

# Culture of Honor



Lesson Objective:

The objective of this lesson will be to understand how our relationship with the Lord relates to our relationship with His body, the church, as we interact with demonstrations of value through honor.

Key Scripture:

***Romans 12:10*** "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

## David and Saul

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One of the greatest stories of honor in the Bible is seen in the relationship between David and King Saul. In the first book of Samuel, we are told of the story of the first King of Israel, Saul. The leaders of Israel were not happy with the way the government was being ran through the leadership of judges. They experienced devastation with Eli and his two wicked sons. And now Samuel's own wicked sons were threatening to repeat history. So they came to Samuel and demanded a new structure in their government instead of dealing with the problem. They wanted to be like the other nations around them and have a king. God chose Saul out of the all the men of Israel as the best choice at that time.

***1 Samuel 8:7*** The Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.

**Key Point:** *Rejection is the fruit of dishonor.*

Rejection is the fruit of dishonor. It is when we loose the sense of value for someone that we reject them. Or when we lose value to another, they reject us. Samuel was feeling dishonored by the leaders of Israel and resulted with him becoming angry. But God reminded him that the leaders of Israel had lost the value of God's ability to rule over them. Their history of poor leadership challenged their trust in God's ways of government.

God provided in his laws ways of dealing with children who rebel. They were to take them out and stone them. The threat of being stoned should turn any child away from bad behavior. But, neither Eli, Samuel, or the elders of Israel were willing to apply this deterrent to those children violating God's authority structure. Honoring your father and mother was God's prescription from heading down the road of rebellion with its destructive consequences and living in the blessings of God, who rewards honor.<sup>1</sup> The promised blessing of a long life is given to those who show honor.

Samuel warned the people of the consequences of having a king like all the other nations. They would become focused on their personal ventures and agendas. The people would become the means whereby he would obtain his success, wealth and prestige among the other kings. They would be the ones paying with their blood for his campaigns in gaining power. And there would be a day coming when the people will cry out because of the king, and the Lord would not hear them.<sup>2</sup> *"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles'"* (1 Samuel 8:19-20). Basically, Samuel warned Israel that the role and structure of the government style they were choosing to rule over them, would require a level of submission that would control them and cost them dearly. Honor, defined within a dominant with a subservient structure, will produce a controlling environment, which will cost them their freedom. Honor would look like what one man at the top of the progressive ladder receiving what he wants at the cost of those in subjection to him.

God was in the process of choosing a man after His heart. But he was still a small shepherd boy in the fields with his father's sheep. God saw the potential of greatness in Saul. And in that foresight, He selected Saul. Saul's potential resulted in God honoring him above all the other men in Israel. The greatness within Saul was the basis of his value, which was rewarded with honor. But Saul had not yet been prepared by God to lead His nation. He had issues, which influenced his mindsets and would eventually affect his character and the choices he would make as king. Saul had the potential to be a great king, but the way he saw himself compared to others created insecurities, which caused him to fear man and become jealous of other's greatness. Consequently, he compromised the call of God upon his life and his God given mission, which ultimately kept him from greatness and the loss of his reign.

Saul was anointed as king. In other words, Saul received a supernatural impartation to rule and reign. The anointing meant that he was empowered with God's ability to govern. It was this anointing that was to separate Saul from all other kings and their dominion. In the power of this anointing, Saul received supernatural ability to fulfill the mission assigned by God for him. His mission was clear. It was the same mission given to Joshua and all the other leaders and judges who followed him – remove the enemy from Israel's land.

This anointing was exemplified in Saul's first campaign against Israel's enemies. After Saul was anointed king, he returned to his father's ranch and continued to do what he was familiar with doing. After all, he had no idea what being a king was suppose to look like, since Israel has never had one before. A group of Ammonites came against an Israeli town and threatened them. The only way they could avoid being killed was to make a treaty with them. This involved every male in the town having his right eye gouged out. News of this siege reached the ears of the one anointed to be king, Saul.

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<sup>1</sup> Deut.5:16

<sup>2</sup> 1Samuel 8:11-22

**1 Samuel 11:6-7** <sup>6</sup> Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry. <sup>7</sup> He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out as one man.

Notice how the anointing had an affect on Saul. He became enraged at the injustice inflicted by the enemy of Israel, and a sense of responsibility rose up in him to do something about it. With the weight of this responsibility, he stepped into a leadership role and rallied the men of Israel with him to defeat this enemy and remove them from their land. God supernaturally gave him the ability to fulfill the call upon his life.

Over the course of time, King Saul began making decisions based out of the fear of man and trying to prove himself as a king. He compromised his mission from God and lost the favor of God upon his reign. God chose a man who had a heart after Him, David. When David was anointed a king over Israel, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. A demon spirit came to Saul and began to torment his mind. Saul became a demon possessed king, rejected by God, and bent upon preserving his throne and his image.

