

Honoring Parents in the Stages of Life

The Ten Commandments

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Well, it's our privilege now to continue in worship by turning to the exposition of the word of God and for those of you that are visiting with us today, we are in the middle of an extended series on the 10 Commandments found in Exodus 20 and I invite you to turn there for our text this morning. Exodus 20. The Lord in his providence has brought us to the fifth commandment and we're spending some extended time on it found in Exodus 20:12 which will be the basis of our time together this morning. Exodus 20:12 says,

12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

When we looked at this last week, we opened with something that I think is important to remind ourselves of again as we start. The Lord Jesus Christ when he was talking about the law and the prophets and summing it up, he summed it up and said that everything about the law and the prophets is pointing toward two goals: one is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind; and the second like it is to love your neighbor as yourself. The goal of the commandments is to teach us and to instruct us on how to love and how, you could say, how to know the will of God. The will of God is expressed in the 10 Commandments. Now that is a shocking thought too much of modern evangelicalism who thinks that the will of God is discerned by some kind of mystical sense in your heart and you listen to a whisper of the Holy Spirit, that's a very dangerous path to go on and a very unbiblical path to go on. We know God's will by what he has said in his word. He has instructed us on how to love him in the 10 Commandments and how to love our neighbor in the 10 Commandments, and what follows in the New Testament builds on that foundation as Jesus himself said.

So as we study the 10 Commandments, we're not looking to find a way to be saved by our obedience to it, rather we are looking for instruction on what the will of God is and what it is that he wants from us. As I've said in the past, the law is not a Christ that can save us but the law is an instruction manual as we now walk with Christ in new life, the law instructs us on how God would direct us to live. And at the start of the second table of the 10 Commandments, at the very head of human relationships, he has placed this magnificent commandment about honoring our parents. So the first four commandments are vertical toward God and instruct us on loving him, the final six commandments teach

us how to love in human relationships and we're immediately arrested, then, by the fact that God puts this commandment first in the second table. God places a high call and a high duty upon children in their life with their parents.

Now let me just say this and it will take us two or three weeks to unfold the fullness of what I'm about to say: every one of us in this room is a child to someone else. When the Bible is speaking about the duty to honor our parents, it is not limited to those children that are of school age and just looking to learn immediate obedience to their parents. No, as you study the fullness of Scripture, you see that this is a commandment that applies to honoring parents in all the stages of life; from the youngest child to the oldest elderly person, there are things for us to glean from this and to come under the authority of God's word. And as we do, it's going to be at times painful. It's painful to hold a mirror up to your soul and find that your soul is sinful and find that your life has fallen short of the glory of God, that we are transgressors of God's law, that we have broken his commandments, and we have all in one manner or another broken this commandment that is at the very heart of all human relationships. So we come to the commandment here today humbly, we come not boasting thinking that I have kept this commandment, as the rich young ruler said to Jesus, Jesus listed out commandments to him including this one and he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." Well, he didn't realize, he didn't understand the depth of which the law probed his heart.

So what I'm going to do here this morning and what I hope to do, anyway, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, is to take this commandment and to help each one of us see how it applies in the various stages of life. This has application for the youngest child in the room that can hear and understand me to some extent, and all the way through. And I just say that as a preface here because I'm very concerned, I'm very concerned that those of us that are adults and are having gray hair and all of this, would come to a text like this and just kind of turn it off, you know, turn our hearing aids down so that we don't have to listen on the assumption that this doesn't have anything to say to us. Well, that's not true. That would be a very serious mistake and so it's important to set that out at the front for all of us, as it were, to be leaning forward into God's word, what would God say to me, how would this interpret things from my past, the way that I have lived in the past, what does it say to me now, what does it point me to in the future.

