

Displaying A Good Conscience: Politeness

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Politeness is more than outward manners. It reflects an inner goodness and benevolence that stems from a Christ-like heart. Cultures throughout history have emphasized etiquette, from the Greeks and Romans to the Chinese and Europeans.

Yet genuine politeness must extend beyond the rules derived from moral and spiritual integrity. In America, politeness and good manners have declined over recent decades, once being central to education and public behavior. Despite this, there remains renewed interest in restoring civility, as manners are essential to maintain respect, peace, and social harmony.

The life of Jesus Christ, God's Word in the flesh, reveals the true purpose of God's law that was not apparent in the written code. God demonstrates His law to us through personal examples and His commandments in action and instances of them being broken.

So He clearly explains the consequences of each. He knows that the examples are more impactful and clearer than words alone. A right example lends credibility and strength to the way of life we teach, and we have a duty to preach the gospel.

The daily lives of Christians often speak more powerfully to the unconverted than the preacher's eloquent words. We are representatives of God's government, ambassadors for Jesus Christ. And just as the prophets sometimes acted out the prophecies they declared, we should embody the establishment of God's government and values on this earth.

The example of someone obedient to God stands out, and it encourages and supports others who want to do what is right. It also strengthens those who need help to overcome challenges. We often underestimate the power of a positive godly example in encouraging others to make necessary changes.

We do not know what fruit might grow years later from a person's good example, and Peter said we should act in ways that make people respect our way of life. Here in I Peter 2, we will read verses 11 through 12. The caption of my Bible for this section says Living Before the World.

I Peter 2:11-12 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles [or the world], that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation [or the day of Christ's return].

This glorifies God. Others will eventually realize that only Christian living or Christ living in us allows us to be honest citizens, productive employees, and caring neighbors. They will realize that our way of life depends on God's love and help.

Please turn over to Ephesians 5, verse 8. Now our examples should demonstrate a better way of doing things and expose Satan's counterfeit world.

Ephesians 5:8-11 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

Treat your neighbors with God's love and joy. A positive person stands out in this negative society, and God's law living in your life should produce a joyful, positive outlook, or your beliefs are not really working for you, are they?

An example must be recognized. Christ said that we are the light of the world. Do not hide your belief in Christ as your Savior.

Do not be afraid to stand out from the world. Use the gifts God has given you to demonstrate His virtue. You never know when someone will notice your example and benefit from it.

We need to get comfortable with being seen as a light to the world. If we want to become leaders in the World Tomorrow, we must practice now. So people should know the evidence of God's Spirit within us: the power, the love, and the sound mind.

II Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

So Christ is our best example. Read the Gospel accounts and observe Christ's actions. Also, study the lives of the biblical figures. What does God commend in their lives? What does He condemn?

By your efforts in every small aspect, show people the benefits of living God's way of life.

Now a failing culture is often characterized by rudeness, marked by poor manners and a lack of consideration for others. The devaluation of politeness is typical of a debased society. And that is what we are seeing in this nation today. We live in a decaying age.

Children no longer respect their parents. Many are rude, impatient, and have no self-control.

Rudeness involves acting in a disrespectful, impolite, or offensive way. The opposite of rude includes politeness, courtesy, kindness, consideration, and respect.

Politeness involves and is intertwined with courteous language, kind empathy, considerate actions, and respectful behavior. When we look at courtesy, it involves kind behavior that considers the comfort and feelings of others. Another word involved in this, kindness, involves being considerate, caring, and empathetic toward others.

Another word that is intertwined in this is consideration. Consideration involves careful thought, deliberation, and discernment. And then respect, involving valuing others' feelings, rights and opinions, behaving accordingly.

All these words that I have just mentioned, all these concepts are all intertwined with whether we are being polite or not. They are all behind the scenes in that, so to speak. Often offenses, irritations, and frustrations in our interactions come from a lack of politeness. We could also call it poor etiquette or poor manners, or even rudeness.

