

The Children's Assignment

The Family Assignments

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Let's go to Ephesians again, Ephesians 6 as we finish the installment of messages on "The Family Assignment." Embracing, that means from our hearts, there is a genuine embracing God's wisdom and celebrating God's wisdom for family life. What a bizarre, twisted, ever-changing, contradictory notion comes to us from the world as the world and some godless professor in some university classroom begins to try to tell us, "Well, here's now what the family is and here's what marriage is and here's how society should work," and they have all of their radical, fanciful, utopian ideas that sound great in a classroom but they contradict the truth of the Creator's design for both family life which is inseparably connected and is the foundation for sane and good and functional civic life or community life.

So we come to the fourth one, the children's assignment. The children's assignment and I have two words for the subtitle and that is: obedience and blessing. The writer of Scriptures shows us that not only are children required to obey but there is a unique promise of blessing on children who do obey their parents. So let's look at this together in Ephesians 6:1-3.

And can I just throw this out now? One of the struggles and challenges of this series is that every week there are literally dozens of points, insights and guidelines or truths that I just can't get to and so I know you're going to...listen, you're going to say, "Yeah, but...yeah, but..." Yeah, there's a lot of "yeah, buts," and I have a lot of those but I didn't want it to be a 12 or 16 week series so I understand that but I really think that the Lord has given me good guidance on some of the heart and central issues that we could all agree upon and understand as we recommit ourselves to these things.

Can I say this to you? Being what God tells you to be as a husband may not be fun, it may be burdensome. Who told you you're supposed to be blessed and fulfilled? Who told you that? Doing what God has commanded you to do as a wife may not be a great blessing all the time. It may be a burden and a challenge and a difficulty. Who told you you're supposed to be fulfilled in everything you do? Being the parent God called you to be can be a challenge, can be grievous, can be a gruesome chore at times but who told you your assignment as a parent is supposed to be just wonderful blessing all the time?

Now we come to children and what God tells children to do may not be the easiest thing to do. Who told you that? Now, we know the Bible does promise there are reciprocal, there are following blessings that come when we're obedient but we don't start out with saying, "Well, let's put our finger in there and see which wind blows the most blessings and that's what we're gonna follow." No, we go to the truth because we're people of the truth and say, "What saith the Scriptures?" That's where we are and if God blesses, we're blessed, and if we perish, we perish. We're not this ever-changing group of individuals following sociological law and sociological precepts, that is whatever the society comes up with next. We're anchored to, as Brother Tom led us in singing, the ancient words settled forever. So we repent of the lust of the idolatry of "fulfillment and blessing," and recommit ourselves to the assignment of our God.

You do understand that you and I have inherited a faith passed on to us by our forefathers, a great many of them who were Baptist or baptistic, who lived and breathed and died persecuted, chased, ran to Holland or wherever they could find some sort of rest or safety and a king that would allow them to practice their religion, many of them martyred by drowning because the state religions of Europe said you like to baptize people after they've had the state's baptism of sprinkling, then we're going to see how much you like water and they would drown our forefathers for the faith. They did not get up in the morning and say, "Now, which way is gonna be the most fulfilling today?" No, they got up and said, "What does God say?" And now today we and our children and our children's children enjoy the truth of God's word because some faithful men and some faithful women lived the truth and has handed it down to us. So let's be faithful to the next generation, amen? And commit ourselves to these things.

I didn't mean to get so hard so quick this morning. Nobody has challenged, nobody has refuted, nobody...and you're always welcome to come ask questions. I need to be corrected at times, there's no doubt about that. I'm just saying that because I know that's what the flesh does and far far far too many of our Baptist and evangelical pulpits are filled with, "This is how it's best for you so do it." I don't know if it's going to be best for you. Jesus said, "If you follow me, you'll be considered as sheep for the slaughter." That doesn't sound like a fulfilling day to me but you'll be following the truth. And by the way, we know in any and every circumstance following Christ may put us in, there is an ultimate final reality for us that is wonderful and blessed.

