

Restoring a Culture of Honor

The VISION Newsletter / June 2019

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Isaiah 3:5 (NKJV) “The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable.”

It seems we have lost our sense of civility. The culture of honor that once characterized places of public discourse has been replaced with a culture of disrespect, shame, dishonor, and cruelty. Jesus warned that, prior to His return, the love of many would grow cold: *“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”*¹ The apostle Paul warned of the destructive effects of hostility: *“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*¹⁵ *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”*²

It is time to restore a culture of honor. Who are we to honor? Children are to honor their father and mother. Wives are to honor their husbands as the head of the marriage union. Husbands are to honor their wives as the weaker vessel. Husbands and wives are to honor the marriage bed and keep it undefiled. The younger are to show honor to the elderly. Students are to honor their teachers and administrators. Employees are to honor their employers. Servants are to honor their masters. As human beings created in the image of God, we must honor the sanctity of human life. As citizens, we are to show honor toward our nation and its flag. We are to honor our founding fathers, our forefathers, and our godly heritage. We are to honor our national, state, and local government and its leaders. We are to honor our military. We are to honor our country’s veterans and those who serve in the military. We are to honor the law and those in law enforcement. We must honor God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We must honor the Bible as God’s inerrant word and final authority on all matters of life. We must honor the Lord’s Day and set it apart as a sacred day for believers to gather in worship and fellowship. We must honor the sanctity of the local church meeting by refraining from disorderly and distracting conduct. We must show honor to our pastors, elders, and church leaders. As fellow members of the body of Christ, we must show honor to one another as better than ourselves. We must honor the least among us as equally important as the greatest.

What is Honor? Today the word has evolved into meaning “honest”. But that is not the concept of honor held throughout history. Historically, courageous men were willing to die to uphold their honor.

Essentially, there are two types of honor. The first is horizontal honor and the second is vertical honor. Horizontal honor includes an honor among equals. For instance, believers should show mutual respect toward one another as fellow members of the body of Christ: *“And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”*³

Horizontal honor can also be merited and bestowed. This bestowal of honor is a bestowal of respect upon those who are recognized for honorable living. This horizontal bestowal of honor can be given by men or by God. Regarding the honor that men bestow, Leviticus 19:32 (NKJV) says, *“You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD.”* Regarding the honor that God bestows, 1 Samuel 2:30 (NKJV) says, *“Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever,’ But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.’”*

¹ Matthew 24:12 (NKJV)

² Galatians 5:14–15 (NKJV)

³ 1 Corinthians 12:23–27 (NKJV)

The honor given by God is greater than the honor given by men. Jesus said, *“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”*⁶ *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”* Jesus also said, *“I do not receive honor from men.”*⁴ Jesus went on to say, *“How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?”*⁵

In contrast to horizontal honor, vertical honor is shown to those in positions of authority. It involves showing esteem and respect for those who are above us in authority. Vertical honor begins with honor toward God. He alone deserves inherent and supreme honor as Creator, Redeemer, and King. John saw this type of honor on display in Revelation 5:11–13 (NKJV): *“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,”*¹² *saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’*¹³ *And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’”*

Vertical honor is also to be shown toward those in positions of governing authority. This includes anyone in a governing role in our lives such as parents, husbands, teachers, church leaders, government leaders, law enforcement, employers, etc. People in positions of authority are to be shown honor because all authority originates with God: *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”*⁶ When we honor those in positions of governing authority, we honor God who gave them authority over us.

If a leader is acting dishonorably, it would be inappropriate to show them horizontal honor: *“As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.”*⁷ In fact, showing honor to a fool empowers their foolishness: *“Like one who binds a stone in a sling is he who gives honor to a fool.”*⁸ Even if we cannot show horizontal honor toward foolish leaders, we are still obligated to show them vertical honor because of their position of authority. Paul says, *“Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”*⁹

It is time to stop the cycles of dishonor. It is time to restore a culture of honor in our land. It is time to restore a culture honor in marriage and in the home. It is time to restore a culture of honor in the church. It is time to restore an attitude of honor in our heart. It is time to live honorably before all men and to show honor to whom honor is due. As we sow honor, we will reap honor in return. May we seek to honor the LORD by showing honor to those whom honor is due.

⁴ John 5:41 (NKJV)

⁵ John 5:44 (NKJV)

⁶ Romans 13:1 (NKJV)

⁷ Proverbs 26:1 (NKJV)

⁸ Proverbs 26:8 (NKJV)

⁹ Romans 13:7 (NKJV)