

The Commandments (Part Eleven)

Honor Your Parents, Part Two

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 08-Jul-89; Sermon #BS-TC11

We are going to pick up on the second part of the series on the fifth commandment, with at least a little bit of a review of the things that we covered in the first part of it.

The first four commandments define the foundation of our relationship with God, and they teach us of the magnitude of His name and exhort us to remember and to regard Him as Creator and Ruler of all. Now the fifth commandment begins the second section of the commandments, and it is placed, like the first commandment, that is, first among those that govern our relationship with men, because of the effect that keeping it or not keeping it has on those relationships. In other words, of all of the commandments that appear in the second section, that is the one that is going to have the greatest effect on society, whether we keep it or whether we do not keep it.

The reason for this is because honoring parents is the beginning of all good government, and a stable society has its roots in a child or children learning to honor and thus regard and respond to mom and dad. Now, it is something that is not inborn, that is, this honoring, this regarding, and responding to mom and dad. It is not something that is inborn; it is something that *must be learned*. Thus this commandment, in its spirit, includes in its broad application all authority figures. That is, since all good government grows out of the keeping of this commandment, in its broadest application, it includes all authority figures, whether they are civil, whether they are teaching figures, whether they are business figures.

Now the family is the basic building block of society, and the stability of the family is basic to the stability of the community. Now for us, because of the calling of God, the community that is in question here is the church. We are, according to Galatians 6:16, the Israel of God. There is an Israel that is of this world, that is, at least one of the nations that you are living in. There is also the Gentile nations, those who are non-Israelitish.

The Kingdom of God is shown very clearly in the book of Daniel, Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, to be a nation, and other verses throughout the Bible fill in the details that it is a nation that has its beginnings in a family. It is a nation that has grown great, that is born of God, and it is a nation that is going to take over this earth. And so the community that we are concerned about, in its broadest application, has to do with the Kingdom of God, but right now it has to do with the church, the Israel of God. And so the lessons learned from honoring and thus obeying parents will result in a society that is stable enough to promote the development of the whole person.

I went through at least a few verses in Isaiah the 3rd chapter to show you that when the family is upset, then taken to its furthest extent, what results is anarchy in the community, that is, in society. And when one gets to that point where there is no government, then the major concern of everybody is survival, just trying to live for another day, because you are spending all your energies trying to defend yourself from your neighbors who live around you, or because business has broken down as a result of the lack of government, then survival becomes a first priority. But where there is good government, survival is hardly a question at all. Then the person is left with the option of developing every part of his personality, and that is what God is after. And that has its beginnings in the home. It has its beginnings with a child learning to honor father and mother.

Now we are going to begin today back in Leviticus the 19th chapter. I want to go through that in a little bit more detail this time and show you some of the principles that are contained within that chapter, because Leviticus 19 is an excellent example of how everything in a good society springs from the keeping of this commandment, the fifth commandment.

Leviticus 19:2 "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.'

I mentioned to you that, as we went through here, these laws that are in this section are a reflection of the Lawgiver. They are what they are because He is what He is. See, these laws are given because, as He says in verse 2, I am Yahweh, and you shall be holy because I am holy. Now these are not

primarily statements of authority, that is, Do this because I say this to you, do this because I command you. Though that is there, it is subordinated to the other thing, that is, Do this because I am holy and you are to be holy.

But rather these are statements of the relationship between the law and the Lawgiver. It is a reflection of His nature. In other words, if God was a man, this is the way that He would conduct His life in society, in a community. And we can be assured that this is the way God did conduct His life whenever He was a man. So the law then is what it is because He is what He is.

Leviticus 19:3-4 'Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the Lord your God.'

It is very interesting, I think, that the word honor is removed from this verse; instead it says revere, which is much stronger than honor. Honor has broad application, but revere has the connotations of worship, does it not? I think the Authorized Version, the King James, has fear there, but revere is closer to the mark than fear. It is respect with the added emphasis of worship added to it. So I think you can get the idea that God wants this respect that we have for our parents to be very close to what we would give to God, and I will read something to you later that gives an indication why it is that way.

I want you to notice here that in this listing, the fifth commandment is listed first, and it is listed in the same breath as the Sabbath commandment, and it precedes the first commandment. So you see the order is changed somewhat here, and it has to do with the context. The context of Leviticus 19 has to do with regulations involving community life, and they are quite specific. It is not like the Ten Commandments, which are broad principles. Here the laws are much more specific regulations of community life.

Now verse 5 is kind of interesting.

Leviticus 19:5-8 'And if you offer a sacrifice of peace offering to the Lord, you shall offer it of your own free will. It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day. And if any remains

until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted. [He goes on in verse 8 that if anyone does do that, even on the third day, they] have profaned the hallowed offering of the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from his people.'

