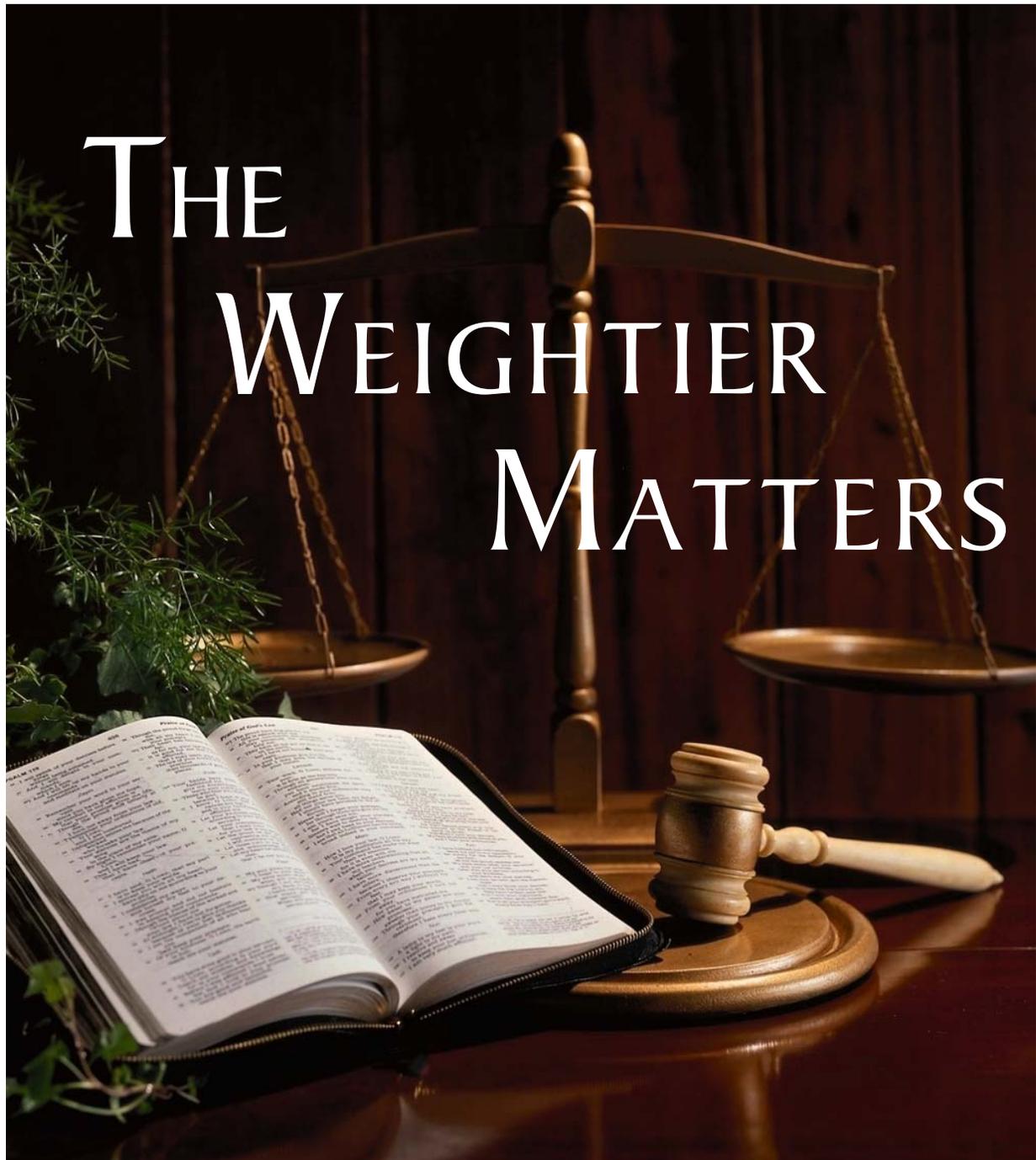


Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 6, Number 6

June 1997



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About Our Cover:

God is the ultimate Judge of everything, weighing in the balance the hearts of men. That judgement is based on every Word of God as presented in the Bible. How are we involved? (Corel photo)

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THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

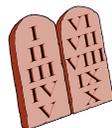
In Matthew 22:36 a Pharisee asked Jesus, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” His response shows that He divided the Ten Commandments into two sections or tables. He covers the first four by saying, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment” (verses 37-38). This supersedes all other commandments; none is greater. The second, covering the last six, is similar to it. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (verse 39).

God also arranged each section to begin with the most important command. He placed first the commandment, which, if kept, will ensure the greatest benefit to our lives, both physically and spiritually. On the other hand, if we break this commandment, it will cause the most damage to our worship of God or to the community by virtually ensuring that we will break others. In the first table of the law, this commandment is, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2). In the second, it is the fifth commandment: “Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (verse 12).

Just as the first commandment governs our relationship with God, the fifth commandment is first among those that govern our relationships with men. When we keep it or break it, it affects those relationships. Not only is it chief in this section, it also acts as a bridge between the two tables of the law. When we keep the fifth commandment properly, it leads to us to revere and obey God Himself.

Honor means “to give high regard, respect and esteem to; to bring respect or credit to; an outward token, sign or act that manifests high regard.” *Respect* means “to have deferential regard for, to treat with propriety and consideration; to regard as inviolable.” This honor and respect, though primarily intended by God to be given to parents, are not limited to them. In spirit it includes civil, religious and educational authorities as well. Elisha calls Elijah his father, though they were not related (I Kings 19:20; II Kings 2:12). In I Corinthians 4:14-15, Paul speaks of himself as their father because he had begotten them to God.

Why Honor Our Parents?



Why does God want us to honor our parents? The family is the basic building block or unit of society, thus the stability of the community depends on the stability of the families that comprise it. A person’s response to government derives from the parent-child relationship. The lessons and principles learned from honoring, respecting and obeying parents will result in a society stable enough to promote development of the whole person.

Isaiah 3:1-12, describing Judah not long before their captivity, is not far removed from what we are experiencing today. Isaiah gives many examples, but two verses, 5 and 12, will suffice.

The people will be oppressed, every one by another and everyone by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable. . . . As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.

Isaiah reveals a society that can be aptly described as “upside down.” Those who should be leading are not and those who should not are. A central factor in this is that the immature are leading. A free-wheeling, laissez faire, hedonistic, immoral and irresponsible culture exists. Verses 5 and 12 confirm that family governance and leadership are greatly affected.

Taken to an extreme, dishonoring of parents leads to anarchy, first in the family and then in society, as the decay of this basic component spreads. Eventually, a person will expend much, if not most, of his energies just surviving, effectively destroying the development of spiritual, creative and intellectual qualities essential to his and society’s well-being.

Not honoring parents also causes immaturity. Because children do not respect their parents’ advice, they grow up missing the significance of much they encounter, and so wisdom comes to them very slowly. In some cases, perhaps they never learn wisdom. Lack of honor manifests itself in self-willed and self-indulgent people who seem to simmer just beneath the point of rebellion. Their

He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

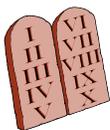
motto in life becomes, “Just do it.” So they condemn themselves to learning the lessons of life through hard experience, which may be a good teacher, but a painful one.

A second reason God wants us to honor our parents is that the family is also the basic building block of His Kingdom. God describes the Kingdom in family terms. He is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and the church is the Son’s bride. We are called sons, daughters and children of the Kingdom. We are created and being created as sons in His image. God also uses terms like “beget,” “born” and “grow up.”

Immediately after creating Adam and Eve and announcing He was creating them in His image, God established the first institution: the family through marriage. The conclusion is inescapable. The family would play a major role in creating man in God’s image. Regarding marriage, family and divorce, Malachi 2:15 says, “But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring! Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.”

The godly principles learned and character built within the human family are, upon conversion, transferable into the spiritual family relationship in the Kingdom of God. Parents are His representatives, and we honor and revere the creative majesty and power of God when we keep this commandment. God expects whatever we learned from honoring our parents to transfer into our relationship with Him.

A Regulator of Community Relationships



Notice how powerfully God backs up this commandment with civil laws:

Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:2-3)

In this context God names the fifth and fourth commandments in the same breath while implying the first.