So that's where we're going to start an I'm going to divide today's message up into two simple sections, really: one, the first section designed to help you see the priority of this commandment and we'll call this section God's design for you, for you because this does apply to each one of us; and then secondly, God's duty for you. God designed your life, God designed your life including down to the very specific parents that he caused you to be born to, we'll see that more in a moment, and within that design, within the family in which God placed you, be it broken or happy, within that design God has a duty for you, the second section here titled God's duty for you. So design and duty, that's what we want to see as we go through our text here this morning.

So first of all, God's design for you and, you know, let me just back up by way of preface so that I can kind of get this off of my mind. I've just been stunned almost to the point of

being overwhelmed at how much there is to speak about from this commandment. You know, we've said multiple times that the entire Bible is the context of the 10 Commandments, and the entire Bible as you read what it says about parenting and children at different stages of life, it is so comprehensive and I have a burden, I have a desire, in other words, what we're going to do is to spend a few weeks on this, more than I had anticipated, to go through this thoroughly. Look, families and the biblical approach to families is at a discount in the day and age in which we live. The whole of society runs counter to it. The government is running counter to supporting families and different things that are of great concern to me. But even more particularly just knowing families within the walls of Truth Community Church, knowing a little bit about the joys of your different family lives, knowing that some of the challenges and the heartache that family life has brought to many of you in the past, knowing that some of you have ideas about family life and parenting and child raising that need to be sanctified, that need to be brought into closer conformity with the word of God, this has long-term consequences as we think about young people rising up and growing up, getting married, starting their own families, this has very long-term consequences. So I feel a particular sense of duty and obligation to deal with these things patiently and carefully to address the multitude of needs that I just found within this room, let alone outside the walls of this place where this material may ultimately go one future day. So we're going to take our time and so we just settle in, we get comfortable, and we thank God for the opportunity to look at his word.

So with that said on all of that introduction, let's look, first of all, at God's design for you. God's design for you, and as I've already said, the fifth commandment stands at the head of the second table. Look at verse 12 with me once again. Notice that this is placed first in priority, above the other commandments that we tend to think about more, you know, more prominently perhaps. So in verse 12 it says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." There is a priority in the second table. He goes on to say, "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet." So the idea of honoring your parents stands at the head, it's like the entryway into the other remaining five commandments, and that alone is enough to arrest our attention and impress its importance upon us, that and the fact that this is God's word would certainly impress its importance upon us, but also as we saw last time and I'm not going to take the time to review these texts maybe with one exception, we saw last time how in multiple multiple places in both the Old and the New Testament Scripture emphasizes the heinous, the evil nature of dishonoring your parents, so much so, you can look across your page to Exodus 21 in verse 17, so much so that dishonoring your parents qualifies someone for the death penalty. The death penalty. Exodus 21:17, "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." We looked at other passages from the Old Testament last time, I'm just doing a very brief sense of review here.

Then in the New Testament we were struck by this in Romans 1 if you want to turn there and just follow along in the text. Romans 1, talking about the revelation of the wrath of God and how we can see the wrath of God being manifested in our day and age, the

Apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ascribes to a depraved mind disobedience to parents, and let's just look at it beginning in verse 28. He says in verse 28, "just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper," and then look at the catalog of the litany of evil sins and evil attitudes that he lists out in verse 29, "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil." It's just an appalling catalog of the multiplied fruit of wickedness and the rejection of God and the rejection of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what flows from it. These are the marks of a depraved mind, a mind that is out of order, a mind that is captive to sin, a mind that is wicked and evil, he says. Then he goes on in verse 30 and right alongside that catalog he goes on and says they are "disobedient to parents." That's a loud thunderclap immediately over the head of our world and over the head of our lives to realize the depth of evil that God associates with being disobedient to parents and refusing to honor them and failing to honor them. He goes on in verse 31, "without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful," and then says this in verse 32, "and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

