

## Perfect, Gentle Courtesy (Part 3)

Good Manners of Children and Kindly Affection

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Given 30-Sep-06; Sermon #795

In this third installment, on principles of etiquette and good manners, I would like to begin by introducing you to Redneck Etiquette, which some might find useful:

Driving etiquette dictates that you dim your headlights for approaching vehicles, even if the gun is loaded and the deer is in sight.

When sending your wife down the road with a gas can, it is impolite to ask her to bring back beer.

While ears need to be cleaned regularly, this is a job that should be done in private using one's OWN truck keys.

Well, as silly as that is, it helps to illustrate that, regardless of one's upbringing, there are certain things that are considered poor etiquette, bad manners, and impolite.

Since this sermon has to do with the practical application of common courtesies, I have asked many of you what infractions of proper etiquette and good manners have bothered you most in the church over the years. Some of you were dead serious, and some were more light-hearted, about your answers. Many of you have contributed to this list. It is an example (and it is not a list of gripes) of some of the things that people are personally concerned about, as far as etiquette, good manners and common courtesies between church members.

Several of you said it disgusts you when people (including children) go to the restroom and leave without washing their hands. Since the statement, "Cleanliness is next to godliness" is a true statement, what does that say about the person with human waste on his hands?

People who come to services with garlic breath really turn me off and I try to avoid them. It is very inconsiderate. One time, I remember that so many people came to services with garlic breath that the whole room reeked of it. I was embarrassed that our services smelled so awful.

You also offered the problem of people wearing perfume, scented lotions

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and cologne. Many of you are allergic to it. Remember these are common courtesies. It has been recommended that you do not wear cologne or perfume when attending a job interview.

I thought it was interesting that most of the negative comments involved the rearing of children. From over forty years' experience of attending God's church, I would say that is not a surprise, because there have always been complaints about the children. I hope to put things into perspective with these items.

You mentioned your concern about parents bringing a sick child to services, or even coming to church services sick themselves. I have heard people say, "Well, it is only a cold." Well, the rest of us do not want your cold. A cold is a sickness; and sicknesses must be quarantined according to biblical principles.

It really irritates you when children come up to their father or mother, while you are talking to them, and interrupt your conversation. That is rude! In some cases parents so cower to their children that they have become their gods. Whatever happened to "Children should be seen and not heard"? Parents really should be teaching their children better manners.

You complained about children going first in line before adults at potlucks. Out of respect and honor for their parents, and other adults, children should go last. That is the way the government of God works—directly opposite this evil society from which so many bad manners have come.

I will just interject here, Isaiah 3:4-5, 12 *"I will give children to be their princes, And babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; The child will be insolent toward the elder, And the base toward the honorable. ... As for My people, children are their oppressors ...."* Obviously, having children go last is opposite from what this society has directed people to do with their children.

You have complained to me about children running around knocking into adults before and after services. Children can, and should be, taught to be calm at Sabbath Services. Some parents are very diligent about teaching their children to be calm and respectful of others, especially on the Sabbath, while others interfere with the child rearing of diligent parents, by allowing their children to be unruly at Services.

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You told me some people in the church have destructive children. They are tolerated, but we cringe when they come to our house, because we know that they are going to damage or break something.

You have told me that you think it is a shame to see children of church members imitating violence in their interactions with other children at services.

You gave me that list. It is pretty hard hitting. It does express a point in how important it is to have common courtesies.

I would like to pick up on the last item, having to do with children imitating violence. Years ago, I went to a church member's house and was stabbed by a young child with a plastic sword as I walked in their front door. The child was imitating a movie or video game. Another time, several years ago, I was shot with a plastic arrow, from a toy bow, as I walked into a member's house.

What are the parents telling these children—to shoot the guests as they walk in the front door? Well, of course not! Nevertheless, what appallingly bad manners this displayed, even by the world's standards.

