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# 1

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## FROM *ENTITLEMENT* TO HONOR

The words *entitlement* and *honor* may not seem like they go together at first. After all, we don't necessarily think about the two being polar opposites. The truth is, though, that the millennial generation has forced the two to be mentioned in the same sentence . . . or at least in the same chapter!

If I were to poll one hundred people who claimed to understand what the millennial generation is and asked those people to name the top three problems with our generation, the majority of them would probably list a sense of entitlement as being one of the great problems. Whether completely true or not, young people today are often accused of believing they are entitled to certain rights and privileges in life.

I believe there is a lot of merit to the idea that our generation (those in their twenties and early thirties) is a generation that feels entitled to many things. It's not just physical things we feel entitled to either. Many in our generation feel entitled to happiness at any cost and entitled to respect and influence well before it's earned. For those of us looking to be the next great leaders who move our

organizations, families, and churches forward, we have to understand that we're not entitled. We have to understand that, while we should certainly be respected to some degree, no one owes us great authority or influence.

### WE AREN'T ENTITLED TO ANYTHING

If we feel entitled to something, we think we deserve it—that it should be ours just because we're us. The truth is, we don't deserve anything we're given. This is a concept we as Christians should understand. The only thing you and I really deserve is *nothing*. That's what we've earned.

Think back for a second to your childhood. If you were like me, you were blessed enough to have parents who loved and cared for you beyond what you could have ever earned. Really, I was blessed beyond belief because my mom had a hard time telling me no. Some would say I had her wrapped around my little kid finger. Mom had such a hard time telling me no she would always let me get a toy when we went to Wal-Mart. I remember searching the aisles over and over looking for that one toy I wanted to buy each time we went. At the end of the shopping trip, it was mine.

I was about eight years old the first time I can remember my mom telling me no on a Wal-Mart trip. This particular trip, I walked through the entrance, ran to the toy aisle, browsed for a while, grabbed my toy of choice, and met up with Mom a few aisles over. But this time when I took the toy over to Mom, she said, "No!"

I don't know if she was proving a point or if she had just had a parent epiphany that I couldn't always have my way, but she told me no. I couldn't believe it. I was her child! I deserved the toy! I was entitled to it! Many of us still have that mentality, even into our

adult lives. We're convinced that because we are who we are, we deserve special treatment or something in return.

Now, I don't think it's all on our own merit. Many times we're told we deserve something. Many of you had a mom like mine who, despite great intentions, was really good at spoiling her children. The belief that we're entitled grows over time. Each time we think, "I deserve that," or "Why don't I get that?" we let it grow a little more. Soon, entitlement is in our beliefs and it begins to drag us down and ruin our view of the world and of others.

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WE'VE DECIDED to  
sacrifice honor and love  
on the altar of proving  
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theology to be right.

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## THE DISCIPLINE OF HONOR

I remember flipping on the news right after the last presidential election and feeling stunned by the lack of honor the panelists and commentators showed toward both candidates. We've lost the idea of honor in our society. Society has quit teaching us how to honor others, how to honor our parents, and how to honor our leaders.

Do you remember the only one of the Ten Commandments that comes with a promise? Moses, after being called up on Mount Sinai, was issued commands for the people to live by. The one commandment God gave to Moses that was accompanied by a promise was the one that said, "*Honor* your father and your mother, so that you may *live long* in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12, emphasis mine). God told the people thousands

of years ago that honoring those people God put in authority over them was important. In fact, God went as far as to say that the span of their lives hinged on it.

We've lost the concept of honoring our leaders, but we've also lost the concept of honoring our peers. Get on Twitter any day and you'll see people arguing back and forth, holding nothing back. Even in the church, we've lost the idea of honoring those around us. We've decided to sacrifice honor and love on the altar of proving ourselves and our theology to be right. In the meantime, we've become a church and society that has lost touch with honor. We've lost the idea that love and honor trump everything else.

## DEFINING HONOR

Honor is one of those heroic sounding words. Read any good fairy tale and there's an honorable hero. Flip on most old movies and you'll find a man fighting for the honor of his lady. No matter what romance novel you read (so they tell me), the woman in the novel always wants an honorable man to come and rescue her

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HONORING GOD travels  
to everything we do,  
everything we say, and  
every decision we make.