I have thought about this over and over again, turned it around in my mind. What in the world does the peace offering have to do with regulations that revolve around community life? Well, I think I finally figured it out in the last couple of days. The peace offering; the word peace comes from the same root as the word *shalom*. Every one of you knows what the word *shalom* means; it is a Hebrew greeting. On Pentecost, Mr. Friddle said to you, "*Shabbat shalom*," you see.

Peace is a good translation of that word. It is not quite the same word as the word *shalom*, but it is very close to it. Now, the root of that word means to complete, to make whole, to supply what was lacking. Now I think if you heard the series of sermons that I gave on the offerings, you will remember that the peace offering shows God, the high priest, and the offeror in fellowship with one another. That is, everybody is eating of a common meal. They are sitting at the same table and they are enjoying the same food together. They are in harmony. They are at peace with one another. They are fellowshiping with one another. They are in union, you see. They are a community.

What is so interesting here is the progression of the offerings that are made. This is something that I never noticed before, and that is that whenever the burnt offering was made, it always was accompanied with the meal offering, and then while they were on the altar, the peace offering was put on top of them. You see, I did not notice that before; the verse says "upon," which means that the peace offering rested on top of. Now what He is doing here is showing an effect, the consequence of making the burnt offering and the meal offering. The effect of it is peace; God and the offeror and the high priest are in harmony. They are in union with one another.

Now you remember that the burnt offering indicated complete and total devotion to God. It represented, it pictures, it symbolizes the person wholeheartedly, with all of his might, with all of his mind, with all of his

heart, yielding to God—the first of the two great commandments. The meal offering shows devotion to your fellow man: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Now the effect of that, you see, is the peace offering, and everybody is in harmony, everybody is in union. Whatever it was that was keeping the people apart has been made up. Remember the meaning of the word again? The word peace here means to complete, to make whole, to supply what was lacking.

So these people are in union, not because of the peace offering, but because of what preceded the peace offering. And the peace offering was the happiest of all of the offerings. It is a celebration. Everybody is in harmony, enjoying a meal together. They are at peace with one another. So the peace offering was not what brought people together through an atonement, that is through the forgiveness of sin, but was made because the people were together; they were a community bound together by common purpose and ideals.

Now what does it mean in the context of Leviticus 19, and why should it appear immediately after the stating of those three commandments and leading right into the section on community relationships? Well, let us look back at it again.

Leviticus 19:6-7 It shall be eaten the same day [and if any remains the same day you offer it], and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire.

There was a time limit that was set on here that gives you a sense of urgency. So there was urgency in carrying through on what the peace offering means. Now what does it mean in the context? It means two things. It means that you better be quick about doing everything that you possibly can to make sure that there is harmony in the community. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath. Sacrifice yourself. Submit yourself to the other person, and do it quickly.

If you will just be patient with me, I am going to turn to a verse here in Matthew 5. In verse 23, Jesus said,

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave

your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

The second aspect of the peace offering: God is saying that if you live in a community, you better be hospitable. You better be sharing your blessings with the others who are a part of that community, because that is what the peace offering is. It is an extension of your joy and your blessings that you are offering to others. You are sharing it with them. You are doing something positive to cement your friendship with these people.

Now businessmen understand this principle. Where are they most likely to cement their deals? According at least to the popular understanding, they do it over lunch, they do it over a meal, they do it out on the golf course, you see, where they are enjoying something in common in fellowship, and their minds are concentrated supposedly on the common good. So their peace offering, the world's peace offering, is in a restaurant. But this is God's version of it.

I think that He would most likely prefer that it be in one another's homes, but He is saying at the very head of the list: be hospitable, do something to cement your relationships within the community. And number 2, if there is a difference that arises, then you better be devoted to God, you better be devoted to man—the first two of the great commandments—and you better be doing something to clear the way so that there can be a reconciliation. Not that the peace offering itself will make it, you see, that is done by other things, but it is an attempt to show that there is peace and you are willing to share life with this person. That is why it is there right at the head.

And so God is saying, be urgent about it. Do not wait; do it; sacrifice yourself. Jesus said it six times in the New Testament. He said that the person who is going to find life is the person who denies himself. And that is why sacrifice is such a big part of the Bible story. Instead, what has Satan done? Satan has tried to convince people that the way to peace is to win your war. It is just the opposite. Your war, God wants you to understand, is with yourself and getting yourself to sacrifice for the other person.

Let us continue through Leviticus. Incidentally, as we go through here, I want you to tie all of this with the family. Where is a kid going to learn how

to be hospitable? Out on the streets? No, he is going to learn it in the home. See, because mom and dad are hospitable, and he is going to learn that practice. Where does he learn to reconcile differences between him and his brother? Out on the street? No, it is in the house, where there are sibling rivalries taking place all the time, kids vying with each other, competing with each other, trying to get the attention and approbation of the parents, or whatever. Where does he learn how to make peace? It is in the home. And where does he learn to sacrifice? It is in the home.