If they do not know that stabbing or shooting a guest when he walks in the front door is wrong now, will they know that it is wrong to do it when they are 20 years old? Most children apparently do understand that is wrong, but many also do not. Just look at the violence in this country. All parents will answer "yes" to the question that most children know what is right and wrong. With pride, they think their children are smarter than the others, and would never do such a horrible thing. But statistics show that some children grow up to be violent! So, the strong influence is there very early in life.

If children are not taught how to behave respectfully in the home, they certainly will not behave respectfully when they are outside the home, or on their own.

How much are those Christian families being affected by, and absorbing, the ways of the world? Well, apparently quite a bit. Parents are allowing their children to play with toy guns, swords and light sabers as they act out the violence exactly as they see it in the cartoons and movies.

Several years ago, at the Feast of Tabernacles, I had to stop one ten-year-old boy from brutally and ferociously stabbing another young boy, next to the stage after services. He

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had no weapon in his hand, but his imagination was all he needed to complete the scenario. They were acting out something they had seen repeatedly in a movie. The predatory boy had such a vicious look on his face; it was not hard to see that he was totally wrapped up in the moment.

I just cannot bring myself to call that "play acting"—there was just too much realism in it. This would not only have been very bad behavior in the home, but how much worse was it at church services? When I saw this happen, I immediately put a stop to it. And, then I felt utterly embarrassed and ashamed by such conduct at church services. I thought it was a horrible example to the rest of the church, especially to the new people.

I would like someone to explain to me, how allowing children to play with guns, knives, swords and bows and arrows presents a true witness of God's way of life. I just do not get the mentality!

**Isaiah 2:4** He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Where do they learn such things as war early in life? In homes, and then they continue to learn about war as they grow up. It is a command from God, through the prophet Isaiah, that nobody should learn war, and by implication nobody should teach it, especially in his own home, if he is a Christian.

All of these things that I just mentioned, are matters of how we live our lives. They demonstrate certain attitudes toward others, and manifest actions accordingly.

Children learn good manners, and appropriate behavior, when parents take the time to teach it, and to enforce the rules. Absentee parenting, and part-time parenting, produces part-time results. None of us are perfect parents. But if we have children, we should be full-time parents.

God's judgment on such neglect of the wonderful heritage of children given by God may not be as merciful as neglectful parents are hoping for. Judgment on may be harsher than we expect.

**Psalms 127:3** Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.

I remember a tongue in cheek quip that I read years ago: "I thought I was a great parent until I had children." I think all parents find that out very quickly.

Emily Post, in her book on etiquette, copyright 1922, in the chapter on "The Fundamentals of Good Behavior," under the subheading "Sons and Daughters," observes this:

We are always disgusted with sons and daughters who do not show a marked respect to their parents, elders, and superiors; and who do not scruple [i.e., hesitate] to contradict them, and set up their own opinions, with the utmost pertinacity, against those of their parents.

"Father" is a holy name, given to us directly from God, the Father of all mankind; and he who attains to that rank and stands as a father of the family, occupies a high position, and his children should recognize his sacred office and give him the name assigned to it.

The connection between the first four commandments and the fifth exists in the truth that all faith in God centers in the feeling that is appropriate from a son or daughter. While we are children, our parents stand between God and us in a way that no other beings can, before we are called into God's church.

**Exodus 20:12** "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

God minces no words with that command. It is point blank, it is short, and there is no doubt in what our responsibility as parents is. The principle of this precept forbids not only all harmful words and actions as well as rebelliousness, but commands the performance of all essential acts of kindness, respect, and obedience.

The Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," does not refer to our relationships with our fellow men, that is, our neighbors, but it refers to those who are the representatives of God. God must be served with honor and fear, and His representatives must also.

In a sense, this includes leaders of nations and communities, as well as, pastors and teachers (that is, founders, protectors, and promoters of our spiritual life to whom

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sometimes the name of father is given, while at other times fatherhood is attributed to them by their students being called sons and daughters). But, of course, Exodus 20:12 primarily refers to our biological parents.

Reverence towards parents, is placed on a similar level of importance with the observance of the Sabbath in Leviticus 19.

