

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about Church building ministries. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: CHRISTIAN PARENTS AND ANCESTORS. We will learn what the Bible teaches about the Christian's relationship to his living parents and to his departed ancestors.

(S) **POINT 1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OBEYING AND HONOURING PARENTS**

First. Christians have the responsibility to change their culture.

All relationships between people, like the relationship between parents and children are determined by one's culture. But relationships are also *prescribed* by the Bible. Christians should therefore change their relationships so that they conform to the teachings of the Bible.

(T) **Second. What is culture?**

The culture of any group of people is their world-view, their truths or beliefs and their values, expressed in their experiences, relationships, behaviour and institutions. Every nation has its own culture and its culture changes and develops throughout its history.

All cultures in the world have sinful aspects, because all people are sinful. There are world-views that are only fanciful human speculation. There are many lies and false beliefs that deceive people. There are values that dehumanise people. There are experiences that are destructive, like that of certain religious movements, drugs and sex. There are forms of behaviour and life-style that are selfish or destructive. There are institutions that have institutionalised crime and promote sin. And there are relationships that break people down rather than build them up.

The only perfect culture is the culture of the kingdom of God! The culture of the kingdom of God is revealed in the Bible. The Bible reveals God's world-view, God's truths, what people *ought* to believe and what values people *ought* to have in every country of the world! It reveals how people *ought* to behave, both in their personal lives as well as in their social relationships and institutions in every country of the world! And it reveals how the relationships between people should be.

Christians must proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God in the whole world (Mt 24:14). Christians must call people to repent and be transformed. They must also call the sinful aspects of every culture to change and to become like the culture of the kingdom of God. Therefore, when people in every nation hear the gospel, they must repent and change their world-view, their truths, their beliefs, their values, their experiences, their behaviour, their institutions and *their relationships* to conform to the culture of the kingdom of God!

Christ has come into the world to change people and to change cultures! Acts 3:21 teaches that Christ will restore everything at his second coming! Matthew 13:41-43 teaches that he will restore everything by *weeding out of his kingdom* everything that causes sin and all people who do evil! Revelation 21:24-27 teaches that nothing impure will enter the final form of the kingdom of God, which is the new heaven on the new earth!

(S) **Third. The relationship of children to their parents. Children must obey their parents.**

Children have two responsibilities. In Ephesians 6:1-3 is written, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for that is right. Honour your father and mother, ... that it may go well with you ...". God gives two responsibilities to children: to obey and to honour their parents.

Children must obey their parents until they become adults. In some cultures in the world, children are taught *to obey* their parents throughout their whole life and under all circumstances, even if what the parents ask is against God's will, selfish or destructive. In those cultures, the parents have absolute authority over their children until they die. However, the Bible and the culture of the kingdom of God teach something different.

The example of Jesus Christ teaches that children must only obey their parents until they stop to be children and become adults. In Luke 2:51 we read that when Jesus was still a child of 12 years old, he was obedient to his parents on earth. However, in Mark 3:21,31-35 we read that when Jesus had become an adult and busy with the task of his life, he no more obeyed his parents or complied with their wishes. He was an adult with an independent task in life. His task was to do the will of God (Jn 4:34) and to comply with the wishes of God, even when his parents disagreed.

The teaching of Jesus Christ with regard to obeying parents. A person's relationship with his parents changes when he stops to be a child. In Matthew 19:5 Jesus teaches that a man *must leave* his father and mother when he marries. He must leave his parents emotionally and financially. He must leave the authority of his parents and if possible he must also leave the home of his parents. In Matthew 10:37 Jesus says, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." If you have to make a choice between your parents and Jesus Christ, then the wish of your parents, no matter how ardent, should be rejected. Your supreme loyalty is to Jesus Christ and no other relationship may replace it. Therefore, the Bible does not teach that Christians should obey their parents throughout their whole lifetime. Instead, the Bible teaches that Christians should obey their parents *only as long as they are still children*, underage, immature and dependent on their parents and only as long as the wishes of their parents are in conformity with the Bible. Adulthood starts when Christians leave the home of their parents, or when they are no longer dependent on their parents or when they get married. Thus, Christian children are under the obligation to obey their parents as long as they are still children. But Christian adults are no longer under that obligation. Instead, they should obey God throughout their lifetime and under all circumstances.

(T) Fourth. The relationship of children to their parents. Children must honour their parents.

The second responsibility of children is that they must honour both their father and their mother! They must honour them when they are still children and they must honour them when they are adults.

