



The Ten Commandments – Part 9
Exodus 20:12
GCSP – 09/05/2009

In what is known as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus outlines the primary points that should be included when we pray. He starts by telling us to address God as our Father, to honor and reverence His name, to seek His kingdom and for His will to be done. Jesus then instructs us to ask for our daily needs to be met, for the Lord to forgive us where we fail, and to protect us.

As we studied this prayer a few years ago I emphasized the order of each component of the model prayer – God first and then us.

As we continue with our study of The Ten Commandments we are experiencing this same order – God first and then us. The first four commandments are all about our relationship with God: God first, no idols or images, honor God's name, and worship the Lord in keeping a Sabbath. The final six commandments are all about our relationship with each other; and that starts with the family.

Specifically God begins by teaching how we are to view our parents.

Parent/child relationships are not always as loving and harmonious as God ordained from the beginning. The evil and insidious nature of sin has done tremendous damage through the years on the family. Parents have at times either abused the authority God has given them or they have abandoned their responsibility altogether.

God blessed me with two wonderful parents who loved my brother and I, sacrificed for us, and raised us as best they could, according to God's principles in His Word. Largely through my parent's efforts and nurture I would estimate that I only missed being in church on Sunday a handful of times that did not include being on vacation; and that pattern continued after I left their home. Church was a priority in the Smith household. Even if we had family staying with us who didn't attend church, we went without them and continued our visit when church was over.

But I would be naïve to assume that all of you here tonight, or all of you who listen to these sermons on CD, had the privilege of growing up in similar circumstances. I know the ravages of sin caused many of you to grow up in less than ideal situations. Some of you may have been abused, some may have experienced the heartache of divorce and thus grew up without a mother and/or father, and some of you may have even lived through the pain of not knowing if you were truly loved by one or the other parent.

I can't say I understand what you have been through. I wasn't there. I don't know what it feels like. I can sympathize with you and I can tell you that God understands, and I can even tell you that God will help you deal with the hurt if you will let Him, but I will never be able to put myself in your shoes.

The fifth commandment in God's top ten teaches us to honor our parents. God does not give us any options or exemptions in this command, and He doesn't put a time limit on

how long we must honor them or that we can discontinue the command when our parents reach a certain age. And as with all of His commandments, He gives us this one out of a heart of love for us. God commands us to honor our parents for our own good and for our own benefit, not to just spoil our fun or keep us under His thumb.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Exodus**.

Exodus 20:12

Let's pray.

This sermon is going to touch each of you in different ways. I do not know the story of your life. I know pieces of the story for some of you, but very little to nothing about the rest of you. Some of our parents are no longer on this earth and some live far away. Some of your parents are on excellent terms with you and some have strained relationships with you. Some of you are parents and some of you are not. All of you are children – I do know that much.

Because this sermon will touch and affect each of you differently, there are also many varied directions I could go. I struggled putting this sermon together more than any of recent memory. So if I seem a little scattered in my approach please rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the bits and pieces that make the best application for you.

In case you didn't get the point in my introduction, allow me to plainly state it right now, parents are not perfect. We all know this fact but I sometimes wonder if we are expecting perfection from them. Some parents are less perfect than others granted, but none are perfect. I would quite honestly be hard pressed to come up with much of list outlining the imperfections of my parents, but they made their share of mistakes along the way as well.

But guess what? You and I are not perfect either. And when you bring imperfect people together things are not always going to go according to one or both of your plans. Maybe it would be better to say that things will rarely go according to your plans, regardless of if you are the parent or the child.

And also, just so you do not get me wrong, I am not and will not be excusing the wrong and sinful behavior of parents. God places a great deal of responsibility upon parents and He does not turn a blind eye on our failures in this regard. He forgives those who ask Him for it, but He does not ignore our sins.

For some of you this sermon will open up some old wounds that have never healed, so at the same time, God does not ignore the pain and suffering many children have had to endure through the years – and many adult children still endure today in some form. God takes your pain very seriously. He knows your pain and He is ready to give you His comfort every moment of every day. And God will settle all accounts in His perfect timing.

