

To Whom Honor Is Due

The Fifth Commandment

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A letter appeared in the form of an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper, entitled "A Message to Parents: Let Children Live Their Own Lives!" It really paints an interesting picture, having to do with the subject for today. The letter is from an angry, disrespectful 16-year-old named Craig Eritou. Above the letter is a picture of him with an obvious set of angry eyes—just a look of defiance. It is so sad to see it, because he is only 16 years old; but the intensity of his look is unnerving.

Let me read this short letter to you. He is sending a response to the Ottawa newspaper in response to a letter that he read in there.

In response to the letter ("Please, no smut after school," April 13), I offer this humble letter of remorse. That letter was all about how offended a parent was that a *Tomcats* movie commercial featuring suggestive images was aired during a supertime episode of *The Simpsons* that her nine-year-old son was watching.

Welcome to the real world. It's a world with the WWF, rock music, swearing, fighting, violence, drugs, war, irresponsibility, sex, binge drinking, and disasters. [I might add, at this point, that he sure has a sad world that he is living in if that is his description of his world.] Only a soft yuppie boomer would object to a movie commercial. Your kids are growing up soft.

What is evil and needs to be banned is mind control—the kind brought on by churches, the CBC, teachers, and over-protective parents. No wonder kids smoke at 10 years old. They need it to relieve stress and anxiety.

Kids today can't live a stress-free and responsibility-free life [So, he is looking at it as if a kid should not have any responsibility.]

because their soft yuppie parents book them for yoga, therapy, soccer, art appreciation and coffeehouse training classes—all after school. Those parents' kids probably have to wear a helmet during all this too.

Why not sign him up in a private school, while you're at it? Give him a little uniform—a nice jacket with a crest and everything. The idea that if kids wear uniforms to school it'll help keep order and improve learning is ridiculous. Don't schools do enough damage making all these kids think alike? Now they have to make them look alike, too?

It's time to let our children live their own lives. If you keep over-parenting, the real world will eat your child alive like a loose chicken at an Alice Cooper concert.

So, what kind of an attitude does this young man have, at the age of sixteen? The boy who wrote this has a hatred toward parents, and it is very obvious—not just to his own parents, but to all parents; and, no doubt, to authority in general. Since the divorce rate is close to 50%, this young man (although I do not know about his family life) has at least a 50% chance that he does not have a father living at home with him. The discouraging thing is that he is only one of millions and millions of such children. How sad that is.

Today, human beings have lost all sense of honor. People have lost their ability to honor friendships. They have lost their ability to honor relationships. They have lost their ability to honor fathers, and mothers, and grandfathers, and grandmothers. They have lost their ability to honor the leadership in God's church—or any church, for that matter (speaking of those in the world).

There are some in the world that understand the principle of honoring parents, but they are few and far between. However, I came across one of these recently. A few weeks ago, I was listening to a lecture given by Douglas Phillips to a home-school association in North Carolina. He did a fine job of promoting respect between parents and children. And his purpose was to show the importance of honoring parents in home-schooling—that it is absolutely necessary to have a successful home-school. He understood that

to properly honor God the Father we must honor our physical parents, and teach our children to do the same. I appreciate his approach and thank him for the additional ideas that I got out of the lecture that he gave to the home-schoolers. He spurred some ideas, and I will probably be bringing some of those to you as well—with examples, and that type of thing.

Honor is critically necessary when it comes to dealing with our physical fathers. Let me go a step farther. Honor is utterly critical when it deals with our spiritual fathers—that is, God the Father and Jesus Christ, and His ministers. Those individuals have invested countless hours into our lives, to try to make us better people—with better character. Notice what Paul says to the five-year-old girls and boys, to the ten-year-old girls and boys, to the twenty-year-old girls and boys, and even to the fifty-year-old girls and boys.

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.

Exodus 20 says something similar. God commands:

Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 5 adds to that.

Deuteronomy 5:16 Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you; that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

It is a very rare thing today to find a boy, or a man, or a girl, or a woman who understands what **honor** truly is. So, let us take a moment to define the term *honor*. It is used several different ways in the Bible, and appears nearly 150 times in our English Bibles. So, obviously, the idea of honor is a very

important idea in the Word of God. To honor means to respect, esteem, have high regard for, and to reward. The term "honor" can be used to express respect paid to superiors.

