Deference

INTRODUCTION

Babies learn through imitation. Clapping, giggling, covering your eyes—whatever you do, they will copy you. Yet, babies are not the only ones who imitate you. Did you know that your brothers, sisters, and friends are also watching you? For this very reason, God’s Word tells you to be a good example. Being a good example may mean limiting your freedom; however, with limitations can come greater opportunities to point others in the right direction. Whether you are seven, seventeen, or seventy-seven, you can influence people’s lives by making wise choices as you live for Christ. “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (I Timothy 4:12). Remember: Others are watching! Ask God to enable you to be a good influence on those around you.

Deference

Limiting my freedom in order not to offend the tastes of those God has called me to serve
Deference Overview

What is Deference?

Read aloud, study, and discuss what deference means and how it applies to life.

The operational definition of deference is “limiting my freedom in order not to offend the tastes of those God has called me to serve.” Everyone you are called to serve—your parents, siblings, neighbors, church family—has preferences. Maybe your mom wants a specific cleaner used on a certain type of surface. Possibly you are asked to load the dishwasher a specific way. Perhaps you share a bedroom with your sister, and she would like to paint it a certain color or organize it a different way.

Maybe a neighbor needs assistance with a project and prefers that you come at a specific time. A person’s preferences may or may not seem important to you; however, by laying aside what you think is best or most efficient and honoring their choice or desire, you are demonstrating deference. Deference communicates that you prefer others above yourself and want to be a blessing to them. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

The opposite of deference is rudeness. A rude person is unpleasant to be around because he only seems to think about himself. Such a person is inconsiderate and will turn on a light when someone else is trying to sleep. He is impolite and will continue talking loudly when another is on the phone. He thoughtlessly plows ahead with his own schedule, ideas, and preferences without consulting others or being willing to change his plans for them. His coarse words and actions are hurtful and offensive. His behavior is in stark contrast to Paul’s prayer in Philippians 1:9–10: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.”

People are different and have unique tastes, preferences, and ideas. With such varying perspectives, your home could be filled with arguments all the time! If you find yourself demanding to have your own way, remind yourself that God resists the proud but gives grace for every situation only as we humble ourselves. (See I Peter 5:5.) The Lord’s grace will enable you to lay aside your comforts, desires, and freedoms so that you can show His love to others as you put them first. You will soon find the peace that comes when we practice deference. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).
Deference in Scripture
Read aloud and discuss each verse, question, and concept.

Proverbs 2:1–6 says, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” What a privilege to study the rich truths of God’s Word, hide them in your heart, and apply them to daily life! These truths are priceless treasures, far above the value and beauty of rubies and diamonds. As you dig deeper into God’s Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will be a radiant expression of His love. He will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD
We see examples of deference in God’s character in the following ways:

• God deferred to Israel’s request for a king even though His desire was that the nation be a theocracy. (See I Samuel 8:7, 22.)
• God will defer His anger for the sake of His glory and praise. (See Isaiah 48:9.)
• Jesus yielded to His parents’ plans even though He was ready to begin His ministry. (See Luke 2:41–52.)
• When Jesus answered the Samaritan woman, He did not enter into her argument but instead spoke truth to her. (See John 4:20–24.)
• Jesus emptied Himself and laid aside the glories of heaven to come humbly to earth and die a terrible death in order that we might be saved. (See Philippians 2:5–11.)

• The Holy Spirit indwells believers, guiding them and reminding them to live without sin and offense. (See I Corinthians 6:16–20.)

DEFERENCE IN MY LIFE
Now let’s examine some ways God wants us to live out deference daily.

• How can I avoid unnecessary conflict with my family? (See Genesis 13:8–9.)
• Has the Lord brought someone to mind that I have offended? If so, what should I do? (See Matthew 5:23–25.)
• How serious is it to lead a child astray from God’s truth? (See Matthew 18:6.)
• What is God asking me to deny for His sake and the sake of the Gospel? (See Mark 8:34–35.)
• Am I willing to limit my freedom as the Holy Spirit directs? (See Acts 16:6, Romans 6:13.)
• What should I focus on instead of judging others’ differences? (See Romans 14:13, 19.)
• Why should I be careful not to be offensive? (See II Corinthians 6:3.)
• Instead of demanding my own way, what is the example Christ gave that I should imitate? (See Philippians 2:3.)