I submit to you that honoring your father and your mother is a command you can start obeying regardless of your situation – even if they are no longer with you and even if they horribly shirked their responsibilities to you.

But before we go there, some of you may be asking the question "Why?" Why should I honor my parents when it is difficult for me to think of anything they did that was worthy of honor?

That's a fair question. I ask you to bear with me over these next few moments together. Let's all keep open hearts and minds as best we can and hear what God has to say on this issue. Allow the Holy Spirit to show you how obeying this command will benefit you even more than it could ever benefit your parents.

And please hear this: No matter what has happened in the past, God is interested in your present and your future. God wants to change your heart and your mind right now, not tomorrow. God wants to walk with you and fellowship with you right now, not after you get your act together. God wants to teach you and bless you right now, not when you are more prepared and have everything in your life straightened out.

God desires to protect you from destructive thoughts and attitudes right now. And right now if you settle the matter of honoring your father and your mother in your heart and mind, you can be a different person. A son or daughter who forgives and honors his or her parents can and will be a better and more honorable parent to their own children; you will be a person, let alone a parent, who is free from the spirit of bitterness and thus, will not be in danger of spreading that bitterness to your children and grandchildren and others you come in contact with on a regular basis.

So let's begin by first looking at how seriously God takes this issue of honoring your father and your mother.

Look with me in your Bibles at the next chapter in the Book of **Exodus**.

Exodus 21:17

Now turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Leviticus**.

Leviticus 20:9

And lastly, turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Deuteronomy**.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

There is no record in Scripture of any parent ever enacting these laws and obviously I am not suggesting they be enacted today, but the point I trust you see is that God is deadly serious about honoring, respecting, and obeying your parents.

Don't turn there, but in **Genesis 9**, Noah overindulged in some homemade wine and got slobbering drunk. In his inebriated condition he was lying around naked and one of his sons, Ham, saw him this way and mocked him. Ham was cursed along with all of his descendants.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew**.

Matthew 15:1-9

Jesus lays into the Pharisees for withholding financial support for their elderly parents. Children were to take care of their parents when they reached the stage in their life where they could no longer care for or support themselves. When FDR instituted Social Security in this country we have slowly but surely relinquished this responsibility to the government, whether the government is sufficiently providing or not. But no place in Scripture has God relinquished us of this responsibility.

Let's look at two more. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Romans**.

Romans 1:28-32

Now turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **2 Timothy**.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

In the midst of horrendous sins and crimes in both of the last passages, we see listed the sin of being disobedient to parents. Whereas our culture may shrug our shoulders at disobedient children today, simply looking at this as an unavoidable fact of life, God compares it with wickedness, treachery, hatred of God, inventors of evil, un-holiness, and murder just to name a few.

Unfortunately in our own personal ranking system of sins, disobedience to parents would be a lot farther down the list than many of these other sins. Even as parents we look at disobedience by our children much more lightly than God does; which is why we probably view the fifth commandment with less importance than it deserves or requires.

There are many other passages of Scripture we could look at to reinforce the point but we will instead move on.

So how do we honor our father and our mother?

Love

It begins with loving them. And I know many people who hear this will say, "Stop right there!" For some the thought of loving their parents is more difficult than climbing Mount Everest in short pants and barefoot. Others, who understand that genuine love means a huge investment of their time will say, "My parents make me miserable when I spend time with them. I can only take so much of that."

That may be true. Honoring them with your time and your presence may be very difficult. But Jesus said, "**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments**" (**John 14:15**). And He again says, "**If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love**" (**John 15:10**).

Beloved, this is the best reason I can think of for obeying the Ten Commandments. I want to abide in the love of Christ. I don't want to live or abide in any other place for any other reason. Life for me means walking and talking and ministering while I am being swept along in the current of God's love. And that means I must obey even when obedience is difficult.

