

# Courtesy

By: Morris D. Norman

Whatever happened to old fashioned courtesy? Oh, it's still around, but it is becoming rarer and rarer, even among those who call themselves the children of God. The English word means, "courtly politeness, graceful and considerate behavior toward others." Refined people are courteous. They have a respect for the rights, privileges and feelings of others. The crude and uneducated are discourteous. I refer not to formal education, but to be educated in ethics and morals; I refer to the education that refines the character and develops love and regard for mankind in general. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." No one is fully educated until he learns to be kind in feeling toward others and treats them with respect.

There are three words that are translated from the Greek into the English words courteously, courteous and the like in the King James. **1 Peter 3:8** has "be courteous" and means to be humble minded. The person who lacks courtesy is self-centered and arrogant. The Christian is to be lowly-minded, to condescend to others (**Rom. 12:16**), to consider others better than self, not looking to his own things but on the things of others (**Phil. 2:3,4**). There is no way that we can be discourteous while we are concentrating on serving others.

In **Acts 28:7** Paul was entertained "courteously" by the islanders where he was shipwrecked. Other versions use the word hospitality. The Greek word here means to have friendly thoughtfulness. Old fashioned hospitality is the force of it, to be thoughtful and friendly, even toward strangers. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unaware" (**Heb. 13:2**). Use hospitality one to another without grudging (**1 Pet. 4:7**).

The, third word is used of the treatment that the centurion afforded Paul as a prisoner when he treated Paul courteously, other versions say "kindly" (**Acts 27:3**). This Greek word is the one from\* which we get our English word "philanthropic," which means to have a "love for mankind, devotion to human welfare, good will to all men."

From these three words we get the concept of what the Christian's attitude ought to be toward all men, regardless of their own station in life and regardless of the station of others. Rudeness comes from being self-centered, out of a selfish spirit. Alexander Campbell said, "A selfish person is always impolite, ungentlemanly and unchristian in his manners. This is manifested even in the beggarly elements of indecency, from the tobacco chewer up to the verist gormandizer (vulgar glutton, MDN), or from him who smokes in your face to him who smites you on the face." To ignore the dignity and rights of others is an outrageous injury.

To whom should we be courteous? To everyone!! Wives and husbands should have the utmost courtesy toward each other. Parents should be courteous to their children; and children to their parents; subjects to rulers; rulers to subjects; brethren to their own brethren; brethren to those who are not their brethren.

How can a courteous saint ignore a visitor in the assembly? How can sisters and brothers not speak to one another (in Christ or in the flesh)? How can saints speak words that hurt to the quick? Even if we disagree in policy or doctrine, we cannot be discourteous and have the spirit of the Master.

How can we develop courteous people? Learn the will of the Lord and do it. Teach it to your

children, practice it before them. Show them the need of respect for others. Teach them to rise when a person older than they enters the room. Teach your sons how to treat ladies. Teach them how to speak kindly, to act kindly.



Refined people are truly educated people; refined people are truly courteous people. Christians are truly educated people for they have learned from the Master. Christians are always courteous!!!