

## **How to Relate to Parents**

**INTRODUCTION** – Parental love for children is something that comes naturally to all parents. There is no need for God to command parents to love their children. However, when it comes to the children's love for their parents, it does not come naturally to them. The LORD has to command children to honour their parents.

The penalty for cursing or smiting parents is death in Old Testament times for the nation of Israel. This was part of their civil law (Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9). God has a very definite view of children who disrespect their parents. They were severely punished for their sin.

Why is there such a great need for children to respect their parents?

Children are the future of every society. When they become adults they take over every top level of society including the government. They have the power to change laws and affect the lives of millions by the new laws. If the laws are evil and draconian in nature, the people suffer. The society dies because it enters into moral decay and debauchery. The next generation that follows such an evil leadership can only become worse. It will not get better.

Fast forward the time line to 120 years (supposedly three generations), the world would be ruined by anarchy and immorality like in the days of Noah before the LORD destroyed the earth with a global flood. In the past, this form of corruption was localized to certain nations. Many of these nations belonged to the western world where sexual promiscuity such as pornography, fornication and adultery had become the normal way of life. The drug culture fuelled such an evil lifestyle. Murders and killings of all sorts become rampant and lawlessness had taken over many parts of modern society where the law was in the pocket of drug lords and corrupt city officials. Instead of enforcing the law, they turned a blind eye to crime and the society suffered.

There is no turning back today. The road to self destruction and chaos is before us. Globalization has shrunk our world into a micro society. Everywhere we go it is the same, like home.

This downward spiral begins with children dishonouring their parents. But is it not true that children are shaped and moulded by their parents? When children fail, it is because parents have failed their children first! This is not a blame game but the reality of life! There is no winner when fingers are pointed. Both the children and parents can still do something right now to fix whatever state our families might be in.

The answer is Jesus Christ!

We cannot salvage the society and the world at large. However, we can still salvage our homes and perhaps the tiny corner of the world that we live in. The people that God brings into our lives who mean something to us are our world which we can still save and influence through the Word of God.

### **I. How to Relate to Parents – You are Irrevocably Linked –**

- **Proverbs 19:26**, "He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach." – [synthetic parallelism]

The impact that children have on their parents is emphasized in this verse.

The wastage here is in the estate of the father as well as the hard work that the father has put in to bring him up properly. These are always regarded as priceless in the eyes of God. The selfless labour in bringing up children is beyond value.

He “chase away his mother” means that he could cause his own mother to avoid and abhor his presence. Mother's love for her own children is beyond measure. It is even greater than father's love because of the months that she carried the child in her womb. There is a bond between mother and child that the father can never comprehend even if he tried. Mother's love for her children is often unconditional and sacrificial. Despite such a strong love, the child can drive the mother away!

What kind of conduct could evoke such a grievous response from mother?

He is a son that causeth shame. The word “shame” means to bring about disappointment. The parents are disappointed by his life of waste (a lifetime of investment) and the result is one of nothingness.

He is also a son who bringeth reproach. The word “reproach” is a stronger word than the word “shame”. It has the idea of one who brings confusion to the parents’ hearts. They are not only disappointed but are thoroughly thrown into great confusion, like someone who had plotted a wrong course and ended up into the wrong place in life!

- **Proverbs 17:6** "Children's children *are* the crown of old men; and the glory of children *are* their fathers." – [synthetic parallelism]

The greatest man who lived to see his great, great, great grandchildren was Adam. He lived to see the birth of Lamech. Adam was 874 when Lamech was born. The only one he did not see was Noah. Lamech was the 8th generation.

The symbiotic relationship between parents and their children is described here. The crown of old men is their children's children. The descendants of the man and how they lived reflect the character of the man. The greater they are, the greater would be the glory of the man they descended from. The Bible calls it the crown of old men. Children and grand children who are good and godly are a joy and a crown to their fathers.

On the other hand, the Bible here says that the glory of children are their fathers. If the parents are godly and good, their children would be proud to say that they descended from such good and godly parents.

