

Life With God In Recovery

SHOWING RESPECT



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When some folks were asked on a blog what makes a person worthy of respect they listed qualities such as: integrity, trustworthiness, adhering to a code of honour, goodness, decency, being respectful of others. Most of us would agree that qualities like these would be evident in people to whom we would show respect. However, even in our new life in recovery, we find ourselves behaving in ways that are just the opposite. We believe we have good reason why we do not treat some people with respect. Politicians, church officials, and other leaders make faulty decisions or behave badly, and we reason they don't deserve respect. People may do things that hurt us, frustrate us, or make us angry and we react with disrespect. In so many ways, we justify our disrespect even though God says to respect everyone.

Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king. (1 Peter 2:17 NLT)

Respect shows high regard for authority, other people, self, property, and country. We show respect by treating others as we want them to treat us. All people have value as human beings, regardless of their status or behaviour and we commit ourselves to living that way. Showing respect and being worthy of respect matters to God. The "Ten Commandments", (Exodus 20:3-17) given by God to His people, were instructions which empower God's people to honour God, and live respectfully with each other. The first four commandments were given to help people know how to respect and honour God, their creator. The following six were given to help them show respect to their parents and live morally and in peaceful harmony with their neighbours.

People who despise advice are asking for trouble; those who respect a command will succeed. (Proverbs 13:13 NLT)

It is God's will that we be respectful of our parents, people in authority, people around us, and their property. This is difficult when we face those who have harmed us. Some of us may attribute our low self-esteem or addictive lifestyle to the disrespectful ways others have behaved towards us. However, no matter how badly others have treated us, this does not nullify the commandments of God.

It is God's standard that, as we forgive those who have been disrespectful towards us, God will forgive us for having spoken and acted in disrespectful ways toward others. Forgiveness breaks our bondage to the events that caused us to stray from being the person God created us to be. God is a righteous judge and He can be trusted to judge the other person's harmful actions. That person is accountable before God unless they also repent.

Servants, respectfully obey your earthly masters but always with an eye to obeying the real master, Christ. Don't just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God. (Ephesians 6:5-7 MSG)

The book of Genesis in the Bible tells us the story of a man named Joseph. Joseph was loved by his father but not by many others, including his own brothers. For more than 13 years Joseph suffered unfair treatment – including being sold into slavery, imprisoned on a false accusation of rape, and broken promises for a fair hearing of his case before Pharaoh. No matter what situation Joseph found himself in, he honoured God and respected those around him. (Read the story in Genesis 39-42)

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27 NIV)

Joseph must have felt frustrated by the undeserved harm that others caused him by their character defects. He was sold as a slave by his own brothers and justice failed him for doing the right thing when his master was absent. Joseph may have had some pity-parties over the impact of disrespectful people and unfair events that seemed to happen repeatedly but, even on the darkest days, Joseph continued to honour God and respect those around him. In God's timing, Joseph was honoured and raised up to be a leader over the very people who had unfairly treated him. In the life plan that God had for Joseph, he was in the right place at the right time to rescue many people from starvation. God's plan also worked in an amazing way to restore the relationship between Joseph and his family.

But now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained.' My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me. (1 Samuel 2:30, Psalm 62:7, Psalm 50:15 NIV).

We have all heard the saying, “actions speak louder than words”. This is extremely important in the matter of giving respect to others around us and over us. As God has been kind and merciful to us, he commands us to be kind and compassionate towards others – all others. God’s standard is not, “some of the people some of the time”. God’s standard is, “all of the people in all circumstances”. It seems an impossible standard and, without God’s grace and forgiveness it is. But with God’s grace and forgiveness, we will be able to treat others with honour and respect in all our affairs. When we honour God with our lives, we can expect that, just like Joseph, God will honour us before others.

Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12 NLT)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION and DISCUSSION

1. In what situations am I challenged to show respect?
2. When and how do I justify my disrespectful words or behaviour?
3. What would it take for me, in “less than perfect” situations, to practice ongoing respect?
4. What changes do I need to ask God to make in me, so I can honour Him in all my affairs?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I ask you to give me the will and the desire to obediently follow Your way in whatever circumstances I am presented with. Your word says, both riches and honour come from You and You hold strength and power in the palm of Your hand. When hard times come, help me to remember that You are always with me and I am choosing to walk in Your plan for my life. Help me to honour and respect you not just in what I do, but also in my thoughts, motivation, and desires. Strengthen me and help me to show respect to each person I meet, even when I may disagree with their ways. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me. Amen