

Lessons on Life and Leadership

Lesson 9...Treat Every Person with Respect

Have you ever been in the presence of a person who seemed to treat you with disdain—a pompous official or an arrogant teacher—making you feel you were of a lower class or lacking intelligence? How did you feel? When treated harshly, did you feel put down or devalued? Doubtless you have had such an experience, as I have.

One fundamental principle of living in a godly manner in a hostile workaday world is to treat every person we meet with honor, respect, and love.

Neurosurgeons, janitors, fast-food cooks, pilots, homemakers, theologians, migrant workers, actors, widows, presidents—are all human. They all have feelings and needs (see James 2:1-4).

Jesus constantly paid attention to the rejected, the outcasts, the unclean. He dined with tax collectors, offered help to Samaritans, the disabled, blind, and deaf.

Each person desires and deserves from us:

- Love—Unconditional acceptance of their personhood.
- Honor—We should honor people for who they are, not for what they do.
- Respect—As a person, regardless of their gifting, position or status.

We reveal both positive and negative attitudes by what we say, by our body language, by our actions, and by the most vital commodity—our time.

In American society, very young people and the elderly tend to be marginalized. As we have grown older, we have observed that younger people often ignore us. Then, if they discover “who” we are or that we have some rank or position (such as a public figure), their attitude changes. What is wrong with that picture? Thankfully in many cultures, age is respected, at least outwardly.

In my Air Force career, I observed that the enlisted men and women and younger officers really did the work. In a factory, those working constantly on the assembly lines actually build things, although they do not receive the attention their supervisors do. But whether working on the line or as a supervisor, every person makes a contribution.

We love [God] because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We should honor the men and women whom we encounter because each one is fashioned in the image of God...and He loves them. Jesus Himself gave us this categorical commandment—*Love your neighbor as yourself*. This is why we affirm the dignity and value of every person.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

(Matthew 5:46-47)