

I know a few people who have served in the British Army. My grandad, Harry Stephenson, was in the Signalling Corps within the Royal Engineers and signed up in 1915. He was Mentioned in Despatches twice. He died when I was a toddler, so I never really knew him. My dad was in the Army due to National Service. Some of you have served our country in one of the Forces too. Thank you for doing that.

At the moment there are around 150,000 Regular serving personnel in our Armed Forces. I know a little about different ranks in the Army. 2nd Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier, Major General, Lieutenant General, General and Field Marshall. You know your place in the Army. If someone who is more senior in rank comes along, you don't just smile, give a wink and tip your hat. You salute! Traditionally there is an exception, in that if you have been awarded a Victoria Cross, then more Senior Ranks will salute you, even if you're a Private. Your body language when you're saluting shows that you are showing respect and deference to the other person. I've stood by the Cenotaph in Whitehall dozens of times and have seen senior British officers saluting the Memorial and so showing outward respect to those that have died in military conflicts over the past one hundred years.

We might not generally salute people today, because none of us I think normally wear a uniform. Showing respect and submission to others is still a very important attitude to have though irrespective of what we wear or what we do most of the week. Are you good at showing respect to other people?

Jesus talks about going the extra mile, turning the other cheek and even praying for those who don't like us. Probably we all meet a few dozen people each week. Our family, our friends, our work colleagues and people we know by sight at the shops or pub or on the bus, though we perhaps don't know their name or much about them. We also come across loads of strangers, especially if we drive on the road and go downtown quite frequently. How do we react if they don't conduct themselves in the manner that we think is acceptable? Do we get annoyed if people cut us up on the road or someone walks through a door and don't keep it open even though we're only two steps behind them? What about if the checkout person goes way too quick with our food purchases at the till

and there's still a big pile of items to bag up and they've put everything through the scanner and are waiting for us? Maybe you use the self-scanners like me sometimes and we all know how they can throw a wobbly quite often. What's our attitude when a member of staff has to be called to sort out that type of machine? Do we say something rude to the person who comes or show a bad attitude with your body language?

Living in a modern, fast-paced and often selfish society like we do has its problems, but things probably haven't changed much in the last two thousand years. Mankind is the same as it has always been really.

We've briefly thought about showing respect to others. There's Someone else we should be showing respect and deference to as well.

How do you show respect to God? For perhaps nearly a decade in the mid 1970s to the mid-1980s I went to two Anglican churches. They have a printed liturgy, like we do in the evening. Part of the Service would be to bow your head or to kneel. This is showing outward respect to God and is important.

Consider what God did for us. He created a stunning creation and mankind was at the centre of it. When mankind decided to go their own way and not follow the guidelines that He'd put in place because He loves us, God didn't go off in a strop and leave us to our own problems. He arranged something so important, so drastic and so out of the box that there isn't any word I know that adequately sums it up. We took Communion earlier and that was to remind us what God did for us.

John 3:16 is a familiar verse to many:

NIV: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Amplified: For God so greatly loved *and* dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.

I like to increase my vocabulary from time to time. Longanimity suggests patient endurance due to love in spite of hardship, injuries, or offense. God showed this in bucket loads towards us!

Some people show in their lives that they don't care about others very much. They think, "Me first, my second and I third." God says to, "Seek Him first, to aim for Him first and strive for Him first. [Cover of Onward.] I've heard some people say to put God first, myself last and others in between. I know what they mean, but I don't think that that is quite true.

Mark 12:28-31 [*The Message*]:

²⁸ One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: "Which is most important of all the commandments?"

²⁹⁻³¹ Jesus said, "The first in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these."

I think God is saying put Him first. "Submit to Him," as our first Reading put it. Then we need to love ourselves less than that, but others equal to ourselves. Often, it's pretty easy to show respect to others and to God. Sometimes the person we might show least respect to is ourselves!

Our second Reading talked a lot about worrying. We probably all worry at different times in our lives. Does worrying mean that we're not trusting God though? If we're worrying have we totally submitted to God?

Today, God is telling us to put Him first, to submit our lives to Him and to relinquish our own ideas in favour of His. Let's also love ourselves as God loves us and equally love and honour those around us – whether these people have familiar faces or not.