

rB Dishonoring Parents | Rod Brace

<http://rodbrace.com/article/honor>

Ominous clouds are forming on the horizon of our culture's future. A storm created by converging forces is darkening the sky. Our predisposition to living for the moment is blocking our view of the growing disturbance. The ingredients for this "perfect storm" have been generations in the making. Grounded in a self-centered living, we easily miss the increasing winds and far off rumbling of a threatening change in weather. The merging weather fronts are easily seen yet often ignored:

Record number of Americans are moving into traditional retirement years without the adequate financial means to provide for basic needs.

Life expectancy is increasingly longer given advancements in health care and pharmaceuticals, however, the ability for senior adults to afford these expensive treatments is diminishing.

Government programs are currently under-funded to care for this growing elderly population.

The U.S. culture has tendencies toward being "youth-centered" making it a backward-facing society that values youth and de-values aged adults.

Parenting techniques have transitioned to a child focused pattern of materialism that fails to teach respect for adults while teaching children a paradigm of entitlement.

Honor and respect for positions of authority are being lost to a media driven culture of new, young and rebellious.

The extended family living under one roof has been set aside as a pattern of living that is undesirable, leaving the aging generations to fend for themselves against mounting financial and social pressures.

"There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother." (Proverbs 30:11)

We have become a generation that is inconvenienced by responsibilities that require attention, expense or time spent on someone other than ourselves. An adult child called upon to care for an ill parent becomes bitter and resentful of the obligation. The self-centered life we have carefully purchased becomes threatened by a seemingly ancient obligation to honor and care for our elderly parents.

The shift in our culture has been subtle. Bertrand Russell wrote: "I was born in the wrong generation. When I was a young man, no one had respect for youth. Now I am an old man and no one has any respect for age." Children were once taught to respect their elders, work

hard, save for their desires, and spend time learning from those who have gone before them. We have in many ways failed our children in these areas by teaching them to live for the moment buried in buy it now credit. They have not seen often enough what it means to care for each other in moments of stress and illness. Our children have grown to expect the attention, expect the privilege, expect the good fortune in ways that were once unknown.

“Honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” (Exodus 20:12)

“Honor” as it is used in Exodus literally means “to be heavy.” It is a term used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe Samuel, a man who was much respected and sought out for his wisdom. This “honor” implies a person not to be taken lightly. Samuel was a man of distinction; a national treasure. To honor our parents in such a way means that we approach them with a reverential awe for what they have done for us and for the position that God has granted them in our life. Our existence was made possible by the collaboration of God, our mother and our father. For that reason, they are to be much honored in a way that we rarely practice today.

It is impossible to honor another, when all we really care about is ourselves. As the fifth commandment of the ten that God gave Moses, “Honor your father and mother” is by inclusion on that list a weighty or “heavy” commandment for which we are responsible to God for its obedient inclusion in our daily life. The magnitude of the commandment calls for far more than a card on special occasions or our annual trip back home. It is a commandment to adults with a call to action. It is a spiritual place that begins with our relationship with God spilling over to our relationship with our parents. It means physical provision for their needs. Honor encompasses encouragement for them in difficult times.

God did not qualify the commandment to honor our parents as something they must first earn or deserve. It is a response to the provision that God has given us despite our undeserving nature toward Him. As the looming storm approaches with colliding forces of economic disaster, health issues and generational indifference, our society will be greatly challenged. It is not in our government’s role to provide the honor commanded of us to give to our parents. It is a requirement that God commands as the way life is designed. We are called to participate in the honorable care of our family in a way that grows dignity for all involved.

Frequent Questions about Honoring our Parents:

Q: If my parents are dishonorable people why should I be expected to honor them?

A: The short answer is because God commands it. He didn’t make it an if/then equation. Much like we should honor the position of the President of the United States even if we don’t support the politics of the current office holder, we are to honor our parents for the position they serve in God’s design for life.

Q: How does this command relate to my in-laws?

A: In the scripture we find that it applies. David showed tremendous honor to Saul, by sparing his life and calling him father. This honorable reaction was despite Saul's desire to kill David. Saul was David's father-in-law. It is important to remember that a God-ordained marriage creates a unity of one spirit though. If there is disagreement among a married couple as how to respond to a parent, it is important that you work through that disagreement first so that the decision to honor is a mutual decision. If disagreements related to honoring a parent persist, it is likely a sign that you or your spouse need to go back and work on your relationship with God first. The command to honor is from God, not your spouse.

Q: Does honoring one's parents require that as adults we obey them?

A: No. Honoring your parents evolves as you grow toward adulthood. As a child you are to obey your parent within the reasonableness of safety and legality. As a teenager, honor evolves into a respect for their authority over us. As an adult child, honor evolves into kindness, thoughtfulness, care, provision and protection. At no time are you expected to "relieve" them of their God sanctioned position as parent. Instead you are to continue to respect their position while caring for them. However, obedience is not required to demonstrate respect and honor.

Q: What if my parents are involved in sinful or self-destructive behaviors?

A: God does not expect you to participate in these behaviors by enabling, encouraging or financing them. The expression of where your beliefs differ from those of your parents can be done in an honorable and respectful fashion. It is important that you spend time developing a strong loving relationship so that discussions involving differences are not seen as intrusive or unexpected.