



What Children Owe Their Parents

Col. 3:20

Today we bring to an end this series on “God’s Help for the Family”. There is much more that could, probably should be said, but next week begins our Phil Waldrep Weekend, and a number of special things after that.

In the previous weeks I have particularly focused on *some of you* each week - *parents, husbands and wives, unmarried*. Today is somewhat more interesting. I am going to be speaking to children only. As I spoke on “What Parents Owe Their Children” now we cover “What Children Owe Their Parents.”

In fact after that first part, I had some parents come and say, “That was really good... But I can’t wait to hear “What children owe their parents.” Sometimes it’s easier to listen when you’re off the hook and it’s someone else in the cross-hairs.

So with that in mind, would everyone here who is a “child” , would you please raise your hand (that’s everybody). So today I am really speaking to everyone when I speak to “What Children Owe Their Parents.”

When I spoke to parents told them they owed their children Unconditional love. And they owed them Corrective Discipline.

Let’s begin by turning to Exodus, chapter 20, verse 12.

I’m sure you recognize this section as the place where we get the Ten Commandments. This is the fifth commandment.

These commandments represents the will and way of God delivered to Moses to govern the Israelites. They were given to regulate their behavior and cement their covenant with a God who had not only delivered them but was now desiring to lovingly direct them to a place that God had pre-prepared for them.

Scholars have divided the Ten Commandments into two sections. The first section, the first four commandments, are those things that define our relationship to God. The second section, are six commandments that define our relationship with other human beings. This fifth commandment, the command to honor our mothers and fathers is the bridge, into the second part. By placing at first, before murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting, it suggests that our relationship with our fellow human beings begins at home in our family. In other words, you cannot have a good relationship with other people if you do not have a good relationship with people in your home first. If you can’t get along with the people in your home, chances are you will not get along with people in the streets either.

Now look, we are all children, I knew that. But I have to tell you that I am focusing on us children who are able to hear and respond to God’s Word (I’m pretty sure God hasn’t recorded Scripture for people who can’t read or understand yet- so that means it is there for people who can.)

So beginning with Exodus 20:12, and moving forward, let’s see what God says we children, young and old, owe our parents.

I. HONOR YOUR PARENTS

HONOR YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER

Now this command, applies to children of every age, whether young and still in the home of their parents, or as adult children. How you apply it will change, but the principle remains the same.

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Definition of honor (Webster): *“To respect greatly, regard highly; treat with deference and courtesy.”* The Hebrew word used here for honor means literally, *“To make heavy.”* In other words don’t take your parents lightly. Give them the respect and reverence they deserve. To honor includes the idea of esteem, modeling, and obedience. I think it is best summed up with the idea and the word “respect.”

Perhaps you’ve seen the bumper sticker that says: *“Honor your parents: they haven’t written their will yet”.*

But God’s command stands in sharp contrast to that attitude. It’s very simple: Honor your father and mother.

Let me say this. You do not honor your parents because you feel they are good parents, you honor them because they ARE your parents.

You may say, “But you don’t know my parents. You don’t know what they did to me.”

Honor is CHARACTER based, not EMOTION based. Not based on if doing a good job - just as parents are to love children unconditionally, children are to love and honor their parents unconditionally.

You may not particularly care for the president of the United States, however you still honor the office of the President.

The sin of my generation and down is lack of gratitude (honor).

Parents, wouldn't it be good if we could be as brilliant as our children thought we were when they were young and only half as stupid as they think we are when their teenagers?"

Mark Twain once said, “When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned.”

The No. 1 thing parents want is respect (honor). So:

How to honor your parents (not so serious list for children and youth):

1. Write a note of appreciation to your parents.
2. Express appreciation for your parents to your friends. (For brownie points do it in front of your parents.)
3. Don't be afraid to speak strange sounding languages... like "I'll help you with the dishes."
4. Try to understand their music. Listen to an oldies station.

5. Be patient with the *under-achieving parent*. For example, when you catch your *dieting dad* sneaking a bowl of ice cream, don't hesitate to tell him “It's OK, I like fat parents.”
6. Encourage your parents to talk about *their* problems. Try to remember that things like earning the living and paying off the mortgage are important.

WHY WE SHOULD HONOR OUR PARENTS? (And parents, why should you teach your children to honor you?)

A. It Teaches Us to Honor all Authority

Proverbs 30:17 ¹⁷*“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.*

That is saying that what happens in the home sets the pattern for what happens in life.

A child who disrespects and disobeys his parents is setting him/herself up for a life of difficulty.

I know that there are whole lot of theories and suggestions on raising children today, but I’m telling you the Bible is correct, honor and obedience begins at home and **the failure to teach it is the highest form of child abuse.**

You see friends it really is rather simple. When we fail to teach our children to honor and obey at home we are setting them up for failure and hard knocks in their life.