For example, Scripture uses the term in reference to the following individuals:

1. It uses it in reference to *God*.

I Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

2. The term "honor" is also used in reference to *Christ*.

John 5:23 That all men should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

3. It is used in reference to *church officers*.

I Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

4. It is also used in reference to *the king*.

I Peter 2:17 Honor the king.

5. It is also used in reference to *the elderly and widows*. Regarding widows, it says:

I Timothy 5:3 Honor widows who are really widows.

6. Then, finally, the area of our subject matter today—"honor" is used in reference to *parents*. Several times we have already read in Scripture where we are told to honor our fathers and mothers.

Honor can also be something *bestowed as a reward* for virtuous behavior. It can be a reward for honoring God, or serving Christ. It can also be a reward for manifesting wisdom, discipline, humility, peaceableness, righteousness, and mercy. Biblical images of honor also include examples of persons whose achievements bring honor to them. Joseph, Joshua, Solomon, Daniel, and the apostles all earned honor.

To honor someone is to acknowledge and show respect for the authority, or worthiness, of a person. To show honor entails an *inward emotion*. That is, a feeling of respect, or reverence. It also entails *outward manifestations*—such as gestures (in the way of bowing before someone, or being attentive to them) or actions (in the way of conferring titles or privileges). So there are many ways that "honoring" is used in the Bible. All these ways of showing honor elevate the person that is honored.

In addition to the primary meaning, honor is used in the Bible to name something possessed by certain people as an innate inner quality. All humans are endowed with *an innate honor* by virtue of their creation in the image of God. While this is inferred from the creation story, it is stated overtly in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8:4-5 What is man that You are mindful of him? And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor.

In Hebrews 2:7, Paul quotes this passage with approval, and adds this: "and set him over the works of Your hands." Thus, it is God who bestows true honor. Biblically, honor is viewed from both external and internal perspectives. That is, *outwardly* honor encompasses rank, wealth, or public respect; and *inwardly* it means nobility and integrity of mind and character.

In the Old Testament, these meanings occasionally merge. Quite often when God blesses Israel, He causes external and internal honor to go hand in hand. When the nations or individuals disappoint God with a dishonorable act, God often deprives them of their rank, wealth, and public respect. This is something that is inherent. It is a curse that comes with dishonor.

The New Testament authors draw a sharp distinction between the two forms of honor—declaring that, because the world is corrupt, those whom the world honors are usually corrupt themselves. Therefore, the New Testament emphasizes that the proper honor to seek is *honor of character*—which will reap public dishonor on earth, but public acclaim from heaven. So there is a direct contrast to the world's form of honor and God's true form of honor.

For the purposes of this sermon, let us define the specific type of honor we want to look at today. This is the definition we are going to work with for most of this sermon. *Honor is a deep, deep abiding inner attitude of reverence and respect.* It is not simply an outward action. Yes, honor is an outward action; and without that outward action, there is no honor. But it goes even deeper than that. You can do things with your face, and you can do things with your hands, and you can say the right words and still *not* know how to honor another individual. That is, not know how to honor your father, not know how to honor your mother, and not know how to honor the brethren. Thus, you do all of that—which looks like "honor" (on the face, etc.)—and yet not really honor those individuals.

Romans 13:7 [Give] honor to whom honor [is due].

"Honor is due" based on relationships and based on authority. Our lives will not be well with us until we come to grips with true honor. And no greater "honor is due" to any human being than to our physical parents. We will not live long in the land; we will not prosper; we will not be at peace until we truly honor our parents—and others. That is, honor all of the other relationships that are an extension of this same principle.

Honor is at the foundation of our way of life, if we are truly Christians. The issue of honor is significant and central to everything in the Bible. It is the reason God says—of "honor your father and mother"—"This is the first commandment with promise." God did give promises earlier. For example, in Genesis 3:15, He says that the Messiah would come. But this is the first command that God gave where He said, "Listen very, very carefully. If you do this one thing, this will unlock the key to your spiritual success; and you will have physical success as well."

We find out, in Deuteronomy 28 and elsewhere in Scripture, that if we do not do this thing, God will bring judgment on us. He will sell our daughters into slavery. He will render us weak and sickly. He will utterly destroy us and obliterate us. And, as if that were not enough, He will cut off our future generations. That is how important God sees honoring parents! God gives us this contrast—on the one hand, that we will have *blessings* if we obey; and, on the other hand, *curses* if we do not.