The next thing He addresses here, in verse 9:

Leviticus 19:9 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.'

He says right here that it is a part of your responsibility within the community to provide for the poor by sharing your blessings with them. So take care of the poor in society.

Leviticus 19:11 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.'

It addresses stealing and being deceitful.

Leviticus 19:13 'You shall not defraud your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.'

He is saying here, say what you mean and mean what you say. Be a right example. Follow through with your contractual obligations. Be responsible.

Leviticus 19:14 'You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind.'

That is pretty clear. Deal mercifully with those who are physically impaired. Again, these are all things that are learned in the home. What do you think the kids are going to learn if they are watching and listening to mom and dad

as they talk about authority figures—the policeman, the governor, the president, the city council—somebody who lives in the neighborhood, somebody who is blind or deaf, and they happen to walk down the street in front of your house, and your children overhear you talking about these people in some kind of negative way? Are you not beginning to build in their mind reasons to put stumbling blocks before the weak or the physically impaired? Yes, you are.

Leviticus 19:15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment.'

This deals with respecting persons. God wants us to be conscious of the way that we are thinking, and not allowing our judgment to reflect our prejudice against a certain portion of society. Again, a child is going to pick that up. If that prejudice is in the home, it is going to be reflected in the children.

Leviticus 19:16 'You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people.'

That one is very obvious. Gossip divides a community, and children are going to hear what we have to say about our fellow members of this community, and we are gossiping about their weaknesses, or whatever, the sins that they are involved in and their attitudes or whatever.

Leviticus 19:17-18 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. [It means do not bear grudges. Look at the last part of that sentence in verse 18?] . . . but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

I think that is very strategically placed. It is right in the middle of the chapter; it has 36 verses, and right at the end of verse 18, it is right smack dab in the middle of the chapter. You think God did not plan this book? Well, He sure did. He took care of everything.

Leviticus 19:19 'You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon them.'

What in the world does that have to do with community relations? Well, what He is saying here is do not let your livestock, your foodstuffs, or your manufactured goods degenerate into inferior quality, because those things are going to be sold within the community. They are going to be used for breeding purposes within the community, and God wants to make sure that nothing inferior is produced, but always there is a tendency to upgrade on the part of His people. And so if the stock that is sold within the community, either for breeding purposes or for food, if you really love your neighbor, it is going to be the very best quality you can possibly give him, and not because you have allowed things to degenerate through carelessness and irresponsibility. It is a way of showing love to your neighbor. Children will learn that right within the family.

Leviticus 19:20 'Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to another man as a concubine. . .

You probably wonder what in the world that has to do with community relations. Well, one of the key things there is that she is betrothed to another man as a concubine, that is, she is the property of someone else. And so what God is addressing here is the mistreatment of, or irresponsibility toward, what belongs to a neighbor. It is a very human example; we do not live in that kind of a society, but if we did, that thing would apply.

And on and on it goes. It even addresses such things as divining, observing time, the way you cut your hair. He is saying, do not get carried off in fads, especially if that fad has something to do with the pagan worship of some kind of a god—talking about making cuttings in your flesh, tattooing your flesh. And then I thought it was so interesting in verse 30, He mentions the Sabbath again. Just in case we forgot: does the Sabbath have anything to do with community relations? Yes, it does. We will get to that in just a little bit.

Then He addresses the alien who is among us, those who are not Israelite but are dwelling in the land. Whatever the reason is, God says you better treat that person just like he is one of the land; no prejudice against them, but you take care of them like they are Israelites.

Leviticus 19:35-36 'You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest

balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.'

So here He is dealing with the subject of being fair in business, in your business practices.

Now the focus of this whole section of God's law is the fifth commandment. What God is saying here is that the attitudes and the conduct that produce a good community spring from one's honoring his parents. That is why this commandment was put at the very beginning.

The Sabbath plays its part in that it provides the means of unified instruction for all the community, that is, that it is through the proper use of the Sabbath that there is a centralized, unified, consistent instruction that is given to all of the people in the community, so that all can speak the same thing. And then finally, the first commandment is listed, because it plays its part in assuring that we have the true source for that unified instruction in spiritual, moral, and ethical areas.

I had another thought this morning about those three commandments being listed at the very head of these regulations regarding community relationships, and that is this: that this is another insight into why they are listed in the order that they are, and that is, in this context, the first commandment is the least important of the three. The second most important is the Sabbath, and the first most important is the fifth commandment. Now if we eliminate any one of those, then, depending on where it falls in that order, it is going to have the greatest amount of negative effect on the community.

