

How To Live A Long Life

Father's Day ~ June 17, 2001
First United Pentecostal Church

Exodus 20:12 (NLT) ¹² Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you.

- Not long ago, cable TV mogul Ted Turner declared the Ten Commandments obsolete: "We're living with outmoded rules. The rules we're living under are the Ten Commandments, and I bet nobody here even pays much attention to them, because they are too old. When Moses went up on the mountain, there were no nuclear weapons, there was no poverty. Today, the Ten Commandments wouldn't go over. Nobody around likes to be commanded. Commandments are out."
- While Turner is right that "nobody likes to be commanded," he is dead wrong in calling the Ten Commandments "outmoded rules." In fact, God's Ten Habits of Highly Healthy Homes couldn't be more relevant!
- Today, we begin the second portion of the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments have to do with our VERTICAL relationship with God. **(Examine Your Priorities, Avoid the Counterfeits, Take God Seriously, Renew Your Relationships)** The last six commandments have to do with our HORIZONTAL relationships with each other. These are the ones that get right down to where "the rubber meets the road" in building a healthy home. (It is impossible to properly obey the last six commands until you have obeyed the first four. That's why unchurched people who seek counseling for family problems find it so hard to make changes – they have no inner spiritual relationship with God to help them with their family relationships!)
- In God's plan, the family plays an enormously important role. It is to offer unconditional love and lifelong companionship to its members. It is to be the first church, the first school, the first hospital, and the first government! It is where children learn about their male and female roles, how to communicate their ideas and feelings, how to enjoy life and endure pain. Family life provides the safest parameters in which to discover acceptable and unacceptable behavior. **In short, the home is the principal place for spiritual, emotional and moral training. Our parents are our first teachers – and they deserve honor!**

- Before we discuss how to honor our parents, we need to more completely identify just who we are talking about, especially today when so many children are raised outside of a two-parent, opposite sex, married model. It is possible for ALL of us to honor our parents, no matter what their condition, behavior, or our relationship to them. Where there is God's will, there is always a way to obey it!
- **Parents can be defined as three kinds of people in our lives:**
 1. Biological parents
 2. Legal parents
 3. Nurturing parents

WHY DID GOD GIVE THIS COMMANDMENT?

1. Respect begins in the home.

- The home is the birthplace of a child's ...
 - A. Self-esteem (their view of themselves)
 - B. Respect for authority (their view of others)
 - C. Values (their view of God and life in general)
- God gave us the fifth commandment because He knew how easy it would be for us to develop a disrespectful attitude toward our parents. As children, we're basically selfish, wanting everything to go our way. As teenagers, we think our parents are hopelessly outdated and behind the times. As young adults, we become consumed with the responsibilities of work and marriage. And as middle-aged adults, we view the needs of our aged parents as wearisome burdens that infringe on our hard-earned freedom. **But if we want to have a right relationship with God, we need to have a right relationship with our parents!**
- The Bible says to love God, the stranger and our neighbor, but nowhere does it specifically command us to **LOVE** our parents. Instead, the command is to **HONOR** our parents. God, strangers and neighbors do not put the same ego demands on us that parents do – just ask any 60-year-old who always feels like a child in the presence of his parent! We are commanded to honor our parents because it is the best way to compensate for the tension-filled parent-child relation, in which "love" may sometimes take a beating.
- The word honor is "kaw-bad" in Hebrew, which means "to add weight," taken from the ancient concept that something heavy was thought to have greater VALUE. The fifth command tells us to VALUE our parents. The Jewish rabbis taught that parents are to be honored because they are partners with God; He is the author of life, but they cooperate with Him by bringing a child into the world.

2. There are no perfect parents.

- Parents may mess up everything after our birth, but they are still worthy of honor as the earthly source of our lives. It is possible to honor unworthy parents, not only because God commands it, but for our own personal well-being.
- Not every family will succeed in providing a child with self-esteem, respect for authority and values; some will utterly fail in these tasks. But the fifth commandment remains true, and we must obey it. **We must honor our parents, even if they fall severely short of God's intention for their role in our lives.**
- This commandment does NOT mean:
 - Honor only if your parent is deserving.
 - Honor only if your parent honors you in return.
 - Honor only if your siblings also show honor.
 - Honor only if you feel good about doing it.
- Only God is a perfect parent! The rest of us have weaknesses, faults, and inconsistencies. Even the best parents have made mistakes and sinned – and every child has sinned as well. As a result, we're all warped! As the title of Wendy Kaminer's book says, "I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional." (One thing you find out in counseling is that those who never come in for counseling are usually naively causing the problems of those who do come in!)
- What if my parents were abusive, manipulative, neglectful, and unworthy of honor? Am I supposed to ignore the pain and pretend everything is great? No, but God does say that we must honor the POSITION of parenthood, regardless of the PERSONALITY behind it.

