

“Better Families: Honoring One’s Father & Mother”

Intro;

- **Continuing Better Families Series - already talked about:**
 - **What makes for a better family**
 - **How better marriages make for better families**
 - **How better parents make for better families**
 - **This week we are focusing in on how ‘better children make for better families’, especially as it pertains to one’s ability to ‘Honor One’s Father & Mother’**

Ephesians 6:1-3(NIV)

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

TENSION/COMMON GROUND

- When hear that command (one of the Big 10-, BTW), we may think, ‘well sure, I honor my father and mother, I think?’...well, it depends, “what does the word “honor” mean? And what if I don’t find one or both of my parents to be ‘honor-worthy’ or ‘worth honoring’...don’t they have to earn that?
- What does the ‘go well with you and live long’ part mean for today

Getting really honest here, I believe that this is a commandment that tends to haunt people with less than stellar relationships with their parents...even if we want to ignore it, we always know that this command exists; we want to be obedient to Scripture - especially the Top 10, but we really just wish that God would have left it out, but he didn’t, and so we struggle to want to

“Honor Beyond the Heartache” - that’s actually the title of a firsthand account by a woman named Myra Johnson; I think her story may represent the stories of many in the room,

Honoring (a Mother) Beyond the Heartache

Myra states that “As our Bible study group began focusing on the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, I felt pretty smug. After all, I didn't worship more than one God, steal, commit adultery or murder, lie about my neighbors, or plot to cheat them out of what was rightfully theirs. But one evening we came to the command to honor our father and mother (v. 12). Against my will, I thought of my mother, who'd passed away ten years earlier. Honor her, when I felt more relief than sorrow at her death? The tears I cried at her funeral were those of an adult daughter who had never heard the words I most needed from her: "I'm proud of you."

- *The Need for Affirmation:*
 - *Comes a time when you no longer need to gain the affirmation of your parents...we only truly need the affirmation of the Father, who has deemed us worthy, and given His Son for us*

My birth was Mother's "midlife surprise." When my father died less than four years later, I gave her a reason to go on. By the time I reached my teens, my mother had sunk into a state of apathy. The more I attempted to earn her praise—with high grades, awards, and interscholastic competitions—the more rejected I felt by her indifference. During my senior year, I earned a major role in a drama production that she never attended. Her only explanation was, "I didn't feel up to it."

The following years were the same. When at age 20 I met the man I'd later marry, my mother openly resented him. Her bigoted remarks about his ancestry horrified us both. During more rational moments, she showed brief motherly interest in our wedding plans, but at the last minute threatened not to attend. I cursed the cruelty of a God who took away my father and left me with an ill, elderly mother who seemed impossible to please.

After my wedding, Mother's downward spiral continued. Our visits usually deteriorated into criticisms about how I raised my children, reproach for my leaving the church in which she'd raised me (my husband had led me to a true faith in Christ), and unfavorable comparisons to other family members who "obviously" loved her more than I did. ...

- *May never find unconditional love and support from earthly parent, but you are not made for this world;*

- *'You are greatly loved' -Father,*

- *Worship Note: God loves you, period!*

- *Enemy knows how to push your buttons...make your buttons inoperable through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit*

Mother's health finally worsened to the point she committed herself to a nursing home. I attempted a few family visits, hoping she'd enjoy seeing her granddaughters. But she showed little interest in them and often received me with such hostility that I left in tears.

- *Their loss...right?*

Congestive heart failure finally ended her life; she died a bitter, lonely woman. ...At my mother's funeral, I studied her features as she lay in the casket. Even in death, her lips seemed pressed into a condemning frown, the same embittered expression that stared back at me from her last professional photograph. Two years after her death, a job-related move took my husband and me to another city. I didn't even unpack the portrait, but hid it away in a box in the attic. ...

- *Pretending there isn't a problem and trying to hide from the brokenness and pain and bitterness and disappointment doesn't make it go away...need to bring it out into the Light, because that's where God does His best work*

Finally, that night at the Bible study, I came face-to-face with my hardened heart. To harbor contempt and anger, to shut someone out of your life and memory because of perceived hurt or injustice—these aren't the heart attitudes of forgiveness. I left the Bible class that night convicted to the core. ...

But how was I to honor—to love, respect, and esteem—a parent I held responsible for so much heartache? I began by admitting I needed God's help not only to confront my feelings toward her but also to confess my selfishness and lack of compassion. I acknowledged with gratitude that she gave me life and nurtured me the best she was able. I took into account the factors that had shaped her life, not the least of which were her own

dysfunctional parents and later the lure of religious teachings that distorted God's truth.

The fact is, there are no perfect human parents, so I had no right to expect perfection from my mother. Since sin entered the world, every succeeding generation has carried its own "baggage" into parenthood. Hadn't I done so with my children? As desperately as I wanted not to repeat my mother's mistakes, when I battled recurring bouts of anger, resentment, and depression, my family inevitably suffered.

The next step was to let my mother back into my life, emotionally if not physically.

Resolutely I climbed the attic stairs to retrieve her portrait, carried it to my desk, and stared at it a long time.

I'm sorry, I silently told my mother. I haven't honored you. I've tried to push you from conscious thought. I forgive you, and I pray you've also forgiven me for turning away from you. I want your memory to be a part of my life.

An incredible peace filled me as God enabled me to do what I couldn't do on my own: remember my mother with love. Suddenly I saw her as God created her to be, and was able to forgive—and in a small way forget—the hurtful things that had passed between us.

