

May 11-15, 2020 Edition

The Year Of Cultivating #19

Mother's Day Weekend 2020

Cultivating Honor

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday:

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other. 1 John 3:16 (CEV)

Reflection: This week we're looking at the concept of honor and what impact it has on our relationships. But what is honor? What does it look like? What happens when we do it? What happens when we don't? Honor is one of those things that we generally think of when it comes to serving in the military or some other profession where heroes are giving up their rights and safety for the good of the rest of us. Police, fire fighters, paramedics and others serve with "honor". But there is another way of looking at honor that I want us to focus on this week, and that is how we treat one another (especially those we care about the most).

When Jesus came to this earth He showed us what it meant to live a life of honor and what it meant to live a life of honoring others (and they aren't necessarily the same thing). Jesus' best friend, the apostle John, had something to say about what that kind of life looked like:

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other. 1 John 3:16 (CEV)

Growing up I learned that verse in Sunday school. I thought that when John talked about Jesus "giving His life for us", he was talking about the cross. About Jesus' death. About the way He served with honor and paid the ultimate price, gave the ultimate sacrifice. And that's true... He did. But I don't think that's all that John was thinking about when he wrote today's scripture.

I think that when John wrote that Jesus "gave His life for us" he was thinking about more than just His death. I think now that John was also remembering how every day for 3 1/2 years Jesus gave up His rights, His comfort and His own interests to honor the people He came to save. He not only lived "with honor" but he lived a life that honored the people He came across every day.

And that way of life changed the world. But it also changed the way the people He was closest to felt about Him. And that's one of the most powerful parts of living a life that honors others, it changes how people feel about us. This week we're going to look at what that means practically and then talk a little bit about what honor looks like.

Tuesday:

Jacob loved Rachel more than he did Leah. Genesis 29:30 (CEV)

Reflection: If you know the story of Jacob, Leah & Rachel from the very first book of the Bible then you might understand what honor does in a relationship (and what a lack of honor does as well). In a nutshell, Jacob falls madly in love with Rachel and agrees to work for 7 years for her father in exchange for her hand in marriage. After he works his 7 years he gets married, but in middle eastern weddings the bride wears a veil so Jacob doesn't realize til the next morning that Laban (Rachel's father) has tricked Jacob and given him Leah instead. Jacob doesn't love Leah. Everybody knows it. Rachel knows it. Laban knows it. And Leah knows it. Jacob loses his mind but Laban offers to give him Rachel for 7 more years of work (and this time Jacob doesn't have to wait til the 7 years is up to get his bride... he gets her right away.

But what a way to start a family, right? The sisters fight over Jacob's attentions and while everyone knows that Jacob loves Rachel the most, Leah is the more fertile of the sisters and so Jacob honors her (sort of) for her ability to provide him with sons. He appreciated Leah, but he LOVED Rachel. He honored her in a way that he never honored Leah. And because of that his relationships with Rachel was far different than his relationship with Leah. It even trickled down to the children. Jacob honored and favored the children he had with Rachel MUCH more than he did Leah's children. And don't think for a second that the kids didn't see/feel it. They did.

And it made for an extremely toxic home life.

It turns out that honor is pretty important, if you want a relationship that is satisfying and lasting. And it's something we automatically do when we are trying to get someone to fall in love with us. It is the part of the love equation that we have the most control over. When we honor someone that we are attracted to it draws them to us (as long as a few other criteria are met... but we don't really have control over any part of this process other than honor). Not sure you agree? Well think about it and we'll talk more tomorrow.

Wednesday:

Do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor. James 3:18 (MES)

Reflection: How does honor translate into the way we feel about one another? Well, one way of looking at it is called the "Love Bank" theory.

In a nutshell here's how the Love Bank works. In your heart there is a "feelings account" for every human being you have to interact with. The number of transactions will be different for each account depending on how much interaction you have with the person representing a particular account, but everybody you deal with has an account. The "balance" of an individual's account is determined (just like a normal bank account) by how many deposits they make and how many debits, or withdrawals they make. The more deposits someone makes in your Love Bank, the better you feel about that person. The more debits, the worse you feel. The more you think about it, the more I think you'll see how the theory works.

Imagine you have to stop at the grocery store quite often. How do you feel about the cashiers? If you've never met them you probably don't have an opinion, but if you've gone through someone's line a few times then you've got a feeling about them. Imagine one cashier is pleasant looking, works extremely fast, is friendly and funny and remembers your name. That's a lot of deposits in a short amount of time. Granted, they aren't HUGE deposits but this stuff adds up pretty quickly.