In the Old Testament and the New Testament, Scripture says that those whose lives are marked by disobedience and dishonoring their parents are worthy in God's eyes of death and ultimately God will fulfill this even if he allows our physical life to continue on. For the unrepentant person, that death will manifest not only in a physical death but in an eternal death when God casts all sinners, all unrepentant sinners into hell as the just punishment, the eternal condemnation of which their sins are worthy. So we have been conditioned by our culture and by our entertainment and different aspects of life to minimize the nature and the importance of this, we have been conditioned and taught by culture to view our parents as those who are buffoons and silly, particularly designed in the way that fathers are portrayed in the media is utterly abhorrent to Scripture. Well, that's the environment that you and I live and move and have our being. This is what has influenced us and so we have to lift ourselves out of that, take a deep breath after being underwater for a while and say, "Okay, what does God say about all of this?" What we see when we come to Scripture is that God has a design that is highly countercultural, God has a high and lofty design which provides us the context in which we are to think about our family relationships, our family relationships going up as to our parents and grandparents, as it were, and our family relationships, as it were, going down into the way that we deal with the offspring of our bodies.

So I want to set just a very brief context about this design to give you a sense of the magnificence and the high order of God that is at stake in these things. With that said, let's go back to the book of Genesis, all the way to the book of Genesis 1. The book of Genesis 1 beginning in verse 26. You see, we need a context, we need a context in which to think about these things, to lift them beyond the petty issues that sometimes family relationships revolve around and sometimes, you know, people argue about, we need to step back from our daily life and see this from the perspective of the grand design

of God in a macro sense and in a micro sense. That's what we're doing here as we consider God's design for you.

So on the sixth day of creation in verse 26 we read this, "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply,'" in other words, go out and have children, "and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." So God tasked Adam, the first man, to rule, to subdue and to fill the earth. And as you know in the text, God gave Eve, the woman Eve, created Eve out of a rib of Adam in order to be his helper and here's what I want you to see, I'm just keeping this very simple on this point: creation itself, God's order in creation, God's command to our first parents provides the basis for the family unit. In other words, my friends, God's order, God's created order undergirds everything about the family and not only undergirds the family, it undergirds the command to honor your parents so that the order of creation informs and strengthens and adds weight to this commandment as we consider what God has established. We have children, we procreate, we have children, we have families in the context of a broader design of God that he has for all of the earth. That raises family up to a different level. It's more than just who we were born to and, you know, who we live life with, there's an order of God that provides the macro environment in which this takes place.

We can take this a step further and for some of you this is going to be a joyful occasion for thanks, what I'm about to say, for others of you it's going to cause you to stop and wonder and have to meditate upon, but let me just state it this way: in addition to the design and order of creation, God gave to you your precise parents. God gave to you exactly the parents that he intended you to have. We see this from the familiar passage in Psalm 139 and I want you to turn there with me. Psalm 139:13 and 14. God gave you your precise parents and ordained the precise length of your life. Verse 13, David here is praying to God, you see that from verse 1, he says, "O LORD, You have searched me and know me." The vocative "O LORD" tells you who he is speaking to and so he is ascribing to God various things, various attributes and various actions in Psalm 139, and in verse 13, that's important because we need to know the antecedent of the pronoun, "For You," who is the "You"? Well, it's the Lord God, it's the Creator of heaven and earth, and David says to him in an act of worship, he says, "You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb." In other words, God formed David in the exact womb of the mother that he gave for him, the mother that he had provided for him, and obviously that includes the father who sired him as well so that we look at this and we realize, we realize a most fundamental aspect of our existence is that from the moment of our conception the Lord God was involved in making us in our mother's womb. It was by his design that you had precisely the mother and precisely the father that you now have. Now, you know, you're like me, one or both of your parents are gone now. You know, as we move on, we lose our parents in an earthly sense but we still look back at the totality of this and say, "God placed me and gave me to exactly the parents that He intended to do." That immediately

brings a sobering aspect to the way that we respond to our parents, to realize that there was a holy, wise act of omnipotent power in which God formed you in your mother's womb.