**Key Point:** *David was tested in honor and became Israel's most honored king.*

After killing the Philistine Giant, Goliath, the evidence of God's anointing upon David became more and more evident as he continued to grow in testimonies of victories against the enemies of Israel and in popularity with the people of Israel. Jealousy against David continued to grow in the heart of King Saul, until finally he began to act out and became focused on trying to kill him.

## Honor Tested

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**Key Point:** *No matter how far a man has fallen away from God, there remains the image of God within them, and a call of God upon their life.*

It was during the days of David fleeing from King Saul that his heart of honor was tested. David had every right to protect himself from a deranged, demon possessed, mad with rage, maniac king. After all, he now had the anointing of God upon him to be the next king of Israel. He bore the favor of God upon his life. It has already been decided in heaven he would be the next king. Why couldn't David defend himself, kill king Saul, and take his rightful throne? Out of the heart that was after God, David understood the Divine Kingdom principle of honor. No matter how far a man has fallen away from God, there remains the image of God within them, a call of God upon his life, and the anointing of God to fulfill that call. Honor isn't based upon behavior – it is based upon identity.

**1 Samuel 24:1-15** <sup>1</sup> Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi." <sup>2</sup> Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. <sup>3</sup> So he came to the sheepfolds by

*the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)* <sup>4</sup> Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. <sup>5</sup> Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. <sup>6</sup> And he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." <sup>7</sup> So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way.

<sup>8</sup> David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. <sup>9</sup> And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?" <sup>10</sup> Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.' <sup>11</sup> Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. <sup>12</sup> Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. <sup>13</sup> As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you. <sup>14</sup> After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? <sup>15</sup> Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand." (NKJ)

Key Point: ***Opportunities don't always reveal the intent of God's will, but rather the aim of testing the heart.***

Even David's men saw these amazing circumstances of God's hand offering King Saul's life into David's hand. They even quoted to David the prophecy he had received concerning his replacement of Saul as King. To them it all made sense. This was God's blessing upon David. It was God's will for David to kill Saul. But opportunities don't always reveal the intent of God's will, but rather a test of what resides within the heart. Even the cutting away of a fragment of King Saul's robe caused David to be troubled by his action. Even though King Saul no longer manifested the evidence of the Spirit of God upon him, David still recognized the anointing he possessed on principle. One cannot hold a position of authority without the hand of God to do so.

***Romans 13:1*** Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

National culture should never dictate Kingdom Culture. In our culture today, those in leadership become the prime targets of ridicule, accusation, and disdain. The media becomes the platform for radio talk-show hosts and televised anchor personnel to go beyond addressing the controversial issues into attacking a leader's person and character. They have taken a position of judges and pronounce their false prophecies to an audience who now take on their hatred and expressed dishonor. An attitude that says, "If you don't agree

with someone, you have the right to judge and commit malice against them,” has become prevalent in society. It has become a common practice to demonize those we disagree with. We look for the faults, magnify them, and then use them against those we oppose as a means to justify our judgments and hatred. This is not the way of the Kingdom of Love.

**Key Point:** *Honor isn't based upon behavior – it is based in the recognition of God hand and calling.*

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Romans while in prison. The governing rulers were men like Nero, who were bent upon imprisoning and killing the Christians. And yet he acknowledged their existence as God's establishment. Where they evil? Yes! Were they corrupt? Definitely! And yet God's hand was in their position of authority. Honor isn't based upon behavior – it is based in the recognition of God's hand in a calling of authority. It looks beyond the circumstances and places reliance upon God when his leaders do not act righteously. Honor rises out of trust that surpasses the behaviors of men and relies upon confidence in God's superior authority.

**Key Point:** *Honor requires a culture of trust in God's ability to rule, judge, and bring justice.*

Even when the opportunities warrant righteous indignation against evil. There is a line that is drawn between our acting as judges and executing justice outside the heart of honor based in God's loving nature. Honor requires a culture of trust in God's ability to rule, judge, and bring justice. Opportunities to bring justice outside of honor are tests. God is looking for individuals who have a heart after Him in all things. These tests expose the Saul mindsets in all of us and call out the David we are called to be.

## Culture of Trust

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**Key Point:** *If we want relationship with someone, trust expressed through honor becomes the basis of a healthy relationship.*

In today's culture, we honor those who are honorable and we extend trust to those who have earned it. We then develop a system of accountability to keep them trustworthy. The problem is, if we want a relationship with someone, trust expressed through honor becomes the basis of a healthy relationship. We can't have a deep relationship with our spouse, family members, friends, a pastor, fellow church members, or anyone if we don't trust them.

Jesus demonstrated trust in Judas even though He knew he was stealing. If Judas were going to succeed, if he were going to make it through the temptation to betray Jesus, it would only be because Jesus honored the best in him. The culture of trust that Jesus created caused eleven men to become world changers while only one was lost. The Father wants a culture where we extend trust to each other by faith in believing each other's identity, calling and destiny. A culture that says, "I trust you even though you haven't earned it," cannot allow the Judas' in our lives to change the way we deal with people who need honor out of trust. We will end up sacrificing eleven world changers to save ourselves from being hurt by the one.

