

Faith of our Youth

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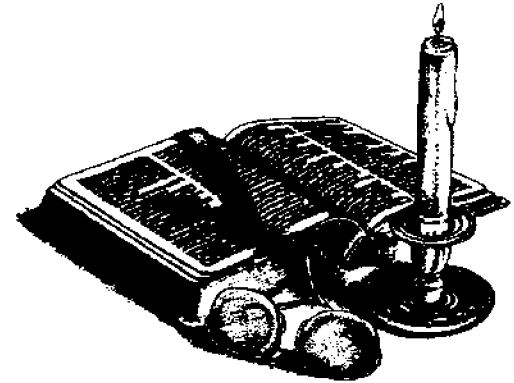
R-E-S-P-E-C-T- what does it mean for you and me?

Kevin Ferguson

As young Christians, how important is respect in our lives? Do we want others to respect us? Do we want God to respect us? Do we respect God, others, and ourselves? While the word respect does not appear a great deal in the New Testament, I believe it is safe to say that respecting others and gaining respect from others is a vital part of a Christian's life. Let's examine this idea of respect a little more closely - at how we gain respect from people and from God.

First, let's focus on what respect is. Respect is defined as "to consider worthy of high regard: ESTEEM." As Christians, does God expect us to live lives considered worthy of high regard? Is God to be considered worthy of high regard? The answer to both of these questions is a very definite YES.

As we look at gaining respect from people, there are two general directions we



"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". 2 Timothy 2:15

may go. Short-term respect is gained through superficial means, while long-term respect is gained through personal character. What do people respect on the surface? Is it not merely

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In my Father's Image

Amy Swearingin

Recently, I attended the funeral of my great aunt in Tennessee with my mother. Many of my relatives there had not seen me since I was a small child. It seemed as if every person I met made the comment "Oh, I can tell you are Gwen's daughter, you look exactly like her!" I was surprised by everyone's amazement that I looked like my mother. Don't most children at least slightly resemble their parents in some way? I had always assumed that was the reason for old sayings such as "a chip off the old block" and "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

We are instructed as children of God to "resemble" our heavenly Father. Ephesians 4: 22-24 says "you were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." How is it possible for us to become "like God" in true righteousness and holiness? Our

resemblance to God begins when we apply His attributes to our lives. Presently, we will discuss five attributes God commands us to attain.

Righteousness. We learn in Ps. 11:7 and Is. 45:21 of God's righteousness. Likewise, we are commanded in I Jn. 3:7 to be righteous. Ro. 1:17 states "for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith." God confirms the righteousness of his children in Jas. 5:16 which states "...the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

"He Who Is Born of God Is Certain To Resemble His Father"

Holiness. God's holiness is prevalent throughout the scriptures. In Is. 6:3 the angels praise God by exclaiming "holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." God commanded his children in I Pe. 1:15-16 and Lev. 11:44-45 to "be holy because I am holy." Simi-

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Reason for Hope

Karen Spencer

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...." -1 Peter 3:15 -

Be ready! In the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples to keep watch and be ready because he was going to return at a time when no one expected him. Peter warns Christians to be prepared for a different reason. Perhaps at a time when we least expect it, someone will ask us about our faith in Jesus. Maybe one day a person that we go to school or work with will become so curious about the way we live that he or she will be compelled to ask, "Why do you live the way you do? I can tell you have a purpose in life—please tell me about it!" Will you be ready to give this person a gentle and respectful testimony? As Christians we must constantly study and pray so that we will be effective witnesses for Christ and do justice to sharing the story of the cross with the lost who need to hear it.

Peter emphasizes this point because he had plenty of experience. He has told the gospel story to many people throughout the country. He walked with Jesus. He struggled with James and John to haul in a load of fish that nearly sunk his boat. He saw Jesus transformed in glory on the mountain. He entered the empty tomb and scratched his head as he gazed with wonder at the strips of linen lying on the ground. He helped baptize the first 3,000 members of the church. He persuaded the first Gentile to accept Christ. And he encourages all Christians to be ready to give the unbelievers an answer.

Peter must have been painfully remembering a time when he wasn't prepared. He remembers the night he told a servant girl who mentioned Jesus, "I don't know what you're talking about" (*Matthew 26:70*). That same night he told two different crowds that he didn't even know who Jesus was. Didn't know Jesus? "But we've seen you with him so many times!" we can hear the people exclaiming.

God gave Peter three opportunities to tell people about Jesus. What stopped Peter from saying, "Jesus? Why, yes, I know who he is! I've been with him for three years now! Let me tell you what he's done for me!" Has God given you opportunities lately? Were you ready?

"So, what do you believe about the creation of the earth?"

"We always go to Happy Hour after the meeting; why don't you come with us?"

"Can we schedule you to work on Sunday mornings?"

If these questions sound familiar, then you have had opportunities. You know what it's like to be asked about the hope that is in you.

Were you ready?

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larly, I Th. 4:7 maintains "for God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." Our holiness is not of ourselves but is from God as He cleanses us from all sin.

Faithfulness. The scriptures are teeming with examples of God's faithfulness to his children. I Th. 5:24 and De. 7:9 exemplifies God's faithfulness: "know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands." In the same manner we are exhorted to remain faithful to God. Christ declared in Mt. 10:22 "all men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Christ revealed in Rev. 2:10 "...be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." What is our reward for the attribute of faithfulness? Eternal life.

Loving. Only God could have so concisely but so adequately explained His love for us as He did in Jn. 3:16. Eph. 5:1-2 reads "be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Many passages explain God's love for us. Likewise, many passages explain how we are to love each other as children of God. I Jn. 4:16 and I Jn. 4:7 are two such passages. The latter reads "dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."

