

## **LIFE TOGETHER SERMON SERIES**

### **Week 3: A Community Of Honour In A Culture Of Contempt**

#### **Romans 12:9-10, 16-17**

Our society is one of polarisation over a myriad of things. Our problem is not incivility or intolerance, but something far worse: contempt. Not just for other people's ideas, but also for other people. The challenge is to live as a contrast society amid pervasive hatred and disrespect.

#### **PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO THE ROMANS**

In his letter to Christ-followers in Rome, from chapter 12 onwards Paul fleshes out the practical outworking of faith for those who are "in Christ". This includes the posture with which spiritual gifts are used and each member empowered. Paul understood honour as something that expresses genuine affection, that for every member of the body to thrive it's incompatible to not show honour. If there is anything we should upstage each other at, it's honouring.

#### **"HONOUR" IN SCRIPTURE AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

From both the Greek and Hebrew words, to honour is to recognise and esteem, to place high value on a person, in recognition of his or her importance. Sometimes, it means to enhance the reputation of someone.

Honour is prominent in scripture because it's a part of God's design. Our mandate on earth is to steward what God has created, for the purpose of human flourishing. Honouring brings order to chaos in our interactions with each other, like Jesus who came to restore honour, to reconcile us to the Father. Contempt diminishes the value in others and ruins the quality of relationships.

#### **Am I giving weight, recognising the value in people, or am I diminishing people?**

The sad thing is that what we are familiar with, even comfortable with, is the opposite of God's injunction to be a people of honour — devaluing one another. The flipside is an unhealthy version of honour laced with guilt, shame, intimidation and self-interests, to manipulate others and ironically, diminish them. This is pseudo-honour, at best.

The truth is that in this corrupt world, anything good can be distorted by the enemy so that we cannot live into the shalom of God. But the biblical emphasis on honouring others has everything to do with the biblical command to honour God. When we refrain from honouring or tolerate dishonour, we denounce by omission the importance of honouring one another, and by default the importance of honouring God.

#### **Learning to value what God values (the importance of honour in God's Kingdom) is counter-cultural in three ways:**

1. It transcends particular time and culture.
2. It goes beyond cultural norms.
3. It lies in our willingness to render it.

**Where there is dishonour:**

1. God disciplines (Ez 22:1-4, 7-8, 13-14; Malachi 1:6-7; 2:1-3, 7-9).
2. People are deflated and not empowered.
3. Division.

The danger is in thinking that because we don't outrightly denigrate people, we are not dishonouring. But Jesus shows us his excellent way; he did not merely tolerate sinners coming to him but went out of his way to pursue them, to give dignity to them.

**HOW CAN YOU & I GROW IN HONOUR?**

All that we are and do as a church community — to be, become and do — for people to grow and flourish, it must be stronger than whatever is out to destroy and tear apart our lives. We want to build a culture of encouragement. We want to help each other be honouring.

**Practice of encouragement**

1. Pay attention to your heart.
2. Listen.
3. Observe and pray (listen).
4. Tell him / her.
5. Schedule to encourage.

Let's commit to being a community of honour.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Using your own words, paraphrase what Paul is saying in Romans 12:9-10, 16-17. What in the context of these verses sheds light on his instructions about honour?
2. What is your main takeaway from this message? Share why.
3. How have you experienced honour (or the lack thereof), and the effects of it? How has that shaped honour as a value in your life?
4. There are many ways we can grow as a community of honour that practises encouragement and exhortation of each other. What does it look like, for you, to commit to building a culture of honour? What would undermine your commitment, and how would you deal with that?
5. Ask Holy Spirit to bring to mind three persons you can show honour towards (e.g. someone you take for granted, or feel contempt for), in the next few days. Obey His prompting.