Politeness demonstrates good manners through words and actions. Manners are polite ways of social behavior, and they are conduct that follows accepted social rules. Essentially manners refer to the ways of behaving and living.

We strive carefully to follow God's way of life, and that is what our spiritual growth is all about. And we strive to emulate Jesus Christ and to align with God's will.

Politeness is an element of etiquette, and it is part of a set of societal rules that help unite society. And although it is invisible like the wind, it has a substantial effect on society's well-being and as well as our relationships with one another.

So guided by the principles of politeness and common sense, these rules not only encourage social interaction, but they are also essential for maintaining composure and decorum.

Good manners are as important as laws because manners rely mainly on them. The law can occasionally influence us. However, manners are what irritate or soothe. They corrupt or purify, they elevate or degrade. They barbarize or refine through a steady, constant, and subtle influence like the air we breathe.

They are always there whether we know it or not, whether we are showing politeness or we are being rude. So they give our lives their full shape and color in one sense. Depending on their quality, they either support morals, strengthen them, or weaken them.

Laws and morals are in a way inseparable, and in many cases, the spirit of the law does involve the politeness aspect. Polite manners usually come from a kind heart, even if they are not refined. Many people pay little attention to what is considered proper etiquette in society.

There are valid reasons for most customs labeled as etiquette. These reasons include promoting peaceful social interaction, avoiding offense, and encouraging well-being and joy. So what is the value of politeness beyond this? Let us look at this simply in its external sense as a lack of politeness first.

Is politeness enough to reflect a good conscience from the heart? "A person who is nice to you, but rude to the waiter is not a nice person," a quote from Dave Barry.

The Greeks and Romans were very committed to etiquette, but it was not the kind that truly encouraged a moral society.

The Chinese have the strictest forms of etiquette, and they have hundreds of books that emphasize the importance of politeness. One of their writings on this subject is said to contain over 3,000 articles. In the past, customs such as salutations and visiting, eating, giving presents, introductions, writing letters, and the like were clearly defined and enforced like laws. No one was allowed to break them. And they have loosened some but still follow a stricter code of politeness than we do in this country. We have tended to view the Chinese as barbarians, but in reality, they are a much more polite nation than ours.

In Europe, good manners have been valued more highly than in the United States and have been more thoroughly taught in both the upper and lower classes. Children have been instructed that it is essential to show respect to their superiors and elders and to be kind and polite to those of a lower class. Like everywhere in the world, this has become much less important over the past few decades.

In America, politeness and etiquette are often passed down in families of inherited wealth and prestige. However, they are rarely taught to the general

public. Unlike today, over 70 years ago, our public schools focused as much on good manners as academics. Children were taught to bow to passing strangers, and now they are more likely to acknowledge them with profanity, crudeness, and disrespect.

Despite this abundance of bad manners, there is enough interest to make it worthwhile for Amazon.com to offer over 1,700 books on etiquette. I wonder how many people really read them or even get them, but it must be enough to sell books.

Sadly, good manners are not as prevalent in the United States. Lower officials are often irritable and abrupt, sometimes the leaders can be extremely uncivil. We are certainly witnessing that today, are we not? This nation's principles of freedom have not prevented the irresponsibility and impoliteness and discourtesy, and as a result, many citizens cast a shadow of disgrace upon this country.

I know decades ago, it was very well known that foreigners called American tourists "ugly Americans." It is because of the lack of propriety and politeness. And now many people who once thought the rules that govern a civil society were unnecessary and silly are calling for their return because good manners serve as a vital barrier against rudeness and poor behavior.

Please turn over to I Peter 3. The apostle Peter assumes that all Christians will exhibit good conduct. The world might accuse us of insincerity, hypocrisy, or dishonesty, or of being enemies of the state or committing terrible crimes, but eventually they will realize their injustice and be humiliated for it.

I Peter 3:15-17 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

So politeness is a key part of avoiding the impression of evil. We are warned not to cause ourselves to suffer because it is our own fault—whether it is through sin or foolishness or neglect or laziness. It is our duty to behave well even if God allows us to suffer.

