

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Children
Scripture Text: Eph. 6:1-3 (Ephesians #42)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-10-22

We have, at long last, arrived at the beginning of the last chapter of the Book of Ephesians, and today we are going to tackle the first three verses—which is, interestingly, addressed to children. This is Number 3 of six paragraphs that all address different people in different roles in different relationships. It started with "wives" (5:22-24); then "husbands" (5:25-33); now "children" (6:1-3); next week, parents (6:4); and then "slaves" (6:5-8); and then "masters" (6:9).

The reason for lumping all of these together is that there is a keynote to all six of them; they all dangle, if you will, from this heading—or, they all reside under this umbrella. Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 18 gives that command that is [stated] in terms of a contrast: "Do not get drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit"; and then he gives a list of things that are characteristics that will be manifested in the lives of people who are filled by and led by the Spirit, and the last of those becomes the keynote for these six paragraphs of application. The keynote is in Verse 21 of Chapter 5—"and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (LSB).

That is one of the most *visible* was that Spirit-led people can be identified. They put themselves under others (Mk. 9:35; Rom. 12:10, 16), and desire to lift up other people (Rom. 14:19; Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24-25); they desire to serve other people (1 Cor. 12:25; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8-10). And in relationships, they are different when they are Spirit-led.

So today, our passage deals with the ones that we are raising to carry the torch of the Gospel to the world for the generations that follow. Three rather straightforward verses, but I want you to have them in your mind; and then we will take a short side trip here.

Ephesians Chapter 6, Verses 1 through 3—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

An important part of our personal obedience to Christ is our voluntary arranging of ourselves such that we submit to those around us; and especially, in each relationship there is a role that is more leadership, and a role that is more submission; and they are complementary to each other.

Today, before we dive into this specific passage, I would like to take us on a little short trip, just to get a bit of a taste of a biblical theology of childhood. I'm not going to go with everything we could do, but tell you some of the things that are significant that the Bible says about being a child; about *childhood*; and, by implication, about raising children.

This paragraph is unique among the six in this section because, unlike the other five, we are addressing people *other* than the ones to whom this is addressed, by and large. Now, there *are* some in the room that are still living with parents; but, parents: you need to grasp that this is *your* job now, to pass this along to the next generation. The following paragraph is going to be addressed to you—parents—to help you know how to do it; so you can consider today *your* introduction to next week's sermon.

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But here is where we are going—just three simple points to organize our thoughts: Concepts For Children; that's a biblical theology of childhood. Then, Commands To Children; that's the three verses before us. And we will try to draw some helpful Conclusions from that.

Let's start with Concepts For Children. What does God say about being a child, and relating to your parents? We have been reading through Proverbs for months here at Heritage Bible Church; you hear *a lot* of things addressing children, and addressing parents. Many of the passages that we are going to see today will relate both to children *and* to parents, and so you might even see some of the same verses next week—but today, we are going to emphasize from the children's perspective; next week, from the parents' perspective.

Let's start with one; this should sound pretty familiar to you, since we just read Ephesians 6:1-3. It's Exodus Chapter 20, Verse 12, which is repeated in Deuteronomy Chapter 5, Verse 16 as well: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which Yahweh your God gives you." I read it that way from the Legacy Standard Bible. That is how God described what He would bless when Israel went into "the land" (Ex. 12:25; cf. Gen. 50:24). It is the Fifth of the Ten Commandments, and it is *extremely* important.

Even though most Christians can't name nine of the Ten Commandments, they are still a crucial part of God's revelation to us (e.g., Ps. 19:11; Rom. 7:12). Now, I don't want to lose you—*do it later*, where you try to go think if you can name the Ten Commandments.

We are going to comment more thoroughly later, but just notice: It is very clear that from the beginning, God blesses obedience of children; He blesses families through obedience of children—among other things.

Here is another little piece of a biblical theology of childhood—one chapter later: Exodus 21, Verse 15 and Verse 17; this is pretty strong, sobering: "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death...He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." Boy, you want to read that and say, "Kids, did you hear that?" It's a *very serious thing* to "dishonor" your parents (Deut. 27:16; cf. Prov. 19:26; 20:20; 28:24; 30:11). If you lived in the time of the Old Testament in Israel, and you dishonored your parents, you could receive the *death penalty*! That was not enforced very often, but it obviously shows us: *this is no joke*! And it is obviously primarily referring to older children as well (cf. Deut. 21:18-21). Leviticus Chapter 20, Verse 9, restates the same thing.