Key Point: ***Trusting that God has placed His treasures in all His children manifests itself in a way we honor them.***

God is calling us to create a different atmosphere, an inhabitable climate of faith based in honor. This faith defines itself in trust. As we begin to trust that God has placed His treasures in all his children, trust then manifests itself in the way we honor people. We become optimistic about what people will become. As we invest trust in people, we demonstrate the message of honor that says they are worth investing in. When we are trusted, we begin to believe in our own worth.

**1 Timothy 1:18-19** <sup>18</sup> *This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight,* <sup>19</sup> *keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.*

Key Point: ***Timothy honored Paul, as a spiritual father, by giving him a place to speak into his life.***

Paul approached Timothy on the basis of the father and son relationship they had developed.<sup>3</sup> He reminded Timothy of the prophetic words he received through the laying on of hands by the elders and called him to steward what he had received. These prophecies revealed God's call upon Timothy. This command to stewardship became Timothy's process of his fulfilled promise. Paul was basically saying to Timothy, *"Because you are destined for greatness, I entrust these things to you. This directive that I give you is because of the awesome prophecies you received. Even though these prophecies have yet to be fulfilled, it is because of what they said about your identity and destiny, and I trust that God is able to bring you to completion."* *"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"*<sup>4</sup>

The Greek word that Paul used in his "command" to Timothy is the word *parangelia*. It is the same word as "charge" in Acts 16:24 and 1 Thessalonians 4:2. It is a command given by a superior officer to a lower rank. Basically, Paul was prophesying the word of the Lord to Timothy, building on what had already been prophesied to him by the elders. In other words, Paul set before Timothy his prophetic call to destiny and then said "CHARGE!" as a general giving orders to his men to press onward for the prize, fight a good fight, and take the promise.

**2 Timothy 1:6-7** <sup>6</sup> *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.* <sup>7</sup> *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (NIV)*

Paul held the position of a father in the heart of Timothy. Timothy honored this relationship by giving Paul the place to speak into his life. Paul's position as a father in Timothy's life enabled him to constantly remind Timothy of his destiny and calling and encouraging him onward and upward through continued prophetic words, toward the prize set before him. Out of relationship, Paul confronts a spirit of timidity and continues to "charge" Timothy, *"Fan into flame the gift of God"* and remind him of the prophetic promises he had received.

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<sup>3</sup> 1Tim.1:2

<sup>4</sup> Phil.1:6

## The Misunderstanding of Honor

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How do we create a healthy environment where people are free and yet connected together in love? Free people can be very scary. Free people have the capacity to make wrong choices, create failures, and wound the hearts of those connected to them. After all, we all have histories and know stories of people doing just that. How do we trust free people who have the propensity to create messes?

Trying to understand the concept of honor in a particular culture, the teacher asked this question to his students, "What does honor mean to you?" Silence settled in the room. Thinking that maybe the translator didn't communicate what he said in a question form, he asked it again. Still silence remained in the room that was once expressive and inquisitive. It later became evident that the answer to that question was one that the students knew was not satisfactory. So they each one remained silent rather than expose a deficit to their culture. Afterwards, one of the students approached the teacher to explain the lack of response. "In our culture," he began, "honor is what you say about a person once they are dead." They may have lived a very bad lifestyle and hurt a lot of people, but you look for the good things and talk about those."

Honor, thus, takes on different expressions and is defined differently in a lot of settings. What does honor look like to you? Is it respect you give to others? Or is it kindness you expect to receive?

### Common Definitions of Honor Include:

- 1) **Personal Code** - as in "code of honor" - Living up to expectations of conduct.
- 2) **Core value** - a person who lives by an inner code of conduct.
- 3) **Respect** - recognition of authority or prestige that demonstrates admiration.
- 4) **Polite** - how we relate to people with kindness.
- 5) **Nice** - our behavior that causes others to be at ease.
- 6) **Submission** - One's willingness to yield their will to the will of another.

Some people confuse being kind and respectful as honor. So they use "honor" as a tool to confront those who are not acting nice to them. Their feelings of acceptance, admiration, and importance become measured by the "honor ruler." If another's response or behavior falls short on their "honor ruler" they feel offended. Of course the "honor ruler" varies in lengths according to each person's sensitivity levels of offense. "I'm not feeling very honored when you talk to me that way." This tool is also used when the person is not being agreed with concerning a matter or simply because the other person does not want to do what they want. "You refusing to do this for me is not making feel very honored."

Neither is honor to be used as a tool of submission. In many cultures, work environments, family structures, and even church environments, the word "honor" is synonymous to the word "submission." "Honor your leaders" is understood as "submit to me." One having their own opinion or method of doing things is interpreted as dishonor. Therefore, obedience is how you demonstrate honor, and not yielding to the will of the other is dishonor. One's willingness to be the "Red" truck becomes the acceptable standard or expectation of honor.

