

America is Endangered Unless We Recover This Vanishing Virtue

Recently I went to a pricey restaurant but left disappointed. Ordering a deluxe burger, I told the server to skip their exotic sauce, cheese and fries and asked if she'd simply substitute with a pickle and tomato slice. When I received the bill they charged me 50 cents for each item and upon inquiry was told, "It's policy."

Have you ever seen the video for instilling excellence in customer service entitled "Give 'Em the Pickle?" It specifically addresses what was missing in my experience. It's the characteristic Chick-fil-A demonstrates that makes them the number-one fast food restaurant in America, handling every customer's request with, "My pleasure!"

On campuses and in town hall meetings across the land, elected officials and speakers are shouted down and events shut down. Our president is disparaged, cursed and mocked incessantly especially on Saturday Night Live and other comedy shows. Rapper Snoop Dog's latest album has Trump dead on the cover; Saturday was a 20-city "Day of Resistance" trashing Trump and Pence; and, after Sunday's horrific carnage at another church once hallowed as sacred space, leftists blamed Republicans.

When I was at Cleveland State University during the turbulent Vietnam era, we hosted controversial speakers like Jane Fonda and Ralph Nader. They exercised their freedom of speech without interference. What was present then that is vanishing today?

Bethel Church in Redding, California, experiences explosive growth and a lifestyle of the supernatural. Senior leader Bill Johnson attributes it to something embedded in their culture.

It's the very characteristic missing in our country and much of Christianity today.

Bill calls it a "culture of honor" that leads people to show genuine respect versus competition or even contempt towards others. They view each other as "comrades rather than competitors."

People once demonstrated civility in public debate; judges dispensed just sentences versus leniency (Bowe Bergdahl?); masses honored law-enforcement, our military, the national anthem and the flag; seniors were not disrespected and subject to ridicule and neglect.

It's time for the church to declare and demonstrate the forgotten principle of honor to "salt" society once again. This precious and rare jewel was foundational to our forefathers who pledged their "sacred honor" to birth America. It must be recovered before it's too late.

What Is Honor?

In a court of law we address the judge as "your Honor." Scouts declare, "On my honor." Invitations state, "We request the honor of your presence."

Honor refers to manifest respect. It is an attitude expressed in an act. We respect people privately, but we can only honor them publicly.

When artists conclude a magnificent performance, we usually honor them with a standing ovation. When a dignitary enters the room, we rise to our feet.

Today it's fashionable to disrespect authority, human life, our nation's heroes and sacred institutions. Ongoing films like *Bad Moms' Christmas* and *Daddy's Home 2* presenting parents as obnoxious perverts and idiots must be countered so society sees God's way.

7 Areas to Show Honor

While the Bible says, "Honor is not seemly for a fool" (Prov. 26:1), God challenges us to "prefer one another in honor" (). I honor my friend, Charles Simpson, who taught me this virtue decades ago.

1. God—In a world blaspheming God, Revelation 5:12 tells us, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 1 Samuel 2:30 says, "Those who honor Me, I will honor." We do this through courageously heeding and heralding the gospel and scriptural standards, obedience, worship, plus cheerfully giving our finances. "Honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of all your increase" (Prov. 3:9).
2. Governing Authorities—While late-night comics and multitudes are mean-spirited, mocking elected officials, God commands us to "Honor all people. ... Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). Keep in mind this directive came when the ungodly Nero was ruler! Romans 13:1-7 warns us that dishonoring God's rulers brings judgment.
3. Parents—"Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3). Do you want things to go well in your personal life? Do you desire to live a long life? Don't look first to Botox and holistic foods but apply this divine directive to your dad and mom.
4. Spouses—Our pop culture revels in contempt for God's Word and the sacred institution of marriage. People casually divorce, fornicate, co-habitate, brazenly commit adultery and endorse homosexual unions. Former President Obama even lit up the White House in rainbow colors to celebrate same-sex "marriage." God tells us in no uncertain terms, "Marriage is to be honored among everyone, and the bed undefiled. But God will judge the

sexually immoral and adulterers" (Heb. 13:4). Sexually transmitted diseases are pandemic while Harvey Weinstein and others are only starting to surface. Scripture teaches men to lead the way as husbands "giving honor to the woman" (1 Pet. 3:7). I know of a man who felt convicted of neglect of his pregnant wife, repented and responded by honoring her with a special getaway. Doctors later discovered a clot that travelled to her brain, later taking her life. This was a tragedy but he treasures that memorable time with her before she died.

5. The Aged—Society endorses euthanasia while some people quickly cart off elderly parents to centers where they languish in loneliness. Seniors abandoned by their children often die of a broken heart. Scripture tells us to honor the elderly. Leviticus 19:32 instructs, "You shall rise up before a grey head, and honor the face of an old man." After my father died, it was an honor to care for my mother in our home for seven years. Only when we could no longer physically meet her needs after a serious fall did we turn to nursing home care. Our visits and calls remained very frequent. She's now in heaven but we have many memories and our children had the example of how to honor a parent in sunset years.
6. Church Leaders—Scripture tells us, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor" (1 Tim. 5:17). We do this as we pray for them, follow their lead, remain loyal and serve them joyfully. Remember, we show our respect for God by the way we treat those who represent Him!
7. One Another—Romans 12:10 says, "Be devoted to one another with brotherly love; prefer one another in honor."

All of us have a God-given need to be respected. Aretha Franklin, a pastor's daughter, cried out for R-E-S-P-E-C-T in her classic song. Comedian Rodney Dangerfield lamented, "I don't get no respect!"

Here's the deal: Against the dark backdrop of a declining culture desperately in need of spiritual awakening, God is raising up a generation lighting up the landscape by restoring the principle of honor in homes, churches and public places.

Will you be part of this countercultural movement restoring this forgotten, rare jewel today?