

Children Obey Your Parents

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Bible Text: Ephesians 6:1-3
Preached on: Sunday, May 10, 2015

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Go to Ephesians 6 this morning. Ephesians 6, as I thought about what I might preach that would be an encouragement to moms today, I thought, well, this might do it. Ephesians 6:1-3.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

First of all, as we talk about this, note I. The command. Sometimes we just need to remind ourselves that God is God and there are some commands we are to obey. The command, "Children, obey your parents." You know, so many children have dishonorably and conducted themselves toward their parents and disrespectfully maintained attitudes about their parents and you wonder where does this come from? We know where it comes from, it comes because there is an evil spirit in this age and there is a fallenness to the human heart. As we've said so many times here, you don't have to teach a child to lie, they will do that on their own. You have to train a child to tell the truth. And it's just inherent in the natural fallen hearts of boys and girls and all of us that we want to disrespect authority, that we want to disregard it but God says in a clear command, "Obey your parents." We live in a culture that today it's worse than I think it's ever been in American culture and that is a culture that revolts at the very notion of obedience to authority. Let's make sure we're going in the other direction on that trend.

Jude 1:7-8, "Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties." Here's what I want to point out to you: Jude is writing to the church and he says, "You remember how vile and wicked Sodom and Gomorrah was in their sexual perverseness and that brings upon them and brought upon them the severe judgment of God." Then he goes on and says, "Characterized with those sins that deserve judgment are those who reject authority." Wow. I might have wanted to put rejecting authority away from some of those other perverse wickednesses, God does not. He loves them all together.

2 Peter 2:9-10, "Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties." They are basically a person, he says, who has no trembling reverence for deity and for God and they are so full of themselves they want to be their own God. They want to be masters of their own ship, captains of their own fate and they don't want to answer to anyone. That's the ungodly. So fallen hearts, fallen sinners and little boys and girls come into this world with that bent toward rejecting and despising authority. As a matter of fact, the word for "reject authority" in Jude that we looked at a moment ago literally means "to do away with what has been laid down." Did you hear that? To do away with what has been laid down. In other words, God says, "I laid down the right way and there is something in folks, they want to set aside and do away with what God has laid down." There is something in folks that wants to reject authority but God says, "Children, obey." It's just a clear command.

Isn't it interesting that today if you hold a person responsible to obey and submit to anyone they consider that abusiveness. "Why, you're abusing a person if you ask them to answer and submit to someone else." And what sophisticated and high sounding philosophies and words they'll use to cover up what is really just their sinful rebellious hearts. Rebelling against God-ordained authority, it's not intellectual, it's wicked. It's not respectful, it's a reproach. The feminist says, "If you tell me I have to submit to my husband, why you're abusing me." Some in the labor movement would say, "If you tell me I'm to work for my employer like working unto the Lord, why you're abusing me." The liberal mindedness among many church members says, "If you teach me I'm supposed to obey and submit to my church elders, you're abusing me." The sexual deviant says, "If I can't feel free to follow all the wandering lusts that come across my heart, why you're abusing me." They don't want any authority. The citizen who loves himself and walks in sin and doesn't want any responsibility or any authority over him from governing authority says, "Oh, you're squelching my freedoms." Psychologists say if you tell a child today that they ought to submit to and obey their parents, why you are exercising literally a form of child abuse.

Well, that's the spirit of this age. Today resisting authority is championed. It is applauded and it is celebrated and too often even in the professing church. We've become like Proverbs 12:15, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel." The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, "Why, mom and dad don't know what's best. Why, the governing authorities never know what's best. Why, church elders don't know what's best. I'm wise in my own eyes." Judges 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes."

Of course, ultimately this fallen rebellious spirit comes from Satan. He's the arch rebel of the universe. The employer, the government, parents, the church, that seek to establish good laws or good rules or good standards and hold others accountable to them in discipline and expect those under them to be obedient, they are not being abusive, they are being biblical and they are being loving. If you this afternoon leave the church and you go across into Florence and you go across the O'Neil bridge, I understand they've

been working on the O'Neil bridge, and for some reason they have removed all the guard rails off the side of that bridge, I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do, the bridge is just the same, I'm not going to cross it. I need the boundaries. I need the security of the boundaries. Little boys and girls need boundaries and that's why God says they ought to obey their parents.