There are very practical benefits to honoring our fathers and mothers. And there are questions like these:

1. How do I deal with an abusive authority in my life? Everyone has "abusive authorities" in their life at one time or another. Sometimes even good men act abusively for a time.
2. How do I deal with it, when my dad is wrong and I know he is wrong?
3. Does that mean I give a different response than when he is right?
4. How do I deal with my father when I am a grown man, and I have a family?
5. What happens when my unconverted parent asks me to do something contrary to the Word of God?
6. Can I disagree and honor my mother at the same time?

These are very practical questions, and they are questions that God answers in His Word. There is not a person in God's church that has not had to deal with these questions at some level. But every single one of these questions has been anticipated in God's written Word and directly addressed.

God has given us—through precepts, patterns, and principles—the answers to these questions. *Precepts* are those commands of God intended as a general rule of action. *Patterns* are the examples that are defined in Scripture and given for our own benefit. And *principles* are the wise and proper

application of God's unchanging truths to constantly changing facts. Precepts, patterns, and principles—we have all three of these in Scripture that will bring us to honor, and help us to walk through these different and difficult circumstances.

We might be very surprised by the answers God gives to these questions. We want to begin to unlock some of these questions by asking children, and parents, and grandparents questions like these: *How do you deal with people in authority over you?* Do you have a hard time with these questions that have to do with authority and honor? If you do, you are probably struggling with honor; and probably it is your fault that you are struggling with these problems.

Those people may be very much at fault, but the actual responsibility for the problem lies on us and how we honor people in authority, and how we honor our fathers, and how we honor our mothers. The most abusive authority in the world will not make it "unwell" with you. You make it "unwell" with yourself when you do not understand the principle of honor.

Do you have security in knowing God (the great God of this universe) is a loving Father? If not, it may be that you have not learned properly to honor those individuals that are due honor. *Are you confident that your parents love you? Do you trust your spouse? Do your children respect you?* All these questions deal with the first commandment God gave with a promise.

Deuteronomy 5:16 Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you; that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

God forbid we should every raise our voice against our father, or our mother! As we look at the Word of God, we see that God is so serious about this issue that if you mock your parents, if you put them down, if you criticize them, if you even get angry with them, He says, "You will die." It is one of the most serious things you can do. And I think it has been very much underestimated.

We read that scripture, "Honor your father and your mother;" and we have all (including myself) pretty much glazed over it—not really realizing the impact it has on our lives. You might steal—and that is bad enough and that requires restitution. But, according to Scripture, it is worse to curse your parents. If you curse your parents, God says He will blot you off the face of the earth. That is how serious it is!

Let us look at an admonition to fathers and sons to respect authority. God has specifically ordained that a father would be the instrument by which a young boy learns who God the Father is. The discipline of a father is a mark of ownership. If your father disciplines you—if he spanks you, if he corrects you—that is a sign that you are a true son. But if your father lets you do what you want and you do not receive correction from your father, the *King James Version* of the Bible says you are a "bastard." This is a very strong word! It means "an illegitimate child." But the mark of legitimacy is corrective wounds.

In Hebrews 12, God shows us that honor, fatherhood, discipline, and submission are utterly critical—not only to your success and longevity, but also to your ability to know who God the Father is.

Hebrews 12:5-11 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him. For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all have become partakers, then are you illegitimate, and not sons. Furthermore we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we gave them respect. [That is, we gave them honor.] Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they [our fathers on earth] chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyous for the present, but painful; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

How can we go to God if we do not understand honor? How can we go to our heavenly Father and say, "I want to serve You," when we refuse to honor our earthly father whom God has given us as a picture, or type, of the holy Father above?

The principle of honor applies to parents, and it applies to children. Here are some of the promises that are associated with this.

Acts 2:39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.

God will call your children at His good pleasure. He has given us the promise of His faithfulness. Proverbs says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." "Train a child to understand *the principle of honor*, and when he grows up, he will be an honorable man," is another way of saying that.