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from her situation or family. Honor has a long history and is a word that gets tossed around a lot, so how have we failed to display it? We've lost the meaning of real honor. We've lost the meaning of honoring others in our entitlement mindset

and our selfish society. Honor means "a showing of usually merited respect."<sup>1</sup> Did you catch the key word in that definition? Go back and read it again. We leaders really need to pay attention to that

word *usually*. You see, honor doesn't have to be merited. For believers in Christ, honor definitely doesn't have to be merited. The people around us and the leaders we serve with don't have to prove anything to us. The leaders we serve don't have to earn our honor. We should always give it regardless.

Honor and respect go hand in hand. We all desire to be respected. We all want to have people around us who appreciate us for who we are. We aren't entitled to respect, but we definitely want it. Honor isn't just something leaders should get, but also something we have to be extra assertive to give.

## A PICTURE OF HONOR

The Bible is full of stories about honor. Beyond just telling us to honor our mother and father unconditionally, the Bible tells us to honor God, to honor our neighbors, and to honor our leaders. Honor can't be void of a loving heart and a forgiving mind. If we're going to make the shift from feeling like we're entitled to believing that we must honor others, we're going to have to realize that our goal is to give what others sometimes don't deserve.

### *Honor God*

If we're going to become people who show honor, it begins with God. Making the shift with God specifically from entitlement to honor should be really simple. He's the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Provider—we are not. Honoring Him and loving Him should be our top priority. We have to honor God in every part of our lives, not just in the right context. I can't begin to count the number of young people and young leaders I speak with who are great at honoring God with their time on Sunday morning and

are great at tweeting Bible verses, but fail to honor God with their work and their day-to-day lives. Honoring God is a 24/7 calling. Honoring God travels to everything we do, everything we say, and every decision we make.

In my life, one of the most challenging verses in all of Scripture is 1 Corinthians 10:31, which says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Think about that for a second. If we obey this verse, loving and honoring God carries to every part of our lives. For young leaders, this is especially eye-opening. There may be times when it would be really easy for us to excel and get ahead, but it might not honor God. There are times when there may appear to be a fast track to a promotion or raise, but that fast track might not be honoring to God. For those of us who have a gifting for leading and influencing others, it can be really easy and seem really simple to step over people to get to where we think we need to go. In the heat of wanting to get to the top, we can often influence people to rally against someone else or against an idea. As heavy influencers, we can take advantage of someone’s small mistake in order for us to get ahead. Again, that would be the easy thing, but not the God-honoring thing. To obey this verse, we have to use our gifts how God wants us to use them. See why that 1 Corinthians verse is so challenging? Honor God first.

### *Honor Others*

The character of Uriah in 2 Samuel 11 is often overlooked in the Scripture. Uriah is rarely seen as heroic. He is usually seen as the guy who got the short end of the stick and was stabbed in the back by the people he trusted. If we take a look at the story, though, we see what kind of guy Uriah really was. He sets an unprecedented example in honoring the people around him. If you don’t know

the story, Uriah was out fighting with the rest of the Israelite army while David (the king) was back at home. One day, David is on his roof when he looks across the way and notices Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, bathing. David is immediately attracted to Bathsheba, so he sends for her and sleeps with her. David later gets word that he got Bathsheba pregnant. David, being the king, knows this is not a good move and goes into panic mode. Immediately, David sends for Uriah. Upon arrival, David tells him to go home to his wife. Uriah, not knowing about his wife's pregnancy, refuses to go home. What happens next shows what makes Uriah such an example of honor. In 2 Samuel 11:11 Uriah tells David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

Did you catch the significance of what Uriah did? Uriah not only honored his commander and leader, but he honored all those fighting with him by not going home. Uriah had too much respect for those he considered his peers to enjoy something he knew they couldn't. You and I sometimes have to give up what we feel entitled to in order to show honor to those around us.

