

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
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Lesson 21: “Cultivate Christian Courtesy”
Scripture: 1 Peter 3:8

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand the importance of cultivating Christian courtesy in our church community.

Covenant Segment:

“We further engage ... to cultivate Christian courtesy.”

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, and be courteous..... (1 Peter 3:8: NKJV)

Overview

During these turbulent times instances of common courtesy are diminishing. There was a time when both Christians and non-Christians placed high value on displays of courtesy. People opened and held doors for one another, allowed the elderly to go first, and gave a seat to a female. Youth, everywhere, not just in the south, were taught to say “Mr. and Mrs., yes ma’am, no sir, please, and thank you”. They learned not to interrupt another or walk between two people engaged in conversation. All of these behaviors are marked by good manners and consideration of others, but could easily go forth from an insincere heart.

As followers of Christ, we are called to a greater standard. No longer are we to be governed by rituals and rules that could be routinely done with a detached mind but instead with an attitude rooted in the love that God has for all. We are instructed in 1 Peter 3:8: “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, and be courteous...” (NKJV). The word translated *courteous* is from the Greek word, meaning ‘friendly of mind’ [Strong’s]¹ and in some texts the word is translated *humble minded*. It pertains to having an attitude of humility.

The heart which God has touched is a heart of compassion where there is humility, kindness and concern. In Genesis 24, Nahor sought a wife for Abraham’s son Isaac. He looked for one who displayed more than common courtesy. When he asked Rebekah for a drink of water, she said “Drink my lord...I will draw water for thy camels, also. (Genesis 24:14-21). She displayed a kindness and humility that extended beyond what was routinely expected. Where the Spirit of God has worked on the hearts of individuals in Christ, God’s grace and mercy has channels to flow outward toward others. We cultivate Christian courtesy when we increase our own capacity for humility, kindness, love, and compassion and where each one regularly touches one. As a result, our homes, churches, and world would be better places for all reflecting more of the love and light of Jesus.

¹ Strong, James, The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers: 1984

Questions 1:

Is there a difference between common courtesy and Christian courtesy?

- Common courtesy focuses on a prescribed set of rules that govern our behavior. However, Christian courtesy is rooted in love and it should be displayed in our attitude, which calls us to live up to a higher standard.²
- Christian courtesy is the unequalled love God has for all human beings.³ We as a body of believers should extend that same love to one another.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

Summary:

Christian courtesy is rooted in the love of God for all of us. We, who have the privilege of a relationship with the Father because of Jesus’ sacrifice, know what it means to experience love that we did nothing to earn. This should give us a glimpse of the value that God places on each and every soul. When this truth comes into focus for us, it helps us recognize that each person we encounter has the potential of carrying the Spirit and love of God. Such a standard goes beyond man’s limited ideas of what’s socially and politically correct. God’s people ought to be reflectors of God’s standard.

Question 2:

Why does Christian courtesy today differ from the behavior of God’s chosen people during the time of Moses?

- The Law of Moses was given to establish spiritual and moral order among persons who had been slaves and, before that, nomads wandering in the desert. This law addressed the behavior of people; the Law of Moses required an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a limb for a limb, a life for a life.⁴
- This was law based on a principle of retributive justice: the threat of retribution was calculated to make a person pause and think before committing acts.⁵

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” Matthew 5:16,

Summary

During the time of Moses, God chose to help His people reflect his love through the Mosaic Law—the Ten Commandments. As God progressively revealed who He was to His people, He provided greater explanation (via the laws) of His own character. This was to guide the people in demonstrating His character to the world. But when Jesus came, God gave the Holy Spirit the work of molding and shaping our character so that we are a reflection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, God’s Spirit and character are to be reflected in every thought, word, and deed. Christian courtesy is no longer regulated by external laws that were based on retributive justice—now, we demonstrate the love that has been shown to us—it comes from “new hearts” within.

²Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant.** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002) 111

³Ibid, 111

⁴Ibid, 110

⁵Ibid, 111

Question 3:

What is the attitude that supports our behavior and Christian courtesy?

- Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount, how our mature attitude and practices as Christians would enable us to demonstrate Christian courtesy.
- Your obedience to the Word of God and commitment to your relationship with God enables you to demonstrate Christian courtesy.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all [who are] in the house. Matthew 5:14-15.

Summary

Jesus taught and modeled Christian courtesy throughout His ministry. After the multitude had been with Jesus three days, rather than send them on their way, He performed a miracle to feed them. [Matthew 16:32, Mark 8:1] When the disciples attempted to send the children away who sought prayer from Jesus, He said "Suffer the little children to come unto to me....." He laid hands on them as they desired. [Matthew 19: 13-14] Jesus was often ridiculed and mistreated, but He prayed and remained steadfast to His relationship with His Father. We extend Christian courtesy by treating others as those who are as precious as we are in God's sight. God places a high value on us through His love. The fact that through our lives we can reflect the very character and love of God demands an attitude of humility. God is extending to us an opportunity to be His servants. What a privilege to be an ambassador for God by living according to His precepts. Demonstrating Christian courtesy requires a close and strong connection with the Holy Spirit through prayer, regular intake of His Word, and a constant yielding to the Spirit. The challenge is not only to demonstrate Christian courtesy, but to do so consistently despite any circumstances we may encounter.

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

Personal Reflections for Your Thoughts:

1. **How do you respond to a church member's discourteous attitude or remarks to you?**

2. **What should you do?**

Where we are in the Church Covenant... *

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; ***to cultivate Christian courtesy***; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.