Psalm 103:17-18 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him [or those that honor Him, or those that reverence Him], and His righteousness to children's children; to those who keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

This includes the fifth commandment—"Honor your father and your mother." But what is that covenant? Honor God the Father by passing on the promises that your righteous father gives you. Implicit to the idea of the covenant is the idea of honor. We cannot understand *covenant faithfulness* without understanding honor. It is inherent to it.

The father passes on the word to the son. The son embraces the word, and out of honor for the legacy of the fathers, passes it on to his son, who passes it on to his son, and passes it on to his son, and so on. Such as keep His covenant and teaches his son to do so, is the first commandment with promise. This is the fifth commandment—"Honor your father and your mother."

Genesis 18:18-19 Since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice; that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

Abraham was the father of the faithful. God saw in him this quality—that he was the teacher of his children. He taught his children to honor him. What did his children do? They honored their father. And Isaac and Jacob became honorable men. Basically, God said, "I know Abraham. I'm going to bless this man forever, because he's going to teach My way to his children. They're going to obey him; and, in doing so, they're going to honor him. And, because of this, it will be well with them. They will be mighty in the land. They will always be a present factor in the work of God on this earth."

Let us take a look at the pinnacle of the father-son relationship. You sons and daughters still under your father's roof, take this to heart. Please understand and appreciate the true value of your parents, and take what it says here in John 5 to heart.

John 5:19-20 Then answered Jesus and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, 'The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do. For whatever He does, the Son does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does.'"

This is the standard to strive for. This is the perfect father-son relationship that we are looking at here.

John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Amazingly, this is the opposite of the independent spirit that older boys reflect today in this society. Statements like, "I'm my own boss," "No one is going to tell me what to do," and "I'm my own man," and so on, are common in this society. None of them understand true honor and how important that is to their future and to their success.

Deep down, we all want a close relationship with our fathers. We see Christ's relationship with His Father, and we want the same relationship—every last one of us. But our human nature gets in the way. Every father who has ever set foot on earth was imperfect. This law of honor is given for imperfect situations—not perfect ones. In fact, all of God's laws are given for imperfect situations—so that we will know how to respond when they come up. These restraints are given partly to teach us how to act when our father or mother makes mistakes. When things are problematic at home, when your authority figure is blind about something—that is when these laws are most important, because they explain to us how to react in those situations.

The standard being set before you today is not merely being polite to your father, or mother. We should always be polite to them. It is a matter of deeply respecting them. Of course, we are to do that! There is no doubt about it. It is a matter of having a deep inner reverence that places us under their authority, so that we are "one" with them. We want to be with them. We want to honor them. We want to help them. This is the attitude that comes from a deep honor of our parents.

You sons and daughters out there, you could forget everything that you learned in school; but if you honor your father and mother, you will still be a true success. That is how much more important it is to honor your father and mother than to learn the secular knowledge of this world. Properly honoring your father and mother is a way of life, based on God's truth. It is part of God's way of life. But there is a flip side of this that you need to know. We must never forget that God promises He will destroy us if we do not follow His commands.

Matthew 15:4-11 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and mother.' And 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you [Pharisees] say, 'Whoever says to his father or

mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"—then he need not honor his father or mother." Thus have you made the commandment of God [to honor your father and mother] of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines [that is, as true doctrines] the commandments [the traditions] of men." When He called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand. Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

He was speaking of the attitudes that come out of a person towards another individual. So, a son or a daughter can dishonor their parents—with the wrong looks, with the wrong tone of voice, with the wrong words.

Exodus 21:17 And he who curses his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Today, we are not "put to death" for disrespecting our parents. But if we were in ancient Israel, under Moses, we would be. So, do not allow yourself to reason, since we do not receive the death penalty today for dishonoring our parents, that it is not as serious an offense. The point is this—We will be judged! That is an eternal law. Do not kid yourself. You will not escape. We may not receive the death penalty right away, but what happens in the meantime? God places a curse on anyone who dishonors his parents—as He does for committing other abominations.

Deuteronomy 27:14-16 And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel, "Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in a secret." And all the people shall answer and say, "Amen." "Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt." And all the people shall say, "Amen."

This means to make fun of. It means to make light of them. We are never, ever at liberty to *make light of* our parents. Neither should we argue with

them. Verses 17-26, here in Deuteronomy, go on to list other abominations that receive a curse as well. The person who dishonors his parents is listed here with some very, very despicable things. If you have this attitude of making light of your parents, it is a sign of final judgment.

