
Respect

There is a wonderful story passed down through the centuries, which to me points out something about respect. Legend has it that a king blindfolded several of the subjects of his kingdom. He told them that they would be led over to an object which he wanted them to describe. They had no idea that what they would try to describe was an elephant. One of them grabbed the tail and was positive that the "object" was a rope. The next one ran into the side of the elephant, and decided that his compatriot did not know what he was talking about.—Rope? Impossible!—The object was solid. —It could only be a wall. The last of them ran into one of the elephant's legs, and after feeling the ribbed surface, shouted to the others that they were crazy—this was undeniably a tree! They began shouting among themselves. Each had investigated certain aspects and had drawn his own conclusions. Each certainly thought himself right, but actually none of them were able to comprehend this "thing" in its entirety, becoming convinced they were correct based only on what they *could "see."* They disagreed and found it difficult to respect the findings of one another. Once their blindfolds were removed, they were astonished at the identity and the hugeness of the object they thought they had so adequately described.

Isn't the same true in human nature? We observe such a small part of one another, yet think we know everything. We notice only a few things within someone that we decide can be valued and respected. The problem is, we fail to see so much more which is "hidden" from our view. We, like the king's subjects, need to have our blindfolds removed and behold the true identity and complexity of the people we *think* we know already. Doing so would allow us to value the good qualities in the person we already appreciate, or infuse respect where a lack exists.

Instead of underestimating people, we should automatically give honor to all human beings. Each of us has a self-image. Some people have greater self-confidence than others, but I feel certain that no person wants to be regarded as a "nobody." While it is "human nature" — more specifically a trait of the *fallen* nature we inherited—to make everyone smaller than yourself, if instead you would willingly put yourself in the lowest position, the only way you could go is up! People think by belittling others they will appear in a better light, but if we observe the example of Jesus, we can see that God actually exalts the person who occupies the most humble position. And we would notice that other people tend to develop a natural respect for such a person.

Another very "human" characteristic is to look with the "emerald" eyes of jealousy at someone who is put on a pedestal. Yet that is exactly the

kind of roadblock we must remove from the path that we walk toward perfection. Doing that will help us gain true self-respect, as well as develop healthy esteem for others.

I feel that we have to become more observant of the universe around us. The spiritual universe is literally untapped; there are so many discoveries to make if only we would decide to start! Once we even begin to think about respecting and loving this world, certain emotions naturally come to the "surface" of our heart and beg to be expressed. Everyone considers himself somewhat of a poet, at least in his own heart, and wants to paint for others the regalia of God he sees with his own eyes. Through the medium of poetry, a person can communicate what he thinks, feels, expects, and perceives. It is a tremendous vehicle to help us recognize the true meaning of life and more of its substance; we can capture that flavor through poetry. The words as well as the syntax and grammar form a certain word sculpture or self-portrait, expressing what lives inside the soul of the artist. It is a natural desire to express our deepest thoughts, but it is quite difficult to attempt while repairing a car, or digging a ditch. If we want to be "poets" in our everyday life—even through normal conversation—it is first necessary to get in touch with our feelings and perceptions. Then we can begin constructing those castles inside our hearts. Once we build those word-palaces, we should also show them to others. But before we begin to speak about them, we need to get in touch with our audience, becoming sensitive to and respecting their needs. If we talk to a person, how much better it is that we understand *his* dream before transplanting the vision from our own heart into his; perhaps by knowing his feelings we can make our perspective that much more alive for him.

Learning how to formulate words is much more than quilting together certain words to convey an image. We need to cultivate the ability, but at the same time show how much we value the person we talk to through the actual words. Some people come forth with coarse or gruff words which could sound unnecessarily abrupt, while others use gentle and soft words which seem to play the heartstrings. Those words undulate over and literally bathe a heart, never forcing entry as an arrow does. While the latter may be a necessary method of communication on occasion, when you talk about the deepest feelings in your heart, use words that are wavy and round. They are bid entry automatically.

