

Leaders' Notes

The Ten Great Freedoms
Sermon #6

First Brethren Church of Sarasota, Florida
February 7, 2010

Dear Growth Group Leader:

I encourage you to remember your shepherding role as a growth group leader. You are not the group's teacher, pouring out information to the members. This is more of a Bible study discussion group where everyone comes together and shares their insights. You are there to lead the discussion but also to encourage and equip the members of the group to care for one another. Is one of your group members sick? How about taking in a meal? Is one of your members feeling lonely? How about calling on the phone? You, as the leader, should not do everything. But you should be thinking about the needs and how those needs can be met.

Iris announced in her group that Esther Metzler needed help and companionship in her home after Wilbur passed away. Bea asked for the details and now she is providing that for Esther. That could have happened without a growth group but those kind of groups are the place that God works to meet needs.

Blessings,

Pastor David

Freedom of giving honor

Exodus 20:12

The two sections of the Ten Commandments

Commands 1-4: Love God.

Commands 5-10: Love others.

Why should we honor our parents?

They have the wisdom of experience.

We owe them.

They teach us to honor all authority.

They are an object lesson of our Heavenly Father.

What about parents who don't deserve honor?

There is no qualifier in this command.

Honor may have different forms for different circumstances.

Exodus 20:18-19

How to honor your parents

1. Be a joy to them.

Proverbs 23:24-25

2. Obey them.

3. Respect their advice.

Proverbs 13:1, Proverbs 23:22

4. Meet their needs.

1 Timothy 5:3-4

5. Forgive their failings.

Hebrews 12:10

Home Bible Study

Freedom of giving honor

Getting started

1. Did any part of the sermon make you think? Did it stir up emotions for you, good or bad?

Talking about family is usually a very emotional subject. Be sensitive to your group members if their parents have passed away, if they had a difficult relationship with their parents, or no relationship at all. They also may have very good relationships with their parents and these could bring out some very good emotions.

2. Is there anything you would like to share about your relationship with your parents that affected how you do or do not honor them?

My purpose in asking this question is not to pry into private issues that people would rather not share. Rather, it is to give people the opportunity if they want to bring out some issues, good or bad, to have the group help them deal with them. If no one shares, just go on to the next question. It is all right for them to keep quiet.

Going deeper

3. Read Ephesians 6:1-4. What are children commanded to do in this verse? What, in your own words, are parents commanded to do?

Children are to obey their parents. This passage shows that part of honoring our parents is to obey. Parents have their own responsibility in their role, however. They are supposed to avoid “exasperating” their children. Parents should be reasonable, kind, and, above all, loving.

4. Why do you think this command is the “first command with a blessing?” Why will we “live long in the land” if we honor our parents? Is this a natural consequence of honoring our parents, a promise of a direct blessing from God, or both?

I believe it is both. We can see in our culture the effects of a breakdown between parents and their children. Young men who have no contact or influence from their fathers are ill-equipped to contribute to society. Instead, they prey on it. Young women without the love they need from their parents look for it in other places, often confusing sex with love. This emptiness in their lives is often perpetuated to other generations. You may want to remind your group of the point in the sermon about the

study in 2008 that estimated the cost of divorce to government at all levels to be *at least* 192 billion dollars a year. This is only a small fraction of the cost of the breakdown of the family.

5. God has given roles and responsibilities to the institutions of any society and culture, institutions such as family, church and government. How would you describe the roles of each of these three institutions? How is each doing in our culture today?

Family: The family is the incubator for the next generation. The family is supposed to socialize and build the character of the children. It is the most basic institution of the culture and, in our case, the most dysfunctional (in my opinion at least). Our 50% divorce rate, teenage pregnancies, juvenile crime, illiteracy, drug abuse, and a host of other indicators show that we have a serious problem.

Church: The church is supposed to provide the spiritual care in society. It deals with the weighty issues of our relationship to God, each other, life and death, morality, and the meaning of it all. The church has problems of its own. However, its worst issue right now is that our society has chosen to marginalize the church. We shouldn't be surprised that we have so many moral problems.

Government: Government is supposed to restrain and punish evil, protect people and enforce the rule of law. Unfortunately, the government is increasingly taking on responsibilities that do not belong to it. The result is failed programs and bloated bureaucracies and budgets. The government is not very good at raising children, creating moral citizens or putting people into relationship with God. It should not try to do these things. Instead, it should create an environment where the church and family can thrive and then step out of the way.

Putting it into practice

6. What could be done to strengthen family bonds in our culture?

Lots of possible answers here. Change tax and welfare laws to encourage family stability. Teach more about family in the church. Stop trying to redefine family as anything anybody wants it to be. Decide that family is important to our culture. Etc., etc., etc.....

7. What could/should you do to strengthen your family?

Even more varied answers are possible here. Let them flow.