

## Honour Your Father And Your Mother

Exodus 20:12: 'Honour your father and mother so that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you'.

Deuteronomy 5:16: 'Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land which the Lord your God gives you'.

Ephesians 6:1 to 3: 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is just and right. Honour your father and your mother; this is the first commandment with a promise so that all may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth'.

The fifth of the Ten Commandments tells us to honour our parents. This commandment is mentioned several times in the scriptures in various ways. In the New Testament we are commanded to honour and obey our parents. This commandment is the only one with a promise, indicating the importance God places on the relationship between parents and children. If we want all to be well with our lives, then we must honour our parents. If we do not do that, then all will not be well with us and we cannot expect to live a long life. To look at the fullness of what God is saying here, we are to more than just honour our parents, we are to obey them, respect them, esteem them, consider them precious, treat them with courtesy, take care of them especially in old age or if they are ill, and accept them as God's authority over us. God has parents standing in on His behalf on earth as far as children are concerned because they represent Him on earth. By honouring our parents, we are honouring God and the result is a long life. The relationship between God, parents and their children is ordained and designed by God and this God-given concept is sometimes treated with little importance, or forgotten in our modern world and the consequence of this is causing untold suffering for families and society as a whole. Honouring is more than just obeying. Obeying is doing what has been asked of us; honouring is the attitude with which we obey. For example, if a child is asked not to stand on the seat at church and he sits willingly, he is honouring and obeying his parent. However, if the child sits and sulks, he is obeying but not honouring.

'Each of you shall respect his mother and his father' (Leviticus 19:3). Honouring our parents pleases God, and there is no time limit on that. It does not cease when we are older. We must still honour our parents even when we are adults and they are aged. Honouring our unsaved parents and showing them love and respect could be God's way of bringing them to salvation, so we must do all we can to make their lives liveable. We are to treat them with respect. The respect we show our parents will be observed by our children, thus ensuring the respect will continue on to us when we are old. Committing elderly parents to a nursing home then forgetting them is not honouring them. Jesus said: "Honour your father and your mother and he who curses, speaks evil of, abuses or mistreats his father or mother, let him surely die. But you say a man is exempt if he says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might have received from me is a gift to God,' then you are no longer allowing him to do anything for his mother and father; letting him off from the responsibility of caring for his parents, thus you are nullifying the authority of the Word of God through your incorrect tradition, which you in turn, teach to your children" (Mark 7:10 to 13). 'If a widow has children or grandchildren, see to it that these are first made to understand that it is their religious duty; their obligation to those at home, and make return to their parents or grandparents for all their care, for this is acceptable in the sight of God (1 Timothy 5:4).

'Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death ... whoever curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death' (Exodus 21:15 & 17). 'Everyone who curses his father or mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or mother; his blood guilt is upon him' (Leviticus 20:9). We are never, ever to curse our parents because they are God's representatives. If children curse, strike, insult or neglect their parents, then they are in effect cursing and insulting God, and that is blasphemy, and with that comes death. Shouting at, abusing, ridiculing and generally treating them with disdain is not honouring them and it is sin.

Even if our parents have been terrible, violent, abusive parents who did not obey God themselves, we must still honour them as our parents. We do not have to agree with them but we must honour them. We must forgive them and allow God to be their Judge, and they will be judged according to how they have treated their children, who are scripturally, God-given gifts. 'Behold, children are a gift from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb a reward' (Psalm 127:3). Just as God will judge parents for the way they treated their children, so the children will be judged according to the way they treat their parents. The children of bad parents need to forgive their parents and let God deal with them. There are few things worse than adult children reminding

their parents of the mistakes they made, years later, especially if God has forgiven the parents at salvation. That behaviour is not honouring them. No matter how unkind parents have been to their children, we must forgive and honour them if we want a long life and for all to be well with us (Ephesians 6:2 & 3). If we do not honour our parents, all will not be well with us from God.

The duty to one's parents stands second to one's duty to God. First we must honour God, then we must honour those whom He has put in charge over us. The only time we can disobey our parents, is when we are asked to do something that contravenes God's will or His Word; even then however, we must still honour them, just not obey that request. Jesus said we must never put our parents before Him. 'He who loves father, mother, son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me' (Matthew 10:37). 'If anyone comes to Me and does not disregard (that is to disregard them in comparison with their attitude towards the Lord) his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and his own life; cannot be My disciple' (Luke 14:26). We honour our parents, without disobeying God's Word. One example would be if our parents asked us to buy them a packet of cigarettes. Our conviction as Christians, who know smoking is sin, should make us feel it would be wrong to buy cigarettes, so we could respectfully tell them our feelings and decline to purchase such a poisonous product.

'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). According to the scriptures, it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children about the Lord and His commandments (Deuteronomy 4:10; 6:7; 11:19). The Lord teaches and instructs adults, most of whom become parents, then onwards from that, the role of parenting is to train our children in the ways of the Lord, but kindly, not provoking them to anger or discouraging them (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). By teaching our children the ways of God, in turn, when they are parents, they will teach their children about God, and so the generations should be blessed.

Some people may ask if honouring applies to grandparents, step-parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, parents-in-law or spiritual parents. Scripturally, yes it does. There are many accounts throughout the scriptures that show us that non-biological parents have the same place in our lives as natural parents do. Here are some examples ... Honouring grandparents: 'I (Paul) am calling up memories of your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am persuaded, dwells in you also' (2 Timothy 1:5).

