
A Teachable Heart

*The Power of a Good Attitude Toward
Elders, Parents, and Correction*

by
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*"Listen to counsel and receive instruction,
that you may be wise in your latter days."*

— Proverbs 19:20 NKJV

Introduction

A good attitude is one of life's most powerful virtues — a reflection of humility, wisdom, and maturity. In a world that prizes independence and self-expression, Scripture calls us back to an ancient and eternal value: the teachable heart — a spirit that honors age, authority, and godly correction.

Such a heart is neither weak nor naïve; it is strong enough to learn, humble enough to listen, and wise enough to submit when necessary. The measure of a person's character is often seen not in how they speak when admired, but in how they respond to authority and to correction. A man's posture before those who have walked further than he has, and before those who would lovingly point out his errors, reveals the inner architecture of his soul.

The Bible draws a steady, unbroken line between honor and humility — and between humility and growth. A heart that will not bow to wise counsel cannot rise in true stature. The proud may climb for a season, but only the teachable endure.

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The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.

— Proverbs 15:33 NKJV

What follows, therefore, is a meditation on the many movements of a teachable heart: honor that endures beyond presence, reverence that bends gracefully before age and office, correction that ripens into wisdom, and the quiet radiance of a life shaped by both. It is a call to recover an ancient virtue that our generation has nearly forgotten — the discipline of being small enough to be taught.

The Anatomy of Honor: What It Is and What It Is Not

Before we explore how honor is to be lived, we must first understand what it is — and just as importantly, what it is not. Honor has been so distorted in our generation that it is often confused with what it most opposes. The believer who would learn the discipline of honor must begin by stripping away its counterfeits.

Honor is not flattery.

Flattery seeks to please; honor seeks to acknowledge. Flattery speaks well of a person to gain something from them; honor speaks well of them because they bear an image, an office, or a season that God has dignified. Scripture warns plainly: “A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet” (Proverbs 29:5 NKJV). True honor never bends the truth; it simply refuses to weaponize it.

Honor is not agreement.

To honor a person is not to endorse every decision they make. David honored Saul without endorsing him. Paul honored Peter while correcting him publicly (Galatians 2:11–14). A son may honor his father deeply while disagreeing with his counsel; a citizen may honor a ruler while opposing his policy. The honor of the heart is not the captive of the head.

Honor is not unconditional obedience.

The fifth commandment instructs us to *honor* parents, not to *obey* them indefinitely. The instruction to obey is given specifically to children (Ephesians 6:1), but the call to honor extends through every season of life and even beyond the death of those we honor. A man honors his father by giving him a dignified burial. A daughter honors her late mother by carrying her values into the next generation. Obedience belongs to a season; honor belongs to a soul.

Honor is not fear.

The Bible distinguishes between the cringing fear that arises from intimidation and the reverence that arises from recognition. The slave fears the lash; the son honors the father. The citizen who pays his taxes only to escape penalty is not honoring the state — he is appeasing it. True honor is offered freely, from the inward awareness that the one before us, however imperfect, is set in a position God has not despised.

Honor is not approval-seeking.

There is a counterfeit honor that performs deference for the sake of being noticed, climbing, or currying favor. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this very thing — they loved “the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi’” (Matthew 23:6–7 NKJV). They cultivated honor as a social commodity. The genuine honor of Scripture, by contrast, is offered whether anyone is watching or not.

WHAT HONOR IS

Honor is the soul’s salute to divine order. It is the deliberate recognition that another person — by virtue of position, age, calling, or simply the image of God in them — deserves a posture of regard that I refuse to withhold. It is the heart’s worship of God displayed in the way it treats man.

Honor Beyond Presence: The Heart That Reveres

Honor, in God’s eyes, is not merely about words, gestures, or outward obedience — it is the posture of the heart that recognizes divine order and authority. Scripture makes clear that honor and respect are distinct from obedience. Obedience may have limits where righteousness is concerned, but honor is non-negotiable — it endures beyond time, beyond agreement, and even beyond the life of the one we are called to honor.

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Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

— Exodus 20:12 NKJV

The fifth commandment stands out as the first commandment with a promise (Ephesians 6:2–3). It is not a suggestion, nor does it expire with adulthood. Honor extends from the home into society, shaping how we relate to all who are older, wiser, and placed in authority over us. The Old Testament constantly reinforces reverence for age and position:

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You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.

— **Leviticus 19:32 NKJV**

Honor, then, is not conditional on the perfection of the one honored, but on the divine order that placed them where they are. This biblical principle reaches beyond the parent-child relationship. It embraces elders in the community, leaders in the Church, and those whom God has placed in positions of responsibility over us.

