

Revelation #47 – “Honor your mother and father...”

“Honor your father and mother, that you may live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” – Exodus 20:12

This is the Fifth commandment out of ten, but the first with a promise! (Eph 6:2) Is this still relevant or important to us today? What if my parents were horrible to me and neglected me? What if my parents abandoned me and I was raised by strangers or put in an orphanage? What if my parents are just plain abusive and mean? Why do they deserve ANYTHING good from me?

I’ve heard hundreds of stories that create questions like these. I have my own story of an alcoholic father who abandoned us and was critical of me whenever I saw him. And I struggled with the same doubts about why I should treat my father with more honor and respect than he showed me.

God calls us to higher standards than those required of our own experience and judgment. It takes a leap of faith sometimes to activate this commandment. My own experience of father’s common belittling me with the words, *“You do that like a girl”*, or *“it’s better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you’re a fool than to open it and prove them right”* were crushing to my heart as a boy. Then he shot my dog when I was 6, my best friend! He took my sister’s college fund and cashed it out. There was plenty of opportunity to learn forgiveness from this broken man. BUT... he was still my dad! How do I honor this man?

Not long before he died, I had asked if he would be willing to give me a Father’s blessing, but he didn’t understand the concept and never could do it. It was just one of many disappointments! I had so many friends in grade school who had terrible parents and abusive homes. That doesn’t even include all the hundreds of people’s stories I’ve listened to as a minister and counselor!! It would be very easy to become jaded and cynical about parents and whether they deserve any kind of honor and respect! BUT GOD requires it of us!!

And I’ve got plenty of stories with mom as well. One of the hurtful things I experienced from her was when I was about 12. I was sharing an exciting discovery I had made that day, and she replied, *“I’m glad you finally learned that. I’ve always known that.”* Those words were like a wet blanket over my joy, affirming my own shortcomings and stupidity, just like what I felt from my dad. What was I to believe about myself?

We ALL have our stories to tell, but HOW do we still honor them even when they failed to be the loving, supporting parents our hearts needed? It starts with a step of obedience. And as we honor our parents, we honor God and His standards of respect and value. Ultimately, HE is our true father and mother! And when we honor the parents He used to bring us into this world, we are giving Him thanks and honor for the very life we live.

I want to use this opportunity to share the last words I wrote to my mom after she passed away two years ago. We can still celebrate our moms and dads for the good they did bring, as we forgive them for all that could have been. I am glad I did.

Every life is precious, and every life is worthy of honor because they are made in the image of God. I often remember Pastor John from Bethany Church in Seattle who said, “Death is not a period, but a comma”, and that when someone passes on, we need to pause and remember their life. When we saw mom last December, both Linda and I noticed she was in a

state of peace, unlike most of what I had ever seen. Even though she commented every 5 minutes about how she missed Ralph, her husband of 41 years, we sensed she was ready to finish her race and to go home.

When I found out about her passing from my brother Bryce on January 31, I was filled with a mix of emotions. One of the greatest was that of feeling like an orphan, with a sense of loneliness and being left behind and on the outside. When I think of mom, what do I remember the most? I think of the little house we grew up in, with the oil furnace and the four of us in our bunkbeds in one little room. We had a lot of fun in that house with a big yard, building tree forts, playing Mother May I and red light, green light, climbing tall trees, and having a huge nest of carpenter ants that ate through the bathroom wall. I loved Saturdays when she would go shopping and bring home some kind of treat. I had quite a sweet tooth. I remember getting in trouble for something and she wouldn't let me have a fudge-sickle from the ice cream truck. So I thought I'd be real smart and buy one for the whole family. She still wouldn't let me have one!

When mom went back to work at Safeco, she often had a carpool with 2 or 3 other ladies. I especially remember one lady, Georgie, who was a smoker and would come in the door and yell, "Good morning Jean", with a nasal obnoxious sound. We were usually in bed and it was our wake-up call, like a croaky rooster.

WE were fortunate to have a landlord, Griffie, who looked out for us and really helped mom through many difficult years. We only paid \$50 a month for rent, and he would even babysit us sometimes. We had many fond memories in that house, and mom always tried hard to be there for us kids, whether it was birthdays or Christmas. Even when she spanked us, she often said, "This hurts me far more than it hurts you." I didn't believe her. She would even make us go get for her the switch she would use, and if it was too thin and broke, she would make us get another one.

I love you mom. And I am glad that you are finally out of pain. You suffered for over 30 years with pain that many said was just in your head. For most of your life, you were quite a talker. And now you can talk to Jesus to your hearts content. I delight in seeing you free to be the child you are, and to make music and dance with your whole being. I am happy for you that you are with a loving God and He has made you whole. Thank you for all you gave and sacrificed for me and all of us. You helped me finance my first car and my first house. You were there for me through my divorce. You were stubborn and strong-willed, but you always cared. You left your mark on this world and in our lives. I bless you, mom, and honor you for your loving sacrifices. Be at peace, mom.

Your son, Brian