

SESSION 2

Honor God



QUESTION 1:

How can you recognize a genuine fan?

THE POINT

Our relationship with God is seen in how we honor Him.

THE PASSAGES

Exodus 20:7-11; Psalm 145:1-7

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We know all about honor and worship because we do it all the time.

Football fans show both honor and worship through their conduct and commitment. A football game involves roughly only seventeen minutes of actual action. When you remove huddles, getting back to the line of scrimmage, and other things that take place during the game, you're left with around seventeen minutes of actual plays being run.

Yet football fans willingly spend up to three hours watching a game that provides only seventeen minutes of action. If you actually go to the game, you need to add drive time, parking, walking to the stadium, and then sitting in traffic gridlock when the game is over. But have you ever heard a football fan complain that the game went too long? No, because when we love and honor something, we willingly commit our time to it.

Translate that willingness and enthusiasm over to our spiritual lives and matters like church attendance, personal Bible study, or prayer. Too many of us are satisfied with a quick five-minute devotion and short prayer. The Ten Commandments call us to honor God, but are we doing that?

Exodus 20:7-11

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Choose your favorite president—living or dead—and imagine he is coming to your home for dinner. When the president arrives, what did you call him? Did you open the door and call him by his first name, or say, “Hey, what’s up, _____?” and call him by his last name?

I doubt it. I have met with former presidents, and no one addresses the president that way. The position calls for honor. When a role requires honor, we place a title in front of the name and speak it with respect.

Yet, far too often, even believers refer to God—the Creator of the universe and the Sustainer of life itself—with dishonor. They refer to Him using platitudes like “the big guy” or “the man upstairs,” or throw out phrases such as “Oh my God!” But Christ taught us in the Model Prayer that we are to honor or hallow God’s name (Matt. 6:9). The term *hallowed* comes from the same root word from which we get the word *holy*. It means to be “set apart” or “sanctified.” His name is unique and holy because God is unique and holy. We are not to treat God’s name the same way we treat

everyone else's name, thus negating the reverence and honor He deserves.

God does not take such disrespect lightly. He will not bend to our wrong definition of Him as we seek to interpret Him according to our own desires. Neither will He accept the expression of His presence and character in situations that demean His dignity or cheapen His character. Why? Because He is God. He is the great *I Am Who I Am*, not the great *I Am Who You Want Me to Be*.

Consider the honor you would give to a celebrity, politician or athlete whom you admire. Compare that honor with what you give to the God of the universe in both your speech and your actions. Do they even compare?

David wrote in Psalm 86:11, "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy name." Essentially, *fear* translates as honor and worship. When we live as David desired to live—honoring God for who He is—God opens up the floodgates of His provision. We honor God because He deserves it, not in order to receive; yet, in His grace He returns favor to us. As David wrote in other psalms:

- ▶ "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! (Ps. 31:19).
- ▶ "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (103:11).
- ▶ "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (145:19).

We are not to misuse God's name in any way. To be a Christian is to carry the name of Christ, but if we live in disobedience to Him, we dishonor His name.

QUESTION 2:

What are some ways people dishonor or make light of God's name?

God has given believers the privilege to pray using Jesus' name. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). That's truly a privilege. However, earlier on the same night that Jesus gave us this promise, He also had explained, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son*" (14:13, emphasis added).

God's preeminence over creation demands we give Him the value and recognition of who He truly is. After all, this is the same Being who spoke the world into existence—and it only took Him six days to do so. On the seventh day, God rested, but not because He was tired. He rested because He had finished what He set out to do. He wanted to enjoy and experience His creation. Similarly, He calls us to set aside one day a week to rest and reflect on who He is and the power He holds in His hands and in His heart. All our honor is due Him. It's all about His honor.

Psalm 145:1-3

1 I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

"Every day." Those two words stand out to me when I read verses 1-3. David praised God and declared he would bless God every day. Not just on the good days. Not just on the days when he felt like dancing and singing in the streets. Not just on the victory

days. No, David penned his heart's desire to worship God every single day and praise His name forever and ever.

Do you desire to worship God every day? Or is your worship limited to the morning hours on Sunday? Or on those days when you get a good report at work or have a nice vacation to an island or mountain somewhere? If your heart does not reflect David's heart, then your worship is fickle. It's based on circumstances and convenience. That's not worship; that's emotion.

American families cook a lot of turkeys and hams at Thanksgiving and Christmas. My wife was a master chef who knew how to cook them perfectly. I observed her careful attention to getting the meat just right before she took it out of the oven—and that included using a thermometer to know when the meat is perfectly done.