**Leviticus 19:3** Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LOORD your God.

**Leviticus 19:18** You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LOORD.

It is interesting that neighbors, our fellow men, are to be loved as Leviticus 19:18 states.

Parents, on the other hand, are to be honored and feared; reverence is to be shown to them with heart, mouth, and hand—in thought, word, and deed. From this honoring and respecting will come love.

All right government has grown out of the relationship of father and child, from which nations draw their moral weight and stability. The prosperity, and well-being, of a nation depends on the respect and admiration of children towards their parents. Without this essential element, nations degenerate and fall in confusion and violence. That is exactly what we see happening here in the United States.

This is why God instructed ancient Israel to put to death rebellious children.

**Exodus 21:15** "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. "

**Exodus 21:17** And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

**Deuteronomy 21:18-21** If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is

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stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

When that was done in ancient Israel, there was very little violence to be found, but when it was not done, it was a violent nation, just as we see our nation here today. Of course, that is referring to the civil law of Israel. Today, that stoning is a putting away, and it says that in verse 21. The purpose of putting him away is to put away the evil. Today, children are arrested and put into jail or parents have to cast them out of the house, if they are of a violent nature, or that there is no peace in the home. God minces no words when He talks about rebellious children.

Perhaps an unsung area of service to the entire church is the extra efforts at child training, which parents can make before and during the Feast of Tabernacles. No one appreciates undisciplined children, or those who insist on a trip to the facilities just after the opening prayer.

Older children passing notes, reading paperbacks, or other books than the Bible, during the sermon, is showing direct disrespect to God, whom we are worshipping. Distracting to others are the young children playing with noisy, disturbing toys.

This sometimes undermines the morale and attention of those there to focus on the vital messages that God's ministers have worked for long hours to prepare to give to the brethren on the weekly Sabbath, the Holy Days. This is especially true during the Feast of Tabernacles, when we are there for eight days learning about God's way of life, and worshipping Him.

Members of God's church have faithfully saved God's festival tithe, for an entire year, to be with each other to worship our Creator. To have children disrupt that, because of bad manners, inconsiderate actions and a lack of parental training cannot be pleasing to the Eternal Sovereign of the Universe, who is there and Whom we are worshipping.

In all fairness, we should understand that there are new members with children trying to learn the ropes, or teens not yet convinced that this way of life is for them. The Feast is an excellent time for us all to learn the big picture.

Many parents try very hard to train their children in the way that they should go. But children are not baptized members with the Holy Spirit to help them to be perfected.

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Even the best-trained children, with wonderful attitudes, make mistakes. Therefore, it is important for the rest of us to keep things in the right perspective. Do not expect children to be as perfect as you. You have the Holy Spirit, they do not. They have their parents! Their imperfections are quite often mirror images of their parents. Not always, but as any parent knows, bad habits come out.

This should in no way excuse rude and rebellious behavior. Nevertheless, our judgment of it must be just, gentle and loving. As people struggle to rear their children, we should not look at them in a critical way, but we should realize that they are trying, and the children are young. Children, with the proper training, will eventually come around to being good children, but it takes a lot of work on the parents' part. Anyone who has never had children cannot stand in judgment of people who do have children and are trying to rear them. You do not understand how hard it is to rear children until you have been there and done that.

Give people the benefit of the doubt. Nothing short-circuits our own joy like petty criticism and self-righteous nit picking. Learning to understand and tolerate other people is a requirement for successful community relationships. This is an essential character trait required in those called to government positions in the Kingdom of God.

Let us look more closely at this problem of poor manners, with regard to the use of alcohol. With the Feast of Tabernacles coming up shortly, this is a very timely subject.

Is the use of alcohol in our homes, social occasions or church activities beneficial or harmful?

Every social get together involving alcoholic drinks transmits a message. If you are the host, your expectations and messages will be telegraphed to others by how you handle and serve alcoholic beverages.

If you offer only alcoholic drinks with no food, you are saying alcohol is the total experience needed. If you top guests' drinks up as soon as they drink a little, or insist on keeping glasses full, you are saying alcohol is important to the success of the occasion.