How do people honour their parents? You honour your parents when you regard them highly, show them consideration and love them without reluctance, selfish motives or fear.

There are five ways to honour your parents, your parents-in-law and your heavenly Father:

(O) One. You honour your parents by not arguing or fighting with them. In Exodus 21:15,17, God teaches that children who curse their parents or attack them, must be severely punished. You honour your parents by not quarrelling with them. You state your point of view in a gentle way and then allow God to work it out in the way that will please him most. In this way you show that you believe that God is in control of every situation and that God has the ability to accomplish what is best for you.

(S) Two. You honour your parents by taking their suggestions and advice serious. Proverbs 23:23 teaches you to acquire truth, wisdom, discipline and understanding from your parents. Whenever your parents make suggestions or give advice, learn from them. While you have the opportunity, learn from their years of experience and accumulated wisdom.

(T) Three. You honour your parents by including them in your real life. 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 teaches Christians "to open wide their hearts" to one another. Take the initiative to talk to your parents. Talk to them about your activities: what you do at school or at work, what you do together with your friends and what you do at church. Talk to them about your beliefs: what you believe about God, Jesus Christ, people, the world and your other Christian convictions. Talk to them about your thoughts, feelings and plans. You honour your parents by involving them in your plans and decisions and you dishonour them by excluding them.

(S) Four. You honour your parents by caring for them and serving them. In 1 Timothy 5:4,8, the apostle Paul says, "Children and grandchildren should learn first to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God". And "if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever". Christians have the responsibility to provide for *the real needs* of their parents, like food, clothing and a place to sleep. Other real needs are respect, attention and hearing the gospel. But Christians have no responsibility to provide for *their luxuries*, like giving them money for holidays abroad.

Train yourself to see where you can serve your father and mother. Take the initiative to serve and help your parents and don't wait till they ask you.

(T) Five. You honour your parents by loving them. When you only show love to them in the culturally required ways, like visiting them and giving them gifts, then you dishonour your parents. Genuine love goes far beyond the culturally required *filial piety*. Genuine Christian love is patient with their shortcomings and forgives the wrongs they have done to you. When you become a Christian, non-Christian parents generally fear that your conversion will affect your life negatively. They fear that you will do worse in your studies; that you will not be able to get a good job; that you will not be successful in life; and that you will earn less money and thus will not be able to support them financially. They fear that you will lose your culture and that you will anger whom they regard as god. Explain your Christian faith to your parents and prove to them that you have become a more responsible and loving person through what Jesus Christ has done for you!

(S) **POINT 2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPIRITS OF ANCESTORS AND EVIL SPIRITS**

Question one. Where are the spirits of our ancestors after they die?

Luke 16:22-23 teaches that when a person dies, his body is put in a grave. But the spirit of a godless and wicked person goes immediately to *hell*, where he suffers torment. And the spirit of a Christian goes immediately to *heaven*, where he will live in the presence of Christ forever. Thus, the spirits of our departed ancestors are never on earth! They do not reside in the house where they used to live and they do not reside at the grave where they are buried. The spirits of our ancestors are only in heaven or in hell.

(T) **Question two. Can the spirits of our ancestors have any influence on us on earth?**

Ecclesiastes 9:5-10 says, "The dead know nothing; ... their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun; ... in the grave there is neither working, nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom". The Bible clearly teaches that the souls or spirits of dead people can have no involvement in the lives of people or in any event on earth! The spirits of our ancestors are not on earth and can have no influence on earth! They cannot show hatred or jealousy to us and they cannot revenge themselves on us. They cannot harm us in anyway! They cannot benefit us in any way!

(S) **Question three. May we call upon the spirits of our dead ancestors for help?**

Ecclesiastes 9:5-10, the spirits of our ancestors have *no knowledge* of people or events on earth! They have *no wisdom* to give advice to the people on earth. They cannot influence the plans of people on earth. They cannot help people on earth. They can no longer take part in any activity on earth!

The event related in 1 Samuel 28:8-14, where king Saul visits a medium and thinks that he hears the dead prophet Samuel speaking, is most probably the counterfeit voice of an evil spirit. Saul did not see Samuel. The medium did not say she saw Samuel. Instead, she said that she only saw *a spirit* coming out of the ground that looked like an old man wearing a robe. People who believe that the spirits of dead people can be contacted or can have influence on this world are deceived by evil spirits or demons. Jesus says that the devil and his evil spirits are *liars* (Jn 8:44). Paul says that the devil *masquerades* or pretends to be someone else than he really is (2 Cor 11:14). What Saul and the woman really saw, was not the spirit of the prophet Samuel, but an evil spirit or demon!