Leviticus 19 deals with social relationships within the community, and these commandments are seen as major regulators of community relationships. God gives all of these laws with a common thought in mind: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” These laws are given because the Lawgiver is God (see verses 4, 10, 12, etc.).

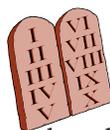
They are not primarily statements of authority (“Do this because I tell you”), though some of this is included, but statements of the relationship between the Lawgiver

and His law. The laws reflect His nature. The law is what it is because God is what He is. Therefore, if we want to be like God, we will imitate Him by obeying His laws in their physical and spiritual applications.

The first thing required in this context is *reverence* (not honor) toward parents and Sabbath observance. These two are major pillars of good government and social well-being. Reverence is a profound, adoring and awed respect—more than mere honor. It actually indicates “to tremble before,” arising from our awareness of our weaknesses in the presence of the one we revere.

The Sabbath commandment influences social well-being in two ways. It first commands us to work six days. It takes working to make a community safe, clean, orderly, strong, peaceful and prosperous. The other part of the commandment implies spiritual, moral and ethical instruction, fellowshiping with others of like spiritual and moral mindset and service to the community. That part of the commandment adds edifying qualities available nowhere else.

Disobedience to Parents



Notice how seriously God takes the breaking of the fifth commandment: “And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. . . . And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death” (Exodus 21:15, 17). Physically striking or verbally abusing a parent is no different to God than murder. They are capital crimes worthy of death!

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 covers habitually rebellious children:

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of the city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.” Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil person from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

If a child was unmanageable, stubborn and disobedient, God empowered the judges to back up the parents. However, regardless of their level of exasperation, the parents had no right to put to their child to death. The elders of the city tried the child, evidence was presented, and they executed the judgment.

It is interesting that the parents charge their son with drunkenness. It does not mean a one-time binge but

repeated offenses implying alcoholism, which is a drug addiction. Drug addiction is a major problem today. The wisdom of God reveals this alternative for dealing with it. Is it offensive that God is so stern? He does not pass this problem off as of little consequence or significance! Look at what it is doing to American society.

Deuteronomy 27:16 has this interesting assessment. “Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.” Such a person is living under divine punishment. God is faithful to what He is for good or ill. There are no hollow threats from God. Many today live cursed lives because of the way they treated or are still treating their parents. Why is God so concerned?

The *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (vol. 1, p. 133), commenting on Exodus 21:15-17, reads:

Maltreatment of a father and mother through striking (ver. 15), man-stealing (ver. 16), and cursing parents (ver. 17, cf. Leviticus xx.9) were all to be placed on a par with murder, and punished in the same way. By “*smiting*” of parents we are not to understand smiting to death, . . . but any kind of maltreatment. The murder of parents is not mentioned at all, as not likely to occur and hardly conceivable. The *cursing of parents* is placed on a par with smiting, because it proceeds from the same disposition; and both were to be punished with death, because the majesty of God was violated in the persons of the parents.

“The majesty of God was violated”! In this lies the importance of keeping this commandment. The relationship God intends within the family is an exact type of a Christian’s spiritual relationship with God the Father and the church as mother.

Training Children



In God’s eyes—and in a small child’s—a parent stands in the place of God Himself. In the physical sense, parents are the child’s creator, provider, lawgiver, teacher and protector and sometimes even savior. A child’s response to this relationship will greatly determine his later response to larger relationships in society. And it is ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN to affect his relationship with God. Thus, since parents represent God, it becomes their **obligation** to live lives worthy of that honor. Ultimately, the responsibility for keeping this commandment falls on the child, but it *begins* with the parents through child training and example. If parents neither provide the correct example nor teach the correct way, they can hardly expect their children to honor them.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul admonishes, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” We need to consider a number of factors in this verse. First, just because he says “fathers,” he does not exclude mothers.



Paul simply addresses the party with the overall responsibility.

Second, though it is not directly stated, we must remember that God consistently teaches that the strong are responsible to care for the weak. In this context, the parents are strong, the children are weak. However, parents must not depend upon their size and strength to demand respect, but should strive to earn it through strength of character, wisdom and clearly expressed love.

The Greek word translated “bring them up” at first meant merely providing bodily nourishment. Through time its usage extended to include education in its entirety since bringing up children obviously is more than just feeding a child food! “Training” is more correct than the weak “nurture” used in the KJV. The Greek word means “to train or discipline by repeated and narrow exercises in a matter.” It implies action more than intellectual thought and corresponds to the word “train” in Proverbs 22:6, which means “to hedge” or “narrow in.” Thus God expects parents to train their children to walk the straight and narrow way rather than allowing them to wander aimlessly about on the broad way.

Paul adds in Colossians 3:21, “Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.” To some degree, all children resist their parents and what they represent and teach. How parents overcome it is Paul’s concern. These verses testify that many parents strive to elicit their children’s obedience and respect in the wrong manner.

The wrong way provokes embittered, fretful, defensive, listless, resentful, moody, angry or sullen children. Paul counsels not to challenge the child’s resistance with an unreasonable exercise of authority. Correction is necessary, but a parent must administer it in the right spirit, counterbalanced by lavish affection and acceptance. A twig should be bent with caution.

Firmness does not need to be harsh nor cruel. Punishment should never be revenge nor dispensed just because

The command to honor our parents applies to all of us all our lives.

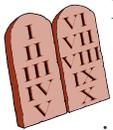
the parent is irritated. Severity only hardens the child and makes him more desperate. If a parent does not use his authority justly, he cannot expect a child to be respectful. It does not happen automatically.

Notice how Paul describes his attitude and relationship to the Thessalonian brethren:

You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (I Thessalonians 2:10-12)

Paul exhorted, comforted and charged them. That is a very good prescription for earning the honor of children.

A Child's Part



By way of contrast, Paul instructs children in Ephesians 6:1-3. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" The command to honor parents applies to all of us all our lives. But here, as in Colossians 3:20, children should obey their parents in all things "in the Lord."

The apostle is not saying a child must break the Ten Commandments if a parent orders him to so. Children should obey "in the Lord," that is, obey commands that agree with the will of God. Most younger children cannot grasp whether a parental order conforms to God's will. But as they age, they need to understand that they, too, are under the authority of the Living Christ.

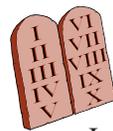
Though parents have a huge part in starting children off on the right foot regarding this commandment, the greater responsibility for keeping it rests with the child. At some point, children need to realize that their submission to parents is an act of faith in Christ. Their required obedience is not based on any arbitrary power held by parents but on a higher law to which parents are also subject. Parents have a primary responsibility to teach their children to discipline, govern or control *themselves* under God's law. Children must learn that they cannot always do what they want when they want, or have what they want when they want it.

Keeping this commandment brings great benefits, as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:2, "which is the first commandment with promise." The promise of blessing for keeping it written right into the commandment! God promises, "That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

This blessing has at least two parts. Obedience to parental admonitions, gained from years of experience living in this difficult and dangerous world, results in the building of knowledge, character and habits of avoiding recklessness, lawlessness, violence, wrong companionships and rebellion against authority. These often result in untimely and violent death at a young age. Virtually every year this comes to the fore when statistics show that accidents are our children's number one killer.

The second and ultimate meaning is that, in honoring our spiritual Father, God, we receive spiritual blessings far above long physical life. From the loving relationship between God and his child will arise eternal life, which God will give as a gift to a son who pleases Him.

Honoring Our Parents



Obedience to this command does not stop at a certain age. Genesis 48:12 reveals the deep respect Joseph had for Jacob when he brought his two sons before him for a blessing: "So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth." With adulthood, the time may come when it is no longer necessary or right for a person to obey his parents strictly. But God's requirement to honor them never ceases. This duty pays dividends by giving us access to the wisdom of years.

Honor has wider application than obey. It expresses itself in courtesy, thoughtfulness, mercy and kindly deeds. We would hardly consider one to be honoring his parents who, when they fall sick, weak and perhaps blind in old age, does not exert himself to the utmost for them and their support in their need.

Just as surely as God requires parents to nourish, defend, support and instruct the children in their lowest state of infancy, so children in their strength should support their parents in their weakness. Turn about is fair play because the Scripture says, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12). Each of us would want someone to care for us in our time of need.

Jesus points out how serious this is in Matthew 15:3-6:

But He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me has been dedicated to the temple" is released from honoring his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition."



