

## LEADER GUIDE

### LESSON 2: HONOR & OWNERSHIP

YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HONOR SETS THE STAGE FOR YOUR BEHAVIOR IN GIVING.



A humbling perspective on honor can be found in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats conveys, very plainly, the importance of discernment and action, when it comes to setting the needs and welfare of others equal to our own. (i) Honor means recognizing the value of others as His masterpieces, worthy of our attention and our treasure. Honor means recognizing Him in the "least of these," all of whom bear His image and likeness. (ii)

The wellspring of honor is the Spirit of Jesus, the embodiment of selflessness and generosity: "What I have is yours; you matter, and I would do without, to ensure that you are provided for." (iii) Through elevating others in the same manner as Christ, (iv) giving and stewardship represent showing honor in its purest form. Viewing what we possess as tools in God's toolbox enables Him to use those resources to reach the lost and build up His Bride. (v)

By contrast, dishonor finds its root in a spirit of poverty, both physical and spiritual: "<I> need what I have, and therefore none is available for you. I don't have enough for me, let alone enough to give to anyone else. I must keep it to make sure <I> prosper/move forward/survive." (vi) The motivation behind dishonor is singular: elevate and preserve oneself with little if any regard for the welfare of others. This antithetical posture to the nature of Christ lays claim to possessions and accomplishments as the fruit of one's own power, creativity, and ability to seize upon opportunity. There exists no acknowledgement of God or His sovereign role in one's life. (vii)

Today we look at how our giving behavior evidences the extent to which our lives honor Christ as Lord and Master.

**THINK ABOUT IT: The role Jesus plays in your life determines the degree of honor you show others.**

Scripture shows us that as "the least of these" receive our help and affection, we evidence our love for Jesus; such behavior affects our eternal reward. Attention to the things that matter to Jesus – the poor, the destitute, the "unlovely" – reveals a heart that beats in sync with His.

When He is truly "high and lifted up" in our hearts, thus recognized and revered for His sacrificial behavior for others, we are led to follow suit with joy. We willingly go to great lengths to ensure the wellbeing of those around us, and around the world, through our support of His church and its focus (viii)

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**TALK ABOUT IT:** Where do you see the “least of these” in your daily life? Are you even looking for them?

#### LEADER NOTES:

As with many others throughout this course, this is a “thinking question” that does not have any particular right or wrong reply. For this reason, some in your group may need gentle prodding to offer their thoughts & perspective.

In addition, many in your group will sit quietly while “knowing” the answer but will not speak up for fear of being seen as prideful. Engage those participants whom you recognize as mature in the Lord and who are thus qualified to impart to others.

#### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- In our family (immediate and extended)
- In our own church (Be advised: you may offend the Pharisees with this one!)
- Throughout our culture as shown in depravity of behavior
- The homeless
- Prisons
- Anywhere we’re willing to look

#### CONCEPT SUMMARY:

Perhaps we’re just not looking very hard, or we’re too callous. Maybe we really do understand our responsibility to do something once we see, but we’re just not yet ready or willing to “go there.” While this may show honesty about where we really stand – and that’s good start! – it also shows our immaturity in Christ. An understanding of honor for our Savior, as displayed through honor for the “least of these,” begins to transform our vision.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Responsibly managing what we do not own shows honor for the Master.

Two parallel Gospel passages speak to this important principle. In Matthew 25.14, and again in Luke 19.11, we are given a picture of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus likens it a Master who entrusts part of His realm to servants who are ultimately judged based on their faithfulness and diligence.

When we personally see Him as Lord and Ruler of all we have and experience, we are compelled to bring honor to His name in how we govern all our resources – financial and otherwise. True honor happens when the vision & priorities of the Master govern

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our decisions, and we choose wisely out of love, not fear of repercussion.

**TALK ABOUT IT: Recognizing we are saved by grace, through faith, and not by our works, what does this passage reveal about the consequences of faithful stewardship?**

#### LEADER NOTES:

Eph 2.8-9 affirms the source of our salvation, and James 2.14-19 establishes the necessity of faith set in motion in response to it. Use these two passages as a springboard for discussion about the positive results, both earthly and eternal, of stewardship compelled by honor.

#### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- That bearing fruit matters (ix)
- That the process, not just the result, matters
- That the motivation of our heart matters
- That it releases blessing(s)
- That God places healthy expectations on His children
- That being faithful with little results in being entrusted with more.

#### CONCEPT SUMMARY:

The Word of God clearly communicates that we

- a) must recognize Him as the source of all we have,
- b) are to activate and employ these various resources in a manner that honors Him, and
- c) will enjoy great blessing when we do, now and forever.

**THINK ABOUT IT: Giving to others finds its source in overt, demonstrated love.**

The apostle Paul instructs us to “esteem others higher than ourselves” and reminds us of Christ’s example in “taking on the nature of a servant” (x) and honoring us through His sacrificial love. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul reveals that “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” (xi)

When we are re-created in Christ (xii) and fully comprehend the love and grace given to us, we respond in kind. Giving becomes a natural extension of our lives, rather than being viewed as a duty or obligation. 1 John 4.19 summarizes it best: “We loved because He first loved us.” Similarly, we give to others because He first gave to us.

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**TALK ABOUT IT:** Who benefits – and receives honor – when a gift is given, and a need is met?

#### LEADER NOTES:

You will take your group in a slightly different direction with this question. Rather than prompting the usual list of replies or comments, steer the discussion around these three simple answers. You may, for example, present the answer as a prompt for discussion, and then summarize each point with the comment following each item.

1. **The one in need.** Our obedience solves an immediate problem and often helps set new things in motion.
2. **The one who gives.** Prov 11.25 makes it clear that blessing another results in blessing in our own life.
3. **The One Who Gave.** Matt 5.16 reminds us that when we “let [our] light so shine before men,” the Father receives glory. And thus He is honored.

#### PERSONAL/FAMILY APPLICATION

##### DISCUSS

To whom, and how, does your family show honor? Are things or traditions more honored than (i.e. at the expense of honor for) people?

##### DECIDE

Establish guidelines, based on His Word, of what honor for others looks like in your life.

##### DO!

Be pro-active: go do something that stretches you and moves you beyond your normal comfort zone by showing compassion, generosity, and love. Visit the elderly; serve in a homeless shelter; empty a closet for a clothing drive.

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**GIVE**&Grow

- [illegible]