Romans 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve those who practice them.

Look at this list of evil actions. "Disobedient to parents" is right in there with them. There is not any distinction made between them—as far as one being any worse than the other. It is right in there with all the rest of the abominations, from God's viewpoint. And Paul tells us that this sin is a very common problem in the end time—and that we should avoid people who flagrantly disobey, or dishonor, their parents.

II Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such people turn away!

This is why I am speaking on this topic today—because this is a major problem in the end time; and we are in the end time. Of all of the things that God condemns in Scripture, dishonoring our parents is one of the most serious. It is not that He condemns it once. He condemns it over, and over, and over again. God only needs to say it once for it to be true. So what do you think it means when He says it dozens of times—that we are to honor

our parents and respect them? Principle after principle, it is stated in the Bible.

Proverbs 30:11-13 There is a generation that curses its father and does not bless its mother. [This is speaking of our generation today.] There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. [This is a description of these Laodicean attitudes today.] There is a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up.

This is a description of our generation today—especially our youth. What are some of the comments that you hear from our youth today? Maybe they do not say these in the exact words, but the attitude is written all over their face. "Look at me, I'm sixteen years old and a repository of wisdom. I know more than my father, even though he's lived more than twice as long as me." Or, here is another one, "I am wisdom incarnate at age twelve, even though my parents have lived four times as long as I have." And when you put that into perspective, it looks absolutely ridiculous that anybody would have that kind of attitude—of disrespect towards parents.

Proverbs 30:14 There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

You can just see this in the attitude of some teenagers today. Their teeth are as swords—with them gritting or clamping them together in anger.

Proverbs 30:15-17 The leech has two daughters—Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, four never say, "Enough!" The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water—and the fire never says, "Enough!" 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.

I mentioned that scripture in my “Fatherhood” sermon. By the way, as I was working on that sermon, this subject of honor obviously came up; and I began to develop this sermon at the same time as I was developing the “Fatherhood” sermon. This is not a "Part Two," but it certainly is a sequel.

We have all seen children *mock* their fathers with their eyes. You know the look. It is a look of rebelliousness and defiance. When you do this, you children out there (and all of us are children, of all ages), you have just incurred *the death penalty*—unless you repent. This is very serious for all of us, and we need to be very careful what our attitudes are. As I was going through and researching this sermon, I felt so inadequate—because I, myself, have disrespected parents before; and I feel very bad for that. I hope, in God's eyes, I am repenting and have repented already.

Of "the raven," mentioned in Proverbs 30:17, the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia describes it thusly:

A bird exhibiting as much intelligence as any, and of a saucy, impudent disposition, it has been an object of interest from the beginning. It has been able to speak sentences of a few words when carefully taught, and by its uncanny acts has made itself a bird surrounded by superstition, myth, fable, and is connected with the religious rites of many nations. It is partially a carrion feeder [or, meat eater], if offal or bodies are fresh; it also eats the young of other birds and very small animals and seeds, berries and fruit, having as varied a diet as any bird. It is noisy, with a loud, rough, emphatic cry; and its young are clamorous at feeding time.

So, we see a bird that is very aggressive, and very changeable—very adaptable. And it can show up in any form to try to get us to disrespect our parents, or to pull us away from God's church. The raven is a type of the carnal human being that, having left God, finds no rest; or the rebellious spirit that rejected God's supremacy, as Satan did. Satan and his demons seek to peck at the weaknesses of mankind, as a raven seeks to peck at the eyes of its victim. These *spiritual ravens* are blinding our children to the way of true happiness. They can even appear in the form of peer groups at school or at work. In the Worldwide Church of God, when it was so large, there were

even peer groups for our children that were acting as "ravens"—pulling the children down.

Fathers, how do we cultivate honor in the hearts and minds of our children?

Malachi 4:5-6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD; and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

Luke 1:16-17 adds, or substitutes, something that helps to clarify this verse even farther—or gives it a different slant, so to speak. For "the hearts of the children to the father," Luke substitutes "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." This implies that the reconciliation to be effected was that between the unbelieving disobedient children (that is, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and the believing ancestors. Some of those ancestors would be Jacob, Moses, Elijah, and others. This is why it is so important for us fathers to teach what the patriarchs taught their children—namely, God's truth. It is so important that we teach our children the truth.

