

Bite Size Bible Study

Honor your Father and Mother #204 By Pastor Lee

Some of God's teaching is so important and universal that it is found in both testaments of our Bibles. One such teaching is Honoring our Parents. But the way the ancient Israelite culture understood this is quite different from our own modern culture. It wasn't a "mind your mommy and daddy" saying.

We find in Deuteronomy 5:16 Amplified Bible:

'Honor (respect, obey, care for) your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that your days [on the earth] may be prolonged and so that it may go well with you in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

Likewise in the New Testament we find the same admonition in Ephesians 6:1-3 Complete Jewish Bible:

Children, what you should do in union with the Lord is obey your parents, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" — this is the first commandment that embodies a promise — "so that it may go well with you, and you may live long in the Land."

Ancient Israel's culture was centered around family and kinship groups in an agrarian culture. Each household was in some ways dependent on the others. They often worked the fields and herds together and when one prospered, they all prospered. If there were conflicts, someone in authority had to be the one to settle the dispute. That duty fell to the patriarchal father, usually the oldest and supposedly wisest in the clan or tribe. His word was law, and everyone was expected to honor his decisions.

Most Ancient Near Eastern families were dominated by men. At the head of the family life was the oldest living male, called the "paterfamilias," or "father of the family." He looked after the family's business affairs and property as well as the well-being of each member.

The patriarchal father, "paterfamilias," was the undisputed leader of the families. This was known as the "house of the father". It could include several generations of greater family members, along with his wife or wives; his sons and their wives; grandsons and their wives; unmarried sons and daughters; slaves and servants; aunts, uncles, widows, and orphans; Levites living in the area; even non-kin who were under his protective care.

Married daughters usually became a part of the husband's father's house, which may or may not be the same patriarchal father, depending on whose son was the husband.

So, honoring your father and mother meant more than your immediate father and mother, it meant the Patriarchal father's house (family). This even extended to the dead ancestors as well. Part of the Honor/Shame

culture meant that one was not to dishonor even a dead member of the family, clan, or tribe. This meant that even the honor of a dead relative was to be respected and one was not to act in a way that would dishonor them. This behavior was not to be tolerated.

This format extended from the immediate family, up through the clan, the tribe, and eventually to the king of the kingdom. In Israel that progressed one step further to God who was the paterfamilias over all Israel.

The paterfamilias at each level, held responsibility for matters far larger than their own lives. Their rule placed considerable demands on their shoulders. They needed to maintain order in their house and preserve the family domains under their leadership. They were expected to learn to respect the individuals and continue the traditions of the family. Yet their toughest challenge undoubtedly originated in the divine mandate to rule as God would rule. The facade of awesome power often hid real frailty and discomfort of the one expected to act like God yet knowing that they were only human. Mistakes in judgement were going to have consequences not just to them, but potentially to many. Lives could be improved or destroyed, by his rule. This was compounded as it reached the level of a king.

It should be noted here that other cultures had patriarchal or matriarchal societies like the Hebrews. In any of these cultures be it Hebrew or other, the person in charge could be one that followed the ideal or took advantage of the position. More often than not, the higher the position the more likely they were to abuse the ideal. Kings and rulers were generally the worst. Rather than being a servant to the people they treated the people as slaves, not caring for the individual's needs but only to their own interests.

Even Jesus' disciples had problems understanding the concept of being a servant to everyone.

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." Mark 9:33-35 NIV

When we look at our immediate families, we can see that the father and mother have many of the same responsibilities. They are responsible for every individual in the family: providing food and shelter; education; a sense of belonging and of individual worth; a good work ethic; and the list goes on. This, from a human that is still in the process of becoming mature themselves. This, as it would seem, should call for respect (honor). Sadly, because of the poor actions of their ancestral parents,

the needed lessons were not taught, and the current person has little to pass on the next generation.

We rarely see this mindset in the business world either. Profits are more important than the individual workers. Profits dictate whether a product is made well or only good enough to catch the buyer's eye. How many CEO's really care for the person on the floor.

Most of the world does not live in a paterfamilias culture. In many cases people are starving, meaningful work to support a family is difficult to find. Wealth and privilege are reserved for the few, and much of the population is left to fend for themselves. Care of the earth takes second place to politics, greed, and wealth. Each government looks out for their own interests, without much regard to how those interests will affect the other governments. Often this results in wars and aggressions.

In our modern world we often recoil at the concept of paterfamilias because of the poor examples we see now and in history. However, the underlying concept of the paterfamilias is to be a servant to all.

Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles have absolute power and lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not to be this way with you; on the contrary, the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest [and least privileged], and the [one who is the] leader, like the servant. For who is the greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

Luke 22:25-27 Amplified Bible

God told ancient Israel that there would come a time when a Messiah would setup a kingdom that would

cause shalom (peace and well-being) to fill the earth. Jesus came to give us a preview of the way in which that kingdom would function. When He returns, He will be the KING over all kings (Servant over all servants).

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

Revelation 21 NLV

The KING of kings will have ultimate authority. He will be the true paterfamilias. He will teach every king of every nation how to be the proper paterfamilias of that kingdom. Families will thrive; there will be no hunger and no child left behind (orphaned). Jesus will have the resources and strength of character to cause each person to live in *hesed* (Godly love). He will not be subject to the greed, selfishness, or the failed politics that we know now.