Well, on with the outline. First of all, children obeying their parents. This is an old old precept. I. It's an old old precept. Very simply Paul says here in Ephesians 6:1,

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.

Now, one thing I would like to point out is that in this context here, the word for children obeying is a significantly different concept than a wife submitting. We saw that earlier. Wives are under the headship of their husbands. They submit to that headship. Because this idea of obedience here is the idea of being even unreasoning and implicit. In other

words, a child does not have to obey when they can reason out and see if it's best. A child does not wait to obey to see if, "Well, I've got to analyze what mom and dad are saying here and see if this fits me." No, the word "obey" is, you're not supposed to reason it out, it's an implicit clear command. You're to obey. Children are children. Can we be reminded this morning in this "modern age of radicalism" that children, the Bible says, have foolishness bound up in their hearts and they need to obey their parents. It's very different from a wife's submission. A wife's submission is an equal person who voluntarily lines up under the headship of her husband with a proper functioning and harmony of the home. No entity anywhere has competing heads. As Dr. Rogers used to say, "When you get married, you become one creature, you're one flesh, you're one organism, and a creature with no head is dead and a creature with two heads is a monstrosity." God wouldn't do things that way. He's too wise.

Honor your father and mother is a part of the structure of the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 20, it's a commandment we've had from the beginning, but we live in a world where children have dishonored and have dishonorable and disrespectful attitudes toward parents and toward authority in general. John MacArthur points out in his commentary that in the United States, at least 8 million serious assaults have been made each year by children on their parents and in some years ago, there was a number of children convicted of murdering or hiring the killing of their parents and usually for no greater reason than resentment of parental control or discipline. Children are incessantly told they can do whatever they wish and can have their own way are children who will soon mock their parents, their teachers, moral standards, the law and society in general. All human relationships obviously grown out of those children with their parents, those rather of children with their parents, and children who respect and obey their parents will build a society that is ordered, harmonious and productive. But where does this disrespectful, this dishonorable spirit come from? It comes from an evil and wicked world. It resides in the world and unfortunately there's been far too many major inroads into the church under love, under compassion, under fairness, we let a Trojan horse in the church.

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." So here the writer of Jude, Jude is writing saying, "We know how vile and wicked those cities were, how they exhibited their rebellion, their wickedness with their gross immorality, going 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 here it is, "and reject authority." So when the apostle wants to tell you about the lowest of the low, the vilest of the vile, he lumps in there those who reject authority which would include young people, children who despise the authority of their mom and dad.

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." Again, you can't rebel against authority as the modus operandi of your life and not think you're part of those who are in vile judgment or in a vile practice and under the judgment of God. Somehow

we think that's kind of the excusable sin; that's kind of okay because our authorities fail and our authorities are imperfect. That doesn't change anything.

How seriously or what a serious context he places the sin of rebelling or despising authority, but the present culture you and I live in is so anti-truth, it is so anti-biblical, it is so anti-God, that it revolts at the very notion of obedience to authority. Today if you hold that a person is responsible to obey and submit to anyone, you're considered abusive and what sophisticated, pseudo-intellectual, high sounding arguments and excuses we hear for why we should not have to obey the civic authorities, respect and obey the police officers, respect and obey church pastors or civic authorities or respect and obey our parents. And when we hear all these arguments and excuses, what we're really seeing is something designed to cover up a sinful and rebellious heart. Feminism says that teaching a wife to submit is abusive. The liberal who might be a union leader says that teaching an employee to obey and work hard for the employer is abusive. Worldly church members believe that if they're taught to obey church elders, that's abusive. Citizens who love themselves and walk in sin believe that submitting to government authority is abusive. Psychologists tell us today if you tell a child no, you're abusing the child. That's the spirit of this age. Today resisting authority is championed, it's applauded and it's celebrated, and far too often, maybe in a veiled way, but far too often even in the evangelical church.

