



# SHIFT AHEAD

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I graduated from college on December 13, 2008, and got married that following Saturday. Just five days before Christmas, Melissa and I said “I do” and left out for a quick honeymoon before Christmas day.

A couple days after Christmas with my family, we drove to our new home that both of us had yet to spend a night in and began to sort through wedding gifts and the stacks of boxes yet to be unpacked. It was a great little house. The church I was working for at the time agreed to let us stay there as part of our package for serving. It was on a long road in a small southern town. It was one of those quiet settings that you usually see in movies. You know, the one where a dirt road runs in front of the house and the nearest neighbor is a quarter of a mile down the street.

Our first night in our new home, Melissa and I were relaxing on our sofa in the living room after a long day of travel and unpacking. We were in the middle of a movie when we heard it! It sounded like someone was coming through the front door. We both jumped to our feet and stared at each other. I had no clue what to do. The only thought I had went something like, “This is my new wife. I’m the man. I have to protect my domain!” I couldn’t remember everything the preacher had asked us to say in our vows, but I was confident protecting her was in there somewhere.

So, like any good husband, I hurried Melissa to the bedroom,

told her to get under the bed, and I grabbed my never-before-shot-by-me shotgun.

Nothing.

I waited for a few seconds . . .

Nothing.

I flipped on the front porch light and looked out of the peep hole . . .

Nothing.

I opened up the door sure I was going to find someone in the bushes . . .

Nothing.

Finally, I locked the door and went to get Melissa out from under the bed. After looking around for a few minutes, we noticed that a few of my baseball hats had fallen from a shelf that we had against a wall in the living room. Apparently, the sound of the hats hitting the wall and then the floor made it sound like someone was coming into my domain and messing with us.

## THE ALARM HAS SOUNDED

Why did I react so suddenly and drastically when Melissa and I heard the sound near our door? It was because I was alarmed. Even more than that, I reacted because I felt like something I cared about was in harm's way. I reacted so dramatically because I knew that someone had to do something, and I was the man to do the job. I was the best option in that moment to protect and take care of my house and my wife. That night sitting on the couch, the alarm went off and I reacted the best way I knew how. That's what we do when we hear alarms, we move.

That's where we are as a generation. The alarm has sounded and we have to react. We are sitting at the threshold of a leader-

ship change and we have to respond. Without us taking action and making the right changes now so that we can be ready to take the baton, we'll see the organizations, churches, and businesses that were started years ago with such passion and vigor become nothing more than a remnant in the timeline of society. We have to take action. We have to wake up.

### ARE YOU NEXT UP?

The previous generation started so many organizations, businesses, and projects. They began organizations they believed the world needed and succeeded in doing so. Some great discoveries, ideas, churches, theories, and organizations have been started as a result of these needs. Those organization-starters, though, are moving into the fourth quarter of their leadership. In the meantime, the forward-thinking ones are looking to hand off the ball to a new generation. Aging senior pastors are looking for the right person to take their place. Will you be that next generation leader?

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**THAT'S WHAT we do when we hear alarms, we move.**

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If so, you'll have to grasp ideas, concepts, and behaviors that aren't typical with our generation. If you're going to be the one who moves ahead of the pack and the one who senior leaders look to hand the reins to, you are going to have to make some shifts in your attitude, your character, and your thinking. You're going to have to make some bold shifts if you're going to be the one who moves the organization you love ahead. If you're going to be the one who is blessed to get to the next level in leadership, you'll have to shift your thinking and begin thinking like someone worthy to

be trusted with a flourishing organization.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that you can't be you. You are definitely going to have to be your unique self. You are going to have to discover the gifts God has put inside you and use them. You can't be your predecessor. The worst thing you could do would be to step outside of who you really are in order to get ahead. 1 Peter 4:10 gives us some instruction about using our gifts when it says, "Each of you should use whatever gift *you have received* to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (emphasis mine)." You have to operate in those God-given gifts and work toward sharpening those gifts as God gives you opportunities.

Your unique personality, your God-given gifts, and a few attitude and mind shifts will be the things that propel you forward to take the reins.