Today, it is a common practice to turn parents over to a government agency and fail to provide anything—even visits! It is almost as if they were an old automobile to be traded in and forgotten.

Behind these Scriptures is a practice whereby people excused themselves from providing for their parents on the grounds of giving offerings (not tithes) to the Temple. On the surface this may seem like an honorable practice, but Jesus condemned them as hypocrites! God wants mercy to people in need, not the “sacrifice” of an offering to God that we think might put us in better standing with Him. That “sacrifice” should have been spent relieving the parent’s need!

Jesus quotes Exodus 21:17 as His authority. “Curses” implies afflicting, bringing evil upon or causing harm or misfortune to. The person who curses a parent, even under the New Covenant, breaks the fifth commandment and is worthy of death. These are sobering words regarding a serious obligation.

Paul clarifies our responsibility further in I Timothy 5:3-4, 16:

Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. . . . If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

What Paul says here often presents great difficulties under modern conditions, especially when young people must choose between caring for parents and furthering

their ambitions or establishing a home. Paul teaches that not only children but also grandchildren have a definite obligation to live their religion by providing for their needy parents or grandparents. He bluntly states that they are to repay them for all their kindness and sacrifices. A child can never wholly repay this debt, but still he should consider it a sacred obligation to make it up as much as possible.

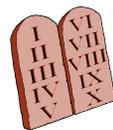
Jesus lived what He taught. Luke 2:51-52 shows that, despite His brilliance and undoubted understanding of who He was even at age twelve, He honored His earthly parents: “Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and *was subject to them*, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

John 19:25-27 reveals another side of His sense of responsibility in this area:

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

Just because He was God’s Son did not allow Him to forego His earthly obligations. He faithfully fulfilled human duties. Even at a time others would think only of self, He thought of her.

Proverbs About Honoring Parents



The book of Proverbs contains many pointed admonitions concerning the importance of keeping this commandment. We would be wise to consider these concepts ageless and not intended just for children.

Notice the contrast in these two proverbs: “A wise son makes a glad father; but a foolish son is the grief of his mother” (10:1). “Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness” (20:20). A son who is wise (that is, he honors his parents) gives his father and mother satisfaction by the way he lives. Solomon invites young people to consider how their actions affect their parents. Parents usually think it is their duty to make their children happy, but many proverbs urge children to bring happiness to their parents. Proverbs reveals the parent-child relationship as a two-way street; each affects the other.

Proverbs 20:20 soberly warns that children who treat their parents lightly or contemptuously, who pay them

Please see page 19

A wise son makes a glad father; but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.

God inspired David to write the words of Psalm 19, revealing that the heavens above—commonly called “outer space” today—are a witness to God’s tremendous glory: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). In verse 2 David asserts that the heavens repeat the fact of God’s glory every day and every night. All man has to do is look into the starry night sky to know that God exists.

Moses writes something similar in Deuteronomy 10:14: “Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God.” Outer space is God’s domain! Just as on the earth, nothing happens in the vastness of the universe without God’s knowledge and approval. As Christians we can have faith in God’s supreme sovereignty over all creation, including the uncharted reaches of deep space.

However, we live in a time when the minds and creative energies of man are especially inspired by Satan the deceiver. He has a plan of his own, contrary to God’s, that he is trying to work out on the earth. Isaiah quotes him as saying, “I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Even though God soundly defeated him in ages past when he attempted this foolhardy coup, his plan remains the same.

He has been conditioning mankind for such an event for years. Except this time, rather than fight God on His turf—the heavens, Satan will wait

for God to assault him and his armies here—on earth! When that day comes, the Devil will have convinced a large part of mankind that extraterrestrial life exists and is conspiring to destroy mankind and takeover the earth.

The Real ETs

Ironically, extraterrestrial life *is* determined to destroy mankind, but “fortunately,” God by His sovereignty limits them to attempting to make us destroy ourselves. Of course, Satan and his legions of fallen angels are the real aliens in this plot. These beings, who do not live under the earth’s surface, as commonly believed, actually dwell unseen on earth and travel through space. Job 1:6-7 shows this plainly:

Now there was a day when the sons of God [angels] came to present themselves before the LORD [in heaven], and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.”

Today’s mass media and entertainment pushes the notion that the earth will be taken over by aliens from outer space. In the movie *The Arrival*, aliens in Third-world countries build power plants to speed up global warming and mankind’s self-destruction. In *Independence Day*, the earth is surrounded by aliens determined to wipe out mankind, but when the nations join forces—it even shows the Arab and Israeli militaries working side-by-side to defeat their common enemy—the aliens are destroyed. In the end, all humanity celebrates a new “Independence Day”

together worldwide. Even in the *Star Trek* saga, a race of half-machine, half-humanoid creatures called the Borg try to assimilate humankind. Other movies and television shows, such as *Robin Cook’s Invasion*, *Mars Attacks*, *The X-Files*, *The Outer Limits* and *Dark Skies*, have similar story lines.

Our children are also being subjected to mind-conditioning from an early age. Cartoons, which used to emphasize *merely* competition and violence in a “friendly” way, have now given way to an almost constant barrage of space invaders. Computer and video games are filled with the same violent extraterrestrials, as are comic books. Children, fascinated with science fiction and futurism, are a ready and willing audience and a high-profit target for purveyors of such satanic mind-conditioning. Parents beware!

Stories of alien abductions, unidentified flying objects and unexplained patterns cut in fields (known as “crop circles”) are gaining popular acceptance. A nationally syndicated radio talk show, “The Art Bell Show,” concerns itself almost exclusively with such mysteries for several hours each night. Without a solid foundation in the truth, it is not surprising that so many believe that aliens are here, have been here or will be here—and they are out to destroy us.

Add to this the common way movie producers show alien craft entering the earth’s atmosphere: with clouds and heavenly shows. *Independence Day* portrayed this phenomenon happening around the globe. *Close Encounters* used the same effect. Notice how it counterfeits Christ’s return:



“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30; compare Acts 1:9-11).

What Satan is preparing mankind for is indeed the return of Jesus Christ and the heavenly host. In Revelation 12:7–13:8 the apostle John writes what God revealed to him about the end time. Satan is given power to exercise authority over the earth for three and a half years. His wrath is very great because he knows his time is very short. He must kick his plan into high gear.

What Will Really Happen

Satan’s end-time plan, revealed in Revelation 13:11-18, is to establish his false church as the “true” church. Then his false Messiah, the Antichrist, will cause such fear and perform signs in the sight of all that the world will believe he is God. Paul warns the true church of this in II Thessalonians 2:3-4:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition [destruction], who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

We should not allow ourselves to be duped by these obvious counterfeits of the truth because we know what is really going to happen.

Jesus foretells of the signs of His coming in the Olivet Prophecy. In Matthew 24:29-30, after Satan has wreaked his revenge on the inhabitants of the earth, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven.” Revelation 6:12-17 describes this time as the opening salvo of God’s wrath, sometimes called the Day of the Lord.

In Isaiah 13:13 God Almighty pro-



claims, “Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.” It seems God will move the earth out of its orbit, causing gigantic earthquakes and other geologic distress. Many disasters follow throughout the seventh seal, which include the Seven Trumpets and the Seven Bowls of God’s wrath.

Revelation 16:12-16 describes the sixth angel pouring out his bowl on the River Euphrates, which dries it up and allows the armies to gather for the battle of Armageddon. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, with His armies (Revelation 19:11-16) will be seen as an alien force come to destroy the earth and its inhabitants. The nations of the earth, having planned to fight each other, will unite to oppose Christ and His heavenly host, the true inhabitants and possessors of the heavens and the earth.

Even in their unity, the nations will fail. Many thousands of rebellious humans will die horribly (Zechariah 14:3, 12-15; see Joel 2:1-11). The real destroyer, the real power over the earth’s governments—the one who was really conspiring to help humanity destroy itself—will be exposed and imprisoned a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3). Then God will establish His glorious Kingdom, and a time of unparalleled peace,

safety and prosperity will dawn on the earth.

We can summarize Satan’s cunning conspiracy to deceive mankind:

1. He inspires the notion of extraterrestrial aliens coming from outer space intent on destroying or defeating humanity.

2. He inspires the belief that if the nations combine their military forces, a united earth can overcome superior extraterrestrial aliens coming from outer space.

