

Honor
Your
Father
And
Mother

Privilege and Duty



Honor Your Father and Mother

In Singapore, there is an ongoing debate on the issue of filial piety. This country has one of the fastest-aging populations in the world, making the issue of what to do when children refuse to support their aging parents much sharper and more critical. Legislation has now been passed into law that enables aged parents to compel children to provide for them materially.

But the debate rages on. After all, it's not possible to legislate love for one's parents.

For Christians, filial piety is not just a desired Asian virtue. God has placed a high priority on family relationships and the respect children are to give their parents. He even gave us a command concerning parents: "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12).

Parents are to set the example in the home by showing children that "their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God" (1 Timothy 5:4). We honor our heavenly Father when we honor our earthly father and mother.

These selections are from *Our Daily Bread*, a daily devotional that helps people understand the Bible. If you enjoy these articles and would like to receive the *Our Daily Bread* devotional, just complete the request form on this brochure and send it to us. There is no subscription fee.

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Day 1

MAGNETS AND MOTHERS

READ:
Proverbs 31:26-31

Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God commanded you.

—Deuteronomy 5:16

A teacher gave her class of second-graders a lesson about the magnet and what it does. The next day, in a written test, she included this question: “My name has six letters. The first one is *m*. I pick up things. What am I?” When the test papers were turned in, the teacher was astonished to find that almost 50 percent of the students answered the question with the word *mother*.

Yes, mothers do pick up things. But they are much more than “magnets,” gathering up clothes and picking up toys around the house. As willing as many mothers are to do such chores, they have a higher calling than that.

A good mother loves her family and provides an atmosphere where each member can find acceptance, security, and understanding. She is there when the children need a listening ear, a comforting word, a warm hug, or a loving touch on a fevered brow. And for the Christian mother, her greatest joy is in teaching her children to trust and to love Jesus as their Savior.

That kind of mother deserves to be honored—not just on one special day a year but every day. And that recognition should involve more than words; it ought to be shown in respect, thoughtfulness, and loving deeds.

—Richard De Haan

*Of all the earthly things God gives,
There's one above all others:
It is the precious, priceless gift
Of loving Christian mothers. —Anon.*

**Godly mothers not only bring you up,
they bring you to God.**

A MOTHER'S TOUCH

READ:

Romans 16:1-16

Greet Rufus, whom the Lord picked out to be his very own; and also his dear mother, who has been a mother to me.
—Romans 16:13

to me” (Romans 16:13). Why would he refer to her in this way?

During his years of ministry, Paul faced many hardships (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). Could it be that Rufus had brought a weary and tired apostle to his house, where Paul received from the mother of Rufus comforting words, a fresh garment, and a nourishing meal? Did Paul receive from her the empathy and tenderness that only a mother can give? We don't know this for sure, but it could explain his unusual greeting in today's text.

I believe that God has given mothers a unique capacity for showing gentleness and compassion, and for influencing the spiritual direction of children. Let's be thankful for our mothers and for those who have been like a mother to us. —Herbert Vander Lugt

God has conferred on motherhood

A true nobility,

And she who gladly fills that role

Can shape man's destiny. —D. De Haan

**A thousand men may build a city,
but it takes a mother to make a home.**

A Christian who helps to place orphans in homes tells about a lovable little Russian boy named Ivan. When he learned that he might be able to leave the orphanage, he said, “Please, will you find me a mother?”

Fathers are important too, but there are times when nothing but a mother's touch will do. Even grown men need it.

The apostle Paul, probably in his fifties, sent special greetings to a fellow believer in Rome named Rufus. Interestingly, he added greetings to “his dear mother, who has been a mother

IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS

READ:
2 Kings 13:1-13

**Be an example to
all believers in what
you say, in the way
you live, in your
love, your faith,
and your purity.**
—1 Timothy 4:12

A father and son were walking along the beach. The boy was lagging behind and suddenly shouted, “Look, Daddy, I’m walking in your footsteps!” This prompted the man to think about his responsibility to provide spiritual leadership for his son.

Second Kings 13 records a sad period in the history of God’s people. The kings of Israel were not obeying the Lord but were following in the footsteps of their evil fathers. The sinful practices of one generation were repeated by the next, and the blessing of the Lord was

withheld from the nation.