God designed the world such that each generation is meant to receive His truth from the previous generation (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 4:9-10; 6:7; Ps. 78:5-6; Prov. 22:6). So, you are to seek to learn what parents have to teach you (Prov. 23:22). That's why God made it so natural for kids to ask their parents questions. And have you ever had a kid that started asking questions? That's like the little bird with its mouth wide open, saying, "Feed me!" *That's your opportunity*! That's *God* giving you the opportunity to *pour in* the truth of His Word (Ex. 13:14; Deut. 6:20-25; Ps. 145:4; Eph. 6:4).

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Now, here's one we read when we were working our way through the early chapters of Proverbs: Chapter 6, Verses 20 through 24—a classic passage: "My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress."

God designed for parents to be His instruments to keep you, as a child, from trouble. It's part of the protection from evil people in the world. It's learning from parents how to recognize the kind of people that you should avoid associating with, and the kind of people you *should* choose to let be an influence in your life (Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33).

How important is this to God? Here's a *great verse* for Junior High Camp: Proverbs Chapter 30, Verse 17—"The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it." If that's not made for Junior High boys, I don't know of any verse in the Bible that is. Now, that's hyperbole; that's *overstatement* for effect. This isn't something that is *literally* going to happen to you, but it is in the Bible as a word picture meant to teach a lesson.

Even if a child doesn't *say* or *do* disrespectful things to parents, we all know—as a matter of fact, we as adults have it, too—there is that "look" that you can give, or see. God wants you to know: *that's wrong*. You see, *He* is interested in the attitudes and the thoughts *just as much* as the actions on the outside (1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 16:2b). To "scorn" or to "mock" parents *is a sin*, and you don't want to ignore it in your own heart.

And parents—again, we're jumping ahead to next week—who is going to *teach it* to the next generation, if not us? This is part of why God wants generations to be connected. It's important for kids to see parents deal with *their* parents, so that we understand the dynamics of what God wants from us.

There is this passage from the time of Jesus, His own words: Matthew Chapter 15, Verses 4 through 6; He, too, quoted Exodus Chapter 20: "For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition."

There was *actually* a teaching of the rabbis that you could say, "Okay, I have this amount of money in my savings, or these possessions; and I am going to declare them 'Corban' (Mk. 7:11)"—that's the word; and it means: "It is a gift to God"—"So Mom, Dad, you know, I know you *really* need that medication, and you don't have any money; I *would* have helped you, but I dedicated my savings to Corban, and so I can't help you." They actually said that! The other thing was: you could get out of that for *any other reason*, but you didn't have to help your parents. That shows you just how *evil* the whole system of the Pharisees was.

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But do you understand—a couple of things to observe there: Notice in our translation, the All-Caps letters: "Honor your father and mother" and "He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death." Jesus stood *solidly* on the teachings of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). The All-Caps in the New American Standard means: this is a quote from the Old Testament. He did not diminish the importance of those things in *any* way. And He says, "If you are trying to rationalize your way out of that, you're dead wrong!"

Later—let's go ahead to the Apostle Paul—First Timothy Chapter 5, Verse 8—"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." That's telling you: It is the responsibility of each family to care for its "own"—*including* what we call in our culture "extended family." In other words: We are to honor parents *throughout their lifetime*. The context of that, in First Timothy Chapter 5, is widows. So it's *clear* that the idea of honoring one's parents goes *way beyond* the day that you move out of their home (cf. Prov. 23:22b).

You can see how important that is to God from something else that Paul wrote in the same chapter. I said the context was widows; scan down to Verse 16 of First Timothy 5—"If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them"—or, "provide for your own, and especially for those of your own household"—"and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed."

In the sad situation where there might not be family to assume the responsibility for, especially widows and widowers, the church is to accept them into the family—even to the extent of physical and sometimes financial support...But it says you are to "take care of your own" first. It is *only* when you have believers that meet the criteria for what he calls "widows indeed"—we could talk about that on a different occasion—the church needs to accept that responsibility; but *before that*, the family: Take care of your parents.

