

# UNIT 2

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# God in our Relationships

### ☞ MEMORY VERSE ☞

*This is how God's children—and the Devil's children—are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. —1 John 3:10-11*

Jesus instructed His disciples to call God “Father,” just as He did (Luke 11:2). Rather than use His special relationship with God as an advantage over the disciples, Jesus welcomed them to act as sons when addressing God.

Later the apostle Paul told the Romans that we who follow Christ have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, and now have the right to address God as “Father” (Rom. 8:15). A new relationship with God has been formed through Christ.

As sons and daughters of God, think about how much honor we should give our Father, especially considering that we are not children by obligation or lineage but by adoption! Not only that, but consider how our relationships would be impacted by our love and honor of God. If we only showed a fraction of the love God has for us in our relationships with others, we can surely expect our relationships to be healthy and honoring to God for the simple reason that a genuine love for God overflows into a genuine love for others.

*How have your relationships changed since becoming a Christian?*



## SESSION 6

# HONOR YOUR PARENTS

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Watch movies and television long enough, and you'll notice many different depictions of parents. Some stories reflect the writers' idealistic views of parenthood. Other stories are a projection of writers' own relationships with their parents onto the characters. Think of the current television shows that claim to be about "the family." Each show has a different perspective on the roles of father and mother. If we are shaped more by our media choices than by God's Word, we are likely to have a skewed vision of our parents. And how we view our parents will often determine how we treat them.

In this lesson, we will see that our parents are put in place by God to guide us and love us. Our respect for our parents demonstrates our love for them, in the same way that our reverence for our Heavenly Father demonstrates our love for Him. It is important that we recognize that God's Word is clear as to how we should treat our parents in a way that honors both them and the Lord.

# The Fifth Commandment Intends for Children to...

## Respect the Authority of their Parents

In the Fifth Commandment we learn that we honor God by honoring our parents. Because God is the One who put this Command in place, we can honor and obey Him through our obedience to our parents.

We should also remember that obedience with a poor attitude is not honor. There is such a thing as “disrespectful obedience,” and it’s not what God desires. God doesn’t just want our actions to be right, but our hearts as well. If obedience was enough, then God could have drawn the line there. But the command to honor implies much more than obedience. It implies a respectful posture to those who have authority over us.



### **Deuteronomy 5:16**

*Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and so that you may prosper in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*

- ▶ **What are some of the blessings children receive when they honor and obey their parents? Why do you think God chose to attach a promise to this commandment?**

Scripture is not silent toward those who suffer at the hands of bad parents. God knows our pain, and He desires to fill the void left by an absent or abusive parent. In the end, God desires to show us all a divine love that is far greater than that of any parent, and He has demonstrated His love through the giving of His Son.

► **How is respecting your parents' authority more than merely obeying them?**

## More than Meets the Eye...

When one of my co-workers had to quit, our boss decided to divvy up her responsibilities among several already-employed workers. Most of her work ended up falling on my friend, Sarah.

Sarah was already juggling a full schedule, so I went to my boss and offered to take some of her new responsibilities. My boss kindly informed me that he wasn't comfortable doing so. I got upset: first my boss overloaded my friend, and now he was looking down on me by not thinking I was responsible enough to handle the extra duty.

When I fumed my concerns to another co-worker who was a little more privy to the situation, she shared some interesting facts with me. When my boss gave Sarah those additional responsibilities, he had also removed several other responsibilities from her and given her a wage increase. Moreover, my boss thought that I was doing so well at my job, he didn't want to endanger the quality of my work by spreading me too thin.

In other words, my boss had sought for Sarah's best interest and for mine. It just didn't look that way to me because I didn't have all the facts. He used his authority for our good.

For most of us, our parents' authority is similar. No one in the world wants good for us more than our parents. So when they exercise their authority over us, we can trust that it's for our good, even if it looks otherwise. If it seems like they're being mean dictators, it's probably because they know more of the story than we do and are protecting us. Of course, as fallen human beings, there will be times they misuse their authority, but those occasions will be the exception, not the rule. So let's give our parents the benefit of the doubt and respect their authority, so that it may indeed go well with us all our days.



# Reward Them With Joy

**Just as God delights in our obedience and is grieved by disobedience, parents delight when we obey and are grieved when we rebel. Honor brings delight. Foolishness brings heartache.**

Not only are we required to respect the authority of our parents, we are also to bring joy to them in their old age. As children, we honor by obeying. As adults, we honor our parents by respecting them and treating them well.

► **What are some practical ways we can show respect to our parents? What does it communicate about us if we are indifferent to our parents?**

## **Proverbs 23:24-25**

*The father of a righteous son will rejoice greatly, and one who fathers a wise son will delight in him. Let your father and mother have joy, and let her who gave birth to you rejoice.*

## **Which One?**

An anecdotal story tells of an interview with Ida Eisenhower, President Dwight Eisenhower's mother. When her interviewer commented, "You must be so proud of your son," she responded, "Oh, I am. Which one are you asking about?"

Mrs. Eisenhower's response proves a powerful point: happy, successful, and virtuous children are a mother's greatest joy—and a father's! Pay attention at the next sporting event, dance recital, or school musical concert at school. Chances are you'll hear more than one "That's my boy!" or "There goes my kid!"

