

Respect

Purpose: To understand the importance of respect in our call to love one another.

Objective: To realize that respect is based on who we are as God's creation.
To know that if we don't have respect for others, then it will lead to pride and self-centeredness.

Key Verse: Philippians 2:3,4

(Write the love acronym on the board before the lesson begins. This is found in point II.)

I. Introduction

(Give an example of having respect for someone based on who they are. Such as:)

Growing up I had many fond memories of my grandfather. It seemed like he was the greatest person in the world and I wanted to be just like him. But my grandmother would often get mad at him for doing the wrong thing, like coming home late for dinner or not hanging up his clothes. Of course, my grandfather wasn't perfect, but because I had a deep respect for him, I could love him no matter what he did.

Many times we can easily respect certain people. Then there are times when it's very difficult to respect other types of people.

Who are some people that you would say are easy to demonstrate respect to? Why?

(Let them respond. Some possible answers are: Good professors, kind grandparents, helpful police and firemen, pastors, wise elders.)

Who are some people that you would say are difficult to demonstrate respect to? Why?

(Let them respond. Some possible answers are: Unfair boss, lazy people, people with different values, lousy drivers.)

II. Love and Respect

A key element of our daily Christian walk is how we express love to others. In fact, I Corinthians 13:1-3 says that no matter what good things we do, if it's not done in love, it's just a waste of time. I Corinthians 13 also shows that love has many aspects or facets, such as being patient, kind, not easily angered, and not self-centered.

Here is an interesting acronym for love that helps bring to light an aspect of love that relates to respect. The acronym is:

Listen when another is speaking.

Overlook petty faults and forgive failures.
Value other people for who they are.
Express love in practical ways.

Each aspect is important, but I'd like to focus on the "V", valuing other people for who they are. When you value someone, you have respect for them.

In fact, respect is defined as giving high or special value, esteem or regard.

Usually, respect is based on the other person's performance, personality, popularity or how they treat us. But respect shouldn't just be based on what they do, but, also, on who they are. If we are to love all people, then respect must be the foundation of that love.

Transition: How can we see value in all people and thus have respect for all people? To do this we need to remember what God says to us in Genesis 1:27,28, 31.

III. Respect and the Image of God

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them...God saw all that He had made and it was very good."

Because all mankind is created by God, created in His own image, blessed by God and declared very good, therefore every individual has dignity and value and should be respected! Even the thief, murderer, or terrorist should be treated with dignity – not because of what they do, but because they are made by God in His image.

Transition: When we do not show respect for others, what is that showing us about ourselves?

(This could be a rhetorical question or a large group discussion.)

IV. Problems When We Don't Show Respect

If we don't respect and value others, then, because of our fallen nature, we will value ourselves more than others. Our self-centeredness and pride will keep us from seeing the value in others except for what they can do for us.

Philippians 2:3-8 warns us against this attitude of self-centeredness.

(Read the passage.)

Notice the primary attitude is humility and the primary focus is service.

The Apostle Peter said that as we defend the hope that is within us to those who may not agree with us, we should still do it with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

Paul describes how we should serve one another in Romans 12:9-16. Read the passage and as you discover ways that we should show respect for one another, share your answers with the group.

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

V. Conclusion

It’s a simple choice, like many other virtues in the Christian life.

1. We can value and respect others based on who they are as God’s blessed creation and grow in love. Or . . .
2. We can value and respect others based on performance, personality, popularity or how they treat us. Or . . .
3. We can value ourselves only and live a life of self-centeredness and pride.

VI. Application

Is there someone in your life today that you have a difficult time respecting? Perhaps someone you listed earlier on the board. God wants to use that person to develop your ability to love as you learn to respect all of God’s creation.

Let’s ask God in the power of the Holy Spirit to help us value and respect them at all times. We need to stop seeing people primarily based on their position or performance, but, rather, as those created in the image of God.

(Close with one of the following two stories. The second was taken from the Internet.)

- 1) Tell the story of David and Saul. Though Saul persecuted David and tried to have him killed, David would not raise a hand against him because Saul was God’s anointed king. When the Amalekite announced that he had put Saul to death, David wept over Saul and ordered the Amalekite’s death (2 Samuel 1:1-16). David respected Saul, not because he was a nice guy or even a good guy. Rather, he respected him because God had anointed him king and used him to free God’s people from the Philistines. He respected him, not because of his performance, but because of what God declared him to be. We need to respect others in the same way.

- 2) During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50's, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. "Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say 'Hello'." I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

(Close in prayer.)