

Engaging Gospel Doctrine (Episode 98.1)

LESSON 21 (CORE)

God Will Honor Those Who Honor Him

Hook	Here we have another of the “the title sounds good but what does it mean?” lessons.
Goal	Class members should better understand the ways we and God honor each other, and appreciate the blessings of putting the priorities of God first in our lives.
Overview	(see below)
Conclusion	

I. Sunday School

- a. Review of the reading (This is a lesson more suited for discussion about life and principles than the reading itself)
- b. What does it mean to “honor God”?
- c. How does God “honor us”?
- d. Lesson manual purpose: To help class members understand the blessings of honoring and pleasing the Lord above themselves, others, or the world.
- e. Happiness Hypothesis quotes
- f. Conclusion

I. Sunday School

- a. Review of the reading

Narratives:

1 Samuel 2: Hannah’s prayer; Eli’s horrifically wicked sons! (who serve as a foil for Samuel)
 3: Calling of Samuel (discussion: how can we recognize God’s voice when we are called?)
 8: Israel demands a king (discussion: how often do we know what is best for ourselves? How can we mitigate or overcome this limitation?)

- b. What does it mean to “honor God”? (This will be a key discussion, get some good scriptures and a talk or two) could have people share their favorite scriptures and experience
 - i. In essence “honoring God” means aligning our nature with that of our Heavenly Parents and Savior’s. (John 14:15: If you love me keep my commandments; Mosiah 2: if you serve your fellow human beings you are serving God; D&C 59:6: obedience and gratitude)
- c. How does God “honor us”? (John 15:15, you are not my servants but my friends, get the calling and election sure wording in Helaman 10, Ether 3, God says I trust you, I will do whatever you ask, etc) transformation (virtuous cycle)

One key way God honors us is to allow us to do the work of God, the work of serving and loving and saving. President Monson told a story and concludes with this same point:

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1995/10/who-honors-god-god-honors?lang=eng>

One warm summer afternoon when I was about twelve or thirteen, I took a large, inflated inner tube from a tractor tire, slung it over my shoulder, and walked barefoot up the railroad track which followed the course of the river. I entered the water about a mile above the swimming hole, sat comfortably in the tube, and enjoyed a leisurely float down the river. The river held no fear for me, for I knew its secrets.

That day the Greek-speaking people in Utah held a reunion at Vivian Park in Provo Canyon, as they did every year. Native food, games, and dances were the order of the day. But some left the party to try swimming in the river. When they arrived at the swimming hole, it was deserted, for afternoon shadows were beginning to envelop it.

As my inflated tube bobbed up and down, I was about to enter the swiftest portion of the river just at the head of the swimming hole when I heard frantic cries, "Save her! Save her!" A young lady swimmer, accustomed to the still waters of a gymnasium swimming pool, had fallen from the rock into the treacherous whirlpools. None of the party could swim to save her. Suddenly I appeared on the potentially tragic scene. I saw the top of her head disappearing under the water for the third time, there to descend to a watery grave. I stretched forth my hand, grasped her hair, and lifted her over the side of the tube and into my arms. At the pool's lower end, the water was slower as I paddled the tube, with my precious cargo, to her waiting relatives and friends. They threw their arms around the water-soaked girl and kissed her, crying, "Thank God! Thank God you are safe!" Then they hugged and kissed me. I was embarrassed and quickly returned to the tube and continued my float down to the Vivian Park bridge. The water was frigid, but I was not cold, for I was filled with a warm feeling. I realized that I had participated in the saving of a life. Heavenly Father had heard the cries, "Save her! Save her," and permitted me, a deacon, to float by at precisely the time I was needed. That day I learned that the sweetest feeling in mortality is to realize that God, our Heavenly Father, knows each one of us and generously permits us to see and to share His divine power to save.

(Being in the right place at the right time has been one of President Monson's gifts to an amazing degree)

- d. Talk the rest of the time about the "purpose" idea. VITAL discussion about how to balance care for/well-being of self, others. This is an important, complex, and often misunderstood topic. On one hand, far too many in the Church wear or even burn themselves out with all the demands of family, church, job, etc. On the other hand, there are some gospel paradoxes at play. Self-care is one thing, but hyperfocus on ourselves, and whether we are getting what we want, whether life is fair to us, can lead us in the wrong direction and stunt our growth. I think this is what Jesus meant when he said he save our lives as we lose them. Great opportunity to wrestle with these issues in discussion.

