

## Topic: Do Not Argue

"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Prov 17:14). We know that we need to be watchful with our words. But often, when opinions differ, we find ourselves getting into a heated debate. King Solomon offered us some sound advice when he stated that we need to stop contention before a quarrel starts. Once strife starts, it is like releasing water – it will flow out unceasingly. In addition, if we stop ourselves before contention starts, it is an honorable act "since any fool can start a quarrel" (Prov 20:3). Let us be wise Christians and prevent arguments before they start. If we do this, it is commendable before the Lord.

## REFLECTION & PRAYER



*Sing hymn 400: More Like Jesus Would I Be.  
We need to be imitators of Christ in all aspects of our lives.  
We need to ask Him to dwell in us, so that we will be  
more like Him everyday, in deed and word. May the Lord  
help us to understand the importance of our speech and  
learn to use it wisely, so that all those who love God can  
be greatly benefited through our words. Let our words  
always be seasoned with salt so that they can move and  
encourage others and give glory to our heavenly Father.*

## Lesson 5

# Honor and Obey

### Listed Scriptures

Ex 20:1–17; Eph 6:1–3; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16, 33; 1 Tim 5:4; Prov 23:22–24

### Lesson Aim

- 1) To know that honoring our parents is the commandment with promise.
- 2) To learn how to honor and obey our parents through examples set by biblical characters.
- 3) To brainstorm specific ways to honor our parents.

### Memory Verse

"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Eph 6:2–3)

### Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Hosea 1–3

## BIBLE BACKGROUND

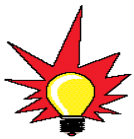


Out of the Ten Commandments, eight start with "You shall not" or "You shall have no." These are all statements forbidding us to carry out a certain act. If we do not follow these commandments, we will be punished. However, two of the Ten Commandments do not start with "You shall not." The first one, recorded in Exodus 20:8 states "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." This commandment begins with "Remember..." and even tells us why and how we should go about observing it. It is a commandment with blessing because the blessings are there for us. The Sabbath is a holy day, filled with God's abundant grace. The other is recorded in Exodus 20:12 and it says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." This is a promise. A promise means that we have not physically received anything yet, but if we do it, or if we follow the commandments, we will receive blessings.

Exodus 21 also records some detailed regulations. In verse 12 it states, "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." Quite clearly we can see that our lives are required of us if we kill another. In verse 15 it says, "And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." If we attack an ordinary person, we have to beat him to death before we repay his death with our life. But if we strike or attack our mother and father, we shall be put to death. Exodus 21:16-17 furthermore says, "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." These are deeds of dishonoring our parents. Even before we seriously injure or harm our parents, we will be put to death.

Thus, if we honor our mother and father, we will live long in the land. But if we don't, it is not a matter of whether we'll live a shorter life, but rather of being put to death. This is a very strict commandment indeed, which requires our obedience in following it through. Honoring our parents is not only our basic duty, but it is also a call for us to act and obey. Only then will we be blessed.

## W A R M U P



Did you know that there are three people involved in bringing you to this world? They are your mother, father, and God. Did you also know that honoring your parents has a direct relationship with honoring God? Yes, they are interlinked. We cannot say that we love God, yet fail to love or respect our parents. If we love God, then surely His love will be instilled within us so that we will be able to love our parents in the same manner. Let's look into this important commandment and how we can learn to show more love to our parents and to our heavenly Father.

## B I B L E S T U D Y



### Part 1

#### *First Commandment with a Promise*

Ephesians 6:1-3 tells us that honoring our father and mother is the first commandment with a promise. Have you ever wondered why is this so? Why is it right for us to obey our parents? Let us look into this.



### *A. To Repay Their Love for Us*

It is a blessing that our parents have raised us ever since we were in the womb. By raising us, they have bestowed grace on us. Our life is given to us by God, through our parents. We must, therefore, remember their love and labor for us. As it says in Proverbs 23:22, "Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old." To honor them is to repay their love (1 Tim 5:4).



### *B. To Obey the Lord's Commandment (Eph 6:1-3)*

The Lord commands us to obey our parents in all things (Col 4:20) and to revere them (Lev 19:3). Since the Lord has made it a commandment, we need to take heed and obey. It is something we should learn in order to show piety at home, as it is our religious duty. By obeying the Lord's command, we are demonstrating our love to Him and to our parents.



### *C. To Be Blessed (Eph 6:1-3; Deut 5:16)*

In order to be blessed by the Lord, we need to first take action and obey our parents. This simple commandment includes a grand promise. Obeying our parents pleases the Lord and leads to a good long life. This is, in fact, not only the first commandment with a promise, but also the first commandment concerning human relationships (Ex 20:12). The promise mentioned in Ephesians 6:3 is that it may be well with the children and that they may live long on the earth. The first part of the promise is related to prosperity in material blessing; it also refers to living in a peaceful situation. The second part is to have longevity. According to this commandment, prosperity and longevity are God's blessings in this life to those who honor their parents.



