

Were You Taught about Courtesy, Nana?

“NANA, when you were a little girl in the olden days, were you taught about courtesy and that kind of stuff?” Nine-year-old Ellie sits on the porch swing holding her great-grandma’s hand and smoothing out its wrinkles.

“Oh yes, Ellie, we were. What made you think of that question?” Nana asks, enjoying this quiet time with Ellie.

“It was one of our spelling words, and I had to look up the meaning and tell the class. Do you know what it means?” Ellie asks.

“Tell me,” Nana answers.

“It means to be polite and kind,” Ellie explains.

“Well,” Nana says, “is that easy or hard for you?”

Ellie thinks for a minute. “I think both. Sometimes when I see an old person going into church, I like to run to open the door for them. They always smile and say thank you. But sometimes when someone budes in line in front of me, I feel kind of grumpy. Maybe I should remind them about manners and waiting their turn. And, Nana, the other day at church, I was whispering and giggling with my friend and my mom tapped me on my shoulder and showed me the ‘shush’ sign. I didn’t even think I might be bothering someone trying to listen to the sermon. I guess that wasn’t very polite. Sometimes it’s just hard to sit all quiet-like.”

Nana chuckles. “It can even be hard for me to sit quietly, but I tell myself I can visit later.”

“I try to remember to say please and thank you,” Ellie continues. “I said that in a restaurant one time and the waitress said, ‘My, you have good manners!’ But I do say it at other times, too.”

“When’s that?” Nana asks.

“When I ask my brother Jake to help me wash the dishes, I try to remember to say ‘please.’ And when we’re finished, I say, ‘thank you very much!’ We actually have fun together. He does a real good job scrubbing the table,” Ellie says.

“I hope you compliment him on that!” Nana replies.

“I sure do,” Ellie says. “I like it when he says that I did a good job, too.”

“You know, that reminds me of a verse in the Bible that I learned as a little girl. It’s called the Golden Rule,” Nana says.

“What’s that?” Ellie asks.

“Let’s get the Bible and read it together,” Nana says.

Nana takes her Bible outside and opens it to Matthew 7:12. Ellie reads: “Therefore all things

whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

“What does that mean, Nana?” she asks.

“It means to treat people how you would like to be treated,” Nana answers.

“I think that must mean then to be kind
and polite,” Ellie says, “just like the meaning of courtesy.”

“Yes, it does,” Nana says. “Jesus teaches us a lot in the Bible. He was very kind to people.”

“I know, Nana. He even took little children on His lap and I bet He even bounced them on His
knee!”

Nana smiles at Ellie, picturing Ellie’s thought of Jesus.

“Nana, do you know what?”

“What?” Nana asks.

“I just love your wrinkly hands!”

“Why, thank you, Ellie. What a kind thing to say!”

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