You have exactly the parents or you had exactly the parents that God intended you to have. And what's the response to that? Verse 14, David says, "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well." In other words, you could paraphrase it badly this way, there is a recognition that God knew what he was doing when he gave you to your particular parents. It was an act of wisdom. It was an act of wonder. It was an act of divine intentions for good that God gave to you exactly the parents that he gave and David says, "I'll give thanks in response to that. You made me, I'll give thanks to You," and included in that sphere, that orbit of thanksgiving is David is thinking about the very mother that God gave to him. So in verse 15 he amplifies the thought, he says, "My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

So stepping back, speaking to everyone, starting to speak a little bit more specifically to the children and the teenagers in our midst because I think you really need to hear this and reflect on this and meditate upon it: God specifically formed you in your specific mother's womb. That means that not only did God design the family as part of his creative order, God designed you for your specific family. There's no need to think, "Oh, I wish I had been in that family. They look like they're a happy family." There's no need to resent or to wish that you had different parents, that is an immediate act of defiance against the God who assigned your specific parents to you and that has a lot of implications. That has a lot of implications and those of you that are sitting with your parents, you don't need to look at them, we don't play those kinds of games at Truth Community Church, but in your heart you should be thinking about that parent that is sitting next to you and saying, "The God of the universe, the God of wisdom, the God of love, the God of might, the God of holiness appointed this person to be my mom are to be my dad." That has massive consequences and one of the consequences that we see from Exodus 20:12 is this, is that God has delegated authority over you to your parents. God has given your parents authority over you and so when your parents are speaking to you, it's not simply a matter of what they want or what they're saying, behind what they are saying even if it is mixed with sinful thoughts, sinful motives, even if it's failing and weak, behind that is the authority of God himself. You look beyond your parents, realize that God has given you these parents and God has established them in authority over you, and therefore you are to honor them not simply for their own sake but in recognition as an act of worship to God, as an act of responding to his will for you. God intends you to honor your very parents.

This is of great great consequence and therefore what it means is this, first of all, you know, we said the commandments are God's instruction on how to love, well, you know, the way that you respond to your parents says everything about the way that you love them, first of all, but going further, the way that you respond to your parents, young

people, it does more than that, it shows forth your heart toward God. A child that is sassy and defiant and rebellious toward his parents is a child that is being sassy, defiant and in rebellion against the holy God before whom you will one day stand in judgment. This is sobering. This is very serious. It's a lofty design. God takes it seriously and as we enter into the Scriptures together, we see an inevitable conclusion, if nothing else, for your own self-interest you should be taking this seriously yourself and considering what God has to say to you. Think about it this way, God has established this created order at which family is in the center of his purposes. God has given you to your specific family and your specific parents so much so that Scripture says he was sovereignly forming you in the womb of your own mother. Well, I want to tell you something, when you read it from that perspective, God takes this seriously. This is a serious matter to God. He inscribed this in the 10 Commandments and it's built upon in the New Testament.

So if God takes it seriously, you and I, we'd better take it seriously too. We need to humble ourselves and say, "God, what would You instruct me from Your word in this context of the most central relationship that I was born into?" And to recognize that God is going to hold you accountable for your response. He's going to hold you accountable for your response and we ask the question what exactly, then, does God require from you? What is it that he wants? That's what we're going to look at in the second part, but before I do that, I just want to say this. One of the things that we'll be doing in the weeks to come is we'll be talking to parents about their duties and their responsibilities. There's an implication of the fifth commandment that when children are to honor their parents and to live life in biblical response to their parents, that implies that parents themselves are to be living biblically, parents are to be living in an honorable way themselves and we'll see that brought out, and I say that just because I wouldn't want any parent in this room walking out at the end of the service and thinking, "I've got a roadmap for what I'm going to do to my kid and how I'm going to bring the law to bear down on his unworthy head." There should not be any sense of attitude about that at all. Children are a gift from the Lord. God has given them to you to nurture, to instruct in the ways of Christ, and if you are one who is relying on the grace of God in Christ for forgiveness of your own sins, then that position of needing mercy should tinge the way that you deal with your children in every aspect about them. It is an oxymoron to talk about a severe Christian parent. That is an oxymoron. That is contrary to the purposes of God. The Spirit-filled parent will deal with their children in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. So I just say that as an admonition, as an admonition for parents not to get carried away before the whole series is done. Yes, we're addressing children and it's a matter of sober reality for children here today but, parents, God's word addresses you too. We just don't have time today to deal with it, that's coming, and so we just all need to be humble before the word of God. That's all I can say about it.