Paul commands believers to “*render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor*” (Romans 13:7 NKJV). Likewise, Peter writes, “*Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king*” (1 Peter 2:17 NKJV). And of those who labor faithfully in spiritual leadership, Paul says, “*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine*” (1 Timothy 5:17 NKJV). Paul immediately adds, citing both Deuteronomy and the Lord’s own teaching: “*For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’*” (1 Timothy 5:18 NKJV). The “double honor” Paul commands therefore includes not only reverence and respect but tangible material provision — the spiritual labor of those who shepherd souls is real labor, deserving of real support. Honor is thus not a matter of hierarchy but of humility — a recognition that all rightful authority flows ultimately from God.

This humility is not bondage but beauty. Peter exhorts, “*Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’*” (1 Peter 5:5 NKJV). In its immediate context, Peter has just addressed the elders of the church as office-bearing shepherds (1 Peter 5:1–4); his primary reference here is therefore to younger believers submitting to those who lead the local body. But the spiritual principle reaches across every relationship in which a younger heart meets an older soul: that humility before age, calling, and the journey that has preceded ours is the very ground on which God dispenses grace. To resist or speak

contemptuously of those in rightful authority — whether parents, elders, or spiritual leaders — is to despise the God who appointed them.

The Test of Absence

True honor reveals itself not only in presence but especially in absence. It is in private speech and hidden attitudes that the reality of respect is tested. Honor is shown in how we talk about our parents, elders, and leaders when they are not around; in the tone we use when referring to them; in how we recount their flaws or decisions. Many forget that dishonor is not merely in defiance but in the subtlety of sarcasm, gossip, and careless criticism. Our attitude in the absence of those in authority reveals the true state of our hearts far more than our politeness in their presence.

It is easy to show deference before an elder or parent. But *God weighs the unseen attitudes of the heart*. What we say of them when they are not around reveals whether we honor or merely perform.

The account of Noah and his sons (Genesis 9:20–27) illustrates this with quiet severity. When Noah lay uncovered in his tent, Ham saw, told his brothers, and made his father's shame the subject of report. Shem and Japheth, by contrast, walked backward with a garment between them so as not to look upon their father's nakedness. The blessing fell upon Shem and Japheth; the curse, remarkably, descended not upon Ham himself but upon Ham's son Canaan: "*Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren*" (Genesis 9:25 NKJV) — a father's dishonor reaching into the next generation, a sobering biblical pattern in itself. The judgment was not merely about an action; it was about a posture: one son exposed, the others covered. So it remains: honor covers; dishonor exposes.

David's example toward King Saul remains a timeless lesson. Though Saul sought his life unjustly, David refused to retaliate or even speak evil of him. When urged by his men to strike Saul, David said, "*The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed*" (1 Samuel 24:6 NKJV). His restraint was not born of fear but of reverence — a heart that understood divine authority. Even when Saul was absent, David's words remained respectful. He never mocked or gossiped about Saul,

even among his men. His speech, tone, and restraint behind Saul's back demonstrated genuine honor rooted in the fear of God, not in human approval. David's restraint teaches that honor is a reflection of godly fear, not of the worthiness of the person.

This standard applies equally in our relationships today — how we speak of parents when they grow old, of church leaders when they falter, or of government authorities when they err. Strictly, David's stated reason was that Saul was "*the Lord's anointed*" — a unique theocratic category that does not transfer directly to every modern parent, pastor, or ruler. But the principle does transfer: honor flows from the fear of God, not from the worthiness of the one honored. To honor those over us does not mean we excuse wrong; it means we maintain dignity, humility, and prayerful respect. True honor remains anchored in love and restraint even when truth must be spoken.

Modern culture often mocks restraint and celebrates "speaking one's mind," but Scripture warns that "*death and life are in the power of the tongue*" (Proverbs 18:21 NKJV). To speak dishonorably of those older or in authority is to sow seeds of rebellion that ultimately harm us. Honor builds; dishonor corrodes. It is why Paul urged believers "*to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men*" (Titus 3:2 NKJV).

Even human philosophers, though lacking revelation, discerned the nobility of honor. Confucius taught that filial piety is the root of all virtue. Aristotle wrote that respect for elders preserves harmony in the polis. And Cicero said that gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all others. These echo the biblical truth: that reverence toward those who came before us is a moral compass for society.

Honor in the Home: The First Sanctuary

The home is the first sanctuary in which honor is learned, tested, and either embraced or abandoned. Long before a child sits under a teacher, kneels before an elder, or stands before a magistrate, he has already begun to form the lifelong habit of his soul toward authority — at the family table, in the corridors of his parents' home, in the texture of small everyday interactions.

It is not accidental that the first commandment with a promise concerns the parent-child relationship (Ephesians 6:2-3). The home is God's chosen training ground for the soul. A child who learns to honor his parents inherits more than family peace; he inherits the disposition that will serve him in every other relationship — toward teachers, employers, elders, civil authorities, and ultimately God Himself. Conversely, a child who learns at home that authority is to be argued with, deceived, sneered at, or dismissed will carry that same posture into every other arena of life, however polished his social manners may eventually become.

