

Love Is Not Rude

Some one has said, "An armed society is a polite society." What do you think they meant by that? Why are people polite—or not polite?

Discuss what the words polite, manners, courteous, rude, thoughtless, and meek mean.

Which of these words refer to characteristics you like to see in others? In yourself?

When is it alright to be rude? Considering the way people actually behave, when does it seem to be alright to be rude?

Consider: Titus 3:1 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men. (RSV)

Was Titus, an evangelist, supposed to teach people manners? Explain your thoughts.

What do good manners have to do with the Christian mission in this world?

What do good manners have to do with church gatherings, Bible studies, potlucks, etc?

How can we show courtesy and eschew rude behavior in Bible studies?

What are some things that love "is not" according to 1 Cor. 13:4-5?

Describe some things that might happen in Bible studies, fellowship activities, etc. that would seem rude or inappropriate—and therefore unloving.

Two of the outstanding character traits of Biblical heroes, including Jesus, are meekness and gentleness. What do these words mean?

Consider the contrast Paul seems to indicate in the following passages:

1 Cor 4:20-21 For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? (NRSV)

2 Cor 10:1 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away!-- (RSV)

What was Paul's usual approach to teaching and fellowship, and what might be his last resort/emergency approach?

What do these verses tell us about our own manners in teaching, etc?

1 Cor 13:1-7

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; ⁵ it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (RSV)

What is Paul referring to with the illustration of body parts as weaker, less honorable, and unpresentable? That is, what is the basis of the illustration, and what is the point?
(see 1 Cor. 12:22-25)

How should we apply this teaching to each other in real world situations?

So, how should we feel about each other?

Paul refers to honor and modesty in these verses. What do you think he's telling us to do?

Once again relating this to the idea of manners, what are we being taught about manners as Christians?

Each of the following passages encourages or commands Christians to develop attributes that will be reflected in good manners—gentleness, meekness, courtesy. Read and comment on each passage, and what it requires of us in public and private circumstances.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. (RSV)

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. (RSV)

Eph 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (RSV)

Col 3:12-13 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (RSV)

1 Tim 6:11 But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. (RSV)

2 Tim 2:24-25 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, (RSV)

1 Cor 12:22-25

²² On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, ²⁵ that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. (RSV)