Some verses here. Proverbs 12:15, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." That one who disobeys their parents, that one who rebels against authority, they've worked it out. They have a pseudo-spiritual or intellectual excuse for why it's okay for them to rebel in this case. The fool, the fool does what's right in his own eyes. Now, the contrast, of course, is instead of doing what's right in God's eyes. You see, you can't trust your eyes. You can't trust your heart. You can't trust your intellect. You've got to trust God.

Judges 21:25 reminds us that there was a day in Israel when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes," and that's our day, and this spirit is that which comes from Satan because he's the arch-rebel of the universe. The employer, government, the church and parents who establish good laws, rules or standards and then hold them under them accountable to those standards and expect obedience are not being abusive, they're being biblical. Those who resist, undermine and disobey God ordained authority are not godly and they are not wise and they certainly should not be followed. They are foolish rebels. They are rebelling against an individual and a group, certainly; you rebel against your parents, you're rebelling against your parents but more than that, you're rebelling against God and the proud rebel will find God's punishment.

Listen to these cross-reference verses here. Psalm 40:4, "How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust," and that means the Lord's wisdom, including what he teaches about who you are to honor and obey. You've made the Lord your trust, "And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood." The proud is the one who raises himself up to say, "I don't have to listen to him. I don't have to submit to that. I don't have to obey that." That's the proud.

Psalm 31:23, "O love the LORD, all you His godly ones! The LORD preserves the faithful And fully recompenses the proud doer." You just can't separate the proud from rebellion to authority. They're just linked together always.

Proverbs 16:5, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished." James 4:6, "God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." Do you know what that phrase "God is opposed to the proud"? It means God puts up his fists and says, "Come on. I'm against you." The moment you rise up in pride and say, "God, your wisdom about how I'm to run my life, who I'm to honor, who I submit to, who I obey, is not right, it's not best, it's not wise," and God says, "Come on. Come on." That's exactly what that verse means. You set God up and you set yourself up to fight God. Can I tell you something? Every single person that has lived that way has lost, has lost that fight.

Matthew 23:12, "Whoever exalts himself," I don't have to obey. I don't have to submit. I don't have to honor authority. "Will be humbled." God will bring you down. This kind of evil spirit that resists authority is promoted by the devil, the world, the flesh, in every way and in every corner. It's infiltrated the nation, the workplace, the church and the home but, brothers and sisters, let us be resolved to trust God and obey his word concerning God-ordained authority. Let the rebels scoff. Let the God-rejector rage. Let the seductive and deceptive ones spread lies and undermine. Let the liberal and the so-called man-centered progressive laugh, mock and ridicule. But let God be found true and every man be found a liar. The truth is still right. It's still good. It still stands. And I don't care, you can watch television and listen on the internet to the talking heads and the news commentators and they are totally anti-biblical, but I'm telling you: every one of them is a lie and God is still true.

The word of God is clear, it's undeniable, it's unavoidable. Children obey your parents. It's an old old precept. Children in past cultures should have obeyed their parents. Children in today's world should obey their parents. Children in the future should obey their parents. It's an old precept established for all time. It's God's truth. Now, we are the people of God, let's start acting like it. Children should be taught to obey their parents and should be required to obey their parents.

Now look, I don't have time to go into all the...certainly we're not talking about abusiveness, we're not talking about a harsh, dictatorial, unconcerned. We've already talked about the parents' assignment and the great responsibility of deep humility and lovingkindness in our spirit and I'm telling you, when a child rises up, we should stand our ground.

