

Teaching E-mail 72

Does The Deference Of Jesus Abide In You?

(July 30, 2013)

We've addressed the topic of deference many times over the years, and at the end of this lesson we cite some of these materials for further study. *Deference* is at the heart of Christ-like character development by the Spirit at work in you, right after *agape* love. Out of wonderful loving deference our Lord Jesus always yielded to the will of His Father, setting for us a pattern of love-motivated, obedient deference.

Now think about the people in your life who have rightful authority, and how you give deference to them:

- Deference is shown when you avoid choices and decisions that would offend them and hinder their counsel in your life (Hebrews 13:17).
- Deference causes you to fulfill your responsibilities to them with a willing heart rather than as a burden of obligation (2Timothy 1:13).
- Deference gives honor and esteem to those who have a right to receive it (1Corinthians 16:15-18).
- Deference interweaves a **humble heart** and **deep devotion** toward those our Lord has placed in authority over you, whether parents, husband, spiritual leader, or employer. Out of the deepest respect and regard for these individuals, you're proactive in serving their interests and concerns (Philippians 2:3).

When I [Mike] first became a follower of Jesus I was still on active duty in the Navy. Before putting my trust in the Lord I had read through the Bible twice. Besides recognizing what Jesus required of me in order to become His own, I also perceived a particular character quality He wanted in His own: **deference**.

Deference had been an integral part of the fabric of my military life. As I read Matthew chapter 8 I could *feel* the mutual respect which deference produced in Jesus's interaction with the centurion:

“‘Lord,’ he said, ‘my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.’ Jesus said to him, ‘I will go and heal him.’ The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have You come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, He was astonished and said to those following Him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great trust’” (Matthew 8:6-10).

Two men with such remarkable deference, the Son of God and a military officer, recognized the depth of deference in each other. Jesus commended the centurion while at the same time denouncing all of Israel because the soldier's deference revealed more faith than any of them had. I immediately understood the connection of **deference** and the depth of **trust** my Father wanted from me if I was going to love and serve Him.

From my own years of experience of giving and taking orders, especially in time of war when your life and that of others is at stake, you perceive how deeply ingrained the character quality of **humility** is in deference. You're ready to lay your life down for others if need be. The deference that's manifested by a military person's willingness to die for others flows from a heart that regards their

lives as more important than his or her own. The Bible reveals this response of humble self-sacrifice as the *standard* for anyone who claims to belong to Jesus.

Deference in the Bible is proactive:

- a readiness to *receive direction and follow through* to completion;
- a willingness to *lay down your own needs and interests* for the sake of others.

Our Lord Jesus combines the *humility of love* and the *proactiveness of deference* in this truth: “*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13). He also proclaims the blessing of trust-filled deference so HE can live through us: “*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*” (Matthew 10:39).

When you follow Jesus as your Lord, you find deference growing in you right next to *agape* love in your sanctification into Christ’s likeness. Out of these two virtues which evidence your obedient trust grow other character traits. Deference is at the core of both *trusting our Lord* and *sacrificing yourself* in loving service to Him. Paul uses Jesus as the model of deference entwined with humility:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:3-8).

This passage sums up love, humility and deference, the same attitudes as

Jesus. In deference our Lord became man, not to do His own will but rather to fulfill His Father’s will even to death. And only by deference can we do likewise through the grace of our Father.

“And [John] will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to children and disobedient ones to the understanding of the righteous—to make ready a people having been prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17, literal).

When you read all the instructions in the Bible on fatherhood, whether direct commands or examples of righteous dads and men, you realize they’re the primary source for imparting deference into children. John the Baptizer’s father, Zechariah, prophesied that his son would fulfill the words of Malachi (4:5,6). Turning fathers’ hearts to children and children to fathers is an age-old problem that each generation must work through. It won’t happen unless fathers first *fully turn their hearts* to children, whether their own or kids in general. Sadly, today’s dads spend little time in meaningful conversation with their offspring.

Fathers whose *hearts* manifest deference are the primary source of instilling deference in their children. Satan has recognized this from the beginning and continues to do everything he can to separate the influence of fathers from their children. Public education with its humanist agenda is determined to undermine the critical God-given relationship between fathers and children.

Our heavenly Father gave us the message of the Hebraic foundations. These foundations point back to the patriarch Abraham, whose heart was well aware of his need to impart the way of the Lord to

his own family: “For I have chosen [Abraham] so that **he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just**, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him” (Genesis 18:19).

Malachi 4:6 insists that “*the heart of the children [must turn] to the fathers.*” For children of any age to learn deference, their hearts must turn to the fathers. Note that the prophet speaks of “*turning the heart of fathers to **the** children, and children to **the** fathers.*” In the absence of a biological father God purposes that older men turn to help younger ones as children, and people who are younger turn to older men of wisdom as “fathers.”

Respecting an older man of wisdom is a great start to learning deference. If you have an older man in your life and treat him as a father by limiting your actions and attitudes so you don’t lose his respect, you’ll learn deference. But this life lesson must be discussed and established as a *father-child relationship*.

We realize that deference probably isn’t a part of your character. If you’re an adult, even a senior adult, you can acquire and grow in deference—but it will take intentional effort. Whether you’re a “father” or a “child,” Philippians 2:1-8 isn’t just a casual suggestion for you. You may want reread and discuss it until you can feel its worth deep inside you. The command to “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit*” pinpoints today’s idol of self-absorption, a brick wall which holds back both deference and humility.

