

June 16, 2006

## Encouragement for Today

Principle 2

### “Honoring Father”

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**Key Verse:** Exodus 20:12, “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land the LORD your God is giving you” (NRSV).

### Devotion:

John Huffman tells the story of a young father in a supermarket with his son:

Dad was pushing a shopping cart with his little boy strapped in the front. The little boy was fussing, irritable, and crying. The other shoppers gave the pair a wide berth because the child would often pull cans off the shelf and throw them outside of the cart. Despite this chaos, the father seemed to be very calm; as he continued down each aisle, he murmured: "Easy now, Donald. Keep calm, Donald. Steady, boy. It's all right, Donald."

A mother passing by was greatly impressed by this young father's calm demeanor. She said, "You certainly know how to talk to an upset child—quietly and gently." Then, bending down towards the little boy, she asked, "What seems to be the trouble, Donald?"

"Oh no," said the father. "He's Henry. I'm Donald."

Children, while a gift from God, are also sometimes a father's greatest challenge. They depend on Dad for so much—food, shelter, clothing, dance lessons, baseball equipment, transportation and wise counsel - yet often show him little appreciation in return. This weekend brings Father's Day and a great opportunity to follow the fifth commandment to show Dad some old-fashioned respect.

“Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12 NRSV). This command to show our earthly fathers honor is echoed in Deuteronomy 5:6 which reads, “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” (NRSV). Leviticus 19:3 commands it as well, ““You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.”

The word honor in the Exodus and Deuteronomy scriptures is *kabed* in the Hebrew, which is a verb with no specific actions attached. It has to do with positive actions that are helpful – that will bring the parent joy or a better life.

The Leviticus scripture, however, uses the Hebrew word *tira'u*, which has to do with an attitude of respect for their parental position. It also means that we are not to take our parents' position or to diminish the esteem due them from others. So, "honoring" could be thought of as positive actions which flow from a healthy respect for a position.

Unfortunately, with divorce and out-of-wedlock birth rates on the rise, many people today don't really know their fathers – and they may harbor ill feelings over his decided absence. Others may know their Dad, but feel he's not been deserving of their respect. The Lord, however, is calling us to honor their position, even if we do not find their execution of the position very honorable. We are called by Christ to treat others, including our fathers, as we would have them treat us (Matthew 7:12). This can be hard, but God assures it will both please Him and benefit us.

Perhaps you never knew who your father was, or perhaps he was absent in your life. Such was the case for a one Minnesota man, Marty Johnson, as reported by ABC News in June 2005.

Marty Johnson knew he was the product of two young college students who had a brief love affair. Neither parent believed they were prepared to deal with raising a child, so they gave Johnson up for adoption. Subsequently, he grew up in a loving home in Minnesota. Years later when he was an adult, a search through past records enabled him to locate and contact his birth-mother.

A while later, a letter arrived for him that said, "Welcome to the Ogike dynasty! You come from a noble and prestigious family." The letter explained that Johnson was the next in line to inherit the position of village chief from his biological father, John Ogike, the current chief of Aboh village in Nigeria.

Johnson flew to Nigeria to meet his new family. He went from having no knowledge of any blood relatives to a noisy celebration in the village in his honor! There he was united with brothers and sisters, numerous aunts and uncles, cousins, and of course, his father.

In a similar way, Jesus' is God's "surprise letter" to us declaring that we are a child of God, an heir of God and co-heir with Christ. Let's be sure to give our Heavenly Father and our earthly one the honor due them this Sunday.

**My Prayer for Today:**

Dear Heavenly Father, I give you all honor, glory and praise today. You truly are deserving of an eternity's worth of respect. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

**Application Steps:**

Ideas for honoring younger dads: make his favorite meal and tie a helium balloon to his table chair, take turns around the table telling Dad one thing you like about

him; clean his car inside and out; give him a subscription to a magazine he likes, be it US News and World Report or Runner's World.

For older dads: make his favorite meal and/or plan to spend a few hours with him listening to his stories. Make a pot of coffee or pitcher of tea and ask him about early jobs he held, favorite friends he had, or about the most exciting thing he ever did. His answers just might surprise you!

**Reflection Points:**

What have I done lately to honor the father(s) in my life?

Do I harbor grudges against him that I need to release and forgive?

**Power Verses:**

Peter 2:13-17, "For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (NRSV)

Proverbs 17:6, "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers." (NKJ)

Colossians 3:24, "Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ." (NLT)

**Additional Resources:**

Capture His Heart, by Lysa TerKeurst

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_captureHis.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_captureHis.htm)

Wild at Heart, by John and Stasi Eldridge

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_wildAtHeart.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_wildAtHeart.htm)

When Your Marriage Dies: Answers to Questions about Separation & Divorce

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_whenMarriage.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whenMarriage.htm)