

**Who Will Choose to Care?**

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“David, don’t do that if your sister, asked you not to!” my mom disciplines, “You know Jesus says ‘do to others what you would have them do to you.’ Treat others how you would want to be treated (Matthew 7:12).”

“But Ma,” I protest, “she wasn’t treating *me* nice, so why should I treat *her* nice?”

“Son,” she begins tenderly, “whether or not she treats you ‘nice,’ you should *choose* to treat *her* kindly. *Niceness* does not matter, because it is often superficial—”

“Huh?”

“Fake. Niceness is fake because it is done without much thought and holds no commitment to kindness, which is held through *love*. And if we choose to love others, as God first loved us, then we will not only listen to what God wants, but we will also automatically *respect them*. Respecting someone is choosing to love the other person even if they don’t love you—even if they are your arch-nemesis and push you down at the playground!” she pauses, “And you do it because it is the *right thing to do*.”

Looking back on that simple moment, whether or not it happened exactly like that, I understand the deep importance of respect in all applications. I continue to see how my actions towards others influence my life. And I sure hope that moms and dads continue to teach their children what respect is—if not them, then hopefully someone. I also recognize the evidence that individuals in the past were taught respect.

In 1964, an infamous flood affected our region of the Klamath Basin, as well as surrounding states. This was known as the Christmas Flood of 1964. For brief background, intense flood waters rose in much of Oregon, California, and parts of Nevada during January due

to harsh winter conditions and extensive precipitation. While it affected arguably the whole nation, I would like to highlight its effect on the Klamath Basin Community.

Being built on the Klamath River, many residents and properties were affected by flooding. Because Klamath Falls is a small community, and because many had been taught respect, community members pooled together and began building sand-bag walls to prevent damage and protect those around them. Ranchers and farmers in the area used what they had—heavy machinery—to reinforce the riverbanks and clear debris. Churches and shelters opened their doors not only to those locally displaced but, too, those affected in other areas who were in need of a community to receive them in crisis. Across the board, our community helped those in need. But most importantly, they did not do it for what they would receive in return, nor for what was done for them. By and large, our community embraced others because they hoped others would do the same for them had they been in the same situation. They chose to respect all people and not withhold their service from anyone. Respect helped this community survive through a hard time, and later thrive.

Expanding our view, respect has also played a major role in shaping Oregon and the people within its borders.

Obviously within our state and country, there has been racial bias towards Native Americans. And while nothing can condone all that was done, respect starting in the 1970s made an effort to heal past hurts. In 1972, the first Native Tribe was recognized as sovereign. Since then, more and more tribes began to gain their sovereignty and land back. While this took years of continuous advocating in Congress, eventually respect was given and demonstrated in the giving back of land. This took a decision on both parts to overlook the past. Congressmen had to look past race, background, and status and see the person of Native Tribes. Tribes had to

continue fighting for what used to be theirs, they had to fight for respect, and they did so by offering it to others first. They had to try and teach others to look from their perspective and hope they would understand. And from this understanding comes the realization that they would want the same to be done for them had they been taken from their lands and stripped of their rights. While this process was extensive and often convoluted, its root was that of the Golden Rule: treat others how you want to be treated.

Fred Rogers, or “Mister Rogers,” is yet another example of respect carried out by the way one lives. While a television host, he taught our nation what it means to respect persons unbiased of age. Similar to 1 Timothy 4:12 when it instructs us to not allow “anyone look down on [us] because [we] are young,” and how we should “set an example” by treating others how we would want to be treated, that is “in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” Rogers took this to heart and especially demonstrated it on one of his TV shows in which he interviewed young children and spoke to them in full respect as if they were adults. Teaching those in the nation that just because one is young does not mean they deserve any less respect. Not only that, but he was often speaking with individuals to help them understand themselves and their feelings further. Who would not want to be treated as competent and be offered help? Rogers answered that question with a “no one” and he made a difference by choosing to treat others that way.

