

Honor your Father and Mother
Exodus 20:12 Deut 5:33 Eph 6:1-4

Last week all 8 ballot propositions were voted down.

Each of these propositions however
pointed to a serious problem in our society.

California is near the bottom
when it comes to academic ability in the schools. Arnold Swarchnegger wanted
to solve the classroom
problem by giving merit pay and giving teachers
tenure after 5 year rather than two.

Another proposition pointed to the fact that in many families children are unable to speak
openly to their parents.

They are unable to share their problems with them.
And so some people wanted to suggest that a teenager
does not need to get permission from her parents to
get an abortion. How sad.

Many California classrooms are in chaos.

Many families are broken and under great stress.
Gangs of angry young people terrorize neighborhoods.
In France, right now, youths are terrorizing a nation.

What a pain people experience in society,
in their families and their schools.

What a breakdown between parents and children,
between teachers and their students,
between authorities and citizens.

What a stress! What a grief!

What grave problems we experience in our society!

Most of us wish for something better, we long for health.

We hope for long life.

We want everything to go well in our society,
in our families, in our marriages,
in our schools and in our churches.

But where do we find this health,
where do we find this well being,
this stress free life, this enjoyable life?

The bible says (Deut 5:32)

if you want it to go well with you,
If you want to prosper and to be happy,
if you want to live a joyful stress free life,
if you want your children or your grand children

to do well and succeed in life;
then walk in the way of the Lord and
keep all God's commands.

Love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself.
This is a recipe for what the bible calls Shalom –
heaven on earth.

And this sense of well being,
this healing of the chaos in society and
in the classrooms and on the streets and
in back allies and on the freeways,

begins at home.

The God who made us and designed the world says to us
“Honor your father and your mother,
so that you may live long in the land God is giving you.”
And in Deuteronomy 5 God repeats himself,
“Honor your father and your mother
so that it may go well with you.”
Loving God and loving neighbor begins at home.

The health of a community, the well being of a society,
the emotional vitality and joy of individuals -
of you and me, is based on what happens in the home.
The home and our relationships in the home,
especially with our parents,
are the most fundamental and formative we can experience.
Our success and our well being and our joy depend on it.

So what does that mean,
to honor your father and your mother?
Our wise friend Lew Smedes in his book on the
Commandments says “This commandment does not
mean we should have warm affections for our parents,
or to feel happy about our parents.
To honor our parents does not mean
we like going on camping trips with them,
or inviting them for dinner all the time.
This command to honor our parents
has to do with family structure and the role of
parents and teachers and leaders in our communities.

The Hebrew word for honor is kabod,
which means Glory and weightiness.
Glory your parents, give them weight.
There is, and there should be an aura about parents,
like the aura and the glory associated with God.

In the family, parents stand in the place of God.
Goodness and health and long life and prosperity and joy
comes through them when we honor our parents.
So what does it mean to honor
your father and your mother?

To honor someone means to respect someone as having
a great deal of weight in your life.
To honor your father and mother means you let them
have influence, and dignity, and authority over you.
It means more than giving Dad a phone call on Father's day
or buying your mother a birthday present.
Honoring your mother and father means
you are willing to listen to them as your teacher and guide.
That you ask for their guidance and their blessing.

Parents have the god-given responsibility to pass on
the moral and spiritual reality of life to their children.
From their parents children learn the core values and
meaning and purpose of life.

And without honor,
without this right relationship with parents,
this gift of meaning and purpose and
a sense of home and identity for our children is
short circuited and the chaos begins, and
the unruliness takes over.

So devastating is this unruliness to the fabric of society
that in ancient times the law said,
"anyone who strikes their parent,
or curses their mother or father,
or is rebellious against their parents
shall be put to death." Deut 21:18-21.

There is a proverb in the bible that says:
pride goes before the fall, pride comes before destruction.
That applies to the relationship between parents and
children too.

But there is saying about honor too.
It's in Proverbs 15:33.

There we are told that humility,
humility comes before honor.

What the bible is saying is
honoring your father and mother is a choice,
something you decide to do,
which requires an attitude of humility.

Of course the bible does not give parents the right
to Lord it over their children,
or to make them obey rules that don't make sense,
or use them as their personal servants
or to vent their anger at them.

Parents stand in the place of God,
and the more they image and mirror God,
the more they are like Jesus - Christlike
the easier it is for children to listen to their parents and
allow them to have influence over them,
the easier it is for children to obey them.

Paul says in Eph. 6

Parents do not provoke your children to anger,
do not exasperate them, instead
bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
Give them a context, give them reason to honor you.
Then you will enjoy a long lasting relationship with them
that brings life and shalom not only to your family
but to the classrooms and the youth groups and
workplaces of the land.

Our heavenly father,
the one who made us and loves us directs us by his word
to find joy, well being, and freedom when he said:
Honor your father and your mother.”

So parents
take up your responsibility to teach your children well.
In many homes and in many classrooms the
children have taken over control.
They call the shots.
Parents and teachers and leaders have allowed it.
They have abdicated their role.
This is not the way God intended it.
Parents are called to a position of authority,
not to be authoritarian, but
they are called to be in authority.

And being in authority takes time, and
wisdom and love sacrifice, and effort.
So if you are a person looking for health and
a joy filled life -
take time, make the effort to be a parent,
persevere in teaching your child well;
their life and their joy and their well being depends on it.

And children, and we are all children,
be humble, listen to your parents and your teachers, and
obey them, respect them, care for them;
for this is how you honor your father and your mother.
This is how you learn to
love your neighbor and to love God.

So what does it mean for us, for you and me
to honor our father and mother?
How can you honor your father and mother today?
What can you do this week to honor them?

If you are a teenager how can you honor your parents?
If you are a young adult?
If you are a young married couple how can you honor your parents?
If you are middle aged? And your parents are older?
If your parents have died how you can still honor them?

As a parent I'm in my glory,
I feel honored, when my children ask for my advice,
I feel honored when they want to come home and just
hang out with me as a friend,
I feel honored when they want to help me and encourage
me and pray for me when I'm down.
Most of all I feel honored, and am in my glory
when I see my children walking in the way of the Lord
and desiring to his will as a disciple of Jesus.
What joy, what a sense of well being,
this glory and honor brings,
also to our father in heaven.

Smedes said:

“There is no single way to honor parents;
there are a thousand ways to dishonor them.
Within the conflicts of faith, and life style, and duty;
honor will have to be improvised out of the creative
resources of our imagination.
Each family will have to find its way to live honorably
with its parental generation.
And each society must find ways to make it possible for
all to keep their parents in honorable circumstances.
For the people who loses its will, and its ability
to honor father and mother loses its humanity.”
And become unruly.

Are you looking for health and a long life of joy,

then honor your father and mother.