

# Respect and reverence

## What Does This Mean?

Dismissing people and things with a “So what?” shows a lack of respect for God’s world and its people. It is an attitude that refuses to be impressed by the splendor and complexity of humanity and creation and never rises above the mundane to marvel and wonder. Such an attitude can lead to a carelessness about both the planet and its people. In contrast, an attitude of respect and wonder can lead to praise of God and care for creation (Isaiah 12:5).

*If a man loses his reverence for any part of life, he will lose his reverence for all of life. Albert Schweitzer*

The Bible locates human worth in being made by and mattering to God. In Ephesians 2:10 we are called God’s masterpiece. Masterpieces are treated with respect. People do not have to wait to earn our respect; respect should be our basic response, and all deserve to be treated with dignity as God’s children (1 Peter 2:13-17). Jesus said that what we do to others he accepts as done to himself (Matthew 25:40).

*There is always the danger that we may just do the work for the sake of the work. This is where the respect and the love and the devotion come in—that we do it to God, to Christ, and that’s why we try to do it as beautifully as possible. Mother Teresa*

We can stand in awe of people’s creativity, thinking, achievements, and the quality of their life and relationships without ignoring their flaws.

The psalmist in Psalms 19:1 sees the heavens, and for him the stars speak of the glory of God. They are not “just stars.” Elizabeth Barrett Browning talks of the earth being “crammed with heaven” for those with eyes to see. God is in the ordinary and the extraordinary; his fingerprints are all over the world for those who wish to see. Such looking can lead to reverence.

*Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God,  
But only he who sees takes of his shoes, the rest sit ‘round it and pluck*

 *blackberries.**Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

## What Does This Mean in School?

How we teach can lead people toward respect and reverence.

- We can help students to see the beauty in the ordinary and the extraordinary: in the pattern of numbers, the structure of a chemical, or the smell of cooking. It can be an experience that suddenly intensifies and becomes something deeper, beyond the mundane.
- The challenge of lives lived well in hard places can be explored in English, history, and geography.
- The way artifacts are handled can foster respect.
- We can teach the language of respect in modern languages, as well as how to practice respect across cultural differences.
- We can explore the body language of respect in drama and in our own body language in class.

Think of times when there have been moments of wonder, respect, or reverence in your class. How could you plan for such opportunities? (That does not mean they necessarily will be taken up.) Sometimes it does not take much, just a few images to show the complexity of a snowflake in science or simply allowing time and not rushing on to the next point. Sometimes nothing different has to happen and we just have to be intentional about it.



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