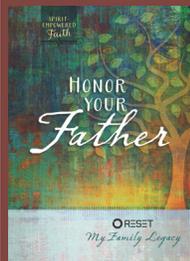


The Father Figure

Josh McDowell



This article is an excerpt from the resource, **Honor Your Father**. You can find this resource and many others today at: greatcommandment.net/resources

A Special Message for Dads,
from Josh McDowell



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The nature and character of our Father in heaven reveals that a godly father is one who comforts and supports his children in life's trials and difficulties. The Bible says, *"The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"* (Psalm 34:17–18).

Our **model Father** is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. He responds to our crises and calamities, not with impatience and indignation, but with comfort and support. He knows that it helps immensely in times of difficulty to have someone on whom we can rely and find strength (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

God's comfort extends to all our troubles. He comforts and supports us when we suffer persecution for His name's sake and when we suffer the consequences of our own foolish behavior. He comforts us when we deserve it least, when we're slogging through a mess of our own making. He supports us when we are weak, and He comforts us when we fall.

Our Father is comforting and supporting even when He must discipline us. The psalmist David wrote, *"Your rod and your staff, they comfort me"* (Psalm 23:4). The shepherd's staff was used as an instrument of comfort and support, lifting newborns, drawing lambs closer, and guiding sheep through dangerous or difficult routes.

The rod, on the other hand, was an instrument of defense and discipline. It was used to deter or subdue attackers and for correcting wayward or recalcitrant members of the flock. Both instruments, however—the staff and the rod—were sources of comfort to the psalmist because both were wielded by a compassionate and supportive Shepherd.



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"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good" (Psalm 107:1).

Reflect for a moment on one of the rods of correction the Shepherd uses in our lives—the Ten Commandments. What was God's motive when He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and the children of Israel and eventually to us? Why did He give commandments such as "Honor your father and mother"?

God undoubtedly gave the Ten Commandments to provide testimony of His character, to portray righteous living, and to clarify sin's darkness, but we must look deeper to see the Father's heart. Our heavenly Father also gave the Ten Commandments because He knew how deeply sin would hurt us. Like a loving parent would warn a child not to touch a hot stove, God's heart of love is what motivated Him to establish rules and commandments (Deuteronomy 10:13). Out of a desire for our protection, God intended the commandments to be like stop signs for our behavior because He knows that when we violate them, we experience hurt. Remember some of the commands from Scripture and hear them from a Father who doesn't want us to experience hurt. Exodus 20:13–15 (*NLT*) reminds us:

- You must not murder.
- You must not commit adultery.
- You must not steal.

Pause and consider:

How do you feel toward your heavenly Father as you reflect on His compassionate, protective motive?

As I consider the loving motive behind God's gift of His commandments, I feel _____.

I am filled with thanks because of God's heart for my good and His desire to protect me, because of how He _____.

Plan to share your responses with your prayer partner or a small group.

God's commands are clear. His motive is love. Yet how does the Father respond when we choose to ignore His commands? Romans 5:8 tells us: *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* Even when we sin, the Father's heart is compassionate, still loving. God isn't moved with vengeance or retribution when we disobey His commands. Instead, His heart grieves when our sinful choices cause us pain.

That's the kind of father we should want to be. By the supernatural presence and power of God's Holy Spirit living in us and working through us, we can reflect our Father's nature, comforting and supporting our children in all their troubles.

