

RESPECTVILLE

They had only walked about six blocks when a small white van approached them and as it slowed up and stopped they noticed green lettering on the side that read, "Transformational Tours". As the van pulled up next to the curb where they were walking, the door opened, and they were pleased to see Tim, their adult youth group advisor at church.

His jovial voice urged, "Come on aboard...today's stop - The Land of the Twelve Seeds!"

They looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and said in surprising unison, "Where is The Land of the Twelve Seeds?"

"Oh, not far, not far at all. Matter of fact, it's just around the bend. Hop on, you two! You're in for a real adventure!"

Next thing they knew, Abby and Adam were sitting in the van with six other people, and as the doors closed and the van began to move...they had a strange sensation of being lifted above the ground. The speed of the van was breath-taking and in what seemed like only minutes, it rolled into contact with the ground again...slowed down and they passed through an arch that said,

<p>Welcome to First Seed County RESPECTVILLE WHERE EVERYONE IS IMPORTANT</p>

Still dazed by the trip they'd just undergone, Adam and Abby climbed out of the van. Tim was there at the door to reach out his hand and help them off. He smiled, tipped his hat to Abby and extended his hand to Adam in a friendly handshake.

"I'm sure glad you two decided to come along." he said. "It's a real pleasure to have you with us."

By this time the others had gathered in a small group outside the van, and Abby and Adam joined them. Each one made a special point to introduce himself or herself to Adam and Abby, and in different ways, expressed gratitude that the two young people were with them.

Soon someone said, "Hey, let's eat," and they turned and crossed the street where a sign read, "Ralph's Restaurant". The group entered and found a table all set and ready for them. Everyone took a seat. Tim rose to greet a man who

came from behind the counter. They shook hands and patted each other on the back.

"Folks, I'd like you to meet Ralph. He's the owner of this establishment, and people here call him Respectful Ralph. Ralph, this is our new group of travelers on the Transformational Tour...Jenny, Jake, Pete, Patrick, Marsha, Michael, Abby and Adam."

As the group watched, Ralph quietly went around and shook the hand of each one of the eight passengers he'd just met. He asked every individual a couple of questions - just to get acquainted. Abby noticed how he focused all his attention on the person he was speaking to, and among the things he asked was what dessert they especially liked. His warmth was contagious and the people soon seemed "at home" with each other and began chatting as Ralph brought menus for them to select their meals.

Abby began to look around and realized what a friendly atmosphere filled the room. The group was visiting with each other with smiles on their faces, and it was open and relaxing. While she was thinking about all this, Adam got up and took his water glass over to the counter where Ralph was standing and asked for a refill. Adam said, "You certainly have a special way of creating all that's needed in a great restaurant."

Ralph smiled and Abby and Adam and all the other guests listened quietly when he said, "I believe every person who comes in here is important. I extend hospitality and genuine regard to each customer and every employee. It is important to me that every person who comes through those doors feels special, and knows, without a doubt, that we care about them and honor their desires and needs."

"Wow!" thought Abby, "it would be rewarding to work for a man like this! I'd sure like to be that kind of person all the time. He seems to have a real grasp of what it means to respect others."

Adam returned to his seat next to her. He was smiling. "What a great guy," he commented, "He's got such a welcoming approach and he's so sincere."

After they ordered, Tim stood and explained that folks came from miles around to eat at Ralph's because the atmosphere was so friendly - and of course the food was remarkable. His employees are so loyal because Ralph shows them how strongly they are valued and he praises them for their hard work.



Abby and Ralph

“No wonder they call him Respectful Ralph,” Abby remarked, as she turned to Adam. “Does he make you think about how much respect you show for others? I was just thinking about the time we worked on that science project together, and how I really lacked respect for your opinions and kept wanting to do my own thing!”

"Oh, Abby," said Adam with surprise, "I was the one who didn't want to let you have anything to say about the project."

"Well, maybe we both need to take some lessons from Ralph!" returned Abby with a big smile. "I do want to show greater respect for everyone I meet."

"So do I," agreed Adam. "Let's remind each other about it whenever we see ways we could improve."

"Got it!" exclaimed Abby, giving Adam a high five!

Their meals came and they were delicious. The best part to follow was totally unexpected. After the main course dishes were cleared away, Ralph and one of the servers brought out huge trays of desserts. They were the favorite individual desserts for each person, all carefully prepared by the kitchen crew while the guests ate their meals. Of course, everyone was delighted and each one felt personally honored. They devoured them with great relish.

Ralph came over to the table as everyone finished their desserts. As the travelers each expressed thanks, Ralph was grinning from ear to ear.

Pete spoke up and asked, "Ralph where did you learn to show such regard and respect for everyone?"

"I am so glad you asked, Pete," Ralph replied. "The answer to your question is written on the back of your place-mats."

Everyone turned a place-mat over and found,

***"Show respect for everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers,
fear God, honor the King."
I Peter 2:17***

"So," thought Pete, "his internal desire to respect comes from my favorite book of the Bible." He smiled as he followed the others to the white van. There was a lot to think about after this visit to Respectville. Ralph had shown them many ways to respect others.

When the eight travelers returned to the van, they each found a Bible and a journal on their seats and both volumes had their names engraved on the leather covers. Inside the Bible was a bookmark with "Respectville" written at the top and listed below were a set of scripture verses:

Exodus 20:12
Proverbs 11:16
Romans 12:10
Romans 13:7
Philippians 2:3
I Peter 2:17

The van grew quiet as Adam and Abby and the others began looking up the references and copying them into their journals with comments about what they meant in concerning respect.