Excellence in character equals righteousness, and one of the ways it manifests itself is as politeness. It does not come across as a rough, short-tempered, or sour attitude. It does not cause its people to break appropriate etiquette or simply good manners.

Now please turn over to Colossians 3, verse 12. Our key to politeness is benevolence, or a desire to make others happy. A faithful Christian should strive to be as gracious as possible, and we see little or no evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in bitter temperaments, none in rudeness, none in harshness, and none in arrogance.

There is a fake humility, a superficial politeness that holds no real value for a faithful Christian. Our politeness should be rooted in kindness. Paul presents a character building plan here to help us live for God each day. Here in Colossians 3, we are going to read verses 12 to 17. This is about the character of the new man.

Colossians 3:12-17 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

So Paul's strategy here is this. Number 1, imitate Christ's merciful, forgiving attitude. The key to forgiving others is to remember how much God has forgiven you.

Daniel 9:9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.

Is it hard for you to forgive someone who has slightly wronged you when God has greatly forgiven you? I should say that as a question. Recognizing God's endless love and forgiveness can motivate you to love and forgive others.

Now, the second one that Paul mentions here in these verses is: let God's love working through you guide your life. We should show God's love to others regarding the situation.

Of course you know what John 3:16 says.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

So we are called to be unified, living in perfect harmony as we submit to God's will. And while this does not eliminate all differences in opinion, we will lovingly work together despite our disagreements. Such love is not just a feeling, but a choice to meet others' needs.

Now Paul points out a third aspect here. And that is: let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

Reflecting God's love fosters peace between people and within the body of Christ. Do issues in your relationships with other Christians lead to open conflicts or to mutual silence? Are you willing to approach a spiritual brother or sister and apologize if you might have offended him or them? Think about how you can restore those relationships with love.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

The word rule originates from athletics here. Paul encourages us to let Christ's peace serve as the umpire in our hearts. Our hearts are the source of conflict because our feelings and desires clash, as well as our fears and hopes and our distrust and trust and our jealousy and love.

So how can we navigate these ongoing conflicts and live according to God's will? Paul explains that we must choose between conflicting elements by following the rule of peace, which option will produce peace in our hearts and in our relationships. And part of that choosing peace is choosing to be polite when others are not.

James 3:18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

The fourth aspect that Paul gives us here in these scriptures is: to always be thankful. Now you might think that these are very basic points, and they are, but they are ones that we easily forget. And so as a reminder, these are important.

Psalms 100:4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

So all our actions should be accompanied by thanksgiving. We should perform every duty not only in the name of Christ, but also with thankfulness for the strength and reason He provides. We should live for the privilege of acting in a way that honors Him and with a grateful remembrance of God's mercy in giving us such a Savior to be an example and guide to us.

The fifth aspect that Paul mentions is: keep God's Word freshly in you at all times.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

So God's Word will help us to have the right words and the politeness that we need in interacting with others. The use of the phrase the Word of God in Hebrews refers to the message of salvation. Still here, the Word is depicted as God's personal utterance, living, active, sharp, piercing, and discerning with eyes that reveal.

The Word of God then functions as God Himself, so that one's innermost thoughts and intentions are exposed, and this occurs frequently in our own lives.

The sixth aspect that Paul gives us here: live as Christ's representative. As members of God's church, we represent Christ at all times, wherever we go and with whatever we say.

II Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

So what impression do others get of Christ when they see you or talk with you?

I Corinthians 8:6 Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

The central role of Christ does not diminish the Father's importance, but instead brings Him glory.

He created us and He carries us in His arms and He provides what we need. He gives us good gifts. He offers us true bread. He disciplines those He loves, as a father disciplines his son whom he holds dear.

And that is why Proverbs 3, verse 12 says,

Proverbs 3:12 For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.

So politeness is an expression of the Golden Rule, and without it, life is a harsh environment. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you do that, then you will be polite in your interactions with people.