Pushing drinks on people not in the mood for them, is saying liquor is a mandatory requirement to be part of the occasion. Having an easily accessible table, or bar, with nothing but all kinds of alcoholic drinks with which anyone can serve himself, any time he wants, is saying that this is essential to a good time.

The world is full of wrong attitudes and messages about drinking such as: A good time

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must include alcohol. A good time is going out to get wasted. A good time is falling down drunk and acting silly.

Young people, especially, seem to have a hard time realizing the balance in alcohol, and so it shows up at the Feast sometimes.

The children of church members, or newcomers to the church, learn the use of alcohol by example. Teaching from the ministry, guidance of more mature members of Gods church, and the instruction of parents, are all crucial; but telling is not as effective as showing. We have to, by example, show the younger ones and the new members what the proper use of alcohol is.

Experience has led organizers of social events, and writers of etiquette books, to some fundamental rules for affairs, where alcoholic drinks are served. Whether in our own home, or at some social event under your responsibility, we should keep these five points in mind. (Herbert Armstrong approved them for the 1981 Good News magazine).

Someone must have authority. There should be no social or formal occasion, where alcoholic drinks are served without some highly responsible person in charge. The person in charge should plan what drinks are to be made available, and should be in full control of the serving of alcoholic drinks.

The host should plan the right atmosphere. Social situations will vary. Moderation and good manners in all things are absolute rules. The setting should be conducive to moderation, education (not snobbishness) and socializing or fellowship. Any music should be at low or moderate levels—not too loud to the point of being uncomfortable or causing people to strain to talk. Drinks should be a sidelight, not the highlight, of an occasion.

The host should place a limit on the types of drinks offered. In more formal settings, often just one mixed drink or one wine is sufficient. Wine glasses should not be more than one-half or two-thirds full. One bottle of wine should be sufficient for six to eight people. A good host will set the tone of drinking by his example. One way of controlling excessive drinking is by keeping alcoholic beverages in a separate room or kitchen. The host replenishes from there.

The host should take into consideration that serving wine, or other drinks, could be a time of education for children or novice drinkers. Certain drinks are for before, during, or after a meal. If you are a host or hostess, serve

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food first, then a drink. Do not delay a dinner or try to fill guests with alcohol first. Make seating arrangements conducive to conversation.

The host should fulfill his responsibilities of etiquette. A good host will try to make sure everyone is made welcome, comfortable and served. He will never expect or force people to drink, or make an issue if a person does not want a drink. He will have nonalcoholic options available. If someone does overindulge, the host must take the responsibility to see that the person is served no more, and that someone drives or gets him home safely.

A good host will not serve drinks in the last hour of the evening. The focus should be on nonalcoholic drinks and snacks. Alcohol is a fast-acting drug. It should never be gulped. This is a sign of bad manners, or lack of control, and produces a sudden rise in alcohol level in the blood and brain.

Alcohol is also absorbed quickly on an empty stomach. Food in the stomach slows this down appreciably. Alcohol is absorbed quickly through the stomach walls and intestines. Carbonated mixers rush alcohol more quickly through capillaries of the stomach lining and intestines. These mixers give alcohol a wallop that quickly affects your self-control.

Most authorities say it is always best to drink in a well-lighted, relaxed setting—especially in your own home with a spouse or family, at a restaurant with friends or at an uplifting social occasion.

Many authorities warn that you should not learn to drink when you are alone, or when you are physically or emotionally upset. Alcohol should never be used for solace, to conquer loneliness, as a solution to personal problems, or to achieve a drugged effect. All of these uses can set one up to abuse alcohol. If you do not want a drink, you can build a lot of character by just gracefully saying, "No, thank you."

What is the effect of your drinking? Is it a positive witness of God's way of life, or a negative example of the world's way of dissipation and bad manners?

The apostle Paul was inspired to remind us,

**I Corinthians 6:20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

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With regard to habits and manners, it is clear that the earlier the conditioning, the stronger the influence. The implications of this conditioning process, as far as habits are concerned, are tremendous. In other words, it is easier to make a good habit in the first place than to break a bad one later.

