

## Live Long and Prosper - Exodus 20:12

It was in 1967 in *Star Trek's* second season that Mr. Spock raised his hand and gave the Vulcan salute with these words: "Live long and prosper." That phrase became popular with the rise in popularity of the *Star Trek* series. Actually, it is one of the priestly blessings in Hebrew.

Our world is obsessed with living long and prospering. The problem is, they are looking in all the wrong places. Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1–3 give the clear answer to the individual and national question of survival. Exodus 20:12 makes it clear that the health of a nation is directly tied to the family. Ephesians 6:1–3 comes at it from a different angle—quality of life.

**Exodus 20:12** (p. 78) – "Honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

**Ephesians 6:1-3** (p. 1245) – "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Paul here is not saying that if you live a short life, it is because you did not honor your parents; neither is he saying that if you honor your parents, you are guaranteed a long life. The focus here is on the quality of life. Those who honor their parents enjoy a prosperous life. It is also a promise to a nation.

What does the word *honor* mean in the Exodus text? The Hebrew word *kābēd* means "to be heavy, or weighty." In other words don't take your parents lightly. Give them the respect and reverence they deserve. You may say, "But you don't know my parents. You don't know what they did to me."

Shaquille O'Neill, one of the most dominant players in the history of the NBA, wrote a rap song titled "Biological didn't bother." His real father deserted him and his mother when he was 6 months old. He hasn't talked to him since. Once at a NBA ball game his biological dad showed up and Shaq was asked about him. Shaq's smile disappeared and he said, "That man doesn't exist to me." Father's day can be a difficult day for many. But, here we have this Commandment from God. It doesn't say, "Honor you mother and father if they have been good to you." It says honor your mother and father, period. It may be that you find it hard to honor your parents as persons but at least you need to learn to honor the position of motherhood or fatherhood. We may not like the President of the U.S. but we should honor and respect the office of the president.

### God Is Serious

God is serious about this, as made clear in His Word (Ex. 21:15, 17; Deut. 21:18–21; Prov. 30:17; Rom. 1:18, 28–32; Col. 3:20). Honoring our parents is no laughing matter. Our national and individual well-being rises and falls with honoring our parents. This is serious stuff.

### Luther's Small Catechism

#### *The Fourth Commandment*

"Honor your father and mother."

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them."

### Honoring Our Parents

Let's consider practically how to honor our parents.

1. We obey our parents.

Obeys and honor go hand in hand; in fact you can't have one without the other. Obedience is what we do; honor is the attitude motivating our obedience.

2. We respect our parents.

Leviticus 19:3 commands children to respect their parents. Again, what does that look like?

a. We speak kindly *to* our parents.

b. We speak kindly *of* our parents.

A little girl was very unhappy because her parents had refused her wishes. That evening her mother was amused to hear her pray, "Please, Lord, don't give her any more children; she doesn't know how to treat the ones she's got now."

Now, I know someone out there is saying, "But Pastor, you don't know my parents!" What if your parents don't act respectable? If not the person, *respect their God-given position*.

3. We listen to our parents' counsel.

Back to Shaquille O'Neal for a moment. He did attribute his success to his stepfather. "Thank God, I listened to my father. I would have been dead otherwise. He raised me the old-fashioned way. He taught me how to play basketball. He taught me about life. He loved me. He whipped me when I needed it. And things have turned out good."

4. We live wisely (Prov. 10:1). What are parents proud of? Their children who live a wise and righteous (moral) life. Righteous living comes only from living a life in tune with God.

5. We forgive our parents.

Parents will make many mistakes; children must learn to forgive them (Eph. 4:32).

6. We care for our parents.

Jesus sternly rebuked the Pharisees for a practice called *Corban* (Mark 7:9–13). *Corban* meant that something of material worth had been devoted to God and could not be given even to a needy parent. Jesus made it clear that it was morally wrong not to care for aging parents.

A good illustration is the story "The Old Man and His Grandson" from *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. It is the story of an older man who lived with his young son and his son's wife. They also had a 4 year old boy. The old man's eyes blinked, his hands shook. When he ate food the silverware would rattle against the plate. He often missed his mouth. Food would be spilled on the tablecloth. This upset the young wife. She appealed to her husband to do something. They decided to move their dad to a corner at meal time away from the family. He would set alone in the corner eating out of a bowl, sitting on a stool. The old man would look sadly at the others and desired to be with them. One day the man dropped his bowl and broke it. His son and daughter-in-law said, If you eat like a pig then we will serve you like a pig. They made a wooden trough for the old man to eat out of. Not long after, they came upon their son playing with some pieces of wood. The dad asked what he was doing. The boy looked up, smiled and said, "I'm making a trough to feed you and mama when I get big." The next day the old man was back at the table eating with the family again and no one ever scolded or mistreated him again.

### **Live Long and Prosper**

God has given us the key to national and individual prosperity. It begins when we are but children and continues as we grow old. Many here today have both children and parents alive. How are you doing? Are you honoring them today? God commands us to do so!

Honor your parents that you may live long and prosper!