

# 30 January evening sermon

## (Sermon Summary)

### Authority figures (Exodus 20:12)

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

This commandment comes just before those that deal with our duty towards our neighbour. Family life is important: the family is the place where we learn the right way to treat others. When the family breaks down, obedience to the other commandments breaks down too. We see this when children look for father figures in gangs, and end up killing and stealing.

### Unruly children

All children are born with original sin (Psalm 51:5, Proverbs 22:15) and eventually their rebellion will come out. Family life is part of common grace: at their best, parents curb the effects of original sin. Parents train children for life, restraining sinful ways such as selfishness, cruelty, greed, and dishonesty. There will be blessing for society even if the children aren't converted. The early chapters of Proverbs appeal to young people to listen to the wisdom of godly parents. Those who do will gain good judgement and wisdom, and will find blessing and the knowledge of God.

Parental training involves discipline and chastisement, but this is not the whole story. Parents must urge the child to consider God and take His instruction seriously. We can see the dangers ahead if young people don't learn wisdom early - for example, many young people are confused about their identity. Children are commanded to respect and obey their parents (Col. 3:20, Eph. 6:1-3); this will give them long term stability.

### Not everything in the past was good

While we may look back longingly to a time when there was more law and order, not everything in the past was good. Authority figures too often treated children harshly, lacking compassion and understanding. Stories of cruelty and abuse have emerged, for example from orphanages. The emphasis on an angry God stunted children; unfair punishments engendered fear but not respect. Those children who are not doing evil should not have to fear the authorities (Romans 13:4).

### Not everything parents do is right

Parents were also born with original sin! Hebrews acknowledges that parents chastise their children 'as they think best' - but this may be the worst

thing for their children. We all get it wrong sometimes, and are always learning as parents.

Fathers may be too overbearing and are warned not to provoke their children (Eph. 6:4). If children are provoked, their wrath may remain for many years. Far too many Christian families are producing atheistic or gender-confused children. Parents should not break the spirit of their children by belittling them; rather we should strengthen their sense of worth.

### **Parents need to work harder**

We need to live out the Bible texts or catechisms that we teach, as an example to our children, whatever their age. How do we treat people? How do we cope with fear or failure? We need to be more prayerful, better listeners, willing to grow and change, and willing to own up to mistakes, if we want to bring something more to our grown-up children.

Children need to see something in us to honour, not fear; respect, not dread. Whether we have young children, grown up children or young relatives, we must commend Christ to them and help them to see what He can do for their souls.