II. Not only is it just an old precept that's for all time but, secondly, this obedience God requires is nature and expected. It's natural and expected because he continues in Ephesians 6:1 and says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," now here's the phrase, "for this is right." For this is right. God, our Creator, has every right to design his creation to function the way he intends it to function. God does not call a committee meeting of the latest group on planet earth who have decided they're wiser than he is to find out

what's best and right for people. Romans 9:20 reminds us, "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 like this,' will it?" Of course, that's in the context of the sovereignty of God in conversion but it applies to all things. You are the molded clay. You do not have a right to tell your Creator, "We don't think it's best this way. That's not right." And Paul says, "Children obeying their parents, this is right. This is right." In other words, it's exactly as it should be. The concept of children obeying their parents is woven into the very nature of creation. Even natural law shows us that we should give our obedience to those who gave us life. This is exactly as it should be, it is right, and all of God's commandments are right. We must lovingly and courageously teach what God's word teaches and expect ourselves and others, including our children, to honor God's word because his word is right.

Let me quickly run through some of these. Psalm 19:8, "The precepts of the LORD are right." Moving on to Psalm 119:75, ", "I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are righteous." Psalm 119:128, "Therefore I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything." 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." Notice the emphasis there.

Now, parents, here's a challenge for all of us and every parent is going to struggle here sometimes but you don't have to walk in this. And might I add since I'm one now, grandparents, you're responsible to back-up your children and to be a continuation of godly training of your grandchildren for the glory of God, and that is, we fall into self-love instead of true love in raising our children or our grandchildren sometimes. You see, parents must teach their children to obey and must teach an obedience guided by love but not abolished by love. Now get that. "Well, I just love them too much so I'm not gonna require that they obey." Do you know what? When you say, "I just love them too much," that is love but do you know what it is? It's self-love. You're loving yourself and what you feel is best instead of what's really best for your child. That's self-love. It's a disregard for God's word. It is sin and in the end it's actually unloving to your children as Proverbs 13:24 bears out, "He who spares his rod hates his son. But he who loves him disciplines him diligently." So how do you hate your son? When you don't require him to obey. Proverbs 23:13, "Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die." So it's naturally right, it's inherently right to require and expect children to obey their parents.

Let's remind ourselves that it's right not because it's just for the good of the child, and it's right not just because it's good for the family, it's right not just because it's good for the nation. All three of those are true but it's right simply because it's right. We've got to be careful as Christians that we're not always saying, "Well, this is best because..." Sometimes there's no "because." God says it. It's just right. If God changed it, then God would be wrong but God wouldn't change it because God would not do anything that was wrong. He always does what's right. It's not right that children obey their parents because the parents deserve it, it's not right because we all appreciate it, it's right because God says it's right and it will remain right even if everyone opposes it.

But, oh, how the world, the devil and your own flesh always comes up with exception clauses. How many young people and teenagers through the years have exempted themselves from this clear commandment? There are always two steps to rebellion. When a child decides, "I don't have to honor mom and dad. I don't have to obey them. I know what's wise. I know what's best." The first foundation stone they base their rebellion on is justification. "I can do this because dad failed this way, this way, this way. I can do this because mom I feel is disqualified because she compromises this way and this way and this way." Every single rebel who's ever lived on the face of the earth has a reasonable justification in their minds. Did you hear me? Every one of them. Every one of them. Justification, they find a way to find fault in the authority and think, "Oh, all of a sudden God's wisdom is void because I have decided I know what's best for me because this parent, my parents maybe, are not qualified for my obedience." Well, who are you, Mr. or Miss Elitist One? All of a sudden you are above and beyond God's precepts as if God did not know what kind of parents he was giving you to start with? Do you want to hear my story? We can all have stories of why this parent or that parent or our parents are not worthy.

