**1 Corinthians 13:5: “Love does not dishonor others”**

What does it mean to dishonor someone?

Dishonor is a lack of respect for another, to view someone as less than they are, and to mistreat them accordingly. It is as much about treating someone else as lower, as it is about regarding yourself as higher. To dishonor someone is to place them in contempt.

As Denise shared last week, the first sins were sins of pride. Satan wanted to be greater than God, and Adam and Eve yearned to be like God. Each grasped at titles above their station; they viewed God’s position as something they too could achieve if they were a little higher and God was a little lower. The first sins were also sins of dishonor.

Philippians 2:5-8: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, Who, being the same nature of God, did not consider equality with God but rather He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, he humbled Himself, even death on the cross.”

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In his work on contempt, secular philosopher David Hume writes that humans do 2 things when we place another in contempt: First, we take a piece of someone and make it the whole. We only focus on someone’s bad qualities, and then view their entire being through the lens of this one bad trait.

Or second, we buy into the myth that the people can always be divided into one of two categories - good or evil, us vs them. We judge people along a binary, label them into a box, and ultimately look down on them for being in the wrong box.

Both of these actions allow us to compare ourselves with the person we have placed in contempt, and evaluate ourselves as better than them. We are not however, actually seeing the other person in their multifaceted humanity, and instead reducing them to a misconstrued figment of our imagination, putting up a strawman, for us to compare ourselves against and feel superior to. This has become all too frequent in today’s culture of polarization, where people are reduced to being on one side or another, being for this…. means you are… anti that - this is something all too ingrained in our current cultural narratives.

The problem is that contempt, dishonor - it is an inherently destructive process - it concerns itself with tearing others down in a misguided attempt to feel higher in comparison. At its core however, it’s the invalidation of the inherent worth and value God has placed in each one of us. To dishonor others is to dishonor God. We have been made in His image; when we dishonor His image, we dishonor the Image Maker.

What’s more, God sent his Son to die on a cross, elevating each one of us from the lowest of lows, as sinners, to the highest of highs, as co-heirs with Christ.

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So, whether in the times of the early church, or for us today, the seemingly pithy statement,  “love does not dishonor” is a loaded one.  It can mean several things at once.

First, we must understand that God’s honor system is not our own. And we need to align ours to be more like His.

Second, we are called to not dishonor others. This means seeing others as God sees them, not as the world sees them, and treating them accordingly.

Third, we have been given new honor as children of God, so we belong to a new family. We are also called to maintain our own new honor, speaking and acting in ways befitting of our new status in Christ.

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“What are my rights?” vs “What is honoring to others?”

Ask God to help you think of examples where you might have this attitude and how best to act upon it.

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Mark 6: A Prophet Without Honor

1 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? 3 Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. 4 Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 He was amazed at their lack of faith. (NIV)

Despite witnessing his incredible teaching and miracles, they could not get over his “status”. They were blinded by their familiarity, a familiarity that bred contempt for Jesus. They would not accept that He could be more than them in the earthly or heavenly sense.

We’ve talked before about equality under God. But we can twist this great gift, and turn it into something sinful. Instead of honoring everyone equally, we might end up dishonoring everyone equally. We can bring everyone down to “our level,” and in the process, we end up missing out on the specialness of others.

The Nazarenes, in their attempt to “same” everyone, ended up missing out on the incredible fact that the Messiah, the one they had been waiting and praying for, for hundreds of years, was from their own hometown and had once been their neighbor and childhood friend.

So too,, when we dishonor people under the guise of equality, we can miss out on their different spiritual giftings, anointings, talents, experiences, and different points of views.  Let’s not miss out on the rich diversity that God has for his church.

Practical Ideas on How to Honor Others:

1. Speak words of value over someone else. Tell them I respect you, I value you, and why, being as specific as possible.
2. Write a letter, or text/email. If speaking these things directly to someone is too embarrassing or unfeasible, put it in writing.
3. Public praise: recognize somebody for the ways they honor others.
4. Get someone a gift to honor them, whether that be of monetary or sentimental value.
5. Make eye contact with someone, be present, and really listen to them.
6. Give way to another’s preferences. Instead of asking “what are my rights”, ask “what is honoring?”

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What aspect of our study resonated with you? Was there something that sparked a new insight or perspective?
2. Share about a time where you felt dishonored, or you dishonored somebody. What was the outcome of that?
3. Share a time when you set aside your rights to honor someone else.
4. How do we honor someone we disagree with?