

## **RESPECT — A Faith Based Value at Work**

There is no respect for others without humility in one's self.

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Respect! What is this thing? We have heard stories of rappers and others being attacked and even killed for disrespecting someone. What was it that they did or didn't do that got them killed? What is that we or our co-workers at work do or don't do that gets us tagged as disrespectful, as lacking respect?

I think there are two streams of attitude that go into creating respect or disrespect. One is derived from the basic value of love, love for others. It is seeing and accepting others as fellow members of the family of man. We are all creatures of a loving God who does not make junk.

The second stream is that of humility, not abnegation of self but recognition that our place before God and in creation is no greater than that of any other person. At work it can be recognizing that others in the work place just might know more than we do about the work we do. They might be right and I might be wrong. I need to listen with an open mind to discover that wisdom and apply the knowledge of the other person.

I think respect begins with being polite and courteous and goes beyond that to be consistent in one's treatment of all people. How widely this can be noticed and spread was brought home to me by a comment my mother passed on to me. I was an assistant principal at an inner city high school with a racially mixed student body. My office was small with no separate space for my student assistants to wait for assignments, so they watched as I dealt with students who violated various school rules. A number of years later one student assistant was a teacher at a neighboring city's high school where my mother was working as a secretary. When the teacher found out that the secretary was my mother she commented that she had been impressed as a student that I treated all the students, black, Asian, and white, the same. While I was delighted to have my mother pass the comment on to me, it certainly emphasized to me that others, even young students, are always watching our actions, seeing and judging how we treat others.

One of the ways that I believe one respect for others is to listen to them, not necessarily agree with them, but listen and understand them—checking with them to be sure we understand what they mean. Another respectful action, I think, is to start conversations particularly with those we and/or the group have avoided. Bringing people into the conversation, asking their opinions and reflecting those opinions back to them shows care and respect for them.

In the workplace I think a particular sign of respect for co-workers is to help them by completing our own work on time, particularly when others are dependent on our completed work products.

On the other side of respect, the receiving end, I have been particularly delighted by people who praise me and/or thank me. Giving abundant, honest praise and abundant thanks seems an easy way to show respect, one that I have struggled with my whole life.

I don't think being respectful means never providing critical feedback. If we truly respect a person, we will give them the critical information that will enable them to improve themselves and their work. But the critical feedback must be honest, based on facts, and delivered with the recognition that it might be wrong.

Part of respect is respect for self. It seems to me that if I truly respect myself, I will not let the actions of my co-workers determine how I treat them. I choose to be respectful of them not because they respect me but because I respect myself and my God who created all of us.

## **RESPECT — A Faith Based Value at Work**

1. What does applying the faith-based value of respect in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of respect in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of respect in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based respect in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?