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Respect

“Honor your father and mother”- which is the first commandment with a promise” Eph6:2

Throughout my early years, sitting in Church Sunday School, I remember clearly that the Bible teaches us to “Honour your father and mother....” Exo 20:12 Deut 5:16, Matt 15:4, Matt 19:19, Eph 6:2. This command appears a number of times in the Bible. God must have meant it important for us to abide to it. I understood the command is to love and respect our parents, be submissive to their authority, follow their leadership. To respect the elderly for their experiences and wisdom in life, is another teaching rooted in me. “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God.” Levi 19:23.

At home, brought up in Chinese culture and tradition, our parents consistently reinforced that we respect them, our grandparents, the aged, and anyone who is elder than usour older siblings and our kinsmen.

Last month I visited Jenny, a good friend living in Melbourne whom I have not seen for some years. We excitedly up-dated and exchanged news of the family and the kids. When I asked about her teenage son, Matthew, her face fell and she said, “He disagrees on almost everything with his Dad. Stephen always complains to me that our son does not respect him. In fact, he brought this issue up at the Parent Teacher Meeting at school last week. The Teacher, not only did not reassure Stephen that she will take up this issue with Matthew, but said, “Mr. Lee, you have to earn your respect, it does not come naturally or by force.”That comment really left Stephen fuming and both of us disgruntled, because in our Chinese traditional teaching, we are taught to respect our parents. The Bible also teaches that!”

Looking deep into Jenny’s eyes, I said calmly, “ Indeed, I can understand your displeasure or even exasperation, and totally agreed with you that in pleasing God, we are to abide to His command, regardless if the person earn our respect or not. But we have to examine ourselves as parents, whether we act and behave respectfully to people or even things around us. We cannot take for granted to dwell in the entitlement or the expectation that being a parent, or an elderly person, we should be respected in anticipation by the younger generation.

When we look at the moral definition of Respect in everyday term, it is:

- Look upon and deal with each person as a valued individual
- Showing consideration and regard for yourself, others and the world around you

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That is we are to treat each other fairly as valued individuals and with consideration, regardless of race, sex, age or ethnic group. And also protect the environment around us with due respect.

Moreover.....in to-day's education, children are given the opportunity to think differently, and may not necessarily follow traditions. They are encouraged to think with open mind and express openly, and logically. When they observe how parents 'disrespect' others or do not treat people or their own children as valued individuals, they may start to query, "Are my parents worthy of my respect? "Or older children may also query, "Do my parents earn my respect?"

At this point, Jenny nodded her head in agreement and said, "You know, I never thought of that. That is very convincing. I gather that Stephen and I have to be mindful and constantly be aware of demonstrating the character quality of Respect so that Matthew could model us, and also, make ourselves worthy of respect from others, including Matthew." I smiled, and patted Jenny in support.

The character quality of respect can be shown in many ways:

- Honour and respect God by worshipping Him, obeying His word, and walk humbly with Him
- Speak and act kindly, avoid insults, cruel comments and rude language
- Demonstrate recognition for people who do not share our belief, likes and dislikes
- Being courteous and considerate to family members and people around us
- Show respect to those in leadership, like employers, law enforcement officers, to the authorities they represent, by addressing them with correct titles
- Respect the time of others by keeping appointed time
- When speaking, pay attention to the Speaker, and letting him/her finish before we speak
- Follow the directives of my Employer, adhere to company rules, and treat co-workers with value

"Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God" Levi 19:32