

REVERENCE

Reverence is not a subject that even those who claim to be Christians talk about much anymore. In the pursuit of "raucous worship," silence and meditation have fallen into disuse. Some are more interested in exciting dramas, clapping hands, and whooping it up (for the Lord, of course) than they are in thinking and reflecting about the Creator of the universe. Man has made God in his image and in this era is not really into: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psa. 46:10).

The Second College Edition of The American Heritage Dictionary defines reverence as "a feeling of profound awe and respect and often love" and later adds the idea of actions accompanying that "feeling." These elements comprise what is meant by reverence. When one thinks of the great power that God possesses, how is it possible not to stand in awe? Every amazing feat that man has ever done pales by comparison to what the Almighty has accomplished. We have but figured out now how to use parts of His creation for our own benefit; He put all of the resources here at the very beginning for us to use! We have not invented or discovered anything that He did not already know.

Respect should follow from a consideration of His power, but it also comes from a realization of His very nature. His love, benevolence, kindness, holiness, justice, mercy, and forgiveness could not have been invented by man. We know the importance of all these attributes, and we could not have invented anyone this perfect. God always does rightly. He does not act out of petty motives, as we do. We respect His fairness.

Love is due to God for Who He is and what He does. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). It is difficult not to love One who has given us this world over which to have dominion (Gen. 1:26-28), as well as "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). Our reverence for God ought to include all these essentials; certain actions are required, also.

Our reverence for God should be demonstrated in our worship, the preparation for which should begin the evening before by getting enough sleep. Some have been known to say, "I just can't get up in time," which merits the response, "What time are you going to sleep?" Certainly it is difficult to arise by 7:00 A.M. if the previous evening's activities lasted until 1:00 A.M.

One should arrive for worship—not in a fit of haste—with worldly concerns dominating one's thoughts, but with spiritual matters uppermost in one's mind. With adequate rest one should arrive on time, preferably a few minutes early (especially if teaching). Is it reverence to enter the class or assembly during a song, prayer, or during the teaching and preaching? Sometimes unusual circumstances arise (especially with small children), but in many congregations, people filter in consistently from one to twenty minutes late.

Prior to worship, should we not be thinking about the worship of God we will be offering Him? Fellowship with each other is important, but frequently we are so noisy that some do not hear anything until about the third announcement. We have plenty of time to visit when the assembly has been dismissed. Usually, there is a Bible text to ponder, and it would not hurt any of us to be seated a couple of minutes before we begin, to think and meditate.

Our reverence for God ought to be reflected in the way we treat one another, since we have all been made in His image and bought by the blood of Christ. It should also be displayed in our daily living. How can we speak and act like those in the world during the week and then expect that God will accept our "reverence" on the first day of the week?

We ought also to have times of daily reverence, in which we study and call on the name of our God in prayer. Always His name and that of Jesus should be profoundly respected. Reverence should be part of our Christian outlook.

—Gary Summers
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