## YOU CAN HELP

As a child, I admired my dad. I loved everything about him. Everything Dad did, I wanted to do just like him. I wanted to be a part of whatever he was doing. I watched my dad cut grass from the time I can remember being able to look out a window. I'd watch him outside my bedroom window as a child and dream about cutting grass. Growing up, my dad owned a pretty large lawn-maintenance business. He had big equipment that always piqued my interest as a boy. I always wanted to help him and go to the job sites to use the equipment.

So I watched him. It wasn't because I liked being outside or liked seeing his big lawn mower in action—although those were definitely cool too. No, I wanted to help Dad cut grass because it was him doing it. There was no greater feeling as a boy than

knowing I was old enough and skilled enough to help my dad with something.

I was about fifteen years old when my dad began to let me go cut grass with him at some of his bigger jobs. It was such a great feeling to know I was good enough to help him. Knowing he needed me to help him with his work and that I was contributing to the family always gave me a fulfillment I never fully understood until I got married and began providing for my family.

We all want to be wanted. We have an innate desire to have other people want us and value us. It's not by mistake that you and I want to feel wanted. That desire to be needed is placed there by a God who wants us to feel love and validation from Him. It's placed there so we can feel and know how much He loves and sacrificed for us.

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If you're reading this and thinking, "There's no way I can be next," you're wrong. Sure, God may not call you to take the reins where you are, but you have the potential inside of you to make waves in our generation and in your world. You have inside of you the ability to help the greatest Dad of them all, in what He considers the greatest mission. You have the potential inside of you to help grow the kingdom of God in miraculous and sensational ways.

## WANTED: IMPERFECT PEOPLE

Do you remember the story in Luke 5 when Jesus called Peter to be His disciple? Jesus was teaching some people by the lake one day when the crowd began to grow. The crowd grew so much they began to get close to Jesus. Not wanting to go for a swim or stop the crowd from gathering, Jesus hopped in one of the boats He happened to see by the side of the lake. The boat Jesus sort of hijacked and began teaching from just happened to be Peter's (still Simon at the time). When Jesus was done teaching, He turned to Peter and asked Peter to take the boat out into deeper water and try his hand at fishing one more time for the day. Now, keep in mind this is what Peter did for a living. Peter's livelihood was dependent upon him knowing how to fish. Peter wasn't just a weekend fisherman with a cane poll. He had already had a long night at work and had caught nothing, not even a cold. So, Jesus asking Peter to try this again didn't seem right. After some arguing, though, Peter agrees to listen to Jesus and take the boat out a little farther into the water.

After Peter and Jesus arrive in deeper waters, you know what Peter has to be thinking: "This guy is a great teacher, but he's about to learn that ol' Pete knows what he's talking about when it comes to fishing." But what happened when Peter reluctantly threw his net out into the water? Something big! The Bible gives a beautiful description of the scene in Luke 5:6 when it says, "They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break." Can you imagine the look on Peter's face and the thoughts going through his head? Peter had no answer for all of the fish they caught. All Peter knew to do when he got the fish into the boat was to fall at the feet of Jesus.

I can imagine the tears in Peter's eyes as he looked up at Jesus.

Peter had to feel so messed up and full of faults. Peter, in the presence of the miracle-working Jesus, must have thought he had nothing good to offer. He had to have felt so dirty and screwed up. That is, until Jesus looks down at him in Luke 5:10 and says, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” In that moment, Peter had significance. He had something to live for beyond his everyday life. In that moment, Peter experienced a big shift in his attitude, his calling, and his purpose. In fact, the very next verse in Luke 5 says that Peter and the gang left everything to follow Jesus.

Jesus would use Peter for the rest of his life. In fact, if it hadn’t been for Peter and his venture from inconsequential to eternally significant, the early church would have looked a lot different. Jesus gives significance. You are significant.

## THE INFORMATION AGE

I’ll never forget what I was doing the day the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting took place. I woke up that morning, had a cup of coffee, spent my daily time with God, and started to go through the usual browsing of my apps on my iPad. I opened up Twitter and started reading about a shooting that took place somewhere in Connecticut.