Now imagine another cashier. This cashier needs a bath and you can tell from 3 feet away, across a counter that they haven't brushed their teeth in what seems like must be weeks. They stink, they are incompetent, they talk to the person in front of you and can't seem to work their hands at the same time as they work their mouth telling boring and infuriating stories, wasting your valuable time. When you finally get your turn in line they want to stop and chat with you too. But you don't want to chat. You want to pay for your items and get the heck out of there. That's a lot of debits in a short amount of time. How do you think you feel about that cashier? The next time you go to the grocery store, whose line will you choose. Even if the irritating cashier

has nobody in line, you'll probably wait in line for the pleasant and competent cashier. Why? Because of honor (or at least our perception of honor). We feel like the competent cashier honors our time, our energy and is professional. We feel like the incompetent cashier dishonors our time, energy and sensibilities.

I know that's a bit of a ridiculous example but the same thing happens in our closest relationships all the time. As a pastor I have done dozens of weddings. When two people stand up in front of their friends, family and God Himself to say their vows I can see it in their eyes (most of the time... there have been exceptions but that's a story for another day)- they can't imagine spending the rest of their lives without this person. You will never see two people look at each other the way that a couple looks at one another on their wedding day (and I get to be right there with a front row seat for it... there's nothing like it on this earth).

Why do they feel that way about each other? There are several factors but the one that they have the most control over is honor. When someone spots another human being that they are interested in and want that person to fall in love with them what happens? We become detectives trying to learn the other person's likes and dislikes. We then try to do what that person likes as often as possible and avoid doing what that person dislikes as often as possible. We become experts on each other and over time this way of life changes the way we feel about one another.

Why? Because as we do the things that our loved one likes we build up deposits in their love bank. And by avoiding what they dislike we keep the debits to a minimum. Over time this leads to a feeling of love that leaves us feeling like we never want to be apart. And so we get married. But then something happens. It's called life. Now we're living together and there are a lot more opportunities for us to do things that will cause debits with each other. We find ourselves spending time together when we're tired and grumpy and used up. We stop doing the positive things that we naturally did while we were courting one another and start doing a lot more of things we dislike about one another. Over time the debits start to outweigh the deposits and the balance in our love bank accounts move into the negative. And we wonder what happened? Why don't I feel the same as I did? How did I go from not wanting to spend another day apart to wondering how I can get out of this?

Honor. We stopped living a life that honors and that has implications in how our spouses feel about us and how we feel about them. What do I have to do to "bring back that lovin' feeling" you might ask? It's actually pretty simple (I didn't say, "easy"... I said simple... there's a difference). Start doing what you did while you were dating. I know things have changed. I know it's not easy. It may not even be possible to do the same things that you used to do for one another in exactly the same way. But there is a way of life that makes your spouse (or friend or family or co-workers or neighbors or...) honored. Become a detective again. And don't be afraid to ask what makes your spouse feel honored. Don't be afraid to ask them what makes them feel dishonored. I know it's not easy... but it is powerful and will change your relationships (all of them, this doesn't just work in marriage... it works in every relationship of your life, in different ways but it still works).

Tomorrow we'll talk about what honor might look like.

Thursday:

Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life. Proverbs 4:23 (NCV)

Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her. Ephesians 5:26 (MES)

Reflection: Ok... honor. What does it look like in practical terms. First of all remember that each of us is different. Honor looks different to one person than it does to another. When Judy and I were first married I was constantly doing things that I thought were going to make her melt as she basked in the glory of the honor I was showing her... but instead I got the opposite. Why? Because when I do something that I think will honor her and it becomes obvious to her that I have no clue what that means, the opposite from what I intended happens. I end up dishonoring her.

That discourages me and it discourages her. Which over time if left alone will turn a beautiful, miraculous, satisfying relationship into something toxic and destructive. So first of all I guess I'd say, if you want to know what honor looks like, ask the person you are hoping to honor. In the marriage seminar that Judy and I sometimes facilitate this is basically the whole point. Give people the framework and language to relearn what it means to honor each other. Give them the opportunity and permission to share with each other what constitutes dishonor (so we can stop doing those things) and what constitutes honor (so we can once again do those things as often as possible). And over time, by becoming detectives about what we love and hate relationships can once again approach the levels they were at when we decided we couldn't possibly spend the rest of our lives apart.

