

## **SESSION TWO // Honor Everyone with Miroslav Volf**

### **Watch Film:**

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/honor-everyone>

### **Going Deeper**

Read through 1 Peter. Volf expresses his surprise to find Peter give the command to a marginalized group of believers to “Honor everyone”.<sup>1</sup> What does honoring look like to you? Where do you see the church treating everyone with dignity?

Western Christians aren’t intensely persecuted in the ways many have been throughout history and around the world, but there are definitely social pressures that we face. Christianity calls us to a life that is often counter to the world’s ways, and the social pressure sometimes cause our belief to cave in and our actions lean towards pleasing the world. How have you experienced making a pro-God action vs. a worldly one? How did it feel? What did you learn about yourself?

Honoring everyone feels like being truthful and transparent in your actions and motivations. It also requires us to know we are all equally created, that we all will live and pass on. It causes us to bind our hearts and motivations to Christ as “the center” of our lives, the foundation/cornerstone, even as the world comes up against it at will. Who do you have the hardest time honoring? Going deeper with your desire to honor others, where do you experience dishonor in yourself?

### **Reflection**

Working at a non-profit ministry, I meet a lot of fringe people. It’s one of my privileges. I am not always received well. Fringe people’s perceptions of me are that I am rich and live a well put together life. In the beginning, I will be under the microscope with them. They need to know if I have really suffered.

“Have you been raped?”

“Have you been beaten?”

“Have you been homeless?”

These questions come up, because they are trying to figure out who I am and what I am about...and, frankly, for a lot of them their suffering is such a part of their story, they want to see how I measure up.

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<sup>1</sup> see 1 Peter 2:17

I get it.

When I have been in my darkest depressions, I didn't think anyone understood my experience. When I was a teenager scrapping for food, I hated anyone who seemingly had their life in order.

It's not only mainstream people who hedge off fringe people, but fringe people hedge off mainstream people. The first is afraid, the second is afraid. When Volf brought up 1 Peter, I took time to read it through with his insight in mind, and with an honest desire to know how to walk through these hedges "oriented to Jesus Christ, the center" and let the boundaries recalibrate.

There's a 60-year old homeless man in our community who is perfectly ornery. He hates everything, and everyone. I pick him up from time to time to take him for biscuits and gravy, not only because I want to make sure he has a meal after another all-night bender, but because he's my friend and I really enjoy his animated cynicism (I don't know what that says about me!). When we get to the restaurant, he spends the majority of the time talking about how no one cares, how people don't treat him with respect just because of his life choice, and how no one really loves him. Then he will say, "I am not talking about you. I couldn't even be here if you weren't sitting with me, they would throw me out."

Everyone in the restaurant is staring at us! We are an oddity, I know. He's moldy and smells like a whiskey barrel used as an ashtray, and I look like the lady next door in rural suburbia. I know he's right. He has been kicked out of places because he's loud and angry and says what's on his mind without apology. People don't qualify him as a viable human because he doesn't fit the mold. But, I wouldn't be loving him well if I didn't also remind him from time to time that honor goes both ways. If he wants to be in a restaurant where people are being polite, he could consider it. (I am laughing as I type this, because that would make our breakfasts so boring.)

Volf suggests that "us and them" cease to exist when our identity is centered on Christ. We become simply "us", as the boundary falls as it will around the center. Us as humanity, us as creatures of earth, us as beings in communion with the stars, us as universal residents...so where exactly is the boundary for Christ's Love and inclusion? I cannot see it from here.