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ROMANS 12:10 (PART 2)

Romans Series: How God Changes People

I think it's important for us to recognize that this word 'meditate' is powerful. I think it's a very powerful word and God uses it to describe our relationship to Him.

In fact in Psalm 1:1-3 it says these words and uses the word meditate to talk about a principle of success for all of us. It says, *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way of sinners* (that means be careful who your friends are and don't hang around with those people) *or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight* (his delight – where his heart is in what) *is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.* Wow. I want to be the kind of person that amplifies that passage just in my own heart. I want to meditate on the law of the Lord, on God's word, day and night. *That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season.*

I didn't put all the rest of it there, but when I was a kid I memorized this passage. It's a great passage of God's word and it's talking about success. That's like a tree. You want to be a successful tree? The key to that successful tree is to meditate (not complain, but meditate) on who God is and meditate on His truths.

Now I'm going to give you one verse today again. We're going to look at one of the ten success principles. There are ten things to do and ten things to react to positively in Romans 12.

We're going to look at one of those again today and we're going to meditate on it. We're going to just take that one phrase. This isn't a three-point sermon. This is a one-point sermon. Because I want to take out of this the idea we're going to meditate on this one idea. I hope that it will change you. It certainly changed my life as I meditate on this concept. But also what I want to do I think this is the key to meditation. This is the key to having this positive outlook in life. I think that sometimes we get stuck and so I think this verse will help us.

The verse is Romans 12:10. Here's how it's translated in the NIV. It's translated this way. *Honor one another above yourselves.* But let's look at the other translations for a moment to get a fuller picture of what Paul is saying in Romans 12. These are other translations which you may have a different one than the NIV. Here's some. The NIV says, *Honor one another above yourselves.* The ESV says, *Outdo one another in showing honor.* I like that. King James Version says, *In honor preferring one another.* That's good. New Living Translation says, *Take delight in honoring each other.* The literal translation of this is *preferring one another in honor.* That means letting someone go first in honor. I'm going to put that person first before me. That's what it's talking about here.

The design of that, I think, is very important because what God is saying to us is that we need to let other people go first or we need to value them or we need to think that they are important.

Now the Greek word honor is the word *timé* which means value. God instructs that families are the place where this is learned.

So you know that this is one of those words that's used in the Ten Commandments. You remember that? In the Ten Commandments the fifth commandment is *honor your father and mother*. So this is a place where it's learned is at home.

I think it's important because here's what happens, I think. A tendency that some young people have is that sometimes young people have a tendency to value themselves instead of value others. When we value ourselves we can become selfish or self-focused. So God would have us value others as part of His design. His design.

But this isn't just for kids. Romans 12:10 isn't in the Ten Commandments. This is a passage that talks to all of us because this is a verse that isn't just applied to children. This is honor that we all need to have in our lives. Maybe taught in the home and developed there, but it's something we all need to take into our hearts because we want to be honoring people, we want to be people who are preferring others or thinking of other people first.

Now that's a strategic concept and that's why it's included in Romans 12 as a list of things Paul is saying characterize a believer. We are different because we think of others.

Now there are some people who talk too much. Because they're just thinking about what they have to say. Because they're just thinking about what they have to say it just starts coming out – sometimes we say those people don't have a filter. Whatever they're thinking is coming out and they lack that filter. This verse helps that person because honor is the filter. Honor says I'm going to be careful about what comes out of my mouth because I'm going to prefer other people. I'm going to consider them before I start speaking. And so my words then are very important.

Some people say, "I just tell it like it is. Everybody knows what I'm thinking," as if that's something good. I've got news for you. Sometimes we don't want to know what you're thinking. I would suggest that there are times when in our lives that thinking best be kept to ourselves. We need to ask the question, is this edifying what I am about to say.

That filter, I think, is partly designed by God to be this concept of honor. Preferring others, thinking about others. That's honor. Honor gives preference to other people. It thinks about how others feel. It chooses actions that consider someone else, not just myself.

So let's do this. Let's try to define honor. What I want to do is I want to define honor in not a dictionary definition but in a practical definition, like a working definition, so we can put it into use.

If we take the word *timé*, which means valuable, and we take what we've learned already preferring others, I think we can say that honor is treating people as special. We can say that other people are special and I'm not just the only one special here. We can value other people.

Now we did see in the Ten Commandments that the word honor is used. *Honor your father and mother*. So young people, this is going to be especially important because you want to know how to fulfill your job description. God has given young people and children a job description and that job description involves two parts – obedience and honor.

In fact in Ephesians 6 he says, *Children, obey your parents. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."* Now that's Ephesians 6.

