

Honoring Dishonorable Parents

Honoring Position

Children are often required to honor dishonorable parents. As adults who crucify our judgments, we must also learn to honor parents whose behavior may continue to be dishonorable. It is important to honor their positions, even when we cannot honor their actions.

In Acts 23:1-5, Paul confronted the Sanhedrin. He looked straight at them and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." At this, the high priest Ananias ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth.

Paul responded to this dishonorable behavior by an authority, saying to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck."

Those near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest!"

Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

Paul asked forgiveness for speaking harshly to the ruler, choosing to honor his position, even when his behavior was dishonorable. He did not repent for the truth he spoke, but only the way in which he spoke it. It is not wrong to judge bad behavior, but it is sin to dishonor or condemn individuals.

Signs of Disrespect

In order to honor our aging parents, we must treat them like adults. We treat them like children when we act as if

- they cannot think for themselves, so we must think for them.
- they have no sense, so we must make choices for them.
- they can't handle responsibility, so we bear their burdens for them.
- they can't face reality, so we protect them and don't hold them accountable.

The truth is, unless our parents are afflicted with debilitating disease or senility, they are responsible for

- their thoughts and attitudes
- their choices
- their responsibilities and burdens
- their speech, deceptions, denials, blame, martyrdom or tempers

They are adults, and fully accountable for their lives.

Do unto others...

To love Mom and Dad is to treat them as I want to be treated. I am an adult and I really don't want people to tie themselves in emotional knots to shield me from the pain of change, or to take upon themselves the consequences of my own problems. I want those I love to share my burdens, not to carry them for me. I don't want to be spoiled. I won't do that to my parents if I choose to honor them.



a prayer to honor...

Lord, I have come to You so often for forgiveness for my resentments and tempers that I fear You don't want to hear me again. I see now that my resentment is not just a surface problem I can control by my own will power. I remember vividly the day when my father shouted at us children in fury simply because we were making childlike noises, and he snapped at our mother because she was there. I remember how unjust it felt and how his words burned into my spirit. I judged him that day; I reacted in anger and bitterness. My condemnation dishonored him. I vowed I would never shout at my children or snap at my wife. Now, Lord, I am confessing to you that I have done it again, and I have seen the fear in my daughter's eyes. My wife has told me how I have hurt her, again. I hate the damage I am doing. I see now that mere will power cannot stop this behavior. I cannot circumvent your law. I am reaping an awful harvest from the judgment I sowed. Only You can free me.

Forgiveness: Lord, I choose to forgive my father for his anger and harsh words. I choose to forgive him for hurting our mother, especially in front of her children. And I ask You to forgive me, Lord, for judging him, for distancing myself from him. Forgive me for the similar ways in which I have hurt my own children and my wife. By hurting them, I have dishonored You. I repent, and choose to be different in Your strength.

Death to the old structures: Lord, I ask that You break the power of this judgment against my father and lift this pattern of behavior out of my life. Bring to death on your cross my habits and attitudes of anger. I ask You to intervene so my family no longer reaps from my planting.

Resurrection to new life in Jesus: Help me to encourage and build them up, not to tear down. Help me to mend the wounds I have caused and to identify with my family's pain so that I might know the cost of my sin. Write it into my heart and help me to build new behavior. Strengthen my spirit so I can contain all of the power and character You want to pour into me.

IMPORTANT: These sample prayers are not formulas; rather, they offer ideas and direction. Be led by the Holy Spirit, and use the substance of this prayer as a guide. Also, please acknowledge these prayers as sample narratives, in which gender-exclusive references are used as they would be used in a real situation. For this reason, some prayers are for a female and others for a male. All are interchangeable.



a prayer to forgive...

Lord, I don't know how to make forgiveness happen.

I can't cleanse my heart or change my feelings.

I don't know how to trust, and I'm afraid to hold my heart open.

But today I'm making a choice to forgive. I know I'll have to choose again and again until You make forgiveness real and complete in me. Please God, give me the willingness and strength to persevere in choosing until forgiveness is accomplished in me by Your power.

I choose to forgive my father for ...

I choose to forgive my mother for ...

Forgive in me all my sinful responses ...

Father, I let go of all resentments and bitternesses stored in my heart. Wash me clean. Forgive me for all condemning judgments I have made. Give me a new and right spirit within me that will enable me to hate sin but look with Your compassion and love upon the sinner. Heal the wounded heart of the child within me. Pour Your love in. Bless those who wounded me.

Forgive me, Lord, for projecting my childish pictures in relation to parents onto You, and onto others, especially those I love. Bring those pictures to death. Bring my childish ways and expectations to death. Let Your light shine into all the hidden places of my heart. Enlighten the eyes of my heart, Lord, to see You and love You as You really are, and to walk in Your way.

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