Consider, for example, when this is applied to child rearing. It is harder to break bad manners that are learned early in life. Good manners should be taught starting at a young age—actually even starting shortly after birth. If you think that is too young you probably began your child rearing, in general, too late.

**Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)** Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. [Proper child rearing and good manners go hand in hand.]

How we learn, how we remember, how we perceive masculinity and femininity as we grow up—all these are matters of habit, and they are ingrained in us from earliest childhood. Even a syndrome of failure can be built into a child's psyche by unwitting, though perhaps well-meaning, parents. And after we grow up, unlearning bad manners instilled from childhood can be difficult. Many of us die with some of those things that were ingrained in us from childhood.

Parents need to reinforce good habits in their children: curiosity, gentleness, patience, willingness to accept responsibility, and eagerness to study. If a good family response is associated with the right action, the willingness in the child to perform the right action is strengthened, and the right action becomes habitual. This is our goal in righteousness and it is in a lesser sense in good manners.

Still, no small child can—or should—be completely conditioned like some preschool Pavlov's dog. Each child's own dependent thinking processes and experiences come into play. But, loving parents can steer a child away from developing habits that will harm him or her later.

If an inexperienced parent, for example, gives a child something to eat (or puts a bottle in the baby's mouth) every time the child cries, the child learns that food is the cure for problems. He begins to learn to extort what he wants with bad behavior. Later in life when the child experiences sadness, depression, pain or other unpleasant feeling, he will be prone to develop a harmful habit of overeating. Gluttons, by the very nature of the sin, have bad manners. In addition, how many adult extortionists learned this way of stealing when they were children?

If, on the other hand, a small child is taught by wise parents to put toys, clothes and dishes away in the proper place as soon as he is through using them, and is praised for doing so, the child will develop a habit of neatness. He will have a desire to take good care of other's possessions. In this way, a child begins to learn good manners and proper etiquette. It is a lifetime of work for the parent, and for the child in learning.

Good manners are taught in the home, and must be based on biblical principles. It requires diligence to properly instruct children. Our own example in proper manners goes far and has positive results; nevertheless, we are commanded to verbally instruct our children, and not just do it by example.

**Deuteronomy 11:19-23** You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. "And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, "that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. " For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him—"then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.

We see another reason why this nation is rapidly collapsing. It is because of the infiltration of foreigners and illegal aliens into this land, as well as the poor manners, the violence and the bad behavior of the children of this nation. Isaiah instructs us on how this is done.

**Isaiah 28:10** For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."

That is how we must teach those things to our children. Children can absorb only so much. To overwhelm them with a lot of rules and correction almost gets nowhere. We have to take one item, or a couple of items, at a time, especially with small children. We work on those, and explain the reasons why some behavior is bad and other behavior is good. Older children can handle learning many principles regarding right behavior.

Emily Post, in her book on Etiquette, in the chapter on The Fundamentals of Good Behavior, under the subheading Sons and Daughters observes:

Let brothers and sisters be taught to respect each other's rights; be as thoughtful to please, and as watchful to avoid anything which will perplex and annoy each other, as they would be to a young guest whom they desired to honor; and they will then learn a due observance of home etiquette and politeness.

Rude and rough boys are often allowed to treat their sisters in a very disagreeable, overbearing manner, and annoy them on every occasion, by breaking up their baby houses and destroying their playthings, and speaking very slightly of "the girls."

We consider such behavior as exceedingly reprehensible, and entirely at variance with all rules of good breeding.

Such boys will also make unkind and rude husbands; for by being permitted to exhibit and indulge such traits of character in their youth, they will be likely to indulge in them in their manhood, and pursue the same pleasing pastimes in their own families.

A sister is the best judge of a brother's abilities in playing the role of a good husband.

And a brother can estimate very fairly the position, which a sister would hold in a husband's home.