This is why the Old Testament treated parental dishonor with such gravity:

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He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness.

— Proverbs 20:20 NKJV

Solomon listed contempt for parents among the marks of moral collapse in a society: “*There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother*” (Proverbs 30:11 NKJV). The Law of Moses prescribed severe consequences for the persistently rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) — not because God was harsh, but because He understood the foundational nature of the household. The home that mocks its head, sooner or later, becomes the society that mocks its God.

In our day, the dishonoring of parents has been rebranded as independence. Children speak to mothers in tones their fathers would never have dared use to grandmothers. Adult sons mock their fathers' opinions to friends. Daughters air their parents' private struggles online. None of this is independence — it is the slow

corrosion of a soul that has lost its first sanctuary. The child who cannot honor at home will struggle to honor anywhere.

But the home is also the sanctuary in which honor is renewed. A grown child who returns and tends to an aging parent; an adult who keeps in his speech the dignity learned in his father's hearing; a man who, even in disagreement with his late mother's beliefs, speaks of her with tenderness — these are not weakness, but the very strength of character that ripples outward into every other sphere of life.

The Long Honor: Caring for Aging Parents

Honor is not only for the season of childhood. Indeed, in Scripture, some of its deepest expressions belong to the season when our parents grow old. The same Scripture that taught us to obey them as children now teaches us not to *despise* them when their strength fails:

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Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

— Proverbs 23:22 NKJV

Paul went further. *“If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Timothy 5:8 NKJV). The context concerns the care of widows in the family. Paul's standard was clear: a Christian who neglects the practical care of his aging mother or father has, in his apostolic estimation, *denied the faith*.

This is sobering, especially in a generation in which many cultures — including, increasingly, our own — quietly outsource the care of the elderly to institutions and then forget them there. There is a place for skilled care; there is no place for forgetting. Long after a parent can no longer dispense advice, scold us for our shortcomings, or attend the family gatherings, the call to honor them remains.

Jesus Himself modeled this. Hanging on the cross with the salvation of the world bearing down upon Him, He paused to entrust His mother to the disciple John.

“Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home” (John 19:26–27 NKJV). If the cross was not too sacred a moment to interrupt for the honor of a parent, no season of our own lives is too busy.

To honor an aging parent is to feed them when they once fed us; to be patient with their slowness as they were patient with our newness; to listen when their stories repeat as they once listened to our endless questions; to clothe them with respect when their bodies weaken. Old age is not a punishment to be hidden; it is, in the divine order, the soil in which one of honor’s richest harvests is grown.

A PASTORAL WORD

There is a peculiar grace given to those who tend their aging parents well. It is the grace of a life closing its first circle with reverence. The hands that once received are now the hands that give. The voice that once asked is now the voice that comforts. In honoring our parents in their twilight, we rehearse the very honor we will one day need.

The Sacred Office: Honor Toward Spiritual Leadership

Among the most solemn relationships in which honor is tested is the bond between the believer and those whom God has placed in spiritual leadership over the local body. Pastors, elders, teachers, and shepherds who labor faithfully in the word and the care of souls are not employees of the congregation, nor are they celebrities to be praised or critiqued at will. They are stewards of a trust given them by God Himself.

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Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

— Hebrews 13:17 NKJV

These are weighty words. The same Spirit who inspired Paul to warn against blind allegiance to corrupt teachers (Galatians 1:8–9) also inspired the writer of Hebrews to call for the honor of those who genuinely labor for our souls. Spiritual leadership is not above correction — but neither is it beneath honor. The mature believer holds both truths at once.

The Old Testament shows what is at stake when this honor is despised. Korah and his company stood against Moses, saying, “*You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them*” (Numbers 16:3 NKJV). Their argument sounded democratic, even egalitarian. But it was rebellion against the divine order, and the earth opened to swallow them. Miriam spoke against Moses, her own brother, and was struck with leprosy until Moses himself interceded for her (Numbers 12:1–13).