- He is not going to listen to the teacher in school
- She is not going to listen to an administrator in the principal’s office
- He is not going to listen to a coach on the field
- She is not going to listen to a director in the band
- He is not going to listen to a pastor in the church
- He is not going to listen to the policeman on the street
- She is not going to listen to her boss at work

In fact, Exodus 20:12, which is repeated six more times in the Bible, tells us that. But from the positive side. *so that you may live long in the land*

the LORD your God is giving you. The person who chooses to honor his mother and father can expect a longer and more prosperous life than the person who doesn't.

If you are older than 40 the name Dr. Benjamin Spock is more than familiar. It was Spock that told an entire generation of parents, "don't discipline your children and allow them to express themselves." "Discipline," he told us, "would warp a child's fragile ego."

Millions followed this guru of child development and he remained unchallenged among child rearing professionals. However, before his death Dr. Spock made an amazing discovery: He was wrong. In fact, he said:

"We have reared a generation of brats. Parents aren't firm enough with their children for fear of losing their love or incurring their resentment. This is a cruel deprivation that we professionals have imposed on mothers and fathers. Of course, we did it with the best of intentions. We didn't realize until it was too late how our know-it-all attitude was undermining the self assurance of parents."

Oops.

B. The Honor You Give is the Honor You will Receive

The Bible says, *"Give and it shall be given to you."* Give what? Love, money, respect, HONOR.

In Grim's Fairy Tales is a story related to this:

It is the story of an older man who lived with his young son and his son's wife. They also had a 4 year old boy. The old man's eyes blinked, his hands shook. When he ate food the silverware would rattle against the plate. He often missed his mouth. Food would be spilled on the tablecloth. This upset the young wife. She appealed to her husband to do something. They decided to move their dad to a corner at meal time away from the family. He would sit alone in the corner eating out of a bowl, sitting on a stool. The old man would look sadly at the others and desired to be with them. One day the man dropped his bowl and broke it. His son and daughter-in-law said, "If you eat like a pig then we will serve you like a pig." They made a wooden trough for the old man to eat out of.

Not long after, they came upon their son playing with some pieces of wood. The dad asked what he was doing. The boy looked up, smiled and said, "I'm making a trough to feed you and mama when I get big." The next day the old man was back at the table eating with the family again and no one ever scolded or mistreated him again.

II. HOW TO HONOR YOUR PARENTS

For this I want us to look at what I call "Parental Proverbs."

1. Honor Your Parents by LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY - Proverbs 23:24-25 *²⁴The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. ²⁵May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!*

This is a picture of proud parents. What are they proud of? Their children who live a wise and righteous (moral) life. Righteous living comes only from living a life in tune with God. This is written with God-fearing parents in mind.

2. Honor Your Parents by LOVING GRACIOUSLY - Proverbs 19:26 *²⁶He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace. (see Prov. 28:24)*

In that day children would work the farm of their parents until they died and then the farm would become theirs. Here the children kick their parents off their farm and take it for themselves. It is wrong to exploit our parents.

In fact, the Bible tells us that we have a responsibility to care for the ones who took care of us when we were children. **1 Timothy 5:4** *⁴But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.*

Also, we need to protect them from exploitation. The older a parent gets the more vulnerable they get. There are a lot of vultures out there ready to rip them off. It is estimated that every year senior adults are scammed out of \$40 million dollars.

We need to look after our parents in these matters. That is how we love them back.

3. Honor Your Parents by SPEAKING LOVINGLY - Proverbs 20:20 *²⁰If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.*

Exodus 21:17 *¹⁷Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.*

The picture of a lamp going out throughout Proverbs is a picture of a person's life being cut short. We can speak curses or blessings. If you embrace a lifestyle of hatred and contempt for your parents, your own life is at risk. Words can hurt. Speak blessings, not curses. For some of you it will take the grace of God to speak to your parents this way.

4. Honor Your Parents by LISTENING TO THEM -Proverbs 23:22 *²²Listen to your father,*

who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

The word *listen* here means to pay attention.

When we are younger children, this means that we are to OBEY our parents.

Colossians 3:20 ²⁰*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

When we are older and living as adults (includes being out from under care financially) then we have to make our own decisions, BUT WE ARE WISE TO LISTEN TO THEIR ADVICE!

5) Honor your parents by FORGIVING THEIR FAILINGS.

Proverbs 10:12 ¹²*Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over (forgives) all wrongs.*

Whenever it you are dealing with human beings and relationships you have to learn to apply forgiveness.

That is certainly true in the family - parents must forgive their children, and children must also forgive their parents.

Is easier to forgive for some things and for others, I know that.

