

3

Honor Parents



QUESTION 1:

What's your favorite memory with one of your parents?

THE POINT

Honor for parents is seen
in our words and actions.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

My mom and dad made it abundantly clear when I was growing up that if I misbehaved at school, there would be consequences at home. My dad, especially, cut no slack when it came to breaking the rules at school or anywhere else. In fact, my father “ruined” many a Saturday night during my youth: as I went out the front door, he’d say, “When you are out there tonight, remember that your last name is Evans.” Obviously, I knew my name; he didn’t need to remind me. But he was reminding me my name represented something bigger than just me. Our

family’s name stood for honesty, integrity, morality, and dignity in the community. In short, it represented a commitment to Christian living, and my dad didn’t want me to do anything to jeopardize the testimony of that name.

That reminder always stayed in my mind as I made youthful choices. I sought to honor my dad and the value he taught me to put in our name. I wanted to honor the name he had given to me.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

EXODUS 20:12

¹² Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

What is “honor”? The Greek word for honor means “to value highly, to hold in highest regard.” This holds true at any age. There may be disagreement regarding the age when children are no longer required to obey their parents, but children never reach an age when they don’t owe their parents honor.

God made it unequivocally clear that honor and respect are critical elements in every home. God is serious about honoring parents because God understands the whole picture. He knows it is not simply about having a good day or a peaceful home; honor is tied to advancing His kingdom on earth.

These days it seems customary to blame your problems and the way you behave on your parents. It reminds me of the two brothers who went through a counseling session together. They had grown up in a home with

an alcoholic father. One of the brothers had also become an alcoholic, but the other drank no alcohol at all. When asked to explain their behavior, they said in unison, “Well, what else could you expect with a father like mine?”

Both men told the truth: One followed in his father’s destructive footsteps, even though he probably had professed he never would do so, but the other stuck to his resolve not to end up like their dad. The story is a reminder that parents sometimes get blamed for far too much—and receive praise for far too little.

QUESTION 2:

What are some ways we show honor to our parents?

So how can we show honor? Let me suggest three categories of honor:

- 1. Emotional Honor.** We honor our parents by spending time with them. Some parents are in retirement homes and care centers and are lacking honor from their grown children. Someone may say, "But you don't know about my mother. She was a terrible mother," or "My father was bad news." No matter what, he or she is still your parent, and the command to honor our parents comes from God Himself.
- 2. Verbal Honor.** When I went home, I didn't say to my father, "Hey, Art. How's it going?" It was "Yes, sir" and "No, sir." Whether a parent is right or wrong, we are still to speak with respect. As Paul told Timothy, "Don't rebuke an older man, but exhort

him as a father" (1 Tim. 5:1). We are also to speak about our parents with honor.

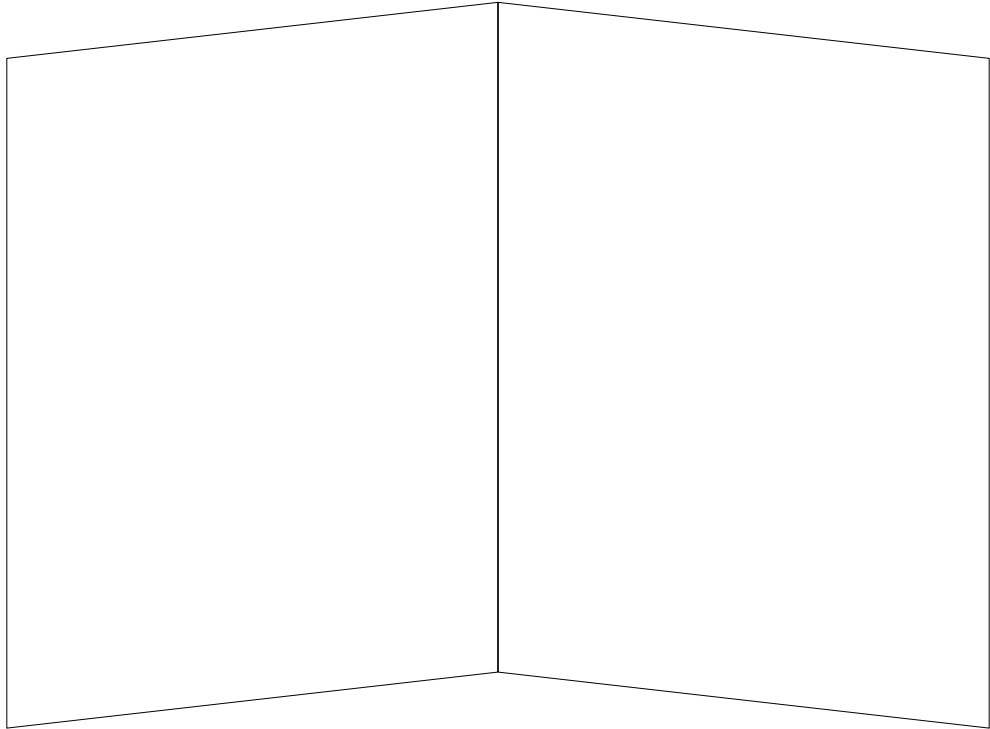
- 3. Financial Honor.** In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul wrote, "If anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Then in verse 16, Paul wrote: "If any believing woman has widows in her family, let her help them. Let the church not be burdened." Honoring our parents means we have a financial responsibility for them when they can no longer take care of themselves. It means seeing to their well-being when they need our assistance.