The episode of the youths who mocked Elisha at Bethel (2 Kings 2:23–24) deserves a closer look, because it is among the most commonly misread passages in Scripture. The Hebrew phrase used — *ne‘arim qetannim* — though sometimes rendered “little children,” uses *na‘ar*, the same Hebrew word applied to Joseph at the age of seventeen (Genesis 37:2), to David’s young warriors (1 Samuel 25:5), and even to Solomon when he ascended as a grown king (1 Kings 3:7). The lexical range stretches from older children through adolescents to young men in their twenties. The setting amplifies the point: Bethel had become, since the days of Jeroboam, the southern shrine of his calf-worship, where he set up one of the two golden calves in deliberate rebellion against the worship of the Lord (1 Kings 12:28–29). When forty-two such young men emerged from this town and chanted, “*Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!*” (2 Kings 2:23 NKJV) — echoing, mockingly, the very phrase by which Elijah had just been taken away up into the heavens by a chariot of fire — what is recorded is not the innocent teasing of children but the organized contempt of a calf-worshipping community for the Lord’s newly anointed prophet. Major commentators across traditions — Matthew Henry, Keil and Delitzsch, and more recent Old Testament scholars such as Iain Provan and Paul House — read the passage in this light. The judgment that followed was therefore the judgment of an organized mockery of God’s anointed, not the punishment of unsuspecting

youngsters. The biblical pattern, taken together with Korah and Miriam, is consistent: God takes personally the dishonor of those He has anointed for spiritual labor.

A NOTE ON ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION

When Scripture says Elijah was taken up “into heaven,” the Hebrew *shamayim* refers here to the visible heavens — the sky — not the dwelling place of God. Jesus Himself testified, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man” (John 3:13 NKJV). The chronology confirms this: two different kings named Jehoram reigned in this period, a fact often missed. Elijah’s translation occurred during the early reign of Jehoram of Israel, son of Ahab and brother of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1), around 852–851 BC. Years later, during the sole reign of a different Jehoram — Jehoram of Judah, son of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 21:1–7), beginning around 848 BC after his father’s death — that king murdered his brothers and led Judah into idolatry; only then did a written letter arrive from Elijah himself condemning his evil (2 Chronicles 21:12–15). Standard conservative chronologies, including Edwin Thiele’s *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* and Floyd Nolen Jones’s *Chronology of the Old Testament*, place the letter roughly three to five years after the chariot event. Some commentators (Keil and Delitzsch among them) propose that Elijah wrote the letter before his translation in prophetic foreknowledge; but the natural reading is that the prophet was still alive on earth when it was sent. Like Enoch before him, “translated that he should not see death” (Hebrews 11:5 NKJV), Elijah was preserved from death but not enthroned in glory; he, like all the patriarchs and prophets before Christ, awaits the resurrection (Hebrews 11:39–40).

This does not mean that spiritual leaders are infallible, or beyond accountability. Paul publicly rebuked Peter when Peter’s behavior betrayed the gospel (Galatians 2:11–14). Paul himself instructed Timothy on the precise process for receiving an accusation against an elder: “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear” (1 Timothy 5:19–20 NKJV). Nathan confronted David. Prophets corrected kings throughout the Old Testament. Honor and accountability are not enemies; they are partners. What honor refuses to do is the casual mockery, the dismissive

gossip, the social-media shaming, the easy contempt by which many in this generation treat the men and women who pray for them in private and bear their burdens in secret.

Pastors and elders are imperfect. So are parents. So are kings. The mark of a believer's maturity is not whether he can find their flaws — that requires no gift — but whether, having seen them, he can still honor the office, still pray for the person, and still speak of them with the reverence due those who *watch out for your souls*. To honor spiritual leaders is, in the end, to honor the Christ who appointed them.

The Citizen's Honor: Honoring Civil Authority

The Bible is remarkably consistent about a believer's posture toward civil authority — even when that authority is hostile, idolatrous, or unjust. Paul wrote to the Roman church under the reign of Nero — a ruler who would later set Christians on fire to light his gardens — and yet he instructed them plainly:

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Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

— Romans 13:1 NKJV

Peter, writing to believers scattered across hostile provinces, said the same: “*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ... Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king*” (1 Peter 2:13, 17 NKJV). These commands were given to Christians living under emperors who often despised them. The principle is therefore not contingent on the righteousness of the ruler but on the divine order he occupies. To honor a king is not to endorse his policies; it is to acknowledge that he sits in a seat God has not abandoned.

The Old Testament gives us extraordinary models. Daniel served under four pagan rulers — Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus — and in each case combined unbending fidelity to God with unbroken honor toward the throne. When Nebuchadnezzar was warned of approaching judgment, Daniel said, “*My lord, may*

the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!” (Daniel 4:19 NKJV). He honored the king even while delivering an unwelcome word. Joseph served Pharaoh with such integrity that Pharaoh entrusted to him the food and the future of an empire. Nehemiah served as cupbearer to Artaxerxes, and even in petition addressed him with respect.

Paul, on trial before Felix and Agrippa — men who could have killed him — never lapsed into contempt. He pleaded his case with reasoned eloquence and respectful address. To Agrippa he said, *“I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews”* (Acts 26:2–3 NKJV). He was about to preach Christ to a man steeped in compromise — but he opened with honor.

