

HOW TO GIVE AND GET RESPECT
Building Great Relationships - Part 5 of 10
I Corinthians 13:5

Recently I've read a lot of stories in the news like this: A lady in Cambridge, Massachusetts was told by the bus driver that she couldn't smoke on the bus, so she beat him repeatedly with her umbrella... A man in an Atlanta restaurant was told that a wait for a table would be two hours so he punched the hostess... A gas meter reader in Houston went to check the home gas meter and was shot in the stomach with a pellet gun by the resident.

There is no doubt about it, rudeness is quite common nowadays. People are more abusive of each other, physically and verbally, than in any other time before. It seems that common courtesy is not so common any more.

What do you feel is the form of rudeness that irritates you the most? I'm going to give you 10 Rudest Rude Behaviors according to an article I read. In fact, we may even find ourselves committing these offenses against humanity.

10. Being Noisy
9. Cutting in Lines
8. Interrupting
7. Not returning your shopping cart.
6. Any form of disrespect to the elderly.
5. Cutting off others in traffic.
4. Tailgating.
3. Not using a turn signal.
2. Being late.
1. Improper cell phone use.

What is rudeness? It is simply a lack of respect for others. Rudeness reveals that I could care less about you. I'm only thinking of myself. It doesn't matter

what anybody else thinks or whether it hurts you or not, I'm going to do what I want to do. You can summarize rudeness in one word: selfishness. The world is getting more rude. But the Bible says, *"Love is not rude."*

The remedy for rudeness is 1 Peter 2:17 *"Show proper respect to everyone."* Everybody. Your kids, your husband or wife, the jerk at work, people I don't even know, mother in law, democrats, unbelievers, atheists, government -- everybody!

Why treat everyone with respect?

1. Because God made everybody.

Psalm 8:5 *"You, God, made man inferior only to yourself. You crowned him with glory and honor."* The Bible says that people are the crown of creation. Even the despicable, unlovely person, God says "I made him." Because we are all created by God, we all deserve respect. We tend to be polite to people we consider more important than us in the social status. We tend to be rude to people we think are below us in social status. But God says they're all Mine. Be respectful to everybody. Be respectful to the President and to the beggar on the street, the CEO and the guy who's homeless. God made them all.

2. Because Jesus died for everyone.

1 Peter 1:18-19 *"God paid a ransom to save you. He paid for you with the precious life blood of Jesus."* That shows how valuable people are. The cross shows how valuable God considers people. I may not think much of that person but God does. He thought enough of them to send Jesus Christ to die for them. Jesus is going to be watching you to see how you treat people He died for. In Matthew 25 it says that at the judgement we're going to be judged how we treated other people. Jesus says, *"I was sick and you came and visited me, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was in prison and you visited me."* We'll say, *"Lord, when did we do that to You?"* Jesus

will say, *"Anytime you've done it to the least person, you did it to Me."* That's how important it is. Jesus died for everybody and God created everybody.

3. Because it shows that I know God.

How do you know if you're a real believer? You look at your relationships. I John 4:8 *"If a person isn't loving and kind it shows that he doesn't know God."* Why? *"God is love."* I may have all the doctrines and beliefs straight, all the Bible verses down, if I don't have love it doesn't count. Jesus was gracious with people. He protected people's dignity. The Pharisees, one time, brought a lady who had been caught in the act of adultery. They threw her at the feet of Jesus. They were incredibly rude people. They had all the doctrine right but their rudeness was strong. Jesus, the first thing He did, was to protect her dignity. He defended her in front of them. He said, *"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."* They all walked away and then in the privacy of one to one conversation He dealt with her sin. Jesus even gave respect to the most disrespected people in society. The Pharisees couldn't handle that. They said in Luke 15:2 this guy parties with sinners. He even eats with them. The most disrespected people were tax collectors, prostitutes and lepers. He befriended all of them. He treated them with dignity and respect and the Pharisees couldn't handle that.

If that's the way Jesus treated people, then if Jesus Christ is really in me, doesn't it make sense that that is the way I'm going to treat people? Yes. You may have all the right beliefs, but if you're right and you're rude -- you're wrong! Love is not rude. And he who doesn't have love doesn't know God.

So, those are the reasons why you should treat everyone with respect. Now, let's switch gears here and let us look at five ways on how to show respect to people.