Not having a clue about the news before a search of Twitter, I immediately began to search around to find out exactly what happened. Within minutes of

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**IT’S A LOUD world. We’re  
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the shooting, I had a pretty good grasp of the happenings some eight hundred miles from my South Carolina home.

That’s the world we live in. You and I, our generation, are

growing up and living in a world where information, news, and ideas are everywhere we turn. No longer do we have to wait until the next morning's paper to read about the news or wait until five o'clock and turn on our local news broadcast to find out what's happening in the world around us. No longer do we have to look up news or statistics in a book to find the information we want. We are literally connected at all times. We're connected to the news, to resources, and to each other like never before.

We're constantly bombarded with the noise of culture, but it doesn't have to be a bad thing and muddy our minds. It can be a good thing that allows us to grow, to learn, and to have an impact on the world around us. In fact, some of this noise is necessary information that can put us well ahead of the curve of the past.

There's a natural inclination in each of us that wants to lead. We all want to invest in something bigger than ourselves and more valuable than what we can do alone. Whether we have aspirations and calls to lead our family, community, non-profit, company, or local church, we all want to invest in something and someone. We all want to lead.

The issue that we're left with in all the noise and leadership talk is the gap between learning how to lead and actually becoming a good leader. No matter how strong of a call and anointing God has placed on us as leaders, we still have a duty and a call to go further and to sharpen our abilities. Jesus set the example in growth. While He was born perfect, He still grew in His abilities and calling. Luke 2:52 describes Jesus' growth this way: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

How do we grow? We practice all the knowledge we gain from the resources we're given. What is the distinguishing factor between those who are able to make the shift from just a head full



of leadership clichés and knowledge, and those who are able to grow in their ability to lead others? Different people get it done in different ways and grow in their own unique style. Much of what separates the great from the average, though, is how they react to the people, situations, and opportunities around them. How they are able to shift from just another voice in the crowd to the next great leader distinguishes them from the rest of the pack.

Leadership is about people. The great leaders are the ones who know how to treat people and move people to do something beyond what they can see for themselves. Those are the *next up* leaders. The ones who have the traits necessary to react to situations and value people. The leaders who are constantly improving themselves, their leadership capacity, and their organizations are the world's next great leaders. The ones who are able to serve people, love people, and grow in wisdom and stature and favor with God are the leaders who get ahead. The leaders who possess the right principles for all their leadership knowledge to rest on are the ones who make an impact on the people around them.

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WHETHER WE have aspirations and calls to lead our family, community, non-profit, company, or local church, we all want to invest in something and someone. We all want to lead.

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If you and I are going to become the leaders who apply the knowledge and information in a unique and purposeful way, we're going to have to shift the stereotypes that accompany our genera-

tion. Too much rests on our generation getting down to business and leading the next great movement for us to stay the way we currently are. The information age we live in needs some people who are able to cut out the noise and apply the good stuff it brings.

### A PRE-SHIFT

I'm not sure when it happened, but at some point in time, leadership development became an art in cloning the already existing leaders. So often, churches and organizations take potential leaders and begin to try and fit them into their mold of what a leader should look like. Instead of asking potential leaders to be themselves, develop some of their strengths, and adopt a few new ideas, many organizations have taught leaders how to walk, talk, act, think, and be exactly like the leaders they already have.

Becoming a *next up* leader doesn't mean you become just like the leader you're currently following. Becoming a *next up* leader and making the leadership shift means you become a better you who gleans and learns from the leaders in your life. Jesus never called His disciples to be exactly like each other—Jesus called them to follow Him.

You have something inside of you that God desperately wants to use. You have to make a shift in your mind before you can ever make a shift in your leadership. You have to go from thinking that you have to watch out of the window while others mow the grass to knowing that, with God's anointing and work through you, you can jump in and mow it yourself.

In order for you to change the world in our generation, you're going to have to shift from thinking, "I can't" to thinking, "I will." With that mindset, the gifts of God, and the guidance of the Holy

Spirit, there's nothing this generation can't accomplish. We have the call. We have tools. We have to make these eight specific shifts and be ready to take the reins when the time comes.