**Key Point:** *It is imperative that we understand's God's perspective of honor so that we can bring the kingdom culture to the earth.*

## *Kingdom Culture*

The kingdom culture of honor as revealed in a "New Covenant" perspective of Scriptures and demonstrated by Jesus, looks a lot different than what we have already defined as "honor." Therefore, it is imperative that we understand God's perspective of honor so that we can bring that culture of into our relationships and churches and ultimately impact society.

Charles Darwin gets blamed for a lot of wrong philosophies in our understanding of science today. One philosophy Darwin introduced is what has been titled as "Natural Selection." The idea of natural selection is that the strong survive and the weak die out or serve the strong. Although Darwin was credited as discovering this concept, it is something that has been evident since the beginning of man. It places a lot of validation on being the strongest, the fastest, the smartest, the one with the most, etc.... We can see its influence even upon small children when they say, "my Daddy can beat up your Daddy."

Eventually this mentality spreads into every aspect of our lives and into the culture of our societies. "I have more money than you, I win.... I have more friends than you, I win.... I can hit harder than you, I win.... we have more nuclear weapons than you, we win..." The person or nation who is the most intimidating becomes the leader. Thus, the way we create a strong society is identifying those who are the strongest and fittest and make them the most powerful by putting them in charge. Our struggle for preeminence becomes a power struggle of who can intimidate the other. The dog who dominates the other dogs become the "Alpha" dog.

Therefore, in much of the world's concept of honor, human relationships become based on one dominating the other. Those who are the most dominate become the leaders and are most worthy of honor.

We should probably mention the other extreme. In reaction to this flawed expression of "natural selection," the communistic philosophy places all men equal and all things of value being dispersed equally. The leader becomes a chosen representative of "all" the people for the "common" good.

The "Tall Poppy Syndrome" is a social dynamic common in warm climate cultures. It is referring to a poppy flower that grows beyond the height of the other poppies in the field and becomes noticeable. It is thus the one who gets the knife. Another similar saying referring to the same dynamic is, "the tallest nail gets the hammer." This dynamic results in those who stand above the norm of the crowd is cut down by the masses. Those who excel in accomplishments above others become targeted by ridicule and rejection.

As an example: A runner competing in a Track and Field tournament at school will judge his speed by the others running in the event. Even though he has the capability to break the speed record, he will purposefully pace himself to stay with the pack of runners. If he were to run at his best and gain a significant lead, the other runners would quit in humiliation and the crowd would turn against the winner for his pompous exhibition. He would be classified as proud and arrogant and no one will run against him again. He could literally be eliminated from the games for his "showing off," and scorn his family name. In this culture, honor is demonstrated by making others around you feel equal to you.

We can see in these two dynamics how the concept of honor goes from one extreme to another. In the first case you have those who use honor as a tool for control and exercise of dominion over others. And at the other extreme, are those who define honor as the absence of offense. One culture honors only those who are successful and creates a structure of competition for the strongest to survive. The other culture creates a structure where all are treated as equals. However, in that structure, neither do they create heroes or history makers.



## Honor: Founded in the Value of Who You Are

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Key Point: ***Honor derives from the fact that we are created in the image of God.***

We can either make honor conditional, or we can refuse to recognize the value each person deserves to avoid offending mediocrity. But the reality of honor is this: honor is something you are. It derives from the fact that you were created in the image of God, called by God for greatness, and gifted by God to accomplish your destiny.

**1 Peter 2:17** *Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*  
(NKJ)

**Romans 12:10** *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*

Key Point: ***Paul sets the standard of honor that is to extend to all people.***

Peter sets a standard of honor that includes all people. Everyone is recognized as being significant and uniquely expressive of their value. We therefore are to take into every relationship an attitude of honor towards them. In the same way that we are to devote ourselves in managing our love to one another, we also are to manage our honor towards people. Our expressions of love are ours to control. God's type of love is unconditional. Therefore, we choose to love regardless of how we are going to be loved in returned. It is our responsibility as being representatives of Jesus Christ to love one another. With that responsibility, we each have a core standard of conduct to manage ourselves in our relationships. It is the same with the way we honor one another. Honoring is in our personal control. It is not dependent on us receiving honor or being controlled or manipulated by others to honor them. Our choice to honor is not based upon their behavior, it is based upon who they are, as a child of God.

In the face of a crowd cursing him, spitting upon him, and murdering him, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." What was Jesus saying? "Your actions do not dictate my choice to love and forgive."

## Overcoming the Misunderstanding of Honor

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If we bring an Old Testament mindset into the church, we will develop relationships that are based upon performance and conformity. In many of our churches today, our connection to certain organizations is based upon one's agreement with their theology, structure, and traditions. "If you believe like us, you can become a member." Compliance (defined as honor) is then demonstrated in one's performance. If one breaks the rules and fails to obey their standards of behavior or fails to speak the language of their beliefs, they will pay the penalty – rejection and scorn. If the punishment does not bring you to "repentance" – which looks like humbling yourself, confessing your sins of dishonor, and being sorry for your differences. Then the end result could be excommunication from that organization. Dishonor is judged and punished.