That first step is always justification. Old Absalom in the Old Testament, Absalom, David's son, was deeply offended, he was hurt, by a failure or we might say failures, in his father David's life, and Absalom, instead of forgiving his father and saying, "Even though he's imperfect, God made him my father," instead of having that spirit, Absalom did not humble himself. He rose up in pride. He put on the most impressive guard being a king's son. He got him a mighty chariot and great horses and he stationed himself outside of the gate of Israel or Jerusalem, and as people came in to consult with David, Absalom would say, "Where are you going?" And they'd say, "We're going to inquire of the king." And Absalom would smile and he would laugh and he'd say, "Yeah, good luck with that. You see, there's a problem with the king. He doesn't love you. He doesn't care for you. He doesn't have compassion on you. But if I were king in Israel, I would take care of all your needs." You'll just have to forgive me here but isn't that what we're hearing from the radical left? "If we have power, we'll fix everything for you," as if the Scripture that tells us every heart is deceptive and all of our hearts are deceitful doesn't apply to them. I'm going to tell you, the Democrats have just as evil hearts as Republicans have and the Republicans have just as evil hearts as the Democrats have. When one group says, "We're just good and caring," another group says, "Well, they must not be good and caring, that's a lie," the Bible says all their hearts are wicked.

Absalom, playing on the needs of the people, seduced them saying, "If I were king and David were not king, I would take care of you." So he raised up a rebellion and the Bible says he stole the hearts of the men of Israel from King David and he started a warfare to dethrone, formed a coup, if you will, but it didn't work. Do you know why? Not because David was perfect, but because David was God's choice as king, just as your parents are God's choice for you.

So Absalom is riding his mule, running for his life. He goes through a thicket. He catches his long, as Lester Rolloff would say, hippy hair in the bogs of the tree and he gets stuck

and the mule walked on and he hung there and Joab thrust spears through him and he died. But Absalom was so sure because he was hurt because David did fail and David did sin in some issues and David and Absalom felt justified. Every rebel begins with what they feel like, "I'm justified."

Listen to me, some of you are right there this morning, listen to your pastor, I love you: you are wrong! Repent of that rebellion. Repent of that insubordination. Repent of that proud spirit. You are not justified. God knows what he's doing when he gave you your mom and your dad.

Well, not only justification is a cornerstone in rebellion, secondly: there's congregation. Every single time there's congregation. These foolish rebels justify themselves, exempt themselves from obeying authority and then what do they do? To appease their conscience they recruit as many to join them in their rebellion as possible. They believe, "If I can get more people running with me, I'm kind of scared about it because I know I'm not right, I know I'm in sin, but if I can get more people running with me, the numbers of us will shield us from God." What a fool. That's why you see this concept of teenage gangs everywhere but let's be reminded that a rebel gang is not just those with tattoos and piercings and colored hair and lewd clothing hanging out on street corners, there can be groups in churches of the "all American kids" but they have rebellious hearts toward their parents and they always congregate together. You scratch my rebellion and I'll scratch yours.

Now, the home that completely neglects to teach and require children to obey is a home of sin and a home of shame and it is a perversion of the God-ordained pattern for the family. Why? Because it's right that children obey their parents. Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." Some of you moms may be right now building, designing and planning your own heartbreak by not teaching your children to obey. Now, I think there's a word of caution here because some of you are too unbalanced sometimes, you're too harsh, you're too cold, you're too hard, and I know that's a struggle, but what some of you men need to do, maybe some of you moms, is get some accountability. Talk to some other godly committed parents and say, "Tell me, where do you draw the line? When do you think you're being too overbearing," because we know, hadn't Paul already warned parents, "Don't exasperate your child. Don't provoke them to rebellion." So there is a balance but unfortunately in our culture today, when we see such radicalism and permissiveness, often we focus on the culture instead of on the truth and we overcompensate and we get into another ditch. So I'm prone to do that so I know it happens. Don't focus on the culture's permissiveness, just focus on the beautiful and balanced truth of the word of God. Amen? That will keep you right where you need to be. If you focus on their excess, you'll be prone to be excessive in the other way.

III. Moving right along. The secret. The secret. We saw last week that the children in Ephesus and in the Greco-Roman world of this day were required to be completely in submission to their fathers. Trust me, in the ancient Roman world when the Scriptures were being written, insubordination was absolutely not tolerated. Literally, guys, a father

had the power of life and death over his children. He could sell his child as a slave. He could sell a daughter into prostitution. Or he could have him or her put to death. That's the authority the parents had in this day. So these Roman men, these Greek Roman men had badly missed the truth of God's precepts and badly – now listen to me – had badly missed the spirit and the heart of God's truth. So there is a sense in which they were right in making children obey but they were way out of balance. They didn't know the word of God.