### Part 2

#### *Learning to Show Piety*

"But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God" (1 Tim 5:4). Have you ever actually thought about how we honor our parents? What does it mean to show filial piety? In this section we will be looking at the fundamentals of learning to show filial piety.

According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, “to honor” means “to regard or treat with respect,” or “to live up to or fulfill the terms of.” How many of us have completely lived up to or fulfilled the terms of our role as children? We often think that honoring our parents means to simply obey them, but if we truly want to treat them with respect it requires a deeper devotion.



### **A. To Take Care of Our Parents (Mk 7:10-13)**

This is the true meaning of honoring our parents. Honoring them is to repay their love and to take care of them. Matthew 15:4–11 records how the Pharisees felt they had already offered money to their parents, so they did not need to look after them. This was not according to the truth of the Bible. The scriptures specifically command us to honor them, which includes taking care of their needs, not just in monetary terms.

The Lord Jesus showed us a perfect example by asking His beloved disciple John to look after His mother (Jn 19:25–27). It was only after He had taken care of this that He said, “It is finished.” From this, we can see the emphasis the Lord Jesus placed on making sure His mother was taken care of. We must, therefore, learn to practice care and love towards our parents.

As our parents age they need us more than ever. We have a great obligation to fulfill our role in serving them and seeing to their needs. We need to love them unconditionally and show it by sacrificing whatever is needed in order to make the latter part of their lives as comfortable physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually as we can. We can never fully repay our parents for giving us the gift of life, but we can show our gratitude through our actions.



### **B. To Obey Our Parents**

To be filial to our parents includes both honoring and obeying them. When Jesus Christ was 12 years old, He went to the temple with His parents. When His parents realized He wasn't with them, they came looking for Him. Even though He knew He should be in the temple of God, He obeyed them and went home with them. He listened to His parents so that He could fulfill His responsibility and show His respect to them (Lk 2:41–50). Likewise, to obey our parents in the Lord is to obey them in the truth. True respect for our parents includes asking them to do

good, according to the Lord's command. Honoring is different from obeying. Obedience refers to an action, whereas honor denotes an attitude. It is possible for children to obey their parents without honoring them. In order to honor their parents, children need a certain attitude, a certain spirit. We therefore need to learn to obey our parents with honor.



### **C. To Allow Our Parents to Share in Our Accomplishments**

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify you” (Jn 17:1). When Jesus Christ was on earth, He fulfilled the glory of God. In the same token, as children we must let our parents share in our glory. Filial piety includes respect, taking care of our parents, and letting them share in our glory (Prov 23:24f).

We often boast that our accomplishments are from ourselves. We have very vivid experiences of our success. Yet we often neglect the fact that our accomplishments are through our parents as well. Let's learn to give thanks to the Lord for our parents, and to let them know how much we appreciate them. Moreover, living a righteous life is an important aspect of honoring parents. We can bring them great pleasure as we strive to live lives of integrity and service as we work diligently to be all that we can be.



### **D. To Bring Our Parents to the Lord**

If we view our gospel as the best, but we do not know how to give the very best to our parents, how can we say we are honoring them? Many will say it is difficult to bring our parents to the Lord, but 1 Timothy 5:4 reminds us to “first learn to show piety at home and to repay [our] parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” Since we have received the best from our parents, we must also offer them the very best that life has to offer—the gift of eternal life.

Ruth has left us a great example of obedience and filial piety. She wanted to cling to her mother-in-law Naomi because she acknowledged God in Naomi's life. She insisted on being with her wherever she went, and for Naomi's God to become her personal God too: “Entreat me not to leave you, Or turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die,

and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me" (Ruth 1:16–17).

The foundation of honoring our parents is to have the same God, to be in one accord in faith, and to have the same spiritual life. Ruth understood this and insisted on honoring her mother-in-law to the very end of her life. Let us learn from her example. If our parents are not yet in Christ, let us strive to bring them this great gift. This is one of the foundations of honoring our parents.

## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



- 1 Why do we need to obey our parents?
- 2 How can we demonstrate filial piety?

## LIFE APPLICATION



### **Part A: A Step Closer to Honoring Our Parents**

With a partner, brainstorm some specific ways you could honor your parents. How might you go about doing this? Be prepared to share with the rest of the class.

1. How I Can Better Honor My Parents
2. Ways I Am Going To Do This

Remember: When you're away at college, make sure you telephone your parents at least once a week, just to let them know how you're doing—they'll appreciate it!