It's a clear command from God. Those who resist, undermine and disobey God-ordained authority are not godly and wise and they certainly shouldn't be esteemed, applauded or followed, even if you're the President of the United States. A person who resists, undermines and disobeys God-ordained authority is a foolish rebel and they are not rebelling against a human individual or even a group of humans, they rebel against God who has established these principles. It's a proud heart that God says he's always opposed to.

So this evil spirit that resists authority is promoted by the devil, it's promoted by the world and the flesh and it influences us and impacts us on every corner in today's culture. It has infiltrated the nation, the workplace, the home and even the church. But brothers and sisters, let us be resolved at Grace Life Church of the Shoals that we trust God and we obey his word. We are here to say God is wiser than men and respect him above men. Let the rebels scoff, let the God rejecter rage, let the seductive and deceptive spirit of lies try to undermine us, let the liberal and the man-centered humanists laugh, mock and ridicule, but let God be found true and every man be found a liar.

God's truth stands and on this rock we must stand. God's word is clear. It is undeniable. It is unavoidable. It is a clear command, "Children, obey your parents." Children in centuries past should have obeyed their parents. Children in today's world should obey their parents. And children in the future should obey their parents, period. It's God's truth for all time. Nature's law teaches this. We can see it in the course of how God designed nature and then God went further and put it in the written law of God. We are therefore the people of God so let's start acting like it. Children should be taught and should be required to obey their parents because the command is clear. It's just that simple. God commanded, "Children, obey your parents."

Now, moms and dads, we should always seek a humble tone and a sweet and loving tone but there is a place to sometimes say, "Because God said so." God said so. Just that tone that lets your children know there is an Almighty. Do you remember old Jerry Cloward the comedian from Mississippi? He said when he was a boy he used to come into his aunt, he evidently lived next to her, he said, "My aunt would be in there ironing and she just stopped me as I walked across the room and she said, 'Jerry,'" he'd say, "Yes ma'am?" She said, "The devil is mighty," then she'd say, "But God is Almighty." Now, his point though he was a funny guy, but his point was: sometimes little boys and girls just need to hear that. It's a clear command from God.

Well, but there's a whole lot more here than that. Secondly, not only just the clear command but this obedience has a divine ground. It has a divine ground. Verse 1 continues, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." It's right. In other

words, God our Creator has every right to design his creation to function the way he intends for it to function. Did you hear that? Lord, help us. We live in this narcissistic, perverse age that thinks that every whim that flows across my fallen, debased heart and mind, I'm supposed to explore it, express it and be loved and affirmed in it. I'm going to tell you something: your lust, your heart and your emotions are not Lord, Jesus is Lord. You don't have the right to follow everything that comes across your demented heart and mind. It's right to honor your parents even if you don't feel like it. It's right to obey mom and dad even if they are imperfect because God is the Creator and he designed it to be this way.

There is a divine ground for this. Romans 9:20, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me this way,' will it?" In other words, the point is that he is the Creator. It's his right. Look, children obeying their parents is exactly the way it should be. That's the right way to run a household. Are you with me, church? Are you getting that it's right because God the Creator made it right? It's woven into the nature of creation that children should obey their parents. It was clearly established in the Old Testament, then it's clearly written in the New Testament. It's exactly as it should be. It is right and all of God's commands are always right and we must knowingly, lovingly and courageously, that means with an intentionality, teach what God's word teaches and expect ourselves and others and our children to honor God's word because his word is always right. It's always right. Listen to me: I don't care what Dr. Phil says and I don't care about the Gospel according to Oprah, God's word is right. We need to hear that today. The psalmist said in Psalm 19:8, "The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart." Psalm 119:75, "I know that Your judgments are right." Hosea 14:9, "Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right and righteous." It's the right thing to do, to require children to obey their parents.