Honor thus becomes one's compliance. This becomes the depth of relationships you will have in that organization. Should you fail to comply, those you thought were friends will not talk to you again and will be forbidden to do so. You are demonized by the leadership (declared to be under the influence of deception), labeled as a rebel, and ostracized (others are warned to stay away or they too could become deceived, and thus be on the receiving end of punishment).

**Key Point:** ***The kingdom value system is based upon unconditional love and grace.***

However, if we are going to become like the kingdom of heaven on earth, then our religious mindsets will have to change. The New Testament value system is based in unconditional love and grace. Love and grace changes the way we relate to one another. It overpowers performance mindsets and brings freedom.

The only way others can be in control over you is if you give that control to them. Under that control, you become a victim of their character defects. You place yourself on the receiving end of offense and pain, because control based in fear will always lead to hurt relationships. Our aggressive dominant mindset or our passive subservient mindset will both create opportunities for control to come into our environment. If you are finding yourself as either the "Alpha" dog, or the one laying on the ground with your belly up, then something is wrong.

## **New Government of Love**

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***Isaiah 16:5**<sup>5</sup> *In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it-- one from the house of David-- one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness. (NIV)**

This prophecy is referring to a New Covenant, which states that a new government will be established. The government based in the old covenant was established on performance that no one had the ability to comply with. It had to be abolished because it was impossible for man to fulfill its obligations. Old Testament based government was structured upon ruling man from the outside through rules and standards of conduct. The New Testament structure government is based upon love and grace empowering man to govern themselves from the inside. A person who is able to self-govern has no need for a list of rules. Loving God and loving one another becomes the motivating factor that empowers righteous behavior.

**Key Point:** ***Fear cannot work in a culture of the kingdom based in love.***

To those who have a religious mindset, freedom is a fearful concept. Because, when you introduce people to a government that does not require obedience and compliance, you are creating the potential for poor choices. However, a governing structure based in fear will not work out of love. Fear cannot work in a culture of the kingdom based in love. Perfect love casts out fear. The only thing that will work in bringing heaven to earth is a government based in love.

## Honoring the Fathers

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There is a game that children play called, "Musical Chairs." Chairs are arranged in the middle of the room with one less chair than there are children playing. When the music starts, the children all march around the chairs in anticipation of the music stopping. When it stops, all the children try to jump into a chair. The child left standing is eliminated from the game and the game continues as another chair is removed and the music begins again. The goal is to be the last child sitting in the one chair left.

Jesus was invited to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee. He notices that others who were also invited were scrambling for places of honor toward the head of the table. He told them this parable:

**Luke 14:7-11** <sup>7</sup> When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: <sup>8</sup> "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. <sup>9</sup> If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. <sup>10</sup> But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. <sup>11</sup> For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (NIV)

Key Point: ***The table of the Lord is contains places of double honor.***

Jesus uses this circumstance to illustrate a kingdom principle. The Lord's table is not round; it is rectangular. When we are invited to the table of the Lord, there are levels of honor and authority. When we get saved and come into the body of Christ, we come into a culture of honor, a culture where more honor is given where honor is due. All are worthy of honor, but those who lead are worthy of double honor, as we shall see.

**1 Corinthians 4:14-16** <sup>14</sup> I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. <sup>15</sup> Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> Therefore I urge you to imitate me. (NIV)

Paul's role to the church was as a father. Out of the role, he charges them to imitate him as He imitates his father, Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** <sup>12</sup> Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. <sup>13</sup> Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (NIV)

## Three Expressions of Honor

As a spiritual father, Paul exhorts the church to do three things to demonstrate honor to those who are overseeing them in the Lord.

- 1) Respect them
- 2) Hold them in the highest regard in love
- 3) Live in peace with one another (or basically, take responsibility for your relationships with one another)

**1 Timothy 5:17** *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (NIV)*

Not only were the saints to honor one another, but the honor they show to the elders was to be a double portion.

**Hebrews 13:17** *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (NIV)*

The writer of Hebrews adds to the description of honor by adding the need to act in submissive obedience. Many who read this Scripture read it from a slave or orphan mentality. They simply do what they are told to do it with strict obedience to the command. Others, who have been hurt and abused by leadership, will read it and react in the other extreme by denying supervision and refusing to acknowledge elders or fathers within the body of Christ. They gain a sense of righteousness by believing that the Old Testament pattern of leadership has been abolished and that we are all equal in Christ. As long as they are submissive to the voice of Christ in their hearts, then that is all that that they believe is necessary. Thus, they deny the role of authority in their lives and follow the whims of their hearts, believing it to be the voice of God.

