Fall 2019

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Even though servants of the Lord do not seek to be honored, Paul instructed us to honor those who do the work of the ministry.
Lesson Big Idea: Even though servants of the Lord do not seek to be honored, Paul instructed us to honor those who do the work of the ministry.

Foundation

Scripture Focus: I Timothy 5:17
Tell the story of Samuel and Eli on page 12.

» In what ways did Samuel show honor to Eli?

Frame

A. We live in a world filled with acts of honor and dishonor.

» Why do you think there is so much dishonor shown in society?

» Proverbs 30:11–13

1. We must make up our minds that we will choose to honor.
2. Honor should exceed personal preferences and be based on biblical principles.

B. When we honor our leaders, we honor God.

1. Humanity does not void honor.

» In what ways do you show honor toward the things of God?

» What are some ways we can show honor to our leaders?

2. What we choose to respect reflects what is on the inside.

» I Samuel 24:6
C. Honor should not waver or change depending on the **circumstances**.
   1. Discovering honor unlocks **blessings**.
      » Genesis 12:3
   2. Honoring and obeying the Word of God is not **contingent** on our comfort level.
      » II Kings 4:7

D. Honor is revealed in our **actions** and in our **attitudes**.
   » *What are some of the ways the Lord blesses people who show honor to God and others?*

   1. Honor is our opportunity to be a blessing and **receive** a blessing.
      » I Timothy 5:17
   2. While some may tolerate a covering, we choose to **celebrate** the blessing of covering.

Finish

Tell the story of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on page 16.
It was another day full of tasks, errands, and responsibilities for the boy. With each passing year, as the eyes of his master and mentor dimmed with age, the young boy, Samuel, became even more involved with the activities in the Temple. What a joy it was to serve Eli the high priest.

However, on this particular night, as Samuel began to doze off, he heard his name: “Samuel.” With a servant’s heart, Samuel responded, “Here I am,” jumped up, and ran to his master Eli’s room. When Samuel entered Eli’s room, ready to serve regardless of the late hour, Samuel learned Eli had not called for him.

As Samuel left Eli’s room to lay back down, thoughts raced through his mind. Am I hearing things? Or maybe, I wonder if Eli did not realize he called me. However, it happened again. And once again, when Samuel heard his name called, he jumped to his feet and ran to Eli a second time. As he approached Eli, Samuel said, “Here I am, for you called me.” For a second time, Eli dismissed his young servant back to bed.

Just as Eli fell asleep, Samuel entered the room for the third time saying, “Here I am, for you called me.” Eli had to be shocked, perplexed, and a little annoyed at his young protégé by this point. Eli had been trying to fall asleep but had now been disturbed not once, not twice, but three times. This time the light came on in Eli’s mind. The dots connected. It made sense. Since it wasn’t Eli calling Samuel, then it must have been the Lord.

This time Eli gave clear instructions to Samuel. “Go lie down. When you hear your name again, respond by saying, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’”

The story of Samuel’s calling to be a prophet of God remains powerful. It reminds us that God can call anyone into ministry, from any background and at any age. But more than that, God honored Samuel because Samuel honored Eli.

In what ways did Samuel show honor to Eli?

It may be a challenge for some to define honor, but most likely we all know honor when we see it. It can be clearly seen in a long line of cars following one another in a funeral procession. Grieving attendees are honoring the life that was. Honor may be defined differently by different people. However, dictionary.com tells us that honor is having “high respect.”

Society may point to public servants or military officials as being worthy of honor. These public servants are often honored by being mentioned in local newspapers. Military officials are shown honor with a salute. Visiting heads of state to the United States are often shown honor by lavish ceremonies and elaborate dinners hosted by the White House.

Showing honor can also include honoring someone’s birthday or even highlighting someone’s accomplishment by giving a card or throwing a party. A person may honor a hobby or collection by how that person treats it. Another person may look at that hobby or collection and feel quite the opposite: that person may even dishonor it, criticize it, or even attempt to destroy it.