The key to *honor* is *in the heart*. So, the hearts of our children have to be filled with God's way of life. And the only way that will happen is if we fathers teach it to them. Then, as they get older, they learn from others—including the ministers. We have to work hard for the heart of our children. You can get a soldier to salute by command, but that does not necessarily mean there is any respect in that salute. But what does it take to get him to really honor his superiors? We can "show" respect for someone and not "have" any respect for him. But what we are looking at here is that you have to have respect, because that would be the inner reverence that is needed. To "show" respect on the surface still allows for *disrespect in the heart*.

We must speak to our sons and daughters as to worthy children. They need to know that they are important to us. They need to know that they have value in our lives. The same is true for our relationship with our parents. And all of this takes communication. To honor our parents, we have to let them know that they are important to us.

And our children need to know that they are expected to address us with honor. You have heard many times where the child has to say, "Yes, sir." That is, when a child is trained to say, "Oh, yes sir." And that is good. That shows honor. But not all fathers want their children to address them as "sir." "Sir" is definitely a sign of respect; but children are not required biblically to say, "Yes, sir." However, it certainly is *the language of honor*. But you can communicate honor without using the word "sir." Or, you can communicate dishonor while using the word "sir"—if it is said in a rebellious tone. The issue is a matter of the heart and attitude. That is what has to be changed. That is where the honor has to be developed. That is where the reverence has to come from.

Proverbs 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

How sweet it is when our children show us respect, genuinely. And we can tell when it is genuine. One of the most important rules in a family, next to respect of the father, is respect of the mother. I do not want to leave that out at all. "Honor your father **and** your mother." Both are important. But in order for the mother to have respect and to be honored by her children, her husband must show respect to her.

I have seen families in which the father talked to his wife in a horrible way—even going as far as saying she is stupid in front of the children. Or, to losing his temper in utter frustration at his wife, in front of the children—telling her to get out of the car, while he is driving along and the children are sitting there. What effect does that have on the children? Guess what? The children speak to the mother in exactly the same tone, because it is the father who has to set the example for honoring the mother first—and vice versa.

The mother has to set the example of honoring the father. How many times have you mothers and wives complained to your husband about something that he was right about? Or, how many times have you husbands and fathers (including myself) gotten irritated with your wife? Usually, it is "small things" and usually it is when we are under duress, or tired, or down; but that is no excuse. We set examples—not only for our own children, but for everyone else's children as well—in how we deal with each other.

Proverbs 15:23 A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season [at the right time, in the right attitude], how good it is!

Fathers, you set the tone for respect and honor in your house. The same principle holds true for the way the mother *respects* or *disrespects* the father.

We do not own our children. We have no right to *not* take the best care of them. And part of that is in the way that we teach them. We should not provoke our children to wrath. Our children are created in the image of God. They have been entrusted to us for a season of time. We have authority and jurisdiction over their lives, but we do not own them. And they are to be respected as image bearers of the Almighty God. That means that we care about them. That means that we communicate to them with the language of honor. And you require that they communicate with you with the language of honor also.

It means cultivating the symbols of honor in your household. The head of the household sits at the designated head of the table. That is not a command. That is just a suggestion. But it is something that sends a message to the children. You train your child to respond in a particular way. You train your daughters to serve their father and their mother in a very special way. The father sets the example by treating his daughters in a very tender way.

This does not mean that there are not times when a child has done something wrong and they have to be corrected, and corrected quite harshly. But the general attitude toward each other should be of tenderness. Fathers, how often do you thank your wife for making breakfast, making lunch, or making dinner for you? There is a great pressure on fathers in a household—today, especially.

My attitude, as head of my household and as father, affects my entire household—my entire family, especially my children. If my attitude is bad, it affects my children's attitude; and there is a wrong spirit in the whole household. And if my attitude is good, generally speaking the whole household's attitude is good. The father has an amazing amount of influence on the family as a whole.

Honor breeds honor, respect breeds respect, and tenderness breeds tenderness. On the flip side, dishonor breeds dishonor, and disrespect breeds disrespect. So, speak to them with the language of honor. Develop symbols of honor in your home. If you are a true Christian, I am sure you already have the Ten Commandments posted in your home, as we are instructed to do in Deuteronomy 6.