Now secondly, then, having made this, by the way, just one other thing, as I've done this, you know, as I prepared these messages and I said, you know, just the sheer volume of things that need to be said is stunning, along with that there is just so much that could be said by way of nuance and qualification and I'm going to try to do a little bit of that today, but there's just a limit to it, you know, you just set forth principles and then it's

your responsibility to seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom to know how it applies in your particular state. But the thing that we're doing here today is we're setting down a fundamental disposition of life by which children are to respond to their parents. The fundamental disposition is unchanging, the way that it applies is going to have an infinite variety of application. We recognize that and I can't do an infinite number of messages on this just to try to cover every contingency that might be asked about.

So secondly, God's duty for you. God's duty for you and with that said, let's go back to our text again, Exodus 20:12. Exodus 20:12 where it says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." Honor your father and your mother. The key term here is "honor." What does that word mean? What does "honor" mean in this context that is so important for us to grasp? Well, the word "honor" in Hebrew is a term that signifies something that is heavy, that is weighty. This is the word that the Old Testament uses to describe the glory of God himself. In other words, his divine majesty is weighty, it's a heavy matter, it's a matter of serious concern, it is lofty, it is majestic, it is weighty and so, my friends, when we think about honoring our parents, we do it, we honor them by this, we honor them by giving due weight to their position. God's design gives parents authority over you. That is weighty, it is significant. They are representatives of God in your life and they need to be treated, you need to respond to your parents in a manner that gives due consideration to the weight of such a position.

So what does that mean just continuing to peel back the layers of the onion? How do we give weight to our parents in a way that honors them? Well, young people, that means that you give respect to your parents. You give attention to your parents. You give obedience to your parents. Respect and attention and obedience not simply externally, as we'll see in a moment, but from the attitudes of your heart, that there is a disposition in your heart that gladly, willingly, lovingly, happily, joyfully gives to your parents respect, attention and obedience.

Look over at Ephesians 6. We know for certain that obedience is part of this because the Bible commentary on the Bible shows us that. In Ephesians 6, there is a subjection, a submission that is at place, and Paul's discussion of the Spirit-filled life includes admonitions that we be subject to one another in our relationships with one another. It has different connotations depending on the relationship but look at this in verse 18, at the end of verse 18 Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit," and he goes on, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, making melody with your heart to the Lord." You see it's a joyful thing to be filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5. Verse 20, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God even the Father," another aspect of being filled with the Spirit, and, "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." Cast rebellion out of your relationships and replace it with submission and love instead so that he goes and he says in verse 22, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." He talks about children. He talks about parents. In verse 5, he talks about slaves. Chapter 6, verse 9, he talks about masters. So that the greater context that you need to see as we're looking at this word of interpretation of

Exodus 20:12, is that Paul in Ephesians is talking about a Spirit-filled life that leads through a cord of submission, a cord of loving deference, a cord of loving preference that is given in all of our relationships in life. It's so contrary to the rebellious tenor of our world but it's in that context, children, that the word of God speaks to you in chapter 6, verse 1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right," and then he quotes from Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and mother," which is a first commandment with a promise. We'll talk about the promise another time. It's very important, we just have to stay focused today. Here's what I want you to see: honor your father and mother is taken by Paul in the context of the Spirit-filled life to speak about in a context where he's speaking about submission and giving preference to one another, and in that greater context he specifically applies it to children who, incidentally, must have been in the service in order to hear the admonition, they weren't off in children's church someplace in the closet of Ephesus someplace, they were with the adults in order to hear this admonition. He says to them, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right."

