

# Simple Respect

The word “respect” has an interesting history. It was originally a Latin word which meant “to look back to.” For instance, if you see something that captures your attention, you’re apt to look back to it or try to see it more closely. Today the word means to have regard for something or someone, to show esteem, to value. We sometimes use the word to describe giving attention to something, to consider something carefully.

There are a number of areas where respect has been lost in this day and age. People are so caught up in the business of equality and personal rights that they don’t give due respect to things that are actually very important. There are some things that are so important that it behooves us to give them special attention—due respect, if you please—and make sure that they are not forgotten. For instance:

**We need to respect God and His word.** It is astounding that in the midst of the best of times, numberless blessings, and wealth beyond imagining, we have no time for God. How many of us pray as we ought? How many of us read the word with any degree of regularity. Even preachers can get so tied up with trivial details, minutia, that they neglect the reading of God’s word. We’re too busy, folks. God should be in our thoughts at the beginning of our day, and the object of the prayer we make at the end of the day. His word should be not just our chore, but our pleasure. It the only source of the information we must have to answer our needs of the here, as well as the hereafter (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is foolish indeed to leave God out of our plans and to neglect His word.

**We need to respect truth.** The devil is very cunning and crafty. He can contrive little subtle things that are almost unnoticeable at the time, but which can eventually cause considerable damage to our spiritual character. One of the things he does with great frequency is cause us to make truth relative. That is, he causes us to rationalize regarding the truth. For instance, he causes us to say, “I’m different.” If we’re not careful, we’ll apply truth to others but when it comes to us, we have some reason why it doesn’t apply. After all, I have a good reason—“I’m different.” Truth is definitive. Its boundaries are clear-cut, cleanly delineated (look at the word—it is *de-lined*). That is, whatever it says to one, it says to all. It plays no favorites, has no personal preferences. Paul treats this very problem in Romans the second chapter. “And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” And again, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Romans 2:3; 21). It cuts both ways, folks.

**Children need to respect their parents.** I hear children talking to their parents in horrible ways in this day and age. Such language not only shows a disrespect for one’s parents, it is a sin against God. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1-3). That is a commandment, young people. It says that you should *honor* your father and mother—that is, you should show a high regard for them, give them a special place. And you don’t give them that kind of respect when you don’t listen to them or when you react to their wishes with a sullen attitude. Respect for parents is one way you show your respect for God. It follows, then, that when you don’t respect your parents like you should, you don’t respect God. Think about that.

**We need to have respect for age.** I deplore hearing someone refer to their father as “the old man.” It’s disrespectful to them, to their age, to their station in life. There is an almost a feeling among us that it’s a sin to be old. Youth is the thing. It receives the attention, the admiration of people. Youth is elevated, age is deplored. Ponce de Leon searched for the fountain of youth—nobody ever looks for the fountain of age. God abhors disrespect for the aged. They were accorded special regard during both the Patriarchal and Jewish ages. Moses gathered the Elders to help him in his work (Exodus 3:16). In Exodus 18, he took advice from his father-in-law, Jethro, a sure sign of respect for his age. In the New Testament, God gave the work of superintending the flock to elders, not youthful men. It is a sin against God to neglect the aged (1 Timothy 5:16). And to pay no attention to the elderly is the same as openly abusing them. Men who have lived long lives are valuable to us. One writer I know rather well said, “If we would take the time to hear them instead of seeking so enthusiastically to compete with them, we could profit greatly. Their advice is based on the result of abrasives which have polished it to a lustre.” (*The Godly Family In A Sick Society*, 1979, p. 71).

**We need to respect the worship services.** The wise man said, “Keep thy foot when thou comest to the house of God and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools” (Ecclesiastes 5:1). It is a serious thing to offer worship to God. It is a serious thing to act like you’re worshipping God when you’re not (Matthew 6:5-6). Sham worship is a terrible sin. It dishonors God. It desecrates and dishonors who and what He is. For instance, when a person doesn’t carefully examine himself and partake of the Lord’s supper in a worthy manner, “he eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:29). That’s serious business, folks. And it’s the same for one who doesn’t sing “with the spirit and the understanding” or merely goes through the motion of prayer, even reciting the proper phrases and saying the expected things, but without the involvement of his heart. It is a dangerous thing to engage in worship that goes no where. “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Respect. Now, there’s a word we’d all do well to remember.

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