

YOUTHFUL INDIFFERENCE

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Can you remember far enough back to recall how we respected our elders? I loved going to stay with my grandparents and I was trained to always do what they asked. I wanted to, anyway, because they loved me and I loved them. I was fortunate to live with my grandmother for the three years prior to getting married and a great bond was established.

Sally was recently in Tasmania, Australia, visiting her relatives. One day her cousin, Yvonne, had her 12 year-old grandson, Paul, over for the day. He played with his Iphone most of the time so was very detached. In the afternoon Yvonne asked Paul to wash her car. He wasn't interested! She said, "I'll give you \$10 if you'll do it." His answer was a straight no.

Now, I have a problem with both parts of this scenario. The first is that Paul was not willing to wash his grandmother's car upon request. The second is that his grandmother would offer him money to do it. Had Paul not been raised to respect elders? Would he not feel it an honor to do a job for his grandmother that would take him maybe 15 minutes to complete? I tried to get my head around this one. I bet he really enjoyed getting presents from his grandmother for his birthday and at Christmas. Even if there were no presents involved a child or grandchild should be raised to respect and care about their elders.

Where did this indifference come from? Paul was prepared to receive, but not to give. Maybe it started with his parents not giving him a set of chores to do as he was growing up and thought he was being abused by being asked to do anything. Then I thought that maybe Paul had been given money to do chores at home. He didn't jump to the task when offered more money than it would have taken to put the vehicle through a car washing facility, so that probably wasn't the case.

Was it because Paul was just at that age when his body was growing rapidly and he had little energy to give? Was it because he might have had a sad life or a difficult upbringing? I say no to all of that and say its simply 'lazy bum syndrome' and parental neglect. It seems like in many families today training and respect went out the back door. If we allow ourselves to be self-interested instead of being outwardly focused we will find that's exactly how our children will be. If we make it an option for our kids to do work free for an elderly person, then the child will take the easy way out. If we don't train our children to do pre-selected chores around home because we work as a team to keep our home clean and tidy, then we are not preparing them for real life.

Respect for each other, and particularly towards our elders, is plastered through scripture and is the basis of tribal expectations, even in developing

countries. We would never have dared to say no to an elder when I was growing up unless it was something that would put ourselves, or others, in danger. I imagine some readers saying, "Get real! This is the 21st Century!" I don't care what century we are in, a principle is a principle. It has always worked and will always work.

By Yvonne offering money for Paul to wash her car she was trying to appease him, but it didn't work. It doesn't work because it is a respect issue and Paul didn't have that character trait, obviously. I wonder what Paul would have felt when it came to a mealtime and Yvonne sat down and had her meal in front of him, because she didn't respect him enough to prepare him some food? What would you do in this situation?

Firstly, I would have had a serious talk with Paul. Grandparents have an amazing opportunity to speak into their grandchildren's lives and to pray earnestly for them right through their development. I would also have mentioned the incident to his parents so that they could address the issue. In a day when respect is sadly lacking it is still our responsibility as parents and grandparents to raise our children with Christian principles that put others before our selves.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.