Wise. A child of God is also instructed to be wise. Ep. 5:15-16 instructs us to "be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." It is no wonder we are warned to be wise since I Pe. 5:8 tells us "...Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Though we are to be wise, God's wisdom surpasses all things. The scriptures record God's wisdom in Ep. 1:7-8 and in He. 4:13 where we read that "nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." God is all knowing, all understanding, and all powerful.

Though it may surprise the world, it should not surprise us when others around us notice our resemblance to our Father. We are His children, truly born of God.

Amy Swearingin is a member of the family of Christ at Ozark, Missouri. She begins employment this fall as a speech pathologist in the Forsyth, Missouri school system.

"As Christians we must constantly study and pray so that we will be effective witnesses for Christ...."

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that which "impresses people". Five things which impress people include: 1) **appearance**, 2) **money / possessions**, 3) **job**, 4) **accomplishments**, 5) **education**. A person who looks good, wears nice clothes, lives in a nice home, and drives a nice car may gain quick respect. Accomplishments such as playing major league baseball, being named Miss America, or earning a Ph. D. also carry prestige and bring almost instant respect to a person. However, each of these characteristics are at the surface and bring superficial respect. These are not the things which bring true respect. True respect runs deeper than this and is gained through personal character. True respect is not given to a person - it must be earned over a long period of time. At first thought, it may seem that gaining respect from people and from God are opposing ideas. It is true that superficial things which may impress men do not impress God. However, when it comes to the deeper meaning of respect, many things which God respects also gain respect from people.

How do we as Christians earn long-term respect through personal character? Consider these five characteristics: 1) *honesty*, 2) *reliability / good work habits*, 3) *concern / care for others*, 4) *positive attitude*, and 5) *humility*. Others are watching and notice our actions in these areas. Honesty and good work habits are appreciated and respected by both God and man. Our care and concern for others is shown through living the Golden Rule found in Matt. 7:12 "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." Being positive and humble also go a lot farther in gaining respect as opposed to being negative and bragging. These are also biblical principles found in Phil. 4:13, Rom. 8:28, and James 4:10.

By continually showing these characteristics, people will respect you. Respect from people is nice, but respect from God is greater. In one sense God respects all people. In another sense He respects those who exhibit the characteristics just mentioned. But in a third sense, to gain eternal respect from God, a person needs to do more. Eternal respect from God is gained through: 1) **obedience**, 2) **commitment**, 3) **love**, 4) **a pure mind and tongue**, and 5) **taking a stand for Him**. Obedience includes believing, repenting, confessing, being baptized, and living a righteous life (Acts 2:38 and Rom. 10: 9 - 10). Daily Bible study, regular attendance, and living a faithful Christian life each day shows commitment (II Tim. 2:15 and

Heb. 10:25). The importance God places on love is shown by his attention to it in the Bible. One place love of God and our fellow man is brought out is in I Cor. 13. A pure mind and tongue are hard to find in this world today. God encourages us in this area and respects a mind and tongue which are righteous (Phil. 4:8 and James 3). Respect from God is also gained through our taking a stand for him (Rom. 1:16 and I Pet. 3:15).

Respect is important to us in this life. We need to respect others and to be respected by others. The right look and the right clothes may bring temporary superficial respect, but being the right person brings true respect. Whether at school, at home, on the job, or in the church, let's strive to be people worthy of respect - from God, others, and self.

Kevin Ferguson is a member of the Lord's church at Ozark, Missouri. He has taught high school for 5 years and is presently pursuing a career change.



"Sound" Bytes

"It is often the last key on the ring which opens the door."

"Some people get lost in thought because it is such unfamiliar territory to them."

"It is more to one's credit to go straight than to move in the best circles."

"Even a mosquito doesn't get a slap on the back until it starts to work."

"Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bear bad fruit—and man is his own gardener."

"Be kind to your friends. Without them, you'd be a total stranger."

"The right look and the right cloths may bring temporary superficial respect, but being the right person brings true respect."

EDITORIAL REFLECTIONS

A feeling of contagious faith and zealous commitment by young Christians is the primary reason for this publication. "Faith of our Fathers" has inspired Christians through the ages, so may "Faith of our Youth" encourage young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth and all to seek the high purpose in life. It is encouraging and refreshing to realize the strength and potential for future leadership in the family of God.

"Faith of our Youth" is published by the congregation of God's family in Ozark, Missouri. The timing of publication will depend on the availability of articles by young authors of the brotherhood. Initially, distribution will be limited to one copy per congregation for reproduction as desired.

All young Christians under the age of 30 are encouraged to write and submit articles based on scripture, relating to the faith, hope, and work of young Christians. Each article will be reviewed by the publishers, who reserve the right to select the

articles to be published. Elders and teachers are encouraged to assist young brothers and sisters in composition of essay's of faith.

Future generations of the church are going to need the strength of "sound doctrine" as proclaimed by able teachers of today. However, the eloquent pens of faith and doctrine are dry, except for a few authors writing for the "Gospel Message" and other publications, and "GDO"'s weekly thought provoking articles in a church bulletin. These are good works and deserve high esteem. But we need more "hard copy" in a medium for teaching that has great potential.

It is the publishers desire that "Faith of our Youth" will be a medium for fledging scribes to exercise their authorial skills for public proclamation of the Father's will.

Constructive reflections on this publication or encouragement for our youth are welcome. They will be considered for publication in future "Editorial Reflections".
DRS

Faith of Our Youth

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