

How Our Culture Lost the Biblical Key to God's Abundant Blessings

Too often TV sitcoms and movies today depict parents in a negative light, deserving little regard, let alone honor. Even the short commercials for shows like *The Simpsons*, *Mom* and others communicate that parents are not worthy of respect, let alone honor.

In society today, bad family relationships are viewed as acceptable and those who make it alone are applauded. But that is not the way God intends for families to work.

The fifth commandment reads in the Amplified Bible: "Honor (respect, obey, care for) your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged in the land the Lord your God gives you" (Ex. 20:12).

The promise associated with this commandment (that your days may be long) emphasizes the direct correlation between a person's attitude toward his parents and the degree to which he experiences the fulfillment of God's promises in his personal life. The family unit is a microcosm of the kingdom of God, providing earthly patterns for authority and protective structures that exist in the spiritual realm. This is why the Bible teaches that the mystery of the kingdom can be understood through the family.

The overarching spiritual picture is that after we experience salvation through the new birth, God becomes our heavenly Father through the process of "spiritual adoption." Once we become a member of God's spiritual family and submit to the authority of that new family, God's promises of nurturing, protection, guidance, provision and instruction are released to us. The blessings of obedience to God begin with obedience

to the parental authorities He gave us.

In the ideal family situation, loving parents who follow the Lord train their children in the ways of the Lord. By God's design, parents, not the priests, were given the responsibility and authority to instruct, train and admonish their children in the ways of God and to establish His kingdom rule in the family. Parents should be honored by children in the same way that God should be honored by His adopted spiritual children. Parents who are submitted to God and actively seek to obey His commandments create an environment that invites the blessings of God on their family. Children who honor the instructions and wishes of the parents fall in line with the authority structure God designed and benefit from His promises.

Based on the original language used in Scripture, author and teacher John Bevere defines "honor" as appreciating, holding in esteem or in high regard and treating with value. I often teach about four attributes that attract God's presence: holiness, humility, honesty and honor. I joined some of the core team of my ministry as we studied John's book *Honor's Reward*. "Dishonoring our parents," John says in the book, "has become a normal way of life in America. It's steeped in our culture."

When children don't honor their parents, doors to bitterness, unforgiveness, anger and all sorts of relational sorrows are opened. Conversely, when children honor and obey parental authority, conflict is reduced and the peace of God prevails in the home. Both the quality and the quantity of a person's life are enhanced through simple obedience to the Word of God.

Like any good earthly parent, our heavenly Father is concerned about the safety and well-being of His children. In Proverbs 6:20-23, He told children to listen to their parents' guidance as it will serve as a protection for them.

My son, keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake the instruction of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them around your neck. When you go, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

The teachings of parents are to be given as “a light” to guide their children through the treacherous turns and enticements of life. Providing children with the means to discern safety from danger and to make decisions that will not harm them is a parental responsibility. Children tend to resist the discipline of their parents because they do not recognize that it is one of the greatest expressions of love that parents can offer.

“My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He reproofs, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights” (Prov. 3:11-12, NASB).

But what about ungodly parents? Must we keep the commandment to “honor our father and mother” when the parents are not practicing godly lifestyles? Although each situation must be individually weighed in light of the entire counsel of God’s Word, generally speaking, the answer is yes, as long as the parents do not act illegally, unethically or contrary to the Word of God. Even when complete obedience is not possible, parents should still be treated with respect. If we disagree with someone in authority, it must be done with an attitude of humility and respect. God is honored when proper respect is given to parents and other authorities.

The most difficult situation of all is when a child has been sexually, emotionally, verbally or physically abused by his parents. What is God’s answer regarding abusive parents? Is

the believer required to remain in abusive situations? Absolutely not. In that case the parents have forfeited their rights to govern the child's life. Let me point out, however, that even in these types of situations, it is important for the child / victim to avoid becoming swallowed up in bitterness, anger and shame.

Many who have experienced abuse at the hands of a parent find it impossible to imagine coming to a place of true forgiveness. How could one ever honor the parent who had damaged them so? If someone is still in an abusive situation, get help. But by honoring God with sacrificial obedience, we open the door through which the miracle power of healing and restoration for our damaged lives can flow.

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Wrestling with all these emotions myself at times growing up, I heard God speak to me, "Don't go as an angry son, but go as My son." These words pierced my heart with conviction but also gave me the confidence that I would be able to obey God even in a hard situation. When we speak with an attitude of respect and compassion God can open up avenues of healing. I am a personal testimony of God's grace to obey even in extremely difficult circumstances and then, with His grace, He gives the blessings of obedience.

Everyone's situation is different, and if you struggle with honoring a parent because of some abuse or abandonment, turn to the Lord first and foremost and know He loves you with an everlasting love. Seek Him about how to move forward, and ask Him to show you who you can confide in for support and

encouragement as you walk out this principle into the freedom Christ has for you.

While earthly parents are responsible for the oversight of our physical well-being, God-given spiritual leaders are responsible for the oversight of our souls. They may not be the best teachers, communicators or pastors, but they are the people who honestly care for us and confront areas in our lives that need correction.

The concept of spiritual fatherhood is found in the writings of the apostle Paul:

“For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me” (1 Cor. 4:15-16).

It is also important to recognize and honor the spiritual fathers and mothers—mentors whom God placed in our lives. Though we may be impressed by gifted teachers or charismatic leaders, they may not be the ones who take responsibility for the care of our souls.

An important characteristic of a good spiritual leader is whether he imitates Jesus Christ. We should show respect for and give honor also to those who look out for our spiritual maturing and well-being. Submitting to their instruction and praying for them when they are struggling opens us to God’s blessing of spiritual prosperity and peace.

As we honor the commandment of God, we receive the promise of “long life in the land that the Lord has promised you.” {eoa}

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