DEFERENCE KEY VERSE
“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

ROMANS 14:21
Having just finished ministering in Athens, Paul traveled to Corinth. Well-known for his outspoken commitment to Jesus Christ, he spent his days discipling new believers in the faith and writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that as a minister, he had a Biblical right to expect financial support from believers. However, Paul was teaching that men ought to work hard so they could have food, support their families, and help other believers. If he taught this principle without working himself, would people question him? If others saw Paul not working at an occupation, would they be tempted to justify man’s tendency toward laziness? Seeing the impact of his example, Paul willingly set aside this freedom and worked to support himself as he was ministering to others. Paul’s deference avoided an offense that could have hindered the cause of Christ. How did Paul support himself as he traveled from place to place and preached? In Corinth, Paul lived with a couple who shared the same profession. How did his example affect the couple with whom he lived and worked? What else do Paul’s epistles teach about deference?

**BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS**

*Read Acts 18:1–4 and I Corinthians 9:1–18 together and discuss the following questions:*

1. **Who did Paul find when he arrived in Corinth?** *(See Acts 18:1–2.)*
   What new places have you been to where you made new friends? Do your friends know that you are a Christian?

2. **What occupation did Paul have in common with Aquila and Priscilla?** *(See Acts 18:3.)*
   What activities, beliefs, or hobbies do you have in common with your friends? How do those common interests draw you together?

3. **How did Paul spend his Sabbaths?** *(See Acts 18:4.)*
   How can you show deference on the Lord’s Day? What activities might you lay aside this one day of the week to be a good example to other believers? *(See Isaiah 58:13–14.)*

4. **Why was Paul making tents in addition to preaching?** *(See Acts 20:33–35, II Thessalonians 3:8–10.)*
   When have you chosen to work instead of play because you knew it would encourage someone else who needed to keep working?

5. **Based on God’s Word, Paul had the power (right) to be supported in his ministry. What was his motive for giving up that right?** *(See I Corinthians 9:12.)*
   What things do you need to give up so you will have a stronger witness for Christ?

6. **Who ordained that preachers should not have to make their livelihood outside of their ministry?** *(See I Corinthians 9:14.)*
   What missionaries or ministries does your church or family support?

7. **Who in this story saw and followed Paul’s example of working to support himself while ministering to others?** *(See Romans 16:3–5a.)*
   Who has been a good example to you? How can you be a good example to others?

8. **In what other ways did Paul teach we are to show deference to one another?** *(See Romans 14:19–21.)*
   In what area of your life do you need to show deference right now?
Memory Verse
ROMANS 14:21

Play the game together to help the children commit Romans 14:21 to memory. In the section “Doers of the Word,” have the children record how they will apply the verse to their lives.

“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

ROMANS 14:21

MEMORY VERSE GAME

Unscramble
Have the children each write a different assigned word or phrase from the memory verse on a sheet of paper. Collect the papers and shuffle them, then distribute the sheets face down, one per child, so that the children do not see which words they received. On the count of three have the children look at the words on their papers and then time them to see how fast they can line up with the words in the correct order. Quote the verse together. Repeat mixing up the papers, redistributing, and timing the children as they line up until the children have memorized the verse.

DOERS OF THE WORD
In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “be aware of others’ limitations,” or “choose activities which everyone enjoys,” or “change any actions that could be offensive.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to ______________ __________________________________________ __________________________________________.
I ask that You would develop deference in my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.
INTRODUCTION

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the deference key verse and definition as you fill in the crossword puzzle below. *Italicized* words fit horizontally and *underlined* words fit vertically. One word is already done for you.

**Romans 14:21**

“It is *good* neither to eat *flesh*, nor to *drink wine*, nor any *thing whereby thy *brother stumbleth*, or is *offended*, or is *made weak*.”

**Deference**

*Limiting my freedom in order not to offend the tastes of those God has called me to serve*
INTRODUCTION

During this character study we are asking the Lord to develop deference in our lives. What a privilege to respond to the work He is doing to change us into the image of His Son! As you are growing in your walk with the Lord, you are being watched by brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, and others. What kind of example are you setting for them? Can you say as Paul did in I Corinthians 11:1, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”? Today we are going to play a game to remind us to be a good example for others.

Instructions

We are going to play the game, Simon Says. However, listen carefully so that you always do what I say, no matter what I do. Ready? Let’s begin!