3. He inspires men to think that God is powerless or indifferent to human destruction, so mankind must depend on itself and technology to overcome overwhelming odds.

Satan’s conspiracy to deceive mankind will include:

1. A sinful leader who claims to be God and performs miracles to prove it.

2. A world power, influenced and inhabited by demons, that will destroy any nation or group of people that does not submit to it.

3. A call to unite all nations to overcome and destroy what the world will see as an alien invasion, but will actually be the return of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ to restore God’s government on the earth.

The irony of this whole scenario is that Satan is already at work destroying humankind, and the world does not even realize it.

—Howard E. Marchbanks

In one chapter, Matthew 23, Jesus Christ rips the scribes and Pharisees to shreds. Eight times He pronounces on them *woe*—defined by *Webster's Dictionary* as “deep suffering, grief, affliction, ruinous trouble.” He dubs them “hypocrites” seven times, “blind guides” twice, “fools and blind” twice, “blind” once, “whitewashed tombs” once and finishes His name-calling tirade by designating them “brood of vipers”!

He then accuses them of being the children of those who had killed the prophets—a heavy-duty insult considering how proud they were of their ancestry. He predicts they would do the same themselves and declares that He would have nothing to do with them until they accept and bless the ones He sends.

Jesus was really worked up over this! Why? These people were extremely careful in keeping every minor article of the law. They even added many precise rules themselves to ensure they did not overlook the law's details.

Their lives, and the lives of those under their jurisdiction, consisted of endless,

of “devouring widows' houses” (verse 14). Hence Christ's remonstrance: Hypocrites!

Yet they LOOKED good, publicly counting their mint, cummin and anise. It is not wrong or unlawful to count each seed; tithing *should* be done, as Christ pointed out (verse 23). But there are far more important issues of the law to consider than counting individual seeds—namely, JUDGMENT, MERCY AND FAITH.

In this series of articles, we will examine these weightier matters.

We will see that Christ would have been much happier had they more efficiently tithed “one measure for you, nine for me” or “one wagon-load for you, nine for me,” using the time saved from counting each seed on weightier matters.

- ◆ They abused their office by burdening others with strict requirements while not requiring the same of themselves (verse 4).

- ◆ What they did do was only for vanity and show (verse 5).

- ◆ They were social climbers (verse 6).

- ◆ Their teaching had negative results, driving people farther from the Kingdom rather than closer to it (verse 13).

- ◆ Their twisted reasoning led them to steal even from the weak (verse 14).

- ◆ Their misguided zeal made their proselytes twice as bad as they were before they were even “converted” to Pharisaism (verse 16).

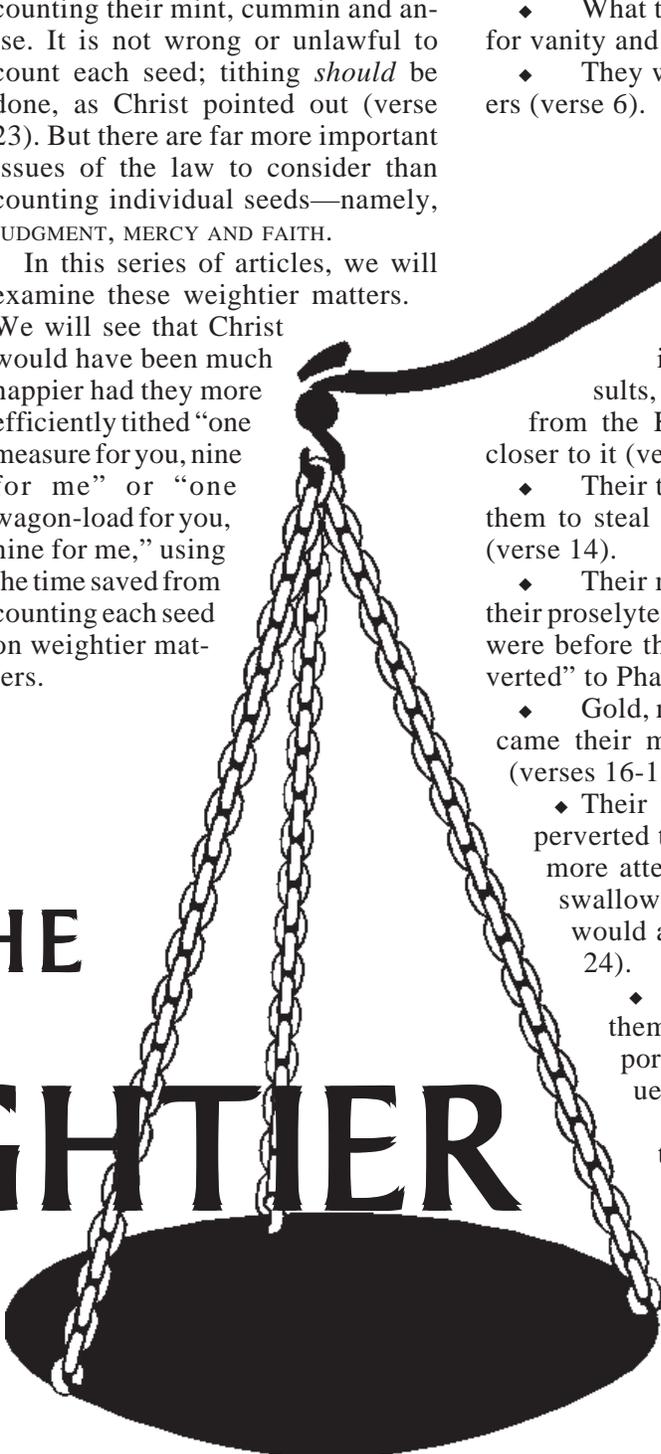
- ◆ Gold, money and greed became their main focus and god (verses 16-18).

- ◆ Their perspective was so perverted that they would pay more attention to keep from swallowing a gnat than they would a camel (verses 23-24).

- ◆ How others saw them was far more important than moral values (verses 27-28).

- ◆ While they extolled the

THE WEIGHTIER



mindless details. Endless, for they continued to break branches of the law down to twigs down to leaves. Mindless, because this focus hampered their ability to think and properly weigh what was *most* important. They became so involved in making sure *everyone else* obeyed their demands that they no longer remembered the fundamental purpose of the law or kept it properly themselves. Even worse, they used the law against others and took advantage even to the point

Basic Pharisaism

We will first examine Christ's scathing indictment of the Pharisees' religion and reduce each of His points to its basic elements to summarize its effects:

- ◆ They set a horrid example by not following their own teaching (verse 3).

virtues of past men of God, they were so deeply hateful and murderous that they would kill Christ and any of His followers that they could (verses 29-37).

- ◆ Their religious house was utterly worthless and desolate, bereft of any contact with or influence of God, though they thought they were perfectly righteous. In a word, they

were self-righteous.

We could easily break these attitudes down into many more

categories of sin, but the point is obvious: The total of all their religious efforts was zero. *Zilch*. Actually, Pharisaism had *negative value*, for the scribes and Pharisees took what people already had and made them even worse off than before!

At this point we could boil their performance with the law down to one word, but we will wait for that distillation until after examining each of the weightier matters Christ specifically noted they were omitting. For in them—and linking them in sequence—lies the answer to the fundamental problem of the scribes, Pharisees and their ilk.

The Law of Liberty

Interestingly, of the three “weightier matters” Christ says to focus on—judgment, mercy and faith—only one is even mentioned in the Ten Commandments. Mercy is not listed as one of the Ten or emphasized as a major tenet, but as a blessing from God to the thousands who keep His law (Exodus 20:6).

