

A Culture Of Honor

Jack Frost

"Jack, we have noticed a potentially harmful pattern in your life that may be detrimental to your future and that of Shiloh Place." It was the first of November and time for my accountability lunch with my friends and ministry Executive Board members, pastors Phillip Miles and Chip Judd. For years we



have tried to get together at least twice a month in order to help each other mature so that we can reach our maximum potential as husbands, fathers, and in our relationship with God. The level of honesty and openness can be pretty painful as we seek to speak truth into each other's lives. Because we love and value each other so much, usually we are not threatened by some of the heavy things that we lay upon each other.

"We have seen a relational pattern in your life that brings dishonor to Shiloh Place, its core values, and to the revelation that God has given you about His love." Somehow I quickly discerned that this week I was going to be in the hot seat with the focus of conversation heavily leaning towards an area of my life that was in need of deeper maturity. At once I could feel my fur bristling and the need for vindication—my mind seeking to defend, justify, and exonerate myself from any fault or blame.

Phillip stuck the knife in a little deeper, "I've seen over the years how Trisha and you tend to give yourselves totally people. You operate on a complete system of trust when you meet people. You just open your heart wide with transparency, realness, and no defenses, and let people come right in. But when you give yourself that freely to people, you are much more likely to take it as personal hurt when someone takes advantage or distances themselves from you. It can be very painful when they reject you and it will be your response to that pain that helps to determine how you will relate to others and your ability to minister to people in the future."

Phillip paused to see how well I was going to swallow this pearl of truth he was trying to deliver. I glanced over at Chip in hopes that I had someone on my side but he was already nodding in agreement with Phillip's words.

Phillip continued in hot pursuit to help me reach my maximum potential, "When least expected, we've been shocked at a couple of things that have come out of you that have tasted of dishonor. When people disappoint you, we have noticed how easy it is for you to expose their faults but not examine yourself to see what part you may have played in the fractured relationship. You tend to focus upon their attitudes and behavior and your judgment of that person is often 100% correct. But what you do with that judgment determines the culture that you and your family are going to walk in, and what Shiloh Place and all its team members are most likely to become. Even if your judgment of the other person is accurate, if your words, tones, or body language exposes their faults, by focusing your conversation upon their weaknesses, then you have stepped outside of Shiloh Place's core value of walking in a culture of honor and grace. Love covers other people's faults, does not complain about them, and does not seek to expose."

"He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates.... Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint" (Proverbs 17:9; 1 Peter 4:8-9).

Let's look at two of Shiloh Place's Core Values that spurred the Executive Board members to lovingly confront me.

Honor—We seek to put love into action by creating a culture of honor and viewing each person as one of God's creations and worthy of great respect, value, and importance. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor" (Romans 12:10).

Grace—We seek for our words to be seasoned with grace and encouragement, speaking to the treasure within a person and not exposing their faults.

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29).

Honor involves a decision that is made to put love into action—to give a person a position of high value and worth in our life. Even if something in their life has been disappointed, hurt, or wounded by a person, honor chooses to make a decision not to respond in like-kind. No matter what is felt coming from another person, honor chooses to not expose but speak words that give grace to the hearer. Honor views each person as a precious gift of God's creation and grants them a position that is worthy of great respect. Honor chooses not to respond with an unwholesome word or tone. Not to give honor is to assign dishonor. Judgment, resentment, anger, exposure, sarcasm, criticism, comparisons, favoritism, jealousy, selfishness, envy, racism, etc. are all weapons of dishonor that are used against those who are considered of little value or worth.

Every time someone's name who has devalued us comes up in conversation, we have a decision to make. We're either going to arm ourselves with a weapon of dishonor or we are going to give an unmerited gift of honor. Have you noticed there's no middle ground? We can be 100% right in our evaluation of a person's faults or weaknesses or how they've disappointed us, but love covers and does not expose other's weaknesses or whine about them.

What are we communicating when we talk to other people? Do other people feel value and worth being spoken by us over those whom others may feel have little worth? Genuine love gives honor. Self-love takes honor and dispenses dishonor. Not to honor can actually become a self-imposed curse and may result in a cloud or shadow of judgment hanging over our home, work place, church, or relationships. Dishonor does not serve well our personal interests and values even if our judgment is accurate. It is like we are trying to punish people when we expose their faults.

When someone who has disappointed me comes up in a conversation, does my words, tone or body language bring honor or do I draw out a weapon of dishonor? Probably my greatest pitfall in walking in honor is that I am often right in my evaluation of other's attitudes, behavior, and weaknesses and the way they have let me down or disappointed me. But is my body language covering or uncovering them? Is my conversation bringing exposure or is it leading to restoration? Is that person's

redemption at the root of my words or am I seeking to make myself look innocent by uncovering their faults?

What is the root issue during the times that I do not honor and speak words that are seasoned with grace? Could I still have insecurities in my life? Do I have a need to help God manage His universe so I've become God's policeman? Do I walk in an over demanding sense of justice not realizing that what I demand I usually do not inherit? Could it be past rejections, abandonment issues, betrayals, or previous wounding that have hurt me in the past are now influencing me to overcompensate by demanding justice in the present.