I know you're thinking, "If you knew some of the people I know, you'd know that they don't deserve honor." Honor is shown even in the midst of what people don't deserve. Honor others anyway. Honor their time. Honor their lives. Honor their sacrifices.

### *Honor Your Leader*

Growing up, my older brother, David, blazed the ministry and leadership trail before it was my time. David taught me a lot, but one of the most valuable things he taught me was how to show



honor to the people who led me. Every now and then, I think back to where I've been and have to think that many of the blessings I've been given over my life are because I was taught how to show honor to the people God has placed over me.

One of the most obvious examples of honoring a leader is in the exchange between Saul and David in 1 Samuel 24. Saul was the king of Israel at the time, but he disobeyed God tremendously. David was the one God determined was going to be the next king of Israel. Saul, consumed with pride and jealousy, tried unceasingly to kill David before David got his chance to be king. David had done nothing wrong, but Saul was still determined to kill him. David could have easily justified speaking badly of Saul or even going ahead, rushing ahead of God, and killing Saul on the spot. Instead though, David, having Saul cornered and in a vulnerable position, decided not to rise up against Saul. In fact, David refused to even say anything bad about his leader and in 1 Samuel 24:6 says, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord." Wow! That's honor. Saul did nothing to deserve it. God had placed Saul in his high position, and David recognized it. Even though David had every right to feel entitled to kill Saul since God had anointed David and told him his enemies would be delivered into his hands, he left entitlement behind to show honor to his leader.

Just like David, we have to be people who honor our leaders. We have to serve our leaders, not because our leaders always deserve honor or serving, but because it allows us the freedom to resist entitlement. Don't use honor as a manipulative tactic either. When you honor the person who leads you or who signs your check or who has the power to hire and fire you, don't do it to manipulate

them. David didn't honor Saul in hopes of getting a fatter calf out of the deal. We honor our leaders out of recognition for who they are and appreciation for the duty they have. The second you and I begin to show honor to our leader because we want something in return is the second our honor turns back into entitlement.

## MAKING THE SHIFT

How do we go from being people who feel entitled to people who are great at showing others honor? In order to be the next up to take the leadership reins, we're going to have to make the shift. In my experience, the people around us know when we're leading from a place of selfishness and false humility. When they see our entitled mindset, they'll be quick to cut us off and begin to do just enough to get by.

### *Know Your Leader*

As we learn to honor God, we have to begin making the shift in honoring our leader. We have to understand the people who do their best to lead us and the organization that we love and work for are only human. You see, many times we fail to respect people and honor people because we forget they're flawed human beings just like us. If we expect others to offer us grace, we must be willing to do the same, even if they're in leadership above us. Regardless of our relationships with our leaders, they will disappoint us. At times, they may fail to show us the honor that we feel we have earned. We'll be disappointed in our leaders from time to time for making the decision they made or for treating someone else in a way we didn't see fit. We have to honor them anyway.

Understand that your leaders aren't perfect and understand that your job as a follower is to support them. The truth is, those

leaders at high levels (the level you may be striving toward) bear heavy loads. Honor your leaders and support them. In Exodus 17, we get a great picture of some followers supporting their leader. Moses commanded the people to go fight the Amalekites (yeah, I'm not sure how to say it either) while he held up his staff to God so they could win the fight. During the fight, Moses' arms started to get tired. Every time Moses' hands began to fall, the Amalekites excelled in the battle. So what did Aaron and Hur (the people with Moses at the time) do? They supported Moses' arms so that he could hold his hands up. That's a great picture of what supporting your leader should look like.

### *Know Yourself*

If we're going to make the shift from entitlement to honor, we're going to have to know our leader, but also know ourselves. Do you understand who you are? You are something only because of what Christ did for you. In fact, according to Romans 5:8, you were nothing but a sinner when the Savior of the world chose to honor you and die for your sin. Who are we, not to honor those around us?

## **SHIFT SHAPERS**

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To make the shift from entitlement to honor, you have to believe . . .

1. You are not entitled to rewards, only indebted to Christ.
2. Honoring God comes before honoring others.
3. Honor continues even when others don't deserve it.

**Honor God by honoring others. #NextUpBook**