We delight in the freedom of childhood; in its merry and in the cheerfulness of youth, and its many delights and pleasures; but still more charming is the gentlemanly demeanor of brothers toward their sisters.

I just wanted to pick out something directly stated about teenagers, by Emily Post:

Some rude boys seem to pride themselves upon their exhibitions of low, vulgar tricks, antic gestures, foolish jests and odd, slangy expressions.

Such low, shameful vulgarity may excite the laughter of foolish persons, "for the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness"; but no one possessing common sense can see such behavior without disgust and abhorrence. And every boy that acts the buffoon puts himself on a level with a clown, and lowers

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himself in the estimation of the good and the wise.

Be polite, respectful and modest to all, and especially to your elders and superiors. There is nothing more disgusting than a youth who assumes an air of disrespect and self-importance towards his superiors, equals, or inferiors.

If we will study to introduce HOME ETIQUETTE into our families; to learn to be always courteous—always conciliatory, we should find that we had gained an immeasurable amount of happiness.

Negligence and carelessness with regard to the little amenities of life are the fruitful source of much domestic unhappiness. Good manners are to the family, what good morals are to society, their cement and their security.

One sure way to know how we are doing as a parent is to observe the good or bad manners of our children. I am not talking about whether they set the table properly, but whether they are thoughtful. This is the key word, in being courteous and having good manners, are we being thoughtful?

Do they help clear the table and do the dishes on their own? Do they offer to help with things at home? Are they polite to other adults?

We are told that "the heart is deceitful above all things," and so we must monitor the minds of our children. We have to read their hearts, and make appropriate modifications; but it must be done patiently, consistently and continuously.

We should be goal oriented with our children to help them become unselfish, courteous, honest and well-behaved individuals. We cannot expect our children to be perfect, but we must do our best to help them to live decent and respectable lives, and treat others as they want to be treated themselves.

Teaching them this is not possible if we are not working at overcoming our own problems, and developing good character ourselves, by learning to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Karen Santorum, wife of a Pennsylvania Senator, wrote a book called "Everyday Graces." She uses several different methods to express her concern. She employs allegories, metaphors and similes by some of the world's most well known authors.

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Although the book's purpose is to help parents teach their children common courtesies and manners, most parents and other adults would do well to apply the principles she includes in her book.

Mrs. Santorum uses a flower as an example to teach contentment and commitment to children.

Contentment and fulfilling one's purpose is a lesson we can learn from the pansy.

Once upon a time there was a king who had a beautiful garden. One day, he went there and found everything drooping. He asked why. The vine said it could not help because it was not tall and strong like the pine tree, so it saw no use in trying. The pine tree, in turn, could not produce tasty fruit like the apple tree, so why bother? The apple tree produced only small, simple flowers, unlike the beautiful flowers on roses that everyone loves.

Finally, the king came upon the pansy. It had avoided this trap. The king asked how. "I am happy because I know that when you planted the seed out of which I grew, you did not want a pine or an apple tree or a rose. You wanted a little pansy. So to please you, I am going to be the best pansy that I can be.

There are several lessons that we can learn from this story. The pansy is content, committed and not looking to covet, not regretting not having, not becoming miserable over its lot in life.

Mrs. Santorum points out, "a sweet-tempered child is the pansy of the home." A room full of people will cheer up when a pleasant-faced child comes into the room.

How does this reflect manners? There is a direct relationship between all forms of good manners and caring, consistent parenting. Children will only learn to refrain from whining and complaining if taught to serve others with courtesy.

Where would they learn to offer assistance to someone in need? Where would they learn that their responsibilities at home are their jobs?

Mrs. Santorum created a complete guide of appropriate behavior parents should teach their children. Subjects such as: good manners at home and school, what to say and not to say, how to behave at the dinner table, how to wash and dress, caring for the elderly,

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sick and disabled, getting along with others, good sportsmanship, what to do at various formal functions such as weddings, handling thank-you notes, and how to respect our country.

She basically presents common sense courtesies, while emphasizing that it is not the rules, as much as the underlying principles and attitudes that really matter. It is being considerate, thoughtful, helpful, generous and respectful, and it is being kindly affectionate.

