

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT *THE HONOR KEY*

“Russell Evans’ book on honor is such an important tool in the hands of the church today. Leaders who want a culture of honor so they’ll be treated better miss the point. Honor is the atmosphere in which the people of God become their best. Russell has done a great job in highlighting the importance of honor as a vital key to creating a kingdom culture. Receiving and giving honor enables us to walk as true sons and daughters of God, restored to our rightful place, to see heaven released in and through our lives.”

—*BILL JOHNSON*

Senior Leader of Bethel Church, Redding, California

Author of *When Heaven Invades Earth* and *Hosting the Presence*

“I’m so grateful God used Russell Evans to bring us this vital message about a neglected key to understanding the heart of God and the way His kingdom functions. Pastor Evans’ gift for making vital concepts clear, accessible, and actionable shines through on every page of *The Honor Key*. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.”

—*ROBERT MORRIS*

Founding Senior Pastor, Gateway Church, Dallas, Texas

Best-selling author of *The Blessed Life*, *From Dream to Destiny*,
and *The God I Never Knew*

“Pastor Russell Evans is one of the preeminent voices in global youth culture and revival. His insights into leadership and church development are not the cold pontifications of an ivy-tower-bound postulator but have been ground tested and proven in the real-world laboratory of leading both a church and a youth movement that are impacting the world.

“In His new book, *The Honor Key*, Russell Evans shares with us a vital key to the advancement of the kingdom in modern culture—honor. He dares to challenge the current tepid temperature of religious relationships and calls us to foster genuine connectivity through the Spirit of Honor. This book is required reading for anyone desiring to understand relevant, relational currency in the rising church.”

—DR. CHRIS HILL

Senior Pastor, The Potter’s House of Denver, Colorado

“History always proves a principle to be right or wrong. In a relatively short time, Pastor Russell Evans has proven that history is on his side, validating the kingdom principle of *honor*, which he practices as a lifestyle. His book *The Honor Key* will change your life. Through his unique conversational style, you will discover foundational keys to unlocking heaven over your life and walking in personal destiny. Every person who reads this book will be inspired to discover, pursue, and fulfill their unique God-given calling.”

—JENTEZEN FRANKLIN

Senior Pastor, Free Chapel, Gainesville, Georgia
Author of *New York Times* best-seller, *Fasting*

“There are few men I know who are as qualified as Russell Evans to write on the subject of honor. What you will read in these pages is not just theory but is modeled and lived out daily in the life of Russell and in the community called Planetshakers. I have personally been greatly impacted by the culture of honor at Planetshakers. They are a testimony of what God intends to do in cities across the earth. The issue of honor is one the church must get right if we are to fulfill our mandate to see nations transformed. Few subjects can bring such radical change in an environment as properly understanding honor. I am grateful Russell has tackled this subject. The church will be strengthened because of it, and nations will be transformed.”

—*BANNING LIEBSCHER*

SLT/Director, Jesus Culture

“I love Russell Evans’ new book, *The Honor Key*. His engaging life stories and clear teaching reveal how honor is the foundation of the kingdom that unlocks the possibilities of heaven. It will literally change the atmosphere of your life. I now look at every person and situation differently . . . from honor’s view . . . God’s view. I highly recommend this book.”

—*JOHN MASON*

Author of *An Enemy Called Average* and many other best-selling books

“Pastor Russell Evans doesn’t sugar coat anything! This is as real as it gets. *The Honor Key* is one of those rare books that illuminates key biblical and kingdom principles in a way we can all apply to our everyday lives. Planetshakers Awakening (conference) grew from 300 to around 25,000 people in a few short years based on the biblical wisdom and truth contained in these pages. Pastor Russell shares openly about the intimate experiences of both triumph and struggle in his private and public ministry life. *The Honor Key* will encourage you to stay strong and committed, and move forward on the journey God has called you. I dare you to read it! It’s more than what you think.”

—MILES MCPHERSON

Founder and Senior Pastor of Rock Church, San Diego, California
Author of *God in the Mirror*

“I’ve known Russell for many years, and he truly is a man of honor, which makes this book even more powerful because it’s written from the platform of his life and convictions. I believe you’ll see that honor is the key to establishing strong, harmonious relationships with our families, our friends, co-workers, and our churches. To use Russell’s own words, “Honor is the opposite of control, because control is all about me, and honor is all about us.” You’re going to love this book!”

