

God's Family

LESSON 4: HONOR ONE ANOTHER

The way Christians view and think about one another and themselves makes a huge impact on how they treat one another. For example, if you view yourself more highly than you view another, you are less likely to serve and/or give of yourself to help the other. Therefore, the responsibility of God's family to honor one another is critical to pleasing God.

ROMANS 12:3-5, 9-10

It can be tempting for Christians to compete to be seen as the most important among the brotherhood, in the local church, or among a particular peer group (Matthew 18:1; 20:20-21; 3 John 1:9-10). In fact, many divisions in the church throughout the years can be traced to such desires driven by pride. So, each person must not see himself/herself any more highly than appropriate (i.e. to think soberly and realistically about your true place in God's kingdom). For, you are simply one part of the body and your well-being is interconnected with the well-being of all the other members. Therefore, you must love genuinely, not selfishly or hypocritically. Then, rather than competing to gain honor so that you are seen as being more valuable than others, make your "competition" about seeing who can show the most honor to others! In fact, even the more mature leaders in God's church are not to be set on a pedestal to become lords over the rest (though they are to be shown honor, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:1-3) but are to work to help each member serve Christ to the best of their abilities, unleashing their potentials (Ephesians 4:11-16).

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-25

If Christians do not focus on showing honor/respect toward every member of the body, it becomes easy to think of others as being

insignificant. Yet, in using the illustration of a body, Paul demonstrates that each member is crucial. In fact, the human body demonstrates this as the parts of our bodies that may be initially perceived as physically weaker or less honorable get clothed in more thoughtful and respectable ways. So it is with Christians who may be perceived as being weaker or less valuable. You should treat them with even greater honor and value (1 Thessalonians 5:14), helping and encouraging them in their walk with Christ as they have great value in God's kingdom! These often work in "behind-the-scenes" ways in congregations that are immensely valuable, though underappreciated!

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

A key part of Christians being united is for them *not* to act in ways that seek their own interests and desires (e.g. wanting things to be their way, viewing their opinions as gospel, expecting others to cater to their needs and desires, threatening to leave the congregation if things don't go their way, etc.). This passage and others (1 Peter 5:5) teach the important concept of being clothed with humility toward one another. So, rather than thinking of yourself (e.g. your needs, your desires, your expectations, your preferences, your opinions, your feelings, etc.) as being more important than those of your brothers and sisters, humility will see their interests as being more important. When this kind of modest opinion of yourself is in place, you simply won't be focused on yourself. Instead, you will be focused on others! This is the same attitude/mind as Christ. For, even when others (including you) acted in selfish ways, He humbled Himself to leave Heaven, come to Earth, suffer, and die on the cross for the sins of each person! Then, this humility resulted in Him being glorified – as God will also exalt you if you humble yourself to serve Him and others (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:6). This humility should result in doing what you can in God's service without grumbling (complaining) and arguing (Philippians 2:14)!

EPHESIANS 5:21

There will be times of disagreement among brothers and sisters in God's family, including within a local church. When this happens, your first allegiance must be to submitting (yielding) yourself to God to do whatever He has revealed in Scripture (James 4:7; Colossians 3:17). After this (in matters of opinion, judgment, and liberty), however, your concern must be to submit to (yield, arrange yourself under) your brothers and sisters. For, God does not tolerate those who fuss and fight to get their own ways about things (Titus 3:9-11)! This problem is corrected if God's children honor their brothers and sisters and have the desire to yield to one another in such matters. So, the only "fights" Christians should have among themselves is about who gets to yield to the other; not about who gets to have their own way!

1 PETER 3:8-12

When Christians fight among themselves it takes the focus away from where it should be, leads to discouragement, distracts the congregation from their mission, and damages the reputation of God's people in the community. So, this text demonstrates the need for Christians to honor one another through being focused on each other and humble. Even though you may be hurt at times (whether intentionally or unintentionally), you must never seek to repay the evil with evil or the insult with an insult. You should even be willing to accept wrongs committed against you for the good of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Matthew 5:9, 38-42, 43-48). For, your responsibility to honor one another does not just apply to when others show you honor; but to every member of God's family regardless of how they treat you (though loving correction may also be necessary, James 5:19-20; Matthew 18:15-17).

CONCLUSION

Those who are part of God's family must show honor to one another. This honor demonstrates that you consider every member to be valuable and that you are interested in their well-being. In fact, you must even be willing to sacrifice your own interests for them!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

How is it possible for Christians to compete for honor among themselves?

How should each Christian view himself/herself?

How should Christians "compete" with one another?

How does viewing the church as a body help you show the proper honor to other Christians?

How will humility impact the way you treat other Christians?

How should disagreements among God's family be handled?

What damage do fights and divisions within God's family cause?

How should you respond when others in God's family fail to show you honor and even hurt you?

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