

## Virtues- a return to ethical roots- Pastor John Kupitz

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### Summary

This powerful exploration of biblical honor challenges us to reclaim a virtue that has been largely forgotten in modern culture. Drawing from the Hebrew word 'kavod,' meaning weight or significance, and the Greek 'time,' meaning value or worth, we discover that honor is far more than a polite gesture—it's about ascribing the proper weight, value, and respect to God, others, and even ourselves. The message confronts us with Jesus' own words from Matthew 15, where He exposes the hypocrisy of honoring God with our lips while our hearts remain far from Him. This isn't just ancient history; it's a mirror reflecting our own worship, relationships, and daily interactions. We're reminded that honor must flow from genuine heart attitudes, not mere outward performance. The call to 'outdo one another in showing honor' from Romans 12:10 becomes particularly convicting when we consider our polarized culture, our fractured communities, and even our own families. Perhaps most challenging is the recognition that sometimes honoring our parents means living in such a way that others look at us and say, 'They must have great parents'—and similarly, our lives should cause others to honor our Heavenly Father. This week invites us to practice honor intentionally, recognizing it as a pathway marked by humility, righteousness, and love.

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### Scripture References from the Sermon

*Directly Quoted or Cited:*

- Psalm 29:2 - "Acknowledge the majesty of the Lord's reputation. Worship the Lord in holy attire."
- Proverbs 18:12 - "Before destruction is the heart of a person, the heart of a person is proud, but humility comes before honor."
- Isaiah 29:13 - "These people say they are loyal to me. They say wonderful things about me, but they're not really loyal to me. Their worship consists of nothing but man-made ritual."

- Matthew 15:1-9 - The extended passage about the Pharisees questioning why Jesus' disciples don't wash their hands, and Jesus' response about honoring father and mother
- Matthew 5:16 - "In the same way, let your light shine before people so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven."
- Hebrews 2:7 - "You made him lower than the angels for a little while and you crowned him with glory and honor."
- Psalm 8 - (Referenced as the source quoted in Hebrews 2:7)
- Hebrews 3:3 - "For he has come to deserve greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house deserves greater honor than the house itself."
- Romans 2:7 - "Eternal life is given to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honor and immortality."
- Romans 12:10 - "Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another."
- Proverbs 21:21 - "The one who pursues righteousness and love finds life, bounty, and honor."

*Alluded to or Related Themes:*

- Exodus 20:12 / Deuteronomy 5:16 - The Fifth Commandment: "Honor your father and mother"
- Acts 14:11-15 - Paul and Barnabas refusing worship (alluded to when discussing rejecting honor when people tried to worship Paul as a god)
- Philippians 2:3 - Humility and considering others (related to the theme of humility before honor)
- 1 Peter 2:17 - "Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor" (relevant to honoring authority)
- Colossians 3:23-24 - Working honorably as unto the Lord
- 1 Timothy 5:17 - Honoring elders who lead well

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## Discussion Questions

- How does the biblical concept of honor as 'weight' or 'significance' challenge our modern understanding of respect and recognition in relationships?
- In what ways might you be honoring God with your lips but not with your heart, and how can you align your worship with genuine devotion?
- Pastor John suggests that sometimes honorable disobedience is necessary when lower authorities contradict higher ones. How do you discern when civil disobedience is the right response?
- How does treating yourself like someone who needs your help relate to the concept of self-honor, and where in your life might you need to apply this principle?
- What would change in your political conversations if you began by assuming that those who disagree with you are logical, reasonable people who share your Christian values?
- How does the Hebrew understanding of honor as 'kabod' (heavy or weighty) inform the way we should approach God's reputation and majesty in our daily lives?
- Romans 12:10 calls us to outdo one another in showing honor. What practical steps can you take this week to elevate how you honor the people around you?
- How might a lack of honor at individual and community levels contribute to the social and political conflicts we see in our nation today?

- When someone honors you with a compliment or recognition, why is it important to receive that honor graciously rather than deflecting it with self-deprecation?
- How does the connection between humility and honor in Proverbs challenge the cultural narrative that self-promotion is necessary for success?

