

Theme: God and Family

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right ... Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:1,4)

One area of tension between traditional Chinese culture and contemporary American culture involves the family dynamic. Traditional Chinese culture prioritizes parental authority. Contemporary American culture advocates independence for children, whether adolescent or adult. Confucius exemplifies the former: "Follow your parent's advice while they are alive, and their pattern of life after they die" (*Analects* 1.11, paraphrase). The entry on 'teenage rebellion' in Wikipedia encapsulates the latter: "As part of their development into young adults, humans *must develop* an identity independent from their parents or family and a capacity for independent decision-making" (*emphasis added*).

It is tempting for overseas-born parents and American-born children to cherry-pick those Bible verses that support their particular perspective. Instead, the Bible speaks a corrective to each: children, obey your parents where their guidance does not oppose the word and ways of the Lord; parents, do not impose your own ways on your children, but guide them in the ways and word of the Lord.

REFLECTION

- Parents: Consider your last conflict with your children. Was there anything distinctly biblical about your perspective? Or was it simply your own subjective preference?
- Children: Review your last conflict with your parents. Did you resist their guidance because it explicitly or implicitly violated Scripture? Or because you wanted to do your own thing, or fit in with your peers?

RENEW

- Parents: If you were to prioritize God over material comfort, how would it affect the educational and career advice you give to your children?
- Children: If you were to prioritize respect for your parents over acceptance by your peers, how would it affect your current values and activities?

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Parents: Pray today for the spiritual development of your children.
- Children: Pray today for your parents' growth in spiritual wisdom.