Eating uncooked meat can be harmful. A ham or turkey can appear to be perfectly cooked on the outside and yet remain raw on the inside. The last thing you want when everyone sits down at the table with appetites and forks in hand is to discover the bloody, uncooked meat is still inside. That thermometer is important.

Kingdom disciples are no different. We can look great on the outside but be a spiritual mess on the inside. Jesus put it this way: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Matt. 23:25). Many of us are not as “put together” and spiritual as we appear on the outside. Under the surface, we carry the germs of bitterness, doubt, and ingratitude. Just because you say “hallelujah” to the message doesn't mean you are spiritual—and even though you preach the message, that doesn't mean you are spiritual either.

God holds the thermometer; He knows the state of each of our souls. He may keep you in an oven of adversity, but He desires to shape and sharpen you during the tough times. He has a purpose for the pain, and He seeks to make you increasingly more like Jesus. Choose to honor Him with your worship in good times and

bad. Sometimes you and I need to learn to trust God and choose to worship Him in spite of the reality of where we are on a given day. As David penned it, we need to worship Him *every day*.

QUESTION 3:

What does it look like to bless the Lord each day?

Psalm 145:4-7

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

David's heart for God shines through in these verses. He wrote of honoring God's great works and God's great goodness, while singing joyfully of God's righteousness. We live in a day and an age when honoring God takes second place to many people's desires to honor themselves. Personal platforms and awards have replaced praise for God. People often strive to present a perfect image and identity on social media, but it is inaccurate and deceptive, and replaces a public confession of God's greatness and goodness. If David's words aligned instead with today's cultural values, the word *thy* would be replaced with *my*.

- ▶ One generation will declare (my) works to the next and proclaim (my) mighty acts.
- ▶ I will declare (my) greatness.

- ▶ They will give a testimony of (my) great goodness.

Yes, we sometimes wrap our vanity into conveniently masked terms such as “legacy” and “reputation.” But anytime we shift the focus from God and His rightful position over all and place it on ourselves, we have failed to honor God through our testimony and actions. We have failed to put Him first. This is similar to the church at Ephesus which Jesus called on the carpet in Revelation 2:4, because, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

To be sure, the Ephesian church had a lot going on. The Lord assured them that they were doing many things right. However, they had neglected one thing: Put God first and honor and love Him over anything and everything else.

QUESTION 4:

What do you appreciate about God’s works in previous generations?

To live lives that honor God in our testimony and actions, we must not only love God, but we must love Him *first*. The issue with Ephesus was not that they no longer loved God at all. It was that they no longer loved Him first. He was no longer their priority—even though they had endured hardships and were doing many good works for the kingdom of God.

So, how do we recognize when first love has turned to second love—or worse—in our lives? One way is whenever performance for God becomes an end in itself. In those moments, we have lost our first love.

- ▶ Whenever I preach simply to preach rather than preaching out of heartfelt love and devotion to the Lord, I have left my first love.
- ▶ Whenever you spend time in daily devotions just to check it off your list, you have left your first love.

- ▶ Whenever your testimony and actions paint you as more prominent than God (who pulled it all off to begin with), you have left your first love.

The best approach is to do what David did. He focused on God's "works" ... "mighty acts" ... "glorious honour of thy majesty" ... "wondrous works" ... "terrible acts" ... "greatness" ... "great goodness" ... "righteousness." When we reflect on all God has done, we're drawn to authentic worship. We'll want to honor Him with lives that "utter the memory of thy great goodness" (Ps. 145:7).

QUESTION 5:

How can we declare God's works to the next generation?

ENGAGE

Choose one of the following images that best reflects your idea of honoring God. Then write a prayer telling God how much you love and respect Him.



LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek to honor God?

- ▶ **Repent.** Confess to God any times you misused the name of God and failed to honor Him with your life.
- ▶ **Journal.** Journaling is a great way of identifying the pressing thoughts on your heart and mind. When you sit down to write, the natural flow of your thinking comes out. Take a moment each day this week to journal about your relationship with God and thoughts about Him. Let your own words reveal to you how much you honor and worship Him.
- ▶ **Share.** If you are on social media, consider how you can post and share God-honoring posts this week. Or consider how you can share a testimony of how great God is and the great acts He has done. If you are not on social media, seek to share a testimony of God and His power in your life with others you communicate with during the week. Go ahead and brag on God. He deserves it.

