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## Who decides?



A current issue is one of who decides about the education of a child?

- Is it the Welsh Assembly?
- Is it the Parliament in London?
- Is it the Department for Education?
- ...or is it the parents of the child?

For any Christian in the pews of the Church in Wales these are some Christian Perspectives.

The commandment is to “Honour your Father and Mother” and examination of the Christian position reveals that Christians are fully in favour of Human Rights.

Article 26 (paragraph 3) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which the UK assented in full:

**‘Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.’**

European law states the same principle in the ECHR, the European Convention on Human Rights. In Article 2 it directly states:

**‘In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching,**

the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.'

The government has decided to remove the right of parents to object to what is taught in RSE (which is not the same as objecting to RSE as a whole) and given final say-so to the Head Teacher. Yet the Christian position is to be fully in favour of the human rights of parents because of the Christian view of the family.

In the 10 commandments that are used throughout the Bible (Old and New Testament), the fifth commandment is "Honour your Father and Mother".

It is one of the only commandments that gives us a reason for observing it.

You can find an explanation of it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pztaLx5ydwU> (that is if you don't mind the "Americanisms"!)

To honour your parents is about respect for them, but it is not actually about agreeing with them on everything thoughtlessly. Neither are we commanded by the Bible to love our parents but we are commanded to Honour them. "Honouring" includes authority and so it is that it is parents who decide a child's education. When parents have the right to decide a child's education that does not mean you have to agree with them: That's is not what such a right means. Parents are the key to a good society even when parents are imperfect.

We are commanded to love our neighbour, we are commanded to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Yet the word "love" in the Bible means love in the sense of caring for someone, it is not simply a kind of vague affection in response to gifts. This is where the English language fails to properly show different types of love. When the English language has only one word for love it is open to misrepresentation. The love talked about here in the Bible is a caring attitude to others.

If you build a society in which children honour their parents then the society will have a strength and respect for each other and do well, but if you build a society in which children disrespect and show contempt for their parents then that society will be fractious and hateful. That society will ultimately self-destruct.

In Matthew's gospel the Lord Jesus Christ tells us:

*If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!*

*Matthew 10 verse 25*

It is only parents which we are commanded to honour and, connected with that, it is parents who decide what to do in our childhood. We as children need to remember this commandment and live it. If parents are not honoured then it relegates parents to irrelevance. Honouring your parents when we are children is also part of understanding that there is a higher authority to which we are morally accountable.

Even when we grow up into adulthood we are still commanded to Honour our Father and Mother. The commandment doesn't stop. We may become more self-determinate having grown up but, nonetheless, we are still commanded to Honour our Father and Mother.

The ancient word in the Bible used for family is often translated better as "household" but the word household throughout Scripture always fully includes family.

We are told by St Paul in the letter to the Ephesians:

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints  
and also members of the household of God  
Ephesians 2 verse 19*

So as a Christian, believing in the life-saving forgiveness our Lord Jesus Christ offers us,  
we are children of God in in God's family.

In the same letter to the Ephesians we are told:

*Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.  
Ephesians 5 verse 2*

So we are brought back to the commandment to Honour your Father and Mother and to be  
a family ourselves.

“Honouring” includes authority and so it is that it is parents who decide a child's education.  
Parents are the key to a good society. A good society (not a perfect society but a good  
human society).

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