—MARK CROW

Senior Pastor, Victory Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Author of *Extraordinary Living, Mastering Your Storms*, and
The Secrets of the Second Mile

“*The Honor Key* is full of truth! Pastor Russell Evans has delivered a powerful message in a day and age when our culture is lacking in honor. What a fresh way to remind us of the importance of honor and what it can unlock in our lives!”

—*CINDY CRUSE RATCLIFF*

Senior Worship Leader, Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas,
Joel Osteen Ministries

“If you’re looking to go deeper and wider in your faith, Pastor Russell’s book will equip you with the spiritual tools to become the honorable person God has created you to be. His book is beyond insightful—he shares his heart and wisdom on how to honor God in your everyday walk and through life’s difficult choices and circumstances.”

—*WILFREDO DE JESUS*

Senior Pastor New Life Covenant Church Chicago, Illinois
Author of *Amazing Faith* and included in 2013 *Time 100: The Most Influential People in the World*

“The principles of living a life of honoring God above all else are clearly laid out in Pastor Russell Evans’ new book. With *The Honor Key*, Evans has lifted the veil over this important subject and given his readers new insight into an authentic and blessed life. After all is said and done, we know this from his wonderful book: ‘As the heavens and all therein raise their voices in honor and praise to God, we are to do likewise’ (Revelation 4:11).”

—*MARCUS D. LAMB*

Founder and President, Daystar Television Network

“Pastor Russell Evans is undoubtedly one of the great leaders God is raising up in our generation! His ministry through Planetshakers is reshaping the face of music in the church around the globe, and his dynamic prophetic voice is an inspiration to the body of Christ to return to God’s order of living spirit-filled and victorious! Pastor Russell is a focused, passionate man of God, and I know this book is filled with wisdom and insight that will challenge you to live for God’s glory and to become everything He intends for you to be!”

—*PASTOR AT BOSHOFF*

Senior Pastor, Christian Revival Church, Blomfontein,
Free State Province, South Africa
Author of *Dream Stealers* and *Live a Yes Life*

“People around the world are blessed by the fruit of Russell Evans’ Planetshakers ministry—it impacts the world in a unique and powerful way. I’ve ministered with Planetshakers in Australia, USA, Philippines, and Malaysia. The impact is always life-changing. *The Honor Key* eloquently unpacks the foundational key that enables a life where Jesus truly is the center of it all. If you want to unlock a limitless life in Christ, this book is for you.”

—*ISRAEL HOUGHTON*

Internationally recognized worship leader, recording artist, producer, and Grammy Award-winning musician and songwriter; gold-selling albums include “The Power of One” and “A Deeper Level”

THE HONOR KEY

UNLOCK A LIMITLESS LIFE

Russell Evans



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MyHealthyChurch.com



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CONTENTS

x		<i>Foreword</i>
xv		<i>Introduction</i>
I	CHAPTER 1	God of Honor
13	CHAPTER 2	Where Honor Starts
31	CHAPTER 3	Honor Is the Foundation of the Kingdom
47	CHAPTER 4	Honor Is the Opposite of Control
61	CHAPTER 5	Appointed
73	CHAPTER 6	Celebrating God in Others
85	CHAPTER 7	A Value of the Heart
99	CHAPTER 8	Wow!—Not Why
109	CHAPTER 9	Start Walking
123	CHAPTER 10	Honor in Motion
139	CHAPTER 11	Multiplication Effect
151	CHAPTER 12	Releasing Miracles
161	CHAPTER 13	Release the Commanded Blessing
173	CHAPTER 14	Kingdom of Order
187	CHAPTER 15	Higher Authority
199	CHAPTER 16	Honor the Truth
219		<i>Epilogue</i>
223		<i>Acknowledgements</i>
225		<i>About the Author</i>

FOREWORD

We live in a world that is obsessed with success. Advertisers promise it—if you’ll buy their latest products. Leaders and influencers use it to justify compromise and self-serving behavior. And too often we hear stories about those who have sought their own success at the expense of others.