For some us, too many miles separate us from our parents. And if you're like me, you may have allowed that distance to lull you into a sense of not needing to communicate as often as you should. I don't call my dad very often anymore. We communicate a little through email and on Facebook, but I don't pick up the phone and call like I should. I'm missing the boat.

The truth is you cannot genuinely express your love for someone apart from sacrifice; and sacrificing a portion of our time to communicate with our parents on a regular basis while the opportunity is still here is a sacrifice we should willingly make.

Let me address for a moment any parents in the room tonight. What three words do you long to hear from your children more than any other? And it's not "Don't need money." It's "I love you" isn't it? Is there anything that surpasses the glow in your heart when a child, regardless of their age, says those words? What makes you think your parents are any different?

It was very hard on our parents and very hard on our son when Connie and I obeyed God's call to move to Colorado. It was also hard on us financially when Connie had to give up the income we had grown accustomed to after we came up to the mountains. And as much as I know that we are exactly where God wants us to be, and that we are willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary, I sometimes wonder if my son was ever disappointed in me. His life was turned upside down and he is probably still recovering to some extent – nine years later.

You don't have to be in full-time ministry to have these kinds of thoughts. Military families are always on the move. My dad had to go where the work was so I went to three different high schools. Kids don't get to choose these things and the parents are sometimes left wondering if they made a mess of things. They need to know that they are loved and forgiven if necessary.

Which brings us to the next way we can honor our parents; forgiveness.

Forgiveness

Parents have hard choices to make almost on a moment-by-moment basis when raising young children. Even in a loving and godly home environment the parents have to say "No" and do things the child doesn't understand or appreciate. A parent's decision will rarely match up with what the child wants. For whatever injustices you felt you endured as a child you need to forgive.

And again, I know some of you dealt with issues and sins against you that I will never fully understand. I say this with as much love as I can muster, you need to forgive. Even if your parents never have asked for forgiveness, you need to forgive. You are not excusing their sins against you, but you need to forgive. Un-forgiveness in your heart is a cancer. Holding grudges is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Why forgive?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:3-9

Jesus endured unimaginable suffering and injustice – at your expense and at my expense. Every sin you and I ever committed caused this suffering. Every time He was slapped and punched and whipped with that cat of nine tails, every thorn in that crown that was pounded into his head, every nail that pierced his wrists and feet, every insult that was thrown his way, and every time a soldier or onlooker spat in His unrecognizable face was because of the sins we committed, not Him.

And yet Jesus stands in heaven today with open arms offering forgiveness; and in that forgiveness He is also offering unending peace, unconditional love, unimaginable joy, and eternal life with Him in heaven.

Beloved, Jesus knows your pain. I may not know your pain but Jesus knows your pain. And Jesus is telling you to forgive because He knows your pain will never fully go away as long as you hold on to the bitterness. He tells us to honor our father and our mother even when they do not deserve it because He knows that is what is best for you, not for them.

Remember this when it comes to true forgiveness: The innocent party is the one who pays. The one who has been hurt is the one who must pay the price. But it is a price worth paying because forgiveness pays you back. Genuine forgiveness pays you back in ways you never thought possible.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Ephesians**.

Ephesians 4:26-27

It is my belief that the stronghold that Satan has in most people's lives originates with un-forgiveness. According to this passage it only takes one night of unresolved anger for the enemy to get a foothold on your life. And once he has a foothold you had better believe he will be enlisting reinforcements with other demons to start bombarding your life with his fiery darts. The longer you allow un-forgiveness to rule the day the more difficult it is going to be to rid yourself of this demonic influence.

Bitterness and un-forgiveness have the power to destroy your life from the inside out. You will be locked in your past to the extent that God cannot use you or bless you.

Now let me ask you a question: who is suffering the most, the one who committed the initial sin or the one who chooses not to forgive?

It's hard to forgive, but beloved it is so very worth it. If you are holding anything against your parents, forgive them. I don't care if you have a valid reason; forgive them. Even if they are no longer alive, forgive them. You will be obeying the command to honor your father and your mother, and God will bless you for your obedience.

Maybe it comes down to this: How much do you want to be used by God?

Let's pray.