People often view good manners as an achievement, but they are actually a duty. Good manners are the customs recognized by society as being polite, pleasant, and respectful. Politeness eliminates rudeness and erases crudeness even from the most primal among us.

Many men believe that good manners are effeminate. They think that beastly rude bluntness is more manly than politeness. However, when people live close together in communities, the skill of living harmoniously becomes increasingly essential. The purpose of good manners is to reduce conflict and encourage smooth interactions. We should ensure that every part of our lives contributes to the well-being and happiness of those around us.

And we must curb excessive pride and eliminate harshness caused by selfishness in our discussions, and we must avoid conflicts and confusion. So not only is violating good manners inexcusable on moral grounds, but it is also sinful. Therefore, when parents, guardians, and teachers seek to encourage the young to develop good manners, these are not skills that can be optional or dismissed.

Turn over to I Peter 3, once again. Everyone has a duty to follow the rules of politeness. It shows goodwill and kindness.

It improves both the person who acts kindly and the happiness of those around him. It is a moral duty and should be part of a religious education.

The apostle Peter tells us that being of one mind requires compassion and love and tenderheartedness, and he even includes being courteous among these other virtues we must keep in mind.

I Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion one for another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.

Adam Clarke's commentary states that courteous comes from the Greek word *philophrones*, meaning be friendly minded, acquire and cultivate a friendly disposition, be kind and courteous. So God's way of life calls for us to be courteous, gentlemanly, ladylike in our treatment of others.

So the question remains, who is a gentleman? A real gentleman is never deliberately rude. No man can afford to break the unspoken rules of etiquette if he wants to be a Christian gentleman.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines a gentleman as, "A man whose conduct conforms to a high standard of propriety and correct behavior." So there is no doubt on what a gentleman is. A Christian gentleman then is a man whose conduct conforms to God's standard of righteousness, to God's way of life.

It is interesting that humans through trial and error have developed similar rules of etiquette and good manners and politeness to the principles of righteous living found in the Bible. People have discovered that certain manners make life with others much more pleasant, peaceful, and happy. Some have recognized that these logically discovered better ways are not only practical but also eternal and universal truths. However, most people refuse to acknowledge God as the source of these rules of conduct that help improve everyone's quality of life.

So a gentleman is anyone who is trustworthy, loyal, sincere, anyone who has a humane or friendly nature and is courteous to all, anyone who is honorable in himself and in his judgment of others, and who needs no law but his word to keep his commitments, meaning he has internalized God's law, and they are automatic to him.

Such a person is a gentleman, whether he wears fine clothes or is dressed in blue work clothes, whether his hands are soft and pale or rough and stained by hard work. The humblest man in the world who has the roughest work to do, yet if his heart is tender, pure, and true, can be in the strongest sense of the word, a gentleman.

In the common courtesies of civilized life, no falsehood is spoken because there is no intention to deceive, fitting in with the sermonette that we had on, "I was just joking." Polite language is always pleasing to the ear and has a calming effect on the heart, while harsh, unkind words have the opposite effect.

Children and animals recognize this truth as readily as adults do. A baby will cry at the sound of harsh language, and a horse, cow, dog, or cat is almost docile to kind words and caressing motions.

We can express simple truths politely; even the most malicious lies can be masked with false words. However, we cannot justify rude and uncouth manners by claiming a love of the truth.

Truth does not need to be harsh, ugly, or gloomy. Instead, it should be presented as kind, gentle, attractive, and pleasing, and even when presented as corrective or disciplinary, it can be softened with encouragement and a sense of hope. Good manners and a good conscience are always attractive when combined. Bad manners often result from poor morals.

No genuine sign of good manners exists without a strong moral basis. Good manners are a vital part of religion and civilization, and we are all duty bound to treat others with consideration, respect, and deference.