3. How I relate to my parents will affect every other relationship.

- How you relate to your parents is the major forming factor in your life. Your style of relating to others is set while you live at home. Even today as an adult, when you act in ways you don't understand and you can't figure out your behavior, many times it's because you are still reacting to your parents.
- Many marriages have been ruined because a spouse has never resolved a relationship with a parent, and they're taking it out on a husband or wife or kids. (i.e. "You're just like my Mom!")
- Surveys have shown that people who get along with their parents have far less stress in their lives.
- The cure for many family problems is found in the fifth command God gave: **RESPECT YOUR HERITAGE!**

HOW SHOULD I HONOR MY PARENTS?

It depends on what stage of life you're in, because you apply this command a bit differently in each stage.

1. As a child, I honor my parents by obeying and respecting them.

- **BUMPER STICKERS:** "Be nice to your children, they pick your nursing home." "Honor thy father and thy mother, they haven't written their wills yet."
- ***Ephesians 6:1-3 (LB)*** ¹ Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. ² Honor your father and mother. This is the first of God's Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. ³ And this is the promise: that if you honor your father and mother, yours will be a long life, full of blessing.
- The Bible teaches that as long as your parents are providing for you, you're to obey them – do what they say willfully, pleasantly and immediately. Regardless of your age, that does not change until you're out on your own.
- One part of the loving obligation of a parent is **DISCIPLINE**, which requires instruction, reinforcement and punishment. Even when children don't like their parents' discipline, they are to obey!
- ***Proverbs 13:24 (NLT)*** If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.
- ***Proverbs 19:18 (NLT)*** Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives.
- ***Proverbs 15:5 (NLT)*** Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise.
- ***Proverbs 22:15 (NLT)*** A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but discipline will drive it away.

2. As a young person, I honor my parents by accepting and appreciating them.

- The older you get, the more you start to see the faults of your parents. It becomes important for you to accept them in spite of their weaknesses.
- Why should I accept them? First, you're stuck with each other! Second, you have faults too!

- Acceptance does not mean pretending they were perfect, ignoring their mistakes, or even agreeing with all they did. **Acceptance is:**
 - A. **Appreciating** that God used my parents to bring me into the world. Realizing that (regardless of their parenting skills) they gave me something nobody else could give me – the gift of a life to live.
 - **Proverbs 19:26 (LB)** *A son who mistreats his father or mother is a public disgrace.*
 - B. **Listening** to what my parents have to say. Not despising their advice even when I reach an age where I'm no longer bound by it. Disagreeing without being disagreeable.
 - **Proverbs 23:22 (NLT)** *Listen to your father, who gave you life, and don't despise your mother's experience when she is old.*
 - C. **Forgiving** my parents for the times they may have hurt me. Knowing that it is a fact of life that we often hurt those we love the most – both intentionally and unintentionally.
 - **Proverbs 20:20 (GN)** *If you curse your parents, your life will end like a lamp that goes out in the dark.*
- Today it's not as popular to honor your parents as it is to go lie on a psychiatrist's couch and blame them for all your problems. But bitterness is self-destructive – it always hurts you more than the person you're bitter against.
- Regardless of who your parents are, and what they did or didn't do, you can at least appreciate their effort and sacrifice. Parenting is a difficult, time-demanding, energy-draining job. **Have you ever considered how much easier your parents' life would have been if they hadn't had you?** Parenting is also expensive. When a couple chooses to have kids, they are choosing to do without some other things. Today, it has been estimated that it will cost the average parents nearly \$250,000 to raise one child from infancy to eighteen years of age.
- One dad, going in for church directory photos, said: "Why don't you have my sons put their hands in my pockets so it will look natural?"
- There are four stages in a man's life: He believes in Santa Claus, He doesn't believe in Santa Claus, He is Santa Claus, He looks like Santa Claus! Appreciate him in all four stages.
- **Proverbs 23:22b (GN)** *When your mother is old, show her your appreciation.*

