



"Those who are wise will shine."

Daniel 12:3

"A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35

I was recently at a doctor's appointment when I saw a framed statement that, like a spark, ignited my interest: **"By their very existence people have the right to be treated with dignity, to be heard, to have their beliefs respected, and to participate in decisions which affect their lives."**

Wow, have truer words ever been spoken? If only that statement could be displayed in every home and office across the world. Who wouldn't benefit from hearing that piece of advice?

Better yet, imagine if we put those words into effect in our daily lives. No one would call us names like, "Stupid," "Dummy," or "You idiot!" No one would make crass judgements or make inappropriate comments based on sexual orientation, race, political affiliation, or socioeconomic status.

We wouldn't have to hear salesclerks abuse customers, or customers demean salesclerks, or witness one driver's rage against another. No longer would we need to witness or participate in things like marches or rallies. We would finally see value in all people and truly know and recognize the blessing of grace in our lives and in this world in which we live. We would be able to give each other the benefit of the doubt and extend courtesy. We would be guilty of drawing people in instead of closing them out. And by listening to each other, could you imagine the headway that could be made in all areas of life; the greater level of understanding that could be reached in and among us?

I'll bet we would even have fewer demonstrations, fights, arguments, or severed relationships if we really heard and valued each other. And what about our children? Wouldn't they be floored if we went out of our way to show them respect and to look – past their inexperience and tattoos – right into their hearts?

Well, I am a firm believer that change can and does happen and usually it happens one person at a time; one situation, one circumstance, one encounter. So that being said,, I want to encourage you to take some time to think about this statement within your own heart and the world in which you live and reside: **“By their very existence people have the right to be treated with dignity, to be heard, to have their beliefs respected, and to participate in decisions which affect their lives.”**

I hope that it stays with you as it has with me. But here’s the thing, this statement isn’t really anything new, nothing you haven’t heard time and time again from your Lord and Savior as he shared moments of teaching. It all boils down to respect – to our ability to love and accept each other as we are called to do. It’s grace at its best. It’s carrying out the life that we have been called to as believers and followers. It’s a reminder to all of us to love that completely and accept that honestly and truly.

So, one situation at a time – one person at a time – one encounter at a time, I want to encourage you to grab hold of that essence of respect and grace in your life. Make today an opportunity to live and to share the Christian message. Take the time and exert the energy to let all know just how powerful the love of Christ can be when it is shared in and among us.

Gracious God,

Keep us wise when it comes to sharing your grace and love with one another.

Help us in all that we do to speak words of respect and acceptance.

Help us to open our hearts that in turn our actions and efforts might help others to open their hearts too.

Amen