

CHURCH. SUPPLEMENT 7

[CHURCH AND CULTURE] THE RELATIONSHIP TO OUR LIVING PARENTS

Introduce. Christians have the God-given responsibility to change their own world-view, ideas, truths, convictions, beliefs, values, convictions, experiences, behaviour, relationships and institutions to conform to the culture of the kingdom of God! In this teaching we will consider the relationship to our living parents.

A. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO OBEY PARENTS

Discover and discuss. According to the Bible, until what age should children obey their parents?

Notes.

1. The command in the Bible.

Read Ephesians 6:1-3. God gives two responsibilities to children: to obey and to honour their parents.

In some cultures in the world, children are taught to obey their parents throughout their whole life and under all circumstances, even if what their parents ask is against God's will, selfish or destructive. In those cultures, the parents have absolute authority over their children, whether they are single or married, until the parents die. This way of interpreting "obedience" in these human cultures is not biblical and must be changed to conform to the culture of the kingdom of God.

2. The example of Jesus.

Read Luke 2:51; Mark 3:21,31-35; John 4:34. When Jesus was still *a minor*, a child of twelve years old, he was obedient to his parents on earth. However, when Jesus had become *a mature adult* and was carried out his life task, he obeyed his parents no more nor complied with their wishes! Although Jesus remained unmarried, he was an adult with an independent task in life. His task was to do the will of God (John 4:34) and comply with the wishes of God, even when his parents disagreed.

3. The teaching of Jesus.

Read Matthew 10:37; 19:5. When a person stops to be a child and becomes an adult his relationship with his parents also changes. When does a person become an adult?

- The example of Jesus shows, that when a single person *begins his independent task in life*, he is an adult.
- The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:5 shows, that when *a man marries*, he is an adult. Then he *must leave* his father and mother and begin a new family with his wife. He must leave his parents emotionally and financially. He must also leave his parent's authority. And, if possible, he must leave his parent's home (no longer live in their house).
- For both the single person as well as the married person, Jesus says in Matthew 10:37, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." If the choice is between your parents and Jesus Christ, then your parent's wish, no matter how ardent, should be rejected. Your supreme loyalty is to Jesus Christ and no other relationship may replace it.

Conclusion. The Bible does not teach that Christians should obey their parents throughout their whole lifetime or under all circumstances.¹ Instead, the Bible teaches that Christians should obey their parents *as long as they are still children*, that is, underage and immature children, who are still dependent on their parents, and only as long as the wishes of their parents are not contradicting God's Word (cf. Acts 5:29).

Adulthood for Christians begins:

- when they the home of their parents to study or to work
- when they still live with their parents, but are no longer dependent on their parents
- when they get married.

As adults, Christians are under no obligation to obey their parents. The Bible teaches that Christians are always under the obligation to obey God throughout their whole lifetime and under all circumstances. The conclusion is therefore that obedience to one's parents has a time limit. Children are only under the obligation to obey their parents until they reach adulthood.

B. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO HONOUR PARENTS

Discover and discuss. According to the Bible, how do people honour their parents?

¹ Confucius taught absolute obedience to the ruler of the land, your teacher and your parents.

Notes. Although children must obey their parents only as long as they are still underage children (minors), they must always honour their parents, also when they are mature adults! To “honour” means: to regard highly, to show consideration and to love without reluctance, selfish motives or fear.

The following five examples are intended for all people in their relationships to:

- their own parents
- their parents-in-law
- and to their heavenly Father.

1. You honour your parents by not arguing or fighting with them.

Read Exodus 21:15,17; Romans 13:4. You dishonour your parents when you argue with them about things that have no direct spiritual significance. For example, don’t argue with them about which clothes to wear, about which television programme to watch, or about who should wash the dishes. Arguing with your parents tells them that you regard their point of view to be ridiculous.

How do you honour your parents in a positive way? State your case as friendly as possible and then allow God to work it out in a way that pleases him most. This proves that you believe that God controls every situation. And this proves that you believe that God is working things out in a way that is best for you.

2. You honour your parents by taking their suggestions and advice seriously.

Read Proverbs 23:23. You dishonour your parents when you do not even want to listen to their advice.

How do you honour your parents in a positive way? Listen to their advice and learn from their insight in things. Learn from their many years of experience and the wisdom they have accumulated, while you still have the opportunity. Learn especially from the areas of their strengths, talents, skills, knowledge and know-how.

3. You honour your parents by including them in your real life.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-13. You dishonour your parents when you do not tell them about think, feel and do. Some children answer the questions of their parents abruptly, “Okay” or “All right” or “As usual”. You dishonour your parents when you keep them outside your plans and give them no chance to have any influence on your plans. You dishonour your parents when you do not allow them to share your joy, sorrow or pain. When you keep your parents outside your life, decisions and choices, you are telling them that they are worthy to relate to!

How do you honour your parents in a positive way? Talk to your parents. Take the initiative to talk to your parents. Talk to them what you do at school or at work, what you do together with your friends and what you do in your church. Talk to them what it means to believe; talk to them about God and people and the world. Tell them what your Christian convictions are, what you think, feel and do. Involve them in your plans and decisions. Respect their views, wisdom and experiences. Ask them to give you advice and suggestions. Even though you may not follow their advice and decide to do something against their wishes, you will still give them the feeling that you have listened, have taken their advice serious and have accepted them as they are.

4. You honour your parents by caring for them and serving them.

Read 1 Timothy 5:4,8. You dishonour your parents when you only serve them when they ask you. Because you think that parents should always take the initiative, you wait a very long time before you act.

How do you honour your parents in a positive way? Practise observing where you could serve them, where someone needs your help, or whether you could do something which no one else wants to do or is able to do. Take the initiative to serve and help and do not wait until your parents ask you.

5. You honour your parents by loving them.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. You dishonour your parents when you only love them according to the culturally determined rules, as visiting them at least once a week, giving gifts to them and carrying out their wishes.

How do you honour your parents in a positive way? Genuine Christian love goes beyond the piety which a particular culture demands of their children! Genuine Christian love is patient with the shortcomings of your parents and forgives them for the wrong they have done to you. When you become a Christian, your non-Christian parents often are afraid that Christ and the Bible will have a very negative effect on you. They are afraid that you will do worse in your studies, that you will no find a good job, that you will have no success in life, that you will earn too little money and thus no longer be able to support them in their old age. They fear that you will lose your culture, anger their gods and religious leaders and shame your whole family. That is why they react very negatively on the fact that you have become a Christian and in some cases persecute and even kill you. Explain to them in a tactful way what the Christian Faith is all about and prove to them that on the contrary you have become a more responsible and loving person through what Jesus Christ has done to you.