



## STUDY #8

# HONOR THY COLABORER

**Bible Passages** > Proverbs 25:6-7; Proverbs 27:18; Mark 6:1-6; Acts 23:1-5; Romans 13:1-10; James 2:1-9

### Background from the Book

**Related Chapters** > 2, 5, 19

**Key Thoughts** > Acknowledging the basic humanity of our leader and our fellow followers should lead us to display a minimum level of respect, but excellent followers must carry this further into an internal and external (words and actions) posture of honor. Even in light of the shortcomings of those around us, we should present an attitude of honoring others, through which we can build a relationship of trust, not one of antagonism.

**In the Words of Others** >

“I suppose that I respect [them] ... but I can’t figure out what it means to give them honor.” (Galvin, 44)

“[Jesus’] followers were to accept the servant’s role no matter how important they may be.” (Smoke, 109)

“Without question, followership develops patience and humility.” (Imoukhuede, 101)

“Humility does not imply a *lack* of confidence or ability.” (Gorton, 23)

“The Lord may let others be honored and put forward, and keep you hidden in obscurity. ... He may let others be great, but keep you small. He may let others do a work for him and get the credit for it, but he will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing, and then to make your work still more precious he may let others get credit for the work which you have done.” (Ricketson, 96)

“Followers are responsible to obey and respect ... have teachable hearts ... [make] disciples ... make themselves available to be equipped.” (Ricketson, 111)

**What thoughts from the book or the Bible stand out to you on this topic? >**

**Blog Posts Related to This Study >**

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### **Personal Perspective**

**Consider This ...**

- How does a desire for honor shape your actions, clothing, work, friendships, associations, speech, and involvement?
- Do you find it easy or difficult to be honoring toward others? What makes you feel honored by others?

**Misconception for Reflection** > “Followership lacks honor and dignity” (Chapter 2).

- How is your personal sense of pride and self-worth? From what associations or involvements do you derive a feeling of belongingness, connection, and contribution?
- What are the biggest cultural influences and messages which challenge your sense of self-worth as a follower? What internal and external expectations cause you to question your value and dignity?

**Your Biblical Exploration of Mark 6:1-6** >

*Observation* >

*Interpretation* >

*Application* >

**Group Dialogue**

**Opening Thoughts** > The idea of honor may often strike us as being an antiquated idea, a leftover notion from the time of heroic knights and majestic queens. What characteristics, lifestyles, roles, and actions do we deem honorable in our modern age? Is the idea of honor different from respect, worship, awe, or reverence? How so?

When we encounter an honorable person or witness an honorable deed, how do we respond? How do we display and communicate honor to others?

Honor is a virtue that is strongly shaped and defined by each individual culture; while some societies are oriented around the ideas of guilt-innocence, many other cultures hold the ideas of honor and shame as core features that guide their interactions.

Despite these strong cultural influences, God has universal expectations for our posture of displaying honor toward others, a critical component of our excellent followership.

### **Bible Study >**

1. Let's begin by establishing a basic framework for our attitude toward honor. Read Proverbs 25:6-7 and Proverbs 27:18. Taken together, what do these two wise sayings present to us in how we should go about achieving honor?
2. How is the idea of "guarding your master" like tending a fruit tree (Proverbs 27:18)? What would it look like for you to guard your master/boss/leader?
3. Jesus himself encountered a cultural struggle with honor, as people around him held wayward perspectives about the nature and qualifications of honor. Read Mark 6:1-6. Share some of your own observations and interpretations of this passage from your reflection above.
4. The residents of Jesus' hometown (v. 1) of Nazareth made assumptions about Jesus' worth. On what did they found these assumptions, and what do these assumptions reveal about their definition of what's honorable?
5. What limitations arose as a result of the local residents' disdain to honor Jesus?
6. The New Testament letter of James offers guidance to Christian communities about how they show honor. Read James 2:1-9. What skewed perspectives and

morality does James ascribe to those who show partiality to some people based on their external achievement and appearance?

7. What truths and perspectives should instead guide our treatment of others?

God has general expectations for our treatment of all people, but provides specific guidance for our treatment of those in authority.

*If there's time ... read again Acts 23:1-5 (we looked at this passage in Study 1).*

8. *What do we learn here about the qualities of those to whom we are to show honor?*
9. Read Romans 13:1-10. What truths about leadership and authority should help us to adopt a posture of honor toward those that are over us?
10. There is an interesting analogy in v. 6-7. In this discussion of subjection and honor, the notion of taxes is raised. How does our payment of taxes and fulfillment of other civic obligations inform our understanding of what it means to show honor to those in authority?

**Invitation to Application** > God tells us to love our neighbors and honor our colaborers, using his standards of virtue and value and his leadership appointments to guide how we respond to others.

