

VIRTUE II

HONOR

The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.
—Proverbs 15:33

Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.
—Proverbs 22:4

Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.
—Proverbs 18:12

Reading the three Scripture passages above leads to one clear insight: humility and honor are interrelated. Honor in the world's perspective typically deals with a person's lifestyle or accomplishments as they relate to the world's virtues. However, honor in God's eyes is very different. From God's perspective, true honor is preceded by deep humility.

What is honor? Better yet, what does it mean to be honorable in God's sight? Honor is difficult to define in a paragraph or even a lengthy story or parable. Consider these short sayings about honor that help define this complex topic:

- An honorable leader gives away all the credit but takes all the blame.
- Honor is living your life in a way that you believe God is *actually watching you*.
- Honor is giving up your bed and sleeping on the floor but saying nothing about it.
- Honor is taking the worst seat.
- Honor is being self-sacrificing and not boasting about it or complaining.
- Honor is overlooking a wrong or taking the losing position in an (ultimately unimportant) argument for the sake of peace within relationships.
- Honor is living for an audience of One.
- Honor is still finishing the details of a project even after you have been fired.
- Honor is taking the high road.
- Honor is giving a two-week notice at work and working to the best of your ability until the day you leave.
- Honor is doing your best on a school assignment even when your teacher does not deserve respect.
- Honor is looking the other way when wronged: “A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense” (Proverbs 19:11).

Godly honor comes to a person when they serve and live only for God. Sometimes others acknowledge this honor publically, but this is never a true knight’s goal. His first goal is to live for God and be loyal to the code of knighthood. He lives for an audience of One and thus maintains and holds honor within himself. Then whatever public honor comes, comes. Thus, a by-product of a true knight’s life is likely a good reputation (at least among those where a good reputation is valued), but that’s never his goal either. Nonetheless, having a good name is “more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold” (Proverbs 22:1).

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alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you *openly*. And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you *openly*. (Matthew 6:1-6 KJV, emphases added).

Honor that occurs in public is usually first earned in private by living quietly for an audience of One. Public honor often comes when you are not looking to be honored.

I heard a story about a missionary returning to America after spending years in a distant country on a mission trip. While walking off the ship, he saw the family members of other passengers rushing forward to greet their missed loved ones. Having no surviving children, he felt disappointed, as no family members came to greet him. He questioned God, "Lord, why is there no one to meet me here? I have spent my whole life serving you?" Then he heard God reply, "My child, it's because you haven't come home yet." Ultimately, our reward and honor for serving the Lord and others should come from Him and in His time.

REFLECT

He who pursues righteousness and love finds life,
prosperity, and honor.

—Proverbs 21:21

A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly
spirit gains honor.

—Proverbs 29:23

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

—Romans 12:10-12

It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

—Proverbs 20:3

God has honored the Knight, and all the people honor him, as is recounted in this Book. And knighthood is an honorable office above all offices, orders, and estates of the world—except for the order of priesthood, which pertains to the holy sacrifice of the altar.²⁹

—Ramon Lull

RESPOND

1. Is honor something we are or something we receive?
2. How should we respond when others honor us?
3. Why does the Bible connect humility and honor?
4. Why is it that whenever we seek honor we typically never receive true honor?
5. Why does humility precede true honor?