Key Point: ***Submissive obedience is developed out of relationship, where we allow someone we have confidence and trust in to govern us towards greatness.***

The word that Paul uses, which is translated as "obey," is the Greek word *peitho*. *Peitho* is a word that has been translated in various ways in the New Testament such as; persuade, agree, confidence, friendship, obedience, trust, submit, and yield.

## Greek Definitions of Obedience:

Vines Expository Dictionary defines it in the following ways:

- 1) **Persuasion** – to persuade, bring about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral consideration.
- 2) **Agree** – to persuade into common belief.
- 3) **Friendship** – to persuade, having influence, having made their friendship.

- 4) **Obedience** – to listen and adhere to instruction.
- 5) **Confidence** – to persuade into confidence.
- 6) **Trust** – to have confidence leading to reliance.
- 7) **Yield** – to persuade to submission.

In other words, *peitho* means to allow someone you have confidence and trust in the freedom to counsel you from his or her mature perspective. The two Greek words *peitho* and *pisteuo*, meaning to trust, are closely related. The difference in meaning is that *peitho* implies the obedience inspired through trust. Faith is of the heart, it is invisible to men until there is obedience that manifests through observed conduct. When a man obeys God, he shows that he believes God. It is the persuasion of the truth resulting in faith (faith comes from hearing the word of God), but *peitho* suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith. The writer of Hebrews was basically telling the church to give the leaders a voice in their lives, allowing them to lead the people on to maturity in Christ. They are to have trust and confidence in their leadership more than they trust themselves. It is not to look like a master and slave relationship but rather a father and child relationship. It is not an issue of control and submission. It is an understanding that says of the father, "In my immaturity I may not know what is best for me, please give me your wise advice."

## Preserving the Structure

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Key Point: ***Those who refuse to be governed from the inside are not grounds to change the governing structure instituted by God.***

In the body of Christ, everyone has value. Honor is not a reflection of who has more value than another, but rather who deserves respect. When we create a round table where everyone is equal, we take away the ability for blessing to flow. Blessing flows from honor. Although the Bible speaks of mutual submission and servant leadership, the Lord's Table is not round. Servant leadership has been taken to an extreme that is no longer Biblical. Jesus washing the disciples' feet has become a metaphor for the lifestyle for Jesus' leadership, which is not balanced. Jesus had a servant's heart and a leader's mind. When you look at Jesus' leadership style, He did more things than washing feet. He gave commands to His disciples.

Jesus did not form a committee to sit at a round table and decide which city they were going to minister in. He went where the Spirit led Him. The disciples trusted Jesus and followed Him wherever He went and did whatever He told them to do. When Jesus saw the struggle over who was going to sit in the places of honor, He did not change the structure to a round table. He did not react their to pride by saying, "You are proud, self-promoting, ambitious men. We're going to cut the corners off of this rectangular table and make it round so that nobody is honored." However, this is how we have reacted in the church. Church leadership was never demonstrated as a democracy. Jesus did what was best for the people according to the will of the Father because He loved them. He knew what was best because He knew the Father's heart and Father knows best. Jesus didn't change the structure of the table; He exposed and confronted hearts.

Both of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were to replace him when he died, but they had no honor for the Lord and acted wickedly toward the people of Israel. God sent a man of God to Eli to warn him of the curse that was coming upon his household saying, "*Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will*

*be disdained.*<sup>5</sup> Blessings flow through honor, but dishonor opens the door to curses. In the demonstration of dishonor by his sons, Eli failed in restraining them and the government transitioned into new hands. Opportunity to return to the structure of honor was given.

Samuel also had two wicked sons who were now in line to take his position of authority. The elders of Israel did not want to deal with the same problem of wicked leadership that they had with Eli and his sons. Instead of restraining the dishonor of God by Samuel's sons, the elders chose to change God's structure and copy one that appeared to be working in the world. A government based in ruling the choices of others from the outside works to a degree. Fear of punishment, fear of rejection, fear of failure, and fear of accusation are all tools that work in managing people's behavior. But it is not the kingdom of God.

The failures of some who refuse to be governed from the inside by the Spirit of God are not the grounds to change the structure of the government of love and grace expressed through honor.

In the story of King Arthur, all the knights literally sat at a round table to convey that everyone was equally valuable. Although there were various ranks in office sitting at the table, all opinions were equally considered and respected. The purpose of the round table was to discuss strategy for battle, not leadership. Over the years, strategy has become the method affecting the culture of leadership in the church.

Our generation does not realize that we have been raised under a round table mentality, both in the nation, the business world, and the church. Our structure changed because of the failures of some of our leaders. We have realized that some of the people we trusted as leaders were untrustworthy. The failures of these leaders have affected our culture so that we now do not trust any of them. Because we don't trust them, we treat them with suspect and anticipate their failures. We now live in a culture that's been polluted by dishonor and lack of integrity. Now, instead of confronting our leaders on a personal level for their failures, their dirty laundry is exposed by those who call themselves "watchmen." As a result, slander, malice, gossip, faultfinding, and accusation have become acceptable forms of executing punishment. Men and women who should be honored for being leaders are being brought down to the level of public servants that thus must be accountable to answer to the public.