A. We obviously have to forgive each other for our HUMAN FAILINGS.

When I was a little boy I remember getting of kindergarten and finding that my father forgot to pick me up. Before I knew it I was all alone on the other side of town. So I started walking. And I was scared and we started to cry. Finally I heard a screeching car as my dad came speeding by and then solemnly and came to a screeching halt. He had lost track of time and he gave me a big hug. Well, I didn't like that he forgot me, and for a while I let him know that. And I was afraid to be dropped off for school for a time as well. But of course I forgave him, even a five-year-old knows people make mistakes.

The funny thing is, 10 or 11 years ago, now I'm the dad, and my sweet little daughter Katelyn is at a summer program at the elementary school. I'm in my study your church and suddenly I realize, "oh my gosh I was supposed to pick her up!" I jump in the car and break every speed limit to get to the school. There she is sitting on the concrete walk all along, everyone else is left. I come to a screeching halt. She is crying and I give her a big hug. However, she still reminds me that I forgot about her even today. (But deep down I know she's really are forgiven me.)

To err is human, to forgive, divine. (Alexander Pope)

But some things go deeper than simple human failings. I know there are some of you here today

thinking, "I am NEVER going to be able to forgive HIM/HER. . . Not after what he/she's done."

I'm probably talking to some people whose parents:

- divorced, and left you hanging.
 - fought, and you were caught in the middle.
- because of work or some other issue have not been there for you the way you felt that they should have been
- because of their own problems are not the parents they should have been.

Listen, there are no perfect parents (except God). But there are also no perfect children either.

And I am not trying to make an excuse for the hurtful things that parents have done to their children. But I am talking to us as children this morning.

You honor God and you honor your parents when you forgive them for their human shortcomings, AND for their mistakes.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a choice to not hold on to anger or the desire for revenge.

Now I also realize that there are possibly some of you here who have experienced a whole other level of neglect or abuse by your earthly parents.

Unfortunately the reality is that when ever you speak about parents, there is someone in the group who was **abused, physically, emotionally or sexually while they were growing up**. Some of you may have grown up in the homes of **alcoholics or drug addicts, you had parents who were distant or cold and uncaring**.

NBA basketball star Shaquille O'Neill wrote a rap song titled "Biological Didn't Bother." His real father deserted him and his mother when he was 6 months old. He hasn't talked to him since. Once at a NBA ball game his biological dad showed up and Shaq was asked about him. Shaq's smile disappeared and he said, "That man doesn't exist to me."

And you want to cry out "how can I honor people who are un-honorable?" "How do I honor someone who never once honored me?"

What is God asking of you this morning? Is God asking you to put on a mask and pretend it never happened?

No, He is not. He knows how sorry your parents were!

Listen, I am not a psychologist or psychiatrist, and if you fall into this category there is a lot more to this than I know that I can tell you here. But this I know. You have been inflicted with a double-damage problem. You had to endure the abuse of the past and you continue to have to endure the pain of the present. The hatred, the anger the personality damage.

And if you are ever going to be free from the ongoing scars of your past you are going to have to reach a place of forgiveness.

So God is this morning still asking you to begin to take this step toward honoring your parents – to forgive. Not for their sakes, but for yours. And for God's.

Give up your right to hold bitterness and a desire for revenge. Give up your right to always think of them with contempt. Forgive, not their actions, but THEM as broken people.

Then, ask God to begin using you as a channel for his love. You can't create love in your own heart. God is the source of love. Ask him to simply pour his love for them into your heart. . . and OVER TIME, as you continually make the choice to forgive, you'll sense an attitude change in your heart.

CONCLUSION

Now there is another "Parent/child" relationship that I want to leave off with today. Not only are we all children of our earthly parents, it is God's intention that we all become children of God. In fact all of the instructions and guidance of the Word, concerning children today, this really conditioned on the fact that we are also children of the living God.

It is only when we know the Heavenly Father's love, and received the power of the Holy Spirit, can we ever be able to live up to our responsibility as children.

It's interesting, the Bible says that we are ALL God's **creation**, but only those who come to Him in Jesus are God's **children**.

A family is a special relationship. And God desires a special relationship with you. That's why Jesus came. He came to make it possible for you to

have a living relationship with God. he came to give us the power to heal our wounds and live a new life here and hereafter.

Have you received Jesus Christ?

You can do that today. You need to confess your sinfulness and receive the forgiveness that only Christ can give you by receiving the living Christ into your life. *"And for all those who received him, he gave the right to become children of God."*

You can do that today. You can never deserve what God gives, so you shouldn't wait to receive it.

INVITATION TO PRAY

This morning, as we close, I want to give you an opportunity to internalize what God has told you this morning. The altar is open for you to come and down before God and commit your life as a child to him. As a child growing up in a family. As a child of adult parents. As a child of God.

If God has spoken to you this morning through his Word, then you come and commit to him what he had spoken. and in a few moments I will lead us in a prayer.