Parents must teach their children to obey and they must be taught an obedience that's guided by love, but listen, never abolished by love. Did you hear that? We must teach them obedience guided by love. In other words, moms and dads, we don't teach our children to obey us for us. It does make our lives better but that's not the goal and you've got to repent if that's the goal. The goal is not you, the goal is the glory of God and the good of the child because it's right for them. You see, they will learn to honor God if they are taught to honor mom and dad first. That's the order of events God has ordained. It's right.

The parent that says, "Well, you know, I let them by with this and I let them by with that because I love them." Well, that's love alright but it's not love for God or love for the children, it's self-love. You're actually just loving yourself. You're letting yourself off the hook, trying to give yourself an easier job. Now, some of you young parents, bless your hearts, what's one of my favorite words as I've grown older in the pastorate? What's my favorite word? Balance. To some of you young moms and dads, you're the best. We have the best young couples in the world in this church. I mean that, we do and where the enemy gets you is some of you will try too hard so don't have a cold, hard, incessant rigidity in this but don't excuse what the liberal philosophies of the world, "Well, I don't

teach my children to obey because I love them." There's a balance in there. Remember Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently." So it's right but it's right, now listen, it's right because it goes beyond the good of the child. It's right and it goes beyond the good of the family. And it's right and it goes beyond the good of the nation. By the way, if parents would raise their children to obey, we'd have a better world to live in. A better world to live in.

But that's not the foundation stone. It's not right because parents deserve it, it's not right because parents appreciate it, it's right because God says it's right. We've got to be God-centered in this things, folks. Look, we're not about behavior modification. Are you listening to your pastor? Our goal is not behavior modification, our goal is the glory of God and when we teach children to obey, we're saying, "We respect his wisdom over man's wisdom. Man's wisdom may not tell us to do this but God does and we respect him so when we do what he says over what the world says, we glorify him and make much of his wisdom." It's to be God-centered. That's the main reason because God says it's right and it's going to remain right, brothers and sisters, even if everyone opposes it. Oh, but the world comes against us. The devil comes against us. The culture comes against us. Your flesh always comes against you. And they come up with these exception clauses why little Suzy or little Johnny is exempt from obeying their parents.

This hasn't happened in many years but I used to run across a kid every now and then and I forgot what the word was but it was something like this or the phrase, "I'm in the gifted class. I'm in the gifted class." It was at school and they were in a higher up class and there was the notion in that, I'm sure there are good teachers who teach a gifted class and do a good job at it, but there's a notion in the liberal world that if you're really smart and you're gifted, well you're exempt from obedience and submission to authority. Listen to me: no child is exempt from submission to God-ordained authority even if you are in the gifted class. As a matter of fact, you keep raising a child like that, they are probably going to have a deep pride problem and remind yourself of this: God is opposed to the proud. Literally the text means God puts up his dukes to the proud and says, "Alright, come on." Look, let's send our kids to school, let's educate them the best we can. We need more godly kids that become lawyers and doctors and judges. We're in the mess that we are in today because liberal Presidents have appointed liberal federal judges. We need more godly kids to become, we need them to become all those things so there is a way to teach a child to be diligent and learn and grow and advance but not be proud and keep a humble tone and a humble spirit.

He's certainly no role model and I know there are some terrible things about him but I remember one time Bill Cosby told his son on the television program, "I brought you into this world and I'll take you out." Well, there are some times when maybe a teenage boy needs a firm word like that or 2. They need to be made to obey.

Let's remind ourselves that foolish rebels always come up with great sounding reasons why they are exempt and rebellion always loves company. They want other rebels to join in their cause because they believe if they get enough numbers, it shields them from the consequence of their rebellion. This is not just the kids with tattoos and piercings and

colored here and lewd clothing out on some street corner at 11 o'clock at night, there are also some real rebels in the church youth group from time to time. "All American kids," but they have rebel hearts against their parents and they lead others to have rebel hearts while they are active in the church program and they begin to mock those in the program who do not go along with them. I'll be honest, we don't have...I don't see that but that doesn't mean it can't happen or doesn't happen.