The believer’s honor toward civil authority is not partisan. It does not depend on whether his preferred candidate won the election; it depends on the order God has ordained. Paul charges Timothy to pray for kings and all in authority *“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”* (1 Timothy 2:2 NKJV) — including, by implication, those for whom he did not vote.

When Conscience and Authority Collide

What, then, when an authority commands what God forbids? Does honor become surrender? Does reverence demand the violation of conscience? Scripture is not silent here. The same Daniel who honored Nebuchadnezzar refused to eat the king’s defiling food. The same three Hebrews who served Babylon faithfully refused to bow to its golden image. The same Peter who urged honor toward the king said before the Sanhedrin:

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We ought to obey God rather than men.

— Acts 5:29 NKJV

There are limits to obedience. But the *manner* of disobedience matters as much as the fact of it. Notice how the saints of Scripture disobey. They are not

contemptuous. They are not loud. They do not mock those in authority over them. Daniel does not curse Nebuchadnezzar; he serves him with excellence and refuses only at the point of defilement. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego speak to the king with extraordinary restraint:

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O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor shall we worship the gold image which you have set up.

— Daniel 3:16–18 NKJV

Notice the words “O king” repeated three times even in the very act of refusal. They will not bow to his idol — but they will honor his office. They refuse his command — but they do not despise his person. This is the high art of Christian dissent. It says no when it must, and even then says no with reverence.

Peter and John, forbidden by the Sanhedrin to speak in the name of Jesus, answered, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20 NKJV). They appealed even to the council’s own conscience. They did not riot. They did not threaten. They went back to preaching the next day — with respect intact.

The believer’s pattern is therefore clear. Where authority commands what God forbids, the believer respectfully and quietly refuses, accepting whatever consequence follows, while continuing to honor the office and pray for the person. We disobey reluctantly, never gleefully; firmly, never scornfully; before God’s face, not before a watching crowd.

The Wounded Heart: When Those in Authority Fail Us

There is a particular kind of pain that comes from being wronged by those who should have protected us. A father who walked away. A mother whose words cut. A pastor who betrayed a confidence. A leader who used his office for his own ends. Scripture does not pretend such wounds do not exist. The Psalms are full of them. And yet, even there, the saints of God show us the path that preserves the wounded heart from becoming a bitter one.

David is the clearest example. His own father-in-law, the king of his nation, spent years hunting him with armies. By any earthly accounting, David was the victim of authority gone wrong. And yet his treatment of Saul stands as one of the most extraordinary monuments to honor in all of Scripture. When Saul finally died on Mount Gilboa, David did not celebrate. He composed a song, *“How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”* (2 Samuel 1:27 NKJV). He honored in death the man who had hated him in life.

Joseph is the other towering example. His brothers sold him into slavery. Potiphar’s wife slandered him into prison. Pharaoh’s butler forgot him in the dungeon for two more years. Every authority figure in Joseph’s young life either failed him or harmed him. Yet when he was at last raised to power in Egypt, his first instinct upon reunion with his aged father Jacob was not pride but honor: *“Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh”* (Genesis 47:7 NKJV). The second-most-powerful man in Egypt led an old shepherd into the presence of the throne — and the old shepherd blessed the king. And when at last his brothers stood trembling before him in Egypt, fearing reprisal, Joseph’s words were these:

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But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.

— Genesis 50:20–21 NKJV

Joseph could not have honored his father or his brothers without first having honored God. It was the upward gaze that made the horizontal grace possible. He saw a hand above their hand, and a purpose above their purpose.

To honor authority that has wounded us does not mean pretending the wound never happened. It does not mean denying the wrong, suppressing the grief, or exposing oneself to further harm. There is a place for distance; there is a place for honest reckoning; there is a place for accountability where it is rightly applied. But honor refuses to let the wound rewrite our soul. It refuses to make us bitter mockers. It refuses to make every story of the person who hurt us into a story of contempt. Even where we cannot trust, we can still honor; even where we cannot embrace, we can still bless; even where we must speak hard truth, we can still speak with reverence.

This, ultimately, is the deepest school of honor — the school of the wounded heart. Many can honor those who are easy to honor. Only those whose honor is anchored in the fear of God can honor those who have failed them.

Receiving Rebuke and Correction with Grace

If honor is the seed of character, teachability is its fruit. A person's greatness is not determined by how they handle praise, but by how they respond to rebuke. The wise welcome correction; the proud resent it.

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Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

— Proverbs 9:8–9 NKJV

Correction, when received with humility, becomes fertilizer for growth. The Old Testament constantly connects discipline with life. “He who heeds correction is honored” (Proverbs 13:18 NKJV). “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17 NKJV). And perhaps most poignantly:

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For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.

— Proverbs 3:12 NKJV

Correction, therefore, is not punishment but proof of love — and when it comes from God, a divine love. In the New Testament, this truth is refined by grace. Hebrews 12:11 (NKJV) reminds us, *“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”* God disciplines not to destroy, but to develop us.