### **Part B: Growing Together With My Parents—How College Improved Our Relationship**

*A strange thing happened to me after I left home and went to college—I started getting along better with my parents.*

*Not to say that I had a horrible relationship with them to begin with, but over the course of my college years, I definitely noticed a change in both the quality and the content of our interactions.*

*Even funnier still, I found that the freedom I had once fought so hard for in high school was no longer the hard-earned result of parent-child warfare. Rather, by the time I graduated from college, my wish to be treated as a mature adult gradually and naturally came true as I learned to behave like one.*

*What brought about these differences in the way I treated my parents and the way my parents treated me? A number of reasons can be identified, but most noticeable among them is the fact that, as my relationship with God improved, so too did my relationship with my parents, especially with my mother.*

### **SOMEWHERE FAR FROM HOME**

*During my adolescence, I used to assume that beneath my parents' setting of rules and limits and behind their demands to know my every whereabouts was their actual intention to demonstrate control.*

*Never one who liked being told what to do, and never one to give up without a fight, you might guess that arguing with my parents was not an uncommon occurrence throughout my adolescent years.*

*Regardless of whether or to what extent they were trying to make clear their authority over me, I was known for firing back full force with a "you can't tell me what to do" attitude.*

*Thank God that halfway into my junior year of high school I received the Holy Spirit during a student spiritual convocation. But by that time, I still had not developed a consistent or lengthy prayer habit.*

*Yet with God's Spirit living in me, I was able to receive the strength to gradually tone down my behavior, which, truth be told, had long ago crossed over the border of proper Christian living into rebellion and sin.*

*As my senior year of high school and the prospect of college neared, I formed several ideas of what I was looking for in a university: somewhere near a True Jesus Church, somewhere near a city, and somewhere far from home.*

*While I was definitely drawn toward the thought of a fast-paced, crowded city life, I recognized that I was also pushed toward that direction by what I saw as my oppressive home environment.*

After I had been accepted into a couple of schools and debated over which one to attend, thankfully, God helped me to realize that choosing the school closest to my home would be best for me because it would allow me to attend the youth Bible study nearby.

While that university also met my requirement of being located near a large city, my dream of moving far from home turned into the reality of a fifty-minute commute from my parents' home.

### **PROVIDING FOR ONE ANOTHER**

While away at school, my parents would call me every few days to see how I was doing. Since they usually worried if we hadn't spoken for over a week, I was obligated to call and check in with them as well.

Because my dad isn't much of a phone person, my mom and I usually did most of the talking. While my father and I were by far not the best of friends, putting my mom and I in the same room could be the most deadly of combinations.

Throughout my teenage years, my mother and I fought often, and we fought hard. Shouting matches that resulted in tears and slamming doors were a painful but common occurrence.

Needless to say, I hardly ever spoke to my parents about personal problems. Therefore, topics such as feelings and frustrations, faith and friends, were strictly off limits.

Regardless, the phone calls to and from home continued. At first, the conversations between my mom and I consisted mostly of what we had done that day, but they eventually evolved into discussions of how we had been feeling that particular day.

After a while, I found that I missed our talks if we hadn't had the chance to speak to each other. After a few semesters of living in the dorms, I realized with some shock that my mother and I had begun to communicate with and depend on each other as (gasp) friends.

My faith during this time was slowly building up with the help of attending the youth Bible studies and my own spiritual cultivation. It dawned on me that the fledgling friendship between my mother and I was also helping to strengthen my faith.

What's more, my mom's spirituality was improving as well. While we weren't nec-

essarily always discussing specific Bible passages as such, we did start to speak openly about our own problems.

For the first time, my mother shared with me the many struggles and trials she encountered in marriage, church, and work life. No longer was she just filling the role of my mother; I came to see her as a person, complete with human needs, weaknesses, and emotions.

As we began to discuss our problems openly, we also began to address these problems through prayer. Oftentimes we would end our long-distance talks by praying together afterwards.

On some mornings or before I would go to bed, I would make a quick call home and ask my mom to pray with me, and she often did the same.

Curiously enough, it often wound up that when my faith was weak, my mother's was strong, and vice versa. Consequently, there would be weeks when my mother would be the one lifting up my spirits, and the next month, I would find myself trying to encourage her.

In this manner, God miraculously provided a way for each of us to receive spiritual support by having us provide for each other.

Our prayers and makeshift testimonies helped me not only to see my mother as an individual, but also as a fellow sister-in-Christ. As stated in James 5:16, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

Helping to bear one another's burdens through sharing and prayer strengthened our relationship with each other and our individual relationships with God.

### **ACCEPTING DISCIPLINE**

Of course, my parents and I still engage in the occasional argument. After all, perfect endings and perfect people are only the works of fiction, and I was reminded of this sobering truth on many weekends or school breaks spent at home.

During those not-so-pleasant instances, the makings of an argument usually went something like this:

Scenario One: Parent asks daughter in a stern tone of voice to do something.