So for children, the idea of what God's will is for your life is very very simple. You look at it and your primary concern in life as a young person is to consider your parents with reverence, to consider them with deference and love, and then as you go through life, that you render to them respect and obedience and your attention. Your life, young people, starts with, your responsibility before God starts with giving honor and obedience to your parents. This is not difficult to understand, and so the fifth commandment orders life around honoring those who have a parental role in life.

Now as I said a moment ago, this is more, when we're in talking about what your duty is, this is more than external compliance, this is more than simply doing what they say on the outside but simmering in anger and resentment on the inside. That is not honoring your parents because the commandment applies to your heart, not simply your outward man. So what is this heart attitude? What does Scripture teach us to think about this heart attitude? Go to Proverbs 1 now. Proverbs 1. When Paul wrote in Ephesians, the Old Testament canon was completed, the book of Proverbs was in place, there was lots that he could assume based on a biblical worldview. So when you consider what Scripture would say to you in your relationship with your parents, look at the receptive attitude that is described here. A receptive attitude. Oh boy, let's pause it there for just a second. To honor your parents is to have a receptive attitude to their instruction and influence. To honor your parents is to have a receptive attitude to their instruction and influence, so in Proverbs 1:8, Solomon writing to his son says, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching." Listen to me, my son. Hear me. I have wisdom to give to you. Listen to me. Chapter 4, verse 1, we'll skip over some things and come back to others later. Chapter 4, verse 1, "Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, And give attention that you may gain understanding." Chapter 5, verse 1, "My son, give attention to my wisdom, Incline your ear to my understanding." Chapter 7, verse 1, "My son, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you." The way that he is addressing his son, there's this sense of endearment, a sense of pleading, a sense of authority all woven together in this most loving appeal, "Give your heart to me and listen."

Now obviously this is assuming a context of believing parents which in our church most of you children are living with believing parents, and so you give yourself to them, to their instruction and to their influence, and you learn in your weaker, more ignorant, I don't mean that in a negative sense, you are weak, you are uninstructed, you need someone to teach you in the ways of life. Scripture says God has given you your parents in order to fulfill that role. So honoring your parents involves and heeding their instruction, treating them with respect and obeying what they say, this is God's command to children and it cannot be avoided, evaded, without the most serious of consequences.

So that's the pattern of the duty. Let's look at it from the negative side here. Do you know what that means, young people, children, teenagers, young adults even? To ignore your parents, to defy your parents is a great great sin that puts you in danger of severe judgment from God. And those of you and I know that there are some of you because I've talked with your parents, and I'm not speaking on their behalf, I'm just speaking from God's word here, those of you that have lived in a pattern like that, God's word is coming to you, convicting you, calling you to repentance, calling you to turn to Christ, to forsake your defiant attitude which is a sin against God, to forsake that lifestyle and to come to Christ for forgiveness, for new life and for the power to live differently. You see, your disobedience is more than just breaking your parents' rules, your defiance and your disobedience, it's a violation of love, it's a violation of the order of God that designs this to be a matter of love. Your defiance and disobedience is saying to your parents, "I hate you," because love is shown by this honoring of your parents as we've seen from God's word. So it's a very serious sin against God and I press it upon your conscience because God's word does that. God calls you to love your parents enough to respect them and to obey them, and if you can't do it immediately for your parents' sake, do it for the sake of God because it's what his will is for your life.

Our friend Phil Johnson put it this way, he says, "There is a perfectly healthy holy fear that children ought to have for their parents. It is a reverence for their authority, a fear of dishonoring them, and an abhorrence at the thought of their displeasure." In other words, for a godly child, what God's will is for children is this, the idea of disobeying my parents or hurting them or defying them, is something that is just an ugly thought that you reject out of hand. That is not what a godly child wants his life to be like.