God loves success. “I want,” He told His people, “to prosper you” (see Jeremiah 29:11). Adhering to His wisdom guarantees it, for wisdom boasts, “Common sense and success belong to me” (Proverbs 8:14, NLT). But God defines success differently. He defines it not according to the understanding of the world but according to His eternal wisdom. Paul wrote, “God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish” (1 Corinthians 1:20 NLT).

So instead of encouraging us to fight our way to the top or demand opportunities, God speaks to the destiny inside each of us and tells us what we must do to release it: honor. We must honor God, others, and even ourselves according to the identity our Creator has given us. When we choose the path of honor, we position ourselves for blessing and eternal success. Honor is a key to success, yet somehow there is a shortage of good books on this vital subject.

My friend Russell Evans has seen success in his life and ministry. Untold millions have been impacted forever by his faithfulness. I know this man and his heart. I can tell you (and

he would agree) that his story is a story of God's grace—a grace that is freely given to those who rely on God.

Though your story is unique to you, if you will be attentive to the timeless principles in this book, you will find deeper conviction to seek the reward of God's presence. As you spend time in His presence, you will be transformed into the extraordinary, favored, and powerful child of God you were created to be.

As Russell shares in this book, God's kingdom celebrates each individual, but it is a family affair. While worldly success is often oriented toward self, your success in God is about so much more than you. God's desire is to see you fulfilled, others invested in, and ultimately, Himself glorified. By His Spirit and His Word, He is more than able to accomplish this in and through you. Your role is to receive from and partner with Him.

The personal stories and biblical truths you will find on these pages will bring you encouragement and position you for revelation. This book will call you into a life of grace, found only through relationship with the One who is its source. Press in. Choose to believe. Have the faith to follow . . . and enjoy the journey!

JOHN BEVERE

Author of *Honor's Reward* and *The Bait of Satan*

Messenger International

Colorado Springs / United Kingdom / Australia

INTRODUCTION

I want to honor you for selecting this book. It's a life message, not just a thought. I've begun the journey of honor and am still on it, so I want to honor you for coming on that journey with me.

If God can take a terribly insecure pastor's kid (which I was) and reveal to him a key to His kingdom, He can do the same for you. There are many things I've gleaned from my spiritual life, and I would love to share some of those with you and help you walk out your own destiny, your own calling.

God has made you in His image—you are unique and valuable to His kingdom. He has created gifts and abilities in your life, but to see those gifts and abilities come to fulfillment, it takes risk. It takes vulnerability, trust, and faith.

It takes honor.

As you open the pages of this book, I dare you to discover the power of the kingdom of God that can come into your life through the principle of honor. When you do, it will release an inheritance. A generational blessing will come out of your life that will affect not only your life but the lives of those around you for years to come.

I honor you for taking the risk to open the cover, read the first page, and then the next page and the next. I honor you for daring to discover the journey of a life of honor.

CHAPTER 1

GOD OF HONOR

If you're like me, you want to experience heaven here on earth. You want to have abundance, receive an inheritance, and release generational blessings. Basically, you desire to lead a more effective Christian life.

So are you experiencing these things? In your life today, are you walking in all the peace, prosperity, and freedom you'll experience in heaven?

If you hesitated for a moment, or know for sure you're not, the first question that must come to mind is, "Why not?"

I asked myself this question, and the answer I received from God was not at all what I expected. There are many principles in the Bible God uses to bless us, but He showed me something beneath the surface explanations I had heard that formed a bedrock for everything else.

Under faith, hope, and love, and beneath walking in obedience and making room for the Holy Spirit in our lives, and undergirding kingdom principles is a key. It's a foundational truth throughout God's Word that's found in every action of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That truth is honor.

All through the Bible, the value of honor is the essence of the kingdom of God. In fact, I believe that honor is the foundational truth of the kingdom. Everything revolves around this topic of honor. Everything happens because of honor. As I examined the life of Jesus, I saw something quite interesting. Every miracle, every breakthrough, indeed everything that happened in His life actually happened when people honored what He carried or honored the miracles He performed or honored who He was.

Honor affects every part of your life. A lifestyle of honor affects your marriage, your family, your job, your finances, and your church life. In fact, it affects everything.