We live in a world filled with acts of honor and dishonor. Dishonor and lack of respect and esteem for others are daily plastered across newspaper headlines and become the leading stories for evening news reports. Commentators, politicians, and others in society often show little respect for people. Social media and the internet have opened doors for people to disrespect others, even complete strangers, from the comfort of their homes.
Why do you think there is so much dishonor shown in society?

The author of Proverbs shared an analysis of a culture that had lost its honor. Although written many years ago, it sadly fits the day in which we live: “There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up” (Proverbs 30:11–13, KJV).

**We must make up our minds that we will choose to honor.** We must also be resolved to honor what and whom God honors. This is because our conduct and our attitude showcase what we esteem in our lives.

Honor should exceed personal preferences and be based on biblical principles. By placing principles over preferences, we will choose to honor the things of God even when the world disagrees. The world may not understand why we honor our ministers, teachers, pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and others who labor for the Kingdom.

**When we honor our leaders, we honor God.** The same holds true when we dishonor leadership; it is an offense unto God. Men and women of God are human, but they are still God’s appointed ambassadors.

We understand no one is perfect. A quick glance through the Scriptures clearly shows the vast imperfections of key individuals. In the beginning, Adam and Eve disobeyed the commands of their Creator. Centuries later we see the missteps of Abraham, who had a child with a handmaid. The apostle Paul claimed for himself the title of chief among sinners. Even King David lamented, “For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me” (Psalm 51:3, NKJV). Peter was outspoken, and the chosen disciple Judas betrayed his Master. Moses had a temper, and Elijah had a rollercoaster of emotional ups and downs. Regardless of their deficiencies, one thing remains constant—God chose and anointed these individuals.

God handpicks individuals and has a divine design in mind. This is why we must realize humanity does not void honor.

Because no one is perfect, all have come short of the glory of God. Let us consider the appointment and designation of King Saul. It may be easy to recall Saul as one throwing spears at David, but King Saul was God’s chosen man. In fact, when God’s people insisted on being like every other nation, they requested a king to lead them. Before Saul was king and before David was king, they both shared a crucial common trait: honoring the things of God.

**In what ways do you show honor toward the things of God?**

Saul was instructed to find what was lost. His family had lost their donkeys, which were important animals to an agrarian family. His father had told him to go and search for them. If Saul’s attitude had been to ignore or disobey, he would have missed his life-changing moment. Saul’s opportunity started by listening to the right voices in his life. A task that may have seemed trivial was in fact the setup for his future.

Saul and his servant realized that to find what they were searching for would require them to enlist the man of God. We are shown a small glimpse into their perspective through their discussion of Samuel. The servant said, “He is highly respected, and everything he says comes true” (I Samuel 9:6, NIV). Saul honored the man of God in his heart, and he honored the man of God with his words. Saul also understood it was important for him to show honor with his substance. He said, “If we go, what can we give the man? . . . We have no gift to take” (I Samuel 9:7, NIV). Saul’s servant had a quarter of a shekel. Fortunately, it was not about the grandeur of the gift; it was simply the custom to approach a superior or one who should be honored with something of substance.
LESSON BIG IDEA: Even though servants of the Lord do not seek to be honored, Paul instructed us to honor those who do the work of the ministry.

What are some ways we can show honor to our leaders?

What we choose to respect reflects what is on the inside. When we respect the world and choose to neglect the things of God, it is an indication of our current condition.

David, while in the presence of King Saul, understood honor. While David played music requested by the king, Saul became hostile and threw a javelin at David on multiple occasions. Yet we find that David kept a right spirit because he had an attitude of honor.

This attitude was on full display as King Saul hunted for David. David and his band of outcasts were hiding in a cave. Saul went inside the cave, not knowing David was already there. David's inner circle attempted to persuade David to end this once and for all. In the eyes of the outcasts, this was God being good to David. Their voices were saying that this day was given to deliver Saul into David's hand.