Please turn over to James 3, verse 13. In the epistle of James we see a code of etiquette and good manners inspired by the supreme authority of the universe. James wrote that a Christian's character is shown through conduct, such as serving and obeying God, controlling the tongue, remaining pure and undefiled before God by caring for the poor and the oppressed, and staying unstained by the world.

It involves having a gentleness that comes from wisdom, harvesting righteousness sown in peace, drawing near to God and experiencing Him drawing near to us in return. Also cleansing the hands and purifying the heart and practicing humility before God. So James describes wisdom from above as gentle, as well as peaceable, willing to yield full of mercy and good fruits.

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works or efforts or actions or statements are done in the meekness of wisdom.

James 3:17-18 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Peace is rare in this insensitive society, but not in the church. So we see here a list of the things that are behind us being polite to one another.

There is a common problem in worldly families that should not occur in families within the church. We might refer to this habit as fault finding. Married couples often show this behavior in front of their children, which can have serious consequences.

C.S. Lewis is credited with saying,

We hear a great deal about the rudeness of the rising generation. I am an oldster myself and might be expected to take the oldster's side, but in fact, I have been far more impressed by the bad manners of parents to children than by those of children to parents.

Wow, is that hard hitting.

A husband might make a sarcastic remark about or to his wife, but ultimately it will lessen his respect in the children's eyes more than it affects the mother. As a result, they often grow to respect and feel more affection for the mother than for the father, and this works both ways. A mother's comment against the father can do the same thing, but not as strongly.

Nothing is more inconsistent with politeness, more harmful or more contrary to courtesy than the constant habit of fault finding over trivial matters, especially when directed at a husband or wife regarding the home.

Some men rarely if ever sit down at the table without criticizing the dishes on their place setting or if one type of meat is served and they want a different one, and no matter what his wife provides, such a man will always want something else. Now if this man were accused of fault finding, he would indignantly deny it.

At the same time, he might be a kind, good, and faithful husband and father and only have accidentally fallen into this habit of not being satisfied with what has been provided. *Half of us habitually find fault. However, some of us sadly do so because of inherited self-centeredness.* That is, our fathers did it, and perhaps their fathers did it as well, continuing the cycle.

So many of our character flaws are family traits that have been passed down through generations. This is not an excuse for our actions, but an explanation of why some struggles are so hard to overcome. Constant complaining about the way others live their lives and serve us is a form of self-righteousness.

II Corinthians 10:12 For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Far more important than any simple statement of etiquette is the essential code of honor. Without strict adherence to this code, no man, no matter how polished, can be considered a gentleman. The honor of a gentleman demands the purity of his word and his principles, and he is the defender of the defenseless, the champion of justice, or he is not a gentleman.

A man who is not well off still does not sponge but pays his way to the best of his ability or at least offers to pay his fair share.

Please turn with me to Matthew 1, verse 18. A gentleman never takes advantage of a woman in a business dealing nor of the poor or the helpless.

A gentleman should never disrespect the mother of his children in front of them or anyone else. And regardless of who he is, rich or poor, the man who publicly tarnishes his wife's name tarnishes his own even more and shows that he is not, was not, and may never be a gentleman.

Joseph, Mary's husband, was a gentleman of the highest kind and he embodies a man of great integrity and strong character.

Matthew 1:18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man [and today we might call him a gentleman], and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." So all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

So Jesus' earthly stepfather Joseph was a true gentleman. And a great example to his sons, including Jesus, who was and is a gentleman Himself.

A gentleman does not lose control of his temper. In fact, his most significant advantage over others who impulsively reveal every emotion they feel, lies in his self-control, especially in difficult and dangerous situations. So a gentleman never takes advantage of another's helplessness or ignorance and assumes that no gentleman will take advantage of him.

A gentleman's manners are an essential part of him and are consistent whether he is in his bedroom or in public. Someone who shows good manners only in public is just a superficial gentleman, not a genuine one.