You can check this with Romans 2, where Paul says that the Gentiles are a law unto themselves, and that they keep the law, not even knowing the law. So they do not know who the true God is, yet it is entirely possible for a Gentile nation to have a very stable society. We have eliminated the first commandment, but they are still able to have a stable society. Why? Because they are keeping the fifth commandment. They are not doing it with understanding and tracing it to the Great God of heaven, but simply because that is their culture. They have a strong family.

Now I propose to you the Japanese. They are not in contact with the true God, but they have a very stable society. In fact, I was reading not too long ago that the number of serious crimes, felonies, that are committed in Tokyo—here is a city of about 10 million people and there are fewer crimes committed in Tokyo than in any medium-sized American city. I mean a city like Des Moines, Iowa, or Springfield, Illinois, or Columbia, South Carolina. We have an equal number of serious crimes in those medium-sized cities as Tokyo does. Now why? A strong family relationship, with father as the head and mother right under him, and the children honoring.

You see, the second most important one is the Sabbath, that there be established within the community a common day of meeting in which everybody receives a unified instruction. And again, the Gentiles are able to do that. They do it on the wrong day, but they do have a fairly unified instruction, and they are able, because of that, in combination with the keeping of the fifth commandment, to produce a fairly stable society. Now for us, we have got to put all three into practice, and we should be able to produce the best society yet, see, because of that.

Let us turn to Deuteronomy 27, verse 16, where Moses wrote,

Deuteronomy 27:16 'Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt' "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

I wanted to repeat that verse from last week, because it leads to something a little bit later in the sermon that I think is very interesting. That a person who treats his parents with contempt. . . Now contempt does not mean that they are smiting their parents on the face, you know, punching them out. Contempt does not mean that they are necessarily what we would call cursing their parents, although that certainly may be included within it, but contempt indicates an attitude toward the parents that is not good at all. Such a person is under a divine curse.

Let me read this to you again; this is from the *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary*, in their comment on Exodus 21:15-17, this is the one that says, "He who smites his parents shall be put to death. He who curses his parents shall be put to death." So they say, again,

Maltreatment of a father and mother through striking, man-stealing, and cursing 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 person of the parents.

The key phrase to me there is "the majesty of God was violated in the parents." And therein lies the major importance in the keeping of this commandment: that the relationship that God intends within the family is an exact type of the Christian spiritual relationship with God the Father and the church as mother. So in the eyes of God and in the eyes of a small child, a parent stands in the place of God, the same principle as Moses used in regard to himself and God there in the book of Exodus. He said, Look, your anger is not really with me, it is with God. Moses understood that as God's representative, Moses was standing in place of God, and what He is saying here is that the parents stand in the place of God in relation to a child.

So in the eyes of God and in the eyes of a small child, a parent stands in the place of God Himself, as I mentioned to you before, that in the physical sense the parents are the child's creator and provider and teacher and protector as well. I might add, in regard to that last thought, that a child's response to this relationship, that is, the relationship of child to parent, is in a large way going to determine his later response in the community, and I think that it is absolutely certain to affect his relationship with God as well. So by direct implication then, if we represent God, then it becomes our responsibility to live a life that is worthy of that representation. So parental example is extremely important. Now, ultimately, the responsibility for keeping this command falls on the child, but it is very evident that the keeping of this commandment begins with the parents.

In Ephesians 6, verse 4, Paul says,

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

What Paul is saying here does not exclude mothers, he is just addressing the one who has the overall responsibility, that is, in this case, the father. But mothers have to be included in this as well, because they are responsible with the father for the rearing of the child. Now he is also showing here that those who are in positions of strength, that is, in this case the parents, have a responsibility to those who are weak. You see that all the way through the Bible; we just saw it in Leviticus 19, that those who were blessed were not supposed to cut the corners of their fields. They have a responsibility to the weak, and thus within the family, the parents, who are the strong ones, have a responsibility to the weak, who are children.

And God is reminding us here that we should not depend on our physical size and strength to domineer over our children, but what God is getting at here is that we earn their respect through strength of character, personality, and wisdom and love. You see, love, which is expressed in this that the Bible calls the nurture and admonition. I mentioned to you that the word nurture in the King James is kind of weak, that in most modern Bibles they have changed it to the word training or discipline, one or the other. And discipline is repeated, or a narrow exercise in a matter, and it implies action more than intellectual thought, and it corresponds in its thought to Proverbs 22:6, which says,

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

The word train means to narrow in. That is what you are doing when you are disciplining somebody, you see, in a small area. It is a narrow exercise in an area. We ask a professional person, What is your discipline? and we are saying to him, What is your training in, what specific area? Whereas most medical doctors would be GPs, general practitioners, you see, it is broader based. But those who have been disciplined have been narrowed in.

