



Sunday October 21, 2018 Honor The Least

Ephesians 4:11-12

**11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,**

As the Bible teaches us, we believe in the five-fold ministry gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers that are functioning in the Church to equip God's people to do the work of the ministry so that the body of Christ can be built up.

While these five-fold ministers have been placed by Christ in the Church to equip and build up the Body - in some cases, some of these ministers abuse (misuse) their place, function and gifting. One of the common abuses, which we wish to address today is by prophetic ministers, leveraging what is commonly known as "the prophet's reward".

Very often the preaching goes with this thought, that if you honor the prophet with large sums of money (and other things) because they are a prophet, you will receive the prophet's reward.

Some prophetic ministers (not all) offer a personal prophetic word for a certain sum of money;
Some even give prophetic words that indicate how much money you are supposed to give;
etc.

Now honoring God's people and God's servants is a Biblical truth and we are encouraged to do so. However, **we must not let preachers exploit us for their personal gain** - which is the issue we wish to address today.

So let's bring a correct understanding on honoring God's people and God's servants.

YOUR REWARD FOR HOSPITALITY

Matthew 10:40-42

40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.



42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

receives Greek = accept, approve, embrace, give ear to

The Lord Jesus was speaking to his 12 disciples/apostles as he commissioned and sent them out to minister.

The message in verse 40 is clear, that if anyone receives the person sent by Jesus, they receive Jesus, and in receiving Jesus, they receive the Father Himself.

The message in verse 42 is also clear, that if we extend any hospitality because someone is a disciple of Jesus Christ - even to a young, novice disciple or least significant disciple, 'little ones' - there is a reward that one will receive.

In the context of the Lord's instructions, if we back up a few verses, this is what the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 10:12-13

12 And when you go into a household, greet it.

13 If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

So essentially, when the apostles visited a home, and they were welcomed they would speak peace, blessing and prosperity, which will be upon the hosts.

In Bible times we understand the greeting of peace as "shalom". They blessed their hosts by releasing the blessing of "shalom." The Hebrew word "shalom" refers to more than just peace. It is a comprehensive word that includes health, wholeness, prosperity and total well-being. By releasing "shalom" upon the household, the disciple of Jesus Christ released upon the host a powerful blessing. This was the reward of receiving a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So let's take everything in context:

- ✓ If you receive someone because they belong to Jesus, you receive the Lord Himself, along with the blessing and "shalom" which they release, which the Lord will make good for you.
- ✓ If you receive someone because they are a prophet, you receive the blessing and "shalom" the prophet releases on you, which the Lord will make good for you.



- ✓ If you receive someone because they are a righteous man, you receive the blessing and "shalom" the righteous man releases on you, which the Lord will make good for you.
- ✓ If you receive even the least of the Lord's disciples, you will receive a blessing and "shalom" which they release on you, which the Lord will make good for you.

So the point is because you recognize them -whether it be a disciple, a prophet, a good man, a little one - as the Lord's people, and receive them, you will receive the blessing and "shalom" they release on you, which the Lord Himself will make good for you.

So it was NOT the Lord's intent to elevate one above another - or make the "prophet's reward" greater than "the righteous man's reward"..and make that greater than "the little ones" reward.

THE PROPHET'S REWARD ABUSED

However, at times we hear prophetic ministers take the above passage, and elevate "the prophet's reward" as being above the other rewards - insinuating that you need to honor them more than others.

They then inevitably refer to two Old Testament passages: Elijah the prophet and the Widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24), and Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (2 Kings 4:8-37)

They use Elijah's story to get people to give every last bit of what they have, promising supernatural multiplication and a resurrection of whatever is dead/lost. And similarly, they use Elisha's story to promise a resurrection of what is dead/lost if they give to the prophet's ministry lavishly.

We are not against honoring true ministers of God, as the Lord leads and releases you. However if you are manipulated, exploited, coerced into giving - that is NOT right!

The truth is while we must honor true servants of God, we must also not forget to honor the least of His disciples equally!

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES AND NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION

The Bible is a progressive revelation and unfolding of God's truth and purposes. This means that ***the Old Testament has to be understood and applied through the lens of the New Testament.*** You **cannot** take an Old Testament examples in isolation, without looking at it through New Testament revelation and apply it to New Testament believers.

Think about this.



Matthew 11:11

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

What did Jesus say, in the New Testament - the least in the Kingdom greater than John the Baptist, the greatest of Old Testament prophets.

So then honoring the least one in the Kingdom is honoring someone greater than the greatest of the Old Testament prophets.

What else did Jesus teach us:

Matthew 25:40

And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

What we do, the kindness we show to the least of His disciples, we are doing it unto the Lord Himself.

HONOR GOD'S SERVANTS BUT DON'T GET EXPLOITED

Yes we are taught in the New Testament to honor God's ministers who serve us in spiritual things.

1 Corinthians 9:11,14

11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

Galatians 6:6

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

1 Timothy 5:17

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

However we must maintain a correct understanding of giving to God's Kingdom. Consider the following:

In 2 Corinthians chapters 8&9, as Paul was encouraging the Corinthian believers to give to the needs of the saints in Jerusalem, he assured them



that "God would make all grace abound" to them (2 Corinthians 9:8). God rewards you when you bless the least of His saints.

In Philippians as Paul commends the believers at Philippi for giving to his needs, commends them for sharing in his ministry of the Gospel (Philippians 1:5,7; 4:11-18) and he assures them that "my God will supply all your need...." (Philippians 4:19). **So whether we give to an apostle or to the least of His saints - the Source of our reward and the reward is the same: God will supply for us.**

Some have used Paul's letter to the Philippians to insinuate or imply or even teach that when you give to an apostle you receive of the grace and anointing of the apostle on their lives. This is not what Paul is presenting in Philippians 1:5,7. Instead he is acknowledging that the Philippians were partners in the work He was doing for the Gospel and for which God had give Him grace (His call, His assignment Ephesians 3:1-2). Spiritual things are imparted by grace and not bought with money. Simon was strongly reprimanded by Peter when he offered money to purchase things of the Spirit. **"But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God."** (Acts 8:20-21)

Paul clearly stated the requirement for spiritual leaders:

1 Timothy 3:3

not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

So also Peter made it clear what spiritual leaders must not do:

1 Peter 5:2

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

SO HONOR GOD'S SERVANTS, BUT DON'T GET EXPLOITED. Be careful if you see anyone being "greedy for money"...or engaging in dishonest gain.

CLOSING

The Prophet's reward is an truth that has often been exploited for personal gain, while the truth about honoring the least is conveniently ignored. **When we HONOR THE LEAST, we honor Christ.**

MINISTRY TIME

SALVATION CALL



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Sunday October 21, 2018
Honor The Least

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at apcwo.org/sermons. Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *Matthew 10:12-13,40-42; Matthew 11:11; Matthew 25:40; 1 Corinthians 9:11,14; Galatians 6:6*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

Q1, What are the key insights from Matthew 10:12-13,40-42 about being hospitable to people of God?

Q2, Consider some practical ways you can "honor the least" in the church community you are part of.

Q3, While it is important to bless God's ministers, what would you do if you feel compelled, manipulated or coerced to give financially to a servant of God?



If time permits, each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

- 1, families to be protected and strengthened*
- 2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.*
- 3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.*

Close by thanking God together.