

re:novate V: respect

Reconnect – April 10, 2011



Text: I Peter 2:13-17; Acts 10:34-36

Key Thought: If you want to grow in God, make sure your relationships are right.

For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority – whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honour those who do right. It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king. (I Peter 2:13-17, NLT)

Intro: something's lacking



- In our celebrity-obsessed, gotcha politicking, fast-paced society, respect would seem to be something that's lacking
- Fifty years ago, respect was something that was expected or assumed – people respected institutions, they respected authority, they respected traditions, they respected their elders, because that's what was done – those things were there to help you and had helped shape you, and they had power over your life, so you respected them
- Then, a societal shift: the counterculture movement of the sixties and seventies questioned everything and upended the idea of respect – respect went from something that could be assumed or expected to something that had to be earned
- Respect was now more subjective – what you respected depended on what it had done or would do for you, personally – and you had the power to decide what to respect and how much to give it
- But somewhere between then and now, and I think likely in the last 20 years or so, maybe less, things have shifted again with regards to respect

- Now, instead of being expected, or assumed, instead of being earned, respect is demanded – people demand your respect, on a personal level – people you know, people you don't know
- What do we see over and over again in conflicts today? When the “drama” comes? Whether it's our circle of friends, or our favourite reality TV show? The cry is for “respect” – YOU need to respect ME
- Ironically, those who demand respect the loudest also seem to be those at the time doing the least to warrant or deserve it

Q: Who is respected in our society, and why? Who do you respect, and why?

(people we need something from – those we know closely enough to want to be like them – people who take a stand for what they believe, etc.)

Back to basics

- Even if it has shifted over our lifetime, respect is still an idea that we... respect
- We want to teach it to our kids – teach them to respect what's important, what's meaningful, the important people in their lives – because “disrespectful” isn't something anyone wants said of them
- But who makes that distinction? What makes something or someone worthy of respect, in a time when everything is upside-down, and “Because I said so” doesn't last nearly as long as it used to?
- The Bible has something to say about it, in this morning's part of the section we've been tracking through over the past five weeks

Read text: I Peter 2:13-17, NLT

For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority – whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honour those who do right.

It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king.

I Peter 2:13-17, NLT

Through the text:

For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority – whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed.

- Wow – and there it is, out on the table – all human authority
- Peter is writing this letter to people who have been persecuted, who are being persecuted for identifying with Jesus – by the people in authority – and yet instead of “stick it to the man” or “don't trust anyone over thirty”, he says “respect everyone who is giving you the shaft” – seems counter-productive, doesn't it?
- Now – respecting human authority doesn't mean blindly going along with it or endorsing it all the time – but there's a far cry between a G20 hooligan with a black mask over their head and Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, imprisoned for her quest to bring democratic freedom to her people

Suu Kyi is a real hero in an age of phony phone-in celebrity, which hands out that title freely to the most spoiled and under qualified. Her quiet voice of reason makes the world look noisy, mad; it is a low mantra of grace in an age of terror, a reminder of everything we take for granted and just what it can take to get it. Thinking of her, you can't help but use anachronistic language of duty and personal sacrifice... this amazing woman who put family second to country, who for her convictions made an unbearable choice—not to see her sons grow and not to bewith her husband as he lost his life to a long and painful cancer. Suu Kyi, with an idea too big for any jail and a spirit too strong for any army, changes our view—as only real heroes can—of what we believe to be possible. The jury is still out on whether we deserve the faith she has put in us. – **Bono, in Time Magazine**

- It's tough to have that much respect for authority, isn't it? Think about our election that's going on now, and the fact that for the last election in 2008, voter turnout was 58.8% - almost one out of every two Canadian citizens didn't respect authority enough to even want to CHOOSE it
- "I have a problem with authority sometimes" – do YOU? How would you know? What's your relationships with your bosses been like? Your parents? Do you have any older friends? Do you have any close friends at all? Who do you have in your life who can tell you the truth? Who do you have in your life that you look up to – who is an "authority" in your life? Or who SHOULD be?
- But we pay the price when we fail to respect authority, don't we?

For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honour those who do right.