And while it's valuable to look at the past and understand what cultivated us and our nation, we must also examine today and understand how respect plays a role in our everyday lives and choose to continue the trend of respecting.

Within my school (Henley) a few others and I founded and facilitate a Bible-based club called *United In Christ*. The club is focussed on bringing together fellow believers in Christ and fellowshiping in a way that is edifying to our character and relationship with Jesus. While this

focus alone may seem exclusive and reserved, we are highly active within the school and do various events throughout the year. These events are not simply advertisements of the club, nor a selfish push of our character and works—if that were the focus then our outreaches would not be blessed. Rather, they are to demonstrate God’s love for *everyone* and fulfill our given command to love others in this way as well. This then carries over into the club as a whole and we practice being a loving community that is open to everyone, no matter their background. We do not worry about what they’ve done, but who God created them to be and who he wants to refine them into.

Because love is the being of God, respect stems from love and thus we respect all people. Even though our club is formally only held in the school, many of the attendees are active members in our community and carry God’s heartbeat of love with them. We are not perfect, but we try to respect everyone to the best of our abilities.

Speaking of trying our best, we can also peruse the respect demonstrated in and from our state. A principle I live my life by, and I wish more people did, can be found in 1 Peter 2:17 in which we are instructed to “show proper respect to everyone” and “honor the emperor” which I would like to relate to today’s problems. With our current state legislation, and as is the pattern for all time, many people are displeased. Laws are passed and practices condoned that a margin of citizens believe should not be. Now while there are protests and the pushing of boundaries, many people are still “honoring the emperor” in regards to our state government. In Biblical context, Peter was specifically addressing Nero—this was a man who publicly terrorized Christians for their faith—if Peter can honor and respect him, should we not today do the same for Tina Kotek? Regardless of our opinion, we must respect and honor those ruling over us. We do not have to agree, but if we lash out, we do not respect. There are various ways to influence change, but the best way to do it is with respect.

And while National Guards are specifically made for the protection of a state, it is a great example of respect demonstrated at the national level. The National Guard is in place to help people, and help *everyone*. When the National Guard is deployed for a state issue, they serve with enthusiasm without bias of who they are helping. They choose to help others because they are able, and want to demonstrate the action to take where someone is in need. Not only that, though, but when needed outside the state for a national issue they do not help only those close to them but everyone in need. Respect is for everyone. Our National Guard understands that.

But without the continuation of respect, will beforehand be for nothing? A forgotten way of the past? I hope not.

In a generation where respect is less and less taught and valued, I believe the practice of it will be a factor that sets apart those living this life the right way versus those who are confused. But I will be optimistic and discuss the future in the hope that revival will spread the nation and Biblical characteristics will be the choice of many.

A community *of respect* in the future will be one of sanctuary. In our country that is a “melting pot,” a respectful community will be one that welcomes many and respects and loves them as a person. Neighbors will help neighbors, connecting persons in a network centered around *seeing* people for who they are and treating them as they would be treated. It will be one where commendation is common practice because individuals seek to edify others—not for fame or fortune—but simply because it is the right thing.

A state ruled with the thought of others and how *they* would like to be treated—in the presence of self-forgetfulness, would be one of freedom. Not the lack of rules thereof, but the presence of those which serve as a guideline living for the benefit of others while we are here this short time. State politicians would campaign and see the people for which they represent,

and rather than seeking personal power and gain they seek how they can help the people. This would be done by not only seeing, but hearing the people, as one would want to be heard. The taking of advantage would not reign copious, but instead the respecting of persons regardless of who they are.

Even more, a nation in which respect reaches over state lines, and through the federal government would be one *for* the people *by* the people.

Similar to that of the state, the first aspect affected would be the federal government. Congress and the functioning branches would pass statues for the people. It would be a manifestation of our forefathers' visions and sayings. If we wish to truly hold to the "*We the People*" it is incumbent we learn to respect from the highest position down. How great it would be if our political leaders chose not to scapegoat or slander but instead listen to the views of their opponent and treat them as the person they are. What an exemplary example many would have.