Well, not only is it a clear command, obey your parents, we ought to just land there sometimes. Secondly, there is a divine ground that God who created and is all wise, we want to glorify him because there is a divine mandate and grounds in wisdom behind this. Number 3: there is an enduring prominence to this command. An enduring prominence to this command. He says there in verse 2, "Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise)." So he's reflecting back on, "You didn't just get this command when God began completing the New Testament canon, God's been saying this from the very beginning." As a matter of fact, all the way back there in Exodus when God gave the 10 Commandments, he gave this clear command so this is an enduring and prominent command of God. It is a foundational and fundamental law for society from the beginning of time. Did you hear that? A foundational, fundamental law for a sane and functional society from the very beginning of time and any culture that applauds child rebellion is a culture that is undermining its own foundations.

It's God's truth in the Old Testament for the people of Israel and the 10 Commandments, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and it's God's standard for the church in the New Testament, "Honor your father and mother." The Jews listed it first, as a matter of fact, in their principles of what it takes to have an effective and enduring culture and a blessed future generation. Fathers, teach your children...rather, a Chinese proverb rather said: one generation plants trees and the next generation gets the shade. Well, that's what we're seeing today. We're getting scorched today because the previous generation didn't plant some good seeds.

He uses the word "honor" here in verse 2. Verse 1 was "obey" and now he says "honor." There is a real significance to that and the prominence of this command is seen as this is not meant to be a cold, harsh, external behavior change. Honor means from the heart. It means from the heart there is an attitude that says, "I see the wisdom in honoring my parents. I see the wisdom in obeying them not just the harsh control or absolute of having to obey them." Honor means a child must cultivate a heart of reverence and honor and esteem for their parents. I think it was John MacArthur that said one time that there is a season of time when your children have to obey because of the consequence and then you want them to grow in grace to where their hearts have been changed by the Gospel so as they are getting older, they begin to see there is wisdom in honoring my parents. That's what this is talking about, a heart attitude of a reverence, not just a cold, external obedience.

This is very much like what God tells wives to do toward their husbands and church members to do toward their church elders where both are commanded not only to obey, wives are commanded to submit and obey their husbands, church members are

commanded to submit and obey their church elders but then he also has another place where he says, "Now wives, love your husbands. Church members, love those who labor among you." What's his point? It's more than external obedience. Folks, if that's all we've got, we don't have a church. It's a heart of love for the God who has ordered and ordained all things to function according to his wisdom that he might give glory and it might be good for us too. Now listen to me: when it's always about his wisdom and for his glory, it's always good for us. Those always go hand-in-hand. What glorifies God and honors his wisdom is always best for us.

Now, when he tells a child to honor his parents, this isn't a natural affection. These fellows and girls, the ones that are in here, they don't just wake up in the morning and think, "Great! I get to honor mom today." It's just not natural. It's supernatural. They have to be taught and shepherded by the Gospel until the Spirit of God tenderizes and humbles their hearts and they begin to treasure God and as they begin to love and treasure God, they'll say, "God is smarter than men and this all wise God tells me to reverence and honor my parents."

Well, number 4, last one: the encouraging promise. The encouraging promise. Verse 3, "So that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." Now, that's a promise he says there in verse 2, the last part of verse 2, it's the first commandment with a promise, all the way back to the giving of the 10 Commandments through Moses, God promised young people, "If you honor mom and dad, it's going to be better for you and you're going to live longer on the earth." Wow, that's a pretty neat thing. Now, understand that these kind of promises are not absolutes, they are general patterns of providence. For example, in Proverbs 10:4, God says, "Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich." It doesn't mean that every single solitary person who is negligent will always be poor, sometimes the negligent guy gets an inheritance. But the general pattern is those who work hard do better financially than those who do not and certainly that's a principle. So the general pattern is fellows and girls who honor and obey their parents, the Bible says, do better and live longer than those who do not. That is an encouraging promise. So this is a revelation of the general purpose of God. This is the usual pattern of providence.

Now, there's a negative side to this. The positive side, you do better, you live longer. The negative side, Proverbs 30:17, "The eye that mocks a father And scorns a mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it." Well, these are carnivores. These are birds that prey upon that which is already dead. So the dead corpses there and the raven or the eagle comes and pecks the eyes to make sure the corpse is dead. The Proverbs writer says the odds are much, much better that you will die young if you live a life of disobedience and dishonoring to your parents.