We observe in the history of the church of God, over the last almost 2,000 years, a "special people"—the "people of God"—who are scattered throughout the world. We are one in Christ—unified in spirit—marked by the fruit of love and good conduct.

In examining the principles governing Christian conduct, we find that love is primary. However, if it is not sincere, it is not real love, but only pretense, then what good is it? Remember, that Paul paused in his summary of spiritual gifts to inject a chapter on love (I Corinthians 13). He also did this in Romans 12 following his synopsis of spiritual gifts.

Obviously, our conduct should be founded on love. If we fail to love others, we are exposed that our love for God is only professed, rather than true.

The apostle Paul called for God's church to love, but in case this is construed simply as an ideal, he put it in living context in Romans 12:10. This section of Romans 12 presupposes the dedicated life, which enables us to discover and demonstrate the will of God.

In Romans 12:9-13, our relationship with fellow Christians is described first, then in verses 14-21 our proper interaction with those who are outside of the church is mentioned. You will notice it says, "*Behave like a Christian to those inside the Church.*"

**Romans 12:9-13** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Love should be shown to people as a way of life, not just spoken of eloquently. Verse 10 pictures this effort of mind and body. It says, "*Be kindly affectionate to one another with*

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*brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another."*

It is interesting that the Greek word '*philostorgos*,' that Paul uses here, is translated '*kindly affectionate*.' The NIV suggests '*devoted*' as a translation. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. '*Philostorgos*' is the Greek word for family love, indicating tender affection, such as the type that exists between parents and children. It means that we, Christians, should have similar feelings toward each other, since we belong to the same family, and are united in the same principles, laws and interests.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words says, '*philostorgos*' indicates '*tenderly loving*.'

We must be 'family' affectionate to one another in brotherly love because we are a part of the 'family' of God. We should be in conformity to the family of God.

We have a duty to love one another, because we are spiritual brothers and sisters, because we are members of one family. We are not strangers to each other within God's Church, much less isolated units. We are spiritual siblings, because we have one spiritual Father. So it all gets right back again to the family and how it works, and whether the children are affectionate to the father, and whether the parents are affectionate to the children.

Part of our responsibility, in showing love and kind affection to others, requires that we give to each other priority in honor. More than half of the trouble that arises in a congregation, concerns people's rights, civil liberties, and pride. Maybe we have not been given the recognition we believe we should have received. Maybe we feel neglected, or shown no appreciation for our efforts. Maybe we feel taken for granted.

The mark of a true Christian has always been humility. It is not easy to give each other priority in honor. It is not easy to esteem others better than oneself. It is part of our human nature to want to get what we think we deserve. We are owed nothing—we have only duties.

Here, at the end of Romans 12:10, Paul says, "*in honor giving preference to one another*." To honor is to give recognition and show appreciation. This is not based on personal attractiveness, which is perceived, or usefulness, but rather on the fact that we have Christ in us.

The apostle Paul spoke of the affection of Christ, when he referred to his affection for the brethren in Philippi. The affection of Jesus Christ, in that context, refers to the

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feelings of love and tenderness believed to arise from the inward parts. Paul's affection had a divine origin. It was actually the indwelling Christ who loved through him.

Paul's allusion in Philippians 1:8 was to the sympathy, tenderness, and love of Christ. Paul regarded the brethren with the affection that Jesus had for them. Paul's affection was the "*affection of Christ*" in that all true Christians have the "*mind of Christ*" dwelling in them.

In Philippians 2:1-8, Paul admonishes the Philippian brethren to be like-minded and lowly minded, in conformity to the example of Jesus Christ, the great pattern of humility and love. There is an affectionate bond by which we are united to Christ. There is a common spirit that facilitates this unity to Christ and to the brethren.

**Philippians 2:1-8** If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is a description of being kindly affectionate to one another. And notice it requires humility. Paul says "*in lowliness of mind esteem others better than yourself.*"

Here are a few basic ways that we can be kindly affectionate to each other, and develop perfect gentle courtesy.