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity: "Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

Family provides concentrated, challenging application of these principles! As President Eyring noted in the October 2009 conference:

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2009/10/our-perfect-example?lang=eng>

Just as Jesus used a child in His mortal ministry as an example for the people of the pure love they must and could have to be like Him, He has offered us the family as an example of an ideal setting in which we can learn how to love as He loves.

That is because the greatest joys and the greatest sorrows we experience are in family relationships. The joys come from putting the welfare of others above our own. That is what love is. And the sorrow comes primarily from selfishness, which is the absence of love. The ideal God holds for us is to form families in the way most likely to lead to happiness and away from sorrow. A man and a woman are to make sacred covenants that they will put the welfare and happiness of the other at the center of their lives. Children are to be born into a family where the parents hold the needs of children equal to their own in importance. And children are to love parents and each other.

The too often overlooked part of the equation of “love your neighbor as yourself” is that we need to love ourselves!

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1981/04/rendering-service-to-others>

As we magnify our priesthood callings, I hope we will always remember that the Church is a support to the family. The Church does not and must not seek to displace the family, but is organized to help create and nurture righteous families as well as righteous individuals.

In this connection, brethren, we hope you will be mindful of your own needs and preserve some of that precious time for your own wives and families. Be mindful, too, of your associates in the work of the Church, so that time is not taken unnecessarily from them and their families.

Avoid the tendency to crowd too many meetings in on the Sabbath day. When holding your regular meetings, make them as spiritual and effective as possible. Meetings need not be hurried nor rushed, for they can be planned in a manner that permits their sacred purposes to be accomplished without difficulty.

From General Handbook 2

1.4 The Home and the Church

In the teachings and practices of the restored gospel, the family and the Church help and strengthen each other. To qualify for the blessings of eternal life, families need to learn the doctrines and receive the priesthood ordinances that are available only through the Church. To be a strong and vital organization, the Church needs righteous families.

God has revealed a pattern of spiritual progress for individuals and families through ordinances, teaching, programs,

and activities that are home centered and Church supported. Church organizations and programs exist to bless individuals and families and are not ends in themselves. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders and teachers seek to assist parents, not to supersede or replace them.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders must endeavor to strengthen the sacredness of the home by ensuring that all Church activities support the lives of individuals and families. Church leaders need to be careful not to overwhelm families with too many Church responsibilities. Parents and Church leaders work together to help individuals and families return to our Father in Heaven by following Jesus Christ.

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-legacy-distorted-love/201302/is-self-care-selfish>

“Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others.”

~Parker Palmer

Remember the old cliché? “Take care of yourself first or you will have nothing left to give others.” Or, “we can’t give what we don’t have.” But what is self-care really? Why is it so difficult and why do we feel guilty about doing it?

There is a difference between self-absorbed, narcissistic behavior and sound internal self-care. Self-care is about taking good care of our own feelings so we don’t project them onto others, act badly, or cause problems in relationships. Being in touch with our own feelings and embracing them is the healthiest thing we can do.

If you grew up in an environment where your emotional needs were not met, or you were primarily taking care of your parents instead of the other way around, you have likely learned to be co-dependent and to take care of others to the exclusion of taking care of yourself.

As we learn better self-care, we become better people in general. When we are in touch with our own feelings, we can then reach out more effectively to others and show love and empathy to them also. If we are filling our own emotional tanks with self-respect and loving care, we have much more to give to our families, friends, and the world in general.

<http://healthcenter.ncsu.edu/counseling-center/resources/mental-health-and-wellness-topics/self-care/>

Self care is an approach to living that incorporates behaviors that refresh you, replenish your personal motivation, and help you grow as a person. It's the equivalent of keeping your car filled with gas so that you are ready to motor any time. (Physical, Mental/Emotional, Spiritual components)

Some others may consider self care the territory of the self-involved. However, taking care of your needs lays in a balanced, steady place on the middle of a continuum, with intense selfishness on one end, and extreme sacrificing what you need or want for others' sake on the other end. In fact, nurturing oneself is a key factor in being able to keep up strength, resolve, motivation and inner resources to continue to give to others, whether that be your immediate partner, family and other important people in your inner circle, or the larger community around you. You might consider that doing too much for others could deprive them of the opportunity to learn how to provide their own self care.