I think I'm beginning my 35th year here on staff and for years I worked with our young people and today I'll get probably 6 to 10 calls or letters a year from folks who are in my student group pushing 30 years ago and I don't know the percentage but without exception, they are something like this, "Brother Jeff, thank you for teaching me the word of God. Thank you for the discipleship groups. Thank you for holding the standards high.

I haven't been perfect but I have purposed to live by them and I got married honoring those principles and I've tried to raise my children under those principles and it's just been a blessing and it's helped me. I've done better because of it." But I'll get letters and calls also that says, "Brother Jeff, I left the church and I rebelled against God. I didn't honor my parents wisdom and guidance. I didn't honor the Lord and I'm on my third marriage, my fourth marriage. I've got children in rebellion. I've made a mess of everything. But I have returned to God now and I just want to thank you for what you taught us." I'm telling you, those that learned to honor God-ordained authority just to do better. It's an encouraging promise the word of God gives us.

Now, real quick, I guess we could list dozens but let me list 2 conclusions for practical application. 1. Promote responsibility in your homes. There is a place, I understand that, I certainly believe in our Bill of Rights and the Constitutional rights that we have as a people but there is a place for encouraging rights but that ought to be small compared to encouraging God-ordained responsibility. Someone said if you are promoting rights all the time, you promote rebellion, but if you promote responsibility, you promote revival. Now, moms and dads, again, we don't have time to go through this but we are to do our teaching because we're all in the Lord. That means boys and girls are in the Lord and moms and dads are in the Lord. Do you know what that means? That means boys and girls need a Savior and moms and dads need a Savior. If I could say one thing to parents about parenting from the weakness and the failures that I have had as a parent, it would be this: make sure as you discipline and guide your children, you tell them, "Daddy's under authority too and daddy fails often too but I humble myself and I get right when I do. Sweetheart, that authority I'm under has put you under me," so none of us are king on the throne. Our children are under our authority but we are under God-ordained authority and children need to see that humility. They need to see a dad who is a man's man but when it comes to God, he's a humble man and see that balance. I've tried to do that and I've failed at it but I've tried to do that and I believe it's a key to your child's heart turning toward you and turning toward God.

But promote responsibility which leads to revival. If you only promote rights, you promote rebellion. And number 2: I tell this to young people, "Young people, focus on what mom and dad are doing right." I know your mom and dad, my mom and dad weren't like a lot of moms and dads and I always wondered why I couldn't have a mom and dad like other people had a mom and dad but I learned when I became a Christian to start focusing on the good stuff they did teach you. One thing my mom and dad did have was a work ethic. They worked hard and provided. There was a lot of things I could find that were positive.

I don't even know where I found this but years ago I found this article and I just want to read it very quickly to you, alright? It says, "If you're having difficulty in this regard, I suggest that you study your parents and pick out those areas in which you can properly honor them. I remember doing this with my father at a very critical point in my growing up. Although my father was not at all a bad father in the sense that I have been speaking of rebellion or ungodliness, but my father was busy. First, my father was a busy doctor who was very seldom home and, second, when he was home, he was difficult to talk to.

My father did not communicate easily on a personal level. In fact, I cannot remember ever having had a meaningful and constructive conversation with my father. But I determined to examine his life for areas in which I could particularly honor and admire him and I discovered that there were many such areas. I learned that my father was extremely hard-working and conscientious. Indeed, that was why he was always away from home so much. So although his being away created problems, there were advantages also. The fact that he could pay for an extended and thorough education for me was one of those advantages. Second, I discovered he was also extremely generous. My father never flaunted his giving to Christian and other charitable causes, in fact, he hardly mentioned it, although my father was quite open in talking about money. But when I learned all that he did, some of the resentments and disappointments I had in other areas disappeared."

It's your choice to look at mom. It's your choice to look at dad and say, "I'm going to choose," listen to that word, not follow my emotions, "I'm going to choose to focus on what they did do and are doing right and praise God for them and honor them for those things." That's just a practical application word to close on.

Well, God's wisdom is greater than man's wisdom and children should obey their parents. Let's stand together, alright?