Honouring step-parents: 'When Joseph and Mary saw Him (Jesus), they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Child, why have You treated us like this? Here Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." And He said to them, "How is it that you had to look for Me? Did you not see that it is necessary for Me to be in My Father's house and occupied with My Father's business?" But they did not comprehend what He was saying to them. And Jesus went down with them and came to Nazareth and was habitually obedient to them' (Luke 2:48 to 51). Joseph was the stepfather of Jesus, and He was always obedient to him.

Honouring foster parents: 'By the cross of Jesus stood His mother ... So Jesus, seeing His mother there, and (John) the disciple whom He loved standing near, said to His mother, "Dear woman, see, here is your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "See, here is your mother!" And from that hour, (John) the disciple took Mary into his own home' (John 19:25 to 27). John was just a teenage boy when Jesus died, so Mary would have become his foster mother.

Honouring adoptive parents: 'Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter (Esther was Mordecai's younger cousin) for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was beautiful, and when her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter ... Esther had not made known her nationality or her kindred, for Mordecai had charged her not to do so ... On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, to Queen Esther. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her ... And the king took off his signet ring that he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, gave written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim' (Esther 2:7 to 9:29). Esther obeyed her adoptive father Mordecai, then placed him in a high position of honour.

Honouring spiritual parents: 'Timothy, my true son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). 'So you my son, be strong in the grace that is found only in Jesus' (2 Timothy 2:1). 'At my first trial no one acted in my defence or stood with me, but all forsook me. When you come, bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, also the books, especially the parchments. Do hasten and try your best to come to me before winter (2 Timothy 4:13, 16 &

21). Timothy was Paul's spiritual son and the only one who stood by Paul at his trial when Nero sentenced him to death. It was Timothy who visited Paul in prison, brought him warm clothing, food and books. This is a powerful image of a spiritual son honouring and caring for his father in the faith.

Honouring our in-laws. The words 'in-law' means in the law, or according to the law. In the Old Testament a son-in-law or daughter-in-law were accepted as fully as the biological child they were married to. Joseph was listed as the son of Jacob and the son of Heli. He couldn't have two fathers, so one was his father-in-law. 'Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus the Messiah' (Matthew 1:16). 'Jesus Himself, when He began His ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the Son, as was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli' (Luke 3:23). Heli was Mary's father; Joseph's father-in-law.

Honouring the in-laws. Moses and Ruth give us two beautiful examples of adult in-law children, loving and honouring their parents-in-law. Here is a very brief account of Moses and Jethro's story. Jethro was a Midianite priest, a righteous man who believed in God, and was a descendant of Abraham and his second wife Keturah (Genesis 25:2). Moses contentedly took care of the sheep owned by Jethro, his father-in-law.

Starting at Exodus 2:21 ... 'Moses was content to dwell with the man; and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter ... Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian (Exodus 3:1) ... Moses went away and returning to Jethro his father-in-law, said to him, "Let me go back, I pray you, to my family in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace" (Exodus 4:18) ... Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. Next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you do for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?"

Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God and His laws."

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out both yourself and this people with you, for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it all by yourself. Listen now to me; I will counsel you, and God will be with you. You shall represent the people before God, bringing their cases to Him, teaching them the decrees and laws, showing them the way they must walk and the work they must do. You shall choose able men from all the people; God-fearing men of truth who hate unjust gain, and place them over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, to be their rulers. Let them judge the people at all times; every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge. It will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you will do this, and God so commands you, you will be able to endure the burden, and all these people also will go to their tents in peace."

Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people; rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. They judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but every small matter they decided themselves. Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land' (Exodus 18:12 to 27).

Ruth was a Moabitess who had been married to a Jewish man named Mahlon, who had died before they had a child. Ruth was a descendant of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Sometime during their marriage, Ruth had accepted the Lord of the Jews as her God instead of the false gods the Moabites believed in. When her mother-in-law Naomi wanted to return to Israel, Ruth went with her, worked hard and married a cousin of Mahlon's named Boaz, who promised to take care of Naomi when she became elderly. Naomi called Ruth, 'My daughter'. Boaz and Ruth had a son Obed, who became the grandfather of King David and an ancestor of Jesus. Ruth did more than just honour her mother-in-law; she left her country of Moab and her own family to be with Naomi, and when she married Boaz then had her son Obed, she gave the baby to Naomi to raise.

Starting from Ruth 1:7 ... 'Naomi left the place where she was, her two daughters-in-law with her, and they started on the way back to Judah. Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find a home, each in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them and they wept aloud. Orpah and Ruth said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband tonight and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; it is far more bitter for me than for you that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me."

Then they wept aloud again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. Naomi said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." Ruth said, "Urge me not to leave you or to turn back from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts me from you" ...

So Naomi returned to Judah and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest ...

Boaz said to Ruth, "I have been made fully aware of all you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and mother and the land of your birth and have come to a people unknown to you before. The Lord recompense you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under Whose wings you have come to take refuge!" ...

So Ruth went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had told her ... and when she came home, her mother-in-law said, "How have you fared, my daughter?"

And Ruth told her all that Boaz had done for her ... Then said Naomi, "Sit still, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out; for Boaz will not rest until he finishes the matter today" ...

Boaz said, "Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife to restore the name of the dead to his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his birthplace" ... So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord caused her to conceive, and she bore a son. And the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, Who has not left you this day without a close kinsman, and may his name be famous in Israel. And may he be to you a restorer of life and a supporter in your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."

Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom and became his nurse. And her neighbouring women gave him a name, saying, "A son is born to Naomi". They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David, the ancestor of Jesus'.

We can see in the Bible, loving and honouring our parents both biological and unrelated is scriptural and brings with it blessing and honour from the Lord, and all will be well with us.

Amen and God bless you.

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