



Honor Guard

Text: Exodus 20:12

Care and Bridging Pastor Dan Slagle

1. Think about that Hallmark card moment that Dan described and choosing a card for your parents. Share briefly with the group what that moment looks like for you.
2. A definition of “honoring your parents” is a choice of the will to treat them with respect and dignity, always looking out for their best interest. Honoring our parents doesn’t look the same for any two people.
 - a. What does that look like in your life?
 - b. Can you share how that has changed as you have grown and matured?
 - c. Are there specific ways that you know your parents feel honored?
3. Read Ephesians 3:16-19.
 - a. What did Paul pray for the Ephesians and for what purpose?
 - b. What goal for the Christian life does this give us?
 - c. What must we be “rooted and grounded” in?
 - d. Why must this be the basis for obeying the commands that God lays out for us?
4. Read John 13:35. As a Christian, it is often said that the hardest people to minister to are the people that know you the most and have known you the longest. This is often your close friends and family.
 - a. How have you found ministering to your family or friends to be difficult?
 - b. In what ways have you seen God work in a difficult relationship when you have extended His love or honored them in a difficult situation?

Challenge: Think about where you are in the circles taught today. What step do you need to pray about taking? If your relationship is good, what is one thing you could do to show honor and appreciation in that relationship this week?

- a. No harm
- b. No hatred
- c. Forgiveness
- d. Communication
- e. Relationship

Prayer:

Lord, Make me an instrument of your love. May I see each circumstance in my life as an opportunity to grow in your love. May I see my environment as a place to grow in your love. May I then take this love to other people... When I am tempted to become impatient, help me to be patient. When I am tempted to become unkind, help me to be kind. When I am tempted to become jealous, help me to be tolerant. When I am tempted to become boastful or proud, help me give you the glory. When I am tempted to be rude or selfish, give me the gift of gentleness. When I am tempted to take offense, help me to let go. When I am tempted to become angry with someone, give me the gift of forgiveness. When I am tempted to become resentful, give me your power to love. Lord, grant that I may take no pleasure in criticizing others, but that I may see good in them, as you do. When I begin to concentrate on the faults and failures of others, give me courage to praise their accomplishments. Help me be loyal to those you give me to love. Help me to believe in them, even when they do not believe in themselves. To expect the best from them, but accept the best they can give. May I always defend them, as you always defend me. All gifts and powers come from you. All will come to an end. With one important exception, the gift of love!!! Lord, when I was a child, I thought like a child, I acted like a child, and I reasoned like a child. Now that I have become an adult, I release my childish ways.

Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

5 ways adult children can honor their parents

How should an adult child, whether married or single, relate to his or her parents? There is a tension in Scripture between obeying the Scripture which says to “leave and cleave” in forming your own adult identity and family (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5) and obeying the Scripture which says to “honor your father and mother” (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:2).

Every family has its own rhythm. Every family has its own share of circumstances, from abusive to permissive to annoying, etc. So how one adult child handles his or her parents isn't necessarily a blueprint for another. Still, the Scriptures seem to indicate an intentional approach to the way we love our parents as adults. This is a journey I've travelled in the last few years. I seem to have endured the typical cycle: being cared for and nurtured by my parents as a child, distancing and forming my own identity as a teen (though still wanting their money and food), thinking my generation will solve all the mistakes my parents made, and finally where I am today—appreciating my parents and figuring out how I can love them better. I'm guessing you've travelled a similar road. As I've pondered these important relationships, I've come up with five general, though not exhaustive, guidelines for the way adult children should relate to their parents. Here's the list:

1. Always respect your parents, even when it is difficult.

By honoring, I think the Bible is saying more—but not less—than simple respect. I'm amazed at how I hear otherwise good, godly people treat their parents. I've been in nursing homes where kids are literally yelling and berating their parents. I realize that sometimes parents are not the easiest people to love, but this is why love is something we do in the strength of the Spirit and is not something we primarily feel.

Your parents, regardless of their flaws, brought you into the world. They nurtured and cared for you and loved you the best way they could. Give them some respect, treat them with kindness and deference, and realize that one day you'll be the one in their shoes.

2. Find ways to affirm the good things they did in your childhood.

I'm not sure there is a generation with more childhood angst than mine. We really think our parents messed everything up so badly and that we'll get it just right. I thought this way up until I became a father and realized how difficult parenting could be. I understand the need for catharsis, fleshing out past hurts and using your past as context for your future. But every negative conversation shouldn't start with, “Growing up...”

Instead, let's find ways to affirm the good our parents gave us, which is likely a lot more than we think. Let's tell them to their faces how much we appreciate their care, their love, their goodness. Parents, especially as they age, can be incredibly reflective. They question themselves: Did I do

the right thing? They have regrets, and some even have shame. So be an encouragement to your parents. Do this often, and do it with intentionality.

3. Find ways to bless them in physical ways.

Sometimes this simply means going out for coffee, while listening and letting them talk. Let them tell those same stories they've told before. It's good for them and for you. Or, this might mean lending financial support if your parents fall on hard times without lecturing them. Offer physical support like helping them clean out their home, taking them to doctor appointments, or doing an airport run. And most sacrificial of all, it might mean allowing them, in their advanced age, to stay in your home and care for them. All of this, I think, is in the spirit of what the Scripture means when it says to "honor your father and mother." We should make sure they are always well-cared for as best as we can. It's ironic how the life cycle goes, is it not? Our parents spend their most productive years caring for us, and now we get to return the favor and care for them.

4. Set healthy boundaries.

You need to set healthy boundaries with your parents so they know where the lines are between your family and them. They don't always know this, and if the distance is too big, they can often think they are imposing every time they come over. If the distance is too small, it can suffocate your own family. You need to "leave" your parents in the sense that you need to be financially and physically separate as best you can. And you'll probably have to have some frank conversations at times. Again, every situation is different, so what I'm offering is some general wisdom.

In setting boundaries, always, always, always do it with grace and respect (see number one above). Make sure you are making your own decisions in your family, but don't hesitate to ask your parents for advice. You don't have to take it, but you just might learn something from it and make them feel good, as well.

5. Don't try to change your parents.

The real way to love and honor your parents is to simply love and honor them, despite their flaws and the annoying things you disliked when you were a kid. Put up with whatever it is they do that annoys you. Do it, not because you'll get a tangible benefit, but because they are your parents, and you are to love them. Do it because the Father has loved you despite the more-than-annoying things you have done. Let your parents know they are welcome in your home, that you enjoy having them around, and that they don't have to walk on eggshells around you. Yes, your way of doing family may be different (that's okay). Your parents will probably give your kids candy before dinner (that's okay, too). And you'll find yourself wishing they were a little more this way or a tad more that way. But they are your parents—the ones God gave you—and if you are serious about obeying and following Jesus, you'll seek to honor and love them the best you can.

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