## **Wheat and Tares**

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Key Point: ***The elements required for a garden to grow are also the elements that promote the growth of weeds.***

When a garden is planted, watered and fertilized, it will undoubtedly encounter weeds. The very thing that stimulates the garden plants to grow will also cause weeds to grow. As a matter of fact, the weeds have a tendency to grow faster than the plants and will eventually choke them out unless they are removed. Some people decide to not water their yard because of the work that weeds entail. They may even cover their yard with rock or cement to prevent weeds from growing at all. They change the structure of their yard to avoid the necessity of weeding. There may not be weeds but there is no life either.

Key Point: ***The potential for our greatness is growing next to our potential for failure.***

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<sup>5</sup> 1Samuel 2:30b

When we hear a teaching where the Spirit touches us in an area to stimulate growth, the potential for our greatness is growing next to our potential for failure. In other words, the greater the potential for a revelation from God to impact us with life, the greater the potential there is for weeds to grow. The solution is to deal with the weeds rather than change the structure by removing the potential for life and growth.

God brings people into our lives that have a good perspective of the weeds in our yard. Most of them are very willing to tell us about them too. We must then decide, from what they have shown us, whether or not to pull the weeds. However, we also have a tendency to only allow those who have nice things to say into our yard. We don't want to know about the weeds, we just want to hear how pretty our yard looks. We want people to come into our garden who are only going to admire the fruit we have growing. The question is: do we allow people to have a say in our lives that will help us cultivate our garden, or do we only allow "yes men" and people-pleasers to stroke our egos?

There was a truth that came to the church several years ago through what was called the "Shepherding Movement." It taught fatherly principles of leadership, but they became perverted when handed down to an elder brother's mentality within the movement. Instead of becoming empowering fathers they assumed power over people. They began to control and manipulate the people under them. The truths of fathering and mothering were taught to sons and daughters who were not mature and lacked the Father's heart. The consequences of teaching fatherly and motherly principles to elderly sons and daughters are that many end up competing with those they are supposed to be leading. When they are taught the principles of honor and respect without responsibility and integrity, the weeds in their heart will pervert them. The elder brother leader begins to demand respect and honor. Honor becomes a principle of law rather than heartfelt respect and love from a free will.

Key Point: ***Blessing cannot flow from the law of honor, but rather honor through love.***

Blessings cannot flow from the law of honor. Demanded honor bypasses the free will, avoids respect, and results in fruitlessness. It is the heart of respect that is fertile soil for the blessing of life to flow into. Weeds grew up in the Shepherding Movement because it was misapplied, not because it was a truth that was wrong. If we do not restore the fatherhood we will miss out on the blessings that flow through "honor your father and your mother."

## Conditions for a Culture of Honor

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Key Point: ***The conditions of freedom, commitment, and healthy communication are necessary in a culture of Honor.***

In order to bring the culture of the kingdom of heaven to earth, we will have to create certain conditions that are conducive to the culture of honor.

### 3 Conditions Conducive to the Culture of Honor

- 1) Freedom** - There is no fear in love.<sup>6</sup> Fear has to do with punishment. There is no fear of punishment in the culture of love. So then, how do we keep order? What will keep people from doing whatever they want? When we create a fear based system of government that elevates the "perfect" ones (which usually are the ones who have learned what mask to wear in public), and demoralizes those who fail. We then create a governing system that is not conducive to heaven coming to earth.

Only in a culture of love, grace, and freedom will people find a safe place to be themselves. Being themselves means they have freedom to make choices out of their "new nature" in Christ Jesus towards their predestined greatness. And it also gives them opportunities for failures and mistakes. So, do we change the structure to control their choices and limit the greatness within them? Or do we provide a structure that gives freedom, creates a safe place to do whatever they want, along with the means to father sons and daughters into their greatness?

***Psalms 32:9** <sup>9</sup> Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you. (NKJV)*

*<sup>9</sup> "Don't be ornery like a horse or mule that needs bit and bridle to stay on track."  
(The Message Bible)*

A You Tube video shows Stacy Westfall competing in a horse and rider tournament without her using a bit and bridle to control the horse. She completes the exercises by her gentle strokes on the horses neck, and her voice speaking in loving tones. At the end of her perfect performance she is rewarded by a standing ovation of the crowd.

In a culture of love, there is no need for tools of control. It is recognizing that grace empowers those who have genuinely had a life-changing encounter by the Spirit of God and has a new nature from which to make choices. They are able to govern themselves in freedom.