Who wants to be proud of the fact that they are descended from Hitler or some other monster?

## **II. How to Relate to Parents – Obey Parents Always –**

- **Proverbs 1:8** "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: **Proverbs 6:20** My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:" – [both are synonymous parallelisms]

Both these verses teach the same truth. The imperative is used in both the verbs – hear and keep. They are not negotiable. The command from the LORD is that every child must obey

the instructions and commandments of their parents. These instructions and commandments are supposed to be the Word of God. But they are not limited to only the Word of God. The father has seen life in the world that will help his child make less mistakes. He has made them himself and would like to protect his children from making these harmful mistakes.

The law of the mother would be instructions that she gives that would also include the Word of God. She also has seen life from her perspective. She can give advice for her children to observe so that combined with the father's instructions they would be well prepared to face this evil and dangerous world.

Take heed to the instruction of parents. It will put you in good state in time to come. You will make less mistakes and experience less hurt and pain in life.

- **Proverbs 4:1-4 (KJV)** "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. **2** For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. **3** For I was my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. **4** He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live." – [This is a mashal ode]

The lesson of obeying parents must not die but must continue on from one generation to the next. If this happens, just imagine how wise the future generations would be. The mistakes they commit would be lesser and lesser. Their lives would be more enriched. The continuation factor is something that we seldom cherish. Therefore we lose it just as fast as it started in our lives. We do not pass it on to our children.

Do you know what you want to pass on to your children? What have you passed on to your children thus far?

- **Proverbs 23:22** "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." – [synthetic parallelism]

The command is to listen or obey your father who gave birth to you.

This means that God has chosen your father for you, obey him.

This means that your father has given his life for you, listen to him.

This means that you owe your life to your father, listen to him.

Never despise your mother. The word "despise" means "to show contempt or disrespect." She loves you the most. Do not look down on your mother just because you are younger and think that you know better. Be patient with your mother especially when she is old. Do not think that now you have your higher education and she has now become a burden to be cast aside. Old people are like babies in many ways. They cannot eat and care for themselves just like babies. The big difference is that old people are not as cute and are much heavier than babies so that one cannot carry them like babies.

- **Proverbs 23:26-28**, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men." –

This is an example of the kind of advice that parents ought to give and children must pay very close attention to obey!

### III. How to Relate to Parents – Accept Chastening Always –

- **Proverbs 13:1** "A wise son *heareth* his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke." – [antithetical parallelism]

If you want to be wise, listen to or obey your father's instruction. Many children today think that they are very smart and that their father's ways are ancient. They believe that there is a generation gap! Do not confuse change and advancement in modern science and technology with old fashioned sinful nature. Old fashioned sinful nature has not changed. It remains the same. Total depravity will always be total depravity. The word "instruction" is the same word which means chastisement or discipline.

The son who refuses to obey the father's instruction is a scorner. He "makes his mouth" at what the father says. There is no sound when he makes his mouth. The outward facade of obedience is also a way to scorn. Obedience has to come from the heart. Obey willingly, not grudgingly. Grudging obedience will stop once the father dies. Genuine, sincere and heartfelt obedience never dies with the father's death because it is from a conviction of the heart.

- **Proverbs 15:5** "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." – [antithetical parallelism]

The son who refuses to obey his father is a fool. The word "fool" does not just refer to one who commits foolish acts like what Nabal did (Abigail's husband in 1 Samuel). This word "fool" means "a perverse person." His life is one of wickedness and sin and evil. His life smells with a terribly disgusting odour! His life stinks! The word "instruction" is the same as in the previous verse above. It means chastisement. The father will rebuke or discipline when necessary. Take heed when that takes place. He does so to stop you from sinning so that you may come back to the right path.