You know why that's important? Because what he's saying here is that command in the Old Testament, number five, is the first commandment that has a promise to it. And what's the promise? That you'll live long life on the earth. If you want to have a successful life, if you want to be successful, you're going to implement this idea of honor. Because honor contains the success principles that are necessary for being successful in life. That's God's design. That promise is really important and valuable.

So I like asking young people, "What are you going to do in life?" A lot of times young people tell me they got it all planned. Some people have a five-year plan. They've got it all laid out of what they're going to do.

And I'll say, "Do you want to be successful?"

"Yeah, I want to be successful."

"Well then you better look up Ephesians 6:3. That will tell you how to be successful." "What does it say there?"

"Honor. Learn honor with your parents. If you learn honor with your parents you'll be able to apply it in other ways. Honor is treating people as special. You treat parents as special. That's what the passage is saying, and that's what it's teaching."

But honor is not just used in the family. So this isn't just a sermon for young people and children. Although we all need to be listening to this and, young people, you'll want to pay attention to this. The passage is for all of us because here's the fascinating thing about the word *honor*. It is used in nine different commands in the Bible. Nine of them!

We're to honor God. We're to honor pastors. We're to honor widows. We're to honor marriage.

That honoring of marriage is particularly valuable because that's talking about sexual purity and how important marriage is. Because God has designed marriage for a reason. That's why we lift it high. We value it. It is important for us. We could go off and talk about that for a long time and I will at another time. When it says honor your body in 1 Corinthians 6.

Honor governmental leaders. It's very interesting to listen to the vocabulary of those who are vying for the office of President. Are their words honoring? Great question to ask. But that's not

what this is talking about. This is talking about how we should be honoring those people. Fascinating idea. How do you honor somebody that you have a hard time respecting? I think God has placed that in our heart, that we give honor as a gift to people, even when we have a hard time respecting them. We respect their position. But God has designed honor to be something inside of us.

Husbands are to honor their wives. And eight times in the Bible it says that children are to honor their parents. Why eight times? Because I think that's where it's learned and we tend to forget. So we want to spend our time learning that. It's not just children that need to honor their parents, but as adults we honor our parents as well. Honoring parents is an important part of what we do.

This concept of honor then is taken into Romans 12 and brought into everybody, not just these eight different categories, but to everybody it says *honor one another above yourselves*. So you bring that into your church body, you bring that into your home.

One of the things that characterizes us as Christians is we want to honor other people. So what does that mean in practical ways in our lives? Well we talked about speech already, but here's another one that is important to me. When someone asks something of me, I want the answer as much as possible I want to be able to say "yes" to the person. I might say "yes" and then postpone it or work around it or something, but I like the answer to be yes because I think that's an honoring thing to do.

There are some people whenever you ask them to do something their answer is "wait a minute, not yet." I think the answer should be "yes" first and then "could I finish this for a moment and then help out?" Honor is a response that we make that values the other person. So I think the primary answer should be yes. That's honor.

I'm trying to work on that in my life. In fact that's really one of the operating principles in our office at the church and at the National Center for Biblical Parenting. If someone calls and they ask for something, we like to say "yes" and then we might have to modify it a little bit, but it makes a statement about it. Why? Because I believe that honor is customer service. That's what it is. We put it into practice in life, but we're talking about customer service brought home. Let's apply it at the home level. That's why children learn honor in the home because that's customer service.

Now if you grew up in a home where honor wasn't practiced, this is an excellent opportunity to relearn that concept. It's part of what God has for us. So I would suggest this idea of defining honor as treating people as special helps to put hands and feet to that.

But I want to give you a second part of an honor definition that I see as I look at Jesus. Because just think about how He interacted with people when He was here on earth. How He treated them, how He responded to them, how He challenged them, the things that He did. Because many times He did the unexpected thing in valuing them. He valued people, but He did it in an unexpected way. So I'm going to suggest and I'm going to share with you some illustrations that a second part of the honor definition is this – doing more than what's expected.

Do you remember the story of Zacchaeus? Zacchaeus, the Bible tells us, was a short guy and he couldn't see Jesus coming. When the group was all coming there was a whole parade of people coming by, so Zacchaeus went up in a tree. Now Zacchaeus was a tax collector and so he was sitting up in this tree and he had a problem. He was sitting up in the tree. He wasn't opening a branch office. He was sitting up in this tree, this short guy, but he was in trouble because he knew he had a problem and he's interested in this Jesus.