How then, do these three virtues carry such weight with the law? The Pharisees were in horrendous spiritual condition. Notice that Christ did not simply say, “You are breaking the law—keep it!” They *had* the law, and they allegedly *kept* it, ever so minutely. The problem was that they had completely lost the meaning and purpose of the law! Rather than it being a joy and benefit to them, it had become a burden griev-

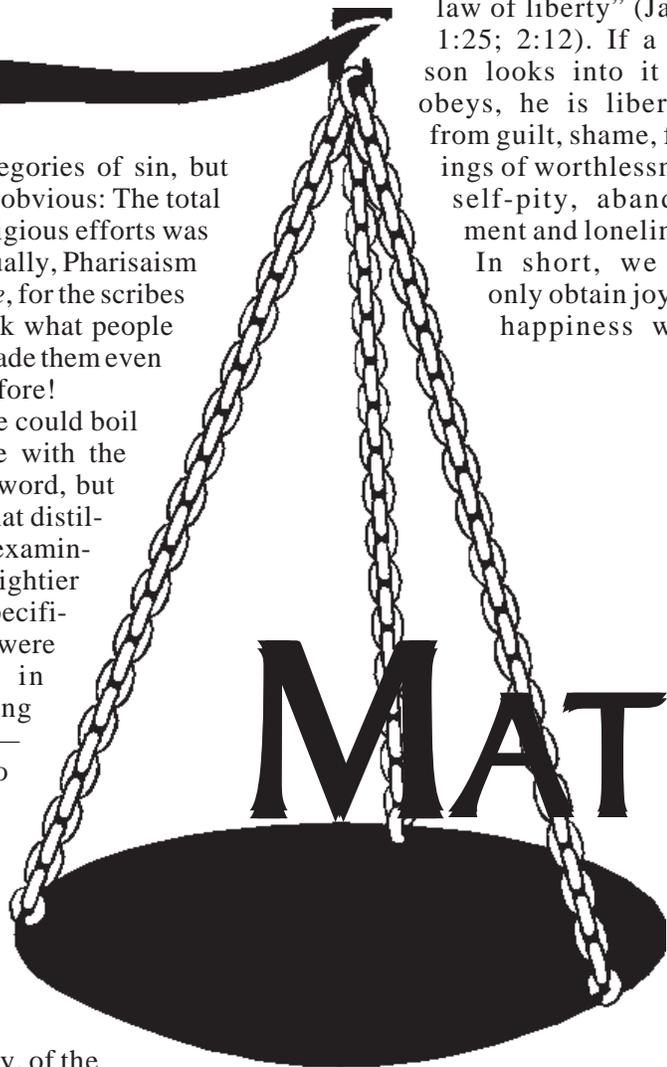
ous to be borne and unhealthy to their spiritual state.

God intends the law to be “the law of liberty” (James 1:25; 2:12). If a person looks into it and obeys, he is liberated from guilt, shame, feelings of worthlessness, self-pity, abandonment and loneliness. In short, we can only obtain joy and happiness when

(James 1:27). How could anyone, by any stretch of the imagination, reason a way to turn this around to the point he could turn widows and orphans out of their homes, then stand in the streets as if righteous, making long prayers to God?

Is it any wonder Christ denounces them so harshly? Considering the content and repetition in His vilification, Jesus Christ is as incensed at them as perhaps anyone He ever addresses in the Bible, Old or New Testament. After calling them snakes in Matthew 23:33, He questions if there is any way they can escape eternal damnation!

Yet in His righteous anger, He still gives them insight on how to correct their course, to put them back on



we keep the law with God’s intended spirit and attitude. Any other use of the law or the breaking of it leads to negative effects that preclude joy and happiness.

They had taken what Jesus and His Father had instituted as a blessing and turned it into a curse. Paul, “a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6) recognized how the law could become an enemy: “And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death” (Romans 7:10). When the law is applied wrongly, the consequences are always destructive.

The scribes and Pharisees used the law on others like a club and perverted it for their own selfish gain. “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble”

track regarding the spirit and attitude necessary to keep the law properly. Christ intends His instruction to cause us to *think through* three basic elements of the purpose of that law and how it should work to man’s good.

To the Pharisees, He did not explain the relationship of judgment, mercy and faith to the law. Why cast His pearls before swine? But if they would make the effort, He gave them a clue about how to straighten out their thinking. In so doing, they would re-establish the law’s purpose and meaning and gain correct perspective in how to keep it. History shows they did not take the hint.

In this series we will examine each of these three “weightier matters” to help ensure we have the right perspective on the law and use it for its intended purposes.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

—Darryl Henson

A WOMAN'S WORLD

Conventional wisdom says that we live in a man's world. Men have all the advantages, all the power. Women, even when they, of necessity, claw their way into positions of prestige and authority, never receive quite the respect that a man would. Conventional wisdom—society's accepted "truth"—is being turned on its head.

Move over men! It is no longer a man's world. A new power has risen in America and other "leading" nations—women. The feminist movement has sailed the female sex past

mere equality into the uncharted realm of dominance and power. Batten down the hatches and prepare for rough seas, for this is a clear sign of the end!

Probably the clearest scripture on this subject appears in Isaiah 3:12: "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and *women rule over them*. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." This comes after God says, "Because their [His people's] tongue and their doings are against the LORD. . . . Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon **t h e m s e l v e s**" (verses 8-9).

Roles of the Sexes

This sounds condemnatory to women in positions of leadership, but this is only part of the story. Earlier in the chapter, God heaps most of the blame on the heads of men. Because men, whom God created and appointed to lead their families and the nation, abdicate their roles and positions in the home and society, women and "children" (the inexperienced and unqualified) take up the slack. In acting outside the bounds of their created makeup, God shows,

women and children tend to hasten a nation's fall.

Obviously, exceptions exist. Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of Britain, led her nation to regain much of its lost power and prestige in the 1980s. However, her accomplishments also prove the point. Britain's "Iron Lady" succeeded because **SHE GOVERNED LIKE A MAN!** Christopher Caldwell, in an article titled "The Feminization of America," published in the *Weekly Standard*, December 23, 1996, concurs: "[T]op leadership positions in any society typically go to the more aggressive, not to the smarter. . . . Women who do make it to the top tend to lead 'male' lives."

Thus, it is not a matter that women cannot lead, but that, generally, women *should not* lead. From the beginning, God placed men in the role of leader and provider (Genesis 3:16-19) and women as partners with their husbands and homemakers (2:18; 3:16). Paul's instructions in Titus 2:4-5 verify that these roles did not change under the New Covenant.

These scriptures show what God **INTENDS** us to do. Though some situations prohibit us from filling these roles (such as single-parent families), this arrangement produces the most harmonious relationships and the best results. When we fulfill the roles God gave us, we prepare ourselves better for His Kingdom and our positions there. In the present, by doing our part, we also help our mate and children fulfill their roles more fully.

None of this is possible without the help of God's Holy Spirit. These roles can only be truly fulfilled by a converted Christian. Paul writes in I Corinthians 2:11-12, 14:

Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.



Now we have received . . . the Spirit [which] is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. . . . But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

This is why, even among “traditional” families in the world, the tendency exists for men to dominate their wives or women to usurp their husband’s authority. Without the strength and abilities God extends to us through His Spirit, people view these roles as confining and impossible, so they seek for “equality,” “gender balance” or “gender-neutral” solutions.

Feminism

Some people trace the roots of feminism directly back to Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden because she took the lead in committing the first sin. God’s rebuked her for it in Genesis 3:16: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” However, God indicted Adam for allowing it: “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife [to commit sin] . . .” (verse 17).

Eve’s curse has resulted in the virtual subjugation of women ever since. Until the Enlightenment in the 18th century, women had few rights, if any. Fathers sold their daughters into slavery or wed them to the highest bidder. Wives existed to give the husband pleasure and sons and to keep the house. Many societies insisted that women be veiled in public, and some considered it a criminal act for a woman to walk out of her house without a chaperone. In short, a woman was chattel.

Not every society was this strict. Because of God’s law, Israel was one of the most enlightened in this area. Israelite women had certain rights of inheritance, and they could even own land and run businesses (Proverbs 31:16, 24), situations unheard of in other nations. Deborah, an ancient Margaret Thatcher, judged Israel and gave her people forty years of peace (Judges 4:4; 5:31). An Israelite



United States Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O'Connor have risen in stature to the highest judgement positions in the country, not an uncommon achievement for women in an Israelitish nation.

woman’s life has frequently been better than her Gentile counter-part’s because of Israel’s acquaintance with the Bible.

Ironically, modern feminism began in England, the Israelite nation of Ephraim. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a challenge to the prevailing attitude that women existed only to please men. It called for women to be granted the same freedoms as men in politics, education and work. However, the fledgling feminist movement soon focused on women’s suffrage rather than more universal rights and freedoms.

Having achieved this immediate goal in the early 20th century, the women’s movement surged with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s worldwide bestseller, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*), in 1949. Its premise is that liberating women is liberation for men too, and as a result, many liberal men joined the movement.