Now, like we've said before, if Paul had only said to the church at Ephesus and the church at Colossae, "Children, obey your parents. Children, honor your father and mother, this is right." Then the children, those old enough to understand something would have slumped back in their seats and put their heads down and thought, "Well, what's new with that? We thought since our parents had become Christians, that perhaps our parents would begin to view us differently and treat us differently but we've always been required to obey. We've always been required to submit. What's new?"

Well, "Children, obey your parents and children, honor your father and mother," is not all Paul said. He said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." In the Lord, and everything in this whole family context grows out of Ephesians 5:18. What is Ephesians 5:18 again? "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." The point is: God has come into your heart. He lives in you in the person of the Holy Spirit. And now with him living in you, you see his wisdom and you grasp his wisdom in ways you couldn't before. There is something inside of you now that gives you the capacity that when God's truth is taught like, "Children, obey your parents," you begin to, from the heart, embrace that, and God's Spirit in you gives you the capacity to begin to try to model and live that out. That's something you didn't have before. That's the secret and that changes everything.

Do you understand that, church? We are not about behavior modification, we are primarily about heart transformation which results in behavior change but it happens in the heart. So the Spirit now lives within us graciously enabling us to see, treasure, embrace the truth, and graciously empowering us to begin to be repenters of how we fail and to be new types of people, new creatures in Christ Jesus, including a new creature and the way I as a child honor, love and obey my parents.

I think that's why in Ephesians 2, he says, "Honor your father." You don't just obey, you honor them. You see, when he said "honor" that gets to the heart issue, that gets to the heart attitude. This is not just dotting i's and crossing t's of external actions. It's much like when God tells wives, "Submit to your husbands," then he goes further and says, "but love your husbands." Now, a wife couldn't do that. The average Greek Roman wife just couldn't do that because men were really abusive to their wives but when God changed their husband, when God changes a wife, all of a sudden she could submit to that husband out of a real love for him, not a woeful duty to him. It's like fathers training their children, not just in a harsh and cold, demeaning, authoritarian way but loving Christ and loving their children first in the way they discipline their children. It starts in the heart.

So honor. Young people, when the Scripture says, "Children, honor your fathers and mothers," it means you begin – now, young people, listen to me – it means you are very intentional here. You intentionally no matter how you feel, you intentionally begin to cultivate a heart of reverence and esteem for your parents. It's not natural affection we're looking for, it's bigger than that, it's greater than that. It's a love for God. It's a pleasure in God and it's a respect for his wisdom and there is certainly a balance to that honoring and that obedience.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord" means that if and when a mom or a dad or both require a child to do something that is clearly evil and clearly sin, that child with a submissive honorable spirit should appeal to their parents and not do it. Now, that doesn't happen very often but, look, parents do not have authority as the final authority over their children, God is the final authority over the children. Moms and dads, we just have a stewardship to raise them for the Lord's sake. We don't own them, he does. We just have a stewardship entrusted to us for them. Maybe a parent tells a 17, 18, 19 year old kid who has genuinely been converted, "You cannot be baptized." I think there's a place, now tone and spirit is everything where that child says, "Mom and dad, I love you and I've shown that I will honor you but I cannot submit to that request. I must honor Christ here." Now, that's a rare thing but that does happen. It's in the Lord. A parent's authority is limited to God's truth.

Well, that's the secret. It's, "We're doing this for Jesus. He has changed our heart. His Spirit enables us to embrace this and walk in it." Now, IV, and quickly: the blessed consequence. In this case, as he's given the assignment for children, he gives a promise of blessing. Verse 3, Ephesians 6, "so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." Now, this is what we call like a proverb, which means it's a general promise but not an absolute promise. In other words, this is a revelation of the general purpose of God, it's the usual course of providence, but it's not absolutely always this way but most of the time, if a child learns from the heart to see God's wisdom in obeying their parents, they do better and they live a lot longer.