Who is a virtuous lady? (You have to give equal time.) In the gospel of Luke, Christ is depicted as elevating women beyond their traditional roles in the Jewish community to a position of respect and privilege. Notice the women who supported Him in His ministry. Mary, Joanna, Susanna, Mary Magdalene. Women were the last to leave the site of the crucifixion and the first to arrive at the tomb. The resurrected Christ appears first to a woman.

So in a practical sense, what type of woman follows Jesus Christ? What kind of woman is a good witness for God? A true lady is modest and humble. She pays careful attention to the rights and feelings of those she interacts with, whether they are wealthy or poor, and she behaves consistently both at home and in public.

Please turn with me once again to I Peter 3. A lady's instincts are similar to those of a gentleman. She is equally cautious about her debts and hesitant to take advantage, especially if her opponent is helpless or poor.

As an unhappy wife, her dignity requires that she never express disapproval of her husband, no matter how publicly he may slight or outrage her. If she has been so unhappy as to marry a man who is not a gentleman, drawing attention to his behavior would put her on his level.

So this principle is expressed in a spiritual application by the apostle Peter. He states that it is a matter of an attitude that originates from the heart. We will read verses 1 through 4. And you know this part is about submission to husbands.

I Peter 3:1-4 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the

heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

God's Word clearly states that men and women are both created in God's image and are equal. In marriage, each person has specific responsibilities. God will not save anyone He cannot rule.

Submission means to cooperate voluntarily with someone else out of love and respect for God and for that person. Ideally, submission is mutual.

Ephesians 5:21 Submitting to one another in the fear of God.

So even when it is one-sided, it can still serve as a powerful witness that leads another to conversion. Jesus Christ submitted to death so that we could be saved; we may sometimes need to submit to difficult circumstances so that others will see Christ in us.

Our submission never asks us to disobey God or do what our conscience forbids. One-sided submission requires great strength, and we could not do it without the power of God's Spirit. God tests our character to strengthen our faith and obedience.

Women train just as intensely and diligently in the character building process as men. Here in Proverbs 31, we are going to read verses 25 to 30, and this is part of the description of a virtuous lady.

Proverbs 31:25-30 Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, but you, you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

This is the key to who is a virtuous lady, a woman who fears the Lord. The virtuous woman, regardless of her physical beauty and feminine qualities is praised as the ideal because she fears the Lord. Fear here means reverence, respect, and obedience.

An effective homemaker or stay at home mom utilizes all the tools of good management. And she develops the qualities needed to lead cities and nations in the future just as much as anyone else does. When we understand the roles of wife and mother, we recognize some of the most essential opportunities for skill development and growth, but even while doing all of that, without love, it is pointless.

So under God's family plan, the significant characteristics of a mother are differentiated from those of a father. She is gentle while he is strong. She is merciful while he is just. She is a follower while he is the leader. Those are just generalities. In marriage, she is the one chosen, the one supported, and the one who bears the children and stays at home. Hers is the micro-management rule and his is the macro-management one.

The home, of course, is the main place for training and testing gentleness, good manners, politeness, and patience. And being a true lady involves being polite, respectful, and gracious in all interactions, and she treats everyone with kindness and consideration. She respects others time by being punctual for appointments and social events. A lady cultivates a generous mindset, offers sincere compliments, and consistently expresses gratitude. She respects others' privacy by being mindful of their personal space and avoiding prying into their affairs.

A lady uses respectful language, as it reflects her character, and she chooses her words carefully, avoiding language that is offensive or disrespectful. Her politeness includes using proper greetings, please and thank you, and demonstrating consideration for others' feelings and viewpoints. She is mindful of her own tone and volume to avoid coming across as rude or dismissive.

I Peter 3:10 For "he [or she] who would love life and see good days, let him [or her] refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit."

Now let us continue with family relationships at this point. When parents do not teach and train their children good manners in the form of politeness, it reflects poorly on them, gives the family a bad reputation, and damages relationships.

Frustrations with family and friends are common because of the intimacy and familiarity of these relationships. Family bickering and strife, a lack of courtesy and good manners would turn the loveliest Eden, so to speak, into a barren wasteland. So these relationships often require a great deal of patience as acts of courtesy and politeness mature.

