



# The Journey of Thomas

## Respect

By John J. Smid

Ephesians 5:21

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Rom. 14:3

*Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.*

The term “respect” can mean many different things for different people. Here are some definitions to help us enter into this subject on the same basis of understanding:

1. Esteem for or a sense of the worth or excellence of a person, a personal quality or ability, or something considered as a manifestation of a personal quality or ability: I have great respect for her judgment.
2. The condition of being esteemed or honored: to be held in respect.
3. To hold in esteem or honor: e.g.” I cannot respect someone who does that”.
4. To refrain from intruding upon or interfering with: to respect a person's investment or time.

I am going to use two definitions from the list above, number “2” and number “4”. God has given an intrinsic value to each of us. To respect what He has created without judgment is to agree with God’s assessment of value to His children.

I would also like to call attention to learning to value one another through maintaining commitments and paying attention to one another’s time and resources.

### **Esteeming Actual Value**

Respect is a practical way of esteeming actual value. When we were created, God spoke into our lives a value that is not negotiable no matter what the world says or does. Just because we were treated poorly or we’ve acted poorly this did not remove or change our actual value. By respecting others we are communicating to them that they are worth whatever God says they are without regard to what they’ve done or based upon the world’s perspective.

When I was on a television program with others that were outwardly contrary to my way of thinking I learned a valuable lesson about relating to them. One man in particular was very outspoken and at times rude and the audience was cruel towards him in return. I watched what was happening and found the words “*respect doesn’t have to agree*” enter my head.

I was reminded of Jesus going through extensive insults and abuse and yet there was a respect that came out of His life that was hard for me to understand. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”.

Rom. 14:1

*Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.*

When I consider others that I might be tempted to disrespect in my own mind, I must admit that I do not always know or understand their history, their life circumstances, or their heart. How do I know what may be underneath their opinions? Without listening to them, I won't.

I have all too often been mistaken in my outward assessment of where others are at. Maybe a person was appearing to be unconvinced of something I would deem immoral. It is entirely possible that they may be seeking for freedom and deliverance from a habit right at that time? Weak in their faith could mean they are on the same road I am, just at a different place along “their” road than I can see.

### **Respect for one another's choices**

I learned a valuable lesson in respect when our country went through a very challenging election in 2008. The country was divided over race, moral values, and certainly political concerns. How did each of us make a decision as to whom we were going to vote for? Each of us had our own reasons for our choice. I am certain that we could argue our own points that we would want others to agree with. Maybe we felt threatened by the differences that were at stake. But in the end, who is right? Well, from a Christian standpoint, God's word tells us that He selects the person of His divine choice no matter what my opinion might be.

I heard that a close friend of mine, who happens to be African American, was going to attend the inauguration of Barak Obama in Washington D.C. After the event I asked him how it went. His comment was heartening to hear. He said, “John, it was all worth it when I saw the tears on my dad's face”. So much went through my mind when I heard about his experience. I know nothing of how it feels to be African American in our country. I haven't walked the path that so many have. I absorbed someone else's experience in my heart through their words.

There are so many who had strong opinions about Obama vs. McCain. Their lives, their personal experiences, their values are something I need to respect. I would do well to listen to the roads they have travelled, the reasons for their convictions, and to hear their hearts regardless of which side they may have been on. My opinions are not any more important than anyone else's. Yes, there are absolutes in God's Word but there is also much room—as acknowledged in Romans 14:3—for personal freedom or conviction. Sometimes we just don't know the bigger picture. In the end people have their own perspectives and we must respect their right to think and act as they choose.

### **Learning from difference**

I found that I could learn a lot more about life if I would practice listening to others even if they disagreed with my position. Once I saw value in the differing opinions I saw them as food for thought and I began to learn. I heard someone once say that you learn from listening to your worst critic. I believe this can only be the case if you are willing to hear what they are saying with respect, and then you may find yourself growing in wisdom and in perspective.

Respecting one another has to do with pushing down our own pride and gaining a perspective for others that Christ may want us to see. Jesus loves everyone equally; He sees things in our lives and hears things in our hearts that we cannot always see and hear for ourselves. Respecting others will require us to see deeper into each other and look for what God sees.

### **Respect for authority**

I remember sitting at a picnic table with some friends of mine. I was upset about some things going on in our church and was speaking negatively about the way our pastor was running things. My friends challenged me by saying, “John, God has not made you the pastor”.