Are there any exceptions to that? Well, I would say that you always need to have an attitude of "honoring your father and mother," and the commitment always needs to be loving them in obedience to Christ. But I have known situations—and I want to make sure that I do not make somebody draw a false conclusion—there *are* times when, to provide financial support or material resources would be *wrong*. For example: I would not loan or give money to a drunkard, or to a drug abuser. I would not allow my children to be alone, even with a family member, if there was a track record of physical or sexual abuse. We could not aid even a family member in criminal activity. So, the *boundary* on "Honor your father and mother" is always "truth" (1 Cor. 13:6; cf. Acts 5:29; Jas. 3:17). But except for those very extreme situations, "Honor your father and mother."

That's just the tip of the iceberg of a biblical theology of children and childhood, but I hope it helps you understand a little bit of a framework as we come to the Commands To Children. Very simple: Ephesians Chapter 6, Verse 1—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord." The word "children" doesn't need an explanation; we understand what that is. I realize that now it is *impossible* to define "woman," but most people can still handle "child" or "children."

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But here is something interesting: Notice that Paul addressed them directly. Now, it wasn't different in those days than it is here: When the church gathered, *primarily* the elders, the pastors, the teachers—in his time, the Apostles—did the speaking and did the teaching; but they *assumed* that children were part of this spiritual family; and Paul *assumed* that Scripture was *important* and *practical* for children as well as adults. So that means: It is *crucial* that parents pass this information on to kids.

I should also mention: There are some groups that use this verse and others to try to prove that when the church gathers, the most spiritual alternative is to have *all* of the children in the worship service at all times. Some of them go so far as to say that if your church has *anything* where people are separated by age, *that's wrong*, and that's *contradictory* to the idea of the Body of Christ. Well, that's going too far.

Now, we *do* have here verses addressed to children; that proves: *We should teach this to children*, and we should pass it along to them. But that does *not* necessarily prove that, in the structuring of a church life, that only one way can possibly be right. We choose to give parents the option to make the decision for their children. We welcome children into the service; but we also provide a "cry room," in case a mom just needs to go cry in the middle of the service.

We also provide the option we call "Children's Church"; and we call it that for a reason. Kids are not a *babysitting problem* for a church! They are the next generation! They are *special people* for whom Jesus died, and they need to hear that! And they need to *learn* how to worship. "Children's Church" is to instruct them in the most loving and age-appropriate, effective way that we can, until they are ready to sit, listen, comprehend, and participate in the worship service. So, they are not a babysitting problem. And Vacation Bible School, Children's Church, Sunday School—those are *purposeful*; those are important: that is, to teach children the Gospel, and the way of the Lord.

Pretty straightforward command: "Children, obey..." "Obey your parents." Literally, the word "obey" means "to hear under"; it means "to listen under the authority of someone." The authority is the parents; the ones who obey: the children.

It is one of those commands in the present tense, which means that it is *always* in force; it needs to be a habitual, consistent pattern of life—as long as a child is in the home of the parents.

And notice the phrase: "in the Lord"—"Obey your parents *in the Lord*." That does not mean a kid doesn't have to obey parents that are not in Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1). "In the Lord" goes with "obey," not with the word "parents." It is like it was with wives; it is like it was with husbands: "Wives, be subject...*as unto the Lord*" (5:22); part of your worship is to accept the responsibility for your role in this relationship. "Husbands" are to "love" their wives "as Christ also loved the church" (5:25); part of our worship is to love as Jesus loved, and accept our responsibility in the relationship between wife and husband.

So, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord"—unless they tell you to do something God clearly says is wrong (cf. Acts 5:29). If they tell you to lie, you can't; you shouldn't.

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But the most crucial question for your children is the same as the most crucial question for you: Are you "in the Lord"? (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5) Remember that key phrase—that "theme phrase"—27 times in Ephesians: "in Christ"? None of these things can be obeyed in a God-honoring way by anybody that isn't "in Christ"! (cf. Jn. 15:5) So, what is Priority Number 1 for parents, with kids? They need to be "in the Lord."

