

UNITY, HONOR, AND RESPECT

Read the attached article (taken from the **October 2024 midweek sermon**) then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

QUESTIONS

Honor all people

1. How can we practice honoring all people in our society today, one that is often divided by race, class, or other social barriers? Can you share examples of how this principle might be applied in everyday situations?
2. How do we address situations where someone's behavior challenges our ability to honor them? What does honoring someone look like when their actions are difficult to condone?

Love the brotherhood

1. Share what it means for the church to function as a "brotherhood" or family.
2. How can we foster a culture of mutual support and forgiveness within our congregations? Are there specific practices or activities that could help strengthen these bonds?

Fear God

1. Discuss “fearing God” in practical terms in your daily life. How does this reverence influence your decision-making and interactions with others?
2. How can a deep respect and awe for God shape our response to societal pressures and moral dilemmas?

Honor the king

1. Can Christians honor those in authority while still being true to their faith? What does this balance look like in practice?
2. What are some examples from history or current events where Christians have had to navigate the tension between respecting governmental authority and upholding their religious convictions?
3. When might it be appropriate to question or oppose authority, and how should Christians approach such situations with respect and integrity?

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Peter 2:17

Acts 2:42-47

Ecclesiasticus 10:24

1 Peter 2:11 NIV

1 Peter 2:13-16

Acts 5:29

ARTICLE

UNITY, HONOR, AND RESPECT: A Reflection on 1 Peter 2:17

The epistle of 1 Peter is a profound and practical letter addressing early Christians scattered across Asia Minor. Far removed from Rome, the Christians in this area were still considered outsiders, “foreigners and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11 NIV), to the people around them. They were quite a mixed group within the Christian community, with both Israelite and Gentile backgrounds of diverse regions and cultures. Facing a diverse and often hostile environment, these early believers needed clear guidance on how to live out their faith amidst trials and societal pressures. In 1 Peter 2:17, the author offers a succinct yet comprehensive guide for Christian conduct: “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” This verse encapsulates essential principles for living out one’s faith in a complex world. Let’s explore the depth and implications of this fourfold appeal and consider how it can be applied in our lives today.

THE FOURFOLD APPEAL:

Honor all people

The first exhortation, “Honor all people,” challenges believers to show respect and dignity to every individual. This directive underscores the fundamental principle in Christianity: every person, regardless of their status, background, or behavior, is deserving of honor because they are created in the image of God. This call to honor is counter-cultural, especially in a world where divisions based on race, class, and social status often create barriers between people.

To honor all people means recognizing the intrinsic worth of every soul. This involves more than superficial politeness; it requires us to see each other as God sees us and to engage with others as Christ did. It means resisting the temptation to judge others based on their appearance, actions, or societal position. Practically, this could involve listening actively to those with different viewpoints, engaging in acts of kindness and forgiveness, and advocating for justice and equality. By practicing such honor, we reflect God’s love and character, challenging societal norms that devalue or marginalize those created in God’s image.

Love the brotherhood

The second aspect of 1 Peter 2:17’s appeal, “Love the brotherhood,” speaks directly to our Christian community. The term “brotherhood” signifies a family-like relationship among believers, indicating that the Church should function as a close-knit family where love and mutual support are

paramount. This command emphasizes that our relationships within the assembly of believers should be characterized by deep, self-giving love.

In the early church, this love was evident in the way they cared for one another, shared resources, and provided emotional and spiritual support. Acts 2:42–47 provides a vivid picture of this communal love, highlighting practices like meeting in each other’s homes, breaking bread, and praying together. For us today, loving the brotherhood involves prioritizing relationships within the Church, and fostering an environment where members feel valued and supported. It means being willing to forgive, bear each other’s burdens, and work through conflicts with grace, understanding, and acceptance.

Fear God

The third directive, “Fear God,” calls for a profound reverence for our Creator. He is first in all things. This fear is not about being afraid in a paralyzing sense but rather holding God in awe and acknowledging His supreme authority. To fear God means to live with an awareness of His holiness and sovereignty, allowing this reverence to shape our behavior and choices.

This aspect of the appeal frames our relationship with both God and others. When we truly fear God, we recognize His authority over all aspects of life, which influences how we interact with people and society. This reverence leads us to live in a way that is consistent with God’s will, ensuring that our actions reflect our commitment to Him.

Honor the king

The last exhortation follows from the first. Directed again towards those outside the household of faith, honor is now encouraged towards those in authority and power - the same honor that is required for all humanity. Verses 13-16 describe in further detail the submission towards those in authority: that it is “for the Lord’s sake” and to maintain a positive relationship with our community and neighbors. The epistle of Peter does not acknowledge any divine right or authority of the ruler. Rather the authority of the king is relativized, desacralized, and limited. Honoring “the king” is simply honoring all people while respecting societal order. *“The prince and the judge and the ruler are honored, but none of them is greater than the one who fears the Lord”* (Ecclesiasticus 10:24).

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