- Judges and police officers... those at the driver's licensing bureau... people who work for the CRA... bylaw officers...
- Pay your taxes – pay your fair share, and give some of your money away to the less fortunate, too – when you do your taxes, you discover what your priorities are, because the numbers don't lie
- Pay your debts – because if you don't, everyone else has to
- Obey the law – because otherwise, you get caught, you get a criminal record, your life changes for the worse – not to mention that you hurt other people by what you've done
- Respect for authority – illustration of police pulling me over a week ago this morning – you can talk big or not out of the situation, but when you are confronted with a police officer, the respect comes out
- Story in the Post of the guy who set the squad car on fire during the G20 – Nick Catenacci – "it's a lot harder than I thought" – changing his tune in the face of authority and in the need for help

It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king.

- First part is more about perspective, perhaps – but the second part is all action, all how you live – fear, respect, love – each relationship we have is some combination of those three
- God links the respect you show to the people and powers in your life to the level of "good advertising" that you give Him in the life you lead – this respect thing isn't just important for YOU, it's important for showing the people around you the path to life and truth and goodness

Q: Should we give everyone the same amount of respect? What are the “levels of respect”?

- a) Basic dignity of a human being
 - b) Age
 - c) Position or role
 - d) Ability to affect us with their choices
 - e) Reputation
 - f) Achievements/track record
 - g) Character
 - h) Proven themselves
 - i) Want to emulate – someone we know something about
- Respect is due each person at different levels, as the passage makes clear – the most clear expression of respect for God is not lip service, but worship – it is the correct response to his position, to who he is, to what he’s done and how he’s proven himself to the whole of humanity

Not just about you

- Respect – the key to a successful life – knowing how to treat other people, how to order your relationships – and a peaceful community, and a well-ordered society, and a strong nation
- When your relationships aren’t right, they’re a huge drag on you – the bitterness you hold on to in your heart feeds on your soul – the emotional toll of the drama is one thing, but then there’s the physical toll of not living in right relationships – fear of authority, fear of being caught
- And it takes humility to show proper respect – humility to put up with someone perhaps being wrong, humility to take the long view that God will work things out – humility to know what’s worth standing up to and what’s worth putting up with and growing through
- Not everyone has that strength of character – hence, the idea of advertising God at work in a life, because humility comes with his help

So what does it look like?

Well-ordered relationships:

- a) With those “under you” – dependent on you – children, staff, friends
 - b) With those “beside you” – spouse, friends, family, neighbours, church friends and peers
 - c) With those “above you” – boss, government, law enforcement, whatever
- Two equal and opposite errors when it comes to respect – not showing enough respect – can get you in to trouble, needlessly, with powerful people, people with power over you in life – and the other is showing too much respect, to those who don’t deserve it or warrant it – again, leads you astray and demeans you
 - God is worth all of our worship and respect, hands down – he’s the only one fully worthy and deserving

- In any relationship, we make decisions as to the amount of respect we'll show – whether we like the person or not, whether they remind us of someone from our past, whether we need something from them or want to try to get something from them, their age, their (relative) success in life, the ability they have to affect our life (for better or for worse),
- But God says, “respect people because that’s what I want you to do” – “because your life will be set in order” – “because your life will be so much easier and more fulfilling” – “because you will be able to do so much more good in the world”

Key Thought:

If you want to grow in God, make sure your relationships are right.

Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favouritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News... that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.” **Acts 10:34-36, NLT**

TAKE IT HOME:

**If you want to grow in God,
make sure your relationships are right.**

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who fear him and do what is right.
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Conclusion: God’s respect

- What did Jesus respect? Faith... especially faith he found in those who everyone else had written off – prostitutes... foreigners... the broken and the poor and the diseased – their faith surprised him and delighted him
- Their refusal to give up hoping and trusting in a God whose followers had not been kind to them was inspiring for him to see – they had such great respect for God
- Do you want God’s respect? Continue to trust him – or start trusting him
- Commit to a life of growth and service – commit to a life shared with him, even though there are times and there will be times where you won’t understand what’s going on , where you’ll be upset and you’ll wonder if He still cares – commit to trusting Him no matter what and encouraging others to do the same, and you’ll be a person who He is delighted to share a name with

Response: Your Love Is Strong (band)