

IT Matters – Respect

7/5/26

2 Kings 4:8-37

Sunday AM

A few yrs ago, I went to a movie w/ a friend – and the theater was packed – and sitting right in front of us were (6) Jr. Highers w/ no supervision. As expected – they talked thru the previews – and then kept talking as the movie started. Of course, people around them asked them to be quiet, but they ignored them. Finally, I leaned forward and kindly asked them to be quiet or go to the lobby – and one of the ankle biters had the nerve to tell me to stay out of his business or he'd shut me up. Well... I have to be honest – my sanctification was tested. Thankfully, security arrived and escorted them out – likely saving me a night in jail for assault or something worse. Yet in the moment, I remember thinking what has happened to being respectful.

Sadly, this is where we are as a culture. Everyone wants respect, but fewer and fewer people seem willing to give it. We want to be heard, but we interrupt. We want grace, but we assume the worst. We want people to honor our time, opinions, and lives – yet we often fail to offer the same dignity in return.

What is respect? Respect is the courage to treat people as fellow image-bearers of God – even when they're different, disappointing, or difficult. It's the lived conviction everyone has value – that they're not a tool to be used, a label to be dismissed, or an obstacle to be removed, but someone to be treated w/ dignity.

TBS – respect begins w/ reverence for God. When we see God rightly, we'll begin to see people rightly b/c if every person is made in God's image, then no one is ordinary or disposable – and no one is an interruption.

C.S. Lewis said – ***There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.*** IOW – every person we meet carries eternal value. So, respect isn't just good manners – it's how reverence/respect for God is revealed in our lives – in how we treat people.

This is why the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman is so powerful. It's a story of profound respect that was thoughtful, practical, and dignified.

If your unfamiliar w/ the story let me quickly recap it for you. In Elisha's travels, he often stayed in Shunem, where a generous woman and her husband prepared a room for him. In gratitude, Elisha promised her a son – and God fulfilled that promise. Years later, the boy suddenly died, but instead of grieving, the woman set out to find Elisha b/c in faith she refused to give up hope. Elisha did return w/ her – and asked God to restore the boy's life. This woman not only showed great faith, but also great respect to Elisha.

So, as we walk thru her story today using the acrostic RESPECT – I want you to keep an idea in mind that is applicable for all of us today – ***respect makes room for people b/c grace has made room for us.***

I Respect **RECOGNIZES** God is at Work

Respect begins when we see people thru the lens of God's work rather than our personal advantage.

The story begins quietly. *One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food.*

Apparently, every time Elisha passed thru Shunem, this lady opened her table to him. His visits were so frequent that eventually she said to her husband – *I know this is a holy man of God* – and we need to honor him by taking care of him.

This is where respect begins. She saw what others may've missed – *she saw that he had value while looking for nothing in return.*

This is respect. *It's attentiveness w/out advantage.* It's when we value people for who they are under God, not for the leverage they might provide.

This matters in our homes, marriages, churches, and nation. We offer respect to one another not b/c we're all impressive, easy, and agreeable, but b/c Jesus died for us and b/c we all bear the image of God.

Thus – a child should be respected. A senior adult should be respected. A perfect stranger should be respected. Even someone w/ a differing nationality, skin color, or political affiliation should be respected – and yes, even a person who disagrees w/ you. Why? B/c respect doesn't mean everyone agrees; it means everyone gets dignity whether they deserve it or not.

II Respect **EXPRESSES** Honor Practically

Let us make a small room on the roof w/ walls and put there for him a bed, table, chair, and lamp. 4:10

The Shunammite woman didn't simply say, "I respect Elisha." *She showed it.* Maybe she appreciated that ministry is tiring, travel is difficult, and God's servants need time/space to rest. In either case, she said to her husband – *let's make him a room.*

Notice what she provided: a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. Nothing flashy/extravagant to draw attention to herself. Just practical provision. A bed for rest. A table for work. A chair for stillness. A lamp for light.

Her respect was intentional and purposeful. She asked, "*What would make his calling easier to carry?*" This is a beautiful question for each of us: *What would make someone else's burden easier?*

This is b/c respect is most powerful when it's practical. It notices. It makes room. It considers needs. It pays attention to details. It serves w/out needing applause.

In a world obsessed w/ being seen, the Shunammite woman shows us the beauty of seeing others.

Meaning – respect in **marriage** may look like listening w/out dismissing. In **parenting**, it looks like correcting w/out crushing. In **public**, it looks like assuming the best instead of spreading the worst.

Point – respect doesn't just feel something; it does something. It steps in to make life easier for others.

III Respect **SERVES** w/ No Strings Attached

What makes her service even more beautiful is that she served *w/ no strings attached.* She used what she had – her home, resources, influence, and hospitality – not to control, obligate, or gain leverage over Elisha, but to honor God's work in/thru him.

This is critical b/c sometimes what we call service is really a hidden agenda. We serve, but secretly we're looking and hoping for something in return.

The Shunammite woman was different. When Elisha wanted to bless her for her kindness, she put him off as to say – *I didn't do this to get something in return.*

This is respect w/out manipulation. She honored Elisha w/out using him. She served w/out bargaining.

What a word for us. Respect isn't showing kindness or generosity to gain leverage to control people or outcomes. It's treating others as we want to be treated.

And notice what happens next. B/c her service was genuine, Elisha's gratitude was genuine too. This often is how respect works. When people are honored and served w/out being used or manipulated, it creates a spirit of gratitude that looks for a way to give back.