Alright... so that's the disclaimer. But there are a few universal things that we can all agree on. One is that honor starts in our minds. Nothing enters into the physical world without first being birthed in our minds. That's why the Bible spends so much time trying to get us to think about what we're thinking about. This is especially true in relationships. I used to think that if I didn't say what negative things I was entertaining in my mind about Judy that it wouldn't have any impact. But there's a fancy theological term for that kind of thinking and it's... RASPBERRIES (imagine instead of reading the word out loud you make the spitting sound that "raspberries" is supposed to convey ;o)

Turns out how I think is pretty important because as Proverbs 4:23 tells me, my thoughts run my life. So I can honor Judy by refusing to entertain negative thoughts about her (as much as I'm able, I mean, I am human...)

I can also honor Judy with my words. When I talk to her, what I say matters. I love the second verse from today which talks about how Jesus talks about us:

His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her. Ephesians 5:26 (MES)

Does that pretty much describe how you talk to the most important people in your life? Is everything you do and say designed to bring the best out of your closest relationships? Yeah... me neither.

But that is one area we can all work on. And not just while we're with people. I've realized I've got to be careful about bad mouthing Judy with others when she's not around. Not only is that a betrayal to her, but it's going to impact the way others see her and also how they see me. Never take the opportunity to talk badly about the people in your life, even if someone is encouraging you to do it. It's just one more aspect of building up your account in someone else's love bank.

Tomorrow two more ways we can show honor... but for today, how are you doing with honoring the most important relationships in your life with your thoughts and words?

Friday:

Do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? James 2:14 (MES)

*Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.
Romans 12:10 (NRSV)*

Reflection: Ok... so let's reset. Honor begins with our thoughts. Nothing enters into the physical world without first being born in the mind. But our honoring thoughts don't do anyone any good if they stay in your minds... they have to enter the physical world for someone to actually feel honored. So the next step is how we talk to one another. We honor each other with our words. Sometimes people will say, "I'm just not a communicator. I don't have anything to say. I can't language goodly!"

But often those same people have no trouble communicating dishonoring thoughts. If that's where you are then you know what you need to work on. We need to honor those we are in relationship with verbally. But if all we do is talk a good game but never follow through that can be worse than not speaking honoring words in the first place.

We all know that person who can make you feel like you're SO honored while they're talking to you. But once they've gone they never follow through. Honor may begin with our thoughts, it may enter the world through our words but if we never follow through with our actions then our words and thoughts create something toxic and destructive in our relationships. Follow through on what you say. Don't just stand there, do something. And when we do, it transforms our relationships.

Did you notice the word, "outdo" in the scripture from Romans 12:10 today? That's an interesting concept coming from the Bible. It's the only time I know of that God invites us to turn our relationships into competitions. Why would He do that?

Because this is what creates beautiful, miraculous relationships. It's what a couple naturally does for one another before they get married. It's what creates the climate where they can't imagine living the rest of their lives without this other person. But all too often after the "I do's" we stop doing this. We stop trying to figure out what honor looks like. And over time that can destroy a relationship. We go, far too quickly, from "I can't imagine spending the rest of my life without this person," to "I can't believe I ever cared about this jerk!"

In fact, we get to where we forget that we ever really did care about them. But you did. You did care. And you can get back there. How? But doing what you did BEFORE you got married. By once again trying your best to "outdo" your spouse at showing honor. Now, if only one person

does this it won't fix anything. As the old saying goes, it takes two to tango." But if two people give each other the space, the permission and the safety to once again communicate what it is that honor looks like to them and what it is that dishonor looks like, over time any relationship can be healed.

And yes, you will once again get to that point where you can't imagine your life without that miserable jerk in it ;o)

And this is true for any relationship. It doesn't just have to be about marriages. So how about you? How are you doing at "outdoing" the most important relationships in your life at showing honor? Why not spend a few minutes writing out who your most important relationships are and what you might be able to do to "outdo" them at showing honor this week? It might just change everything.

Ways I Can Show Honor?

**** Pro Tip: If you don't know what honor looks like to someone try asking them ;0)**

1. _____ : _____
(Name Of Person) (Ways I Can Show Honor?)

2. _____ : _____
(Name Of Person) (Ways I Can Show Honor?)

3. _____ : _____
(Name Of Person) (Ways I Can Show Honor?)

4. _____ : _____
(Name Of Person) (Ways I Can Show Honor?)

5. _____ : _____
(Name Of Person) (Ways I Can Show Honor?)