

Blog 59 - May 2021 Honor Your Parents

It is very important to God for us to honor our parents.

Note: Jesus concern for this matter in His last moments on the cross and in the human body.

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

John 19:27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

God listed it in the Ten Commandments, a hinge-point between the commandments about honoring Him and then honoring relationships with others, starting with our parents. This commandment is the only command with a promise. This promise can be elusive when you are engaged in the honoring process.

Exodus 20:12 states "Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. "

My translation of this text is: "Honor your father and mother, sacrificing your needs for theirs as they did for you in your youth, for it is commanded by our Lord for the keeping of your soul". The definition of the word honor in the command means "to fix value to'.

In today's entitlement society, we are in a battle for souls. Even "professing" Christians lead self-centered individualistic lives with little regard for others. Honoring relationships, or in other words "sacrificing" for others, is counter cultural. Additionally, our parents may be geographically separated from us, making honoring them a distance issue thus easier to ignore.

So what might this "honoring" look like?

In our case, Rachel and I began the more concentrated effort of honoring my parents about 6 years ago with quarterly visits to their N. H. home. Initially, we focused on helping around the farm/homestead, with my father recovering from triple-bypass heart surgery. At that time, both had their mental faculties, but we saw signs of change; we shored up the various legal trust documents and began to prepare for moving into the elder-care stage of life. Both parents are the same age, now 86. The sacrificing of our personal time and resources were all that were demanded. Loving, honoring my parents was an easy task.

In January 2019, I received a call from a police officer, he informed me my parents had been the victims of a scam! They were told they had won a million-dollar prize from the Publishers Clearing House but before they could receive their winnings, they needed to pay the taxes on the million dollars. They had been convinced to withdraw cash totaling nearly \$30,000 and send that cash via FedEx to a suburban address in PA.

When we contacted them, they said they just wanted to give the winnings to people that needed help. "As our pastor would say, "Bless their heart".

Though we had detected a decline in my mother's mental faculties over the past three years, we had assumed my father was still managing their resources properly.

Time for tough love!

This is where a new phase of "honoring" our parents began. People are living longer (thanks to the miracles of modern medicine) but the failure of the mind is rightly in line with their age. We needed to step into their lives in a SERIOUS way. When we arrived in February, my parents agreed I needed to become the sole legal guardian of their trusts, and other assets.

Where once we had a loving and trusting relationship, my father's behavior and attitude toward me and Rachel changed dramatically. We were now being looked upon as bothersome intruders in his life. Remember, our fathers (much like we do) consider our status as leader/provider with a considerable measure of pride.

On December 19, 2020, during our daily call to check on my parents and to engage my mother in conversation, she doubled over in pain. My father immediately drove her to the hospital. On Christmas Eve, she had surgery to remove an intestinal blockage. On January 2, 2021, she was discharged. The two-week traumatic event dramatically vaulted her into mid-stage dementia.

A few days after my mother was discharged, Rachel felt compelled to help my father acclimate to a post-op care-giver role. A 5-day trip turned into a 15-day trip to not only help with my mother's recovery but to discover my father was no longer capable or interested in caring for my mother. This was a hard reality for me - a father who I respected all my life now lacked compassion and was much more interested in maintaining his freedom/lifestyle.

We drove to NH four weeks later, with the family dog, in anticipation of an extended stay.

Through a series of miracles, God was with us in our efforts to observe, assess and act appropriately! We successfully moved my mother into an assisted-living facility in my parents' hometown. God is good!

This whole process was completed in just under a month, but it was a battle...a real battle with the devil. My father had become angry and was mean to my mother, resented her for losing her memory. I had two knock-down, drag out days (entire days) of arguing with my father. I truly felt I was battling a possessed man.

Though it is important to have empathy for parents' perspective on things, we very much maintained our steadfast belief we were and are still completing the will of God in honoring

our parents. This is the hard part you will face but Philippians 4:13 provides the backbone to persist in what you know is the right thing to do.

Our struggles continue daily with my parents separated yet married; my father is living at the house independently but rapidly approaching the time for assistance. Additionally, I am grappling with the sobering discovery my dad's love of "his" money is more than his concern for my mother's well-being. "There but for the grace of God go I..."

And this brings us full circle on the matter of honoring our parents. It will be different for each of you but what will not differ is sacrificing will be involved. Prepare yourself, God is on your side.

Applications:

1. This is a positive command, so you get to define what honoring your parents look like. But you get to explain your thinking to God.
2. What are your plans for your honoring-caring for your parents? Have you started conversation with them about their wishes, desires?
3. Prepare yourself to be sacrificial. Distill it to its finest essence... the lesson Christ teaches us is selflessness.
4. Honoring your parents should be a team effort with your spouse (and hopefully your siblings).
5. Discuss the process with your children.

Personal Story: Nine days into Rachel's 15-day trip to NH to care for my parents, I texted her a message, "I love you and thank you for the love you have for my parents". I hadn't asked her to go. She chose to go. Once she was there and she saw things were not. Personal Story: I didn't ask her to stay longer. She chose to stay, honoring my parents as she would her own. She reminded me that when we married, we each gained another set of parents.