As the leader, give the students a few commands after saying, “Simon says.” For example, say, “Simon says, ‘Touch your nose,’” as you touch your nose. Then, command one thing but do another, such as, “Simon says, ‘Touch your elbows,’” as you touch your shoulders or “Simon says, ‘Turn around,’” as you jump up and down. (See suggestion chart for more action ideas.) Continue to play the game for several more commands, with one or two “mixed signal” commands interspersed among them.

Did you do what I said every time? When did you not? Why was it difficult to follow my instructions when I said one thing and did another? Being a good example to others is very important. Part of being a good example is making sure that your words and actions match. If your words say one thing and your actions do something else, people will wonder which one they should follow: your words or your actions.

Let’s play the game again, remembering that when you are a good example, your words and actions will match. Play several rounds of Simon Says, allowing the children to take turns being “Simon.”
“We ... wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us” (II Thessalonians 3:8–9).
**Hymn History**

"May the Mind of Christ My Savior"

_Sing “May the Mind of Christ My Savior” and read about the deference of the hymn writer, Kate Wilkinson._

In 1925, a new hymn appeared in the children’s publication, _Golden Bells_. Titled “May the Mind of Christ My Savior,” it included Philippians 2:5 as a byline: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Very little is known about the hymn writer, Kate Wilkinson. She was born in 1859 in England and married in her early 30’s. Mrs. Wilkinson attended the Keswick Conventions and ministered to girls in West London. This hymn was published when she was 66 years old. Three years later, in 1928, Mrs. Wilkinson passed away.

Written as a prayer, this hymn asks for God’s enabling to help us live as Christ would. _Deference_ is “limiting my freedom in order not to offend the tastes of those God has called me to serve.” The opening line of this hymn, “May the mind of Christ my Savior Live in me from day to day,” is a reminder to defer to Christ and seek His perspective throughout each day. In every situation ask, “How would Jesus respond?” or “What would He have me say?” Each of the five verses expounds a secret of the Christian life. First, God’s love and power control me. Second, as I allow the Word of Christ to dwell in my heart and mind, He gives me victory over sin. Next, trusting God in difficult circumstances yields peace for comforting others. Then, when the love of Christ fills my life, it will spill over to those around me. Last, looking to Jesus gives me strength and endurance. This limiting of self for the outflow of Christ is a beautiful display of deference.

The final verse of the song seems to be the prayer of this hymn writer of whom we know so little:

_May His beauty rest upon me_  
_As I seek the lost to win,  
_And may they forget the channel,  
_Seeing only Him._

As the channel, Mrs. Wilkinson may be forgotten, but her song lives on, pointing others to Christ. The same is true of the little-known composer, A. Cyril Barham-Gould. He was an Anglican priest and composed the tune specifically for this hymn. At the time, he was staying at an English coastal town called St. Leonard’s-on-the-Sea; thus, the tune’s name is “St. Leonard’s.”

Mrs. Wilkinson and Mr. Barham-Gould were two servants of God who lived their lives in service to Him. They displayed the heart of deference: not wanting their lives or anything they did or said to distract people from God’s message.
May the Mind of Christ, My Savior

Kate B. Wilkinson (1859–1928)

A. Cyril Barham-Gould (1891–1953)

1. May the mind of Christ, my Savior, Live in me from day to day,
2. May the Word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour,
3. May the peace of God, my Father, Rule my life in every thing,
4. May the love of Jesus fill me, As the waters fill the sea;
5. May I run the race before me, Strong and brave to face the foe,
6. May His beauty rest upon me As I seek the lost to win,

By His love and pow'r controlling All I do and say.
So that all may see I triumph Only thru His pow'r.
That I may be calm to comfort Sick and sorrowing.
Him exalting, self basing This is victory.
Look ing on ly unto Jesus As I onward go.
And may they forget the channel, Seeing only Him.

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Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

Recommended Resources

- 2018 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar
- Hymns for the Family CDs (“May the Mind of Christ My Savior” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 3.)
- The Power for True Success
- Character Cards
- Character Cards Memory Game
- Character Sketches, Volumes 1–3
- Achieving True Success
- Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends by Sarah, Stephen, and Grace Mally
- Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends - Coloring Book
- Children’s Illustrated Hymn Book, Vol. 1 by In The Gap
- The Power of Music by Don Staddon, Jr.
- Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Movement by Dan Lucarini

Hymn History Bibliography
