

“Honor Your Father *and* Your Mother”



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Gen. 22:1-14, Exod. 20:12, Luke 2:41-52, Eph. 6:1-3, 1 Pet. 5:5.*

Memory Text: “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (*Ephesians 6:2, 3*).

As Seventh-day Adventists, we point to the seventh-day Sabbath as one of our core beliefs. And rightly so. It is part of the Ten Commandments, which encapsulate the basic principles for humanity. But to “honor your father and your mother” (*Exod. 20:12, NIV*) is also one of the foundational principles for a healthy society. It is interesting to note that these two principles—keeping the Sabbath and honoring our parents—are singled out and mentioned together: ““Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths” ’” (*Lev. 19:3, NIV*).

This week we’ll take a look at just this specific concept, of how children, or even how adults, should relate not only to their parents but to those who are older, in general. Because, in almost all cases, no matter who we are or how old we are, we come in contact with those who are even older.

The Week at a Glance: What does the Bible say about how we should relate to older people? How do we honor our parents? Can obedience to our parents ever interfere with our obligations to God? What kind of examples does the Bible leave regarding parent-and-child relationships?

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 10.*

Respect for “Gray Hair” (*1 Pet. 5:5*).

Over the past few decades, in a large part of the world, a youth culture has developed, teaching that the secret of successful living is to remain young and beautiful. Detection of a first wrinkle can cause a minor, or even not so minor, trauma for someone who embraces the ideals of the youth culture. But this youth culture goes far beyond the way we look. Children and young people have become important markets for manufacturers of clothing and sport shoes and for all kinds of gadgets. They are specifically targeted by the entertainment industry, as well as by fast-food chains. Parents are made to feel guilty if their offspring cannot get the latest fads or follow the latest fashions.

Just as worrisome, if not more so, is a parallel trend: In many modern homes in many parts of the world, the younger members of the family tend to set the domestic agenda and to determine the value system by which the home operates.

What basic rule does the apostle Peter refer to as a guiding principle in any relationship between older and younger persons? *1 Pet. 5:5*. How was this same principle regarding the relationship between young and old already embedded in the Mosaic law? *Lev. 19:32*. How do we apply this principle in our dealings with older people?

Showing respect, and being submissive, does not mean accepting everything without comment or complaint; nor must we obey everything anyone older than we are tells us to do. These principles need to be understood in the larger context of all God’s commandments.

At the same time, however, this principle does underline the basic concept that age and experience count and that respect is due those who are older than we are, whatever our age. Indeed, we can honor and respect those who are older than we are, even if we don’t necessarily agree with what they say or believe.

On a purely practical level, why does it make good sense to honor and respect our elders? What justification, outside the Bible imperatives, do we have for such an attitude?

Honoring Our Parents (*Exod. 20:12*).

How we relate to our parents is clearly an important issue. One of the Ten Commandments specifically addresses the parent-and-child relationship.

Read Exodus 20:12. How does this principle inform us about our relationship to our parents? For instance,

- 1. What does honoring mean?**
- 2. Is honoring the same as being obedient? If not, how do these two concepts differ?**
- 3. Is it possible to honor parents whose lifestyles we disapprove of? Can children honor parents even if the parents are abusive?**

“Our obligation to our parents never ceases. Our love for them, and theirs for us, is not measured by years or distance, and our responsibility can never be set aside.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 360.

Read Proverbs 19:26. What further light does this text shed on how we should relate to our parents? Does it mean children have a duty to support their parents materially?

In many societies, aging parents have to rely on the material support of their children. Often elderly parents live in the home of one of their adult children and form part of their *extended* family. In other countries, this is no longer the case. One pays taxes and contributes to social-security systems and expects to be cared for by society when one no longer has regular income from work or can no longer live independently. But, whatever the social system under which we live, children must continue to care for their parents; if not in material ways, certainly in immaterial ways. Few things are more abhorrent than the neglect of aging parents by children too busy to spend time with them.

Why do you think the Lord placed this commandment in the law? What does this commandment tell us about the importance of caring for those (not only of family) who need help?

What About Obedience? (*Eph. 6:1-3, Col. 3:20*).

Many people have a problem with authority. They want either too much or too little. Authoritarian people are a problem to themselves and to others, ruining relationships as they bully their way through life. Those who do not want to exert any authority and/or do not accept any authority are, likewise, a source of trouble. This is true in general but in particular in the parent-child relationship. Parental love does not exclude the concept of discipline and obedience, and the love of children to their parents finds concrete expression in accepting parental authority.

What aspect of the relationship between generations is singled out in Paul's list of last-day conditions? *2 Tim. 3:2*.

Paul's catalogue of elements of godlessness that will be rampant in "the last days" is frightening. It is significant that he mentions disobedience to parents as one of the terrible conditions of the time of the end. This reveals a general moral breakdown that reaches into the inner sanctum of the family, as well. And if the family is falling apart, there's little hope for society as a whole.

How does the Bible stress the importance of the acceptance of parental authority? *Eph. 6:1, Col. 3:20*.

The obedience the Bible demands is not blind obedience, and respect for parental wishes cannot simply be enforced but must, to a significant degree, be earned. Parents may make demands, but these must be reasonable, consistent, and always with the best interest of the child and, most important, not contrary to other biblical principles.

Do children ever reach an age when their parents may no longer expect respect, if not necessarily obedience, from them? If so, when? When the children leave the home? Or when they become legal adults? Can we show our parents respect and honor while not obeying them? If so, how?