Now what this means to child rearing is this: that it is the responsibility of parents, because of their education, because of their wisdom, because of their superior understanding, to narrow their child in by limiting that child's choices in life. A child does not know what is good. A parent should know what is good, and through the exercise of discipline he narrows the child's

choices in, so that he does not have so many choices. Young children are confused by having too many choices, and if you want a confused child, let them do whatever they want to do and you will reach that goal of having a confused child.

Children feel safest, they are calmest, they get along with people better whenever their choices are limited, and their choices are gradually expanded as they begin to show the parent they have the maturity to be able to handle making more choices. That is the way God is with us. He narrows us in, and then, as we develop, He adds to our responsibility, understanding, and the making of the choices that need to be made in life.

The word admonition has to do more with formal instruction than the word nurture or discipline. That is, it has to do with verbal instruction that comes in a more sit-down, structured kind of setting. You do not need to turn to this, but in Colossians 3:21, Paul says not to provoke your children. Now it is a little bit different word than we see here in Ephesians 6, and here it means to embitter, to fret, or harass. The implication in the context is by overcorrection. And he is saying not to challenge the resistance of the child—because the child is going to resist—but not to challenge it with an unreasonable exercise of authority.

Just before we came over here, I had the radio on and heard just a little news item that there are two million cases of child abuse reported now every year in the United States. And most of that, of course, is abuse of authority on the part of the parent, taking advantage of the weak child, and certainly harassing them, overcorrecting them, and leading them to the place where that child is going to bolt out of the house just as soon as he possibly can, because they have been provoked to wrath. So correction is necessary, but it must be administered in the right spirit.

Now let us go to I Thessalonians 2. We are going to get back to Ephesians in a bit, but I Thessalonians 2, I think, is an excellent example of the apostle Paul and his attitude toward the congregation. Remember what he said to the Corinthians, that he was their father in the faith, and he looked upon them as his children in the faith. And so he approached the congregation as a parent is supposed to approach his children. Now notice what he said here. Let us begin in verse 6.

I Thessalonians 2:6-7 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

It is kind of interesting. Now what it implies here is someone going out of their way to make sacrifices for the well-being of another. And so the one going out of the way and making sacrifices is the mother, and it is for the well-being of the child. Now if we would read this whole context, Paul gives us plenty of examples of how he went out of his way for the spiritual well-being of the people in this Thessalonian church. But you see his attitude:

I Thessalonians 2:8-9 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you have become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; . . .

Quite an example. The word labor indicates fatigue as a result of mental activity; it was something internal. The word toil indicates the tiredness that comes as a result of external difficulties, that is, making what we might call the muscular activity necessary for carrying out his responsibilities and getting sleepy, you know, tired, where he could be very irritable. So you remember, brethren, our labor and toil. Parents, apply that to your responsibility as someone who has children, that a parent is supposed to get tired rearing his children. It is not something that comes easy.

I Thessalonians 2:9 . . . for laboring night and day [parenting is not a 9-to-5 job], that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly. . .

It is interesting, the word devoutly, or piously, is a way that some people translated it. It means religious. Somewhere in here I have a note; there is something that the word pious means that I think is very interesting, and right now my eye will not pick it up. But he is addressing three different areas here: he was moral, and he was untainted in his dealings.

I Thessalonians 2:11 as you know how we exhorted [again, parental responsibility, this means to incite by advice], and comforted [that is, give strength and hope to children], and charged [means pleaded with authority], every one of you, as a father does his own children, . . .

There is major responsibility for setting the right example for a child. And here was the purpose,

I Thessalonians 2:12 . . . that you would have a walk worthy of God [that is, that they would have lives that were good within the community] who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Now back to Ephesians 6 again. This time, in verse 1. He says,

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Again, notice the change of wording. In verse 2 he quotes the commandment, honor, but in verse 1 he says obey. The reason for that, of course, is honor leads to obedience, and it is implied in the commandment that honor will lead to obedience. The one thing that I want to begin to inject here is this thought: that the command to honor applies to all of us, all of our lives. In this context here, it is directed to children, and we find, if we put this together with Colossians 3:20, that they are to obey in everything. We will modify that in just a bit. Now I think that it is undoubted that the apostle got as his example for these statements about obeying your parents and obeying them in everything, from the example of Isaac and his response to his father Abraham. In Genesis chapter 22 and in verse 2 it says, God is speaking here, and He says,

Genesis 22:2 "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

God commanded him to sacrifice his son. Now let us go to verse 7.

Genesis 22:7-11 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." And the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

You will notice that Isaac permitted his father to put him up on the altar and was willing to give his life in obedience to his father. Now that is an awesome display of honoring your parent! Now from what I am able to put together, in other scriptures: Ephesians 6, where it says obey your parents in the Lord, and Colossians 3:20, which says obey them in everything, together with Genesis 22 and Isaac's obedience to his father, that obey in Ephesians 6 means listening to and following with unswerving obedience their parents in the Lord.

