

Respect

Respect others would help you getting their attention. As a servant of God, you need to respect all, no matter a person is old or young; sick or healthy; rich or poor; well educated or illiterate; man or a woman; saintly person or a sinful one. We should respect all no matter how good or bad the attitudes of the person or his/her past experience or background.

We respect people because of many reasons. First, we respect human beings because God created man in His image and after His likeness. Therefore, when we respect others, we show respect to the image of God they were created after. Second, we do that because God offered His Son sacrifice for their salvation. If God grant them this valuable sacrifice for their own sake, then I should offer at least a respect. Third, no matter how bad a person is, he or she still has an element of goodness deep inside.

Showing a person respect could awaken his or her good nature. Also, it will not put the person in a defense mode, which gives the person listening ears. Respect also means giving the person the freedom to choose without forcing. We proclaim the Gospel (The Good News), with the grace of God, in a convincing way, after that it is up to the person to accept or to refuse. Respect involves respect of the privacy of a person and his/her personal life. No matter how much we know about a person that we could use to convince him/her, but respect inclines us not to do so.

Respect includes avoid using words or behaviors that could offend the person or hurt his/her feelings, which required us to know about the culture, the background, and the norms, and also will guide us to pray for god's directions, because no matter how much we know we still don't know enough not to cause any hurt.

We see respect very clear in the evangelism of our Lord Jesus Christ. How respectful He talked to the Samaritan woman, or to Nicodemus, or how He welcome the children when everybody else decide to send them away, or even His respect to the thief on the cross or the rich youth.

Respect means we talk to people using not only respectful words, but also respectful manners. Respect also means respecting the person's privacy. We don't impose ourselves on others because of evangelism. Listen to the Master of evangelism, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*" (Rev 3:20). So, although He is the creator, the judge, and has the authority over all creation, He is so gentle and never enters without full acceptance of a person.

Respect means that I don't attack other's faith. No matter how ugly is a religion, I should not attack that religion, because a religion is like a mother to many, and nobody likes to hear that his/her mother is ugly. So, you can not win a person if you attack the person's religion. Instead, show the person the treasures we have in Christianity. Similarly, I'd say the same thing about other Christian denominations. To attract a person from another church, don't attack that church-although you may know enough to attack it. But quietly show how the Church started by the Lord and how she continued based on the delivered faith, worship, and mysteries. Then say that the Coptic Orthodox Church still keeping the same faith, worship, and mysteries without alteration until now. This way you invited the person to ask more questions and got him/her interested enough to know more about the church and even to ask to visit your church.

One of the great pillars in evangelism is St. Paul. Listen to his amazing sermon in Athens, "Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you'" (Acts 17:22, 23). Even though they were idol worshippers, he told them, "I perceive that in all things you are very religious." What a great respect!

Respect also means giving the person enough time to think about what you said. Usually we bite food, chew it, and then swallow it. We don't swallow immediately. So, you give people something to bite first, then give them sometime to chew. Don't rush people, but walk slowly. As a farmer, you put the seeds and water them not continually but periodically with amount of water that is based on the kind of the seeds.

Respect entails using a proper voice tone, especially when we talk to individuals. Higher voice tone may be needed when giving a sermon to

get people attention. A proper understood language is also important. If I respect a person, I don't talk to him/her using a different language (unless there is a translation), or using words or phrases that are beyond his or her comprehension. I need to speak to a person using a language that matches his/her background. For example, I will not talk to high school student using philosophical idiomatic expressions. Meanwhile, when I meet a gang member, I don't need to use gang's dirty words but rather I keep my respectful simple language.

Respect also entails respect of others' time. People are busy and we need to be sensitive as to how much time we take from them. When they ask for more time, we spend more, yet when they seem to be ready to go, we let them go easily.

Avoid giving long sermons to a person, instead use short sentences and ask questions. Again, read how Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman or Nicodemus or other individuals and you will see that He used questions and short passages, but never lengthy ones. He kept the lengthy passages to sermons.

I saw very respectful servants of God. One of the greatest was Pope Kyrillos VI. Here are some situations full of respect:

1- Although as a pope he met with high-ranked people, he also talked to every person visited him, including children. He talked to Sunday school students. I saw them leaving him very happily because the pope talked to them, a lesson of respect.

2- A poor lady used to bring him three boiled eggs every month and gave it to him in the church. He welcomed her with a big smile, took the eggs thankfully, and put them in his pocket. Each time the woman left with a great joy, feeling that she fed the pope. He never turned a person down.

3- When he met a group of people, some are Christians and others are Muslims. He gave the Christians the cross to kiss, but when a Muslim approached him, he put the cross on the other hand then shook the Muslim's hand with love. Muslims who met the pope were touched by what the pope did. They said that he respected them. Afterwards, some of them when they approached the pope while he was moving the cross to his other hand, they caught his hand and kissed the cross so many times.

4- When he visited President Nasser in his home, he gave his children golden necklace with the word 'GOD' engraved in it. Although he was a pope, and popes usually give crosses and people understand and accept, but respect lead him to give something else that showed respect to their religion.

5- One time he knew that a homeless wanted to talk to him. The pope left the church alone. Met the homeless and sat on the street with him for over an hour.