When talking with a person, be sure to occasionally interject his name—that is a real communicator and a way to show respect. In your discussion, bring out points that show him you were listening to what he said at other

times. If he feels you are genuinely interested in him and the things that interest him, his self-respect as well as his admiration for *you* will soar.

We have to learn how to convey heart-to-heart. We do that through cultivating respect for others, as well as through perceiving their needs. One most important way to do that is to become a good listener. People feel appreciated and genuinely valued when someone else shows courtesy and love by listening to them.

To ensure spiritual and emotional health, mutual respect in marriage and among the members of a family is absolutely essential. The morale and the whole spirit of secular society is decaying, and in the process of crumbling because lack of respect and love pervades the family unit. Children see their fathers and mothers fighting, even beating one another. They might even feel the blows of such detrimental anger themselves. How will children who grow up in such families learn appreciation and consideration for others, or for themselves? We have to reverse this trend and restore the mistakes made in the past.

A natural respect is generated when we are able to recognize the spirit of God in our partner, our children, and our parents. Feelings of love are able to develop from that base. Jesus is perhaps the most well-known servant in human history; consequently, people look up to him even today. His legacy is widespread, his deeds respected. The Bible records that he even washed the feet of his own disciples. We too should carry each other's loads—within our families and in all our relationships—and make sure that we bring each other closer to God. Unfortunately, we too often do not recognize the nature of God within a person, and see only his shell. What we often fail to identify is the spiritual quintessence. Not just in strangers, but even in the people we know well. Their faces are very familiar to us, and while we may sometimes grit our teeth and tolerate their seemingly eccentric behavior, we do not see the real person locked inside them. It is because of this that misconceptions, mistreatment, as well as lack of respect and love grow. God is so different from any of us. He loves us as if we are the only person in the world that He loves. He never fails to recognize that unique characteristic of His nature which He endowed to us. And when He looks at us, He automatically respects us, because He views us as if we were already perfected.

Each of us is such a unique individual, and we each have our own opinions and perspectives. Yet we should each accept and even respect the

viewpoints held by another person as being just as true and valid as our own. We may have different ways of doing things. The "right" and "wrong" may not be verifiable, but is there any real sense in bickering about it? We would certainly learn empathy if we attempted to walk a mile in the "moccasins" of our fellow human beings. That would surely afford us a feeling of appreciation for their difficulties.

One way you esteem another person is to get on his wavelength, and then turn the tables: instead of concentrating on what you think of that person, you should consider what he feels about you. That would make us analyze and examine ourselves, especially our behavior and attitudes. Why not ask yourself: would I like a boss like me, or a parent like me? Can you accept your own humanness? How about the qualities of humanness you see jut out from someone else's character? If you see these things but still can commend something about his nature and find certain things to respect, you won't so easily put up your own defense mechanisms, or hide your own character traits out of embarrassment. All of us can learn about the need to be respected, which is common to every human being, when we ourselves receive respect from another person.

You face the greatest obstacle in respecting someone by putting yourself, rather than God, in the center of things. Self-centeredness gets you nowhere. The principle of God is simple: Love your neighbor as yourself. If you want to generate harmony, you have to respect people. When you live with others for a long time, you may lose a certain amount of respect for them. You already know all their more negative traits, and your viewpoint of them could be on the decline rather than the incline. But if you only concentrate on their more undesirable characteristics, you could begin to devalue a great deal more than the people around you. Pretty soon everybody and everything might begin to "bother" you. Your spiritual senses may become too dulled to see the spiritual light that radiates from the hearts of others. You may have a hard time to see situations, even personal trials, as valuable lessons. You may build up resentment unnecessarily. Yet in the eyes of God, every person still has value. God looks at every situation as something which can be turned around—restored—to teach us something and ultimately help us progress. That is the difference between the perception of God and man.