Members of a family must constantly exchange kind acts. There is a rejoicing and mourning, hope and fear, smiles and tears together. A family needs to share sympathetic feelings with a proper regard for each one's emotions. Otherwise, the joys of the home will diminish significantly or the household will fall apart and lose interest.

Mutual respect is the foundation of genuine affection and although it might seem like a small issue within the family, whether this way of speaking is used or that, in reality, it is a very important matter!

Now I want to revisit an issue I mentioned earlier in the sermon. Please turn with me to Ephesians 5:33. Children are greatly influenced by the behavior of their father and mother, and the husband who speaks to his wife in a derogatory manner in their presence causes harm to both himself and her. Meanwhile, the wife is equally obliged to show her husband all due respect.

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

So every human being has an innate sense of what is right and wrong. Children are no exception to this rule.

Those of us who engage in unkind words toward others lower themselves more than we might realize in the eyes of those around us. In the next chapter in Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

A caring son will never forget the unkind and taunting words he has heard an irritable and poorly controlled father say to his dearly loved mother, nor will either daughters or sons forget similar breaches of politeness and good manners shown by their mother toward the father.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft or gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Have you ever tried arguing in a whisper? It is just as hard to argue with someone who insists on answering softly. On the other hand, raising your voice and using harsh words almost always provokes an angrier response. And to avoid provoking anger, try to promote peace using gentle words.

Please turn over to Deuteronomy 6, verse 4. The sermon is full of practical application and it is just revisiting these common sense issues that we often forget about.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

So God is telling us there, do not forget, always remember, every minute of every day.

A good father does not neglect the physical welfare of his children. God is a loving Father who has compassion on all His children.

Psalm 103:13-14 As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

We are fragile, but God's care is eternal. The good fathers we encounter in the Gospels look to Jesus for their children's needs, especially the physical ones.

Teaching children politeness requires consistency, patience, and respect. Parents can teach children respect by modeling a lifestyle that promotes empathy and kindness, consideration for others. Politeness grows when children experience and practice kindness through helping others, showing gratitude, and receiving positive recognition for considerate actions.

Making good manners enjoyable turns daily routines such as mealtime into learning experiences that are enjoyable. Instead of material rewards or criticism, parents should use specific praise and connect good behavior to satisfying the children's emotional needs. Help children see kindness as rewarding in itself.

They can show kindness between each other. That is a real challenge for our siblings but that is the place to start. Respect also develops through learning proper greetings, understanding social cues, and adjusting tone and behavior appropriately.

Mistakes become growth opportunities when parents guide children to recognize how their actions affect others and encourage them to offer sincere apologies. Children learn most from observing adults, and when parents model politeness, admit their own mistakes, and maintain consistency, they show that respect is a lifelong process.

So families can build lasting habits by focusing on one or two manners at a time, involving older siblings and holding family discussions about values. Progress requires encouragement and even minor improvements matter. Ultimately, raising respectful children means cultivating a home culture of empathy and kindness where every interaction, whether at home, at church, at school, or in public reinforces the idea that respect is not just a rule but a way of life.

GrammarStreet.com carried an article by Peterson on April 30th, 2025, titled "Opposite of Rude, A Complete Guide to Politeness and Respect in English." Then he says: Steps for everyone to practice politeness and respect. And here is 10 that he lists.

Use courteous language: Say "please," thank you," and "excuse me."

Listen actively: Show genuine interest when others speak.

Maintain appropriate body language: Smile, make eye contact, and avoid confrontational gestures.

Respect personal space and boundaries: Don't invade others' personal zones.

Show appreciation: Recognize others' efforts with kind words or gestures.

Offer help: When someone is in need, lend a hand willingly.

Be punctual: Arrive on time to show respect for others' schedules.

Apologize when necessary: Admit mistakes humbly without excuses.

Avoid interrupting: Allow others to finish their thoughts.

