

Relating to Parents, Part 1

By Patricia Ennis

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

TV shows and movies often portray parents as stupid and unnecessary. Read Exodus 20:1-17; 21:15-17; Deuteronomy 5:16; 21:18-21; and Leviticus 19:3. Compare the contents of these verses with the image TV shows and other media portray. What do you think would have been the consequences if these media behaviors were exhibited during the time period when Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus were written?

Assignment Two

Many myths or untruths exist about parent and teen relationships. Often these untruths become conversation connectors for teen relationships. Read the following myths. Locate Scripture passages that describe what the Bible records as parents' responsibilities.

- My parents want to control my life.
- My parents think they know everything.
- My parents care only about what I can do for them.
- My parents don't want me to have any fun.
- My parents don't respect my opinions.

Assignment Three

Psalms 145 offers a clear description of what God is like. Study the psalm by asking the questions, "What is God like?" and "Since I am to reflect God's character, how should I honor my parents?" For example, Psalm 145:8a states, "The LORD is gracious . . ." Since you are to reflect God's character, you honor your parents by behaving in a gracious way toward them.

Scripture to Memorize

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will learn how to relate to their parents as the Bible teaches.

Pat Ennis is distinguished professor and director of Homemaking Programs at Southwestern Seminary. Prior to that she served as consultant to that program. She taught home economics for the San Diego Unified School District while developing the Home Economics Department at Christian Heritage College (now San Diego Christian College). In 1987 she established the Home Economics-Family and Consumer Science Department at The Master's College.

She is the author and coauthor of several books, including *Becoming a Young Woman Who Pleases God*. Pat's life's mission is to:

- Love her Lord with ALL of her heart (Matthew 22:37).
- Walk worthy of her calling (Ephesians 4:1-3).
- Train the younger women to fulfill the Titus 2 mandate so that God's Word will not be discredited (Titus 2:3-5).

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Pastor John constantly hears this from teens in his youth group: “How can I relate to my parents? They are so strict and simply do not understand me. I think they must have traveled with Noah on the ark!” Challenging parent and teen relationships plague all families from time to time. What counsel do you think Pastor John could provide both the parents and their children so they can enjoy one another?

Read Exodus 20:1-17; 21:15-17; Deuteronomy 5:16; 21:18-21; and Leviticus 19:3 out loud.

Exodus 20:1-17 introduces the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are a part of the *Torah* or the laws given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. The first four commandments describe our relationship to God and how He is to be worshipped. Following these instructions, the next commandment relates to how we are to treat our parents. Note that He placed this command above those relating to murder, adultery, theft, lying and coveting.

Studying the Passage.

Within the pages of Scripture, when God gives a command once, it is important. If He repeats the command a second time, its importance is increased. When it appears three or more times, it is similar to highlighting it in the brightest highlighter possible. The repetition communicates that this teaching is *really* important! The command to honor one’s parents is repeated three times in **Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; and Leviticus 19:3.**

Exodus 20:12. Honor your father and your mother. The key to family happiness and stability is reverence and respect for people in authority. This command reminded the Israelites of the standard of behavior God established for His people. God expected them not to tolerate juvenile delinquency, which at heart is disrespect for parents and those in authority.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21. a stubborn and rebellious son. These verses describe the consequences of a child who consistently violated the fifth commandment—death by stoning!

Exodus 21:15-17. Whoever curses his father or his mother. Disrespect for parents, either physically or verbally, was so serious it was labeled a capital offense or a death-penalty sin. Speaking unkindly about your parents or treating them as invisible people is an example of cursing your father or mother. A significant question to consider is: “Would I still be alive if this law were in effect today?”

Deuteronomy 5:16. that your days may be long. This teaching is repeated in the New Testament. Reading Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10; and Ephesians 6:2-3 will help you understand this. Paul, in Ephesians 6:2, suggested that the command to honor one’s parents is the first command with a promise attached. Jesus spoke about honoring parents in Matthew 10:37; 19:29; Luke 2:49-51; and John 19:26-27.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the comparison of selected scriptures with contemporary media.

Discussion Question

What are your definitions of *honor* and *respect*?

Read 1 Samuel 2:11-3:21 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Do you appreciate the commitment your parents have to their faith, but would you like for them to stop pressuring you to be as “spiritual as they are”? Do you want the benefits of being a Christian without assuming the responsibilities of the relationship?

First Samuel 2:11–3:21 provides a comparison of two families, Elkanah’s and Eli’s. Samuel was Elkanah and Hannah’s long-prayed-for son (1 Samuel 1:1–2:10). Samuel was committed to the Lord at birth. He **ministered to the Lord (2:11)**, meaning he performed services that assisted Eli the high priest. Hophni and Phinehas were Eli’s sons. They wanted the benefits and advantages of the priesthood without practicing the purity required of the office.

