

RESPECT FOR FAMILY HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

I. Introduction

- A. My Parents – 93 yrs old – 60+ years in same house > independent living > assisted living.
 - 1. Remember when father asked me to help buy car, thinking – “what have you done with my dad?!”
 - 2. Paula and I recently read a book addressing how to have a conversation with aging parents
- B. Fascinating examples of families (parent / child dynamics) in Bible
 - 1. Healthy families
 - a) Moses / Zipporah (Exod 2:15b-22; 4:24-26; 18:1-27)
 - b) Manoah and his wife (Judges 13)
 - c) Hannah / Elkanah (1 Sam 1:1-2:11)
 - 2. Families in disarray – most involve *sibling rivalry!*
 - a) Cain / Abel (Gen 4:1-16)
 - b) Noah’s family (Gen 9:20-27)
 - c) Abraham / Sarah / Hagar (Gen 16:1-16; 21:1-21)
 - d) Lot’s family (Gen 19)
 - e) Judah / Tamar (Gen 38)
 - f) Moses / Aaron / Miriam (Num 12:1-16)
 - g) Gideon and Abimelech (Judges 9)
 - h) Jephthah’s family (Judges 11)
 - i) Eli’s sons (1 Sam 2:12-36; 5:10-12)
 - j) Samuel’s sons (1 Sam 8:1-6)
 - k) David’s family (2 Sam 13-18)
 - 3. Absalom’s dismissal of his father David – “the old man too old...no longer looks regal!”
 - 4. Prodigal son – bad style to ask for inheritance “pre-death of father!”
 - 5. Jesus (comes from a “blended” family with two “fathers”!). Note the seeming “mixed messages” he sends:
 - a) Stays behind in temple – disobeying parents! When they arrive – he goes “obediently.”
 - b) Potential disciple – “let me first go bury parent” Jesus – “let dead bury dead!”
 - c) Interaction with the rich young ruler – cites “Honor” (last) as one of commandments!
 - d) Jesus heals a son
 - (1) For widowed mother
 - (2) For father
 - e) On cross – entrusts mother to beloved disciple
 - f) Criticizes the *abuse* of Commandment #5 – Mark 7:9-13 (*qorban*). Mishna: anything designated *qorban* (temple proceeds) could not later be used for anything else (*Nedarim* III.6; IX). Not widely practiced until later times.

II. What does Honor Mean / “Look like”?

- A. Modern complexities of parent – child relationship

1. Commandment #5 addressing adult children! (Rest of Decalogue addressed to adults). Thus – misunderstand commandment if think to keep young children in line, to keep them tractable, dutiful, and respectful of their elders. Societal context – an extended family would have 3-4 generations under one roof.
 - a) Ancient Israel – roles depending on life stage
 - (1) “Child” – neither nuisance nor emotional luxury; part of productive team
 - (2) Child receive selfhood / identity from family (“Levi, son of Asher”)
 - (3) Young males – generate work; females – work + produce more workers!
 - (4) Agrarian society – most egalitarian (consistently talk of “father and mother!”).
 - *Mothers and Fathers treated as equals! (Though rest of society may be male dominated, family place where have equality in male / female interaction)
 - b) Chief responsibility of parents: *transmission of faith to children* (Deut 4:9; 6:7, 20-25).
 - *Family a place where children learned who they were and what God expected them to do. Father’s authorized role was family storyteller; child’s was listener (Smedes, 69).
 - c) Deuteronomy – *primary* function / role of parents – pass on faith to children! Tell the story of God’s love and grace...and proper response to that gracious mercy!
 - (1) Proverbs – parents essential task to provide instruction – includes learning discipline, ethics, not simply mastering data but prioritizing, evaluating, synthesizing!
2. One of most effective (and least used) means of instruction – Ps 78!
 - a) *Don’t do as we’ve done!!
 - b) In an ideal world – parents acknowledge mistakes, errors, shortcomings!
 - c) In an ideal world – parents avoid “because I said so” for rationale – “let me tell you what God has done for us!”

B. Honor due Parents

1. “Honor:” respect and general submission to parents’ authority (broader than “obey” [obedience may diminish with age; honor carries beyond age of dependency]).
 - a) Nuance of term (*kabbed*): consider important, weighty; exalt. **To take parents seriously. *Love is a natural impulse; honor is a moral choice.*
 - b) Lev 19:3: “revere father and mother.” (Otherwise reserved for God). Treat with high regard...context for Paul’s Ephesians 6 – “obey...in the Lord!” (Let relationship with God dominate thought process as deal with parents)
 - c) With aging process – issue not obedience / disobedience, but whether children are considerate or despise. *Proverbs faces the reality that older members **can** become a burden. Children need to provide for aging parents.
2. Children, raised, nurtured, cared for, and instructed by parents...as adults at some point find themselves doing those things **for** their parents.
 - a) Honoring Parents involves more than simply good manners and no “back-talk.”
 - b) Issue of the responsibility of the younger generation to those older, “non-productive” members. Clearly they were not to be ignored nor discarded, but included within the family and provided for. Such behavior results in a stable, secure society. (Model for contemporary families!)
3. When that done – for “child” to reject / scorn = “abuse” of one’s parents! Can occur in ancient Israel:
 - a) Through cursing (cursing = treat as of no consequence / value; insult, belittle, contempt): Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9.
 - b) Through striking: Exod 21:15 (young, truculent teenager); cf. Prov 19:26.

c) Through rebellion: Deut 21:18-21

III. What does Honor look like in daily life?

- A. Joseph and family – cares for family *because of father*. Cares for / provides in Egypt...because of father! (Why brothers concerned when father dies!)
- B. Jonathan and Saul. Backdrop – Jonathan’s best friend David is considered “public enemy #1” by his father!
 - 1. *Honor not synonymous with obedience!
 - 2. Jonathan disobeys father – consistently protects David and advocates on his behalf!
 - 3. Dies next to father on battlefield as loyal son!
- C. Ruth and (mother-in-law) Naomi
 - 1. Tragic life for Naomi – loss of husband and sons
 - 2. Send daughters-in-law home
 - a) Orpah obedient
 - b) Ruth – disobeys! (Does again at threshing floor when tweaks Naomi’s instructions); often challenging for Ruth – “came back with nothing!”
 - c) *Honor not synonymous with obedience!
 - d) Conclusion – “Ruth more valuable than 10 sons!”

IV. Practical Applications / Implications for us

- A. Parental authority
 - 1. Derived from the family (family = group of individuals bound together in covenant of care for one another).
 - 2. Focused on faith and morality. Parent teacher of what right and true about life. Parent true to calling when teaches a child what worth living and dying for! Parental authority lost not when parent **wrong**, but when parent fails to provide anything! Parents live in such a way children see honor role modeled.
 - 3. Goal of parental authority: the child’s freedom. Teaches child how to live freely and critically within structures of society.
- B. The “Child’s” Response
 - 1. Younger children (at home): respect, assistance
 - 2. For grown children: continued concern for parent’s physical, financial, and emotional well-being. Commandment a call to not denigrate life and worth of human beings who have lost “commercial” worth, especially those on whom one’s own life depended. Problem with our age: we no longer value age, experience, wisdom.
 - 3. *We honor even dishonorable parents, *not because of what they have done but because of who our God is*. “Honor:” treat them the way we would like (have liked) to be treated! Not return evil for evil. Life together in a community must be enriched by care for one another even when that care a nuisance.
 - 4. Live by Golden Rule