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## 5-Day Devotional: Reclaiming the Virtue of Honor

### Day 1: The Weight of Honor

**Reading:** Psalm 29:1-2; Isaiah 29:13

**Devotional:** The Hebrew word for honor, *kabod*, literally means "heavy" or "weighty." When we honor God, we acknowledge His weight and significance in our lives. But God warns against hollow worship—honoring Him with our lips while our hearts remain distant. Today, examine your worship. When you sing praises or pray, is your heart fully engaged? True honor isn't performative; it flows from genuine devotion. Consider where you might be offering God lip service rather than heart service. The remedy begins with honest self-reflection and a humble return to authenticity. God desires worshipers who honor Him not just outwardly, but from the depths of their being. Let your worship carry the weight it deserves.

### Day 2: Honoring Through Humility

**Reading:** Proverbs 18:12; Proverbs 21:21; Matthew 5:16

**Devotional:** Scripture teaches that humility precedes honor. This paradox challenges our cultural obsession with self-promotion. When we pursue righteousness and love rather than recognition, we find life, prosperity, and honor as byproducts. Jesus modeled this perfectly—He humbled Himself to death on a cross, and God exalted Him to the highest place. Your good deeds aren't just personal achievements; they reflect on your Heavenly Father. When people see your integrity, compassion, and faithfulness, they honor God who shaped you. Today, resist the urge to elevate yourself. Instead, pursue what is right and loving. Let your light shine not to draw

attention to yourself, but to illuminate the goodness of your Father in heaven.

### **Day 3: Honoring Your Parents and Authorities**

**Reading:** Matthew 15:1-9; Ephesians 6:1-3

**Devotional:** Jesus confronted religious leaders who created loopholes to avoid honoring their parents financially. They claimed religious devotion while neglecting family responsibility—honoring God with lips but not hearts. Honoring parents means living in ways that reflect well on them, making others say, "They must have been raised well." This doesn't mean blind obedience to ungodly requests, but it does mean treating parents with respect, dignity, and care—especially in their aging years. The same principle applies to other authorities in your life. Today, identify one way you can tangibly honor your parents or someone in authority over you. Perhaps a phone call, a word of appreciation, or practical help. Remember: honor isn't just attitude; it's action.

### **Day 4: Receiving Honor Graciously**

**Reading:** Romans 12:9-10; 1 Peter 2:17

**Devotional:** Honoring others includes receiving honor when it's offered to you. Self-deprecation that rejects genuine compliments doesn't demonstrate humility—it dishonors both the giver and yourself as God's creation. When someone praises you, they're acknowledging God's work in your life. Arguing against their kindness dismisses their generosity and God's grace. Scripture calls us to "outdo one another in showing honor"—a beautiful competition of mutual respect and appreciation. Today, practice receiving compliments with simple gratitude: "Thank you, I appreciate that." Also look for opportunities to honor others genuinely. Notice someone's effort, character, or contribution. Speak words that ascribe proper worth and value. In a culture of criticism and cynicism, become known as someone who honors generously and receives honor graciously.

### **Day 5: Honor in a Dishonorable World**

**Reading:** Hebrews 2:5-9; Romans 2:6-10

**Devotional:** We live in an age where honor seems almost extinct—in politics, media, schools, and even homes. Dishonor breeds more dishonor in a vicious cycle of disrespect and retaliation. Yet Christ calls us to break this pattern. Jesus, though deserving ultimate honor, humbled Himself. He honored the Father through obedience, honored humanity by becoming

one of us, and honored even His enemies by dying for them. We're called to this countercultural lifestyle: showing honor even when it's not returned, extending respect even in disagreement, and ascribing worth to those society devalues. This week, look for one situation where honor is absent — perhaps in a contentious relationship, a political discussion, or a workplace conflict. Be the person who reintroduces honor into that space. Seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in doing good, trusting that God sees and rewards those who honor Him and others.

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## **Additional Devotional focusing on Cultural Pain Points**

### **Devotional 1 – Honor in an Age of Outrage**

**Cultural pain point:** Online anger, shaming, and “piling on”

**Scripture:**

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”  
– Romans 12:10 (NIV)

We live in a world where it is easy to dishonor people we don't know.

With a few taps on a screen, we can mock, insult, and dismiss strangers. We may feel justified, especially when we believe someone is clearly wrong. But Scripture doesn't ask, “Do I have a right to say this?” It asks, “Am I honoring others above myself?”

In the sermon, we heard that to honor someone is to treat them with the “weight” and “significance” they deserve as someone made in God's image. That includes people we strongly disagree with—even people who have sinned.

Honor does not mean pretending sin isn't sin. But it does mean we refuse to strip people of their dignity or find pleasure in their humiliation. Isaiah and Jesus both warned against honoring God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him. We can type “true” words with a heart completely unlike Christ.