So, Elisha asked his servant Gehazi – *What then is to be done for her?* And Gehazi said – *She has no son, and her husband is old.* Then Elisha prophesied – *At this time next year, you shall embrace a son.*

So – in response to her respect – it made room for Elisha's gratitude to become a doorway to blessing.

It's here the story turns. Years later, the blessing she never asked for became a source of deep pain. And this is where we discover another truth about respect – it's not only revealed in how we serve when life is good; but also in how we respond when life breaks our heart.

IV Respect **PRACTICES** Patience Under Pressure

For the Shunammite woman, her joy would become her pain as several yrs later – her son went to work w/ his dad when his head began to hurt – *My head, my head!* He was then carried to his mother, sat on her lap until noon, and then he died.

It's hard to imagine the grief of that moment. After all, this wasn't just a son – he was the promised son. This was the child she hadn't asked for but who was a gift from God. And now he is gone.

Yet watch what she does. She carried her son and laid him on the bed of Elisha – then shut the door and left.

TBS – her patience wasn't passivity. It was governed. She acted w/ purpose by not allowing her pain to turn into panic. Instead, she moved w/ purpose toward Elisha/God thru whom the promise had come. So, she set out to find the prophet to ask for his help b/c her faith and respect were facing Godward.

Point – respect is revealed not only in how we treat people when life is easy, but in how we respond when life is hard and breaks our heart.

SEE – Pain can make us careless w/ our words – and grief can make us reckless w/ blame. Disappointment can make us punish people who didn't cause the wound. But the Shunammite woman teaches us that dignity is still possible under pressure when our hope and trust are in God.

V Respect **ENGAGES** Truth w/out Contempt

When the Shunammite woman spoke w/ Elisha at Mt. Carmel, she was direct – *did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, 'Don't deceive me?'*

While painful – this was honest. And it was bold. Still, she didn't blame Elisha or accuse God of evil. She didn't turn her grief into cruelty. Instead, she spoke the truth plainly and refused to leave until Elisha came and God moved.

Some people think respect means silence – that if you are respectful, then you'll never confront, question, challenge, or name what hurts. But biblical respect is never dishonest. It speaks the truth w/out weaponizing it. So, the issue isn't whether we speak honestly. The issue is whether our honesty is soaked in contempt or seasoned with grace.

Ephesians 4:15 calls us to *speak the truth in love*. Proverbs says gracious words are like honey to the soul and health to the body. James says be *quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger*.

The Shunammite woman modeled this. She spoke the truth, but she never weaponized it. She was clear, but not cruel. Wounded, but not wicked w/ her words.

VI Respect **CREATES** Room for God to Work

While Elisha initially sent his staff w/ Gehazi, he did return to her house – went into the room and found the child dead on the bed. He then shut the door and began praying for God to do what only God can do – and stretching his body over the boy, God restored the child’s life and Elisha gave the boy back to his mother.

Don’t Miss – her respect made room for the prophet. It made room for grief. It made room for truth. And ultimately, respect made room for God to work. In fact, the same room she built in respect became the room where God displayed His resurrection power.

VII Respect **TREATS** Others w/ Grace Received

This is the **Golden Rule** – *doing unto others as we’d have it done to us* – speaking to others as we want to be spoken to. So, before we speak, post, reply, correct, complain, or confront – we need to ask – would I receive this as loving if the roles were reversed?

Truth – the power to live this way doesn’t come from manners alone. It comes from remembering grace.

The Shunammite woman teaches us that respect is formed before it’s required. She respected Elisha before she needed a miracle and before she received her blessing. She showed honor w/out asking for attention and carried grief w/out losing dignity.

This is the kind of respect our world needs, our homes need, and our church’s need. Yet this can only occur when we remember how God has treated us.

Max Lucado once shared of an unexpected upgraded from coach to first class after a long day of delays. As he sat there grateful, knowing he’d received a gift he hadn’t paid for. Nearby, another man treated the flight attendant w/ entitlement, barking orders as though everything was owed to him. Lucado said the difference was simple: one man was living like a recipient of grace; the other as an owner of entitlement.

This is what respect often comes down to. When grace is forgotten, respect evaporates. Yet, as followers of Jesus, we must always remember that the greatest upgrade of our lives didn’t occur at an airport counter – but on an old rugged cross.

At the cross, Jesus treated us w/ a dignity we didn’t deserve. And while He didn’t ignore our sin, neither did He discard us b/c of our sin. He told the truth about us and then gave His life for us. He bore our shame so we could be called sons/daughters of God.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness/love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not b/c of righteous things we had done, but b/c of his mercy. He saved us thru the washing of rebirth and renewal by the H.S., whom He poured out on us generously thru Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus

When we were dead in sin – ***God made us alive***. When we were guilty – ***God forgave us***. When we were outsiders – ***God brought us near***. When we had no room for Him – ***He made room for us***. When we were undeserving of respect – God made the ultimate move of respect – ***He gave His life to give us life***.

So, we don't respect others b/c they always deserve it. We respect others b/c we've received grace. In fact, when grace is remembered, honor always follows.

So, this week, ask the Lord to make you a person of respect. Ask Him to ¹help you see people as He sees them, ²serve them w/out needing applause, ³speak truth to them w/out contempt, ⁴listen to them before answering, ⁵forgiving them as you've been forgiven, and ⁶treating them w/ the dignity Jesus has shown you.

B/c respect isn't just good manners. Respect is gospel-shaped character that makes room for people because grace has made room for us. And it matters.