2 SAMUEL 15:7-12

⁷ When four years had passed, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I made to the LORD. ⁸ For your servant made a vow when I lived in Geshur of Aram, saying: If the LORD really brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron." ⁹ "Go in peace," the king said to him. So he went to Hebron. ¹⁰ Then Absalom sent agents throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: "When you hear the sound of the ram's horn, you are to say, 'Absalom has become king in Hebron!'" ¹¹ Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom. They had been invited and were going innocently, for they did not know the whole situation. ¹² While he was offering the sacrifices, Absalom sent for David's adviser Ahithophel the Gilonite, from his city of Giloh. So the conspiracy grew strong, and the people supporting Absalom continued to increase.

PARENTS' DAY

*Every day ought to be Parents' Day as we honor God by honoring our mothers and fathers.
In the space below, compose a brief greeting card for this occasion.*



*“Honor your father and mother,
which is the first commandment with a promise.”*

EPHESIANS 6:2

QUESTION 3:***What are ways our culture shows dishonor to parents?***

To further understand what it means to honor parents, we're going to look at a particularly tragic narrative in Scripture. We will examine the life and character of David's son Absalom because he serves as an example of what not to do.

Absalom was David's third son. He was born to David through his fourth wife, Maacah of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3). This marriage most likely was rooted in the pursuit of political gain rather than attraction or love. After all, Maacah was the daughter of King Talmai, ruler of a small Aramean city-state. In fact, almost all of David's marriages were created for the sake of political dominance. No doubt this created an atmosphere of jealousy and infighting among his family members.

David was far from a perfect husband. Nor was he an upstanding father. David's sins and imperfections, however, did not excuse

Absalom's behavior. Absalom was still responsible for honoring David as both his father and king. Instead, Absalom sought to honor himself at the expense of his father. After returning from his exile after killing his half-brother Amnon, Absalom sought to take the place of his father as king of Israel. He was popular and well liked, but with deceptive words and a total lack of integrity, Absalom attempted to win the hearts and loyalty of the people.

We see here that Absalom dishonored his father with a lie: he told his father he was going to Hebron to worship. Indeed, Absalom did go through the motions of worship by offering sacrifices, but his true intent was to be in a safe place where he could spread the message that he had become king.

We can't honor our parents when there's a lack of integrity in how we talk to them or about them. Absalom provided an example, showing us the consequences when we fail to show honor. Absalom's dishonoring actions brought great adversity home to the nation of Israel—and death to himself.

2 SAMUEL 15:13-14

¹³ Then an informer came to David and reported, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." ¹⁴ David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, "Get up. We have to flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! Leave quickly, or he will overtake us quickly, heap disaster on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."



Absalom's move to become king appeared to be working. He was popular, and one of David's men reported to him, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with

Absalom" (v. 13). Had this been an election, it would have meant David would have to step down and let Absalom take the office he won by a vote of the people. But defeat in that culture meant death. David rightfully feared for his life and the lives of his people in the face of Absalom's groundswell of support.

David knew the depth of Absalom's dishonor. He knew Absalom would not spare him simply because he was his father. Absalom had no concern for his father's welfare, only his own.

Absalom's dishonor of his father, David, cost him his life. His rebellious pursuit to dethrone his father left him dead. Joab, "took three spears in his hand and thrust them into Absalom's chest. While Absalom was still alive in the oak tree, ten young men who were Joab's armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him, and killed him" (2 Sam. 18:14-15).

Absalom was fully responsible for his rebellion. Even so, David, by his own integrity, could have encouraged Absalom to honor his father and king. Dishonor has a way of recycling itself throughout our relationships, which is why it is so critical for us to display integrity in all aspects of our lives. Yet, when we sin, we must seek God and His mercy.

QUESTION 4:

How did your desire to honor your parents impact your decisions?

What if our own parents were hard to honor? If they left us with a legacy of destruction in our own hearts either through rebellion, bitterness, or any number of things, we must seek to return to the spirit of the Scripture in which God has called us to honor them.

One way we help our children to honor us is by honoring them. We do that by admitting to them when we fail and seeking to correct the situation. Confession, honesty, and integrity on our part encourages a lifestyle of honor.

QUESTION 5:

Whom do you know that models the parent-child relationship in a way that honors God?



LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek to be a person who honors parents? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Repent.** We have all failed in one way or another when it comes to showing our parents honor or living honorably so that our children will honor us. Confess and repent of any sins of dishonor you have had or any ways you have made it difficult for your children to honor you.
- ▶ **Model.** Determine to be a model of truthfulness and integrity in front of all people: your children, your grandchildren, and the children of others.
- ▶ **Act.** Carry out a tangible act of honor. Do something to help and support your parents. Write a letter. Even if your parents are no longer living, you can show them honor by how you talk about them. If this is you, share with someone the role your parents played in your life and how God used them to shape you into who you are today.

No matter what family history you have been given, I urge you to choose the path of love, respect, and honor from this day forward.