

Is there a difference in showing someone honor and showing them respect? What do I do if the person I am supposed to honor has ultimately failed or harmed me (or others)?

Treating someone with honor who has proven to not be an honorable person, seems like an impossible task on the surface. Understanding the biblical foundation for our call to honor everyone (1 Peter 2:17) is helpful, as is grasping the difference between honor and respect as presented to us in scripture.

In the New Testament, the word **Honor** is most often a form of the Greek word *time'* which means an *estimate of value in which the price is fixed; to esteem as precious or weighty; and to honor based on rank or office held.*

Likewise, the word **Respect** is most often a form of the Greek word(s) *entrepo* or *phobos* which mean *to fear, to revere (or have reverence for)* and by extension *to admire, look up to, or have a high opinion of.*

Honor and Respect are closely connected and even overlap at times, yet the New Testament treats them as different concepts (see Romans 13:7).

Honor vs. Respect

We are told in scripture to Honor God and one another (mankind). Furthermore, the Bible emphasizes certain people that we should honor including parents, government leaders, the elderly, and spouses. Within those instructions there seems to be no consideration of the actions of the individual prior to giving honor [*One possible exception is pastors/elders in 1 Tim 5:17*]. As defined above, the Greek word *time'* is **estimating value at a fixed price**. This means that the value placed does not fluctuate or change. In using this word to describe how we are to relate to others, the Bible is showing us that honor is not dependent on what an individual does or does not do. We are called to consider them valuable in an unchanging way. Honor is primarily based on position, such as someone in authority over us or relation to us. And every man or woman is in the position of an Image-bearer of God and therefore are inherently valuable to Him.

Respect, on the other hand, is closely tied to the actions or way of life of the individual. Joseph of Arimathea – a follower of Jesus (Matthew 27:57) who asked for his body after his death - is said to have been a respected member of the Jewish council (Mark 15:43). Joseph is singled out as someone who was greatly admired in His community. His courageous actions in giving Jesus a proper burial seems to indicate the authenticity of his good character. Joseph had lived in such a way as to gain the high opinion of many. The Greek words *entrepo* and *phobos* indicate a consideration of a person's way of life as we show them proper admiration.

Application

It appears then that the case can be made that **respect is earned**. Individuals are revered because of their actions. They receive the admiration of others because of the way they have lived, how they have treated people, and by the way they have carried out their assigned role with faithfulness.

In turn, **Honor is given**. It is a determination of worth that we fix in our hearts and bestow upon someone else because of their position in our lives. Honor is granted, in many cases, despite a lack of proper behavior. And while it is hard to honor someone who is not honorable, we remind ourselves that in His sovereignty God has given (or allowed) them a position and he will hold them accountable for it. If they fail to fulfill their role in dependence to Christ, or even hurt people through it, they will answer to this on the day of judgement. Our

responsibility is to treat them as valuable (with God's help) and trust Him with the results. Scripture shows us that honoring someone who does not deserve it may be a tool God uses to move them to proper behavior (see *1 Peter 3:1-2*).

Real Life Example

Years ago, I was asked to assist someone outside of our church who was going through some marriage difficulties. The husband had been caught in an act of unfaithfulness, and his wife was willing to forgive him if he would repent. The man, a former church leader, agreed to meet. But during the meeting he refused to take responsibility for his actions and to return to his spouse.

Looking back, I had no respect for this individual. I did not admire him nor have a high opinion of him. He did not treat his family well, nor those trying to help him. I was, however, called to honor him. He is an image bearer of God. He was a father and husband who needed the rescue of Christ. I honored him (treated him as valuable) by praying for him, continuing to offer to meet with him, and counsel him if he wanted to listen. I honored Him by encouraging him to fight for his family and by reminding Him that He could be the person God designed if He repent. He had not earned my respect, but He was given my honor.

Conclusion

Honor is very closely tied to love. We are told to honor God and people, just as we are told to love God and people. I believe it is possible to give honor and love to those that have not earned our respect, but this will require the help of God. To honor someone properly, we must first esteem them as valuable in our hearts. And only God can grant us the ability to love those who do not deserve it. The foundation of our call to honor everyone is to remember that God has bestowed upon us that same honor and love (Psalm 8:4-5), even though we did not deserve it. All of us, in some way, have failed in our God given roles. All of us, in some way, have sinned against God and hurt others. Yet even while we were rebels against Him, God chose to give us His love (Romans 5:8). By honoring others, even at times that they do not deserve it, we are imitating God and reflecting His character.



love the Lord
love our neighbor
make disciples