Whether they are aware of it or not, fathers set an example for their children. An unknown author wrote:

*A careful man I ought to be;
A little fellow follows me.
I do not dare to go astray
For fear he’ll go the selfsame way.
Not once can I escape his eyes;
Whate’er he sees me do he tries.
Like me he says he’s going to be—
That little chap who follows me.*

*I must remember as I go
Through summer sun and winter snow,
I’m molding for the years to be—
That little chap who follows me.*

Fathers, be careful where and how you walk! Someone’s following in your footsteps! —Richard De Haan

**A child may not inherit his father’s talents,
but he will absorb his values!**

THAT'S MY DAD!

READ:
Proverbs 23:15-24

**The godly walk with
integrity; blessed
are their children
who follow them.**
—Proverbs 20:7

You don't have to meet a man face to face to know what kind of a father he is. Just listen to the way his children refer to him.

The respect that children have for their parents can be a good indicator of how much respect they deserve. One of the Ten Commandments is to honor our father and mother (Exodus 20:12). But how many parents live in a way that is worthy of honor?

I cannot think of a greater tragedy in life than to lose the respect of my children. I would be the most humiliated man if my children were ashamed of me. But nothing would make my heart beat faster than if my child pointed me out in a crowd and said proudly, "That's my dad!"

A good test of whether you are a father who is respected by his children is to ask yourself, "Do I want my son to be what I am, to do what I do, to go where I go?"

Fathers, remember that never before in all history have your children needed the undivided interest and attention of loving parents as in these days of a polluted moral and spiritual atmosphere.

With the help of God's strength and wisdom, determine to be the kind of parent whose child is proud to say, "That's my dad!" —M. R. De Haan

*A father who emulates God
Is one who is faithful and true;
And if he is honest and strong,
His children will follow him too. —Hess*

**A life lived for Christ is the best inheritance
we can leave our children.**

THE COUNTRY OF OLD AGE

READ:
Mark 7:1-13

[The children's] first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God.
—1 Timothy 5:4

In the book *Another Country*, author Mary Pipher met with people in their seventies, eighties, and nineties who were confronting many different life situations.

“I wanted . . . to understand the country of old age,” Pipher writes. “We are not organized in a way that makes aging easy.” The root problem, she observed, is that young and old have become segregated, to the detriment of both groups.

This social trend is not necessarily intentional. But many people do ignore and shirk their responsibilities for the elderly. In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees found creative ways to avoid their family duties. In Mark

7:9-13, Jesus rebuked their common practice of dedicating their material possessions to God (declaring them as *Corban*) rather than using their assets to provide for their parents. Their tradition had violated the commandment to honor their father and their mother.

Our children, work, and church activities can pull us in many directions. But that doesn’t excuse us from honoring our aging parents by making provision for their needs, as much as we are able (1 Timothy 5:8). When the time comes for us to enter the country of old age, let’s hope we’ve set the right example for our own children to follow. —Dennis Fisher

*Providing for our parents’ needs
With loving words and selfless deeds
Is what the Lord expects of those
Who try to follow where He leads. —Sper*

**Honor your father and mother—
The Fifth Commandment**

HONOR YOUR PARENTS

READ:
Ephesians 6:1-4

**Some people
curse their father
and do not thank
their mother.**
—Proverbs 30:11

It was a sad, unsigned letter from an elderly mother. “I have an only son,” she wrote, “who does all sorts of things for other people but hates to do anything for me. He rarely visits me although I live only 8 minutes away. He seldom even phones.”

God puts a high priority on family relationships throughout life—so says the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12). On the surface it seems directed exclusively to children, but parents must set the example. Children learn to honor, respect, and obey their parents when they see Mom and Dad honoring one another, when they feel respected, affirmed, and loved by their par-

ents, and when they observe their obedience to God. This commandment to children actually touches us all.

How many of us have been as thoughtful of our parents as we could have been? And who of us as parents have been to our children all that we should have been? Although we’ve broken this commandment, our guilt has been removed by Jesus’ death on the cross. He gives the courage to ask forgiveness of our children and our parents. And if they are not living, we can show the sincerity of our repentance by strengthening our other family relationships.

We honor our Father when we honor our parents.
—Dennis De Haan

*Children who honor their parents
Are doing what’s good in God’s sight;
Parents who love and admonish
Are teaching to do what is right. —Sper*

Honoring our parents is learned by example.