I quickly did an evaluation of the truth of their words. I didn’t sit in his chair, his office, nor did I see things from his perspective. I was not right to assume I fully understood his reasoning for the decisions he had made. God had called me to respect his position, not because it was greater than mine, but because I was called to submit to his perspective, and that I didn’t know it all.

This didn’t mean that I was less than, or “underneath” him. Rather, there was an intrinsic difference between my view and his. When Ephesians 5:21 says to “submit to one another”, scripture is saying that we are not above or below one another, rather just different. We are called to understand this truth, that we each have different positions, different perspective and to submit to one another is to embrace this reality and not to push for our way being the right way.

Heb. 13:17

*Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

Respecting the authority of difference around us will be a blessing to all of us.

### **Respect for Wives and Husbands**

One of the most interesting things I have experienced is the multifaceted interpretation of the biblical instruction for a wife to “submit” to her husband and for a husband to “love” his wife. To submit in this context is a willing subjection, not to be “lorded” over, rather to understand perspective. God has given the husband a mantle of understanding from his role in a marriage. God has also given the wife a mantle of perspective. A mutual submission here is an understanding of respect that will set us free! It is not designed to place us into bondage.

For a wife to willingly subject herself to her husband is to understand that he may see what she doesn’t. To choose to allow him to walk in the position of husband and to support what God has put into place by His design is to respect the role.

The husband on the other hand, is equally called to respect the role of “wife”. To grasp that God has also given her a viewpoint that is to be heard and embraced, not fought against and resisted as though there is a supreme authority in the husband.

Eph. 5:33

*Nevertheless, let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.*

### **Through Jesus' eyes**

An acquaintance of mine, Tim Miller, once said, "When you look into the mirror and begin to see more of Jesus, the mirror will turn into a window and you begin to see what He sees – hurting people needing our kindness and respect."

We must also see that there isn't a "pecking order" in the kingdom of God. There isn't a hierarchy, or someone who is bigger than or better than someone else. There are some who are more talented than others, or who have a different type of responsibility but this doesn't mean that others are less significant, less valuable or those who have all the answers.

When the man who is cleaning up the office speaks to the President of the company about how his job of cleaning would be made more efficient if some things were handled differently, it would behoove the president to listen because he isn't the one mopping the floors each night. The Janitor therefore is to be respected for his perspective. At the same time, the president may have knowledge about the budget that the janitor needs to hear and submit to as well.

### **Respect for time**

Another way to respect is to value one another's time. I have known some people who are habitually late for things. I am not talking about the situation where an unforeseen matter comes up that causes someone to be late, rather the person who just doesn't get up in time or dawdles around to make them late. Being on time is something that is really important if we are to respect one another. Being habitually late may communicate to a friend that "our" time is more important than "theirs" and therefore they can just sit at the restaurant and look at the menu until we arrive.

Have you made a commitment to do something for someone? Than do it out of respect. Have you made a promise that you would follow through with something? Than make it happen - out of respect.

### **Respect for yourself**

Always remember to respect yourself as well. Taking care of ourselves in our health, our rest and personal maintenance all affirms to us internally that we are worth respect. Sometimes we don't receive respect because we aren't communicating to others that we respect ourselves.

Developing healthy boundaries, healthy relationships, and allowing God to remove unhealthy patterns of behavior will all say that we respect ourselves. Saying no when we feel the need or conviction to do so will say "I am worth taking care of myself".

*Matt: 22:37-39*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

**Prayer for today:** Thank you Lord for creating me with a purpose and intent. Help me to see that in myself and in others today. When I encounter others today, open my eyes and heart to respect them, their experience, their life story, and their perspective. Help me to learn that everyone is worthy of respect, and even if they don't show it outwardly, you made them with a plan in mind. I need your heart to listen to them even when they aren't speaking. I am amazed at what a difference there would be if we could learn to respect one another. I might learn something today.

**Practical Application:** If you encounter a differing opinion today – stop and listen to what the other opinion is and ask yourself if you could learn something from it. If there is an opportunity to speak with this person, ask them why they believe the way they do and where their opinion comes from.

Write down your opinion and beside it write down the other perspective. Create a list with each one of pros and cons. Look to see if there is something you can change about your opinion from this exercise.

Write three feeling statements regarding the subject of Respect:

"I feel \_\_\_\_\_

About the challenge of diverse opinions or standards

Because \_\_\_\_\_"

"I feel \_\_\_\_\_

About authority in my life

Because \_\_\_\_\_"

"I feel \_\_\_\_\_

About a situation where my opinion is dramatically different from someone else's

Because \_\_\_\_\_"

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