



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HONORABLE?

TO: LEGISLATORS

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At the risk of sounding dishonoring, after watching the Vice Presidential Debate last night, the thought came to mind that I should teach a Bible study on what the Scriptures say regarding Honor – and being Honorable! May the recent display of dishonor serve as a teaching moment.

Each of you carries the label “The Honorable.” What does the New Testament and the Book of Proverbs have to say regarding that? In a biblical sense, what is honor?

The root word in Hebrew for honor is *Kabad* meaning “heavy or weight.” The form of this appearing throughout Proverbs is *Kabod* meaning “abundance, glory, dignity or high position.” In Psalm 8:5 the word is used to describe how God has crowned man with dignity and splendor as it relates to man being created in His image and given rule over His creation.

Taking our cue from God, and to quote one of the Boy Scout laws, it follows that we should “give honor to whom honor is due.” Sadly, the VP Debate demonstrated something else. So let’s take good look at this biblical concept. Read on.

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**WEEKLY MEMBERS BIBLE STUDY**  
 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF  
 FIRST-VOTES-BACK (MONDAY OR TUESDAY NIGHT)  
**Dinner Served • Capitol Room H324 • Spouses Welcome**

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HONORABLE?****I. INTRODUCTION**

Honor is dignity and respect ascribed to man or God. Honor *kabod* is exhibited in different ways throughout the OT; each of the following provides a sense of understanding of this character quality. First, in the OT, honor can be exhibited in the form of external splendor, such as material possessions. (Cf. 1 Chron. 29:12, 28; 2 Chron. 1:11, 12; Esther 5:11; Prov. 3:16). This is honor that is visibly expressed materially, as is evidenced in our culture when we give a gift to someone. Such actions serve to express honor. Another kind of honor in the OT was the ceremony accompanying a military success. Still, another sense of honor was the respect afforded to one of high position (e.g. Joseph, Gen. 45:13; Job 19:9) as royal stewards. In this regard, we appropriately label our political leaders “The Honorable.” Last in our introductory notation is the heavenly honor that awaits the faithful as ascribed in Psalm 73:24.

Let us thoroughly study honor from Proverbs and the NT. I have organized biblical attributions to honor in the following way: First, giving honor to the Lord – versus the sin of giving honor to oneself. The second classification pivots around the idea of receiving honor—how one receives it from the Lord and how one receives it from others. Finally, in our attempt to better understand the concept of honor, the student can organize the oft idea of giving honor into three main categories: (1) to others; (2) to fools; and (3) to institutional leaders.

**II. GIVING HONOR TO THE LORD****A. THROUGH GIVING**

***3:9 Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce;***

This is a reference to the OT concept of tithing. In Malachi 3:10b, the Lord adds, “test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a

blessing until it overflows.” We are to honor God in a way that is proportional to what He gives us.

**B. THROUGH TAKING CARE OF THE POOR**

***14:31 He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.***

Giving to the poor is another biblically explicit way that we honor God. It is important to note that this responsibility is ascribed to the Church and to individuals. One cannot find a mandate in Scripture for this being a primary responsibility of the institution of Government.

**C. THROUGH PRAISING HIM VERBALLY**

King Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that he needed to honor God. Note that he did this via verbal praise:

***When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me. I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored the one who lives forever.***

God is honored by our material gifts in support of His purposes to take the Gospel throughout the world; by taking care of the less fortunate; and speaking His glory from our lips. These are ways we ascribe to Him dignity; this is how we honor God.

**III. THE SIN OF HONORING SELF**

***12:9 Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant than he who honors himself and lacks bread.***

This Proverb contrasts outward appearances with inward stability. The two are not necessarily connected: It is better to be industrious and of low



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profile than a blowhard. There are those who work on their character and there are those who work on their reputation. It follows then....

**27:2 *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.***

It is always best to work hard and quietly and let your record speak for itself over time, versus falling into the trap of constant self-promotion with little to promote.