*Interpreting this as an attack on her newfound adulthood and independence, daughter responds back with an irritated tone of voice. Fight ensues.*

*Scenario Two: Daughter makes known her frustration with parent's seeming ineptitude. Taking this as an assault on parental authority and ability, parent responds back in frustration. Fight ensues.*

*The possibilities are endless.*

*Usually, what sets off an argument is not so much what is said but the way it is said. King Solomon was right on the mark when he wrote in Proverbs 15:1 that "a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

*Yes, sometimes our parents may be wrong, but many times, they are in the right. And when our emotions get the better of us in an argument, it's hard for us to tell who's right and who's wrong.*

*What's more, no matter what the situation, we still should not act disrespectfully towards our parents. If we cannot even treat our earthly parents properly, how can we expect to please our heavenly Father? As written in Hebrews 12:9, "Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"*

*The same chapter of Hebrews also teaches us that God disciplines those He loves. Verses 6 and 7 read, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*

*"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"*

*God sometimes trains us in painful ways. Likewise, we may think that parental discipline is too strict at times, but it is usually for our own benefit.*

*And if parental efforts seem less than perfect to us, we need to remember that our parents are, after all, only human. They are not God, but they are trying. Therefore, we must also try our best to repay their efforts with obedience and respect. Patience helps, too. Finally, we need to examine the reasons why we're so offended by our parents' comments in the first place.*

*Most people don't like being told what to do, and most people dislike criticism even more. Unfortunately for them, our parents are the ones stuck with the job of having to dole out the bulk of these hard-to-give and hard-to-receive comments.*

*When we do hear these types of remarks, we must ask ourselves if our desire to retaliate against our parents is actually a result of wounded pride. Proverbs 13:1 tells us that, "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke."*

*Let us not be foolish, but wise children.*

### **ALWAYS A CHILD IN THEIR EYES**

*Despite the fact that I'm now a college graduate and supposedly all grown up, I've realized that I'll always be a child in my parents' eyes.*

*No matter how old we are, whether we're working or starting families of our own, our parents will always be our parents. As a result, regardless of age or abilities, we will always be their children.*

*In Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians concerning how to treat parents, he addressed the believers as "children." For example, in Ephesians 6:1, Paul writes, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."*

*While Paul's letters apply to believers of all ages, he probably wasn't directing this message solely toward toddlers and teenagers. As the apostle who guided them into God's truth and the one who nurtured their spiritual growth, these believers would always be Paul's spiritual children.*

*In the same way, God gave our parents their status as caregivers and guardians. And according to His will and the measure of love He has put in our hearts, we must strive to honor our parents throughout our lives. This is also how we are to honor God.*

*Four years of living on campus also showed me that the longer I lived away from home, the more I looked forward to going home. Yes, absence does make the heart grow fonder, and I've found truth in the saying that we often don't appreciate what we have until it's gone.*

*However, the fact that I no longer minded but enjoyed going back home was also because my home was no longer the same as it was when I had left it. My lifestyle*

*has calmed down considerably since my high school days, and I did some necessary maturing in terms of my behavior, my emotions, and my faith.*

*My parents saw these changes and did some adjusting of their own. Ironically, my parents actually encourage me to get out of the house more, whereas in high school, they seemed to be doing everything in their power to keep me at home.*

*During these four years, you might say that we all grew up together. Now that I've graduated and am living at home again, I really thank God for the changes that He has made in my life and in my relationship with my parents.*

*At the same time, my parents definitely still do treat me like a child in some ways, but I've learned that that's not necessarily a bad thing. While parents sometimes do need to ease their grip a bit, we shouldn't expect them to completely let go, either.*

*Sometimes, it feels good to be held onto.*

*(Manna. "The End Times," Issue 41 Jul-Sept 2003)*

**Questions to think about:**

1. "As my relationship with God improved, so too did my relationship with my parents..." How can our relationship with God help our relationship with our parents? Have you had any experiences of this? Share them with the class.
2. This sister would often call home every few days to check in with her family. Consequently, her phone conversations resulted in a closer and deeper emotional and spiritual link with her mother. What ways do you think you could devise in order to have closer ties with your parents?
3. "Despite the fact that I'm now a college graduate and supposedly all grown up, I've realized that I'll always be a child in my parents' eyes." It often seems that the older you get, the harder it is to honor your parents. How do you think you can continue to honor your parents as you grow older?

**R E F L E C T I O N   &   P R A Y E R**



*Sing hymn 409: Make Me a Blessing.*

*Let's ask the Lord to help make us a blessing to the people around us, especially to our family members. Let us also ask Him to continue to guide us as we learn how to show true filial piety to our parents. May His spirit of love continue to be aglow within us and to make us a blessing to our family.*