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Unshakeable

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Commandment with Promise

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exodus 20:12 KJV).



▲ Melissa Ponce-Rodas

Exodus 20:12 is often taught to young children to show them to respect, listen to and obey their parents. However, as a commandment-keeping people, we must understand that while God’s law never changes, how one honors one’s parents must change as you both grow and change.

Last month, my maternal grandmother turned 85. I praise God for her every day. Unfortunately, in this sin-afflicted world, her health is deteriorating and she is suffering from dementia of the Alzheimer’s type. Dementia slowly destroys the connections in our brain which allow us to make new memories and remember old ones. It affects everything, including remembering where we put things, who people are, and how to brush our teeth. As the disease progresses, people can do and remember less and less.

During spring break, my mother and I had the opportunity to help care for grandma. While diseases like these are heart-wrenching as we see the ways our loved ones suffer, my mother’s care (and that of my aunts as well) taught me so much about how our understanding of Exodus 20:12 must tangibly change as we, and our parents, age. The practical ways to honor our aging parents are not the same as when we were children, developing teenagers, or even as young adults, because during many of these stages our parents are still the ones giving advice and caring for us. Honoring our parents must be very different when our roles change, and we, the children, are the ones caring for our aging parents.

Some ways I’ve learned to honor our aging parents is to:

- Meet them where they are. Grandma cannot always remember who her children are, but they honor her

by not getting upset, understanding that this is part of the disease and she is still loving them the only way she can.

- Respect what they are still trying to contribute, especially in the early stages of the disease. Many want to continue doing things like cooking, cleaning or paying the bills. My grandmother can no longer reliably do most of these things, but mom would find one simple task with which she could help and let her do it. She was honored for what Grandma could contribute and found a way for her to feel useful and needed.
- Treat them with dignity. A visiting nurse came to see how she could help with Grandma’s care. Mom had to tell her all of the things Grandma could no longer do for herself, like bathe, dress, or sometimes she even had trouble eating. Mom would discreetly ask the nurse to go into the living room to share this information to avoid ever making Grandma feel incompetent or ashamed.
- How we honor our parents may very well be showing our children how to honor us. By following God’s command to honor our parents at every stage of their lives, may we enjoy the promise of many days in the land the Lord gives us. ■

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Unshakeable

It is fascinating how we internalize this notion that we are victims of stress, time and busyness. It is as if we are completely defenseless — running in a hamster wheel, out of breath, often stumbling, sometimes falling, taken for a constant, nauseating spin.

“I don’t have time” has sadly become a staple phrase in most peoples’ vocabulary. We have adapted to simply reacting to whatever is thrown our way and, oftentimes, we are not prepared, nor do we have the resources to react in a way that helps us to actually master the bump with grace, strength and wisdom.

To actually start living our lives to the fullest, we need to seriously shift our mindset, our thinking, and our locus of control. Life is scary; it is hard; it is often unfair. But continuing to point our finger at something or someone else to take responsibility for that which is actually ours to carry will not take you on the path to living up to your fullest potential.

Please do not misunderstand me! I know we cannot control a lot of things that are thrown our way. But I believe we CAN choose how we will respond. I also believe we can train to be ready and fit for those moments in life where things shake us up, knock us off our feet, or where the battle seems endless. *Will you freeze? Will you stay down? Will you just react rather than fight?*

If you are tired of being stressed, too busy or not conquering these hurdles in front of you, and you are ready to get off that hamster wheel, I am cheering you on! Do it! **Today is a great day to start taking responsibility and making positive choices!**

This choice will require a number of important elements, such as being honest with yourself, reorganizing and prioritizing your values, activities, schedules, relationships, and caring for your body, mind, spirituality and interpersonal connections.

We need to create intentional goals and a specific plan of daily action of how to better care for all these areas. Rather than reacting, we start living a life of training, preparation and execution. You will start feeling more balanced, more at peace and more in control. The beauty is, even when you do get knocked down, you will not stay down for long, because you have trained to be **unshakeable**. Being **unshakeable** does not mean that you will not fall — it simply means you are prepared to fight and you have built up resources to be able to fight.

Here are some basic ideas for starting your training to become unshakeable:

1. **Spend a few minutes every day in meaningful connections with God.**
2. **Start incorporating 30 minutes of intentional exercise into your daily routine.**
3. **Create a gratefulness jar, and add one note of gratitude into it daily.**
4. **Pick one person in your network each day to whom you send a message of care, kindness, love or encouragement.**

To live your life to the fullest and be unshakeable, you must choose to change, take responsibility and get off the hamster wheel. You are strong, beautiful and capable. You have been created an extraordinary being with great potential. Do not hold yourself back. **Become unshakeable!** ■

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▲ Dominique Gummelt