# 1

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## FROM *ENTITLEMENT* TO HONOR

The words *entitlement* and *honor* may not seem like they go together at first. After all, we don't really think about the two being polar opposites. When someone fails to honor someone, it doesn't mean they *entitle* them. The truth is, though, that the millennial generation has forced the two to be mentioned in the same sentence . . . or at least in the same chapter!

If I were to poll one hundred people who claimed to understand what the millennial generation is and asked those people to name the top three problems with our generation, the vast majority of them would list a sense of entitlement as being one of the great problems. Whether completely true or not, young people today are often accused of believing they are entitled to certain rights and privileges in life.

I believe there is a lot of merit to the idea that our generation (those in their twenties and early thirties) is a generation that feels entitled to many things. It's not just physical things we feel entitled to either. Many in our generation feel entitled to happiness at any cost and entitled to respect and influence well before it's earned.

For those of us looking to be the next great leaders who move our organizations, families, and churches forward, we have to understand that we're not entitled. We have to understand that, while we should certainly be respected to some degree, no one owes us great authority or influence.

### WE AREN'T ENTITLED TO ANYTHING

If we feel entitled to something, we think we deserve it—that it should be ours just because we're us. The truth is, we don't deserve anything we're given. This is a concept we as Christians should understand. The only thing you and I really deserve is *nothing*. That's what we've earned.

Think back for a second to your childhood. If you were like me, you were blessed enough to have parents who loved and cared for you beyond what you could have ever earned. Really, I was blessed beyond belief because my mom had a hard time telling me no. Some would say I had her wrapped around my little kid finger. Mom had such a hard time telling me no she would always let me get a toy when we went to Wal-Mart. I remember searching the aisles over and over looking for that one toy I wanted to buy each time we went. At the end of the shopping trip, it was mine.

I was about eight years old the first time I can remember my mom telling me no on a Wal-Mart trip. This particular trip, I walked through the entrance, ran to the toy aisle, browsed for a while, grabbed my toy of choice, and met up with Mom a few aisles over. But this time when I took the toy over to Mom, she said, "No!"

I don't know if she was proving a point or if she had just had a parent epiphany that I couldn't always have my way, but she told me no. I couldn't believe it. I was her child! I deserved the toy! I

was entitled to it! Many of us still have that mentality, even into our adult lives. We're convinced that because we are who we are, we deserve special treatment or something in return.

Now, I don't think it's all on our own merit. Many times we're told we deserve something. Many of you had a mom like mine who, despite great intentions, was really good at spoiling her children. The belief that we're entitled grows over time. Each time we think, "I deserve that," or "Why don't I get that?" we let it grow a little more. Soon, entitlement is in our beliefs and it begins to drag us down and ruin our view of the world and of others.

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WE'VE DECIDED to sacrifice honor and love on the altar of proving ourselves and our theology to be right.

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## THE DISCIPLINE OF HONOR

I remember flipping on the news right after the last presidential election and feeling stunned by the lack of honor the panelists and commentators showed toward both parties. We've lost the idea of honor in our society. Society has quit teaching us how to honor others, how to honor our parents, and how to honor our leaders.

Do you remember the only one of the Ten Commandments that comes with a promise? Moses, after being called up on Mount Sinai, was issued commands for the people to live by. The one commandment God gave to Moses that was accompanied by a promise was the one that said, "*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, emphasis mine). God told the people thousands of years ago that honoring those people God puts in authority over

you is important. In fact, God went as far as to say that the span of our lives hinge on it.

We've lost the concept of honoring our leaders, but we've also lost the concept of honoring our peers. Get on Twitter any day and you'll see people arguing back and forth, holding nothing back. Even in the church, we've lost the idea of honoring those around us. We've decided to sacrifice honor and love on the altar of proving ourselves and our theology to be right. In the meantime, we've become a church and society that has lost touch with honor. We've lost the idea that love and honor trump everything else.

