

“Honor Your Mother”

Mother's Day and Father's Day. These are special days in our country to honor the people that God wants us to honor all year round. In fact, the Fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12) telling us to honor and obey our parents is the first commandment with a promised blessing (Eph. 6:1-3). Below are a few thoughts about this commandment followed by some practical suggestions. Read them as a family and discuss how you can apply them in the days ahead. The word “honor” means “high public esteem; fame; glory; to earn a position of honor.” The Hebrew word meant “heavy.” Here it means to regard our parents as worthy of a weight of respect. We should be those that place upon them great worth & value. This word is used in the Old Testament to mean: **a) Prize them highly** (Prov. 4:8); **b) Care for them and show affection** (Ps. 91:15); **c) Show them respect, reverence, and deference** (Lev. 19:3). One of the reasons the nation of Israel went into exile was they failed to keep this command (Ezek 22:7, 15). The Old Testament penalty for failure to keep this command was: **a) Death** (Ex. 21:15-17; Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20; Dt. 21:18-21); or **b) Exile** (Ezek. 22:7, 15)

The Heidelberg Catechism explains the 5th Commandment: **“That I show honor, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all who are set in authority over me; that I submit myself with respectful obedience to all their careful instruction and discipline; and that I also bear patiently their failures, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.”** The terms “Mother & Father” were not only terms for physical parents, but were representative of all authority (Gen. 45:8 – Joseph as father of Pharaoh; Judges 5:7 – Deborah as mother of Israel; 2 Kings 2:12; 13:14 – Elijah as father of Elisha). The command is thus UNIVERSAL and applies to anyone in authority (governors, magistrates, teachers, pastors, counselors, anyone that surpasses us in wisdom and years!

The New Testament reinforces this concept of submission to and honor of authority (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 2:13-17). In fact, it talks about God's judgment on those that disobey and/or dishonor authority (Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2:9-10; Jude 8). **How do we practically demonstrate respect & honor toward our parents and others in authority?**

1. Publicly display respect (heart attitude & obvious action)
 - a. **Words** (opposite of disrespect – mocking; speaking unkindly about them; publicly addressing them as something less than my authority). Never speak negatively of them to people—build them up! Don't complain about what our parents won't let us do!
 - b. **Eyes**. Look in their eyes when we speak to them. Honor them by giving them all our attention. Don't act like a valley girl (roll our eyes back in our head, open our mouth & let air come out).
 - c. **Ears** (Prov. 1:8; 6:20-23). Have my parents words go deep into my soul so they go with me everywhere I go (cf. Dt. 6). Their words provide LIFE, not bondage.
 - d. **Posture** (Lev. 19:32 – “Rise up before the gray headed”). Our culture used to do this when an adult/teacher/elderly person walked into the room. We do it for judges, why not other people in authority? Stand tall & let the person know you are honored to be in their presence.
2. Submit to parental **authority** (obedience – Eph. 6; Col. 3). The only limitations to this would be: a) If they are asking you to disobey clear commands of Scripture; or b) If you are married. At that point you are not under obligation to obey everything they say but you are still to honor them.
3. Submit to their **discipline** (Heb. 12:9). Receive it with gladness because it is for our own good. When you rebuke a wise man he loves you for it (Prov. 9:8).
4. **Take care of them** when they get older (Mt. 15; Mk. 7; 1 Tim. 5:1-16). The Lord Jesus took care of His mother prior to His death (John 19:26-27). We should take care of our elderly parents! Prov. 23:22 tells us not to despise our mother when she is old (see also Mt. 15:3-6). A recent survey said that barely 50% of American people believe it is the children's responsibility to look after their parents! How sad! We murder millions of babies when they are in the womb because they are “unwanted pregnancies,” what will keep this same generation from killing off the unwanted old people? Christians should lead the way in sacrificing for their elderly relatives! We should be spending much of our time, energy & finances in a sacrificial way to HONOR those who sacrificed so much for us in our early years!
5. Submit to **ALL** authority (Government, teachers, church elders, older people – Rom. 13; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 2).
6. Read the book, **“The Tribute,”** by Dennis Rainey. Write a tribute to your mother & father! Let them know how much you appreciate the positive things they did to influence your life. Don't wait until their funeral to say how great they are.

Thoughts on Parents that hurt you:

- Recognize that God is sovereign. He gave your parents to you & you to your parents for a reason (Gen. 50:20 – what others may intend for evil God can turn around & use for good)
- Recognize that your parents are human -- they were hurt; they have needs; they have feelings.
- Release the negative emotions (Eph. 4:31) and replace those emotions with positive ones (Eph. 4:32).
- Recognize your responsibility for your behavior (don't make excuses for your behavior toward parents by always being a VICTIM).
- WRite a letter thanking them for the positive things; asking forgiveness for negative things you did.
- Results belong to God. They may not forgive; they may not confess; they may not ask for your forgiveness, but you will know you have done what you can.

Let's go beyond Mother's Day and Father's Day. Let's honor people in authority every day of the year!

Discussion Questions:

1. What do people give honor to in our culture today? How do they do it? Why do they do it?
2. Why does the Hebrew word “heavy” mean “honor”? How should that apply to the way we relate to our mother (parents)?
3. How might you **dishonor** your mother (parents) in the following ways? List as many as you can. Role play if you have time:
 - a. Words
 - b. Eyes
 - c. Ears
 - d. Posture
4. How might you **honor** your mother (parents) in the following ways? List as many as you can. Role play if you have time:
 - a. Words
 - b. Eyes
 - c. Ears
 - d. Posture
5. How might honoring or dishonoring our parents (or others in authority) be a barometer of our relationship with God? (See Romans 13; Eph. 6:1-3; etc.)
6. When a person is an adult, how do they honor their parent(s) even when they don't obey them?
7. Why do you think that only 50% of Americans believe it is the children's responsibility to take care of their elderly parents? What does the Bible say about this issue?
8. Have you consistently honored your mother (parents)? If not, what should you do about it today? What needs to change for you to begin consistently honoring them? What will have to change in your lifestyle in order for that to happen?
9. Bonus Question: What is the difference between “respect” and “honor”?