Verse 12. Worthless. How would you feel if you read a description of your character and **worthless** was used to explain it? That is exactly how Scripture describes Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas. **They did not know the Lord.** Remember, God has no grandchildren. Though Eli was a godly man, his sons chose to reject his faith and showed no evidence of a personal relationship with God. Are you depending on your parents’ relationship with God for entrance into heaven, or do you embrace a personal faith in Jesus Christ?

Verse 13. custom of the priests. Hophni and Phinehas were discontent with the specified portions of the sacrifices given to priests (Deuteronomy 18:3) and greedily took for themselves what they wanted.

Verse 24. the report is not good which I hear. Eli’s failure to discipline his sons led to their early death (2:34), while Samuel **grew and the Lord was with him** (3:19).

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the myths or untruths that exist about parent and teen relationships. Report on the Scripture passages that describe parents’ responsibilities and thus negate the myths in this assignment.

On Your Own

In the space below compare the consequences of Hophni and Phinehas’s father allowing them to do what they wanted with Samuel’s godly response to authority. Ultimately, would you prefer parents like Hophni and Phinehas or parents like Samuel?

Read Daniel 1:1-21 out loud.

Studying the Passage

The positive training children receive from their parents, if absorbed into their personal worldview, provides a foundation for making good decisions when parents are absent. Such was the case with Daniel. Unlike Eli's sons, Daniel chose to honor his parents and uphold their spiritual training in an environment that supported a pagan lifestyle. Taken from his family and relocated to Babylon, he purposed to remain true to his commitment to God.

Verse 4. Competent to stand in the king's palace. Daniel arrived at the training schools of the wise men in Babylon with the ability to study. He likely was between the ages of 14 and 17.

Verses 8–16. During his training he was distinguished for his faithfulness as a student and consistent observance of the Mosaic law.

Verse 8. Daniel resolved. Daniel chose to risk punishment or death rather than compromise his commitment to God by eating food and drink that had been offered to idols.

Verse 9. God gave Daniel favor. God honored Daniel's trust and allegiance by sovereignly working favorably for him among the heathen leaders.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now answer questions from Psalm 145.

On Your Own

In the space below, list some specific and practical ways you can apply the **Assignment Three** analysis of Psalm 145: What is God like? Since I am to reflect God's character, how should I treat my parents? When everyone is finished, the group can share their responses.

Discussing the Passage: vv. 17–21

Daniel's life teaches us that we are to honor our parents in all we do. What specific things do you think Daniel did to allow his teachers to affirm his character?

Studying and Applying the Passage:

At the conclusion of Daniel's three years of discipline and training in the royal schools, he was given high marks for his grasp of the wisdom of the day.

Verse 20. The phrase **ten times better** suggests that Daniel excelled far beyond the other students in his class. Though Daniel's parents were not present at his graduation, he brought honor to his family by his diligence. How can you bring honor to your parents and your heavenly Father in your daily choices?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

Building a positive relationship between parent and teen is challenging. In reality it is impossible without God's strength because He is the only one who can provide the foundation for strong relationships. Ultimately your choice to build a healthy relationship with your parents has little to do with them and everything to do with your relationship with your heavenly Father. It is your choice to resist or voluntarily surrender to Him. The decision comes with far-reaching implications. Perhaps these principles will assist you in developing a solid relationship with your heavenly Father:

- Your Father does not offer a “cafeteria plan” for obedience (James 2:8-13). We live in a world that promotes “have things your own way.” To please your heavenly Father, you need to respond to *all* of His instructions with an obedient spirit (2 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17), not just pick those that appeal to you.
- God's Word is true whether you choose to embrace its teaching or not (Hebrews 4:12-13). If you insist on establishing your own kingdom and assert your right to rule, you set yourself at war with the sovereign God of the universe. When you bow to His kingdom, you can then live at peace with your heavenly Father and, more than likely, your parents.
- You must exercise faith to embrace teaching that is contrary to current trends (Hebrews 11:6). You are to trust your heavenly Father that “no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11). You can fully trust Him even when His instructions deviate from what society says will make you happy. Your only responsibility is to choose to walk uprightly—and that is an act of the will, not the emotions.

Disciples who relate to their parents according to the teaching of Scripture ultimately bring glory to God.

Follow up Question

What is one biblical example of a child who did not respect and obey parents? What was the outcome? What is one biblical example of a child who did respect and obey parents? What was the outcome?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.