- 2) Loyalty** - No matter how bad the failures and mistakes of others can become; and people can and do make serious life altering choices that often result in devastation. There must remain a loyal commitment to the structure of the government of love. The same Father who put two trees in the middle of the garden and made them totally accessible to people with a free will has not changed. Therefore, we must maintain the governing structure of freedom while refusing the tools of fear to gain control.
- 3) Relational Connection through Healthy Communication** - We need to be able to communicate the value we see in those we are in relationship with. We must create a prophetic culture that calls out the treasures of others. We need to create a safe place where people can communicate what their needs are. When there is a breakdown in communication it will usually result in disconnection and broken relationships. In an environment where we practice love and cultivate honor, we must realize that relational connection with open and honest communication is the glue that holds us together.

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<sup>6</sup> 1John 4:18



In our open and honest communication comes the necessity to confront one another in love. This means, the choices you are making that are hurtful to those around you, that are contrary to the greatness within you, and influencing your attitudes and behaviors, are going to need to be confronted. In a culture of love there is also the need for accountability to one another and especially to those who have a father or mother role in our lives. There is a need for us all to have people around us who can speak the truth in love into our hearts without being offended. Change is inevitable in our walk with Christ into His Kingdom. Transition and be difficult. Therefore, friends communicating wisdom and guidance into our transition becomes an important part of the process towards greatness.

## Conclusion

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Key Point: ***God is looking for those with a heart of submission that demonstrates honor to reveal His commission to.***

David became the greatest king Israel ever had; he was a man after God's heart. David was raised under the leadership of King Saul, who tried to destroy him. However, David remained true to honor a king he saw as anointed of God. David's greatness was due to the fact that he submitted to the leadership of Saul so that the mindset of Saul within him could be purged from his own heart.

The potential for greatness is within each of us. In the world and even in many churches there is a "Saul" mindset that wants to rule through control, domination and force. That mindset must die so that the heart that is after God's heart may come into greatness.

There are many that have been hurt by the rectangular table style of leadership. When submission is discussed, something rises up within them wanting to resist. However, the structure that caused eleven men to come into their greatness cannot be changed to save us from the few who would abuse it. Instead of changing the structure, let's deal with the heart. Leaders, who abuse their authority, need to be confronted. Those who reject authority need to be counseled. We don't change the structure to avoid offense. When we become honest with one another, we create an atmosphere of trust. If we are not honest with one another, when we remain un-confrontational, we will create structures of legalism that will make things worse in the end. The structure that keeps out offense will also keep out trust and love.

The kingdom of God does not revolve around the dreams of men; it revolves around the will of God. Men and women of Godly mission have seen the vision of His kingdom coming to earth. Before we receive a commission, we must first come under submission and join with those who have a mission. It is the humble hearts of those who submit and give honor where honor is due who receive the blessing of life that the kingdom of God offers.

Key Point: ***Out of God's love flows a devotion to the saints to see them prosper.***

Paul exhorted the Romans, *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor."*<sup>7</sup> Out of God's true love flows a devotion to our brothers and sisters to see them come into their

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 10:12 (NAS)

greatness. This devotion requires us to approach them in their faulty condition, and call them into the place where the Father dwells. We must be devoted to each other in love to expose the weeds, cultivate the soil, and to cherish the good fruit. This must be done in honor as to the royalty they have been called to be.

Key Point: ***Honor involves two powerful people who have the ability to communicate while they stay relationally connected to one another.***

Honor is two powerful people in a relationship who have the ability to communicate while they stay connected and meet each other's needs in the situation they are in. Two powerful people equals; two valuable, significant, assertive and unique individuals. Not just one dominant person and one passive person - Not two powerful people taking turns at being aggressive. It is focusing on what two equally powerful need.

Most people do not know how to communicate what they need. Communicating our needs is typically viewed as weakness. As if admitting you have a need is revealing your vulnerability. Good communication is a pillar of honor. Knowing how to assertively communicate what it is that we need to one another. The only way that we are going to learn to honor one another is to extravagantly value, courageously love, and valiantly confront. It is learning to show your real self to others and to listen as they reveal themselves to you.

Key Point: ***Honor is most tested among the closest relationships, when each has become vulnerable and trusted.***

Honor is most tested among the closest relationships. Relationships are going to be challenged as we transition and transform from one mindset to kingdom mindsets. It is going to require that we give the grace we received from God in our ignorance and give that grace to others who are still transforming. This means, that we are all prone to make mistakes and create messes with one another. But in these messes are opportunities for grace to abound and practice choosing to honor. Honor brings out the best in each other and creates a channel for blessings from heaven to flow.

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*End of Lesson 405*

## Recommended Resources:

1. Audio message, *"Places of Honor"* by Kris Vallotton
2. Audio message, *"Honoring the Fathers"* by Kris Vallotton
3. Audio message, *"Culture of Honor"* by Danny Silk
4. Audio message, *"Honor Among Us"* by Danny Silk

Copies of these messages can be obtained through:

Sound Wisdom  
933 College View Drive  
Redding, CA 96003  
USA

email: [customerservice@ibethel.org](mailto:customerservice@ibethel.org)

Customer Service Phone #: 1-530-246-6000