Many Christians are familiar with the term *honor*, and some can even quote Scriptures on the subject, such as, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). Unfortunately, many people have a misconception of honor. Or they have a narrow view of honor. We often misuse the term because we don't understand what honor really means.

We readily think of honor in terms of Scripture verses that tell us to honor our father and mother, and in some circles pastors and leaders have used the terms *honor* and *submit* interchangeably when talking about how to respond to authority. Because of partial understandings and misunderstandings

about honor, many people become frustrated and drop the term entirely from their lives.

However, God showed me a different perspective on honor, and in this book I hope to help you begin the journey of a life of honor. I don't claim to have it all figured out or to have mastered this concept, but what the Lord has shown me is important to any Christian who desires to live a kingdom-centered life.

Just a moment ago, I asked you to consider why you aren't experiencing heaven on earth as you would like. The answer God gave me for my own life when I asked this same question was striking: "Because there's no honor."

But then He showed me something else: In everyday life, a lifestyle of honor brings heaven to earth.

The Honoring Father

The word *honor* actually means "to esteem at the highest level" or "to add weight to." It comes from the time when people used to weigh shekels (coins) to determine their value. The heavier the coin, the more value it had. And so it is with honor—the more you put value on something, the more weight it has in your life.

When we honor someone or something, we give it weight or deep respect. It isn't enough to feel it inside; honor must include an outward expression or it's just lip service (Isaiah 29:13). Honor includes the heart condition and the outward expression of respect and reverence for something that we esteem to the highest degree.

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In order to understand biblical honor, we need to look at God for a perfect demonstration of this powerful kingdom principle. As sovereign Creator, He is the original source of honor. I had never thought of honor in the way the Lord has been showing me. To explain it as He showed me, I want to use a story you probably know, but I believe you will see in a different way when we're done.

One of the stories I love most in the Bible is the story of the prodigal son (which I think is misnamed, as I will explain later). You may know it well, but allow me to frame this story in a new light.

The younger son demanded his inheritance from his father and left for a distant land. To begin with, asking his father for his inheritance was an act of dishonor. He then proceeded to live wildly and spend his inheritance. He lived a life centered on doing whatever he wanted to do and on spending his money frivolously—until it ran out.

The money was gone, and so was all the food. It was a time of famine, and he didn't have enough to eat. With no money, no friends, and nothing to eat, he hit rock bottom. When he envied some pigs eating their dinner, he realized that even the servants in his father's house at least had enough to eat. So he came to his senses and started for home.

Imagine for a moment that you were in the shoes of the prodigal son as he arrived at the outer gate of his father's property, starving and dirty. The last time he passed through that gate, he was sure he could make it alone in the world. He couldn't wait to break free from his dad's rules. Life was awesome for a while, probably even better than he had imagined. He was surrounded by people who thought he was cool (as long as he had money), but eventually starvation, humiliation, and regret were his only friends.

I imagine he rehearsed over and over in his mind what he would say to his dad to convince him to let him come back home—not as a son, but as a servant. He probably dreaded the reactions of the rest of the family and even the servants who had once served him. But though humiliating, these things probably seemed worth it for the relief of coming back under his father's covering and provision.

We learn that the father had been waiting every day for his son to return home. When he saw his son, he could have said, "Hey son, you really messed up your life. You've caused me great pain." But instead, the father saw the young man while he was still a long way off and *ran* to him. He greeted and embraced his son.

Then the father did something that seems strange to us—the father *honored* the son. The heart of the father was moved to *honor* his rebellious son. He reacted the opposite way that everyone expected him to. He didn't shout at his son or remind him of the great dishonor and humiliation his behavior had brought on his father and his household. He didn't mention the

financial cost or the shameful activities the son had participated in while living the high life.

No, the father showed nothing but genuine love and honor toward his son.

Jesus used this parable to cut through the lies and misunderstandings about the nature of His Father. This confronting story undermines the teachings of religious people who try to keep others in bondage and fear by teaching that God is an angry God who responds to sin with judgment and punishment.

Jesus used the story to declare that the opposite is true: Regardless of our condition, God always waits with love, forgiveness, and honor for all who are willing to humble themselves and reach out to Him.