(Invite listeners to think about a few ways they can meet their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Useful to note that self-care doesn't need to be alone; it can involve friends. The "self" refers to your initiative in being sure your needs are met so you can function well, including caring for others.

e. Happiness Hypothesis quotes

Scientific research supports the virtue hypothesis, even when it is reduced to the claim that altruism is good for you. When it is evaluated in the way that Ben Franklin meant it, as a claim about virtue more broadly, it becomes so profoundly true that it raises the question of whether cultural conservatives are correct in their critique of modern life and its restricted, permissive morality. Should we in the West try to return to a more virtue-based morality? I believe that we have indeed lost something important—a richly textured common ethos with widely shared virtues and values. Just watch movies from the 1930s and 1940s and you'll see people moving around in a dense web of moral fibers: Characters are concerned about their honor, their reputation, and the appearance of propriety. Children are frequently disciplined by adults other than their parents. The good guys always win, and crime never pays. It may sound stuffy and

constraining to us now, but that's the point: Some constraint is good for us; absolute freedom is not. Durkheim, the sociologist who found that freedom from social ties is correlated with suicide³² also gave us the word "anomie" (normlessness). Anomie is the condition of a society in which there are no clear rules, norms, or standards of value. In an anomic society, people can do as they please; but without any clear standards or respected social institutions to enforce those standards, it is harder for people to find things they want to do. Anomie breeds feelings of rootlessness and anxiety and leads to an increase in amoral and antisocial behavior. Modern sociological research strongly supports Durkheim: One of the best predictors of the health of an American neighborhood is the degree to which adults respond to the misdeeds of other people's children.³³ When community standards are enforced, there is constraint and cooperation. When everyone minds his own business and looks the other way, there is freedom and anomie.

The first American colonists created enclaves of ethnic, religious, and moral homogeneity, but the history of America ever since has been one of increasing diversity. In response, educators have struggled to identify the ever-shrinking set of moral ideas everyone could agree upon. This shrinking reached its logical conclusion in the 1960s with the popular "values clarification" movement, which taught no morality at all. Values clarification taught children how to find their own values, and it urged teachers to refrain from imposing values on anyone. Although the goal of inclusiveness was laudable, it had unintended side effects: It cut children off from the soil of tradition, history, and religion that nourished older conceptions of virtue. You can grow vegetables hydroponically, but even then you have to add nutrients to the water. Asking children to grow virtues hydroponically, looking only within themselves for guidance, is like asking each one to invent a personal language—a pointless and isolating task if there is no community with whom to speak... I am not yet convinced that we are worse off, overall, with our restricted modern morality. One thing that often distresses me in old movies and television programs, even up through the 1960s, is how limited were the lives of women and African Americans. We have paid a price for our inclusiveness, but we have bought ourselves a more humane society, with greater opportunity for racial minorities, women, gay people, the handicapped, and others—that is, for most people. And even if some people think the price was too steep, we can't go back, either to a pre-consumer society or to ethnically homogeneous enclaves. All we can do is search for ways that we might reduce our anomie without excluding large classes of people.

Haidt, Jonathan (2006-12-26). *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (pp. 176-177). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.

When people think and act using the ethic of autonomy, their goal is to protect individuals from harm and grant them the maximum degree of autonomy, which they can use to pursue their own goals. When people use the ethic of community, their goal is to protect the integrity of groups, families, companies, or nations, and they value virtues such as obedience, loyalty, and wise leadership. When people use the ethic of divinity, their goal is to protect from degradation the divinity that exists in each person, and they value living in a pure and holy way, free from moral pollutants such as lust, greed, and hatred.

But as science, technology, and the industrial age progressed, the Western world became “desacralized.” At least that’s the argument made by the great historian of religion Mircea Eliade. In *The Sacred and the Profane*,²² Eliade shows that the perception of sacredness is a human universal. Regardless of their differences, all religions have places (temples, shrines, holy trees), times (holy days, sunrise, solstices), and activities (prayer, special dancing) that allow for contact or communication with something otherworldly and pure. To mark off sacredness, all other times, places, and activities are defined as profane (ordinary, not sacred). The borders between the sacred and the profane must be carefully guarded, and that’s what rules of purity and pollution are all about. Eliade says that the modern West is the first culture in human history that has managed to strip time and space of all sacredness and to produce a fully practical, efficient, and profane world. This is the world that religious fundamentalists find unbearable and are sometimes willing to use force to fight against.

Haidt, Jonathan (2006-12-26). *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (pp. 192-193). Basic Books. Kindle Edition.

f. Conclusion

(shorten this)