

# Speaking to the soul



## Parents

**If you insult your father or mother, your light will be snuffed out in total darkness. - Proverbs 20:20**

Family relationships were of central concern to the writer of Proverbs. The incredibly harsh language that he uses in this particular proverb shows his complete contempt for those who insulted their parents. No punishment was too great for those who were able to sink to such depths. Later in Proverbs the writer speaks with even greater passion: “The

eye that mocks a father and despises a mother's instructions will be plucked out by ravens of the valley and eaten by vultures" Proverbs 30:17.

The whole Bible speaks with one voice on this subject and it is not surprising that honouring parents was one of the Ten Commandments, standing alongside the commands not to murder, commit adultery or steal.

All family relationships will be strained at times, but nothing can change our fundamental responsibility to our parents. The commandment is followed by the promise that if you honour your father and mother "then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). That is to say good follows from caring for your parents and showing them the respect that they deserve.

When I lived in India, I had the privilege of living with an Indian extended family. We lived, ate and worshipped as a three-generation family and that seemed to work well, although it would be misleading to suggest that there weren't times of tension. In the West, such families are relatively uncommon. That presents us with challenges, particularly in the care of elderly parents. This has become an even greater issue as people live longer. But the principle remains the same. Caring for parents is a fundamental responsibility, however demanding it might be.

## **QUESTION**

In what way does the command to honour parents shape your life?

## **PRAYER**

Lord God our Father, we thank you for parents. We praise you for every way that they have blessed our lives, and ask you to help us forgive them for the ways that they let us down. Amen