Now, parents, *your* sermon isn't until next week, but make sure you don't miss this: The problem with your children is that they need to be *converted*; they need to be *saved* (cf. Gen. 8:21; Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Prov. 22:15; 2 Tim. 3:15). They were sent to you from God as a "gift" (Ps. 127:3), and they are *adorable* little bundles of depravity. How does Voddie Baucham put it? "It's a good thing God sends them to us so small, so they can't kill us. It's a good thing He sends them to us so cute, so we don't kill them."

Look, we all have the same problem: We are *born* "dead in sin" (Eph. 2:1); we *need* the Gospel. You need to raise them to know the Lord. Your goal is *not only* to keep them under control. That *is* important; that *is* part of parental responsibility. But the need is the Gospel—not to raise a moralistic, well-behaved child. I happen to really *like* well-behaved children, as opposed to the alternatives; I like them, too, but in a different sort of a way. But understand: You need to teach them to be "in the Lord"—"in Christ."

To obey Christ means to obey your parents as well. There is no room for debate on this; it says it right here: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, *for this is right.*"

I remember a friend of mine in seminary, when he and his wife had their first child; and as he grew up and as he started speaking, he was a pretty gregarious little guy, and he was pretty verbal at a young age. And my friend said, "Jeremy! Tell Jim your memory-verse!" And my friend said, "He has memorized his first Bible verse!" And Jeremy looked up at me with a big smile on his face, and he said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." That's smart parenting!

Did he understand "in the Lord"? No. Did he know the Ten Commandments? No. Could he articulate the Gospel? No. But he knew: That's the parent, I'm the child; they're in charge, I obey. That's where you start; and from there, you build on it. But if you don't get past just obeying, then you're going to miss the most important thing of all: This is required by God's Law, and it is a matter of *respect* as well as something given by God as a commandment.

Now, here comes the famous quote, from Exodus 20, Verse 12, and Deuteronomy 5:16—"Honor your father and mother"—then there's the little parenthetical editorial comment from Paul—"which is the first commandment with a promise"—that just means: Of the Ten Commandments, this is the first one that has a promise for those who keep it—"Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

The word "honor" means: to treat with respect, with kindness, with courtesy, and with obedience—according to who it is that you honor. In some places, this word "honor"—like in First Timothy Chapter 5—it also includes financial support for widows and for elders

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"who work hard at preaching and teaching" (vs. 17). It means: to treat with respect. This same word is used for how we respond to public officials—even if you don't agree with them, you still "honor" them (Rom. 13:7; cf. Prov. 24:21), you still "submit" to them (1 Pet. 2:13, cf. vs. 17).

And as one person said during the Covid thing—James Coates, the pastor who went to jail for having the audacity to keep the church open and let people choose whether they would come or not—he said, "Well, how do you both *submit* to the government while you *disobey* the government? You honor them." He went cheerfully; *sad*, but he went willingly to prison *for doing the right thing*. That's his "honoring" a public official, "honoring"—obeying, submitting to—"the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1).

Now, notice the contrast here between two words that are a tandem: "obey" and "honor." "Obey" is the *duty*; "honor" is the *attitude* underlying the duty. Back in Ephesians 5:33, Paul used it to speak concerning wives and husbands. In Romans 13:7, it's about public officials and the government. In Hebrews 13:7, it is used for the relationship between the elders and the congregation. The *duty* is to "obey"; the *attitude* is to "honor."

And by the way: It *is* significant—in our day, especially—that Paul so *brazenly* quoted from the Ten Commandments. They were *very important!* They were very important in Jesus' teaching as well, not only Paul and the rest of the early church (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:19). And they were seen as *just as crucial* for Gentile Christians as they were for Jewish Christians (e.g., 1 Jn. 2:4).

There is one pastor of a "megachurch" in America who has famously said that we should "unhitch" from the Old Testament. That is the statement of someone who *absolutely* is in *total, flagrant opposition* to Jesus Christ! What did Jesus say in John Chapter 5, Verse 39? "You search the Scriptures"—now, what "Scriptures" was He talking about? The Old Testament! "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (cf. Lk. 24:27; Acts 8:35; 26:22; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). It you "unhitch" the Old Testament, you unhitch *three-fourths* of the story of Jesus Christ! *You don't cut that off!* (cf. Matt. 4:4) Paul quoted it, and he told kids to "obey" it.