Can you imagine? Victory lay right in front of David. Out of all the caves and of all the people, standing right in front of him was the opportunity one could only dream of. Surely one could argue that it was the will of God, and God was going to let David take down King Saul and rightfully take the throne. After all, David had been anointed by God and was called by God too. David knew the imperfections of King Saul and had watched as Saul battled the evil after the Lord departed from him.

Yet when David stepped forward and cut off a piece of Saul's robe, he instantly felt conviction. David's words profoundly reveal why he would be labeled a man after God's own heart: “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord” (I Samuel 24:6, KJV).

Despite the flaws and deficiencies of King Saul, David refused to dishonor God's chosen vessel out of personal preference or personal gain.

Honor should not waver or change depending on the circumstances.

King David made the right decision, and his actions reveal the character of a man who understood honor.

Discovering honor unlocks blessings. When we sow in honor, we reap in blessings. Everyone will honor something, but when we honor the things of God, we will be blessed by God. When God gave Abraham a promise, God provided a principle. The Lord promised, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, ESV).

The Old Testament tells of a time when there was a famine in the land. We are introduced to a wife who had become a widow. In the middle of grieving the loss of her husband, her attention shifted to an impending disaster because of unpaid debts that would no doubt cause her to lose her sons. Can you imagine? What should she do? Where should she turn?

Resources were limited. Help had vanished. So she turned to the man of God and said, “Thy servant my husband is dead” (II Kings 4:1, KJV). She had gone to the man of God and presented her need. But Elisha's response was not condemnation or accusation. The Bible conveys that he did not ask how she got in this mess of debt. He did not investigate the reason and did not share his opinion on her condition.
Instead Elisha responded by asking how he could help. He asked the woman, “What hast thou in the house?” (II Kings 4:2, KJV). He then told her to use what she had. Arguably one could make the case that Elisha was not compassionate, but rather hard-hearted and cold. How could he make the grieving widow go find, borrow, and use what she had? Should he not just have found a way to exonerate her of her debts, perhaps by finding money for her?

Why did Elisha not go and do it all for her? Instead he gave her instructions on what to do. He told her to go and find all the vessels she could. She was to borrow from neighbors, borrow from strangers, and find anything that could hold oil. Upon finding all the vessels, Elisha instructed the widow to start pouring the oil. She was to keep going from one container to the next, filling the vessels, until they were all filled to the brim.

The widow’s faith was shown by her obedience and honor to the man of God. When she honored his word, she saw the miraculous occur. Imagine if she had just gotten a couple of empty vessels. She would have seen a miracle, but the miracle would not have been enough to pay her debts because of her lack of obedience. **Honoring and obeying the Word of God is not contingent on our comfort level.**

The widow made every effort to get as many empty vessels as possible. When all the vessels were filled with oil, she came back and told Elisha what had happened. Notice she continued to have the posture of honor by telling Elisha of the miracle. Elisha responded with, “Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest” (II Kings 4:7, KJV). Once she possessed the miracle, she still honored the man of God by inquiring of him what to do.

**Honor is revealed in our actions and in our attitudes.** When the widow honored, God gave and God restored.

**What are some of the ways the Lord blesses people who show honor to God and others?**

Showing honor to leaders is not only a blessing to the leader but also a blessing to us. God blesses families who show honor. God blesses churches who show honor. God will bless nations that show honor. **Honor is our opportunity to be a blessing and receive a blessing.** The apostle Paul instructed Timothy, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (I Timothy 5:17, ESV).

Thank God for those who preach, teach, lead, and guide. Their guidance is a continual blessing, even amid disagreement. We must honor our leadership by honoring God’s Word. There is a mutual benefit when honor is given; when we bless our leaders, we are blessed. We find throughout the Word of God that God will “bless them that bless thee” (Genesis 12:3, KJV).

The blessed life starts with honor—honoring God, honoring leaders, and honoring family. We are blessed to have leaders, elders, and those who labor faithfully in our lives. Their apostolic covering is designed to curate protection. The blessing of leaders who cover us may be understated but should not be undervalued. **While some may tolerate a covering, we choose to celebrate the blessing of covering.**
LESSON BIG IDEA: Even though servants of the Lord do not seek to be honored, Paul instructed us to honor those who do the work of the ministry.