*Workplace* > How are you doing with honoring your boss? How often do you give in to reviling your leader (like Paul in Acts 23)? Do you often feel afraid of your boss's authority? If so, take stock of your followership: are you pursuing goodness and excellence and keeping a clean conscience in regards to your life and responsibilities? How can you improve the economy of honor in your workplace?

*Volunteering* > Are there “distinctions among you” (Jas 2:4) in your associations? What factors seem to determine who receives honor and who is overlooked or talked down? What can you do to contribute to an environment that honors godly virtues rather than worldly standards? Confess your own sins of showing partiality and seek God’s guidance in how to love others.

*Church/Ministry* > How is the authority of God’s leadership appointments used in your church or ministry? Is it wielded for the good of others, or for the exaltation of self? How can honor be shown and shared more appropriately toward all the members of the ministry—leaders and followers alike? How does your church/ministry respond to those it knows (Mark 6) compared with those that come in with external appeal (James 2)?

10. God is the one actively doing the most significant work in us and through us: giving peace, making us wholly holy (spirit, soul, and body). We can trust in his faithfulness: he will accomplish the work that he is doing in each of us (Philippians 1:6).

**Study 8 >**

1. Proverbs 25 shows us that we should not attempt to take honor for ourselves. Rather, according to Proverbs 27, in the course of serving well and tending to our responsibilities, we will be given honor by others.

2. We have a responsibility to facilitate a nurturing organizational environment, to free up our leader (protecting his/her time, environment, etc.) so that our group can be fruitful.

4. They assume that since they know Jesus—they know the humble origins of his background and occupation, as well as his family—that he is nothing special and thus not worthy of honor. There is perhaps an underlying thought that that which is well-known is not all that special or honorable; they can't imagine someone or something common being great. Rather than celebrating his wisdom and great deeds, they are repulsed by him—perhaps indignant, feeling jealousy that despite not being so different from him they have not acquired the same wisdom and greatness themselves.

5. They miss out on experiencing for themselves the fullness of his greatness (v. 5). As a result, their disbelief (v. 6) that Jesus could be anything special remains, rather than having their faith developed and encouraged by engaging with Jesus in an honoring relationship and accepting him for who he is rather than what they expect him to be based upon their shared heritage.

6. Showing partiality—honoring some people and not others—is sinful (v. 9), revealing a twisted heart (evil thoughts) and an inappropriate sense of judgment (v. 4). It stems from devaluing what God has valued (v. 5-6; recall also 1 Cor 12:23), while also embracing those people who are not truly virtuous and worthy of honor and who, in fact, oppress others and oppose that which is truly honorable (v. 6b-7).

7. We should honor faith (rather than external appearance; v. 5) and those who know and receive the love of God. We should be active in displaying that love toward others (v. 8). This is said to be the fulfillment of the “royal law,” which is an interesting idea as we typically think about showing honor to royalty: God calls us to honor

others, not on the basis of their station in life or external factors, but rather upon their relationship with him and the inner majesty they've received in Christ.

8. Although we were warned off of honoring people solely based on external appearance and status in James 2, we see here that those who have God-given authority over us should be treated with honor regardless. Even though they may not demonstrate internal virtues such as faith and love, yet they should not be subjected to our curses or insubordination. Honor, humility, and submission all go hand in hand.

9. Authority figures are given their stewardship by God (v. 1-2), and empowered to carry out discipline and make judgments (v. 4b). Leaders exist in order to be an influence for good over their followers (v. 4a). We are also called to love all people (v. 8), which includes our leaders—even if they are not perfect in carrying out their leadership.

10. Fulfilling our obligations sets our conscience free: knowing that we have done what we should have done (v. 5b) frees us from fear (v. 3). But also like taxes, honor is a resource: taxes are required to keep the state running, and honor is required for a leader to be able to do his job effectively. A dishonored and despised leader will not be listened to, obeyed, followed, appreciated, or forgiven (when he makes a mistake). Thus, honor is part of the economy of organizations: it is the currency that followers give to leaders, which leaders can then rely upon and spend as they carry out their duties. When they have to make difficult decisions or when they err, having a supply of follower-given honor ensures that the relationship and organization do not implode (much like trust; see Study 9 and *Embracing Followership*, Chapter 15).

### **Study 9 >**

1. These three passages show us how trusting the Lord is superior to any other object of our trust.

Psalm 40:4 shows us that we are better off placing our trust in the Lord than trusting in those whose lives and activities are ultimately founded upon lies. Placing our trust in the Lord protects us from chasing after people who are ultimately concerned with their own pride; they may be very charismatic leaders, but following them leads us into lies rather than blessing.

Psalm 52:6-8 warns us about trusting in ourselves and our material goods. Trusting in God instead leads us into a fruitful life lived