The difference between a teachable person and a stubborn one lies in attitude: the humble ask, *“What can I learn from this?”* The proud ask, *“Who are you to tell me that?”* Two persons may receive the same words; they will reap entirely different harvests, because the soil of the heart was not the same.

Examples of Teachable Hearts

Even the wisest and most anointed are not above correction. Moses received counsel from his father-in-law Jethro (Exodus 18:17–24), and he heeded it with humility, restructuring the entire administration of Israel on the wisdom of an older man from outside his own nation. David accepted Nathan’s rebuke after his sin with Bathsheba and uttered the six words that rescued his throne: *“I have sinned against the Lord”* (2 Samuel 12:13 NKJV).

Apollos, *“an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures”* (Acts 18:24 NKJV), did not bristle when Aquila and Priscilla *“took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately”* (Acts 18:26 NKJV); he received their teaching from a tentmaker and his wife and grew greater in usefulness. Peter received Paul’s public correction at Antioch (Galatians 2:11–14), yet later called him *“our beloved brother Paul”* (2 Peter 3:15 NKJV).

These examples show that greatness in God’s eyes is not measured by perfection, but by humility — the readiness to repent and grow when confronted with truth.

The Cost of a Closed Heart

The opposite is sobering. Saul received correction from Samuel and offered excuses; he lost his kingdom (1 Samuel 15:22–23). Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the older men who had served his father Solomon, listened instead to his peers, and tore the kingdom of Israel in two (1 Kings 12:6–17). Asa, who began so well, was rebuked by the prophet Hanani in his later years and, instead of repenting, threw the prophet into prison (2 Chronicles 16:7–10). The youths who mocked Elisha for his baldness met sudden judgment (2 Kings 2:23–24). Scripture is consistent: a heart closed to correction closes itself to mercy.

Jesus Himself modeled perfect submission to authority. As a boy, He was found in the temple among the teachers, listening and asking questions (Luke 2:46). Yet when His parents found Him, He *“went down with them and was subject to them”* (Luke 2:51 NKJV). The Son of God — perfect in wisdom — still submitted to earthly parents. That is divine humility. The Roman centurion who came to Jesus understood the same principle from the other side: *“For I also am a man placed under authority”* (Luke 7:8 NKJV). He grasped that authority is exercised rightly only by those who first know how to be under it.

To resist correction is to choose stagnation. To embrace it is to mature. Proverbs 12:1 (NKJV) states it plainly: *“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”* Godly reproof — whether from a parent, an elder, a leader, or a friend — is a gift, not a wound. It protects us from pride and aligns us with truth.

Ultimately, our willingness to receive correction is a mirror of our relationship with God. A heart that rejects human counsel will often resist divine leading. *“The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise. He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding”* (Proverbs 15:31–32 NKJV). A teachable heart, therefore, is a guarded treasure — the secret of continual growth and grace.

Correcting Others in the Spirit of Meekness

We have spoken at length of receiving correction. But Scripture also instructs us in giving it — for sooner or later, every parent, every elder, every friend, and every spiritual leader will face the holy duty of speaking a hard word to one they love. How that word is given matters nearly as much as what it contains.

“

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

— Galatians 6:1 NKJV

Paul's word here is precise. The goal of correction is *restoration*, not exposure. The spirit of correction is *gentleness*, not severity. The posture of the corrector is *self-awareness* — “*considering yourself lest you also be tempted*” — not superiority. Correction offered from a high horse rarely lands; correction offered from a kneeling heart almost always does.

Job's friends are the cautionary tale. They came intending to comfort. They ended by accusing. They had truth in their hands, but they had no humility in their hearts, and they hammered a suffering man with theology until even God Himself rose to defend him: “*My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has*” (Job 42:7 NKJV). Even right words, badly given, can become a wound the Spirit will not bless.

Nathan, by contrast, is a master class in the art of correction. He came to David not with accusation but with a story — a parable of a rich man who stole a poor man's lamb (2 Samuel 12:1–7). He drew David's judgment first, then turned it back upon him: “*You are the man!*” David, who would have raged at a frontal attack, was instead led to repentance by a friend who loved him enough to be indirect, and wise enough not to be cruel.

Jesus, too, is our teacher here. He could be sharp with hypocrites who knew better, but with the broken — the Samaritan woman, the woman caught in adultery, Peter after his denial — He restored with infinite tenderness. “*A bruised reed He will not*

break, and smoking flax He will not quench” (Matthew 12:20 NKJV). The believer who must correct another should ask first: am I addressing a hypocrite who needs to be alarmed, or a broken one who needs to be restored? The two require very different tones.

