

## Honor All -What's Involved &Why

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Peter tells us to *honor all*... All? Easy to say. Difficult to do. Especially because Peter gets specific about *whom* we're to honor

***1 Peter 2:17 Honor all. Love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.***

"Honor all" is the introductory command. Peter follows it with three examples of how to live that out. By loving fellow believers ... that's understandable. By fearing (e.g. respecting) God ... of course. But by honoring Nero? The king who kills Christians? Is Peter serious? Yes, he is. What is he saying? What does "honor all" mean?

### **The Meaning of Honor**

When Peter says "honor" he uses a Greek word that wraps together three English words: weight, honor, and glory. To get the full breadth of Peter's word we'd have to translate it "weight-honor-glory." When we honor someone we, in a sense "give them weight." The idea of "weight" is particularly helpful in understanding what Peter means – he's talking about significance. "Weighty people" have significance. We take them seriously.

The corresponding Old Testament word translated as "honor" (kabed) can also be translated as "weight." While "weight" sometimes has a negative connotation (weighty as in burdensome), more often it means weighty in a positive sense (weighty as in significant, worthy, or glorious.) When Moses says *Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12)* He's telling us to listen to our parents, to value them, to give their opinions weight.

In the Hebrew, the opposite of honoring someone (kabed) is taking them lightly (qalal). We all know how to do that. It only takes a few seconds to recall the last time we dismissed someone as insignificant. Peter says we're not to do that. We're to honor all. And all means all.

### **Peter Gets Specific**

It's easy to agree with Peter's command (in an abstract, pious sort of way) and at the same time fail to follow through by actually complying with it (i.e. taking specific actions towards specific people). So Peter gets specific. He tells us clearly who falls into the category of "all" and what "honor" looks like with the brotherhood, with God, and with the king.

- ***Love the brotherhood.*** – Brotherhood refers to other believers. Not just some of them, but all of them. Even the ones with whom we have nothing in common. Even those we find offensive. Let's get personal: when you read this explanation, who pops into your mind?
- ***Fear God*** – Fear often carries the connotation of "respect." That's consistent with honoring God. We honor God by taking Him seriously, by respecting (i.e. fearing) Him.
- ***Honor the king*** -This is where honoring another gets almost unthinkable. Peter is referring to a specific king, Nero, the king who fed Peter's readers' relatives to the lions; the one who burned Rome and blamed it on Christians. That king. How Peter's contemporaries must have struggled

with his words. We also struggle with Peter's words: Honor Nero ... honor Bashar al-Assad – there's not much difference. Peter repeats the word “honor” to drive home his point: all means all.

### **Honoring Isn't a Part-time Choice.**

Just how long is this honoring to go on? All the time. Peter lets us know that by the Greek verb forms he uses. His first command ("honor all") uses a nondescript, common verb form (the Greek aorist tense). But for his next three commands (“love,” “fear/respect,” and, once again, “honor”) he uses a verb form (the Greek present tense) that emphasizes the ongoing nature of honoring. We're to *consistently* honor others (not just do it sometimes). We're *always* to treat *everyone* that way. Not just some people some of the time, but all people all of the time. That can be quite a stretch.

### **But Why Honor *Everybody*?**

Why? Because behind Peter's command to honor all lies the reality that every person on earth bears God's image. Everyone. Whether they portray God well or portray Him poorly. Whether their likeness to God is obvious or deeply buried, Our Creator has made each of us in some deep way like Himself. And that deep likeness never disappears.

If we go by what we see on the surface, “honor all” at times seems ridiculous and at other times seems impossible. But if we know what God knows, “honor all” makes perfect sense.

Does behavior matter? Of course. We rightly mourn when someone's likeness to God is hidden (and rightly rejoice when it's visible.) But no human behavior can wipe out the image of God. His image lies permanently at the core of each person. It never disappears. And His image is what we honor. In everybody. All the time. “Honor all” isn't about behavior; it's about our deep resemblance to God.

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Peter says “Honor all.” Why?

Not because we earn it, but because we each bear the image of God.

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