Jesus stops what He's doing as the crowd's coming by and He comes up to this guy, under the tree, and He says, "Zacchaeus, come down because I'm going to go to your house today." So Jesus does something very surprising. He goes and He eats at a tax collector's house. These were the bad guys. These were the guys who were often cheating money. They were Jewish men who took on the job from the Roman government to tax their own people, so the Jews would look at these tax collectors and disdain them. They had betrayed everyone. They were taking money and often they would cheat because they could take what they wanted to keep some for themselves as a tax collector.

Well when Jesus comes to eat at his house and they're interacting together, Zacchaeus stands up from the table and he says, "I'm going to give back what I have cheated people. I'm going to give back to the poor." And Jesus says these words: *Today salvation has come to this house.* Why? Because this man had changed. This understanding of who Jesus is affected his life. So he was going to be a different person. Jesus honored him. Jesus did more than what's expected as He came into his life.

There's another story when another large crowd moving from Jericho up to Jerusalem. When I say up, they're going up to about 3,000 feet above sea level as they're moving up to Jerusalem. As they do this happened to be the time of the Passover. So they're going to go as a group. There are certain psalms in the Bible that they would sing that are psalms of ascent. And so it's like a big celebration as they're proceeding, everybody of course walking on the road, and you'd hear this song. Somebody would start the song and some people would sing, and they're all going up to Jerusalem.

But as they're leaving the town of Jericho, on the side of the road during the big parade were these two blind men calling out, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" The crowds wanted to quiet them down, but Jesus did something that was more than what's expected. He honored them. He went to the people who were hurting, the blind men. He went to them and He had compassion, the Bible says, on them and He healed them.

Jesus, again, honored people. He did more than what's expected. You wouldn't expect Him to do that. The crowds were saying, "Let's go on. This isn't the time for that. This is the time for a parade." But Jesus did more than what's expected.

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman, He was alone with a woman at the well. You just didn't do that. You didn't hang around. This was a Samaritan woman; this was a Jewish man. You just didn't hang around this way. She was even surprised that He was talking to her. But Jesus did more than what's expected. His interaction taught her some important things and offered her living water. He valued her. He honored her by doing more than what's expected.

There's a story about the woman who comes in. See, Jesus was eating at another Pharisee's house and while He's eating at the Pharisee's house a woman comes in to Jesus and at the table there starts wiping His feet with the tears and her hair. And the Pharisee says, "Ooh." He knew what kind of a woman this was because she was a woman of disrepute. So the Pharisee says, "If He knew what kind of a woman this is, He wouldn't allow her to touch Him." Jesus, knowing what he thought, says to him, "When I came into your house did you offer me a kiss? (a common greeting) No. Did you wash my feet? No. But this woman hasn't stopped kissing my feet and washing my feet with her tears."

Jesus, again, was doing something unexpected. He was valuing this woman who was down and out, and did something really amazing in her life. Jesus often did more than what's expected. I would suggest that that's a good part of the honor definition. Doing more than what's expected. I think that's true in life.

As I'm working with children and I'm saying to kids, "Okay kids, you're going to learn honor here. We're going to think of doing more than what's expected. If your mom asks you to get the towels out of the dryer, and that's what your obedience is, you're doing that, what could you do that's more than what's expected?" And they say things like, "We could fold them. We could put them away." I said, "Yes! That's honor. That's something that comes from your heart. That's not the thing she told you to do. If you did what she told you to do, that's obedience. This is more than what's expected. It's what Jesus did. He often did more than what's expected." So we're trying to help children understand what that looks like in very practical terms.

It was just amazing to me that Jesus got up and washed the disciples' feet. That was much more than what was expected from the Master to act as a servant. Isn't that what we're told? To act as servants and do more than what's expected in our lives with people?

Let me talk to you a moment about the adolescent brain. When children are growing we like to give them lots of variety of experience. So we allow children, little infants...like Madison. She's got little sounds and colorful things. Just go over to her little car seat over there and they've got little colorful things for the baby to look at. When the baby starts crawling she'll be able to crawl and they'll put the little plugs in the plug receptacles and move all the dangerous stuff so the baby can explore. Why are they doing that? Because they want the baby, Madison, to have lots of variety of experience. Because the brain is developing very quickly and lots of new pathways are developing in that baby's brain. So varied experiences help.

So in childhood and preschool life we allow children to play with sand in the preschool or we allow them to do finger painting so they're getting a variety of experience. When they're in elementary school we encourage them to get involved in music and we encourage them to get involved in sports. Even though we can tell they're not going to be a musician someday or I don't think sports is really their thing, we allow them to try those because we're helping the brain to develop in a lot of different ways. Lots of variety is what we do in the childhood and preschool and infant stage.