In 1963 American Betty Friedan’s book, *The Feminine Mystique*, attacked domesticity, the conditioning of women to accept dependence on men and passive roles. Already women were leaving their homes and entering the workplace in droves; in 1994 they comprised 46% of the U.S. labor force.

In 1966 Friedan and others founded the National Organization for Women

(NOW), and yet other women began forming into local groups to fight for the cause of women’s liberation. They marched, agitated and sued to overturn laws and practices that they felt subjugated, demeaned or restricted their sex. They concentrated on contract and property rights, labor issues, contraception and abortion.

Roe v. Wade, the landmark abortion case before the Supreme Court, gave feminism an impetus still visible today. Abortion distilled into a woman’s “choice”—without regard for the “rights” of the unborn—and thus the Court handled it as a First Amendment right rather than a crime, murder. This ruling promoted feminism to become the law of the land.

Such gains came in tandem with the sexual revolution, civil rights advances and economic circumstances that “dictated” two-income families. These factors fed off each other, helping to produce the social chaos we see today.

A New Wrinkle

Despite these feminist gains, the mood of the American people swung toward the right in the early 1990s. The public grew tired of and increasingly vocal against the militant, radical feminism sponsored by NOW and other left-wing women’s groups. The movement had to take a new tack.

In reviewing feminism’s emphases in the ‘70s and ‘80s, the leader-

ship recognized that stressing equality had caused polarization and distrust between the sexes. Their shrill demands, though met, had produced resentment. They needed a new angle to appear more mainstream.

In response, the women's movement of the '90s emphasizes the *differences* between men and women. Such recent books as Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* and Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* have led the way in "raising consciousness" about distinctively feminine strengths and virtues. They are reviving traditional roles for women, but with a twist. Christopher Caldwell writes, "The new feminized vision is often the traditional sexist stereotype, overlaid with a shrill man-hating ideology."

It seems to be working, if the 1996 presidential election is any indication. The Clinton-Gore ticket considered a woman's vote more valuable than a man's, and this is in a way true because 52% of voters are women. Using women's stereotypical behavior as a guide, the Democratic candidates supported women's issues and shied away from reasoned positions on various topics, opting for more emotional stances.

They also knew that women tend to follow two general rules in voting:

1) They make up their minds later in the election, and 2) their allegiance to political parties is weaker. Clinton-Gore kept their noses clean—especially in the last several weeks before the election—emoted about the needs of "soccer moms," and rode a landslide victory into the White House primarily on the back of the women's vote.

The private sector has jumped on the bandwagon too. Businesses are more concerned about convincing consumers to switch brands than they are about getting them to buy their products. Advertisers know that women are just as fickle in the marketplace as in the voting booth, while men display a "puppy-doggish loyalty" to brands. So what do they do? Switch the focus of the ads to appeal to women!

Psychologists have found that women respond better to emotional appeals than to hard, rational arguments. So, for instance, if a company sells toothpaste, it drops its ads that say, "Four out of five dentists surveyed . . ." and runs new ones that say, "How could anyone resist a smile so bright?" Even products typically associated with men, such as auto parts, are being pedaled to women under the guise of safety, reliability and looks, rather than their actual effectiveness.

What to Expect

No matter how they must appear in order to gain power, radical feminists will not be content until they feel women have "arrived"—until they are the dominant sex. At this juncture, a slogan of the Feminist Majority Foundation is "Half the World, Half the Power." The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in September 1995, lists "establishing gender balance in governmental bodies" as feminism's primary goal.

We must not overlook that some of feminism's victories have been worthwhile. Women should not be treated as inferior. Women may be physically weaker and in some cases unable to do certain jobs, but they can also be more intelligent and more capable than men in other areas. Spiritually, men and women have equal potential; Peter calls married couples "heirs together of the grace of life" (I Peter 3:7).

Men and women should have equal rights under the law, according to what God has revealed in His Word. Women should be able to buy and sell property, run businesses, make contracts, pursue education and hold jobs at equal pay as men can. However, all this must take second place to the vastly more important spiritual development that is enhanced by filling the divinely ordained roles of each sex.

Isaiah 3:16–4:1 and Amos 4:1–3 paint rather uncomplimentary pictures of women in our time. Both predict captivity and great humiliation to the women who oppress the poor and needy, satiate their desires and proudly vaunt their power. We need not be terribly observant to recognize that we have reached such a state in our society. It will not be long before God acts to correct it.

The genie is out of the bottle. Radical feminism will not go away until Christ returns to usher in true cooperation and proper balance between men and women. When He sets up His government, "the times of restoration of all things" will begin (Acts 3:21), and He will declare the eternal end of the battle of the sexes. Then it will not be a woman's world—or a man's world—but God's world!

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh



PARENTING OLDER CHILDREN

One of parents' greatest challenges in life is relating to our children in a proper way, especially as they approach adulthood. We deal with one set of challenges during their adolescent years, and in the progressing teenage years, we begin to face infinitely greater concerns.

We may begin to see warning signs indicating they do not see the value of God's church and are increasingly oriented toward the world. They may begin to be more reluctant to submit to our authority. Confrontations over the Sabbath, choices of friends, style of dress and hair, relationships with the opposite sex—seemingly at every turn, the potential for an increasing array of problems exists.

It is alarming to realize that these problems can lead our children out of the church and into the world. This should motivate us to examine our approach in raising our children and preparing them for the road ahead. Children never stop being their parents' children, and thus our responsibility to them never really ends—it just modifies as they get older. Even after they leave home, we can still guide them, provided the communication lines have been kept open.

Notice what Valerie Bell writes in her book, *Getting Out of Your Kids' Faces and Into Their Hearts*:

The quality of your parenting *now* is the grid through which the rest of your child's life will pass. It is the filter that colors and interprets their future life experiences. You are not only making memories, you ARE the

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

memories. In a deep, subconscious, inarticulate place a parent stays with his or her child—forever!

This is just a modern restatement of Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

The “Woe Is Me” Syndrome

Many times there are no easy solutions to problems with our children. Nevertheless, by asking God in prayer to provide us with the proper wisdom, patience, sacrifice, endurance and perseverance, we can effectively “train up a child in the way he should go” or properly guide older children in making wise decisions.

Some years ago, syndicated col-

umnist Ann Landers conducted a poll regarding parenting. The majority of parents of teenagers responded that if they had to raise their children again, *they would never have any*. What a shame they saw their children as a curse rather than a blessing! They allowed the difficulties to overshadow the joys and the children's great potential.

Before we can effectively meet the challenges of parenting older children, we need to re-evaluate our approach. Sound tough? You bet—it is not easy! The issues are emotionally powerful where the welfare of our family is concerned. However, we

cannot become so entangled in our emotions that we lose sight of our objectives. When problems arise, it is a great exercise in futility to be swept along by emotional outrage. Becoming angry and accusative often leads to mistrust, resentment and anger from our children.

Instead, we should deal with problems rationally from a spiritual perspective. God shows us that our children are an important part of the big picture. “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is His reward” (Psalm 127:3). Malachi 2:15 says, “He seeks godly offspring.” If we become weary and give up on our children, we have not only let our children down but God as well. Without faith in God that He will give us the wisdom to

A Ready Answer

“Be Ready Always To Give An Answer” – I Peter 3:15 (KJV)



deal with the seemingly complicated situations that arise involving our children, we cannot hope to arrive at meaningful solutions.

God is trying to teach us important spiritual lessons. Poet Mary Howitt (1799-1888) wrote:

God sends children for another purpose than merely to keep up the race—to enlarge our hearts; and to make us unselfish and full of kindly sympathies and affections; to give our souls higher aims; to call out all our faculties to extended enterprise and exertion; and to bring around our firesides bright faces, happy smiles and loving tender hearts.

In working out problems with our children, we can begin to understand the frustration God has experienced in struggling with stubborn, rebellious mankind. Jesus laments, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37).

Confronting our children’s problems should not mean that we are at war with them, but that we have an opportunity to train and nurture a potential member of the God Family. Our approach should match God’s approach of never giving up. Peter writes, “The Lord is . . . longsuffering

toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should be brought to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). We, too, must give our children time and space to change.