So this is the kind of honor that God calls us to. The purpose is clear. The duty is clear. Let's talk about some application here. I don't do this every time I preach. The purpose of the fifth commandment is clear, the application changes as life changes. The way that it applies changes as you go through different stages of life and here we'll go from the cradle almost to the grave, you can say. So let me just speak in a pastoral sense of love and care for young people in what I'm about to say. Young children, young children, God wants you to speak to your parents with a good attitude and to obey them. You should not tell your parents, "No," when they tell you something to do. That's a great starting point is to just realize, "Yes, mommy. Yes, dad." That is to be the disposition of your heart to every interaction that you have with your parents.

Teenagers, let me go a little further with you. As you get older, you become more mature, there is more that you can grasp and understand. In addition to the things that I just said to the young children, let me say this to you and I trust that you're listening as I do. You should make it a point of speaking well about your parents to your friends. You should not speak about your parents in a way that causes your friends to laugh at them or to despise them or to think ugly thoughts about your parents. You should guard to the extent that you possibly can, put your parents in the best possible light before your friends. This is one of the ways that you honor them and so it is just repugnant the hypocrisy of having a smiling face before your parents in home and then going out and mocking them to your friends. I can't imagine a more devastating sin worthy of such judgment from God than that, to mock your parents with a sense of honor in the home that is insincere is proven by the way that you speak about them when you're at school or other events of what it may be like. That's terrible to contemplate. And teenagers, speaking a little further, you should heed the warnings of your parents about how you choose your friends, what you expose yourself to on the internet, and how you spend your time. You should listen to them, take it to heart, embrace it and do it. One other aspect, teenagers, honoring your parents means talking to them about what you're doing and not keeping secrets from them. This is an evident obvious application of God's word; you give such weight to your parents that you're not hiding your life from them, there's a measure of transparency as you interact with them.

To young children and teenagers alike, I would add this, turn over to the book of Hebrews 12. Hopefully we're being clear and we're being specific so that the implications of the word of God are clear in our lives. Hebrews 12:9 and 10. The writer of Hebrews here is making a point about the discipline of God in the life of a believer but he draws an analogy to human experience in order to make his point. We're going to look at the analogy for our sake here. The Bible says, "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness." Notice what he says, young people, what God's word says there. We had earthly parents who disciplined us and we respected them. When your parents discipline you, you accept their discipline. You receive it. You respect them. You don't bite back. You don't fight back. You don't go and give them the silent treatment or storm out of the house and slam the door. The attitude is, "Mom, dad, I respect you. I honor you. I receive this. I receive your correction. Forgive me for breaking your rules. You're right. I was wrong." That kind of submission is at the heart of a God-honoring attitude toward parents.

Now we need to look at a couple of other stages rather quickly here. Young adults go through a transition and parents need to not only recognize that but give them the freedom to go through a transition, to help young adults establish an independence in their lives, but young adults still have a role in honoring their parents whether they're under the roof or not under the roof. I would suggest this to you, young adults, as you make major decisions about college, education, careers, about marriage, you should involve your parents. Seek their perspective. Honor them by asking them what they think. That does not mean, parents, I say this for your benefit, that does not mean that the

parents get to make the decision for you but it does mean that you respect them by giving them access to your life. How can you honor someone by excluding them from that which is most important to you?

Adult children, speaking even beyond young adult age, people my age and all of that, adult children, you should make time for your parents in one way or another. Stay in touch with them. They care about what's happening in your life. They want to know. They need to hear from you. And you care for them not only in that way but with the benefit of your skill, your time and your resources as they have need of them. Jesus made that point very clear in Matthew 15 when he rebuked the Pharisees for using a ruse to avoid supporting their parents. You can look at that later, Matthew 15.

