
Words of Truth

“Where’s Your Manners?”

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Manners is defined as: “(1) a way in which a thing is done or happens. (2) a person's outward bearing or way of behaving toward others (3) polite or well-bred social behavior” (New Oxford American Dictionary). What has happened to people being polite? What has happened to people showing respect one toward another? It has been a long while since I have heard someone ask, “where’s your manners?” It is not that such a question is not necessary today. When I look around I see a great need for manners in our society. It just appears that proper upbringing has diminished so badly that manners are not expected in our day. Impoliteness is not only tolerated, it is almost expected, and even celebrated.

As we look at the world we [faithful disciples] must understand that this world will/does rub off on us negatively (I Corinthians 15:33). As we are around individuals who do not have good manners, we will be influenced by what we see and hear. We all know that we have to guard against such and that we cannot conform to this world (Romans 12:1-2). Yet, sometimes we overlook some things that may not be as obvious as others. Therefore, in this study I hope to remind us that as saints, we are expected to be kind, polite, and respectful regardless of how we are treated or how we observe others behaving.

Manners Befitting A Child Of God

As children of the Almighty God our behavior must be holy and godly rather than worldly in all areas of our lives (I Peter 1:13-16). Our behavior in all situations should resemble our Lord (Ephesians 5:1-2 and I John 2:2-6). Some of us were not brought up by our parents and taught good manners. Our parents may have failed us in that. That is no excuse for us though. We [faithful saints] have a Father above who has laid down for us how we are to conduct ourselves (Luke 4:4, II Timothy 3:15-17, and Titus 2:11-14).

As new creatures in Christ, we are to behave differently than the world does. Part of that behavioral change is to include us being kind amongst other things. Notice: *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”* (Colossians 3:12). There are certainly times wherein it is appropriate not to be kind (i.e. John 2:13-22, Titus 1:10-14, and Jude 1:3-4). However, most of the time, we are to be kind people. We are to have a peace and gentleness about us (Galatians 5:22-23). This is even true when we are mistreated by the world.

Mistreatment Does Not Entitle You To Be A Jerk

There are times wherein the world treats us badly and you can almost feel justified in turning into a jerk. Here is where we have to be very careful and thorough in our thinking about our manners. Does someone else's lack of manners, even straight out bad behavior towards me, give me the right to mistreat them in return? Consider this: *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good... Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it"* (Romans 12:17-21 and I Peter 3:8-11).

I know those instructions are hard for some of us. I know they are difficult for me. I was raised to defend myself in the most carnal of ways. It has taken me years to learn to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:38-48). There is a Scriptural point that Jesus made that really helped me to learn how to treat others properly even when they were undeserving of such. In addition to that point, there is something else that always helps me be balanced.

Think About These Two Principles...

Jesus taught this: *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 7:12). Do you like being mistreated? If you answered "no", the point of the Scripture you just read teaches you not to mistreat others. In addition to that, we have all had a bad day. How do you feel on those days? You, as a disciple of Christ, have a peace the world could never understand (Philippians 4:6-8). Yet, you still have bad days. Have you ever considered that when a person of the world is having a bad day it is worse than any day you could have because they have NO HOPE. Think about that. You should be able to understand why they mistreat you when you can be considerate of their plight. Aren't we supposed to be able to be considerate of others (I Corinthians 10:23-33 and Philippians 2:3-5)?

Conclusion

How can you be a light to those you mistreat (Philippians 2:14-16)? As a child of God, be considerate and put your best manners on display always (Colossians 4:5-6)!