It is an important thing to understand the Law and the Gospel, because the Law is the *backdrop* for the Gospel (Rom. 3:20). Now, it is true: If you are talking about how to be saved, keeping laws won't do it (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9). But it is *crucial* that we understand God's *proper* use of the Law in our lives for the purpose of helping us deal with our "sin" (Rom. 7:7; cf. 1 Tim. 1:8-10). You know the word "Gospel" means "Good news," right? Well, the "good news" is set against the backdrop of the "bad news"—and the "bad news" is: We are all sinners (Rom. 3:10); we are "dead" in our sin (Eph. 2:1); we have "no hope" (Eph. 2:12).

Galatians Chapter 3, Verse 19 and Verse 24—same Apostle Paul; he wrote: "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made...Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith."

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Yes, *it is* a good thing to have your kids memorize Ephesians 6:1—*start out* with the demands of the Law. And then your kid is going to find out: "I am not perfect at obeying Mom and Dad." And they are going to understand: They need help—just as the Law is there to teach us that we need a Savior (cf. Prov. 20:9; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 7:24); so we do well to teach God's laws to our children so that early in life, they will be driven by their own awareness of their sinfulness to seek the Savior.

So he says: "Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise)..." The first one that had a promise—you'll notice there, it is worded a little bit differently here in the New Testament; in the Old Testament era, under the theocracy of Israel, it was: "that your days may be prolonged in the land." God promised Israel: "You obey My laws, I'm going to bless you in the land; you disobey My laws, I'm going to kick you out of the land" (e.g., Lev. 20:22; Deut. 28:63). How did that work out? They disobeyed His laws, and God kicked them out of the land (2 Chr. 36:15-20). And the whole point is to lead them to understand: *You need a Savior!* You need the "New Covenant," the one that has a Savior that takes away sins (Rom. 11:26-27; Heb. 8:8-12).

So, look at the next verse: "so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." So, here's a question: How can we explain the existence of *old* disobedient children, and the fact that there are some *obedient* children who die young?

Well, the answer is: Obedience and disobedience are not the *only* factors in determining the span of one's life. I don't think I would have made it to twelve, if that was the *only* factor. But it is an *important* factor. Disobedience tends to lead toward an undisciplined life, which leads to vice and dissipation. Therefore, if all other things are equal, disobedience *tends* to shorten one's life, and obedience *tends* to bring the blessing of a longer life.

And though you can't tell it in English, that interpretation is right here in this verse in the Greek. This promise is stated in the subjunctive mood; that is the grammatical mood that expresses possibility without certainty. In other words: This promise is a *principle* interwoven with other factors. And you have to say this: Even if a disobedient child with a horrible attitude lives to be a hundred years old, it will *never* "be well with" him; so it will *always* be that *that* part of the promise *is* fulfilled (cf. Prov. 4:19; 15:19; 13:15b). You do what God wants, it is well with you; it is "well with your soul" (cf. Rom. 2:9-10).

And I feel like that's kind of a shotgun that went off in seven or eight different directions. Let me see if we can draw a few Conclusions here.

First of all, I would say: There are two boundaries to the obedience to parents. *Honoring* your parents never ceases. But the first boundary of obeying your parents is marriage. When you get married—Genesis Chapter 2—you must "leave" a former relationship and "cleave" to the new one (vs. 24, KJV). "Leave" and "cleave" are very strong words; and it means that you supplant one relationship with a new one—you are *bound* to the new one. You do not *disown* your parents when you get married, but the relationship changes, and they are no longer the Number One relationship for you; your wife or your husband is that primary relationship; that new home is the central part of your life.

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The second boundary has to do with recognizing that God is a *higher* authority than parents, even if you are not married. I had a little season of my life after I came to know the Lord and before I got married; I lived with my parents several summers and one more school year before I got married. And there were times that my parents wanted to do things that I had *formerly* been just fine with—and I would politely say, "No."