(T) **Question four. May Christians call on the spirits of dead Christian saints for help?**

Some churches believe that the spirits of particular famous dead Christians can be mediators and intercede for Christians who still live on earth. They venerate these so called *saints* and crave their intercession. However, the Bible clearly teaches that the spirits of the departed saints are unconscious and uninvolved with respect to anyone and anything that happens on earth. Job 14:21 says that the spirits of the departed dead do not know whether their children on earth are getting rich or remain very poor. Isaiah 63:16 says that neither Abraham nor Jacob is able to see or hear what is happening on earth to their descendants.

Therefore, Christians may *not* pray to Mary or to any dead church saint. Instead, the Bible teaches that Christians should only pray to God, the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit!

(S) **Question five. May people call on evil spirits or demons for help?**

Modern spiritists, who say they can make contact with the spirits of departed ancestors, tell lies. The mediums of modern spiritists are not the spirits of dead human beings, but evil spirits or demons, who belong to the devil! Evil spirits or demons are fallen angels.

In 2 Corinthians 11:14 Paul warns Christians that the evil spirits or demons are experts in disguising and counterfeiting. They can pretend to be messengers of Christ, while in reality they are messengers of the devil! They can pretend to be human ancestors, while in reality they are evil spirits!

In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul warns Christians that the evil spirits or demons teach false teachings and they deceive people. These evil spirits give false messages through dreams and visions, evil experiences, and false teachings through the false teachers, which they control. False prophets, who do not know the God of the Bible, may believe that they receive a message from god, but in reality they receive a message from the devil!

The devil will also try to deceive Christians. In Matthew 4:5-6, the devil shows that he is able to quote the Bible when he tries to deceive people! In John 8:44 Christ warns that the devil is a liar and the father of all lies!

In Deuteronomy 18:9-13 and Leviticus 19:31; 20:6,27, God forbids Christians to contact spiritists, mediums, fortune-tellers and all kinds of sorcery! Isaiah 8:19-20 teaches that Christians should never consult mediums and spiritists. Instead they should look for guidance in the Bible and through prayer to God. Christians should therefore study the Bible, explain the Bible correctly and obey the teachings of the Bible.

(T) **Question six. May people worship the spirits of their ancestors?**

Colossians 2:18-19 forbid Christians to worship angels. Matthew 4:8-10 forbid Christians to worship the devil or his demons! Acts 14:11-15 forbids people to worship other people. Therefore, it is also forbidden to worship or venerate the departed spirits of ancestors. In Matthew 4:10, Jesus commands, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve *him only*". Christians may not offer incense or make sacrifices to their dead ancestors, because the apostle Paul teaches that sacrifices offered to idols are in reality sacrifices to demons (1 Cor 10:19-20)! Evil spirits or demons like to be associated with idols, with religious holy men, with religious buildings, ceremonies and feasts, with religious relics like the tooth of a prophet and with the religious sacrifices of goats. Evil spirits or demons associate with all these visible things, because that is the easiest way they can continue to control people on earth!

Christians may not offer incense or make sacrifices to their dead ancestors, because such activities are in reality sacrifices to evil spirits or demons! Moreover, Paul says that people cannot serve demons and God at the same time! People must choose between serving evil spirits and serving the living God!

(S) **Question seven. May Christians remember their ancestors?**

The Bible forbids the worship of human beings and the worship of the spirits of ancestors. But *the Bible recommends the remembrance of important events and important people in the past*. For example, 1 Corinthians 10:6,11 says that the events in the Old Testament occurred as examples to keep Christians from setting their hearts on the evil things the people in the past did. It says that in the Old Testament, the things happened to those people as examples and as warnings to Christians today!

Hebrews 13:7 teaches that Christians should remember their leaders, who in the past spoke the word of God to them. Christians should especially consider how their past leaders practised what they preached. They should imitate the Christian faith of their leaders. Christians may not venerate or worship their ancestors or their prophets or their leaders. But Christians should remember the lessons they have learned from the people in the Bible and from their godly leaders in the past. In the same way, Christians may remember the good lessons they have learned from their godly ancestors!

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach people what the Bible teaches about living parents and departed ancestors. Make sure that what you believe is based on the Bible and not on fanciful speculation or false teaching.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".