



HONORING YOUR SPOUSE'S PARENTS

HOW TO DEAL WITH IN-LAWS

By Justin Marbury



Asking a father for his daughter's hand in marriage is a tradition that is losing prominence in American culture. It could be because it is awkward and embarrassing. Perhaps today's society encourages young adults to be more independent. But the importance of this ritual far outweighs any jangled nerves on the part of the groom. Seeking the parents' blessing can set a tone of respect between the couple and the in-laws for years to come. Maybe you didn't get off on the right foot with your in-laws. But it's never too late to bring honor into a relationship.

We all know that the fifth commandment tells us to "honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). But what about honoring our in-laws? Are we commanded to honor them? The answer is a resounding yes. After all, marriage means that two individuals have become one. You now share everything, including parents. You may even call your in-laws "Mom" and "Dad." And while marriage involves "leaving" one family and "cleaving" to another as a new family, it doesn't cancel the fifth commandment. So how do we honor our spouse's parents while retaining the autonomy marriage requires? Try following these three principles:

1. HONORING YOUR IN-LAWS IS A REQUIREMENT.

The first step in honoring your in-laws is to understand that God expects it. In fact, He commands it.



Like so many of God's requirements, this is unconditional. Honoring your in-laws doesn't necessarily mean that you always conform to their will. Sometimes you will disagree with your in-laws or act in a way contrary to their desires or expectations. It is possible to disagree agreeably. But always make sure you retain the critical boundaries of honor and respect.

2. CONSIDER YOUR IN-LAWS' PERSPECTIVE.

The second step in honoring your in-laws is to try to see things from their point of view. Perspective changes everything. It's not always easy to look at things from another's perspective. The best way to do this is to put yourself in their shoes, "How would I feel if my daughter didn't come home for the holidays?" "What if I wasn't invited to my son's birthday party?" In the end, it may not change your decision, but it should help you to honor their position.

3. LET LOVE MOTIVATE YOU TO HONOR YOUR IN-LAWS.

The third step in honoring your in-laws may sound cliché—love them. First and foremost comes our love for God. There is no possibility of consistent love (*agape*) outside a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When you try to unconditionally honor your in-laws in your own strength, you will fail. While love for God is primary, you should also be motivated by love for your spouse. After all, the person you love so much is the product of your in-laws' DNA. As imperfect as your in-laws may be, they produced the person you married. The next time you're tempted to think, "*Life sure would be easier without them,*" remember, without them you wouldn't have your spouse.