However, when the son regardeth reproof, i.e. more than just chastisement, it includes correction, he is considered prudent by God (wise and judicious in his ways). The word "regardeth" literally means "guard or keep." You only guard something you consider as precious. This is the same word as "keep" Deuteronomy 5:12 (keep the Sabbath holy). If you do not regard the reproof of your father as precious, you would inevitably despise it. Then it will be your loss and the Bible calls you a fool, i.e. a preserve person!

#### IV. How to relate to Parents – Purposeful Aim always --

- **Proverbs 20:20** "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." – [synthetic parallelism]

Do you aim to be put out in obscure darkness? – If you do, then curse your father or your mother. The word "curse" means to bring father or mother into contempt. It means to have a low esteem of father or mother and to make others think lightly or ill of them as well.

Such a son shall have his lamp put out in obscure darkness which means "the darkest part of darkness." This word is used to describe the apple (darkest part) of the eye in Proverbs 7:2. His lamp would include his spiritual sight which will be taken away from him whereby he will be made spiritually blind. His testimony will be turned into the darkest of night if he lowly esteems his father or mother.

This means that the believer must NOT curse his father or mother. He must NOT lowly esteem them, neither will he cause others to look down on them. His salvation and testimony are at stake.

- **Proverbs 23:24** "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him." – [synonymous parallelism]

Do you aim to be righteous? – If you do, you will make your father very, very happy. This is the kind of rejoicing that money cannot buy. The righteousness that you have is only in Christ Jesus. This is the only kind of righteousness that the Bible speaks of. It is the imputed righteousness that is given to the believer when he becomes a Christian. Then he will be able to live a righteous life where righteousness characterises his manner of life including his speech and deeds and thoughts and motives.

The father who gives birth to a wise child, i.e. a righteous child, will bring much joy to the father. The father being the head of the house is responsible for the child's upbringing. That is the reason he is mentioned here instead of the mother. Of course, the mother will also rejoice. In fact, everyone in the house will rejoice if the son is wise and righteous!

- **Proverbs 28:7** "Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous *men* shameth his father." – [antithetical parallelism]

Do you aim to be wise? – He is wise who keeps, i.e. guards, the law of God by holding on. The other kind of "keep"ing is to prevent others from taking it away like standing guard. This "keep" has the idea of one who guards by holding on to something tightly or hiding it so that no one can find out where he has kept it. The law, i.e. the Word of God, is so precious to this wise son that he will study it and obey it at all costs. No matter what the situation in life might be, he will not let go of the Word of God in his life! The context of this verse is one of poverty. He would rather starve to death than break the law of God.

Conversely, there are those who would befriend riotous men, i.e. gluttons. They would break the Law of God to befriend men with money who can eat whatever they wish in life because of their wealth. By his compromise and sin, he brings shame to his father. His sin and bad

company has turned him into a shameful transgressor of God's Word. It shames his father for having such a son who would sell the Word of God to fill his stomach.

**APPLICATION** – The following two verses from Proverbs sum up our lesson well. There are only two choices for the children to choose from in relation to their parents. **He is either wise or foolish. Which are you?**

**Proverbs 29:15** "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame."

OR

**Proverbs 10:1** "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother."

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Do you find it difficult to relate to your parents? Do you, parents, find it difficult to relate to your children? How much time do you spend talking to your children - from infancy to now? Do you think that open communication with your children is important and good?
2. Do you think that there is a generation gap between you and your parents? Please elaborate. If the answer is yes, do you think this gap can be bridged? What steps have you taken to bridge this gap?
3. How much does the home life affect your working life and vice versa? How much of the church life affects your home life and working life? How are these integrally linked together, if at all? Which life could be said to be the anchor or foundation for the other lives?
4. Do you have a happy home environment? How would you want it to improve to make it better or do you feel that what you have now is the best already and no improvement is necessary? If an improvement is needed, who should begin the effort and how? Please explain your answers.
5. Do you have a purpose in life so that you know what you want to become? Have you arrived? Has your aspiration changed with time or is it still the same? Would you do anything for money and more money including disobeying the Word of God? Would you be prepared to starve and see your family starve rather than disobey God?