**IF YOU ARE INDUSTRIOUS AND GOD-HONORING, OTHERS WILL TAKE NOTE IN DUE TIME. DON'T HONOR YOURSELF.**

1Thessalonians 4:4 helps to clarify our perspective of self and honor. The passage is written to believers:

***Each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.***

The Greek word here for **honor** *doxazo* takes on a right kind of connotation (in terms of “value and respect” for self) given its contextual usage. Honor, here, is used in terms of our personal sanctification, or being set apart from the world and its ways. The idea is that we should always hold ourselves in utmost dignity that befits a true ambassador of the King of Kings. Our strong sense of self worth does not stem from arrogance, but from our position in Christ – Christ has bought us at a huge price! The believer possesses an imputed dignity and honor that comes from, and is, Christ Himself! (Cf. Gal. 2:20). As a vessel of and for Christ, the believer celebrates His honor in and through their life.

#### **IV. RECEIVING HONOR FROM THE LORD**

##### **A. THROUGH OBEDIENCE**

In the following Proverbs Solomon personifies wisdom, stylistically assigning a feminine gender to the idea of obedience to God’s Word.

**3:16 *Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor.***

**4:8-9 *Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty***

**8:18 *Riches and honor are with me, Enduring wealth and righteousness.***

The summary point of these Proverbs is that God will honor you if you honor His Word! God blesses – He honors – obedience!

##### **B. THROUGH HUMILITY**

Hebrews 12 reveals the method God uses to mature His children. It is through His discipline and the subsequent humility that ensues – God’s economy for maturity -- that a saint is moved toward greater usability. The following Proverbs summarize in sound-bite fashion all that verses 5-13 in Hebrews teach about being humbled by the Lord:

**15:33 *The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes humility.***

**18:12 *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, But humility goes before honor.***

**22:4 *The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches, honor and life.***

**29:23 *A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.***

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It is normative for God to profoundly humble those whom He plans to honor greatly. Know this about God and expect the same course in your life.

**V. RECEIVING HONOR FROM OTHERS**

Do your peers honor you? Do they ascribe weight to you; are you respected in the minds and actions of others? There are Proverbs that address this important aspect of honor. Consider the following six insights in terms of gaining dignity in the eyes of your colleagues.

**A. THROUGH GRACIOUSNESS**

**11:16 A gracious woman attains honor, And ruthless men attain riches.**

1Peter 2:17 states that believers should give honor to all people, believers or not: "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

**THE FACT THAT ALL ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD SHOULD PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE ATTITUDE OF HONOR AND RESPECT TOWARD OTHERS**

Even though we believers are called to confront sin and counsel repentance, we all need to remember that such is motivated out of a heart of compassion for the unregenerate who are passively or aggressively hostile toward the risen Christ. Be gracious; give people what they do not deserve! As a result you will garner weight.

**B. BY AVOIDING ARGUMENTS**

**20:3 Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.**

Don't be someone who takes issue with everything, as if you are the self-appointed Sheriff.

**C. THROUGH LOYALTY**

**21:21 He who pursues righteousness and loyalty Finds life, righteousness and honor.**

The Hebrew word for **loyalty** is *kesed*, which carries the idea of goodness and kindness. If you are good and kind to your friends, if you have their back, you will gain much favor in their eyes.

**27:18 He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit, And he who cares for his master will be honored.**

The Hebrew word for **Care** is *shamar* meaning, "keep, watch, or preserve." Do you have that attitude toward your boss? Do you have his back? Again, such attitudes and actions lead to your honor; betrayal on the other hand, leads not to receiving honor.

**D. THROUGH SELF-EFFACING**

**29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.**

From the heart, become a master at understating self-importance and you will obtain honor.

**E. THROUGH HUMILITY**

**25:6 Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men.**

Here is one of my sayings, "always deflect praise afforded you onto those who supported you." Remember....

**27:21 The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, And each is tested by the praise accorded him.**

Since flattery in office is such a huge temptation, develop a style of self-effacement if you haven't already.



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Here then are five ways you can gain honor in the eyes of others. Work on them in and through the power of Christ. There is one additional way to gain honor....

