

How to Write a Tribute to Your Parents

A step-by-step guide

Creating a written Tribute to your parents – a formal document honoring them for what they’ve done right - is not as difficult as you may think.

Parents do not care about your gifts as a writer or a grammarian. They feel honored by the fact that you are speaking from the heart. To be effective, a Tribute must include emotion and a piece of your heart. You can accomplish this as you include special memories – those times of happiness, joy, celebration and even pain and sadness that recapture how you felt as a child.

The best way to begin writing a Tribute is to set aside a large chunk of time – perhaps an afternoon – to be alone with God and start putting thoughts and memories on paper. Here are a few suggested steps for this time:

Step One: Prepare Your Heart

Spend some time in prayer and fellowship with God. Talk with Him, read His Word and allow Him to search your heart. As Psalm 139:23-24 says, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.”*

Here are a few questions to help you:

- Are you willing to look at your parents through the eyes of Christ?
- Are you looking to God, rather than your parents, for approval?
- Are your motives pure? Are you seeking to manipulate your parents through this gesture in any way? Is honoring them your goal?
- Are you prepared to honor them regardless of their response?
- Do you need to ask for their forgiveness for anything?
- Are you willing to forgive them for how they may have hurt you?

Step Two: Create a List of Memories

Your goal here is to collect as many memories as you can. Write down the good memories you have about your childhood – events, happy occasions, interesting experiences with your family, things your parents taught you and more. Don’t be selective yet – you want to pull memories out of your mind and put them on paper.

Unless you had a parent who deserted you at a young age or a totally evil parent, you should be able to recall at least 10 or 15 specific good things about your parents. It may take a weekend, or even a couple of weeks, but usually those memories are stuffed in your brain – it’s just a matter of bringing them out.

You might want to start with an hour alone, just writing down anything you can remember. Then, over the next week or two, carry around a notepad or some small cards and write down anything that comes to mind. You will be surprised how, once you start, little things will spark memories – smells, sights, things people say, things your kids do.

The following questions should loosen a few rusty drawers in your brain:

- What was your favorite gift your dad or mom ever gave you?
- What memorable conversations do you remember having with your parents?
- Where did you go on vacations? What did you do?
- What was your happiest moment as a child?
- What did you enjoy doing with your dad and mom?
- What holiday traditions did you observe?
- What problems did your parents help you with as a child? As a teenager?
- What pets did they get for you?
- What activities did they encourage you to be involved in?
- What activities did they participate in with you (as a coach, teacher, etc.)?
- What was the funniest moment you experienced with your family?
- What special phases did your family invent?
- What nicknames did people in your family have, and how did they earn them?
- What was your favorite birthday?
- What did other people think of your parents? How did they react to them?
How did they treat your father at work?
- What did you admire about your parents?
- In what ways are you like them in your personality, skills, habits, etc.?
- How did your parents display affection for you?
- What character qualities did they model that have stuck with you?
- What values that you learned from them are now being passed on to your children?

Step Three: Organize Your Material

After you have finished your “List of Memories,” go through the list and select the memories you feel are most important to include in the Tribute. Then begin writing your Tribute just as if you were writing a letter. Explain why you’re writing the Tribute, and then use your list to show what they did right as parents.

After you’ve written your first draft, look for ways to improve it. Does everything make sense? Is the writing clear enough to understand what you are describing? It might help to have other people – your mate, or some friends – look at your Tribute because they may spot some problems you haven’t thought of. They can also point out any grammar or spelling errors you didn’t catch.

Finally, rewrite the Tribute on a fresh sheet of paper – or type it into a computer. You might even want to frame the final product and present it to your parents to make it a true keepsake!

~ Taken from the Resources at FamilyLife.com