Deuteronomy 6:7-9 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.

We do not all have posts on our house, especially if we live in an apartment. We do not all have gates on our house. But the principle is that they should be posted where they can be seen easily in our homes.

The fifth commandment is right there, at eye level, in my son's room when he walks into his room. And I pointed it out to him again this morning, to make sure that he realized that it is there; and that he did not keep walking by it, and not even noticing it. But it says, "Honor thy father and mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you!" It is so important that children have that as standard of righteousness, standing there where they can see it. And even though my son does not read it every time that he walks into his room, the fact that it is there means symbolically that it is hanging over his head (so to speak)—or, that is how our household lives. It sends a message.

We are at war for the minds of our children!

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle [or, war] against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The whole world conspires to make our sons and daughters disrespectful. This is spiritual wickedness, because of its source. Some of you are going to come into a very difficult situation, and here is the situation: You find yourself dealing with what we will call *a perverse authority*. This "perverse authority" may be your father (who may be a non-Christian, a drunkard, has some other problem, or whatever) or maybe he is an employer. This "perverse authority" is someone who is in authority over your life, and he is acting wrongly. Every one of us has dealt with this—or will deal with this—at one time or another in our lives, because there are so many "perverse authorities" in the world.

I do not take any credit for this; but I am so thankful that, when I was young, my father taught me how to deal with this type of situation. It saved me heartache, upon heartache, upon heartache in dealing and complying with employers over the years. This principle is found in the book of I Samuel, where we are given a dramatic example of the most "abusive authority" leader that we can imagine—that of a son who is being abused wrongfully.

If ever there was a person who had a 'right' to rise up and shake his fist and to destroy that authority figure, it was David. Here is David, and he is in a situation where his 'father' Saul is a "perverse authority." Saul is actually his father-in-law—but understand that, in the Israelite society, Saul was just like a second father. Saul was also his king, which means Saul was set up by God Himself to rule over David.

This is something that we need to recognize as well. God chose your father to be your father, and He chose your mother to be your mother. And He chose my mother and father to be my mother and father. God is the One who set them up. And it is God who tells us that we are to honor them. God knew that our fathers and our mothers would have problems. He knew that they were going to be sinners. He knew all of these things, and He still made our parents our parents. And He still expects us to respond in a positive way.

Turn to I Samuel 24. David had been fleeing from Saul for quite a long time, at this point. And now David had an opportunity to take things into his own

hands. All the while, his peers were pressuring him to fight Saul. That is, to dishonor Saul—to dishonor that authority. This is such an important example, and it is stated so well by the Eternal God here.

I Samuel 24:1-5 Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David is in the wilderness of En Gedi." Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. [For those of you who are very young and do not know what that means, it means that he went in there to go to the bathroom.] (David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.) [So they were in the same cave, at the same time that Saul was doing his business.] Then the men of David said unto him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" And David arose, and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him, because he had cut Saul's robe.

Honor started to enter David's mind again.

I Samuel 24:6-8 And he said unto his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD." So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.

So we see that David was still showing *respect* to that authority figure, and *honor* to his 'father.'

I Samuel 24:9-12 And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed, David seeks your life?' Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me kill you. But my eye spared you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.' Moreover, my father [This is David speaking to Saul.], see! Yes, see the skirt of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the LORD judge between you and me, and the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.

This is an important principle. If we have a "perverse authority" figure over us, it is *not* for us to take it into our own hands, unless. . . (and I will get to the "unless" later).

I Samuel 24:13-14 As the proverb of the ancients says, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked. But my hand shall not be against you. After whom is the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?

There you see *humility* in David's attitude. He is not thinking of himself as greater than Saul.

I Samuel 24:15-17 Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand." So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. Then he said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil."

Is there ever a time when a child may disobey his parents? Yes, there is; but be very careful with this. You may disobey your parents *if your parents ask*

you to break God's law. Here is an extreme example: You live in Thailand, and your parents want to sell you into prostitution. You may then not obey them—because God's law supersedes their 'law.' Here is another example (more close to home): Your parents want you to shoplift. That is stealing. You may not obey them. I am not going to get into any more details than that, because it is the principle that we are looking at. However, other than in cases where God's law is being broken, you *must* obey your parents, in accordance with God's law. But do not think God has given you license to second guess every micro-decision your father or your mother makes. Do not ever fall into that trap!