Lucifer was such a terrible example; he did not learn to minister to mankind because he could not see Adam or Eve with the eyes of God. He

became jealous and loved based on the desire for revenge; he got the wrong concept of position, and believed that he did not receive the same amount of love as Adam. God, however, had a completely different view of that situation. God loved and respected Adam and Eve as well as Lucifer, but created them for completely different purposes, and hence related to them in different ways.

If we restore that failure of Lucifer by respecting and serving each other, we can bring Heaven down to earth. However if we, like Lucifer, insist on elbowing our way to a high position that may not rightfully be ours, through being selfish and discourteous to those we *should* respect and love, we will make life miserable for ourselves as well as the others involved.

If you desire to receive respect, you should first honor other people. You may be better good-looking and more brilliant than your brother, but can you be so certain that you are really *better* than him? If you become convinced of that, Satan succeeded in entrapping you into a certain way of thinking. Abel felt he was better than Cain, and he let his brother know it. But the fact that Abel was not very diplomatic or humble did not help matters. To reverse this mistake, the one in Abel's position then should listen to God's command, and also serve his brother. He occupies the position of God, who is the greatest servant of all.

Look up to your leader and to the others with whom you work. If you successfully get *yourself* out of the center of your life and place God there, cultivating a healthy respect for yourself but also honoring others, you will experience a miracle.

Why not build bridges toward others? The best ones are constructed out of respect. You are not always right, so admit when you are wrong or when you can learn from someone. Forgive the people who hurt you, and remember that sometimes you have also hurt people with your own unkind words or deeds, even if this was quite unintentional.

Some people are full of anticipation under the assumption that others will automatically live up to their expectations. Yet they become sorely disappointed when that does not happen. That may stop them from respecting the people who in their eyes fall short. It is far better for us to base respect on what a person *does* accomplish, not what he *doesn't* achieve. If you become disappointed, instead of becoming angry with the person who did not fulfill your hopes, why not become angry with yourself for

expecting so much. Maybe the other person lived up to his own expectations of himself, and although you can encourage him to raise his standard next time, honor that person anyway. He did the best he could.

You may feel as though you are in competition with everybody else in the human race. By looking down at everyone else, you may feel that you occupy a higher position. But that is not what God does. He occupies the lowest position, and honors all of us. God respects us even though we are not yet perfected.

A wise person looks up to and says good things about others. My father was exemplary in this. Someone could kick him emotionally or even physically, or nearly bite his head off with words of criticism, yet he would still praise that person. He would not even try to retaliate by mentioning past mistakes the person made. He would always teach all of us children to look at each person and discover the beautiful qualities, not the negative ones. Because he always looked hard enough to discover traits he could respect in a person, he was never disappointed. In fact, he always claimed that he found *more* than he originally expected!

Each of us wants to be a winner. We want to appear and be recognized as a superman or superwoman. We each have such a need to be valued. Personal dignity is an intimate and special sphere within each human being. Even if a person appears so shy that he has not yet pecked his way out of his shell, he should still be considered as a child of God. Unfortunately, we often only see a person's external appearance and feel that is all there is to him. We fail to see the portion of God within him, and don't always remember there is "somebody" inside who needs coaxing to come out. We see the physical appearance, the facial expressions, and the clothing, but we don't often look much further. It is far too easy to harbor misconceptions about someone, but by doing that, we could mistreat them and disrespect their true nature. Most people not so spiritually sensitive to others are unable to perceive what may be going on inside them. If that has been your trend, why not reverse things and start to look up to others!

It is often hard to accept compliments, especially when they seem too lavish. If we feel that we don't measure up to the nice words, we probably lose trust in the person who gave us the compliment. We don't know what he meant by it, or if he just wants something from us.

It is so different with God. He deserves praise, and He can accept it. In fact, He *expects* it Like Father, like child: we need respect and love, but once in awhile, we also need praise.