Now disobedience is a sure sign of a disintegrating community, and Christians are not to contribute to that disintegration. Children need to learn the principle that some things have to be accepted even though at the time they do not themselves understand why, and so they have to learn to grin and bear it. I say that on the authority of I Peter 2, beginning in verse 18. So "in the Lord" means that they too are under His government, and that the obedience that is required of them is not based on any arbitrary power of the parents, but on the higher law that the parents also are subject to.

Now if those parents are subject to that law of Christ, they are not going to be telling their children to kill, to lie, to steal. See, this is addressed to people in the church. The children, Paul is saying here, need to be taught by their parents that they too are under the authority of the living Christ, and as they get older they are going to understand that their submission to their parents was an act of faith in Christ. They may not understand it while they are doing it, but they will come to understand that.

I have a quote here from J. Edgar Hoover, who is now dead, but he used to be the head of the FBI. It comes from an article that he wrote called "How Good a Parent Are You?" And he says that, "Criminals are made, not born. Long before a youngster is legally labeled a juvenile delinquent, his acts repeat a familiar pattern of conduct: falsehood, disobedience, truancy, petty stealing."

If you would read the whole article, you would understand that he said these things are coming right out of the home, and then they are amplified on the street, until finally the kid becomes a crook, you see, and he is picked up by the police and he is in juvenile hall.

Each dereliction leads to another, and unless he learns the fundamental lessons of self-discipline, trouble is inevitable. Every child should have a maximum freedom of expression, but when such freedom transgresses common decency or infringes upon the rights of others, it must be curtailed.

Now, if any of you have children, 2 or 3, at least 2, you begin to understand those kids begin to compete with one another. They fight with one another; they will take advantage of one another. All the things that are possible within a community can also be possible within a family, on a much smaller scale. And you know that they will take advantage of their brothers and sisters, and they will do things that will impinge upon the freedom of others within the family. So it must be curtailed—narrow in, train up a child, discipline. Our prisons are filled with individuals who enjoy freedom of expression without self-discipline.

I want to read something especially to you men. It appeared in the Los Angeles Times just a couple of weeks ago, and it is just one page long. It is called "How Fathers Figure," that is, what kind of an impact does a father have on his children? And what it is, it is brief quotations from a number of studies that have been done by psychologists, and the impact that the father has on his children. It says,

As researchers have become more aware of the father's influence on his son's emotional, intellectual, and social development, says Ken Druck, a Del Mar author and clinical psychologist who runs

workshops about the father-son relationship, our understanding of the entire structure of the family has changed. Boys with strong, warm, nurturing fathers, it now appears, are more socially competent, more persistent at solving problems, and more self-directed, says Norma Radin, a professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, writing in *Social Work in Education*.

She goes on,

The effect is visible from infancy onward. Psychologists at the National Institute of Mental Health found that boys as young as five months who had more contact with their fathers were friendlier with adult strangers than were those who had less. The infants with more contact vocalized more, showed a greater willingness to be picked up, and enjoyed play more.

Boys who lived with their fathers after divorce, reports Dallas psychologist John W. Santrock and R.A. Warshak, were warmer, had a higher degree of self-esteem, were more mature and independent than boys who lived with their mothers. On the other hand, when fathers were not present, either physically or emotionally, boys tend to be more aggressive and less compliant. Radin says they have greater problems in school. They do not obey their mothers as well. They have problems in peer relations, tending either to play alone or play with younger children.

Fathers are not mere substitutes for mothers, Radin says. The father's physical, robust approach to the child complements and contrasts with the mother's more verbal, slow-paced style. The children of both sexes respond enthusiastically to their father's playfulness, says Harvard pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton. An infant, by two or three weeks of age [that is pretty young] displays a more wide-eyed, playful, and bright-faced attitude toward his father than his mother.

Sociologists who have studied the interaction of children with fathers and mothers on playgrounds have concluded that, in

general, fathers allow their children to roam farther afield, climb higher, and take more chances, says Asa Baber, a Chicago author who writes a column on men's issues for Playboy. Moms are wonderful, and they provide safe, secure role models, says Rick Porter. He goes on here, but boys need someone who is going to encourage them to take risks.

Well, all I read that for was so that you fathers would begin to understand that you play a very important part in the development, not only of your sons, but also of your daughters.

There was one thing here. Let me see if I can pick it up. Here it is.

Finally, according to studies by psychologists including Henry Biller of the University of Rhode Island and Lloyd Borstelmann at Duke University [listen to this, men] it is the father who is the primary influence regarding sex roles for both boys and girls. Fathers who are powerful, nurturing, and available are most often seen as models by their sons, and weak fathers tend not to be imitated.

