

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T... Find Out What It Means to Me!”

Laura Urista

As a singer and musician, I often think in terms of lyrics. My husband often likes to joke that most of our conversations include lyrics from my favorite songs. You may recall the 60s hit song made famous by Aretha Franklin “RESPECT,” from which I took the title of this article. In her song, we never really find out exactly what respect means to her, only that she needs “just a little bit, just a little bit.”

You may also recall these lyrics from another favorite song of the 60s: “What the world needs now is love, sweet love.” Please keep both of those lyrics in mind as we take a close look at Jesus’ words in John 13:34-35, from the Voice translation.

John 13:34-35 (The Voice):
“I give you a new command: Love each other deeply and fully. Remember the ways that I have loved you, and demonstrate your love for others in those same ways. Everyone will know you as My followers if you demonstrate your love to others.”

A NEW COMMAND

On the night before his beating, crucifixion and death, the disciples’ Master and Lord humbled himself like a common servant and washed their feet. And, like anyone who knows they are nearing the end of their days, Jesus gave his disciples some instructions about what he wanted them to do going

forward. He wanted to help comfort and prepare them for a new way of life following his death. Jesus gave his disciples (and all future Christ-followers by extension) a new command.

He gave us all a new command—a mandate. I especially like *the Voice* translation of this verse because it emphasizes loving others “**deeply and fully.**” Many versions say “*if you love one another*” but we understand that this love command of Christ goes far beyond simply loving our family, friends or other Christians in a superficial or obligatory way. “**Love each other deeply and fully.**”

Jesus is talking about loving our neighbors as ourselves, which we know from his parable of the

good Samaritan means showing love toward everyone. Even the people who don’t look like us, talk like us, think like us. Yes, even our enemies.

The Greek word used for “love” here is *agapao* (verb tense of the noun *agape*). It refers to the supernatural love of God, but that’s only part of the meaning. It also refers to the *love which arises from a keen sense of the value and worth* of the object of our love. When Jesus commanded his disciples (then and for all time) to love (*agapao*) one another, an intrinsic part of his command is to deeply appreciate the worth and value in others as BELOVED children of God, i.e., family.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

To deeply appreciate the worth



and value in others means to recognize their place as a child of God, and to respect them as our equal. It can be challenging to recognize the value and worth in others. Especially if we've been taught from a young age that we are somehow more special to God or more worthy, or "called" or "chosen." Of course, that's what Jews (the audience Jesus was speaking to in this passage) were brought up learning from the day they were born.

Sometimes it is even hard to see the value and worth in ourselves! Part of the problem is that we don't really believe, deep inside, that God loves or values us



and others. Or maybe we do believe God loves us, but we've been taught all our lives that we must keep doing good works to earn and keep God's love.

In the John 13:34, Jesus said *"Remember the ways I have loved you and demonstrate your love for others in those same ways."* When he said this to the disciples, he had just humbled himself to serve them by washing their feet. This must have been part of what Christ had in mind when he said the disciples should demonstrate that same type of love to others.

When we recognize and accept the true value of others, looking at them through the eyes of Jesus with his *agape* love, we will absolutely RESPECT them as a fellow child of God—a sister or

brother, or maybe at least our first cousin! In other words, we see them as a part of our tribe.

That means intentionally giving space for others to have the same opportunities and rights we enjoy. It means intentionally giving others space to have a different point of view about things and a chance to express their point of view. Yes, even if they look different from us, or speak differently, or have a different belief system, or have a different education or a different cultural background than us. Maybe **especially** because they are different from us, we need to give others that space.

SAY WHAT? LOVE YOUR ENEMIES?!

What was Jesus thinking when he commanded us to even have *agape* love for our enemies? That kind of respect and love doesn't come naturally to us humans. But we can make a choice to try to consistently choose to recognize, value and respect others. We can make it a daily habit to **ask** Jesus to live in us and love through us. Godly *agape* love flows through the Holy Spirit as we surrender to Jesus and allow him to live in us and love through us.

That's what the world needs now and that's what R-E-S-P-E-C-T means to me. □

Laura Urista is the Managing Editor for CWRm and PTM.

Biblical References to Jesus' Cross as a 'Sacrifice' (NRSV)

Mark 10:45 "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many."

John 1:29 "The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

Romans 3:23-25 "...since all have sinned and fall short the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith."

1 Corinthians 5:7 "Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed."

Ephesians 5:1-2 "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Hebrews 10:10 "And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."