

“THE CYCLE OF LOVE” The Fifth Commandment Servants' Guide

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take some time and discuss what the ideal biblical family should look like.
 - *This is very difficult because every single family is “dysfunctional” as a result of sin.*
 - *Try to give ample time to ponder this. Help them see that it involves more than blood relationship and consensual relationship. The biblical family is one based on being a covenant community where we are united by Christ.*
 - *In some ways, are family groups are trying to picture the ideal biblical family.*
 - *Note what Jesus says in Mark 3:35: “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” True family is marked by those who share the blood of Christ.*

2. Read Exodus 20:12. What do you think it means to ‘honor’ your parents? What are some reasons that we would want to obey this commandment?
 - *Important to emphasize that this is commanded without anything contingent on the parents. In other words, the command is unconditional. It does not say to honor them if they are Christian, if they are good to you, if they are respectable, if they never abused you. For some this is a very tough truth. We’ve got to understand that parents who were less than ideal will be judged but that we too will be judged for our obedience to carry out this commandment. Thus, we can try to honor even the worst parents because we love Jesus and that’s the motivation.*
 - *We honor our parents because the family is the most basic unit of society and of the church. If we learn to love on this level, this is the beginning of learning to live out the rest of the commandments.*
 - *It may be helpful to distinguish the difference between honoring and obeying. It is possible to honor even without obeying. We are called to obey our parents but not when it is conflicting with what would honor and obey God. Most likely 99% of the time, even obeying non-Christian parents is the right thing to do and will honor God.*
 - *Honoring parents is a healthy way to live because when your relationship with God and with parents goes well, there will be great stability to your life. It will also model how you raise your own children.*

3. Why do you think this commandment is placed at the beginning of the commands concerning our relationships with others?
 - *In life, this is the first round of relationship that we encounter. Failure at this level often leads to failure in other levels. Those who honor parents (even bad parents) tend to do well in other relationships. Note that the last five commandments all deal with relationships.*

4. What are some practical ways that we can honor our parents the next time we visit home? What struggles or obstacles do you face in honoring your parents?

The following comes from a message Pastor Min Chung (Covenant Fellowship Church) gave on this commandment. He offers seven practical ways to honor your parents. It may not be bad to print this on a separate paper and read it together. Also, it important to spend some time discussing the struggles people have in honoring their parents. Give people a chance to really share. Many have wounds you may have no idea about that need to be healed. For many with bad family backgrounds, it is important to touch on issues of forgiveness. Be sensitive but also keep in mind that a victims mentality is unbiblical because we how we respond to our circumstances is what God looks at. Point them to the victim and wounds of the cross which allows us to overcome all things.

Seven Practical Ways to Honor your Parents (Pastor Min Chung)

1. Obey

- *If you’re in your growing years, especially in the early years of college life, you must obey. But when you become an adult, you don’t have to obey. It doesn’t mean that when your eighty-year-old dad says, “Do this,” you have to do it, because you’re only 60. Some people are too abusive, too*

commanding. Some people are in grad school and can't even go to a retreat. There's something wrong with that. It's an ambiguous state, that stage between college and marriage.

- If you're in your obeying age, you need to obey in the Lord, meaning that if they tell you to do something disobedient to God, you don't have to do it. They are supposed to be under the authority of God. For some of you, obey your parents in the Lord.

2. Speak kindly of them and to them

- Some people talk about their parents and say very negative things. The only time you should say negative things about your parents are in a counseling session. If you are in any other situation, try not to say negative things about them. And even in a counseling session, don't enjoy talking negatively, but do it only to get advice.
- Speak kindly to them. When you go home, there will be times that you will want to speak negatively to them. This is the best advice I can give you. Just bite your tongue. Get out of the situation. The Bible gives the same advice for sexual temptation—run! When you want to shout, bite. That's why you need to pray so much when you go home, because it's a spiritual battle. Your old self wants to shout. When you go home, you aren't on break. It's a spiritual battle. Vacation times are the more difficult times. People fall so much. You need to pray during the lock-in so you can respect your parents. Even in your disagreements, please be kind. When I talk to Ruth, who's two and a half and is becoming a human being, I tell her to say, "OK," and she says, "OK" (rudely). Until she says it nicely, I discipline her (which I rarely and reluctantly do).