As our children advance toward adulthood, we have a responsibility to relate to our children and to teach them how to honor us *in an adult relationship*, so that

honor may be transferred to our heavenly Father. We are challenged to refine our beliefs and to live according to the spiritual principles that God has revealed to us in our parent-child relationship with Him.

We may believe we have less and less influence over our children. In terms of absolute control, that may be true. However, we can do much to continue their spiritual training. We do not have to resign ourselves to failure and throw in the towel. The Bible gives us specific instruction in how God responds to His people in every spiritual state to help them mature. “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). God is our supreme teacher!

Provoking Them to Wrath

Before we can help our older children, we have to be sure our attitude toward them is right. Are our children seeking independence from us because we are still treating them as little children when they are in transition to adulthood? Could we have placed the indifference to Christianity in our children? Are our children simply imitating us? Using the principle of Luke 6:42, we need to remove the plank in our eye first.

The apostle Paul warns us, “Do not provoke your children to wrath” (Ephesians 6:4). This command assumes that we may at times misrepresent God’s way of life through our

own spiritual weakness when we should approach our children positively and assertively. When they are young, it is easier to have the final say, but as they near adulthood, we must realize that they have to live their own lives.

God intends—for their own development—that our children begin making their own decisions as they mature. How else will He be able to lead them to conversion? In Israel men were considered fully adult by age twenty. In this light, we should pick our confrontations carefully, not completely alienating them, but gradually turning the decision-making over to our children until they can stand on their own.

We should reinforce the areas where they are aligned with God’s will and stand firm on areas that are spiritually wrong—but ultimately, they have to choose. God tells His children to choose in Deuteronomy 30:19, and what finer example could we have to follow? God never jams His religion down anyone’s throat, and neither should we. This does not mean that we should not require our school-age children to learn God’s way of life! If our children—of any age—live at home, they should abide by its rules and not bring the world’s sinful ways within its gates.

Continuing after God’s example, if His people go astray, He has a planned approach. God writes His position on disobedience in Scripture so we have no doubt where He stands. He is honest and forthright. If we do well, He blesses, but if we do wrong, we merit a penalty.

Likewise, we should have a plan. We should inform our children about this world and urge them not to pursue it. Help them understand the heavy toll it takes on its followers. Show them how it damages the family relationship. Remind them that God will hold them accountable for the truth they know. Though we cannot force them to live a prescribed way of life, we can help them understand the consequences. Then, after we have done this, we must follow through with all promises and threats.

Although we cannot make their decisions, we can emphatically communicate God’s—and our—position,

as well as the benefits and penalties. "You shall teach [God's ways] to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 11:19). If we do this, our children will have no doubt about what we believe and practice.

Increasing Spiritual Confrontation

Because we grow tired of the strife, do we let our children believe they are free of responsibility, free to follow their natures? God advises, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Especially as our children finish their schooling, we need to challenge them spiritually.

Again, God instructs us. The

cursings He sends on the unrepentant are often gradual, increasing in intensity (Deuteronomy 28). God does it gradually to give them time to think about the consequences of sin and what long-term spiritual blessings they are throwing away.

Thus, instead of nagging our children, we should wage a precise campaign to help them understand God's way of life. First, we need to have faith that God will call them in His time. Meanwhile, we should not make excuses for them, for this is as destructive as provoking them to wrath. We should stand firm, not wavering, so they will know where we stand. When they walk contrary to God, they should feel the immensity of our displeasure, as well as our pleasure when they do well.

For instance, if a grown child works yet does not tithe, he should not at-

tend the Feast on our tithes. As important as the Feast is, it is more important for children to be inwardly committed to God's instruction on how we should worship Him. We should hold our offspring to a minimum standard, yet mercifully give them time to make the right decisions.

God bore Israel's recalcitrance for centuries, and even for the church He grants a period of repentance. Of the Thyatira church, Christ says, "And I gave her time to repent . . . , and she did not repent" (Revelation 2:21). Imitating Christ and our Father in heaven, we should foster an attitude of positive change in an atmosphere of understanding and mercy without compromising godly standards one bit.

Though we love our children un-

Please see page 19

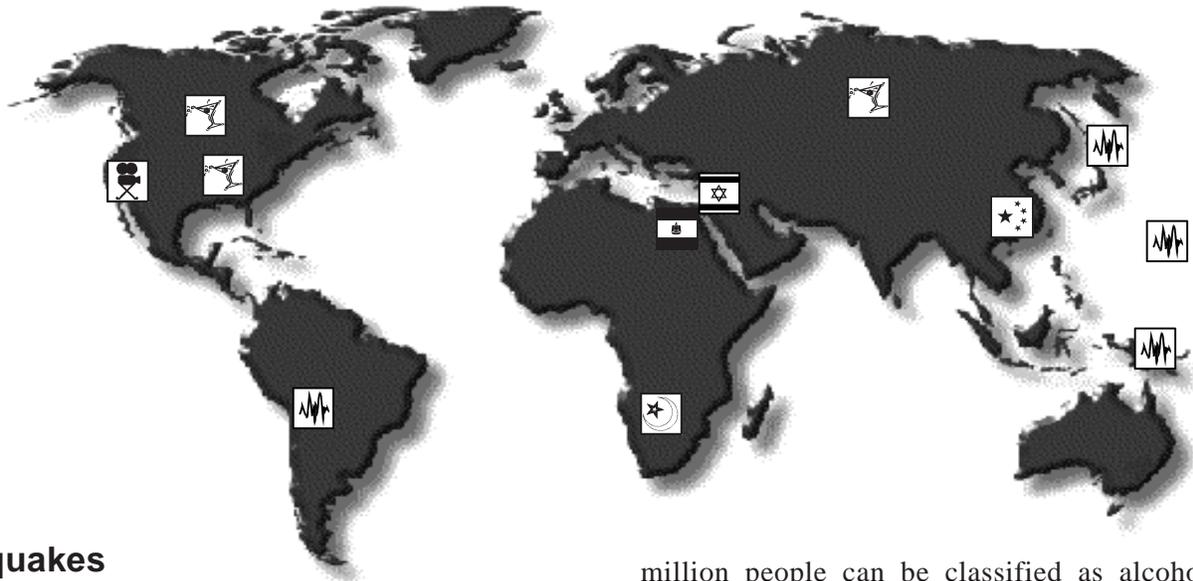
12 EASY STEPS TO RAISING A BRATTY KID

This essay was originally prepared by the police department of Houston, Texas, and appeared in my [Ann Landers'] column back in 1959. It received a great deal of positive comment then, and I am pleased to run it again. Here it is:

RULES FOR RAISING DELINQUENT CHILDREN

1. Begin in infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way, he will grow to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up "cuter" phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait till he is 21, and then let him "decide for himself."
4. Avoid use of the word "wrong." It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe, later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves lying around—books, shoes and clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.
6. Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your child. In this way, he will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.
8. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?
9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
11. When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."
12. Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it.

World Watch



Earthquakes



◆ So far in the '90s only four earthquakes of 8.0 or greater on the Richter scale have occurred. These struck New Guinea, February 1996; Kuril Islands, Japan, October 1994; Bolivia, June 1994; and South Mariana Island, August 1993.

◆ An Israeli expert predicts that a +6.0 quake could strike the Jordan Valley in the near future and damage Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa.

◆ Final large earthquake totals for 1996:
+6.0: 135 (down 39 from 1995) +7.0: 17 (down 2)

Pornography



The American porn industry has exploded in volume in the last decade. Rentals of hard-core videos rose from 75 million in 1985 to 665 million in 1996. Americans spent over \$8 billion on pornography last year. About 75% of porn videos are produced in Los Angeles County, California.

Islamic Fundamentalism



◆ Some South African Muslims are receiving military training in Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan and Libya. South African police fear "the threat of Islamic extremist fundamentalism is now on South Africa's threshold."

◆ Chinese security officials have issued a warning to southern and coastal provinces to expect terrorist acts perpetrated by Muslim separatists from the far-western province of Xinjiang. They warn that all busy central districts and government buildings are at risk.

Alcohol



The World Health Organization (WHO) regards alcohol abuse as "one of the most serious public health problems in the world." Canada reports that 90% of violent crimes there are committed under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In the U.S. 14

million people can be classified as alcohol abusers, costing the nation \$100 billion annually. Eighty percent of Lithuanians are alcoholics, while Russians drink more alcohol per capita than any other people. In addition, WHO considers alcohol the number one cause of the spread of AIDS.