**Reflection questions:**

When I post or comment online, am I trying to win, or trying to honor?

Would I say these words if the person were in the room with me?

Is there a post, comment, or attitude I need to repent of today?

**Prayer:**

Lord, You see every word I type and every thought in my heart.  
Teach me to honor others—even when I believe they are very wrong—as people You created.  
Slow my anger, deepen my compassion, and let my online words reflect Your character, not just my frustration.  
Amen.

## **Devotional 2 – Honor Across Our Divides**

**Cultural pain point:** Deep polarization and “us vs. them” thinking

### **Scripture:**

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

– Matthew 5:16 (NIV)

Most conversations can quickly become “us vs. them.” We sort people into camps, assume the worst, and defend our side by dishonoring the other.

The sermon reminded us: no group is completely right or completely wrong. People are not monolithic. When we reduce others to labels—“those people,” “that group”—we have already stopped honoring them as image-bearers of God.

Jesus said that when people see our good deeds, they will “glorify [honor] your Father in heaven.” When we treat people with honor, especially those we differ from, we are not just being “polite.” We are showing the world what our Father is like.

Honoring others in a divided world does not mean we never disagree. It means that even in disagreement, we refuse caricatures, contempt, and hatred.

### **Reflection questions:**

Who do I most often think of as “them”? How do I talk about them?

Do my words about those I disagree with help others honor God—or push them away?

What would it look like to let my “light shine” in one current disagreement?

### **Prayer:**

Father, I confess I am quick to take sides and slow to show honor. Help me see each person not as a label or enemy, but as someone You

created and love.

Let my words and actions—even in disagreement—draw attention to You.  
Amen.

### **Devotional 3 – Honor in the Midst of Crisis and Conflict**

**Cultural pain point:** Confusion and anger around public crises

#### **Scripture:**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

– Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

When painful events hit the news—violence, protests, clashes with authorities—our world pressures us to respond quickly and fiercely. The first question often is, “Whose side are you on?”

The sermon described how dishonor on all sides can escalate into a feud: one group dishonors another, they respond dishonorably, and the cycle continues. Many believers feel torn and confused watching this.

As followers of Jesus, our first move is not to pick a side, but to grieve and to honor the image of God in every person involved. We mourn every loss of life. We remember that both the one in uniform and the one in the crowd are human beings bearing God’s image.

Peacemaking does not mean ignoring wrong. It means confronting wrong without throwing away honor, dignity, or compassion.

#### **Reflection questions:**

When I hear about a crisis, is my first response grief and prayer—or anger and argument?

How might I speak about all involved in a way that reflects their worth before God?

Is there someone’s story I need to listen to more carefully, without rushing to defend my view?

#### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, when I see conflict and violence, guard my heart from hardness.

Teach me to weep with those who weep, to honor every person as Your image-bearer, and to speak with truth and mercy.

Make me a peacemaker in a world of feuds.

Amen.

## **Devotional 4 – Honor and Our Leaders**

**Cultural pain point:** Disillusionment and cynicism toward leaders

### **Scripture:**

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority...”  
– 1 Timothy 2:1–2 (NIV)

Many people today are disappointed in leaders—in government, workplaces, and even churches. Some have failed in serious ways. It is easy for disappointment to harden into general cynicism, mockery, or contempt.

In the sermon, we were reminded that honoring authority does not mean pretending leaders never sin. It does not mean excusing injustice or agreeing with every decision. It does mean we speak about them as people who will answer to God, just as we will.

Scripture calls us to pray “for all those in authority.” We may at times need to challenge or disobey human authority when it contradicts God. Yet even in disagreement, we are not free to dehumanize.

### **Reflection questions:**

How do I usually speak about leaders (local, national, workplace, church)?  
Would those words honor Christ if they were spoken directly to them?

Do I regularly pray for those in authority—especially the ones I struggle with—or do I mainly complain about them?

Is there a leader I need to begin viewing and speaking about with more respect, even while being honest about their shortcomings?

What is one specific way I can practice honoring a leader this week (for example, praying for them, thanking them, or choosing more respectful words)?

### **Prayer:**

Sovereign God, You rule over all human authority.  
Forgive me for speaking with contempt instead of truth and grace.  
Help me to pray faithfully for leaders, to honor where I can, and to trust You when human authority fails.  
Amen.