BEFORE YOU CORRECT

If you must correct someone, ask yourself three questions before you speak: Is this true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Then ask one more: am I the right person to say it, in the right place, at the right time? Many a true word has been ruined by being said by the wrong voice at the wrong moment.

The Promises of Honor and Humility

Scripture is generous with promises to those who walk in honor and humility. These are not mere sentiments; they are covenant assurances, repeated from Genesis to Revelation, written so that the people of God might know that the lowly path is also the favored path.

To the one who honors parents — the promise is long life and stability: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12 NKJV). Paul, citing this commandment in Ephesians 6, calls it the first commandment with a promise. There is a measurable, tangible blessing — not always in years alone, but in the quality of the years — that attaches itself to the soul that honors its origin.

To the one who is humble before God — the promise is grace and exaltation:

“

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

— James 4:10 NKJV

And again: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5 NKJV). The proud carry their own crown and exhaust themselves defending it. The humble walk uncrowned through this life, but they are seen by God, and in His time He Himself crowns them.

To the one who receives correction — the promise is wisdom and honor in the assembly of the wise: *“The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise”* (Proverbs 15:31 NKJV). *“He who heeds rebuke gets understanding”* (Proverbs 15:32 NKJV). The reception of correction is a quiet door through which the most valuable inheritance — wisdom — quietly walks.

To the one who honors his spiritual leaders — the promise is a shared portion in their joy and reward: a congregation that honors its shepherd will be shepherded with joy and not with grief (Hebrews 13:17). The honor flows back.

To the one who honors civil authority — the promise is peace: *“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”* (1 Timothy 2:2 NKJV). A society of honorers is a society of peacemakers.

And to the one who walks in the fear of the Lord — that great summary virtue of which all honor is a branch — the Bible piles promise upon promise: long life (Proverbs 10:27), confidence (Proverbs 14:26), satisfaction (Proverbs 19:23), riches and honor and life (Proverbs 22:4). The fear of the Lord is the cornerstone of the teachable heart, and around that cornerstone God assembles a thousand graces.

The Radiance of a Teachable Heart

A teachable heart is the soil in which honor and correction both flourish. It reveres elders without flattery, receives rebuke without resentment, and walks humbly before God and man. Such a heart reflects the wisdom of James:

“

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

— James 3:17 NKJV

It was a teachable heart that made the young Samuel say, *“Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”* (1 Samuel 3:9 NKJV). It was a teachable heart that made Solomon, faced with the riches of a kingdom, ask only for *“an understanding heart”* (1 Kings 3:9

NKJV). It was a teachable heart that made Mary, hearing Gabriel's impossible word, answer, "*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38 NKJV). It was a teachable heart that made Paul, at the height of his religious career, ask on the Damascus road, "*Lord, what do You want me to do?*" (Acts 9:6 NKJV). In every age, God advances those whose ears are open and whose pride is small.

Such hearts have a quiet radiance about them. They are not the loudest in the room; they are seldom the most quoted. But they are the ones to whom God entrusts the deeper things. They are the ones whose old age is filled with peace rather than regret. They are the ones whose children rise up and call them blessed. They are the ones whose pastors and elders count it a joy, not a grief, to shepherd them. They are the ones whose tongues are seasoned with grace and whose presence brings calm to a room.

Five Biblical Examples of a Teachable Heart

Before we close, consider five lives in which honor and teachability were tested in fire and proved their worth. These are not the only examples Scripture provides, but they are among the most instructive — each lighting up a different facet of what it means to walk with a humble, reverent, and teachable heart through the relationships God has placed us in. Read them slowly. Ask, in each case, what your own life would have done.

1 Joseph

Honor toward those who wounded him

Joseph was favored by Jacob to the harm of all his brothers; those same brothers sold him into Egypt. Every authority figure in his young life either failed him or harmed him. Yet when at last he stood before Pharaoh in glory, his first act on being reunited with his aged father was to bring him into Pharaoh's court and present him before the throne (Genesis 47:7 NKJV). The most powerful man in Egypt set the old shepherd before the king — and the old shepherd blessed the king. To his brothers, Joseph said only, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20 NKJV), and he provided for them and their little ones. Honor toward those who had wounded him became the door through which a whole nation was preserved.

2

Moses*A great leader teachable to his father-in-law*

Moses was the deliverer of Israel, the man who spoke with God face to face. Yet when his Midianite father-in-law Jethro visited and saw him judging Israel from morning until evening alone, Jethro said simply, “The thing that you do is not good” (Exodus 18:17 NKJV). And Moses — perhaps the most exalted man on earth at that hour — listened. He did not dismiss the counsel because it came from outside his nation, his calling, or his immediate community. He restructured the entire administration of Israel on the wisdom of an older man from another tribe (Exodus 18:24–26 NKJV). True greatness is teachable across boundaries.