### F. THROUGH AGE

**20:29** *The glory of young men is their strength, And the honor of old men is their gray hair.*

There is yet another means of gaining honor. Whereas the former represent honor being earned through merit and personal character, this last one represents a right of honor. The inference of this Proverb is that an older person is to be honored period. In a way similar to Deuteronomy 5:16 and Ephesians 6:2 speaking about honoring one's parents, this category of honor contains no caveat or litmus test relative to bestowing honor. It doesn't matter whether an older person has earned it or not.

The word here translated **honor** is different. It is *badar* meaning, "an ornament," which differs from the meaning of *kador*. Our capitol culture should be totally informed by the ancient Hebrew culture on this point; as such foundations make for a nobler environment. (Such insights should also inform our views regarding Senior Healthcare and Euthanasia).

In a biblically informed culture, then, one way of receiving honor is to simply grow old; **Gray hair** citizens should automatically gain honor.

## VI. GIVING HONOR TO OTHERS

### A. TO THE LESS FORTUNATE

1Cor. 12:23 contains profound, sobering truths about members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we are to bestow abundant honor, and thereby our less presentable members become much more presentable. The NT Greek word for **honor** in this passage is *timao* and means similarly "to ascribe worth, respect." We are to

honor the less fortunate not only as a means of blessing them, but for the purposes of manifesting unity in the body of Christ. This display is unequalled in the fallen world around us. Romans 12:10 echoes the same truth when it states, "Give preference to one another in honor." Beloved, do not be partial toward the powerful.

### B. TO WIDOWS

1 Timothy 5:3 states, "Honor widows who are widows indeed." Do you have a widow on your staff or in your community to whom you are ascribing favor? Do you ascribe them worth and respect? The less fortunate, widows, children without parents, these are those whom God expects us to give over-abundant favor.

## VII. GIVING HONOR TO A FOOL

Fools are those who tender thoughtless, insensitive remarks. They can be identified by their inability to reason cogently. Proverbs identifies these manifest characteristics of a fool as evidenced by and when (interestingly!) they debates another person:

**29:9** *If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.* <sup>(ESV)</sup>

Scripture serves to inform the wise public servant that fools will resort to **rage** and **laughter** to win their point. Sound familiar? Be prepared for this:

**3:35** *The wise will inherit honor, But fools display dishonor.*

If a believer is called to a campus ministry, (be it a university or capital) wherein rigorous debate is expected, it follows that you have a special assignment requiring special abilities. One of our joint prayers in the Members Bible Study needs to be that God will raise up thousands of public servants (like many of you) who will be strong in Christ, and able, cogently and forcefully, to defeat overwhelmingly the foolish speculations of those

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who ignore the precepts of His Word and new life in Christ. Let us give no honor whatsoever to the verbiage of foolish thinking.

**ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO PRATE FOOLISH IDEOLOGIES SHOULD BE REGULARLY AND ROUNDLY DEFEATED BY THOSE TRAINED IN THE USE OF TRUTH**

How then should the believer relate to a fool? Clearly they represent a category of people whom God says you should *exclude* from honor:

**26:1 Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest, So honor is not fitting for a fool.**

**26:8 Like one who binds a stone in a sling, So is he who gives honor to a fool.**

**VIII. HONORING ALL INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS**

All are to honor the leaders in the five institutions ordained by God during the Church age. The Greek word for **Honor** in each of the following passages is *doxazo* which means “to render esteem.” Notice the recurrence of the word:

**A. GOVERNMENTAL**

**Romans 13:7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.**

**1 Peter 2:17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.**

**B. FAMILIAL**

**Ephesians 6:2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise).**

**C. ECCLESIASTICAL**

**1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.**

**D. ECONOMICAL**

**1 Timothy 6:1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.**

**E. MARITAL**

**Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**

**3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way . . . and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.**

God’s leaders are to be esteemed, if for no other reason than the position they hold.

**IX. SUMMARY**

We have attempted to build a theology regarding Honor this week. Honor is an integral part of the believer’s life. We are to give weight to certain others, as have been revealed by this study. Conversely we are not to honor fools or foolish things; we are never to honor things that are dishonoring to Christ. Honoring the right things is not only an element of living life with skill for God’s glory (i.e. wisdom) but it is a means of placing oneself in a position to be blessed. Practice honoring others in humility, and God will honor you as a result.