Egypt



Middle Eastern sources believe Yassir Arafat is clearing with Egypt all acts of violence by the Palestinians in the West Bank. The key to the timing of any future war between Israel and the Arabs, they say, lies in Cairo. An old saying in the Middle East runs, "The Arabs cannot make war without Egypt."

Israel



A team of rabbinical experts has confirmed that a red heifer, born last September on a religious kibbutz in Israel, meets the biblical criteria for use in the ancient ritual for purifying sacred things that have become defiled. Religious Jews believe that this first flawless red heifer since the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70 is a sign from God that work can begin on building a Third Temple in Jerusalem.

China



The rumors of increased abortions and infanticides of female fetuses in China are true. The ratio between male and female live births is increasing. In 1984 the ratio was 108 males to every 100 females. Today, it is 131:100. This means that every year 750,000 more males are born than females. By 2000, China could have 90 million unattached men—and little idea what to do with them. Observers fear that this "Chinese problem" may not remain an internal one. Could this portend the 200 million-man army of Scripture?

—Andy Benedetto

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

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and their word no heed, are headed for failure that may include death. They are putting themselves “behind the eight-ball” by developing habits of disregard of those who are more experienced and wiser.

Proverbs 30:17 describes an even more sobering end for those who fail to keep this commandment: “The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.” What a gruesome end for those guilty of this! In this figure of speech, an outward manifestation (a mocking eye) represents the unseen cause in the heart (scorn, disrespect). Over the short term, the inner cause produces stress-filled family disturbances. Over the long term, though, it produces even more distressing and serious consequences—even death.

At the beginning of Proverbs, Solomon, after stating his specific purpose for writing and laying a brief foundation, tells to whom he is writing: “my son” (1:8). We understand the book is primarily addressed to all of God’s household and secondarily to the children of His regenerated sons and daughters. One of his first pieces of advice is, “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck” (verses 8-9).

Life begins at home and wisdom should begin there too. The home is the primary and most vital factor in a child’s development into a mature and stable member of society. Church and school play secondary roles, if only because of the amount of time spent at home and all the personal interaction that takes place there.

In keeping this commandment, the Bible divides responsibility between parents and child, even though the child eventually bears the greater responsibility. It is his responsibility to learn from his parents, not just because they are his human lifegivers, but because the parents have been what the child has not—both young and old.

Therefore, parents should have accrued wisdom from situations the child has not yet experienced. It is the parents’ responsibility to create an environment in which they can pass wisdom on so that the child can learn the lessons of life more easily. And so society benefits from the resulting stability of that family unit.

If the child learns these lessons, the wisdom will be an enriching ornament, a sign of honor and a guide to long life and prosperity. These are the fulfillment of the fifth commandment’s promise. The process begun in the home then prepares the way into the Kingdom of God.

In Christian love,



PARENTING OLDER CHILDREN

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conditionally, we should give them material blessings conditionally. God repeatedly showed Israel that if they obeyed, the physical blessings would follow. We should take the same position with our children. Never give them everything they want! Such permissive parenting creates incredible self-centeredness! (See inset, p. 13.)

Be Prepared To Let Them Go

As much as young adults think of themselves as independent, in reality they are not. Even in old age they are still part of a physical family, and when converted and baptized into God’s Family, they become part of a spiritual family. Nevertheless, older children often assert their independence.

One of parents’ greatest trials is when a child decides to go his own way. However, trying to keep him “in the church” may not be the best thing for him. It may be that God perceives a need for the child to see the world’s decadence firsthand so that he can be included in God’s plan. If his heart is committed to the world, he needs to be there to experience its futility. As parents, we must remember that God has his best interests at heart (Romans 8:28).

After encouraging a child to live righteously, if he will not, let it be his decision to leave and go out in the world. The prodigal son left of his own accord (Luke 15:11-32). Continually threatening to throw him out of the house is a potentially damaging approach, as is constantly reminding him that he lives at home only by our grace. Burning bridges behind us makes for difficult reconciliations later. However, if a child is disrupting the peace that God expects in a Christian home, and will not leave on his own, parents may be forced to ask him to leave.

Although it may be the most traumatic experience in a parent’s life to see a child leave God’s way of life, we must remember that it is not over. All our childrearing was not in vain. It is 100% guaranteed that the world will fail them. Eventually, the child will come to see the advantage of God’s way of life, and it will no longer be just “mom and dad’s religion.” When this awareness dawns, a renewed relationship of love and respect can begin.

In the meantime, we fervently hope and pray that our children turn to God. He may soon give us the chance to finish the job He has given us in leading our children to Him. However long it takes, no matter how many setbacks arise, have faith and handle the problems as they come in a spiritually responsible manner. Remember God’s promise, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” If we rear our children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4), their values and character will one day become set in holiness.

—Al Legg

BIBLE STUDY: THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

The first four commandments define man's relationship with God, teaching us the magnitude of His power and name so that we can properly worship and obey Him. The fifth commandment is the first of those that regulate man's relationship with other human beings. "Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD

your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) links the first four commandments with the last six. Truly honoring one's parents is perpetually coupled with obeying and revering God (Leviticus 19:2-4), for it is by learning to honor our parents that we first come to understand how to approach God.



1. Does God pronounce a curse on those who break the fifth commandment? Deuteronomy 27:16. Did Ham dishonor his father Noah? Genesis 9:20-22. How did his brothers honor their father? Verse 23. What curse fell on Canaan as a result of this sin? Verses 24-27.

COMMENT: This commandment was in effect long before Moses received the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. Both Ham and Canaan broke this commandment by dishonoring Noah, and God pronounced a curse, specifically on Canaan, who probably played the largest part in this sin.

2. How serious is striking or cursing one's parent? Exodus 21:15, 17. What did Solomon record about respecting parents? Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-5; 6:20-23.

COMMENT: How important this commandment is to God! The relationship of children to their parents is a type of the spiritual relationship between true Christians and God. Without a loving attitude toward parents, it is impossible to love God truly.

3. Does God emphasize that obeying the fifth commandment will prolong our lives? Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:33; 6:2; 11:8-9. Did the apostle Paul also state this? Ephesians 6:1-3.

COMMENT: Obeying this commandment automatically builds habits and character that promote long life (Proverbs 4:10-11). A child trained in biblical principles and God's way of life will avoid recklessness, violence, immorality and rebellion against authority that often result in premature death.

4. How do children dishonor their parents? What is the result? Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Exodus 21:15; Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 19:26; 20:20; 28:24; 30:17. How did the scribes and Pharisees pervert obedience to this commandment? Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:6-13.

COMMENT: We can dishonor our parents through stubbornness, mocking, scorning, angrily talking back to them, thievery and violence. These will eventually be punished by death, shame, disgrace, darkness of un-

derstanding (ignorance) and destruction. Through greedy human reasoning, the Pharisees encouraged financial neglect of parents to increase the riches of the treasury, a hypocrisy Jesus condemned.

5. Is there a limit to the love and honor we should show our parents? Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26; Hebrews 12:9.

COMMENT: *Hate* in Luke 14 means "love less by comparison." If our love for our parents interferes with worshiping and obeying God properly, we do not genuinely love Him. Matthew 10 shows that Christ refers to those who place their father or mother above God in obedience and reverence; this is idolatry. The time may come when it is no longer necessary or right for us to obey our parents. Even so, we should never cease to honor them. Honor indicates a high respect for their worth, high esteem and reverence. Without this, we cannot properly revere God. Just as our parents corrected us, so also God corrects us. As a result we honor and respect our parents which is a shadow of our subjection to the Father.

6. How are widows to be treated by their children? I Timothy 5:4, 8. What was Christ's last concern? John 19:26-28. Did Jesus personally express his reverence and obedience toward the Father? John 14:31; 15:10; 10:17-18.

COMMENT: A person who has properly obeyed his parents in childhood later expresses his honor for them in a deeper appreciation of the comforts and training they provided him as a child. This honor expresses itself in courtesy, thoughtfulness and kind deeds. Any parent, especially a widowed parent, should be repaid by his children for the care given them as they grew up. Even in His dying moments, while suffering an agonizing death, Jesus honored and loved His mother by making provision for John to care for her after His death. God our Father is well pleased with us when we obey this vital commandment (Colossians 3:20).