

Your Life - Your Values #6
How to Be Respectful to Others
1 Peter 2:17

Tonight we are going to continue in our series on "Your Like – Your Values." In this segment we will be looking at another one of those endangered character qualities that you do not find too often in our society. And that is the quality of respect.

We live in a very rude world. People are becoming more and more rude. Common courtesy is not so common any more. I read a couple of articles not long ago. One was called "America's Uncivil Wars: The Decline of Respect in America" and another "The Age of Irreverence." It seems that respect for other people, respect for property, respect for institutions is at an all time low. Today, very few people respect the government, educational institutions, big business, the post office, law enforcement, religious institutions, etc. Our favorite kind of humor today is sarcasm - put down humor. Every night America turns on Leno or Letterman and listens to them put down society. Their favorite targets are those in authority, those in leadership, those who are to be respected simply because of their position.

The Bible makes it very clear that respect is one of those values that a stable family is built on; a stable life is built on. It is even the framework for a civilized society. If there is no respect among people or rights and for responsibilities and for each other, then civilization decays. The Bible is real specific about this. It says we are to honor our parents - that is the fifth commandment. We are to respect people in authority like those in government, those in law enforcement, those in military. We are to respect church leaders. The Bible says wives are to respect and reverence their husbands (in Ephesians) and in 1 Peter it says husbands are to respect and reverence their wives. And just in case God forgets anybody, He says in 1 Peter 2, "Show proper respect to everyone." Everybody is worthy of respect.

All of us want to be respected. That is one of your basic needs in life. You want other people to treat you with dignity. So in this segment we are going to look at how you give and get respect. They are the same thing. The way you get respect is the way you give it.

We are going to see four reasons why the Bible says you should respect everybody regardless of their lifestyle, regardless of their decisions, regardless of their behavior or beliefs. The Bible says every person should be treated with respect. Why?

First of all, because God made everybody. Psalm 8:5 says, "You (God) made man inferior only to yourself; you crowned him with glory and honor." Everybody is created by God and God does not make junk. **There are no worthless people.** There are people who do worthless things. There are people who do wrong things but they are all of value to God. Even the most unlovable person is loved by God.

Second, because Jesus died for everybody. The Bible says in John 3:16 that "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Matthew 20:28 tells us, "God paid a ransom to save you. He paid for you with the precious life blood of Christ." I may not think much about somebody, but God does. In fact, He says they are worth dying for. **The cross shows how much people matter to God.** God says, "I died for people. Even people who don't believe in Me. Even people who reject Me. Even people who choose to disobey Me. I still died for them because they are people of worth, people of value." God made them, Christ died for them.

Third, when I respect other people it shows I have a personal relationship with God. Jesus gave us these instructions in Matthew 22:37-39, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And in John 13:35 He made an even bolder statement, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." 1 John 4:8 says, "If a person isn't loving and kind, it shows that he doesn't know God, for God is love."

The Bible says that God is love and if I know God then I am going to fill my life with love. Love always treats people with respect. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 says, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude." **When you look at the life of Jesus Christ, you find that He treated even His enemies with respect; even those who wanted to kill Him.** He was not rude to them. He was not demeaning to them. But He treated even the people who were trying to put Him to death with respect.

After spending years studying the Bible, I am convinced that the number one test of my faith is my relationships. It is not what you believe or what you say you believe that matters as much as how that belief comes out in your behavior. The number one test of my faith is my relationships. **Matthew 25 says one of the things we will be judged on at the judgment is how we treated other people.** Why? Because it comes under "works."

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians, "Love is not rude." **What is rudeness?** We see it all around us but what really is it? The bottom line is, rudeness is simply

disrespect. If I am rude to you it means I do not care about you. You do not matter to me. You are not worth much. You are not valuable in my eyes. When I am rude I am basically saying, "I am the only thing that matters. You don't matter. I do." So I treat you with disgust or disrespect - rudely.

Four, when I respect other people I will get back whatever I give out. Listen to this warning from Jesus himself, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others." Paul put it this way in Galatians 6:7-9, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

It is called the law of the harvest! In today's language it is "Whatever goes around comes around." If you want to be respected, it is simple - treat other people with respect. If you want to be treated and valued with dignity, treat other people with value and dignity. If you want people to smile at you, you smile at them. Whatever you give out, you are going to get back.

The Bible says, "A man's harvest in life will depend entirely on what he sows." Proverbs 11:17 puts it this way, "Your kindness will reward you, but your cruelty will destroy you." In other words, the bible says you are doing yourself a favor when you are kind. It never pays to be rude. Great people are just ordinary people who make people feel great.

In a world that is full of rudeness and disrespect, how can I show respect to others in a practical way? Let me just give you a couple of suggestions that I promise will change your life:

First, when I speak to other people I need to be tactful, not just truthful. The primary way we show respect is with our words. Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Proverbs 15:4 says, "Kind words bring life but cruel words crush your spirit." The Bible is giving us instruction concerning tactfulness. Tactfulness is a quality we do not hear too much about today. It is about watching *how* you say *what* you say. The way you say something determines how well it is going to be received. You can say the same thing in different ways and it will be *accepted* or *rejected*. The Bible says if you want to get along in life, the secret is tactfulness.

Listen very carefully (you might want to write this down). Tactfulness is the emotional lubrication of life. Tactfulness is the thing that makes family conversations relationships go better. It reduces friction. Tactfulness is the key

to a happy home, a happy marriage, to getting along in life with other people. It is the key to strong friendships.

Some people today confuse rudeness with frankness. They think they are being *frank* in the way they talk when actually they are just being *rude*: "I just tell it like it is and let the chips fall where they may!" That is rudeness. That is being mean to people, being disrespectful.

Second, when I am being served by people, I need to be understanding not demanding. One of the greatest tests of your character is how you treat people when they serve you. Waitress, waiters, clerks, employees, secretaries, people who work for you, husband, wife, or children. I often hear people say things like, "Well, they are getting paid to do their job!" When people are doing something for you, are you understanding or are you demanding?

I read about an executive who, before he hired anyone to be over others, he would take them to a restaurant and watch how they relate to the servers. You see, he knew that someone who is rude and demanding and not understanding has a character flaw that he did not want in his upper level.

Jesus said this in Matthew 7:12, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Eric Hoffer said, "Rudeness is the weak man's imitation of strength." It takes no intelligence at all to be rude.

The best place to practice this is at home. More marriages are ruined - killed - by rudeness than anything else. When I used to do marriage counseling, I was absolutely amazed at how many marriages are buried by one little dig after another. Constantly putting down, constantly cutting, constantly being rude. Pretty soon the marriage is buried and it is over.

Why is it that sometimes we are the most disrespectful to the people we love the most? I know people who treat their families in ways they would never consider treating a stranger. They say hurtful things to their families that they would never consider saying to a stranger. That is not right. God says even in our families we need to be understanding, not demanding.

Write this down: courtesy is just love in the little things. That is all it is. It is showing respect for people by being courteous in the little things.

I have saved the most difficult for the last: when people are rude to you, respond politely. Jesus said this in Luke 6:26-28, "But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you." 1 Peter 3:9 gives us this instruction, "Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you.

Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it.” This is really hard, because the flesh wants to rise up inside of you. The Bible says, “Don’t retaliate by being rude back.” That only adds fuel to the fire. It just makes things worse. The Bible says, “Don’t repay evil for evil but overcome evil with good.”

Any time you treat God's creature - another person - with respect and dignity, no matter how despicable and vial they are, God is saying, "You did it right!"