

## SESSION 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 PASSAGES

Exodus 20:12; 2 Samuel 15:7-14

## 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.

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## Exodus 20:12

**12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.**

What is “honour”? The Greek word for *honour* means “to value highly, to hold in highest regard.” This, by the way, 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.

### QUESTION 2:

***What are some ways we show honor to our parents?***

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 their 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.

So how can adult children show honor to their parents? Let me suggest three categories of honor:

1. **Emotional honor.** Parents are honored emotionally by spending time with them and showing them genuine concern and love. Some mothers and fathers are in retirement homes and care centers and are lacking attention and 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. I’m not saying you have to honor the wrong your parents did. I’m saying you can still recognize and honor your parents simply because of their position as your parents. Honoring our parents does not end when we become independent adults or if we disagree with how they raised us. Many among us grew up in an abusive or dismissive family environment. Honoring one’s father and mother is not equated with remaining in or endorsing such an abusive relationship. In such a case, honoring one’s father and mother may mean removing one’s self from the environment and forgiving the abusive parent.

2. **Verbal honor.** I told you about my parents’ home in Baltimore. 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, “Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father” (1 Tim. 5:1). We are to speak to and about our parents with honor.
3. **Financial honor.** In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul wrote, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Then in verse 16, Paul wrote: “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged.” Honoring our parents means we have a financial responsibility for them when they can no longer take

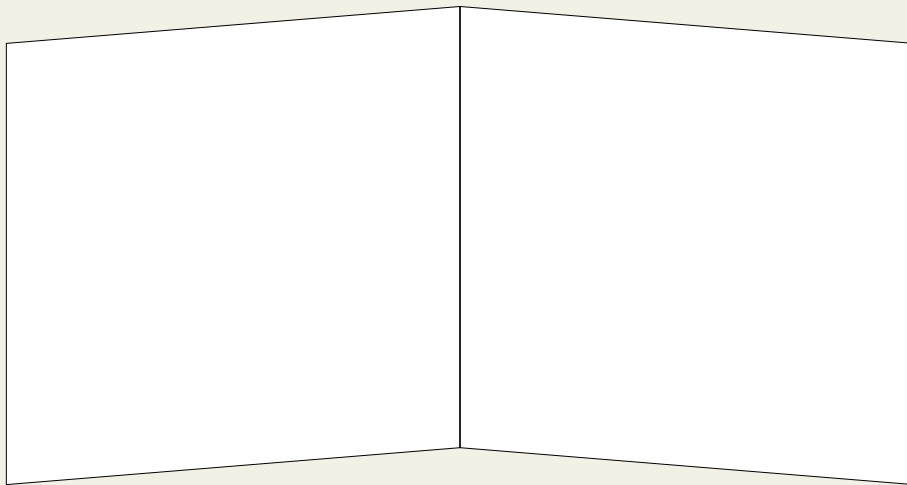
care of themselves. This means more than buying a card on Mother's Day or Father's Day. It means seeing to their well-being when they need our assistance.

**QUESTION 3:**

*What are ways our culture shows dishonor to parents?*

**ENGAGE**

*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.*

**2 Samuel 15:7-12**

**7** And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

**8** For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

**9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.**

**10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.**

**11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.**

**12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.**

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, the man after God's own heart, was far from a perfect person. His sins against Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11) unleashed a whole series of consequences on his family. David was not an upstanding father. We see this in the story of his children.

- ▶ David's son, Amnon, raped Tamar, Absalom's sister, and Amnon's half-sister (13:1-20).
- ▶ When King David heard about all these things, he was furious, but did nothing (v. 21).
- ▶ Two years later, Absalom killed his brother Amnon (13:22-33).
- ▶ Absalom fled and lived in exile for three years (v. 34-38).

- ▶ David longed to go to Absalom after he finished grieving over Amnon's death (v. 39).
- ▶ David finally sent for Absalom to return to Jerusalem but would not see him (14:1-24).
- ▶ For two years Absalom lived in Jerusalem but did not see his father (v. 25-32).
- ▶ David finally summoned Absalom to come to him and kissed him (v. 33).
- ▶ Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel from his father David (15:1-6).

David's sinful behavior, however, did not excuse Absalom's behavior. Absalom was still responsible for honoring David as both his father and the 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 in this passage 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 cannot honor our parents when there is a lack of truthfulness and integrity in how we talk to them or about them. Absalom provided a negative example, showing us the tragic consequences when we fail to show honor with integrity. Absalom's dishonoring actions brought great adversity home to the nation of Israel—and death to himself.

#### **QUESTION 4:**

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

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## **2 Samuel 15:13-14**

**13** And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

**14** And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite 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 after Absalom." 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 to be recognized as king.

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.

God has given us another case study in His Word that shows how He feels about dishonor. It's an unusual story about a group of young men who dishonored and cursed the prophet Elisha.

**"As he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them"** (2 Kings 2:23-24).



These were not little kids being irresponsible. These were boys who were, in effect, cursing God's prophet. And their disrespect brought death. Many children are dying spiritually, emotionally, and relationally in our culture today because they never have learned the importance of honor, and it's costing them their lives.

Absalom's dishonor of his father, David, cost him his life. His rebellious pursuit to dethrone his father left him dead. Joab "took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him" (2 Sam. 18:14-15).

Absalom was fully responsible for his rebellion. Even so, David, by his own integrity and uprightness, 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 and honesty in all aspects of our lives. Yet, when we do sin—and we surely will—we must seek God and His mercy—the mercy given to us by God's grace through the covenantal covering of the blood of Jesus Christ.

All parents, unfortunately, have done things that made it difficult for their children to show honor and respect. I believe that 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 an attitude of honor and models for them how they, in turn, can live lives of truthfulness, integrity, and honor.

#### QUESTION 5:

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

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## LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek to be a person who honors parents?

- ▶ **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 tangible 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 the person you are today.