God sees each person quite differently from the way any of us do. In order to love a person as God does, you must first respect him. Respect entails looking up to a person despite his faults. The only way to do that is to humble yourself. Yet when you inwardly feel arrogant or try to lord over someone else, it is a sure sign that you either never felt respect for the person in the first place, or have lost it. If you look up to your peer, he will be empowered to give you something: that is a double "win" situation: he wins and so do you. Yet if you puff yourself up and become haughty, upon self-reflection, you will probably feel quite empty. And you will find that if you are overbearing, those in a position above you can give you neither praise nor constructive criticism, simply because you no longer care to listen.

Yet when you display humility and respect for your brothers and sisters, you pump new vitality through the "veins" of your relationships with them. It is when respect fades that problems occur. When you no longer respect and admire a person, you tend to view him according to the dictates of society rather than with God's viewpoint. You just see the stains on the clothing he wears, notice his hair is mussed, and become offended by the way he behaves. You easily become disgruntled when he stands in your way, takes the chair you were going to sit in, or eats the piece of fruit you were planning to eat.

Your lack of respect for him, however, does not automatically mean that you respect yourself. You may find that you feel disdain for life in general and everything disappoints you. When things don't go your way, do you become angry? If your respect for life has diminished so much that you feel as though you want to spit nails at the world, regain the right perspective: "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Even before we can love God, we must first acknowledge His existence and respect Him. The same is true for human beings. Before we can love, we have to respect. If you don't respect a person, you probably don't look *at* him or even want to, much less look *up* to him. If you live in a land of plenty it is probably difficult for you to feel proper respect for a slice of bread. If you have plenty of bread and butter, it becomes hard to imagine and consider that millions of people go to bed hungry every

night. There is so much abundance, who cares? Yet if you were in a prison camp, you would appreciate even a mouthful of water. A person learns respect for everything once he comes into suffering circumstances. Even the small take-it-for-granted things are viewed as great blessings. I feel the "I don't care" attitude is one the greatest evils in North America, as it shows such a lack of respect. It is the greatest obstacle to humility and to nurturing a solid relationship with God. If we don't appreciate what He gives us, can we perfect our hearts?

Sloppiness stems from disrespect. If a person has no respect for his personal belongings, he may throw them around without regard. This kind of attitude easily carries over into interhuman relationships. It is almost a sure bet that a person who has no respect for material goods also has a hard time appreciating people. But if we don't show respect for people, can we be sure that we respect God? If we have no respect for God, we will find ourselves pretty much on our own.

Far too many people today have lost respect for religion and God. Although it may have been somewhat slow in coming, it probably started when they no longer cared for the things for which they were responsible. If we don't care about the small things, sooner or later we will probably stop caring about bigger things, too.

When you respect something, you naturally handle it with care. If you have respect for a person, under normal circumstances you would not talk with your back to him, or just mumble a few words in response to a question he asked. You would care enough to think and formulate a respectful answer before speaking. Talking to someone in a sloppy or disorganized way reflects your lack of respect for that person.

You respect those you care for. All Unificationists have respect for Father and Mother; if I were to tell you that True Parents were going to arrive within the next few hours, what would you do? I am sure you would probably bathe and put on special clothes, making sure you look your best. You would start cleaning the house so that it would be presentable for their visit. You would make such preparations because you respect them. Meanwhile, I am sure you would also pray and prepare internally. You would get yourself "together," and for good reason! Yet do we prepare as well when we go to meet our superior, our brother or sister, our spouse, our children, or even new people we meet each day? We are much more laid back when it comes to meeting others because we don't have the same respect for them that we do for True Parents. If we value a person, we spend time and effort to ready ourselves to meet him. We want to glow, to

look good for him. And when we do that, we surely project much more self-confidence. We communicate more effectively and our self-esteem shows! But when we do things with half a mind, and half a heart, our shortcomings tend to show. It is because we do not get totally involved. Yet we may find that this backfires on us: the person we are to meet also may not appreciate us as much as we would like him to!