1. When you speak to people be tactful not just truthful.

I start with speaking because the primary way we're rude to people is with our words. Proverbs 15:23 *"What a joy it is to find just the right word for just the right occasion."* What he's talking about here is tact. Tactfulness is thinking before you speak. There is a way you speak that the way you say it enhances it or detracts from it. You can say the same thing five or six different ways and it will be received different ways even though it's the same words. If you're going to learn relationships, the secret of effective relationships, the foundation is tactfulness. That's the key. If you want good people skills, develop tactfulness. Learn how to say things the right way. Tactfulness is relational lubrication. It minimizes friction between people. Somebody said, "When you use tact you have less to retract." Because you think first. I can't overestimate the importance of tactfulness. Yes, Christians are called to be truthful; they're called to be tactful, too.

Definitions of tact:

Tact is what you thought but didn't say.

Tact is the ability to make a point without making an enemy.

Tact is when somebody tells you to "go jump off a cliff" that makes you look forward to the journey."

Tact is treating everybody as if they knew what they were talking about when they don't.

Tact is the art of telling somebody he's open minded when he just has a hole in his head.

Tact is changing the subject without changing your mind.

If the Bible were to define tact I'd say it's Ephesians 4 *"Speaking the truth in love."* When you speak to people, be tactful, not just truthful. Proverbs 15:4 *"Kind words bring life but cruel words crush your spirit."* People who say, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me, " -- that's not true. Words do hurt. And they hurt worse than sticks and stones. You can break a

physical bone and it will heal in a matter of weeks. But somebody who has been wounded emotionally, it may take years for the hurt to go away, if ever. We are called to be not only truthful, but tactful. Which means you need to tell it like it is with tact.

Like the man who came up to the pastor after the message on "The Parable of the Talents" and said, "Pastor, my talent is to speak my mind." The pastor said, "That's one talent you should bury."

Before you're frank with anybody you need to stop and ask yourself, "Why am I saying this? Am I going to be frank with this person to demean them? Will it make me feel better by putting them down? Is what I'm about to say going to build up the relationship or tear it town?"

When people speak to you, be tactful not just truthful.

2. When you are served by people, be understanding not demanding.

Luke 6:31 *"Do to others as you would have them do to you."* That's the Golden Rule. Do you want people to be demanding of you? No. You want them to be understanding of you. So you treat other people the way you want to be treated. Be understanding, not demanding.

How do you treat people who serve you? One of the great tests of Christian character is how do you treat a waitress or waiter? They say some of the rudest people they know are people who have Bible studies in a restaurant. They don't leave any tips.

How do you treat your secretary, or employees, or that fast food person who doesn't speak good English? Are you understanding or are you demanding? Eric Hoffer, a moral and social philosopher, says, "Rudeness is the weak man's imitation of strength." You see, rudeness is always an indication of weakness.

You know, the secret of great service is to treat people with respect. Be considerate of their feelings. Be sympathetic to their stresses. When you're dealing

with a waitress, she may have had fifteen cranky people before you and she's not feeling good and she's had a tough day. And if you act cranky, too, you'll be the 16th.

Be understanding not demanding. Proverbs 16:21 *"A wise mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words the more persuasive he is."* Would you like to be more persuasive with your children. Would you like to be more persuasive with your husband or wife or boss or employees? The Bible says the way you're persuasive is by being pleasant. I'm never persuasive when I'm abrasive. It is politeness that changes people, not rudeness.

The best place to practice this is in your home. Often we are more polite to strangers than we are to the very people we live with all the time. We say things that are rude and act rudely to the people we love the most. Courtesy is showing love in the little things. Emerson said, "Courtesy is made up of little sacrifices." That's what manners are -- little sacrifices. It's the little things that irritate us. Rudeness can kill a marriage. Do you remember how polite you were when you were dating?

I read about a couple who actually got an annulment on the basis of the husband's rudeness. Evidently his wife went to court and claimed that her husband burped all the time and that it was annoying to her. The wild thing about it is the judge granted the annulment on the basis of the fact that if he really loved her and if it really annoyed her that much, then he would do something to try to take care of all that burping. And he should have been more considerate.

3. When you disagree with people be gentle not judgmental.

As a Christian there are a lot of things in the world I disagree with, a lot of things that happen, a lot of lifestyles, behavior. There's a lot that takes place in the world that I disagree with. I don't even agree with everything you do and you're a

Christian. We don't agree with each other. What am I supposed to do? Romans 14:12-13 tells us what we're supposed to do. *"Each of us will give an account of himself to God, therefore let us stop passing judgment on each other. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block in another's way."*

Even Christians disagree with each other on major issues. But we can disagree without being disagreeable. We can have various views on nonessential issues without being disagreeable and you don't have to devastate people you disagree with. The Christian book market has found a market for books by Christians who attack other Christians. That is so sad! Some of it's true but they do it in such a rude and unloving way it's wrong. I think the world is laughing at us shooting each other.

