

Revitalize: Conduct and Manners

As I write this it's 97 days until the 2016 Presidential election. I don't know about you, but I want to know what has happened to respect, politeness, manners and good conduct. You can definitely tell that neither candidate grew up in the south. There isn't a 'yes Sir' or a "no ma'am' ever spoken by either one of them! Seriously I rarely hear a kind or respectful word shared in the news bites or political ads. And often it's not just the presidential candidates; it's all of the candidates for all of the positions. It feels like the polite candidates get voted out of the tribe first!

As a Christian this really rubs me wrong. Truly, what are these people thinking? One attack ad highlights the rude comments of a candidate as children watch TV. Yes, his words and behaviors were disrespectful, but do we really need to keep playing it over and over again? I'm not sure which is worse; the initial comments or the constant nasty rehash by the opposition!

This little essay isn't about my political views; it's about how we have lost the proper way to conduct ourselves. I wrote about brotherly love among believers previously. This is about what the Bible says about how to conduct yourself with everyone around you.

First of all I want to go back to the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. There are nine things listed that reflect Christ in you and how you are living. If you look at them they are a list of ways you should conduct yourself. These are the basis of good manners. "The Fruit of the Spirit (yes, Spirit is capitalized) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." When you interact with someone don't you wish that all of these attributes would be in play? If this is true, then you need to express yourself with these attributes, because you are supposed to be growing the Fruit of the Spirit. If you want to be treated with kindness by other people, make sure you treat people with kindness. What does it cost you to hold a door for someone? How much energy do you expend saying 'thank you' to the clerk at the store check-out? Do you lose any status by speaking kindly to your waitress?

As a Christian your conduct should reflect your faith and it needs to be a consistent part of your life. Paul writes in Philippians 1:27, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." What? You mean I have to act like I'm at church all the time? The answer is...which is the real you and which is the fake you? Is your grumpy or pushy or cold-calculating self real? Is your Bible-quoting, praise-singing, sweet prayerful self the fake one? Who are you?

In Second Peter 3:11, Peter asks and answers the same question. "What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives." And to put it in perspective, Peter is talking about how we are to conduct ourselves as the end of the world approaches! Hello! I don't know if we are there or not in spite of the upcoming elections.

Now Paul reminds us that It is not a cloistered life we lead. We don't live in separate communities, as believers we never really have. So in First Timothy 3:7 he says, "He must also have a good reputation with outsiders (non-believers), so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's

trap". What do you have to do to have a good reputation? Well, you can be polite, honorable, and trustworthy along with having the Fruit of the Spirit. I like people like that.

Jesus really summed up how we should conduct ourselves in what has been called 'The Golden Rule'. It's part of the Sermon on the Mount teachings in the book of Matthew. "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12) Sounds pretty simple. If you don't like being cussed at, then you shouldn't cuss either. If you like people speaking kindly to you; then you need to start speaking kindly.

I wish our political candidates had spent some time reading the Golden Rule. All of their negativity toward each other is infections. Any time either one of them is on TV. we mute the sound at my house. I am tired of the he said-she said opponent bashing. As believers we need to rise above what we are seeing and remember to conduct ourselves *Worthy of the Gospel*. We need the highborn manners of the children of the King of Kings!

Nancy