

What does Honor mean in a family?

God tells every one of us to “Honor your father and mother.” How can children (of all ages) fulfill this command? What do children need (especially from their father and mother) to keep this commandment? Where is God’s grace (unconditional love) in the midst of the giving and the keeping of this commandment?

November 15, 2009



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

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’—this is the first commandment with a promise: ‘so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Reflections

This may sound like the intro to a silly joke, but years ago I had an occasion to sit around with a small group of ordained clergy; a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a couple of Baptists, a Catholic Priest and a Rabbi. We were discussing teaching children about faith; prayer in particular. We were students in a class together and our discussion flowed far and wide. We delved into Fowler’s notions of faith development, Kohlberg’s understanding of developing moral judgment and Gilligan’s feminist corrective. All pretty theoretical and heady stuff. For the longest time the Rabbi just sat there saying nothing. I guess after he’d had enough, he cut in and added, “Well, I think you guys have it all wrong. As Rabbi, it is not my job to teach my congregation’s children to pray. I learned to pray standing next to my father every morning and every night. Now, if a young couple in my congregation doesn’t know how to raise up a faithful Jew, then I teach those parents.” The Rabbi from Rodef Shalom had nailed it.

Words rising up from a community which has survived in the midst of numerous cultures hostile to its faith just might be words of wisdom for those of us seeking to thrive within this one. We may assume we live in unusual times, that “doing” marriage and family are tougher now than ever before. During my three week intro (which

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begins this Wednesday evening) to a Biblical understanding of marriage and family I hope to dispel that myth. Every generation has its challenges.

In the early 1500’s, Martin Luther, like St. Augustine before him, divided the Ten Commandments into two lists. The first three detailed our relationship under God. The second list,

beginning with the fourth commandment, asserted our ethical responsibilities toward others. It is not by chance the second list begins, **“Honor your father and your mother.”** Luther would write, *“If we want qualified and capable men [sic] for both civil and spiritual leadership, we must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and mankind [sic]. We must not think only of amassing money and property for them. But he has given and entrusted children to us with the command that we train them according to His will; otherwise God would have no need of father and mother.”*

If we assume there was some grand time in our past when family life functioned as an idyllic community, then we have much to fear. Glancing backwards through human history, we can see a certain consistency as well as a continuing need to be reminded of God’s plan for marriage and family life. **Honor your father and your mother.** Together let us explore what this can mean in our day.

Pastor Brian Hughes

Readings

Sunday, November 15

Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-4

Not everyone is a parent, but everyone is a child. Why does it mean to honor one's parents?

Monday, November 15

Exodus 20:1-12

Examine what commands precede the commandment to honor your father and mother. What does this tell you about how God values family?

Tuesday, November 17

Ephesians 5:22-33

Today's reading precedes one of our sermon texts this week. Why would the writer instruct husbands and wives about honoring one another prior to teaching about how children should honor their parents? In what direction does this guide your attitude and behavior?

Wednesday, November 18

Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:20-21

How can parents bring up their children "in the training and instruction of the Lord?" What results if they do not? How will you become equipped to carry this out?

Thursday, November 19

Deut. 6:6; Deut. 4:9

In what ways does your life reflect, or not reflect, a picture of honor within your family? What causes you to struggle?

Friday, November 20

Prov. 23:22 ; Lev. 19:32

As we become adults, how do we continue to honor our parents? If your parents are no longer living, how can Christ guide your heart to honor them?

Saturday, November 21

1 Tim. 5:1-4

What does this scripture teach us about honoring others based on what we first learn in the context of Christian family? How will you apply this in relationships you experience today?

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.