Let us look quickly at a series of verses here. Let me see what I want to go to here. Let us stay right here. He says in Ephesians 6:2, that is "the first commandment with promise." Obedience to the fifth commandment automatically results in a building of character and habit of avoidance of recklessness, lawlessness, violence, and wrong companionships and rebellion against authority, which often results in untimely death.

So it tends to hold society together, just like it would hold a family together. A family would be broken up if a child is killed as a result of an accident, and accidents are the single largest killer (more than disease) of young people, those who are under 18. So parents, you need to be aware of this, and not allow yourself, through neglect, to be subtly guilty of teaching your children to flout law.

And that is what happens if you do not take a hand in narrowing your child in. They will flout laws, and so they will be willing to take the chance to take drugs, to smoke cigarettes, to drive the car faster than they should. They will be willing to reach into that cabinet underneath the sink, where those potent

poisons are, and drink them, unless they have been soundly taught that is a no-no and they do not go in that drawer. But if you never narrow them in, and you allow them to have those choices, you are setting them up for an accident, and you are guilty.

So if you are teaching your children to honor your word, your command, you are very likely taking a major step toward saving their lives. That is why it tends toward long life. Because, you see, eventually the command shifts over to God and into the spiritual areas that are going to produce eternal life, and the child is already in the habit of listening to the wisdom and experience and understanding of mom and dad, and he will turn to God in the same way and will take God's advice and extend his life as a result, all the way out into eternal life.

Now back in Genesis, the 48th chapter and in verse 12. I mentioned to you earlier that this command to honor your parents has no age limits to it, though undoubtedly the parents are responsible for being the ones that begin the process. Ultimately, responsibility for the keeping of it falls on the child. Now, we are all children, and so that commandment never has an end in its application. Here we find,

Genesis 48:12 So Joseph brought them from beside his knees [meaning Ephraim and Manasseh], and bowed down with his face to the earth.

Before whom was he bowing? He was bowing to his father Jacob. Now consider the relative position of each one of them. Jacob was an old man. Jacob was down in Egypt because he was poor, because it had stopped raining in Palestine, and there were no crops (you know the story) and so he was reduced to nothing. So, in effect, he was down in Egypt, almost begging, spending what resources they had left in order to buy a living.

Joseph, on the other hand, was now second in command in all of Egypt, only the Pharaoh had more power and authority. Now in ordinary society, who would bow before whom? Well, in most societies, the one in the weaker position would bow to the one in the stronger position, and certainly Joseph

was in the stronger position in every way, but it was Joseph who bowed before his father. Now he did it because of God's command. He did it because of duty. It was his obligation to honor his father.

His father was always his father, regardless of what Joseph was, and regardless of Joseph's age, Jacob was still his father. And so Joseph bowed himself before the hoary head. That command has no end in terms of age. And so when you get to be 25, 30, 40, 50, let me tell you, you are still wise to honor your parents. Not just because they are still your parents, but because they have been something that you have not been yet, simply by having lived. They have been old, and you are still young.

And if you are wise, even though you have greater formal education than your parents do, God is telling you, "you dumb-koff, they still have something you do not have: wisdom, common sense, experience, understanding." Listen to them, even though it may come out in a way that you think is uneducated, does not have the pizzazz and the sophistication of the way that you would say it. You want to live long? Keep this command; it has a promise built right into it.

Now it is very interesting that as life continues, the position between parent and children begins to change. And so as the one took care of the other when they were young, now, as we get older, the other begins to take care of the other, and that responsibility falls on the children. And it is a way in which the children can show that they are still honoring their parents, by taking care of them, providing for them in their old age, in the way the parents nourished and defended and supported and instructed their children in their infancy, when they were weak.

In Matthew 15, in verse 3:

Matthew 15:3-6 He answered [Jesus is speaking] and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? [What commandment were they breaking?] 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]"—then

he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites!"

He goes on, which I will not read. The common practice today is to turn parents over to a government agency, and then unfortunately, in many, many cases, fail to provide anything for them, even visiting them, almost as if those parents were like an old automobile—you trade it in and never think about it anymore. Well, that is a far cry from Joseph and the example that he set.

Do you know what this word curse means? It may include something that we do with our tongue, but it has a wider application. It means to afflict; it means to bring evil upon, to cause harm or misfortune. Now what were these Jews doing here? They were not cursing their parents with their tongue, they were neglecting them, and Jesus said that was a curse. They were contemptuous of their parents' need (Deuteronomy 27:16), and that person who does that is living under a divine curse himself.

These people were excusing themselves from providing for their parents on the grounds of giving an offering to the Temple—not their tithes, but an offering. Now what they were doing was simply withholding what should have been given to their parents. They were not necessarily using it themselves for their own ends, they simply were not giving it for their parents' support. They were not giving it to the Temple; they had simply *promised* it to the Temple. Jesus said they were hypocrites.

