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All Persons Have Dignity



WORDS TO KNOW

dignity: Worthy of respect.

traditional: Doing things as they were done in the past.

village: Small town.

thatch: Straw.

scarce: Rare, hard to find, not common.

responsibility: Duty; job.

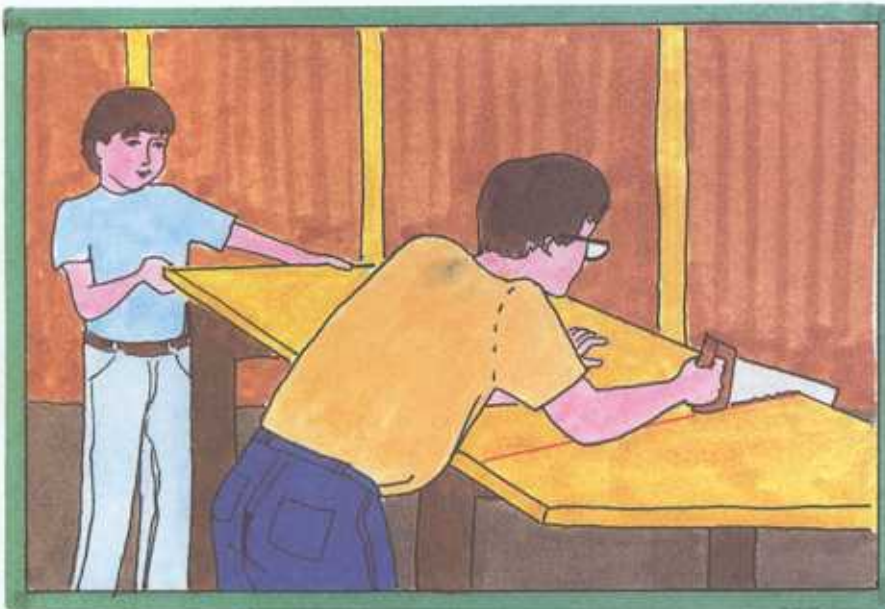
self-esteem: Self-respect.



We are images of God. We are all persons. As persons, we have dignity. As persons, we are worthy of respect.

One person does not have more dignity than another person. People can and do have different abilities, likes, and dislikes. But their dignity remains the same. As images of God, we all have the same boundless worth and value.

Two boys, James and John, are both third-graders. They are in the same class. Both boys are very good students. They seem to be very much alike. Yet their families are very different. James' family owns many things. John's family does not. This difference bothers John.



*John
and
his
dad*

*James
and
his
dad*



James and John

James: My dad owns ten department stores. He has a chauffeur who drives him to work in a limousine every day.

John: My dad is a carpenter. He makes things in our basement.

James: My mom loves to shop. She has a credit card for every store. She also has a closet full of beautiful clothes.

John: My mom enjoys staying home. She makes all of our meals from scratch and decorates our house with beautiful homemade crafts. She even has time to play ball with me and help me with my homework.

James: My older brother Tim has his own car. Dad pays for the gas and insurance. Tim drives his friends to school every day.

John: My brother Mike helps Dad fix our old station wagon. It's the only car we have. Mike rarely uses it with his friends.

James: I have my own TV, VCR, computer, and telephone.

John: We have a small TV in the family room.

James: You don't have much, do you.

John: No.

James: Wouldn't you rather be rich like me?

John: Well, I guess so, but I love my family. We're all healthy and happy. Things just don't mean that much to us. James, we both deserve respect, not for how much we have, but for who we are—images of God.

James: I guess you're right. As persons, everyone has dignity.

Like all of us, James was born with dignity. When he does not act as an image of God and brags too much, he does not lose his dignity. It is just harder for us to see.

John does not lose his dignity by being envious, either. His dignity is just not clearly seen. Acting as images of God makes their dignity clearer to see.



All persons have dignity, not because of what they own but because of who they are—images of God. All persons should be treated with respect.

As persons, we have dignity. All human persons in all of the other parts of the world have dignity, too.

The nation of Tonga is made up of 150 islands. It is located about one thousand miles north of New Zealand.

Most of the people are farmers. They like to live a traditional way of life.

Nuku (*noo-koo*) is a happy nine-year-old girl. She lives in a small house with a thatch roof, along with her two brothers and two sisters. All of the children in Tonga attend school until they are fourteen years old.

In the morning, Nuku's father works in the garden; and in the afternoon, he fishes for tuna and shark. Nuku's mother does the housework and sometimes helps in the garden.

After school, Nuku and her friends enjoy playing hide-and-seek among the trees and swinging on the vines that hang from the branches. Sometimes, they create their own play villages with handmade dolls, houses, and furniture.

In school, they read about life in other places. Some of the children they read about live in big houses, play with store-bought toys, and ride in fancy cars.

The children of Tonga do not have these things. This does not bother Nuku, her family, or her friends. The people of Tonga understand that people are more important than things. They respect each other's dignity. They act as images of God. Their dignity is easy to see.

Many people want to visit Tonga because of the warm friendliness of the people. One tourist, a representative of the United States, invited Nuku to live and attend school in the United States for one year.