But at adolescence, the age of 12-25, young people are starting to specialize. They're choosing certain things about what they're going to do and the 'use it or lose it' principle begins to work. So someone who used to have some ability in music who doesn't practice begins to lose it. The person who is learning a foreign language if it doesn't use it, loses that ability because the brain is paring itself down and specializing in particular areas.

Now there's a tendency sometimes in adolescents for a person to become more self-focused. That is thinking about themselves, wanting to do things that they want, and invest their time and energy and talents in things that make them happy. That tendency is a common tendency, but it's a dangerous one because allowed to go on its own starts to pare the brain into selfishness and move away some of the selflessness that's needed. So God has designed a principle He calls honor to be brought into the home at that point of children growing up, and that principle helps to build that other part of the brain.

So when children are treating people as special, parents, siblings, and those people outside the family, when they're doing more than what's expected, what they're doing is they're building that part of the brain to balance the other parts. It's God's design. It's a beautiful thing that God's designed.

But it's not just for children. There's a lot of adults who have this 'use it or lose it' problem. If we aren't using this idea of honor in our lives it starts to drift off and we become selfish and that selfishness gets us into problems in our lives. God wants it clear that honor is part of the curriculum. Not just for adolescents, not just for children, but for all of us. Romans 12:10 says, *Honor one another above yourselves*. That is written to all of us.

I would suggest that at first if you're just starting to work on this it's not easy. If you're inclined to focus on yourself and your speech or your action or your decision-making or the way you handle your emotions, if you tend to focus on yourself it's hard to make these new pathways in the brain. But as you do, God allows that to not only develop in your brain but to develop as a pattern inside of your heart. Then we begin giving preference to others in honor, as the passage says.

But I want to add one more part to the honor definition as we're thinking about it because I think there's a way that we can honor others in the environment and in the home or whatever it might be. So I want to add this part to the honor definition because it's about an attitude, having a good attitude. An attitude says I value this situation enough so that I'm going to add to it; I'm not just going to subtract from it. And that attitude really contributes to the environment. It makes other people feel good.

This week I had to go down to the state of New Jersey office. Believe me, it was not something I wanted to do because we had some Calvary Chapel business I needed to do down there. So I had to go down to the... What do you call the office that you're in? Department of Revenue. I had to go to the Department of Revenue.

I go in there and the lady behind the counter is just the sweetest lady. She is so nice to me and she is very kind. I'm the fourth person – they got the counter. I took my ticket and I was standing

there and she keeps looking at me like “it will be a minute.” She’s just treating me really special. I greatly appreciate it. Jessica who works there comes by and says, “Hi, Pastor Scott,” and so we’re interacting a bit. She helped me greatly enough to tell me that I have totally failed and I need to go back to the beginning and start over and come back tomorrow. So I had to go back home, do some homework, do what I needed to do, and come back the next day.

So I come back the next day. I go back the next day hoping I’m going to find this nice lady who just contributed to my life delightfully (which you often don’t see in government officials, so I was very grateful). She wasn’t there. There was another young lady there and she was just as helpful. She came out from behind the counter, she goes over to the computer and sits with me at the computer and helps me redo my problem and fix it and do what I needed to do. So by the time I left there I had all the documents I needed in order to accomplish what we were trying to do. I was really grateful.

So I said to her (and Jessica comes by again because she works there), “I’m just really grateful for the way you guys have treated me. I feel honored.” The attitude that they had was just an encouraging one. I said, “It’s surprising. You don’t always see that in government officials.” And we started to talk about it. It was just fun to be able to interact with them about how they were treating people. They felt good about it. This young lady says she really likes her job. We interacted about that for a bit.

I think one of the ways that we honor people ultimately is we share the gospel with them and we tell them about Jesus Christ. We care about them. So I said to this young lady, “Hey are you looking for a church?” And she says, “Oh we live so far away.” So we talked about it a little bit.

But I think that as we share Jesus Christ with people we’re showing honor to them. I value you enough that I want to tell you about something you need that will change your life, that will bring solutions into the problems that you’re experiencing in your heart. God is that answer. I want to share it with you.

I just think this idea of honor is so valuable. It characterizes who we are. I think it helps us practice the shortest verse in the Bible.

Do you know what the shortest verse in the Bible is? Some people think it’s *Jesus wept*. I’m about to shoot down that argument now, just so you understand, because that’s not what we’re practicing that here. John 11:35 says, *Jesus wept*. People believe that’s the shortest version because in the King James Version those are the words. But the Bible wasn’t written in English. The Bible was written in Greek. So you have to ask the question, what is the shortest verse in the Bible in Greek?