The story of Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley (along with seventeen other children), shows the depths of a parent's joy in their children. John Wesley's chapel sat across the road from a Dissenters' graveyard (at that time in England, anyone who was not a member of the Church of England got buried in a Dissenter's graveyard; it wasn't

Jesus Comanded us that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we are to treat our neighbors in a loving way, how much more accountable should we be for our families?

▶ **Do you think our culture as a whole honors and respects the elderly? Why or why not?**

▶ **How does the gospel impact the way we care for our parents?**

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exactly an honor to be buried there). As a good Anglican, Susanna was guaranteed a burial spot in her parish cemetery, yet she chose to be buried in the Dissenters' lot across from John's church to be close to her son.

Susanna's choice shows she found great delight in her children, even more so than being "properly" buried. And as much as we love to hear our parents say, "I'm proud of you," they love to say it even more. At Jesus' baptism and again at the transfiguration, God said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Likewise, we ought to live in such a way and with such an attitude that our parents are well pleased in us, enough so that we would be the apple of their eye and the joy of their hearts. After all, a well-pleasing child easily trumps even the most honored burial. Just ask Susanna Wesley.

# Reflect the Savior to Them

Caring for our parents reflects the heart of Jesus. We can see the love Jesus had for His mother, especially at the cross. Imagine the difficulty of living through this moment. Put yourself in the scene as you watch the child you raised suffer and die a horrifying death. Mary mourned, but she was not alone. In this moment of physical torment, Jesus took time to demonstrate love to His mother. He acknowledged her presence and commissioned one of His disciples to care for her.



We reflect the Savior when we put the needs of others above our own. In this moment Jesus could have been focused on His own situation as He endured the agony of the cross. But even here, we see His self-giving love. He placed the needs of His mother above His own. In this event, He demonstrated what honoring one's parents looked like. Even in death, Jesus was obedient to God's Commands.

► **What are some of your regrets in how you have treated your parents? How does the gospel apply to those regrets?**

## **John 19:25-27**

*Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*

We see how Jesus loved and respected His mother even as He died for her. Because of His perfect obedience, the failures of our parents and those of our own can be forgiven. The slate can be wiped clean. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can now honor our father and mother because of Christ, who honored His father and mother completely.



► **How is respecting your parents' authority more than merely obeying them?**

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► **How have you been treating (or mistreating) your parents based on their conduct, not their position?**

## Sith Lord or Not, He's Still My Dad...

“Obi-wan never told you what happened to your father...I am your father.”

With these lines, Darth Vader coined one of cinema's most-quoted and most-parodied lines. And yet, if you know the original *Star Wars* (20th Century Fox) movies, it marks a turning point for Luke Skywalker, the series' protagonist. Sure, it's devastating to know his father is the galaxy's worst villain, but it changes the way he approaches Darth Vader.

Luke refuses to fight Darth Vader. He insists on trusting the good in him. He actually hands himself over to his father, counting on Vader to do the right thing. And when Luke is finally forced to fight Vader, he won't kill his father. Instead of joining “the Dark Side,” he tells the evil Emperor, “You've failed, Your Highness. I am a Jedi, like my father before me.”

I want to suggest that Luke gives a great example of honoring his father. Not because of anything Vader has said or done (in fact, Vader was pretty evil). but because of the fact that Vader is his dad. Luke submits to him, trusts him, and assumes the best of him. And, in the end, it works: Vader becomes a good guy.

I'm pretty sure our parents aren't as evil as Darth Vader, and I'm pretty sure the way we'll honor our parents won't look like refusing a light saber duel with them. But Luke's actions remind us that we are to honor our parents just by virtue of who they are. Maybe that means we need to submit to their house rules. We probably won't redeem them from an evil Emperor, but maybe we'll care for them in their older years. And, while I doubt we'll turn them back to the light side of the force, maybe we can help them to savor Jesus more. It'd be hard to honor our parents in a better way than that.

## GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

The Commandment to honor one's father and mother is forever relevant no matter one's age. This is no less true for students, especially since it is the case that you are still directly under your parents' authority within the home. In addition, while the parent-child relationship can have its ups and downs through the years, it is important that you understand that respecting one's parents is primarily a respect for the authority God has placed over their lives. The honor and respect mentioned here essentially means an attitude of respect to the parents God has given you. In fact, it is not dependent on whether your parents are necessarily deserving of respect in the first place; the respect is aimed at the person holding the title of "parent."

*How does a Christian view of authority differ from a worldly view of authority?*

In addition, this lesson also speaks directly to those who are believers but whose parents are not. For students in those situations, living out the faith can be a constant struggle, especially if their parents are either hostile or completely indifferent to the things of God. If someone you know is in that situation, encourage them to reflect the Savior to their parents in such a way that the gospel shines forth through their changed lives. By doing this, they can intentionally be on mission within their own homes, believing that their parents, too, can know the saving grace of God.

*How is our mission impacted by the way we treat those in authority over us? In what ways is our mission hindered by our failure to care for our parents?*