Now, the opposite side of the coin is: a child who, as a pattern of life, has a stinking rebellious spirit, rebels against mom and dad, generally speaking they don't do well and they don't live long on the earth. That proverb is true too and we see that in Proverbs 30:17. In Proverbs 30:17, the writer says, "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." Now, ravens and eagles don't mind be scavengers if there's a fresh dead corpse nearby and what they're prone to do is fly down on the corpse and the first thing they do is peck the eye and make sure it's really dead, and if they peck the eye and there is no movement, then they go ahead and eat the eye and begin to have their fill. But it's more than just generally speaking rebels don't live long, it's that this body is laying exposed. Nobody even cared enough to bury the body. It means you often leave or come to the end of your life in shame and disgrace without any around you to love you.

So God says, "Understand, young people, how much better it is to come to Christ, rely on the Spirit of God, learn to honor your father and mother." You know, we want to take our

children from when they're in their younger ages, they're required to obey, that's right, but as they get into those teen years, our prayer is they understand the wisdom of obeying and they begin to joy in that. It's not just harsh threatening consequence that leads to their obedience, it's a new heart of seeing the wisdom and being obedient.

I was with a friend recently I went to high school with and this friend was showing me pictures of people that I went to high school with and what they look like today. Now, one hint, maybe I need to look in the mirror myself a little bit, but I know some of these people because I ran with some of these people and I understand they're still living like rebels and they look like they've lived like rebels. Trust me, it hasn't gone well with them on the earth. Marriage after marriage after marriage, difficulties, problems.

Dr. R. G. Lee was the pastor of the Bellview Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, a good man, strong Bible preacher and when he was retiring, Dr. Adrian Rogers came on as the Senior Pastor there at the Bellview Baptist Church and Dr. Rogers said to Dr. Lee one day, he was in retirement but he was still in the church, he said, "Dr. Lee, before you die or maybe when you die," he said, "could they open up your skull and take your brain out and open up my skull and take my brain out and put your brain in my head?" Dr. Lee said, "Son, that would be like putting a grand piano in a broom closet."

But Dr. Lee in his old age was sweet and he was kind and he had a dignity and a beauty about him and people would often ask Dr. Lee, "How do you think you've aged so well and your spirit's so wonderful and you've done good?" Dr. Lee said, "I'm living on the dividends of a well-spent youth." There's something to that. He wasn't saying he was perfect but he said, "My pattern was to honor Christ and live for Christ from a child on and it's paying great dividends now." That's what the Bible says, "It'll go well with you and you'll live on the earth," the Scripture says.

I was converted at age 19 and I was estranged particularly from my father and there were a lot of things and a lot of reasons, but I learned even at that age to forgive my parents for whatever failures may have been there and learned to go to them and tell them that I loved them and ask their permission, even though I was an adult man paying my own bills, but they were still my mom and dad. I asked their permission for my major decisions. I asked their blessing to go into the ministry. I asked their blessing to ask for Pam's hand in marriage. And my mom and my dad, if they did not give me that blessing, I would not have done it because that's what's right. That's what's right.

Young people, remember these four things about God, four attributes of God. And I'd say, moms and dads, I've given you these four and jot this down and we're giving you tremendous help in small groups because all the way through the preschool and the grade school years, we are pouring into your children the attributes of God so they'll know who this God is they're supposed to be trusting. That's so very important. First of all, that God is good. He's only and he's always good. When he tells you to do something, he's good. Secondly, he's all wise. That means his plan for you is perfect. Where he has you is perfect for you. He's all wise. Thirdly, he's loving. His love for you is beyond comprehension. You don't know all that he's doing yet. Trust him. He's all loving. And

lastly, he's all powerful. All powerful. His will, his plan cannot be thwarted no matter what you do or how you do it or what you do.