Across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., is Arlington National Cemetery. The cemetery is the nation’s most hallowed ground since it is the final resting place of more than 300,000 American veterans. Its vast landscape boasts perfectly aligned white gravestones on hundreds of acres of land. Each perfectly shaped gravestone honors and reminds visitors of the sacrifices of those who have served the United States of America in the armed forces.

On a hill inside the cemetery, overlooking the nation’s capital, is the iconic Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. At one time, inside the tomb were the remains of four individuals unknown—one from World War I, another from World War II, one from the Korean War, and another from the Vietnam War. Since the development of DNA testing, the Vietnam unknown soldier’s identity was discovered, and his body was moved to his family’s cemetery. Though the Vietnam crypt remains empty, it still symbolizes the countless Vietnam War soldiers who died as unknowns.

The tomb’s prestige and renown are for showing honor to those Americans who served with selfless sacrifice yet cannot be awarded the recognition they deserve because their identities are not known. The back of the white, marble tomb is inscribed with the words: “Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God.”

The tomb was completed in 1932. In 1937 a twenty-four-hour guard was placed on the tomb. The tomb has been guarded ever since. For over eighty years, every hour of every day of every year, a guard has solemnly protected the tomb. Even amid inclement weather, such as blizzards and hurricanes, and even during terrorist attacks, the dignity of not just the unknown soldiers buried in that tomb but all unknown American soldiers have been guarded and honored by a tomb guard.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier guards meticulously walk twenty-one steps, stop for twenty-one seconds, and then walk an additional twenty-one steps to the other side of the tomb. The process is repeated after waiting another twenty-one seconds. Without fail and without improv, the process is repeated over and over again throughout the day. When it is time for the changing of the guard, the parting guard commands the new guard, “Orders remain unchanged,” for the directive to protect and honor remains unchanged.

The apostle Paul reminded the church at Rome to give honor where honor was due (Romans 13:7). This directive of Paul remains unchanged. Every day is an opportunity to live a life that honors. The privilege of honor is bestowed upon the beholder. Who can you start honoring today? Honor is a choice we can start living from this day forward. Today is the first day of the rest of our lives, and today is our opportunity to live a lifestyle of honor.
Appreciation Sunday: Honoring the Ministry

Opening Question: Who is a leader in your life that you greatly admire? Why do you admire this person?

Scripture Focus: I Timothy 5:17

Tell the story of Samuel and Eli on page 12.

Group Discussion:
The story of Samuel's calling to be a prophet of God is powerful. It reminds us that God can call anyone into ministry, from any background and at any age. But more than that, God honored Samuel because Samuel honored Eli.

1. In what ways did Samuel show honor to Eli?

Dishonor and lack of respect and esteem for others are daily plastered across newspaper headlines and become the leading stories for evening news reports. Commentators, politicians, and others in society often show little respect for people. Social media and the internet have opened doors for people to disrespect others, even complete strangers, from the comfort of their homes.

2. Why do you think there is so much dishonor shown in society?

Before Saul was king and before David was king, they both shared a crucial common trait: honoring the things of God.

3. In what ways do you show honor toward the things of God?

Saul honored the man of God in his heart, and he honored the man of God with his words. Saul also understood it was important for him to show honor with his substance.

4. What are some ways we can show honor to our leaders?

The widow’s faith was shown by her obedience and honor to the man of God. When she honored his word, she saw the miraculous occur. Honor is revealed in our actions and in our attitudes. When the widow honored, God gave and God restored.

5. What are some of the ways the Lord blesses people who show honor to God and others?

Prayer Focus

Lord, I pray my generation would bring honor to You. Give me a heart to show honor to the leaders in my life. I want to be an individual of character and integrity. I want to walk in Your blessings and favor. I want to be an example to others in showing honor. Thank You for the leaders in my life.

To download a Small Group Leader’s Guide and Participant’s Guide, see the instructions on page 2.