A Robe, a Ring, and Some Sandals

God is by nature “honor” just as He is by nature “love,” and we see these character traits expressed consistently in everything He says and does. In this story Jesus shows the heart of our heavenly Father toward each of us.

After tasting the bitter dregs of life in the world and discovering his father’s wisdom to be true, the son found himself at a turning point in life. He realized his own foolishness and approached his dad differently—with honor (weighty respect and courtesy). This was the change of heart the father had been waiting so long to see, and he was overcome with joy. In response to his son’s humility, the father engaged in three

actions that clearly communicated his feelings for his lost son—now found—that are highly symbolic for us.

First, he placed a robe on him. This act represents restored honor and dignity. No longer was the evidence of the son's sin in full view for all to see. No longer was his shame and filth exposed and displayed. Kings, priests, and people of influence wore this kind of robe. By placing one on his son, the father communicated to everyone that his son was restored to the position he once held.

This is a beautiful picture of the “robe of righteousness” that is placed on all who receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior (Isaiah 61:10). This is God's way of communicating to us that He no longer sees our past and our failures but only the authority and favor He originally placed on us.

Second, the father put a ring on his son's finger. This act symbolized the restoration of the son's full authority in the father's household.

It was not dependent on the son's *behavior*, but on his rightful *position* as son. When he honored his father, it restored his authority.

Third, the father put sandals on his son's feet. This act symbolized the way the father wanted his son to walk: not as a slave, but as a son. Because slaves didn't wear sandals, they were easily distinguished from those in authority. By covering

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the young man's feet, the father communicated his restored position as son.

Here's another thing I noticed from this story. After restoring his son, the father said to his servants, "Kill the fattened calf! We're having a celebration!" I think that from the moment the son left, his dad planned for the day he'd come home and had a calf prepared for the celebration. It was a fattened calf. He didn't say, "Get me a calf." He said, "Get the *fattened* calf." He had been waiting for the day he could honor his son—such was the heart of the father.

And such is the heart of our heavenly Father.

Our Honoring Father

Like me, I'm sure you're amazed and moved by this honoring father's love, devotion, and heart of restoration toward his son. Imagine what this welcome did for the relationship between the prodigal son and his father! Imagine the relief and gratitude that flooded that son's heart. Imagine how he loved his father.

Does this sound familiar? This is a picture of the amazing experience of "coming home" to our heavenly Father when we choose to accept Jesus into our lives. Let's wander down memory lane for a moment.

Do you remember hitting rock bottom in your life as guilt, shame, and self-hatred overwhelmed you? Do you remember the moment you decided that anything would be better than the pit you were living in? Do you remember crying out to God in desperation, hoping that He wouldn't ignore you like you deserved?

Do you remember?

Then it happened—He responded like the father in this story. He didn't respond in the way you expected Him to, did He? Do you remember how you felt accepted and loved? Do you remember how you felt valued and important to someone—something you hadn't felt in such a long time? Do you remember how unworthy you felt when He forgave you, favored you, and spoke incredible promises into your heart? Promises that brought hope to your future? Do you remember the joy and gratitude you felt in response to His unbelievable kindness in the face of your failures?

Do you remember?

This is our God. He practices honor, and He attracts honor. He is honor.

Without honor, you cannot come to salvation. God has honored us just as the father in this story honored his wayward son. But in return, we must honor God in order to receive His gift of salvation and restoration. The way through the door of salvation is honor, and the way of living once you're through the door of salvation is also honor.

If we truly desire to become more like our heavenly Father, we must model ourselves on His character. What He loves, we must love; and what He honors, we must honor. If your heart is soft and you're willing to allow God to change you from the inside out, then come with me on this

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journey of discovery. You will be changed forever as we uncover the powerful truth about honor and see God's "kingdom come" in our lives.

They call this story the parable of the prodigal son, but it really should be named the parable of the honoring father. Jesus wanted to present the facts about His Father so people could walk in truth, life, and freedom regardless of their mistakes. That's why He revealed His Father's heart. It was completely different from what the religious establishment thought God was like. Jesus showed that His Father embraces honor, even for wayward sons.

He hasn't changed.