

## **Character Trait for July – Honor**

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The Character Trait for July, 2014 in the City of Opelika is the word “HONOR.” Webster defines this word as a respectful regard, esteem or worship, as an outward mark of high esteem; and as a title used in addressing certain officials. If someone has “honor” they possess a good reputation and good quality of character, as judged by other people. As William Shakespeare once said, “Mine honor is my life; both grow in one. Take honor from me and my life is done.”

The word “honor” is used in several pledges, vows and awards. For instance, the Girl Scouts’ and Boy Scouts’ pledge both contain the phrase, “On my honor I will...” Both organizations strive to teach young people that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful to others, courteous, and kind – among other virtues.

The word “honor” is used in many marriage vows, alongside the word “love”, recognizing one of the hallmarks of a truly successful marriage depends upon respect, esteem and honesty.

The **Medal of Honor** is the United States of America's highest military honor, awarded for personal acts of valor above and beyond the call of duty. The medal is awarded by the President of the United States in the name of the U.S. Congress to U.S. military personnel only. (The City of Opelika has a Medal of Honor Recipient – Col. Robert Howard – who was the most decorated soldier in the Vietnam War, and a student at Opelika High School!) We also have another Retired Army Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Bennie Adkins, living in Opelika, who is up for this prestigious award as well for his bravery that went far and above the call of duty on the field of battle.

One does not have to use words, however, to portray honor to others. We can show it. For those old enough to remember it, one of the most memorable commercials that came out after 9-11, 2001, was one depicting the team of Budweiser Clydesdale horses on the outskirts of New York City, and upon seeing the city’s outline – and the vacancy where the Twin Towers once stood – the horses bowed their heads and one leg in honor of those who lost their lives on that unforgettable day. That commercial was not about making a profit for Budweiser; it was about paying honor and tribute.

Honor characterizes one of the foundational principles on which personal success is established. Living an honorable life is not something that just happens – it must be continually sought after, even though it sometimes takes courage to stand up for what you know to be right and honorable, because sometimes you will have to stand alone. But living a life of honor is always the right thing to do, even if no one else is looking. One of America’s Founding Fathers – and our third President – Thomas Jefferson said it best when he stated, “Nobody can acquire honor by doing what is wrong.”

For those of us who are Christians, we know that among the Ten Commandments, “Honor your father and mother...” is the first commandment that offers the promise “...that your days may be long...”.

In his article “Honor: the Importance of Character in Success” on the website *DebtFreeAdventure.com.*, Matt Jabs makes the following statements about HONOR:

- It is not glorified on our televisions as something to be desired, yet it is more to be desired than fame and riches.
- It is not often hailed as sacred in the halls of government, yet without it governments cannot succeed.
- It is not commonly praised among people of fame, yet without it their perceived “success” is often accompanied by unfulfillable desire and feelings of unhappiness and even bitterness.
- It is not often held as an imperative and foundational component of behavior in our universities, yet without honor the educated man winds up hollow and empty.
- It is not often a focus of training in our public schools, yet without a foundation of honor our children cannot perceive what behaviors are truly of value.

An honorable character will not find us... we have to find it. When you act and speak with honor and integrity, people will learn that you mean what you say, and they can count on you. And even when you tell them something that they don't want to hear, people will respect your honesty. A person's honor is something that cannot be bought, sold or traded – it is earned by someone who does not merely speak noble words, but lives by them.

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