You have to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29); you cannot say, "Well, because my *husband* wants to rob the bank, I'll drive the getaway car—because I have to submit to my husband." That's not how it works (e.g., Acts 5:7-10). As you become an adult, you have to walk with the Lord on your own. Like Jesus said in Matthew 10:37—"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." If it comes to making a choice between parents or family and the Lord, it is an obvious choice.

But you can "honor" your parents *always*—not necessarily always doing everything they want you to do, after you are an adult. The same is true with the "governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1); you don't have to *agree* with them in order to give appropriate "honor" where "honor" is due (Rom. 13:7; cf. 1 Pet. 2:13). And if necessary, you choose to obey God as a higher authority (Acts 4:18-20); you accept the consequences as part of God's all-wise dealing with you (Acts 5:40-42).

But let me make a couple of exhortations here:

If you still live with your parents, your duty is clear: "Obey" and "honor" your parents. Cheerfully do as they say (cf. Eph. 6:7), and treat them with respect. It does not mean you cannot ask questions. It does not mean you cannot discuss issues—but "obey" and "honor."

And by the way: Here is something to teach kids; and in this case, I wish all of them were in the service—even high school kids are away at camp—but pass this on, will you? *Obedience* and *honor* is the shortest road to gaining *trust* and *independence* from your parents. Kids don't realize how much power they have in their home; and if they would choose to be a model child, *you respond to them differently*, don't you?—so much easier than when it's an ongoing, declared war.

I would also say: If you do *not* live with your parents, but they are still alive, your duty to them is *also* clear: "Honor your father and your mother."

As of three years ago now, Marsha and I have both been orphaned; our parents are no longer with us. But there was a time when that was very, very different. My dad passed away much younger than my mom, and she was a pretty independent lady; she did well, despite some real physical limitations that she had. She was in California and we were up her, and I would talk to her every week—even before cell phones, and you didn't just text and call all the time. And I would always say, "Come on up here. I'd love to get you out of Los Angeles. Come on up here." She would say, "No, I have my friends, I have my life, I have my Bridge Club, I have all this." She loved that. One day, the phone rang, and I saw on Caller ID that it was her; and I said, "Hi, Mom." No formalities whatsoever—

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Scripture Text: Eph. 6:1-3 (Ephesians #42)

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she just said: "I'm ready. Come get me." And she moved here. And our lives became very simple, because a *whole lot* of decision-making was a *whole lot* more simple, because the Fifth Commandment got elevated to the top of the pile. Now you have a widow who is in your care. And then it happened again, and we had *two* widows in our care. It went 20 years, of being able to honor widowed family members. It could be a widow, it could be a widower, it could be both of them together—both mom and dad together, if they have physical limitations. You have to "honor" them.

And, by the way: It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of energy, on your part. But it is a *wonderful* opportunity for *you* to *let your kids* see what it means to "honor father and mother." And face it: They are going to be *your* caretaker, so, "honor your father and mother."

And if you have parents who are still alive, and you want to honor them—if you haven't already faced this, let me also mention to you: There is a time when the roles are going to be turned upside down; there will be a reversal of things. And in most families, there comes a time when you end up taking care of your parents more than they do for you. But trust me: There was a time you were totally dependent on them, and they came through—*or you wouldn't be here!* So, be helpful to your parents without demeaning their dignity or their personhood.

This overlaps next week, but it is one thing to tell your children to "obey" and "honor" their parents; but we need to recognize that the responsibility falls on the parents to make it work—and so I will try to help you understand what it means to take control, what it means to lead in a Christ-like, God-honoring sort of way.

Keep the baton of the Gospel going with your children—and, for many of us, to your *grandchildren*. You know, we have some people in the church that are *great-grandparents*? We have at least one that is a *great-great-grandparent!* Look: These principles just reverberate, generation after generation after generation. May God grant us Spirit-Led Children.

And let's pray:

Father, we do thank You. Your Word is so clear. It is humbling, and it is life-changing. Thank You for all that You do, all that You have provided us, so that we might be able to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Father, for those still raising children, for those with unborn children—oh, bless them and encourage them, that they might, from the very beginning, be faithful to what You have provided to us. For those with great regrets—it is never too late, Father, for Your grace. May we be the ones who "speak truth in love" across the generations, those ahead of us and those behind us, that You might get all of the glory for what is accomplished, in Jesus' name. Amen.