



## Honor—A Heart Attitude

*"Honor thy father and thy mother . . . (Exodus 20:12, KJV).*

Let me say to my daughter, Alana, that I have not targeted her with this verse. She does a great job honoring her parents. Neither have I focused on the two young teens, Yahna (my niece) and Emily (my God-daughter) who read these teaching letters and who I believe are exemplary in honoring their parents. I simply asked the Lord what verse to address for the week, and He said, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

Although Scripture in other places does address children and states, "Children, obey your parents . . ." (Ephesians 6:1), God addressed adults when He gave this commandment to "honor thy father and thy mother." While obeying our parents ceases at some point, honoring them does not. Honoring is an attitude of the heart and is evidenced by our words and actions.

The attitude of our heart is of great concern to God. So are our words and actions, but the heart is the primary focus. If the heart is right, what comes out of the mouth and the things we do will more likely be right. And vice versa. A heart that is not right will not produce right attitudes, words, or actions. It may be possible for a while to hide the true heart condition, but usually not for long. Eventually the true heart attitude will be known by those who are closest or most often with us. God always knew.

God wants us to know the condition of our own heart. Scripture tells us "the heart is deceitful above all things . . ." (Jeremiah 17:9). That may mean deceit is potentially the heart's major issue. Nothing indicates this refers to the sinner's heart. One might hope the Christian's heart would not contain deceit, but don't count on it. It simply says "the heart." It is possible for my heart to deceive me, so God will give me clues. In Matthew we read, "Out of the abundance of the heart the

mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). What do my words say about my heart?

We are also instructed to examine ourselves (see 2 Corinthians 13:5). The responses of those around us will sometimes cue us as to whether we are speaking and acting out of a heart that seeks to honor others. Because others often have issues, their responses may not give an accurate reflection for us all the time. In general, however, we can use the responses of others as a starting point for prayer and self-examination.

When I am alone and there is no one to impress, what do I know about my heart? My attitude toward my parents is a good place to start if I want to know the answer to that question. If our parents were difficult to live with when we were young—or worse, our first inclination might be toward self-justification for some less-than-honoring thoughts we might think about them. Self-justification is a road block to truth and change.

Jesus said, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32, RSV). Someone far less important (whose name I cannot remember) said, "It is often the truth we don't want to know that *would* set us free." We must be willing to receive what God may be showing us if we are to be changed and to grow. David said, speaking to God, "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts" (Psalm 51:6). It takes truth in the heart in order to be truly set free. We must remove any road blocks, such as self-justification or self-deception so the truth may proceed to our inner most parts.

Another first response some people offer is the socially—or the Christianly—correct one. If the person truly believes it, he or she is a victim of self-deception. "Of course, I honor my parents. I am a Christian." My husband Walter and I

conduct training for police officers once or twice a month regarding how to respond to individuals with mental illness. Our friend, Diana Jackson, also helps with this. This week the officers shared the kinds of responses they get when they stop a traffic offender or arrest someone for a crime. Among the top responses they receive is, “I would never do that—I’m a Christian!” But they were caught on camera.

**I** could suggest some ways we could honor our parents—since the season is upon us. I won’t, however. We can all do that for ourselves. Mother’s Day and Father’s Day are good opportunities to express thankfulness and appreciation. These holidays are difficult for some whose parents are deceased and for others who might have strained relationships. There may be regrets or hard feelings.

It is possible to find healing and heart change if that’s what is needed no matter what the circumstance and with God’s help. If you need help in this matter of honoring your father and your mother, ask God to help you. All things are possible with God. God is happy to help with heart change. It’s His specialty. **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY  
Teaching Letter 7  
“Honor - A Heart Attitude”  
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