

## Honor Your Father

Exodus 20:12 (New American Standard Bible)

*Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord your God gives you.*

## My Father



(May 1963) (left to right: me, my brother, my father)

### Introduction

Happy Father's Day! I am going to talk about fatherhood this morning. Everyone has a father. How is/was your father? Let me tell you about my father. Because he had six children with my mother, of whom I am number 5, by the time I arrived, he was quite an old man, 46 years old. He never scolded me or chastised me. Even when I took his wallet unknowingly and spent all the money inside, he never raised his voice to me. I was dearly loved by my father. I remember him taking me to a movie. It was quite a treat back then. Just me and my father. He also took me for a school field trip. He passed away when I was 12 years old, so my memory of him is limited and most of them remain vague.

As far as him being the head of the household is concerned, it was a different story. He was an alcoholic, non-violent yet dysfunctional. He just loved drinking. Too much. A couple of pictures in his thirties show him holding a bottle to the camera! Furthermore, he was diabetic that made him sick often. Consequently, he couldn't hold a steady job. So, all the burden to take care of the family fell on my mother's shoulders.

I must say my father was kind and loving to his children as much as he could. He died of a traffic accident at the age of 59. Kind of interesting feeling that I have outlived my own father.

## Content

- What about your father? Is/Was he a wonderful father? Then, thank God and honor him.
- Not so good, even worse, a terrible father? Forgive him and still honor him.
- **The reality** is: Not every one of us is proud of our fathers. Did you know that Father's Day is the busiest day of the year for collect calls (so many fathers in jail)? If you have a wonderful relationship with your father, you should be very grateful, because there are so many fathers whose children wish that they didn't have such fathers. E.g., a card company offered a free card to prison inmates for Mother's Day. It was a huge success. Hundreds of thousands of Mother's Day cards were sent and touched the hearts of mothers. The company offered it again for Father's Day. Unlike the Mother's Day, however, this time, no inmate wanted to participate in the free card offer. Why? The inmates were mad at their fathers about whatever they had done/not done to their children (cf. Ephesians 6:4 says, *Fathers do not provoke your children to anger*).
- The Bible shows **two kinds** of father: two Hebrew words are used for father: 1) **Ab** (ah-b) occurs in most references for fathers; five out of six times (e.g. father of all who play the harp and flute (Genesis 4:21). e.g. 2. Paul was the father to all Corinthian believers. 2) **Yalad** (ya-lah-d) ('biological' fathers) occurs in one out of six times in the Old Testament references. They remind me of rather unfortunate occasions of fathers who just contribute their sperms to create babies but fail to raise them in loving relationships. No such biblical distinction was made for mothers in the Bible.
- My heart goes out to those grown-up children who have such a difficult relationship with their earthly fathers. E.g. One female student in seminary had a hard time calling God in Heaven 'Father,' because each time she did, it painfully reminded her of the very difficult and abusive relationship with her earthly father. No human fathers are perfect, and some are pretty bad. Thank God that we have only **one perfect Father** in Heaven. Jesus points out that we all have one father who is in heaven (Matthew 23:9) (we'd best stop relating the imperfect image of earthly father to that of Heavenly Father).

- With such reality (of two kinds of fathers) in mind, let's pay attention to the Fifth Commandment once again: <sup>12</sup> **“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you (New International Version).**

### **Why Should We Honor Our Fathers?**

- My honest thought: It would've been far easier if the commandment said, “Honor your father and mother **only if they deserve it.**”
- But, it says, plain and simple: “Honor your father.” Period. Honor all types of fathers, either good or bad. Also, let us remember that it is not an option or suggestion. It is a commandment.
- So, the real question is how can we honor our fathers who deserve no respect or honor from us?
- **It would help us if we remember that this commandment is not conditional.**
- **In other words**, we are to honor them
  - Not because of what they have done for us.
  - Not because of societal pressure or culture.
  - Not because it is the right thing to do.
  - Not because it would make us feel good.
  - But because we owe our life to them. Like they owe theirs to their parents. It goes all the way up to God—the Giver of Life. One reason we ought to honor our parents is for the life in us. Proverb 23:22: *“Listen to your father, who gave you life”*... By honoring our earthly fathers, no matter how imperfect they may be, we ultimately show our respect to our Father in Heaven.
  - Another reason, when we honor our fathers, God will grant us a long life on earth.

### **What Does It Mean to Honor?**

- It rather means: to **show respect** [Nahash, 2 Samuel 10:3]. To **‘reward’** [Balaam, Numbers 22:17, 37]. To **‘think more important’** [sons of Eli. 1 Samuel 2:29]. To **‘make them proud of you.’** **Not to ‘embarrass’** [Saul to Samuel, 1 Samuel 15:30]. **Not to ‘despise’** [Jerusalem, Lamentations 1:8, Despise Vile men, Psalm 15:4, 1 Samuel 2:30]. To **‘care for, show affection, glorify, prize and cherish.’**

### How Do We Honor the Unworthy Fathers?

- **Be proactive:** Not reactive. Honor them **not because of** but **in spite of**. Please note here that this commandment begins in positive and affirmative formulation [i.e., most of the Ten Commandments begin with “You shall NOT...” Once we start putting it into practice, it will open up many other doors and ideas for us to honor our fathers. Here’s a **good starter: forgive**. Remember the Lord’s prayer: forgive our trespasses as we forgive those [our unworthy fathers] who trespass against us.

### Conclusion

#### Advice for Fathers of Young Children

- Train your children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). Three pieces of advice from me a fellow father:
  - Remember you will **reap tomorrow what you sow today** in your relationship with your children. You will enjoy and appreciate the fruit of your relationship in later years.
  - **Sow Love and Truth in Discipline** (Hebrews 12:7) today and every day. One day at a time. Fairly, faithfully, and lovingly.
  - **Your Prayer matters.** If you don’t pray for your own children, who will? Pray daily for your children. For their salvation and for their relationship with God. For your relationship with them as well. No one with God is poor and nothing will go wrong in the lives of those who know the Lord.

Let us pray.