You can fit I John 4:20-21, here, where it says that he who does not love his brother does not love God either, and in this case, the brother is the father or mother. That is why Jesus called them hypocrites. They did not love God.

Let us go to I Timothy 5—just powerful words here about our responsibility toward our parents. He says in verse 3,

I Timothy 5:3-4 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.

Is that not interesting? Repay their parents, and show piety. This is where I had the note on that word pious, piety. It means to be dutiful, to be faithful to natural obligations, as to parents. That is what the word pious means, it means to be faithful. So how are you pious in this context? By being faithful at home and repaying your parents, see, for what they did in bringing you into the world, taking care of you, providing for you, defending you, nourishing you, teaching you, correcting you, doing all the things that parents do while you were in your weak state. Remember what I told you about the Bible principle? Those who are strong always have an obligation to take care of the weak, for this is good and acceptable before God.

Now verse 8:

I Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith [Matthew 15, those hypocrites] and is worse than an unbeliever.

Boy, those are strong words! We could take you through Jesus' life and show you how He kept this commandment. There are many examples of His duty toward His mother, even to the point that when He was hanging on the cross, being crucified, practically His last thought was for His mother. He gave her to John and said, "Take care of her." When others would be thinking of their agony, the pain that they were in, and the imminent death and the loss of their blood, and the ignominy of what they were going through, He was thinking of mom. That is a pretty good example of somebody who disciplined His mind to focus on what was to Him of primary importance, that right to the end He would be keeping the fifth commandment.

Now there are a couple of things I want to go into back in Proverbs again, to show you the seriousness of this commandment in the eyes of God, and again it is serious because of what it does to the community and of the transference that is going to come to God, and the effect that it is going to have on someone in terms of achieving or attaining to the Kingdom of God. In chapter 20, verse 20, it says,

Proverbs 20:20 Whoever curses his father or his mother [remember curses? It does not mean out of the mouth necessarily; it

means to afflict, to bring evil upon] his lamp will be put out in deep darkness.

Lamp either means his prosperity and can indicate death, or at the very least, the loss of prosperity. And he is warning that suddenly there will come an end to all that brightened his life, that has made him happy and embellished his life.

Proverbs 30, just very quickly, in verse 17:

Proverbs 30:17 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.

The eyes reveal the mental activity of the heart. That is what he is talking about here, about contempt, scorn. And so the effect, see, the mocking eyes, what one is able to see on the outside, is put for a cause, and that is the scorn and contempt that is in the heart, and that is what God is judging. He is looking at the heart. And so that person is going to suffer an ignominious end, and their life is not going to go on.

Let us finish with Proverbs 17, verse 25:

Proverbs 17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him.

One more. Solomon writes,

Proverbs 27:11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.

If you put the thought in these two verses together, what you find is that the parent-child relationship is a two-way street. Each affects the other. If the son or the daughter is bad, then we have Proverbs 17:25 coming into play. If the son is wise because the parents have done their job, then we have Proverbs 27:11 coming into effect, that the father or the mother feels very happy, because he is able to answer him who reproaches, that is, reproaches

the parent about what the child has done, and the parent knows that the child has done awfully well, and so he feels glad about it. So whenever the parents are wise in their living, then children are made happy, and when children's choices are wise, then the parents are made happy.

I want to conclude this with a thought about David. David did not do a good job with his children. That is shown very clearly in the Bible. The story of the brokenhearted David, mourning over the death of his son Absalom. Remember that Joab speared him through as he was hanging by his long hair in a tree, he got his hair caught in the tree, got trapped there, and Joab ran him through with a spear and killed him, when David had asked that his life be spared.

But that brokenheartedness that David experienced has been enacted millions and millions of times, over and over and over again, by parents who have lived to see their children make a mess out of their lives. And so they reflect on those lives and wish they could have done things over. You cannot turn back time. And so Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote this poem, and I am just going to give you just a verse or two out of it. It is entitled "The Chamber Over the Gate," and he is reflecting on David. He says:

It is so far from you, you can no longer see, in the chamber over the gate, that old man desolate [David, see, that old man desolate], weeping and wailing sore for his son, who is no more: O Absalom, my son!

You see, the clock cannot be turned back, and actions that are past are done. Repentance is possible if God grants it, but the effect of the failure to do a good job nonetheless remains, and it takes its toll. So parents, give your children half a chance. Ride herd on them. Be responsible. Do not let them intimidate you. Do not be afraid of them.

We have been reared in a society that has been sold a bill of goods by the psychologists, that somehow or another children are equal to parents. God makes it very clear that is a *lie*. Children are equal only in that we are both human beings. But children are your responsibility, and you have the

authority, and that authority is not equal, and you are responsible. So spend quality time with them. It is an investment that you will never regret, unlike David did.