3. As an adult, I honor my parents by affirming and not abandoning them.

- For many parents, the older they get the less respect they get. All of their affirming friends start to die off; they are no longer wanted in the marketplace for their skills and wisdom; their grown children are busy with their own families; they lead lonely lives.
- Your parents have a desperate need to know that they made a positive contribution to your life. They need affirmation, and God says that He wants you to affirm them for the rest of your life. All the flowers in the world at their funeral won't do them any good – affirm your parents now!
- **Proverbs 3:27 (NLT)** *Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them.*
- **You affirm your parents by ...**
 - A. staying in touch with them
 - B. sharing the details of your life with them
 - C. seeking their counsel on major decisions
- It is a shameful tragedy in our society that busy families are abandoning the aged to die all alone. **Your parents cared for you when you were dependent, and caring for them at the other end of the cycle of life is YOUR responsibility.** The Bible teaches that the way you treat your elderly parents is a demonstration of your true faith.
- **1 Timothy 5:8 (LB)** *Anyone who won't care for his own relatives when they need help, especially his own family, has no right to say he is a Christian. Such a person is worse than the heathen.*
- **1 Timothy 5:4 (NLT)** *Their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God very much.*
- Jesus made arrangements for the care of his aged mother as He hung dying for the whole world on the cross!

A WORD TO PARENTS

- **Ephesians 6:4 (LB)** *And now a word to you parents. Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice.*

- Parents, if you want to be honored, you must be honorable! Don't drive your kids nuts by being unreasonable. Don't try to make your child into another you (one is enough!).
- The Bible teaches that the key to good parenting is "loving discipline." Every child must learn two things:
 - A. Disobedience brings pain.
 - B. Obedience brings freedom.
- As a Christian parent, your number one goal should be to insure that your kids come to know the Lord as soon as they are old enough to understand. Don't rest until all of your family is serving God!

A WORD TO YOU

- For some of you, this may be a very painful message. It is easy to honor your parents if they have been good, godly people. But some of you had parents that hurt you deeply and devastated your life. The Bible says that there is severe judgment for child abuse and neglect.
- ***Matthew 18:6 (NLT)*** *But if anyone causes one of these little ones who trusts in me to lose faith, it would be better for that person to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around the neck.*
- HOW DO I HONOR A PARENT WHO WAS DISHONORABLE TO ME? **Don't fake it, face it!** Don't gloss it over or deny the pain. Don't repress it or make excuses for your parents' wrongs.
- **Many of you are still carrying unfinished business with your parents.** Just the thought of it can bring tears to your eyes and a pain in your heart. You're still reacting to your parents, maybe venting your anger on your family or friends because you've never resolved it.
- **If you're still angry with a parent years later, you're still letting them control your life.** It takes a courageous decision to face the issue, but you cannot get on with your life until you release the anger and get over this. Make the wrongs right while there's still time to attempt a reconciliation. If you can't talk to your parents because of death, chemical dependency, mental illness, etc. at least talk it over with a Christian friend and get partial relief from it. **Stop the cycle!**
- God knows the pain you feel and He can help you overcome it – He can even bring some good out of it if you will let Him! If your parents abandoned you, you are a special person to God, for the Bible says that God assumes responsibility for abandoned children!
- ***Psalm 27:10 (GN)*** *My father and mother may abandon me, but the Lord will take care of me.*

- The church is a family that will last longer than your physical family. In terms of eternity, it's far more important. If you have hurts in your life because of your upbringing, get involved in the family of God here at First UPC! You can be part of a family that's stable, secure and loving!

GOD'S DESIGN

You are who you are for a reason
 You're part of an intricate plan
 You're precious, a perfect unique design
 Called God's special woman or man.

You look like you look for a reason
 Our God made no mistake
 He knit you together within the womb
 You're just what He wanted to make.

The parents you had are the ones He chose
 No matter how you may feel
 You are custom designed with that plan in mind
 Your life bears the Master's seal.

The trauma you faced wasn't easy
 God wept that it hurt you so
 But it was allowed to shape your heart
 So that into His likeness you'd grow.

You are who you are for a reason
 You've been formed by the Master's rod
 You are who you are, beloved
 Because there is a God.