3. Acknowledge their impact on you to them and of them

- Say it to them sometimes and when you talk to others about them. I think about my mom. I thank my mom for a lot of spiritual stories she told me. She would go to revival meetings and tell stories about them. I didn't read the Bible that much when I grew up, but just listening to those stories, my heart was moved. When I saw her prayers being answered, my heart would move. I thank my dad, who passed away a few years ago, for his growth. If I've ever seen someone change—from a tough-tempered, typical Asian father to someone so humble, growing, like a child—my father was it. When he passed away, he felt like someone I was ministering to. He became so humble. "How do you preach?" I would teach him in a respectable manner. He would ask about life questions. "How do you do this?" Can you believe that? Until his death, he grew. I always remember him for that. I want to grow until I die. Acknowledge their impact on you to them and of them.

4. Forgive them

- They all blew it. Every single parent blew it except God. I've blown it many times and I will blow it many more times, because I'm an imperfect father. It's a revolutionary concept that they are sinners in need of God's grace, just like you. Treat them like one of your small group members. Think about one of the most difficult members (you might be one of them) and love them and serve them like that. You can actually minister to your parents. You go home to serve them, not to be served. They had imperfect parents. Don't expect them to be superman or superwoman. But you do. Do you know why we complain? Because we expect them to be superman or woman. Go home to minister to them. For a change can you throw out the garbage voluntarily? How about washing the dishes without being asked? Your parents might faint. Go home to serve for the first time in your life. Don't have the why-aren't-you-superman-or-woman-mentality. Go home to minister. Pray so much that you are so filled with God's love that it overflows. Then you get a lot of benefits. Then they think you are growing up and give you a lot of freedom. Of course, don't make that your purpose; that's called buttering them up. Minister to them.

5. Care for them in later years

- All their life they've helped you. Be there to help them. Take care of them in their later years.

6. Spend time with them

- You have about a month for winter break. The only time you should go away is for a retreat. Since it's the beginning of the year, you should go to a spiritual retreat. One retreat. Maybe two, to help a past youth group's retreat. The rest of the time, go home and spend time with your parents. A retreat should be your only excuse to be away from home. You say, "But my parents do nothing. They just watch videos in their language." I say that you just don't understand. When I talk about my kids, I realize that you just don't understand what parents are like. I hate going away because I hate going away from CFC. I also just miss my family. The best thing for me is to just not think about it. My kids might be running around and I might be reading a book. I love just having them around. I'm happiest when I'm at Barnes and Nobles. Think about it. Coffee. Books. Kids. What more can I want? Even if they are just present at the house, I'm just so happy. The painful thing is thinking about my kids going to college. The \$50,000 a year is not the major source of pain. If you are an international student, etc., call them, write letters. But if you can, just be there. If they're only

home in the evenings, just be there then. Maybe even help them at the store. Even if you don't talk about anything, just smile. Even if they don't look happy to see you there, don't worry about that. Don't be deceived by facial expressions— they're happy. You'll never regret it.

- My father passed away a few years ago to cancer. I was there just the last couple of weeks. The time he died, I wasn't able to be there, because I had to be here to minister. But for one week, I was there. I was such bad kid. I don't remember a time before that I did something voluntarily for my dad. But that week. I washed him, changed him, went to the bathroom with him. To this day, I'm so thankful that I voluntarily, happily, joyfully served him. Maybe it was the day that I had to come back. He never voluntarily touched me unless we were passing by to go to the bathroom and accidentally touched. But I was sitting by him and he started to reach for something, I thought it was for the railing, but it was for my hand. I felt so... uncomfortable. It was the first time he reached out to touch my hand. However, I'll never forget the temperature of his hand. You'll never regret spending time with your parents. You can spend time with your friends at other times.

7. Grow up

- Proverbs 23:24 says, "The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him." Sometimes even if you disobey for the sake of Christ, if you become a man or woman of God, that's the way to honor Him. If everyone praises you, your father and mother will be proud. You might say, "Mom or dad, you used to be God to me. But now I depend on God. I used to cry when you hurt me, but now I go to God." Some of you say, "I have such imperfect, abusive parents." If you have a perfect Father, you can forgive your imperfect parents. I remember Dr. Kent Hughes was describing his wife. When she was about 13 in junior high, she was receiving some kind of award from school. She was to receive it at an assembly but her dad showed up drunk. She made a resolution that she would never be embarrassed of her father. And she held his hand and introduced him to each teacher. "This is my father," smiling the whole time. That's honoring. If we have a perfect Heavenly Father, we can love and honor our imperfect parents.

5. Share some convictions you gained today. Spend time praying for your family.