James 3:16-17 *"Where ever there is jealousy or selfish ambition there will be disorder. But wisdom from above is peaceful, gentle and friendly."* If it's really wisdom from God it's going to be peaceful, gentle and friendly. When you get two Christians arguing about beliefs how do I know what's right? Wisdom from above is peaceful, gentle and friendly not argumentative, destructive and devastating. When you shoot the arrow of truth you need to dip the point in honey. Be persuasive by being pleasant.

One of the best examples of this is a guy named John Woolman. He was an 18th century Quaker. Quakers are Christians. They call themselves the Society of Friends. Woolman in the 1700's became concerned that many Quakers were slave holders. As a young man he was determined to rid the Society of Friends of this ugly blight. His strategy was simple. He did not picket, hold mass rallies, preach harsh sermons against slavery and slave holders. He did not go gather names on petitions. He did not go on a hunger strike. He did not chastise or threaten or organize committees. For thirty years he traveled up and down the country visiting with slave holders. He would go in their homes, accept their gracious hospitality

and gain their respect. And then he would simply, quietly ask, "How does it feel to be a child of God and own slaves?" There was no condemnation in this approach because he believed the slave holders were people of conscience and they could be helped to make the right decision. He asked bold disturbing questions that caused changed hearts in Quakers. He was successful in his dream, so successful in ridding the Society of Friends of slaves, that 100 years before the Civil War not one Quaker was a slave owner. Such phenomenal success was the result of one man's passion for justice and righteousness and his dedication to the task of righting the wrong.

Today there are many wrongs that need to be righted. There are many people in various bondages that need to be freed. There are ill informed, mistaken ideas that need to be corrected. Where are the ones who will be instruments of remedy for our world? What kind of person can God use? John Woolman is just one example of such a person. Perhaps his greatest strength was that he was tactfully bold.

I think that's what God wants Christians to be when we disagree with each other. When we disagree with what we see in the world he wants us to be tactfully bold.

4. When you share your faith with people, respect them don't reject them.

Col. 4:5-6 says, *"Be tactful with those who are not Christians, talk to them agreeably with the flavor of wit and try to fit your answers to the needs of each one."* Be tactful. It's amazing how some people can take the most positive message in the world -- the Good News -- and turn it into a negative message. They beat people over the head with the gospel. How they do that I don't know. A lot of evangelism is subtle putdown: "I'm saved and you're not; I'm good, you're bad; I'm up and you're down." Sometimes it's not even subtle. Billy Graham's definition of evangelism: Evangelism, sharing the good news, is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread. That's it. I'm no better than anybody else but I've found

some things and I want to share them. When you share your faith you need to respect people, not reject them. As a pastor I'm embarrassed by some of the tirades I see TV preachers do. Blasting away in anger and in a condemning manner. So self-righteous. The whole message is one giant put down. It's no wonder some people don't understand the love of God; I wouldn't either.

Jesus never spoke to people that way. He was kind, gentle, generous, respectful. The Pharisees spoke that way, but Jesus didn't.

Notice it says, when you share try to fix your answers to the needs of each one. Start with their needs. How does the Good News help them? You don't use a canned approach. You start with their needs. I Peter 3:15-16 *"If anyone asks you why you believe as you do be ready to tell them and do it in a gentle and respectful way."* When you share, let your light shine. It doesn't say be a blow torch. You don't burn people into heaven.

5. When people are rude to you, respond politely don't reply angrily.

Don't respond by being rude yourself. That only adds fuel to the fire. When somebody is rude to me I want to be rude back.

I saw a bumper sticker in that said, "Don't get mad, get even." But that doesn't work. Rudeness never pays. Kindness does. The Bible says in Romans 12 *"Do not repay evil with evil. Overcome evil with good."*

I want to encourage you to join me in a war against rudeness. As our world becomes more and more crowded and as the stress level goes up people are rude. Studies have shown that the more stress people have, the more stressed their job is, the more rude they tend to be. The 80's was known to be the "Me" Generation when people were focused on themselves. It was about me, me, me. It looks like our society is headed that way again. Despite Facebook, and Instagram, and Twitter, and a host of other social media apps which are designed to bring people

together and help us focus on others, the reverse is happening. They're instigating a "Me-First" attitude. We can reverse this trend folks.

I want to challenge you to join me in a polite revolution. Let's all work on this together. Love is not rude, it's polite. The one thing you're going to be judged for is how you treated other people. I want Fil-Am Church to be the most polite, courteous family church possible. When people come to the Fil-Am Church family I want them to say, "They love people there. It doesn't matter what you wear or what you look like, they're friendly there. They give up their seats, open the door for you, offer you bread, don't cut in line, really friendly." That's what God wants us to be. Let's work on that this week. And let's start at home.

I want us all to bow our heads and close our eyes.