

Ten Commandments -- #5 Honouring My Parents

T	Honour your father	Honor all God-given
e	and mother that you	authority starting with
n	may have a long	your mother and
5	good life.	father.

Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God will give you.
(Exodus 20:12 NLT)

Of all the things God tell us to do, this honouring of our parents is the one commandment to which God also attaches a promise – we will live a long and full life. Who of us doesn't want that? Yet, what does honouring our parents have to do with the quality of our life? For some of us our parents were loving and caring. For others, just the opposite. If our parents were harsh or abusive, how are we to honour them?

God reveals Himself to us as Father through Jesus His son. Jesus referred to God as Father, as Abba (Daddy) and through his obedience and loving trust we see how children and parents are meant to relate to each other. Jesus respected, consulted, and obeyed His father in everything he did.

But I do nothing without consulting the Father. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely just, because it is according to the will of God who sent me; it is not merely my own. (John 5:30 NLT)

Honouring our parents involves different things at different stages in our lives. When we are young kids we need to obey our parents in order to stay safe and to learn healthy ways to interact in our world. During teenage years we begin to develop our own independence and consult with them, respect them and watch their lives as models. As adults we interact with our parents and as they grow older and decline we take on more and more responsibility for their care.

God gives us numerous instructions on how we are to listen and learn from our parents. Even if they have many faults they have still learned much about life. As young people we have much to learn about life and limits through learning to obey and respect the guidance and decisions of our parents. Where else do we learn self-discipline and to follow God's discipline if we've not responded to discipline from our parents and allowed it to shape us?

Since we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father and live forever?
(Hebrews 12:9 NLT)

Where else do we learn how to live by principles before we totally understand why unless we learn to simply follow our parents' commands. For example, our parents teach us to not put our fingers in electrical sockets. As little ones we

don't understand why but we do well to follow them in that advice even if they don't teach us well in other areas.

Listen, my child, to what your father teaches you. Don't neglect your mother's teaching. What you learn from them will crown you with grace and clothe you with honor. (Proverbs 1:8,9 NLT)

Listen to your father, who gave you life, and don't despise your mother's experience when she is old.
(Proverbs 23:22 NLT)

No parent is perfect and some are less perfect than others. However, there are no exceptions noted in the many verses given for parents that are difficult to get along with. To the contrary, we are clearly warned against being disrespectful to them. **If you curse your father or mother, the lamp of your life will be snuffed out. Children who mistreat their father or chase away their mother are a public disgrace and an embarrassment.**
(Proverbs 20:20, 19:26 NLT)

Our first decision, then, is simply to honour our parents and not curse them. The next lesson may well be how to do that when they are strugglers themselves. We may need to look for the gold among acres of rocks and dirt but we can identify some gifts in every person. They too are made in the image of God and created for good work by God. (Ephesians 2:10) However flawed their methods, we need to see the good intentions and desires our parents had for us. We may need to learn to empathize with mental illness in our parents or their own brokenness from abuse they suffered, even though they passed more of that on to us. We certainly need to learn to walk in forgiveness and acceptance of our parents even as we establish some healthy boundaries if they are still walking in unhealthy life practices.

How do we do all that if they hurt us badly and let us down, abandoned or rejected us? We have to ground ourselves in the love of God. We have to find our identity in God and who He says we are. We have to be settled in our relationship with God, being loved and valued unconditionally. We have to receive healing and forgiveness and allow God to rebuild us from the inside out. Out of that solid relationship we are then commanded to love and value others unconditionally. As we have been loved we are to love. That includes our parents.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways do I show love and respect for my parents?
2. In what ways do I live with unforgiveness and resentment? How do I need healing?
3. What can I do this week to honour my parents, living or dead?