## DEFINING HONOR

Honor is one of those heroic sounding words. Read any good fairy tale and there's an honorable hero. Flip on most old movies and you'll find a man fighting for the honor of his lady. No matter what romance novel you read (so they tell me), the woman in the novel always wants an honorable man to come and rescue her from her situation or family. Honor has a long history and is a word that gets tossed around a lot, so how have we failed to display it? We've lost the meaning of real honor. We've lost meaning of honoring others in our entitlement mindset and our selfish society. Honor means "a showing of usually merited respect."<sup>1</sup> Did you catch the key word in that definition? Go back and read it again.

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**HONORING GOD** travels  
to everything we do,  
everything we say, and  
every decision we make.

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We leaders really need to pay attention to that the word *usually*. You see, honor doesn't have to be merited. For believers in Christ, honor definitely doesn't have

to be merited. The people around us and the leaders we serve with don't have to prove anything to us. The leaders we serve don't have to earn our honor. We should always give it regardless.

Honor and respect go hand in hand. We all desire to be respected. We all want to have people around us who appreciate us for us. We aren't entitled to respect, but we definitely want it. Honor isn't just something leaders should get, but also something we have to be extra assertive to give.

## A PICTURE OF HONOR

The Bible is full of stories about honor. Beyond just telling us to honor our mother and father unconditionally, the Bible tells us to honor God, to honor our neighbors, and to honor our leaders. Honor can't be void of a loving heart and a forgiving mind. If we're going to make the shift from feeling like we're entitled to believing that we must honor others, we're going to have to realize that our goal is to give what others sometimes don't deserve.

### *Honor God*

If we're going to become people who show honor, it begins with God. Making the shift with God specifically from entitlement to honor should be really simple. He's the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Provider—we are not. Honoring Him and loving Him should be our top priority. We have to honor God in every part of our lives, not just in the right context. I can't begin to count the number of young people and young leaders I speak with who are great at honoring God with their time on Sunday morning and are great at tweeting Bible verses, but fail to honor God with their work and their day-to-day lives. Honoring God is a 24/7 calling.



Honoring God travels to everything we do, everything we say, and every decision we make.

In my life, one of the most challenging verses in all of Scripture is 1 Corinthians 10:31, which says, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Think about that for a second. If we obey this verse, loving and honoring God carries to every part of our lives. For young leaders, this is especially eye-opening. There may be times when it would be really easy for us to excel and get ahead, but it might not honor God. There are times when there may appear to be a fast track to a promotion or raise, but that fast track might not be honoring to God. For those of us who have a gifting for leading and influencing others, it can be really easy and seem really simple to step over people to get to where we think we need to go. In the heat of wanting to get to the top, we can often influence people to rally against someone else or against an idea. As heavy influencers, we can take advantage of someone’s small mistake in order for us to get ahead. Again, that would be the easy thing, but not the God-honoring thing. To obey this verse, we have to use our gifts how God wants us to use them. See why that 1 Corinthians verse is so challenging? Honor God first.

### *Honor Others*

The character of Uriah in 2 Samuel 11 is often overlooked in the Scripture. Uriah is rarely seen as heroic. He is usually seen as the guy who got the short end of the stick and was stabbed in the back by the people he trusted. If we take a look at the story, though, we see what kind of guy Uriah really was. He sets an unprecedented example in honoring the people around him. If you don’t know the story, Uriah was out fighting with the rest of the Israelite army while David (the king) was back at home. One day, David is on his

roof when he looks across the way and notices Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, bathing. David is immediately attracted to Bathsheba, so he sends for her and sleeps with her. David later gets word that he got Bathsheba pregnant. David, being the king, knows this is not a good move and goes into panic mode. Immediately, David sends for Uriah. Upon arrival, David tells him to go home to his wife. Uriah, not knowing about his wife's pregnancy, refuses to go home. What happens next shows what makes Uriah such an example of honor. In 2 Samuel 11:11 Uriah tells David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing."

Did you catch the significance of what Uriah did? Uriah not only honored his commander and leader, but he honored all those fighting with him by not going home. Uriah had too much respect for those he considered his peers to enjoy something he knew they couldn't. You and I sometimes have to give up what we feel entitled to in order to show honor to those around us.

