

Growing Kids God's Way – Appendix 3 – Questions And Answers About Mr. & Mrs.

This appendix is related to Chapter 7 and our discussion of Mr. and Mrs. There are a number of common questions raised as a result of that lesson. The following addresses the ten most commonly asked questions.

Question One:

What do you do when someone does not want to be addressed by their last name?

Explain that you have chosen to have your children use these terms as a vehicle to communicate the biblical principle of respecting elders. Most adults will agree with your goals and comply with your desires to provide this tool for your children. In some cases, an adult may insist that your children not address them by their last name. Consider the context, the preciousness of others, and your child's moral maturity and determine if deferring to the adult's preference in this situation would be appropriate. Your children can also address people in positions of authority by their titles rather than their name. "Coach", "teacher", and "pastor" are examples of this. There is always a way to put a principle into action!

Question Two:

What should our children call their babysitter?

When our children babysat, children called them Miss Amy and Miss Jenny. That title reinforced the position of authority in the child's mind, while acknowledging that the babysitter was not yet an adult.

Question Three:

What about the grandparent type of relationships children have with older members of the church?

Whether your child is in a babysitting relationship or acquainted with a close family friend through church, the title "Grandma" or any other term of endearment would be appropriate. The same is true with very close friends of the family. There is nothing wrong with children calling a very close nonbiological friend "Aunt" or "Uncle," but it should only be with a few of them—not the entire church!

Question Four:

How should young adults address older adults?

That answer really depends on both your personal preference and that of the person being addressed. As we move into adulthood (21 years of age), our peer group relationships may expand to 30 or 40 years. A 21-year-old may be in a peer relationship with a person who is 55. In this situation, addressing him by his first name would be appropriate.

Question Five:

Can my child feel as close to our friends if he calls them Mr. and Mrs.?

Yes, absolutely!

Question Six:

What should a child call a stepparent?

We can recommend some basic guidelines, but no hard-and-fast rules. If you are in a stepparent relationship with children under three or four years of age, you may be able to get away with the stepparent being called Mom or Dad. Over this age, the biological parent should be called Mom or Dad, and the stepparent Mom or Dad, but only if the child feels comfortable with that title. You might also consider a neutral but special name or term of endearment. From the child's perspective, you may be a husband to his mother, but that does not make you his father. You may be a wife to his dad, but that does not make you his mother.

Mr. and Mrs. or Sir and Ma'am are too formal for this type of relationship. On the other hand, Mom or Dad may not be appropriate or fair to the child who already has a history or memories of his natural parent.

Question Seven:

What about the child who uses Mr. and Mrs. but does not have a respectful attitude, as compared to the child that does have a respectful attitude and still calls an adult by his first name? Is not the second child more respectful than the first?

Absolutely! The attitude and heart of your child is most important. The biblical principle of respect for elders is the goal you are pursuing. However, it is important to remember that with children actions precede beliefs. Training your child to use titles of respect provides a practical tool for a child to reflect an attitude that is consistent with the biblical standard of respect. Titles are helpful vehicles, but do not elevate the vehicle to the same level of the principle that is behind it.

Question Eight:

How do we start introducing the titles Mr. and Mrs. with friends who are used to being called by their first names?

Start with those who are supportive and understand what you are attempting to accomplish—possibly the members of your Growing Kids God's Way class. For those who are unfamiliar with what you are learning, let them know what you are doing as a family without becoming a fanatic or arguing over the issue. (See question one for help with those who do not seem to be supportive of this change.) As new friends enter your life, begin your relationship with Mr. and Mrs.

Question Nine:

Will my child become confused during the transition period when I start introducing my friends as Mr. and Mrs.?

No. Children do not have a problem adapting—only adults do. You can help your child, though, by letting him know that when he cannot remember someone's last name, he can address the person as Sir or Ma'am, whichever is appropriate.

Question Ten:

Should I concern myself with how other children address me?

Yes and no. Your primary concern is training your own children. You are not responsible for someone else's child. If a child calls you by your first name, you can say to them, "I would prefer to be called Mrs. Smith." You can also take advantage of natural opportunities to introduce yourself as Mr. or Mrs. For example, when you phone a friend's home and the children answer, say to them, "Hi, Ryan, this is Mr. Brown calling. Is your dad home?" If a child is visiting, ask for his help. "Ryan, will you please take this dish outside and give it to Mrs. Smith?"

Summary

It is worth restating that the use of the titles Mr. and Mrs. is not a biblical principle but a vehicle to deliver the principle. A child should acknowledge that time has not made him equal to adults in life's experience, wisdom, and knowledge. It is a valid way to fulfill the command of Leviticus 19:32.