I think teaching those four attributes, certainly the others must be taught, but coming back to those for our children, "And understand, sweetheart, God is good, God is wise, God is loving, God is all powerful." The point is with these things being true, it would be the utmost foolishness to rebel against his will for your life. Boy, I want to say this: people who won't know the will of God sometimes frustrate me so very much and my sympathy should go out to them, and they do because I've been where they are, but for children, when they say, "What's the will of God?" It's real simple, "Ask your mom and dad." Say, "Mom and dad, I'm praying about my future mate. I'm praying about my vocation. Would you give me guidance? I'm trusting God to speak through you." I guarantee you it'll work that way.

Go through mom and dad. I know what some of you dads are doing, you're squirming in your seats, "I don't want that responsibility." Well, you've got it whether you want it or not. It's your assignment. You need to pray. And typically, moms or dads with wisdom will say, "Well, we don't know exactly but you might try this and you might..." And they may say something and when they say a particular thing, you might think, "No, no, no. That don't fit." Moms and dads are important in guiding children to know the will of God. "Maybe I'm supposed to court this certain girl." Ask mom and dad. If they say, "You know, we don't like this," then you say, "No, not doing that." I'm not going to be your pastor and tolerate 12, 13, 14 year old girls deciding who they're going to court and go out with. If I find that out, I'm coming to see you and saying, "Where is your brain?" Amen? I'm not literally coming to see you, Brother Matt will come to see you. I came for 30 years and now it's his turn to come. No, tongue in cheek, yes. But seriously, moms and dads, that's your responsibility. You say, "Yeah, but they're gonna kick and jerk and rebel and cry." Then we'll talk to them. That's what the church is here, to help each other and help us, amen, raise our children for the glory of God.

Obedying and honoring your parents is right, it's your assignment, it's your duty as young people. In God's infinite wisdom, it is the right way to have a relationship with your parents. The way you have a relationship with parents is to obey them and if your parents do not require this obedience, then they sin and, young people, if you do not perform this way, then you sin.

One man wrote, he said, "I remember doing this with my father at a very critical point in my growing up, and although my father was not at all a bad father, the difficulty with my dad was twofold. First, my father was a busy doctor who was seldom home and, second, when he wasn't home, it was difficult to talk to him. My father does not communicate easily on a personal level. In fact, I cannot remember ever having a meaningful and constructive conversation with my dad. But I discovered and 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 away from home so much. So although his being away created problems, there were also advantages. The fact that he could pay for

an extended and thorough education for me was one of those benefits. Second, I discovered that he was extremely generous. My father never flaunted his giving to the church and other charitable causes. In fact, he hardly mentioned it although my father was quite open in talking about money. But when I learned what he did, some of the resentment I had in other areas began to go away." And he goes on to tell about how you've got to learn as young people even, to discipline yourself to think on, "What are mom and dad doing right?"

The Bible tells me to honor them. Young people, there's a lot there to honor your parents for. And do you know what I've run into lately and this is the sweetest thing? I'm running into people in their 40s, 50s and 60s who had very bad home lives and with sweetness and forgiveness, they are reinvesting in their parents and loving their parents and honoring them for the things they did do right. Is that not good? And that's such a witness to those parents. And very often in my experience, when I cause myself to focus on those things, I find out I didn't have it so bad after all. There are many many good things God did by giving me the perfect parents I needed.

So, young people, find those things that are honorable in your parents and focus on those and refuse to focus on those things that may be weaknesses or failures, and when you find those honorable things, thank God for them and then thank them for them. Thank God that in his goodness, his wisdom, his love and his power, he gave you the perfect parents just for you. At the end of the day, God is either sovereign and knows what he's doing or he doesn't know. "All things work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes." The children's assignment: obedience that results, the Bible says, in blessings.

Let's stand together in prayer, alright?