

though certainly we could come up with many more. I will warn in advance: In every case there will be temptations to say, "Yes, but you don't know who your parents are or what they did to me." I understand that in some cases showing honor may be difficult or very nearly impossible. There are many circumstances. But for now, let's simply consider some practical ways in which we can display honor to our parents.

Forgive Them

Perhaps the most important way we can honor our parents is to forgive them. The fact is, there are no perfect parents. All parents have fallen far short of their children's expectations and, in all likelihood, even their own expectations. Our parents have sinned against us. They have made unwise decisions; they have had unrealistic expectations; they have said and done things that have left us deeply wounded. For that reason, many children enter adulthood controlled by anger and bitterness and find themselves unable to move past their parents' mistakes or their parents' sin.

wounded him. In the very moment the nails were driven into his flesh, he cried out “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Standing at the foot of the cross and considering such a Savior, who are we to withhold forgiveness from our parents? We honor our parents by extending grace and forgiveness to them.

Speak Well of Them

Another way we can honor our parents is to speak well of them, to refuse to speak evil of them. We live at a time when it is considered noble to air our grievances, when it is considered therapeutic to air our dirty laundry. We think little of telling the world exactly what we think of our politicians, our bosses, our parents. Yet the Bible warns us that we owe honor and respect to all of the authorities God has placed over us (Romans 13:7). It warns us that our words have the power to extend honor or dishonor. We cannot miss that in the Old Testament the penalty for cursing parents is the same as the penalty for assaulting them (Exodus 21:15-17, Leviticus 20:9), for the root sin is the same. To curse parents or to

God calls every child of every age to show honor to our parents, to refuse to dishonor our parents. God calls us to honor them as the outflow of honoring him. He calls us to be people who respect his sovereignty by respecting the parents he saw fit to give us. In what ways is God calling you to show honor to your parents?

principles: Children are to make some return to their parents (4) and Christians who will not provide for their family members are behaving worse than unbelievers (8). Commentators are nearly unanimous in extending these principles to children and their elderly parents. "African and Asian cultures, which have developed the extended in place of the nuclear family, are a standing rebuke to the West in this matter."

When children are young, God expects parents to provide for them (2 Corinthians 12:14). But, "when parents grow old and feeble, it is then that roles and responsibilities are reversed." "Christian sons and daughters are responsible for the [financial] care of widows and, as the text expands it, of their helpless parents and grandparents." William Barclay says much the same: "The raising of children requires tremendous sacrifice and it is only right that children make sacrifices for parents in return." We might also consider Mark 7:9-13 and Jesus's harsh rebuke of the Pharisees for their refusal to care for their parents.

Perhaps no form of honor more deeply cuts against

well of them after they have died, to speak well of them to our siblings, to our spouses, to our church communities, modeling a counter-cultural kind of honor and respect that has long since gone missing in too many contexts. Christian, speak well of your parents and refuse to speak evil of them.

Esteem them Publicly and Privately

A third way to show honor to parents is to give them esteem both privately and publicly. In a powerful sermon on the fifth commandment Pastor Tim encourages children to "Respect their [parents] to see themselves in you." Parents long to see how they have impacted their children, how their lives are a reflection of their strengths, their values, and their faith. You don't realize how important it is to give them honor where you can. You don't realize how critical it is to say, 'You know, everything I really ever learned about saving money I learned from you.' You don't realize how important it is to say, 'You know, Dad, that was one thing you taught me that I really, really appreciated.'

children to write a formal tribute to their parents, to present it to them and to read it aloud in their presence. We can honor our parents by esteeming our parents.

Seek Their Wisdom

We honor our parents when we seek their wisdom through life's twists and turns. The Bible constantly associates youth with folly and age with wisdom (Proverbs 20:29, Job 12:12) and tells us that those who have lived longer lives have generally accumulated greater wisdom. We do well, then, to lean on them for understanding, to seek their input when faced with major decisions. In some cultures this is expected and in some it is eschewed. But either way, it honors our parents when we seek their help, even if in the end we cannot or must not heed it.

Support Them

We can also honor our parents by supporting them. I am not yet speaking of financial support, but other

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When we are young we gain strength and lose independence. Our parents raise us to be strong and free! But there is a trade-off here, a passing of the baton, for as our parents age they become feeble and they begin to lose their independence (Ecclesiastes 12:1-8). We honor our parents by giving them the assurance that we will not forsake them in their old age. Just as they cared for us, we will care for them. This is our responsibility and it ought to be ours.

At a time when millions of elderly adults are alone, consigned to nursing homes and hospitals, cared for by professionals rather than family members, Christians have the opportunity to give them special honor. I read on Facebook lately "there is a Christian obligation for hands-on, loving care." Nurses may be employed, but there must be someone who cannot be done by proxy. Emotional neglect and abandonment is not an option, for such care is worse than an unbeliever."