How do we do this with words?

Politeness—Gentle courtesy

Kind words (including greetings, conversations, and goodbyes)

Humble admonishment

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Sincere encouragement

Genuine praise

Heartfelt thankfulness

Conversation without sarcasm, humiliation or anger

How do we do it with actions?

Good manners—Interaction according to rules of conduct.

Golden rule—Doing to others, as we want others to do to us.

Helpfulness—Lending a helping hand.

Humility—Serving as a meek servant.

Courtesy—Holding doors, letting someone else go first.

Honoring—Esteeming others better than ourselves.

Consideration—Looking out for the interests of others.

The Church of God is the Kingdom in embryo. That means that we must be seen practicing the way of life that works—the way of cooperation, courtesy and consideration.

**Acts 20:35** I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

If the world is to be changed, it must start with us. Good manners are not merely conventional rules, but are founded upon caring reason and good sense.

These underlying principles, and attitudes, govern common sense courtesies, and find their strength in humility, and selflessness. Do these principles hold any weight in the

whole scheme of salvation and eternal life?

**Psalm 50:23** Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

Our conduct, for Christians, is righteousness. How we treat others, everything gets back to righteousness. How we live our lives, our way of life. Is it a righteous way of life, and is it from an attitude of love?

**Romans 2:7-10** eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

*"Patient continuance in doing good"* means that those who continue or persevere in good works, in a way that demonstrates their dedication to obey the Law of God, seek honor. It does not mean that those who perform one single act, but those who willfully live in such a way that they show that it is in their character to obey God. It is the uniform doctrine of the Bible that none will be saved, except those who persevere in a life of holiness.

No other conduct gives evidence of goodness than that which continues to manifest a heart of righteousness. Nor has God ever promised eternal life to people, unless they so persevere in a life of holiness that their character is evident in their settled and firm rule of action.

The terms *"doing good"* or *"well doing,"* here in Romans 2, indicate conduct that conforms to the Law of God; not merely external conduct, but conduct that comes from a heart attached to God and His way of life.

Paul writes that the elect of God must let the peace of God rule in our hearts. We know that the fruit of the Spirit is produced in peace. And so, he tells us to produce, or put on, this fruit. In Colossians 3, he lists virtues that are produced as the result of peace ruling in our hearts.

Remember, perfect, gentle courtesy must come from the heart.

**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, so 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 were 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.

The final thing that we are told to put on is caring love. All the virtues listed in Colossians 3:12 and 13 are evidence of love; but love is greater than any one of them—greater than all of them combined. Therefore, love is the bond of perfection.

Love, as the bond of perfection, produces excellence in character—manifested as perfect gentle courtesy! The elect of God are made up of holy gentlemen and ladies, and should have holy children as well.

**I Peter 1:13-18** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

Holiness, in verses 15 and 16, includes purity and moral integrity. Those called to be children of God are to be like Him. The basic idea of holiness, in the Bible, is that of separation from all that is sinful. The simplest explanation of holiness is loving conformity to God's commands and to Jesus Christ. Therefore we are told, in verse 15, to be holy in all our conduct.

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In II Peter 3:10-11, Peter asks what kind of character we will have when the day of the Lord suddenly comes and the earth burns up.

**II Peter 3:11** Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

Godly manners are about courtesy, politeness, etiquette, customs, correctness, respectability and a more excellent way of life within the church—within the Family of God and eventually within the Kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul was inspired to tell Titus, to instruct the brethren regarding treating people with courtesy. I began this three part series with Titus 3:1-2.

**Titus 3:1-2 (ESV)** Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

We have a responsibility to treat everyone, even those in the world, with perfect gentle courtesy.

This quality of '*courteous consideration*' is perfectly reflected in the life of Jesus Christ. Followers of Christ must always use appropriate conduct, remembering that Jesus did not revile when He was reviled, but spoke gently to those with whom He came in contact.

May we all treat one another with the affection of Christ, and show perfect courtesy toward all people.