If you don’t have sufficient motive to change, consider this. Only those who live in deference to our heavenly Father, who are willing to *do His will* no matter what it costs, are welcomed into heaven:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only he who does the will of My Father** Who is in heaven. **Many** will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you. Away from Me, you who practice lawlessness** [you lived contrary to the commands of God]!’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).

EVERY man who seeks to become more like Jesus needs other men in his life who can confront him to stop his unChrist-like attitudes and motives. Without these guys to confront him, a man becomes a tyrant in his own home. Are you a family man who lacks an accountability relationship with other men, whether spiritual leaders or mature brothers in Christ? Then you’ll **NEVER** develop the *loving servant-leadership role* our Father intends for you with your family.

Our Lord Jesus was a servant leader (Matthew 20:28). In other words, He *reached over* to help people; He never looked down on them or lording His position over them.

Men who have no deference either toward appropriate leaders regarding their spiritual growth or toward other men who walk alongside them in developing Christ-likeness are dominated by **pride** and/or **rebellion**. Because they refuse to defer to others, these men shouldn’t expect to receive deference from the people who should be giving it to them. If another man can’t give you appropriate correction and rebuke, you have no right to expect deference from your wife or children. In fact, when deference is

Anything BUT the Father & Jesus

Our Father and Jesus must be preeminent in the heart, soul, mind and strength of those who claim to belong to God. Every other relationship flows out of the quality of this priority. Strongholds (especially deceit) and their symptoms are a **barrier** that keeps Christians from pursuing the fullness of the relationship the Father and Jesus want with them. As a result the Spirit is blocked, and they don't develop the character virtues of *agape* love and the deference they need to do the Father's will. When the **barrier** is not removed, Christians may pursue religious gratification in self-serving home fellowship social gatherings, or in large congregations in which nothing is expected of them but their tithe. They're attracted to particular faith communities because the people are beset by the same strongholds and symptoms -- "they're just like me!" But these demonically-influenced religious systems act as a further **barrier** to wholeheartedly pursuing the will of our Father and growing in the nature of Jesus in *agape* love and deference.



We encourage you to check if you're free of strongholds and symptoms. See our one-page handout: **Do You Suffer The Effects Of Demonic Strongholds In Your Soul?**

<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/hebraicArticles/Spiritual_symptoms.pdf>

not given to you, it's a valid indicator that you haven't given appropriate deference yourself. Too many Christian men expect unquestioning "doormat deference" from their wives and children. As a result their marriage and home life become a contest of selfish wills!

The pressure today on many Christian wives as the ONLY potentially corrective source in their husband's life is often insurmountable. Over time they wear out and leave! A wife who has to work up courage to overcome her apprehension to confront a resistant husband tends to feel she's either not loved or underappreciated. A woman always departs with her heart before she departs with her feet!

A genuine indicator of a man who has learned deference from either his father or through people from whom he's willing to accept correction and rebuke is that his words can be trusted. People have confidence that he'll follow through on what he says. His word is his bond in all his relationships.

Another indicator of deference is that he seeks advice before he acts. He takes into consideration the morale of both those he

gives deference to and those his decision will affect. By seeking advice he is supporting the **dignity** of both those he respects and renders account to, and those who will be affected by his decision.

"A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones" (Proverbs 12:4).

"Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion" (Proverbs 11:22).

Women who have been wounded or let down by fathers and/or husbands often have a difficult time demonstrating deference. They may feel vulnerable in showing it, fearful that their husbands will tromp on their emotions. What compounds the problem is that when a wife withholds deference, her husband will withdraw into work, hobbies, TV, Internet, or even alcohol.

A woman who refuses to give her husband deference is a destructive influence in her home. She's modeling rebellion and insolence in her children. A younger woman needs an older, wiser woman (Titus 2:3,4) and/or a spiritual "father" in

order to develop **affectionate deference** toward her husband. This character quality nullifies a woman's carnal tendency to be **manipulative** and **controlling**.

Affectionate deference flows from the heart. A wife emotionally senses the weighty responsibility of her husband to instill God's commands and character in his family, and comes alongside to lovingly help him in this. Affectionate deference entails far more than just giving him advice. Rather, it's providing emotional support in the decision process *and* praying for the grace of our Lord for her husband to follow through in His will and design. Through affectionate deference she upholds her husband's dignity *and* displays her absolute trust in the sovereignty of God (1Peter 3:4-6).

We have several questions for you to consider with those who know you well.

- Name the people to whom you give authentic deference.
- Do you readily solicit the advice of others before you act?
- Do you make it easy for others to correct or rebuke you? How do you respond when they do?
- Do you hide behind a veneer of friendliness in order to avoid being confronted?
- In your relationship with your own parents, especially your father, did you give deference?
- If you're older, who is giving you deference now? Do you find tension with your own children? Do you avoid helping other younger people?

For further study:

- ***Pastoring By Elders***: Chapter 8, *Deference: The Character of Jesus In His Followers*.
- ***Demolishing Strongholds***: page 9 on the need for authority.
- ***Kingdom Living Today***: Lesson 23, *In Everything You Do, Do It To The Glory Of The Father*.
- ***Discussing How To Restore the Early Church***: Lesson 44, *Develop Deference At Home; Guide Your Child's Ambition*.