Parents and Children: Part 1

The Bible is, in many ways, a family history. All through its pages, we are shown the lives of families, often revealed in the context of parent-and-children relationships. Some of these relationships are quite healthy; others aren't. Yet, all are placed in the Bible for reasons, because all can teach us something. The culture back then was radically different from our culture today, but basic principles remain.

Look up the following texts. What can we learn from them about how we should or should not relate to our parents?

Gen. 22:1-14

Genesis 27

Lev. 20:9

Deut. 21:18-21

2 Sam. 15:1-12

Matt. 8:21, 22

Luke 2:41-52

John 19:26, 27

Parents and Children: Part 2

Yesterday's study provided us with some powerful and dramatic examples of parent-and-children relationships, particularly in the context of how children should relate to their parents. The hard question is, How do we apply those examples to us, today, such as those in Deuteronomy, where rebellious children who don't obey their parents should be taken out and stoned? Or what do we do with the Abraham and Isaac story (obeying and honoring your parents is one thing, but this . . .)?

Again, keeping in mind the time and culture in which these incidents occurred, what universal principles can you draw from these stories that help us understand how we are to relate to our parents while, at the same time, keeping our first loyalty to the Lord?

It is clear from some of these accounts that there can be a conflict between obeying parents and obeying the Lord. Read Genesis 27:8 for one example. Or look at the situation in Matthew 8:21: What could be more basic and honorable than burying one's own father?

Read Ephesians 6:1. What does this say that helps us better understand our obligations to our parents in light of our walk with the Lord?

Notice in Ephesians 6:1 that Paul not only tells children to obey their parents "in the Lord" but gives the reason why they should: "for this is right." And why is it right? The next verses give the reason: Because it is a commandment of God.

A young woman had grown up in a home of abusive, drug-addicted, even violent parents whose shameful treatment of her as a child left the woman an emotional cripple. Eventually, she became a follower of Jesus. How is she supposed to honor her father and mother?

Further Study: “Isaac believed in God. He had been taught implicit obedience to his father, and he loved and revered the God of his father. He could have resisted his father if he had chosen to do so. But after affectionately embracing his father, he submitted to be bound and laid upon the wood.”—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 82.

“Said one of her mother, ‘I always hated my mother, and my mother hated me.’ These words stand registered in the books of heaven to be opened and revealed in the day of judgment when everyone shall be rewarded according to his works.

“If children think that they were treated with severity in their childhood, will it help them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, will it make them reflect His image, to cherish a spirit of retaliation and revenge against their parents, especially when they are old and feeble? Will not the very helplessness of the parents plead for the children’s love? Will not the necessities of the aged father and mother call forth the noble feelings of the heart, and through the grace of Christ, shall not the parents be treated with kind attention and respect by their offspring? Oh, let not the heart be made as adamant as steel against father and mother!”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 362.

Discussion Questions:

- ① **Read again Exodus 20:12. What qualifications, or exceptions, if any, does it place on the commandment to honor our mother and father?**
- ② **What do you think it means to honor your parents “in the Lord”? How does that help us better understand what is said in Exodus 20:12?**

Summary: In today’s society, the rights of children are very much emphasized. And rightly so. But we should not lose sight of the fact that older people are also important and that they have the right to be respected by the youth. The commandment to “honor” our parents applies to the young and to the not so young. Our parents deserve our support and respect and, above all, our love. Families cannot function adequately if there is no respect for authority.

The Bus Ride: Part 2

by KRASIMIR KAREV

I met Stefan at the bus stop on a cold evening. I could tell he was burdened down with a heavy weight of care. I felt impressed to speak to him and prayed that God would tell me what to say. On the bus ride across the city we talked, oblivious to the cold inside the bus or the snow swirling around outside. Little by little I saw a glimmer of hope in Stefan's eyes.

We talked about God's love for the sinner and about Jesus Christ, the Savior. I could see hope begin to light his eyes. As we approached my stop, I gave him the address of the church in the town where I lived and told him when services were held. Then we parted.

Two weeks later on Saturday evening, Stefan came to the church for vespers. He had brought a chess game with him, in hopes of playing a game of chess with me. At the end of the service I greeted him warmly and introduced him to several men in the church whom I had asked to pray for Stefan. He told me that after we had talked that night on the bus he had decided to find the courage to continue living rather than commit suicide. I asked Stefan if he could share with me what had happened in the past two weeks. He agreed, so we went outside into the cold and talked for two hours.

He told me that he had learned that his wife was having an affair. He had decided to move to a town in Bulgaria as far from his wife as possible. I asked him if I could pray for him before he left, and he agreed. We prayed, then I gave him my telephone number, and we parted. I did not know if I would ever see Stefan again, but I prayed for him every day.

A few months later my telephone rang. It was Stefan. He sounded so happy, so well, that I hardly recognized him. He had located the Adventist church in his city, and the members had welcomed him and loved him. He had found a job and was enjoying his work. He was studying the Bible and seemed sincerely eager to learn more about what God had in store for him.

And he told me of the surprise that had awaited him—he had learned that his great-grandmother had been an Adventist. "I have found myself!" he exclaimed. "I am saved!"

Later still, I learned that Stefan had been baptized into the Adventist Church. God took a man at the end of his rope on a freezing night and warmed him with His love. He truly is able to save to the uttermost.

KRASIMIR KAREV is a pastor in Pernik, Bulgaria.