There is a difference between *honor* and *counsel*. A young man who is living under the roof of his father is required to obey him. If you are living under the roof of your father, and he is providing for you and protecting you (it does not matter whether you are 18, or 21, or 35), you must obey him—**unless** he is telling you to break God's law.

I Kings 15:11-13 And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image, and burned it by the Brook Kidron.

If you are a young man who has established his own household, then your father is no longer the *commander* in your life. He is now the *counselor* in your life. This means that you are ultimately responsible in your life—for your own actions, and for making your own decisions. Nevertheless, in all circumstances you need to show honor to your father and your mother. However, "honor" does not always mean "obey."

But if you seek your father's counsel (as you should, no matter what age you are), it would be in the rarest occasions that you would not take your father's counsel. Whether you are 15, or 18, or 30, or 50, or 70 (if your parent is still alive)—it is good to seek your father's advice. I am not saying that you have to obey them at those older ages; but I am saying that you would certainly

want to take their counsel with a great deal of respect, because they know you in many ways better than you know yourself. If my father were alive today, he would certainly know me better than I know myself. But my mother is alive, and sometimes she can point out things that I do not realize; and I appreciate that.

Here is an appeal to you. If you have dishonored your father or your mother, go to them and ask them to forgive you. Begin to build *a relationship of honor* with your father and your mother. Whether they are 'in the church' or not, you should still be honoring your father and your mother. If you are still young, you have a wonderful opportunity ahead of you; but there is a big "If"—If you learn how to honor your father and mother now. You are going to be tools in the hand of the Almighty God—to change the world. But forget it! Forget it—all your dreams, all your hopes gone—*unless* you learn how to honor your parents. Not only do you need to honor your father and mother, but also those who have invested in your life. It is very important.

God's system of honoring requires *humility*. Throughout the entire Bible, God demonstrates His desire that we conform to His system of honoring—both by revering Him, and by aspiring to His value system—in humility. This theme occurs again and again in the Old Testament, as God tried to show His people that blessings and honor come forth from Him—and that the only way to receive them is, paradoxically, to humble ourselves and honor Him. *Honor* and *humility* are closely associated.

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low: but the humble in spirit will retain honor.

That honor comes from God. Humility is essential to properly honoring our spiritual fathers and physical parents. This principle is indicated in Proverbs 6 regarding friends, but it can be applied to parents as well.

Proverbs 6:3 So do this, my son, and deliver yourself, for you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; plead with your friend.

In honoring your parent—*if* you have dishonored your parent, *then* go and humble yourself; and "make sure" with your father, or your mother.

Matthew 23:12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled; and he who humbles himself will be exalted [or, honored].

Even those to whom God gives the worldly honors of power, fame, and riches must learn the boundaries of His goodness. Again and again, God taught the rulers of both Israel and other nations that their honor on earth must be accompanied by humility—because God gives the honor in the first place. We must conform to God's system of honoring, both by revering Him and by working to reach His standard of righteousness—in humility. And part of that reaching His standard of righteousness is developing that honest and genuine honor of our parents, and teaching that to our children.

The Old Testament is a testimony to the fact that ultimately God alone is the possessor of honor, and worthy of being honored. When God ended the disgrace of Hannah's barrenness, giving her a much-longed-for son, she voiced this important principle.

I Samuel 2:8 He [God] raises up the poor from the dust, and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory [or you could say, the throne of honor]. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and He has set the world upon them.

It is God Himself who determines who shall be honored, and who shall not. He has commanded that we honor our fathers and mothers.

Sometimes the word *love* is used as a synonym for *honor*. Paul tells the Romans to "love one another" with mutual affection. That is, to outdo one another in showing honor.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

This is *the true foundation of honor*—that we *love* our parents, that we *love* our brethren, and that we *love* God. The highest example of such loving honor is the example of Jesus Christ. In washing the disciples' feet, He paid

them the honor of service and subjected His own priorities to their interests. Such honoring of others is tied up with humility, which is the method of obtaining true honor. In this way, we obtain both *honorable character* and *honorable distinctions* forever.

I will leave you with this final statement, so that it rings in your ears: "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you; that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you"—for now and for eternity!