Now certainly marriage changes the matter of how we relate to our parents. When you are married, your first duty is to your spouse, not to your parents. Marriage changes the dynamic but even within that, even within that there is still a need to honor your parents within the marriage life but part of the way that you honor God is recognizing that your first priority has changed now to your spouse rather than to your parent. A lot of parents need to let go. I'll say that again: a lot of parents need to let go and let their children develop their own lives and develop their own independence and not resent it when they do. This is all so very practical and goes to the heart of so many relationships in our lives.

Having said that, all of these qualifications and stages and everything, it's complicated, there's a lot to it. At the same time and I'm almost done here, at the same time I want to make this point also, is that when we're talking about young adults and adults in particular, Scripture clearly limits parental authority and I want to lay that principle down for those of you raising young children now, that this would be in your mind and would shape the way that you think about what is to come later in life. Look at Matthew 10. Matthew 10:34. The fact that God calls us to honor our parents does not mean that there will always be harmony. Sometimes for the adult child it's not going to be possible to have harmony with your parents because the parents make that an impossible task for whatever reason the case may be, and Jesus Christ puts himself above even the fifth commandment in what we see here which is just an astonishing assertion of his deity. Matthew 10:34 Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household." There will be times where a faithful Christian is put in a position where he's at odds with his parents because of his devotion to Christ, his obedience to Christ, his faithfulness to Christ. Jesus makes that clear so that there are limits on parental authority. There are apparently times where an adult child is within his rights to set boundaries on the parents and say no.

Verse 37, so much so Jesus said that, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Our preeminent affection, our preeminent priority is always Christ himself and that means that obedience and devotion to parents are not absolute but, boy, you better have a really clear reason with the support of your elders if you're going to defy your parents

even in adult age and separate from them. There are times where that's appropriate but that is never to be undertaken lightly because the cornerstone command is honor your father and your mother. So one of the reasons that God establishes leadership in the church is to help people through times like this and to think through them and so that we are not acting on our own impulses, our own, you know, our own desires, our own rage, but taking counsel from the people that God has put in authority and other places to help you think through these things and make sure that you're not simply acting alone and as a rogue.

So we have been assuming all along here believing parents or at least loving parents in what we've discussed. Ungodly parents, obsessively controlling parents can forfeit their privilege as their children move into adulthood. That's about all I can say for it in the time we have left here but we recognize that following Christ may put adult children at odds with their parents. In such times, what you do as the adult child is you do this, you honor them as much as you can, you do what you can but if the parent makes it impossible for a normal relationship to occur, a healthy relationship to occur, then the Christian adult is free in light of Matthew 10, the Christian adult is free to place boundaries on the relationship because God has called us to peace and you are not obligated to engage in endless conflict with an adult parent simply because they won't have peace with you in a way that two adults should be able to do. There's so much more that could be said about that but we're out of time.

Let's not lose the main principle for the sake of closing on an exception, okay? We've talked children, teenagers, young adults, adults, let me just ask you this question: God calls us all to honor our parents and if our parents are dead, even in the way that we speak about them can be a posthumous way to honor them. God calls us to honor our parents. Do you? Do you? What would your parents say about the matter? Well, if you're convicted by God's word, let me just remind you of the Savior of which Philip spoke and sang about earlier. Calvary's love is a place of redemption and a place where forgiveness is open freely to sinners just like you. He came in full knowledge that we would be disobedient to our parents. He came to pay the price for our sin. He came to forgive us of our sins so that God would not hold those things against you and, my friend, his shed blood can save a sinner just like you. He will forgive you and empower you to change. If God's word has convicted you here today, I plead with you don't resent that, don't reject it, don't turn away from it, don't harden your heart, rather instead embrace it as a gift of God that he wants to use to have you turn to Christ and to be saved.

Let's pray together.

Gracious Father, give us wisdom to understand and apply the things that we've heard today and to do it from hearts that are filled with gratitude toward You and honor toward those who hold a parental role in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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