And while loyalty and state-pride are fun to get behind, a nation of respect would have a people that—in Oregon's case—do not look down on others simply because they are from California. Part of respect is embracing differences and not allowing them to become bruises that are sensitive to touch. No matter your state of residence and the preferences you carry with that, they are a person, and upon interaction, that is how all would like to be treated. Dehumanization is the root of xenophobia and kills respect.

Now, it is great to observe the role of respect in our own home, but it is not specific to America, but native to the rest of the world.

Looking back on the presence of worldwide respect, it does not take long to find good and lesser examples. In the past especially, an obscure example of respect, is the simple formality of language. Leaders and the general population did not travel with the goal to offend with the

disregard for other cultures' customs. A respecter of persons would enter another's space and not conform willingly, but embrace their traditions and compliment the actions with their own traditions. And even beyond tradition is the practice of expurgating one's language. Respectful people avoid polluting an environment with obscene language, regardless of setting.

Presently, between our nations' leaders, respect is indeed old-practice, which is disappointing. Our societies have told us that a respectable leader is one who fills a room and projects themselves in an intimidating way, how ironic it truly is. If one wants to be respected they do not carry respect for others, but try and scare it into them. This is contrary to how it should be. If a leader wishes to be respected—if anyone does—it does not come from accomplishment and power, but first from treating others with respect, as you would have them treat you regardless of their actions towards you.

Despite the shortcomings of our leadership, though, respect is still present in our world communities. Those in our communities committed to reaching others and edifying the world do carry respect with them where they go. This changes the world for the better. If more people behaved in this way we would not see as many iniquities committed on the grounds of offense. Today, an answer to a call back to respect would benefit the world starting in our own communities.

If this call were taken seriously, our world leaders would not lead with a hand of intimidation but a hand of caring. One would not throw a tantrum because of another, but convict the other by their choice to look past, forgive, and respect the person in a way that treats them as oneself would want to be treated. Entitlement would not hold value among citizens but instead self-forgetfulness would be the teaching in homes. Encountering people in other countries would

not be awkward but a time to embrace differences and see that human as a person worthy of one's care and attention—not some sight to see.

But for all this to be possible it must go beyond one being taught, but lasting respect lies in the personal choice one makes to respect others.

In my current life, as I've been taught, I respect all I encounter. This action is not routine though, without thought, but a conscious choice I must make whenever I interact with someone. I undoubtedly meet people I disagree with, but if I choose to disrespect the person for that, then I am the loser, the lesser person. And in that, if I am trying to elevate myself above them with the leverage of respect then I have missed the point as well. I do not respect with the goal to be seen as a respector, nor any legacy. I respect because I was first respected by those around me, and because I would wish for others to respect me.

Now, just because I choose to respect others, does not mean others respect me for the same reason. Some respect I have from others was earned. This respect is demonstrated in the form of trust, and favor. The respect and other character qualities I display has earned me the responsibilities I am able to pursue. This encourages me to continue displaying them, but also urges me to teach others how to demonstrate them.

As my life continues on, I know that the respect I have learned to give others will carry me far in life. Respect sets one apart, not above, but apart. Going to job interviews, walking around Sherm's—respect not only is displayed *from* one, but displayed *on* one. Carrying respect in the future will also bring a sense of duty as I interact with others. I will not respect just so I am different, but because I truly carry a conviction to treat others how I would want to be treated: with love, kindness, patience, and integrity.

Respect is a quality one chooses. But eventually it becomes a trait one grows with.  
Respect in turn treats one as they should be treated.

“I’m sorry sissy, will you please forgive me?” I seek.

“Hmph,” she turns away.

“I will try and treat you how I would want to be treated,” I say as I choose to commit to a  
way of life.

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