The shortest verse in the Bible in Greek is 1 Thessalonians 5:16 – *Rejoice evermore*. I like that one better. You want to see the Greek? Okay there it is. There are sixteen letters in the first one and fourteen letters in the second one. Just to confirm. Now you know when anyone talks to you about the shortest verse in the Bible, we’re talking about 1 Thessalonians 5:16 which talks about *rejoice evermore*.

I think that's what we're doing. We have this attitude of honor in our hearts that allows us to be this thing, this person that is adding to other people's lives and contributing to them. Wouldn't it be nice if we were that kind of person. We're giving these kinds of gifts to people on a regular basis. That we're sharing with them and offering to them something that would contribute to them.

Do you get this idea about honor? Honor is like a gift. Does that make sense?

Okay to illustrate this, I'd like to give a gift to someone. Who'd like to receive it? Okay, Rachel. Come on up. You raised your hand, come on. Here you go. I'm doing this to remind everybody and to illustrate the point that honor is a gift.

This is Rachel. Rachel is married to James. Go ahead and open it up and tell us what it is. Yes, we like to see people open gifts. And tell us what it is. Turn it around so everybody can see. What is it?

[Rachel] Dirt!

[Scott] Yes. It's dirt. Now let me tell you why I gave you that gift. This is a reminder, okay. Because the tendency I think we have in life is when we're supposed to be giving nice gifts we tend to give gifts of dirt. So I'm hoping you're going to remember to not give gifts of dirt and give honor instead. Will you remember that?

[Rachel] I will.

[Scott] Good. I'm going to give you another gift. This is a real gift. Alright? Here you go. Go ahead and open that one. What is it?

[Rachel] It's chocolate. Best gift ever!

[Scott] Do you see the smile on her face and the comments that she's making? I just want you to know, this week when you're giving honor to someone you will see that kind of response. Like I saw honor treating me at the New Jersey office, I'm going "yes" and delight is on my face.

I think I gave you two of them. One is for you to keep and the other is to give away to someone else this week when you tell them a little bit more about honor. Okay? Let's give Rachel a hand.

Now I would suggest that this idea of honor that God has given to us is the closest we get to positive thinking in our theology. There are some people who really go off on this positive thinking stuff and so they're just thinking positively for the sake of being positive. There's probably some good in that, but there's not a lot of depth to it. And then there's other people on the other extreme who are so in touch with their sin with the suffering and the pain in the world that their thoughts are all negative and painful all the time. I would suggest we want to be somewhere in the middle. We want to have a positive outlook on life. We want to be honoring. We want to be looking out because of some depth that exists inside of us.

See, this honor isn't my idea. This honor idea comes from God. In Ephesians 1 do you remember when it says there that God picked us out before the creation of the world. He chose us. Why? He was honoring us. He chose us. He picked us out. He was treating us as special. That's the first part of the honor definition.

The second part of the honor definition says doing more than what's expected. Did God do more than what's expected of us? Well in Romans 5:7-8 it says this: Rarely will someone die for someone who's not righteous. But God demonstrated His love toward us in that. *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* He did more than what's expected. That's the idea. You might die for a righteous person, but a sinner? I don't think so. But *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* See, He did more than what's expected for us.

When we accept Jesus Christ into our lives then He creates this attitude in our hearts, this good attitude of joy that we can share with other people. It's God's design. It's something He wants to do in each one of our own hearts first and then it starts to affect our families, then it starts to affect the way we treat our children, and the way our children treat their parents, and the way we treat other people in the neighborhood, in the workforce, in government, and elsewhere.

This concept of honor is God's design for His church. That's why Paul is saying in Romans 12:10, *Honor one another above yourselves.* Treat them, give preference to them in honor. It's God's design for us.

It starts with something going on inside of us. So if you're here today and you've not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior that's where it starts. God has honored you. And what does He ask in return? That we honor Him with our heart, with our soul, with our mind, and with our strength. We give all those things to Him. When we do that, we call that getting born again or being a Christian, or we call it asking God to be the Lord of our lives. So I want to invite you to think about that today. If you've not accepted Christ we want to invite you to do that.

But this is a message, certainly, for all of us that we all need to grow in this area of honor. That God would grow us in such a way that we would influence other people and they would see that honor inside of us that He's placed there.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for this word in the list of things that you desire for us. I ask, Lord, that you would make that word a very important part of our hearts. Grow us. Expand our ability to care about others, think about others, give preference to others. Lord, I ask that you would use your Spirit right now to point out areas where we can grow in this area of our lives. Lord, we want to be those people that fix our eyes on you and draw attention to you. Lord, we may have regrets in our past, from mistakes that we've made, but we want from here on to fix our eyes on you and who you are and what you're doing in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.