

# The LOST ART OF RESPECT

— by Peter Hammond

Today's child-centred parenting all too often fails to teach children respect. Seldom do we see respect for God, His Word and His worship; respect for people and for their property; and also respect for God's creation. Ultimately lack of respect comes from lack of love for God and for our neighbour. Today in so many ways we see cruel disrespect for elderly parents who are frequently abandoned in old age homes and neglected. "Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old." Prov 23:22

### Nothing in nature is equal

Egalitarianism (the enforced equality of everyone) is humanism. It says that everybody is equal. But everybody is not equal. Zebras are not equal to lions. Pigeons are not equal to eagles. We should honour our father and our mother and we should respect our elders - we are not equal to them, even though most teenagers think they are. "The eye that mocks

In today's modern world, respect and chivalry are antiquated concepts, even amongst Christians.

his father and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out and the young eagles will eat it." Prov 30:17.

Winston Churchill once declared: "Socialism could only work in Heaven, where it is not needed, or in hell, where they already have it." There is nothing egalitarian about the Bible. Equality before the Law is commanded (Num 15:15-16). However, no one can enforce equality of effort, or equality of results. Nobody on earth is equal. Not in height, not in size, nor in appearances. People are not equal in intelligence, talents, motivation, dependability, competence, trustworthiness, productivity, devotion, dedication, capabilities or achievements.

### The Law of God commands respect

The Ten Commandments effectively forbids egalitarianism. We are not to covet what others have.

"You shall rise before the grey haired and honour the presence of an old man, and fear your God; I am the Lord." Lev 19:32

We are not to steal other people's property, nor are we to dishonour our parents or other superiors. Neither may we lie, gossip or slander others. This is always a temptation towards those who are 'better' than us. Instead of an attitude of entitlement we need to re-discover the lost art of respect.

We are commanded: "Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." Heb 13:17

### Examples of men honouring women

On 26 February, 1852, one of the worst naval disasters occurred off the coast of South Africa. HMS Birkenhead, an iron paddlewheel frigate of 1 400 tonnes, struck a rockshelf off Danger Point, near

Man's persistent quest for equality has led us into a culture of disrespect and rebellion.

present-day Hermanus, and began to sink rapidly. The Birkenhead was carrying Regiments, which had distinguished themselves in conflicts from the Napoleonic Wars through to the Crimean War. That night the Birkenhead had 638 people on board, including 138 naval officers and crew and 480 army officers and enlisted men under the command of Lt. Col. Alexander Seton. Also on board were the wives and children of those members of the military who were married. The order went out: "Women and children first!"

As the women and children were rowed away to safety, the horses were cut loose so that they could attempt to swim the over 3km to shore. Captain Robert Salmond gave the order to "Abandon Ship!" adding "Every man for himself!" At this Col. Seton shouted: "Stand fast!" He instructed the men to remain in their ranks and go down with the ship. Should they attempt to make for the lifeboats »



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they would overload these fragile vessels, swamping the lifeboats and endangering the lives of the women and children. The 480 officers and men of the 74th Regiment stood in their ranks on the sloping deck of the doomed Birkenhead as their pipe band played. Singing Christian Hymns, these Scottish and Irish stalwarts went down with the Birkenhead into the shark-infested waters of the ocean. No man attempted to swim to the heavily laden life boats, as they realised that any attempt to do so could de-stabilise and swamp these boats and risk the lives of the women and children. The Birkenhead sank within 20 minutes. Not a woman or child was lost. 444 men drowned. 193 people, including all the women and children survived.

## Laying down one's life

The Maritime disaster of the Birkenhead popularised the protocol of: Women and children first. This became standard evacuation procedure. When the Titanic sank 15 April 1912, 1 503 passengers and crew drowned. 703 were saved. For every woman who died on the Titanic, 13 men died. Some of the richest men in the world gave up their seats to women and children of all classes and went down with the ship.

*"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."* John 15:13

## "Survival of the fittest"

The consequences of modern egalitarianism have been seen in recent Maritime disasters. Over 4 000 people, mostly women and children died in the horrific ferry sinking in the Philippines in 1987. Unlike the Titanic,

most of the survivors of this Philippines ferry disaster were men! Similarly, when the ferry Estonia sank in the Baltic Sea most of the survivors were men. When questioned why they hadn't helped the women and children to be saved, survivors were quoted as saying: "Hey, it's survival of the fittest!"; "It was every man for himself!" and "If women



want equality so much, they've got it!"

Again in 1996, a boat sank off the shores of Indonesia. The ship was inadequately equipped with lifeboats, and men received preferential lifeboat treatment ahead of women and children. The Islamic culture of Indonesia prevailed and women died that men should live.

The Bible is clear: *"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and*

*gave Himself up for her..."* Eph 5:25. *"To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps."* 1 Pet 2:21

## The Christian civilisation

For nearly 2 000 years this principle has guided Christian civilisation. The groom dies for the bride. The strong suffers for the weak. The highest expression of love is to give your life for another. Women and children should be respected and protected. Scripture calls on the younger to respect the older. The men to protect the women. The stronger to sacrifice for the weaker.

The leaders are to serve the best interests of those under them. No doubt this message is too uncomfortable for the beginning of the 21st Century when abortion targets pre-born babies, pornography exploits women for profit, when cowardice is the norm.

Today Christian men are still called to be true to the Birkenhead Drill: to be courageous, chivalrous, self-disciplined and self-sacrificing. Teenagers and young people need to remember God's Law and not man's law. Respect should be a hallmark of every Christian. *"Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity."* 1 Tim 5:1-2 ■

DR PETER HAMMOND is an author and conference speaker. Tel: 021 689 4480 or [www.frontline.org.za](http://www.frontline.org.za)