

SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 8 DECEMBER 2019



Be a Parent Worthy of Honour

Tim Challies

Children do not bear the full responsibility of the fifth commandment. If children are to extend honour to their parents, parents are to make it easy for them by living honourable lives.

Children are not to wait until their parents prove honourable before extending honour, for the parents' honour derives from their position, not their behaviour. Yet there is still an onus on the parent to live a worthy and respectable life.

And this is what I wish to consider today: How can we who are parents live lives that are worthy of honour?

How can we make it easy for our children to honour us now and in the future?

The Glory of Children

We will begin with an appropriate proverb. Proverbs 17:6 tells us, "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers." It is the second half of this proverb that is of particular interest to me. What does it mean that "the glory of children is their fathers?"

Even while we must acknowledge a unique Old Testament context, we can still agree with Eric Lane who says, "For the children themselves their greatest blessing was to have parents in whom they could take pride – respected in the community, prosperous in business, and thorough in bringing them up."

It is a blessing for children to have honourable parents and it is right for them to take pride in their fathers and, of course, in their mothers as well.

In John Kitchen's explanation and interpretation of the proverb, he emphasizes the importance of parents living with honour: "Children find great honour in having an honourable father. True, the commandment requires children to honour their father and mother (Exodus 20:12), but it is also incumbent upon the father to give

It is incumbent on parents to give their children reason to honour them.

his children reason to do so. What greater earthly incentive could there be to live honourably as a man, than to

have your children be proud of you and long to model your character?"

Parents are the pride of children when they live honourably.

Living Honourably

How do parents live honourably? How would you counsel a friend who tells you, "I want to live a life worthy of honour. What do I do?" There are a hundred possibilities, a hundred ways to answer.

We could create a list of characteristics that ought to mark the Christian parent: Love, kindness, patience, gentleness.

We could generate a list of duties that parents ought to fulfil: Spending quality time with our children, praying for them, reading God's Word to them.

We could come up with a list of characteristics and behaviours to avoid: Do not exasperate our children, do not treat them unfairly, do not fail to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

The possibilities are endless. I intend to keep it simple and propose three areas of emphasis.

First, make your own godliness your foremost concern.

As parents, there is the tendency to expect more from our children than we expect from ourselves. We have great expectations for them but only modest expectations for ourselves. A life of honour before others begins with a life of honour before God.

As we pursue God, we will long to be who He wants us to be, to put on all the noble characteristics associated with godliness and to put off all the ugly characteristics associated with ungodliness. We will want to behave how God means for us to behave, to put aside any actions that are unfitting for a Christian while emphasizing all those actions that are worthy of a Christian.

In these ways we will model mature character and behaviour, extending and displaying love to our children, even when they exasperate us or push us to the brink of despair. We will live with a clear conscience before God, man, and our own children.

Second, identify and imitate worthy models.

Especially within the local church, look for people who have modelled successful parenting. God has put us in local church communities so we can have help through all of life's challenges and difficulties.

God surrounds us with other believers so we can have models to imitate. Be deliberate in identifying people whose children love and honour them, whose children delight to be with them. Learn to imitate those people.

Ask the parents, "What did you do that your children now respect you? How did you raise them? What did you teach them?" Ask the children, "What did your parents do that led you to honour them? What do you love about them? Why do you love to spend time with them?" There is much we can learn by inquisitiveness and imitation.

Third, commend your children to the grace of God.

Learn to be godly and to imitate worthy models, then commend your children to the grace of God.

It is your responsibility to live a life that is worthy of honour and it is your responsibility to teach your children the importance of honour. But, ultimately, honour is to be extended by the children, not demanded by the parents. The responsibility falls to your children. They may prove hard-hearted, unwilling to identify the love and grace you've shown them,

unwilling to forgive your shortcomings, unwilling to heed God's command. But you, at least, will have lived a life of honour. You, at least, will have fulfilled your God-given duty.

There may be times to appeal to your children when they act dishonourably or, if they are Christians, to even appeal to their church. Church leaders should take seriously every member's responsibility to obey the fifth commandment. Yet, in the end your children will make their own way through life. They will choose to honour God by honouring you or they will choose to dishonour God by dishonouring you. Even if they choose poorly, you can take comfort in knowing that even if your children forsake you, God will not.

Parents, make it easy for your children to honour you. Make it a delight for them to take pride in you. Live in such a way that your children can say, "the glory of children is their fathers."

Parents, make it easy for your children to honour you.



Tim Challies is an elder at Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Ontario. He is a prolific blogger (challies.com), an author, and a book reviewer.

Source: <https://www.challies.com/articles/being-honorable/>

Reproduced by permission.

For the complete library of St David's Articles, please go to rest.org.au.

Kindly pass on this article.