We must learn to be respectful to our elders. To be polite, not impertinent. If a spiritual elder enters the room, don't simply ignore him or her; look up in acknowledgement and respect. We should always respect the "God" in a person, and not underestimate him, scrutinizing through our eyes rather than God's. Respect is an inner "something," expressed by gestures and even the spiritual vibrations of our emotions and feelings. You are a son or daughter of God and True Parents. Why shouldn't you be honored? You *will* be respected when you practice honoring all those around you by showing reverence to them.

Respect in marriage is first and foremost. It does not matter whether you are the husband or the wife: respect is crucial. Respect between parents and children is just as critical to the health of a family. It is the thread that can bind all members in a family together. Without it, the family unit could easily be ripped apart.

Society is disintegrating because there is a lack of respect and love. If the husband and wife do not respect one another, the children could observe that, and not respect their parents either. Too many children in Western society today yell at their parents, swear at them, and even order them around. They have it all wrong—they have reversed the natural order completely. Satan has done so much damage to the ideal of love and respect. We have to return to the basicS again: spirit and body must be united, and the vertical connection with God must be solidified. Seeing God in our partner automatically brings a certain amount of respect and love. Respect should be established first and from that springboard, love can develop. It is possible that husband and wife might even become best friends!

Once we are more respectful to other people, especially God, our attitude will change. We will then do the same on the horizontal level, genuinely loving and respecting others. If you are able to analyze and detect what goes on inside a person, then you will be able to look up to him.

Mutual respect is a precious commodity. It is certainly something to strive for in your relationship with another person. If you look down on somebody, you won't show much concern for him. But if you treasure and value this person, you will automatically look up to him. Then put the love that develops as a result into the safest place you have—your heart.

Respect is basic. Why should we be rude when we can be loving. Respect promotes feelings of value. If somebody doesn't act as we expect him to, we should be benevolent and give him the benefit of the doubt. Father views us as if we were already perfect. God does the same.

Develop a respect for food, and when you cook be prayerful, conscious of loving the food that is being transformed into a meal which will nourish others. If you feel tense or negative while you are cooking, you put elements of your emotions into the food. Food that is lovingly prepared and presented can more easily be absorbed by the body.

Be more sensitive about what you say, and don't interrupt someone when he is speaking. Some people are overruled all the time and don't have much of a chance to express their feelings. They end up staying in the background and articulate very little. Yet one way to respect people is by keeping quiet and giving them a chance to speak. Encourage them to express what is going on within their hearts. If you simply chatter away, you will neither inspire people nor help them. Put value into your words and respect other peoples' time. Make sure what you say is meaningful, not superficial and shallow.

It is also important to display respectful behavior when you enter a meeting already in progress. You should stop and bow when it is appropriate, or at least nod your head in respect to those who are speaking. We should show respect whenever we meet another person, greeting him with more than a grunt.

If you have love within yourself, then you will automatically extend respect to everyone. I feel the person who is able to respect others commands a certain dignity because he offers something of substance. A person who walks into a room and doesn't look at anyone else, either because he disrespects them or he is full of fear, has virtually nothing to offer. If he doesn't see any value in other people, we might wonder whether he values himself.

Once you respect a person, you want to love him. All of us need affirmation that we are decent human beings. Our feelings need to be acknowledged. So affirm someone, and recognize his goodness! All it takes to begin is a smile and a simple "hello."

Most members of the human race simply don't look at each other enough, preferring to look away or at the ceiling or floor, because doing that is more comfortable than looking into the person's soul through gazing into his eyes. We don't celebrate each other enough. We may take it for granted that other people know how we feel about them. But too often we who are on the receiving end, *don't* know that. Each of us has some admirable qualities and we need to be told that those virtues are worthy of praise.

Why do we too often pass each other by out of deference and embarrassment? Why don't we regard, rather than disregard, esteem rather than scorn? No matter how despondent we feel, God still respects us. He always finds something redeemable about us. Should we not do the same to each other?