Phillip and Chip challenged me that Shiloh Place has been given a revelation about God's love that much of the world is seeking right now. We have a colossal responsibility to be good stewards of that revelation. That responsibility touches on much more than just what we preach. We are also accountable for who we are and this culture of honor and grace is at the core of God's love and should be entwined about everything we are at Shiloh Place. How can I take Phillip and Chip's challenge and begin to turn truth into change and fruitfulness?

Developing a Culture of Honor

1) Take Ownership

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Proverbs 28:13).

Phillip's last few words to me were, "Jack, your biggest challenge is - will you try to walk in denial of this or are you willing to take ownership? Are you able to see that you have used weapons of dishonor against others in your evaluation of them? Now, how will you respond from here?"

At first, I usually react negatively to truth. It hurts and makes me very uncomfortable! But once truth comes, I know that I have a choice of what kind of pain I will choose. Either I will face the pain of taking ownership of the truth or months, even years later, I will have to face the pain that the lack of taking ownership has caused my family and relationships. Why not face the discomfort of repentance now and begin to confront my attitudes and behavior that misrepresents God's love to others?

I am becoming more and more aware of how the whole exercise of trying to justify or place blame on another person is a waste of my time, and accomplished nothing. No matter how much fault I find in another person, nor the amount of blame with which I charge him, it is not going to change me or make me happy. The only thing I accomplish in such an exercise is to keep the spotlight off of the things in me that misrepresent God's love and grace, then nothing changes and my personal maturity and growth is stunted. Looking for an external reason for why I use the weapons of dishonor is to totally miss the point of the culture of honor. I may succeed in making someone else feel guilty, and I may discharge a lot of negative emotions, but I will not succeed in changing whatever it is about my innate disposition that is making me 'whiney'. Nobody makes me respond in a dishonoring way. It is my own insecurities and need to vindicate myself that dishonors another person. I am beginning to take ownership of this truth and am seeking to lay down all my really good and well rehearsed excuses!

2) Become Accountable

"Let our lives lovingly express truth in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him who is the Head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15 AMP).

I chose to not delay in facing the pain of taking ownership of the issues Phillip and Chip could so easily see in my life though before I had been blinded by self deception and the need to be right. I asked them to continue to speak the truth in love to me and to hold me accountable for my attitudes and actions. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend..." (Proverbs 27:6).

Shortly afterwards, I met with my wife and staff and told them how I had been lovingly confronted by my two treasured friends. I looked each staff member in the eye and confessed my sin of stepping outside of the culture of honor and grace that we had painstakingly sought for years to cultivate at Shiloh Place. I asked each of them to forgive me and to help hold me accountable. I gave them permission to gently let me know if they ever feel that I am drifting off center of love and honor in my attitudes towards others. Many wept and responded in like kind, confessing their sins and asking to be held accountable also. I then met with my staff directors and took the confession and apologies even deeper with them and beseeched them to help me grow and mature in the culture of honor.

I am now more sensitive than ever to walking in honor and grace and my prayer is to be a good steward of the revelation of God's love that He has given us at Shiloh Place. With all the growth pains that are presently happening in Trisha and I, at Shiloh Place, and in the nations, I am a desperate man who desires to know the truth about myself and am in deep need of God's help so that I can further mature in this area.

3) Bless the Good

"To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9).

Ninety-three percent of all communication is not words but non-verbal attitudes that are communicated through tone and body language. When a name of a person who has disappointed you comes up in conversation are your tone, body language, and words seasoned by grace? The way I used to handle disappointment was to just keep my mouth shut if I didn't have anything good to say about them. But that communicates something negative. Silence speaks rejection. So now, as soon as their name comes up, I want to be sensitive to think about their strengths. How can I bring a word of edification about them? Honor is a decision I choose to make to give a person a position of great worth and value in my life.

Phillip and Chip continued, "If a name comes up in conversation of someone you feel has not been faithful to you in any way, whether family members, people at church, peers, or other ministries, seek out and speak of the good in them instead of highlighting their faults, mistakes, or weaknesses. Discover the great joy of putting love into action by making a decision to honor all men!"

How do you speak about the body of Christ or the church across town? How do you talk about other ministries that may not have the revelation that God has given you? How

do you chat about people who leave your ministry, church, or work place? If we are going to be an imparter of life and healing to a hurting world, to your family, and work place, then we have the responsibility to make a decision to put love into action by leading the way with a lifestyle of giving undeserved honor and grace. God does! Will you accept the challenge?

I am now so deeply aware that the future of my family and Shiloh Place is dependant upon me seeking to (not perfection) lead them into a culture of honor and they may find it difficult to embrace until I make it a primary pursuit and core value of my life. Won't you join me on this adventurous trek to make God's love known to our families and to the nations?

In Father's love,

Jack Frost

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