I know you're thinking, "If you knew some of the people I know, you'd know that they don't deserve honor." Honor is shown even in the midst of what people don't deserve. Honor others anyway. Honor their time. Honor their lives. Honor their sacrifices.

### ***Honor Your Leader***

Growing up, my older brother, David, blazed the ministry and leadership trail before it was my time. David taught me a lot, but one of the most valuable things he taught me was how to show honor to the people who led me. Every now and then, I think back to where I've been and have to think that many of the blessings

I've been given over my life are because I was taught how to show honor to the people God has placed over me.

One of the most obvious examples of honoring a leader is in the exchange between Saul and David in 1 Samuel 24. Saul was the king of Israel at the time, but he disobeyed God tremendously. David was the one God determined was going to be the next king of Israel. Saul, consumed with pride and jealousy, tried unceasingly to kill David before David got his chance to be king. David had done nothing wrong, but Saul was still determined to kill him. David could have easily justified speaking badly of Saul or even going ahead, rushing ahead of God, and killing Saul on the spot. Instead though, David, having Saul cornered and in a vulnerable position, decided not to rise up against Saul. In fact, David refused to even say anything bad about his leader and in 1 Samuel 24:6 says, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed one of the Lord." Wow! That's honor. Saul did nothing to deserve it. God had placed Saul in his high position, and David recognized it. Even though David had every right to feel entitled to kill Saul since God had anointed David and told him his enemies would be delivered into his hands, he left entitlement behind to show honor to his leader.

Just like David, we have to be people who honor our leaders. We have to serve our leaders, not because our leaders always deserve honor or serving, but because it allows us the freedom to resist entitlement. Don't use honor as a manipulative tactic either. When you honor the person who leads you or who signs your check or who has the power to hire and fire you, don't do it to manipulate them. David didn't honor Saul in hopes of getting a fatter calf out of the deal. We honor our leaders out of recognition for who they are

and appreciation for the duty they have. The second you and I begin to show honor to our leader because we want something in return is the second our honor turns back into entitlement.

## MAKING THE SHIFT

How do we go from being people who feel entitled to people who are great at showing others honor? In order to be the next up to take the leadership reins, we're going to have to make the shift. In my experience, the people around us know when we're leading from a place of selfishness and false humility. When they see our entitled mindset, they'll be quick to cut us off and begin to do just enough to get by.

### *Know Your Leader*

As we learn to honor God, we have to begin making the shift in honoring our leader. We have to understand the people who do their best to lead us and the organization that we love and work for are only human. You see, many times we fail to respect people and honor people because we forget they're flawed human beings just like us. If we expect others to offer us grace, we must be willing to do the same, even if they're in leadership above us. Regardless of our relationships with our leaders—they will disappoint us. At times, they may fail to show us the honor that we feel we have earned. We'll be disappointed in our leaders from time to time for making the decision they made or for treating someone else in a way we didn't see fit. We have to honor them anyway.

Understand that your leader isn't perfect and understand that your job as a follower is to support them. The truth is, those leaders at high levels (the level you may be striving toward) bear heavy loads. Honor your leaders and support them. In Exodus 17, we get

a great picture of some followers supporting their leader. Moses commanded the people to go fight the Amalekites (yeah, I'm not sure how to say it either) while he held up his staff to God so they could win the fight. During the fight, Moses' arms started to get tired. Every time Moses' hands began to fall, the Amalekites excelled in the battle. So what did Aaron and Hur (the people with Moses at the time) do? They supported Moses' arms so that he could hold his hands up. That's a great picture of what supporting your leader should look like.

### *Know Yourself*

If we're going to make the shift from entitlement to honor, we're going to have to know our leader, but also know ourselves. Do you understand who you are? You are something only because of what Christ did for you. In fact, according to Romans 5:8, you were nothing but a sinner when the Savior of the world chose to honor you and die for your sin. Who are we, not to honor those around us?

## **SHIFT SHAPERS**

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To make the shift from entitlement to honor, you have to believe . . .

1. You are not entitled to rewards, only indebted to Christ.
2. Honoring God comes before honoring others.
3. Honor continues even when others don't deserve it.

**Honor God by honoring others. #NextUpBook**

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