*What changed was my perception of the past, which in turn has positively affected my present and future. **In forgiving and honoring her, I'm breaking the chains of bitterness in my life.***

- *Lack of Forgiveness Creates Negative Consequences:* *To harbor contempt and anger, to shut someone out of your life and memory because of perceived hurt or injustice—these aren't the heart attitudes of forgiveness.*
 - *In forgiving and honoring her, I'm breaking the chains of bitterness in my life.*
 - *Jesus can enable you to forgive your parent(s), no matter what the transgression...every hurt can be healed in the name of Jesus...and He wants to bring you to a place of wholeness and healing, because it hurts His heart that you are hurting*

Worship Note: Jesus is the key that unlocks the shackles of brokenness, bitterness and unforgiveness.

I promise you that Jesus can do that for you, if you let Him and if you earnestly ask Him to do so. I dare you to test Him on this...but it will be costly to come face-to-face with all the junk, but the rewards are freedom and joy and greater intimacy with your Heavenly Father...

Ephesians 6 New International Version (NIV)

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²

“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment

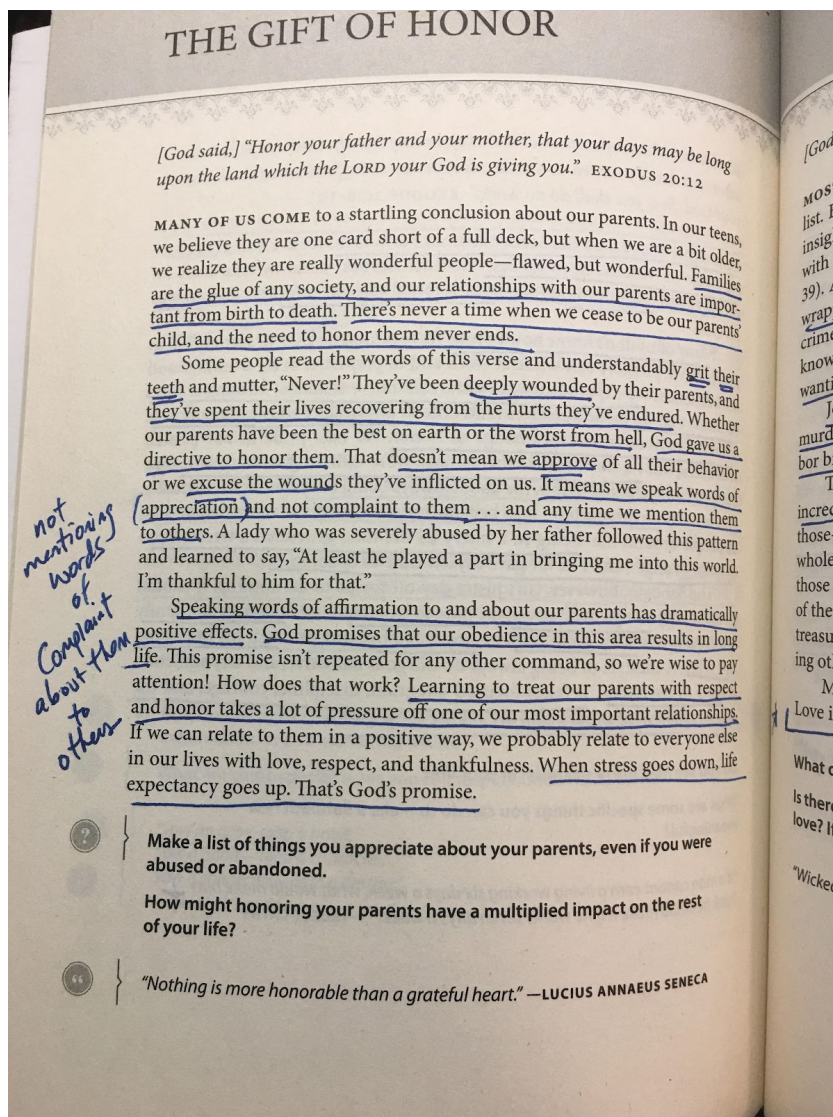
with a promise—³“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

What does that word “HONOR” mean??? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ‘HONOR’?

HONOR - ZIG ZIGLAR DEVOTION

synonyms: recognize, credit, respect, esteem

antonyms: [Don’t] disgrace, dishonor, shame, discredit, vilify, disrespect, humiliation



God promises that Obedience in this area will have positive effects - will result in 'long life':

2 "Honor your father and mother"... "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

- Context
 - Culture is different
 - Honor and shame
 - Mindful
 - Phillipians 4:13 and sports

- Paul was in jail, wasn't trying to win a football game
- Qualify
 - Jesus said 'you can do greater things than me'
 - As a group, longer life, etc.
 - No you as a believer can do these things =heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead
- Here= if you honor it will go well with you and you will have long life
- If relationship with parents is 'gummed up' due to dysfunction, not going to 'go (as) well' with you as it could
 - Releases us; creates pathway for healing & wholeness
 - Bitterness can cause health problems...
- Importance of forgiveness of family (leave gift at altar if have something against brother...)
 - There are things that need to be said with our own families
 - How does 'honor' play into that?
- Don't defame or discredit bad parents - difference between telling the truth and defaming character

Work through it before it's too late...

Worship Note: The Time is Now! Don't wait till it's too late!

Closing