3

David*Honor beneath an unjust authority*

David spent years fleeing the very king God had set over him — a father-in-law turned hunter. By any earthly measure, David was the victim of authority gone wrong. Yet twice, when he held Saul’s life in his hand, he refused to strike, saying, “I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed” (1 Samuel 24:10 NKJV). When Saul at last fell on Mount Gilboa, David composed a lament — not a celebration: “How the mighty have fallen” (2 Samuel 1:19, 27 NKJV). He honored in death the man who had hated him in life. This is honor anchored not in the worthiness of the recipient but in the fear of God.

4

Daniel*Honor toward pagan kings without compromise of faith*

Daniel served under four foreign rulers — Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus — and in each case combined unbending fidelity to God with unbroken honor toward the throne. When Nebuchadnezzar was about to receive a word of severe judgment, Daniel hesitated to deliver it; when he did, he framed it gently: “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies” (Daniel 4:19 NKJV). He kept his Sabbath, refused defiling food, and rose three times a day to pray with his windows open — but he honored every king who sat over him. Civil honor, properly understood, is not a partisan affair.

5

Apollos*A mighty preacher teachable to a tentmaker and his wife*

Apollos was “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24 NKJV) — already preaching boldly in Ephesus. But his understanding of Christ was incomplete; he knew only the baptism of John. A tentmaker named Aquila and his wife Priscilla heard him, and “took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26 NKJV). Apollos did not bristle at being corrected by laypeople in a private setting. He received their teaching, and the chapter that follows shows him in Achaia “greatly helping those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:27–28 NKJV). The teachable preacher is the growing preacher.

Ten Questions for Honest Self-Examination

Before the final word, sit with these questions. Take them one at a time; do not race through them. They are not designed to condemn but to clarify. Let the Spirit of God use them as a quiet mirror — for *“the unexamined heart will neither grow nor heal.”*

- 1 When I disagree with someone in authority over me — a parent, a leader, a pastor, a ruler — does my private speech about them remain as reverent as my public posture toward them?
- 2 How do I speak of my parents — their flaws, their decisions, their slowness in old age — when they are not in the room? Would they recognize me by my tone if they overheard?
- 3 When I receive correction — at home, at work, in church — what is my first emotion: gratitude that someone loved me enough to speak, or defensiveness that someone dared?
- 4 Is there a pastor, elder, or spiritual leader I have allowed myself to grow quietly contemptuous of — finding it easier to critique their flaws than to pray for their strength?
- 5 Have I cared practically for my aging parents — in time, attention, presence, and provision — or have I let the demands of my own life become the polite cover for a quiet neglect?
- 6 Do I pray for the leaders of my nation with the same earnestness regardless of whether they belong to my political camp or my preferred party?
- 7 When I must correct another person — a child, a friend, an employee, a younger believer — is my actual goal their restoration, or the demonstration of my own rightness?

- 8 *Is there a wound from an authority figure in my past — a father, a mother, a teacher, a pastor, a leader — that I have allowed to harden into contempt rather than mature into honor?*
- 9 *Have I ever rejected a word of correction that was true because of the messenger — the wrong person, the wrong moment, the wrong tone — and lost the lesson because of the wrapping it came in?*
- 10 *If God reviewed the last week of my speech about those He has set over me — at home, at work, in church, in the nation — would He say I honored Him in honoring them, or that He found contempt in the language of a son?*

A Final Word

The same God who exalted Joseph to second in Egypt first taught him — through his brothers' betrayal, a wrongful imprisonment, and long years of estrangement from his father — to carry the dream God had given him at seventeen without bitterness toward heaven or earth.

The same God who lifted Moses to speak with Him face to face first watched him listen, without a word of protest, to the counsel of his father-in-law Jethro.

The same God who called the young Samuel to be His prophet first heard the boy answer in the night, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears."

The same God who delivered Daniel from the lions first found him bowed three times a day at his open window, refusing only what defiled him and honouring every king who sat over him.

The same God who used Mary to bring the Christ into the world first heard her say, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."

The pattern is always the same: honour before influence, humility before honour, a teachable heart before a heart God can entrust with much.

Speak of those above you with reverence — in their presence and in their absence.

Receive correction as you would a gift; the wise are not those who never err, but those who never stop learning.

Honour the gray-headed, bend before the wise, cover what should be covered, and forgive those who failed to cover you.

Be quick to listen, slow to defend, slower still to mock.

Call your aging parents. Pray for your leaders. Honour your shepherds. Welcome the next word of correction as the very hand of a Father who loves you too much to leave you as you are.

And trust the One who is "gentle and lowly in heart" to teach you Himself the things no other teacher can.

Only the teachable can truly grow, and only the humble can truly shine.

That is the kind of heart worth building a life around.

“

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

— Matthew 11:29 NKJV

Oludare Akinbo