Honor to Whom Honor

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A missionary was returning to America after a lifetime of service abroad. He shared the flight home with an actress who was met at the airport by throngs of people, flashing cameras, and bouquets of roses. When the crown thinned, the missionary stood alone with no one to greet him.

"Just once," he thought, "I’d like to be welcomed home like that.” Then the Lord said, "My child, you are not yet home.”

Most of the missionaries I know never seek glory or fame. They would, however, enjoy some word of appreciation for the language they mastered, the culture they learned, the birthpangs they experienced, or the daily burden they carried for the welfare of new churches.

Here are three reasons we should minister to our returning missionaries:

- **Ambassadors should be brought home with dignity and grace.** They have represented the Lord, and us, to dying people who now walk in newness of life. The Bible says we should honor those to whom honor is due.

- **Missionaries are members of our family.** Jesus promised that those who left mothers and fathers would receive them a hundredfold. The church, as the family of God, is privileged to become the mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters of our missionaries. They especially need this familial relationship as they experience the rigors of reverse culture shock.

- **Our children are watching.** They notice how we care for returning missionaries and they are wise enough to equate that care with the value we place on these servants. What they observe may help determine whether or not they will seriously consider serving the Lord overseas.

To our returning missionaries we say, “Thank you. God bless you. Well done.” The final Homecoming, however, still lies ahead.