Respond thoughtfully: Think before you speak to avoid offending.

So politeness requires patience. We certainly understand that if we have had children before or if we have interacted with anyone else in the world.

We all need patience, and in the family circle it is one of the brightest virtues. A broad secular definition of patience is the ability, habit, or fact of enduring pains or trials calmly and without complaint.

Two things are involved. 1) being an unpleasant but common situation, and 2) being calm about it.

The apostle Paul wrote that patience is one of the fruits, byproducts, or results of God's Spirit. And it is not enough to act patiently. We must genuinely be patient. It is similar to gentleness in that it must come from within.

Now Christ's mercy towards Saul, renamed Paul, demonstrates His unlimited patience and compassion. And since sin is against God, it was a personal offense against Him for which Paul needed forgiveness. And God patiently waited for the right moment to approach Saul, and through this He revealed His love by showing patience.

Let us turn over to James 1, verse 2. According to the Word of God, patience typically represents calm, steady endurance sometimes associated with wisdom or humility. It is a hopeful form of persistence.

Patience requires vision—forethought. And as we are tested through trials involving others, patiently handling the situation according to God's instruction by extending mercy and forgiveness, we will develop righteous qualities within us.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

So if we handle this testing correctly, it will develop unwavering faithfulness.

The word patience is too passive a translation of the Greek word *hypomone* used here in verses 3 and 4. It is not just the ability to endure, it is the ability to turn challenges into greatness and glory.

And according to historical records of the centuries of persecution after Christ's death and resurrection, what amazed the world was that the martyrs did not die gloomily. Often they died singing.

Hypomone or patience is the quality that enables a person not only to endure hardships but to overcome them. Testing patience helps develop the strength to handle even greater challenges. And that is why good conduct and manners and gentleness and politeness require a lot of patience.

Having good manners or not is both a choice and a test. It might not be as serious as following God's commandments, but it still relates to producing the good fruit that we are told to do.

James says that this unwavering faithfulness, which gives us patience, ultimately leads us to three things.

1. Unshakeable faithfulness makes us perfect. That is *teleios* in the Greek, meaning perfect for a specific purpose. Complete in mental and moral character growth. We are perfect when we are spiritually healthy enough to be offered to God without any disqualifying spiritual flaws, and then we are spiritually mature and fully grown.

And the way that James uses the word perfect means unshakeable faithfulness resulting from testing, in the sense of being spiritually healthy for the duty we are born to do.

So how we approach every experience in life determines whether we are healthy or unhealthy for the role that God means us to fulfill in His Kingdom.

2. Unshakeable faithfulness makes us complete, and that Greek word there is *holokleros*, meaning complete in every way, that is, perfectly sound in body. Over time this unshakeable faithfulness removes the weakness and imperfections from our character.

Daily, it helps us overcome past sins and shed old blemishes, so we can replace them with new virtues, and this process continues until we are fully spiritually healthy and ready to serve God in His Kingdom.

3. Unshakeable faithfulness makes us deficient in nothing, meaning we are not lacking in the unwavering faith needed to overcome our spiritual enemies. Paul states:

Ephesians 6:16 Above all, take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

So we never give up on a struggle and we never fail to meet the standard God has set for us. And we do this with the help of God's Spirit and because Christ lives in every saint.

From a Christian perspective, politeness is not optional, but a moral and spiritual duty. And Scripture teaches that believers should demonstrate good conduct and kindness and humility, forgiveness, love, peace, gratitude, and faithfulness, qualities that mirror Christ's character.

True politeness is rooted in love and the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is not a superficial courtesy, but a genuine expression of the fruit of the Spirit, gentleness, patience, and self-control, and all the rest as well.

Good manners promote peace, reduce conflict, and express goodwill. They are a visible reflection of righteousness and a vital part of Christian witness. Ultimately, to be polite is to live as Christ's representative, gracious, respectful, and devoted to the happiness and dignity of others.

So may God grant you a peaceful home of kindness and politeness!