

Stadium Village Church
October 5th, 2005
God's Plan for Abundant Living
Sermon: Exodus 20:12
Why & How to Honor our Parents

Have you ever been present at the birth of a child, where there was no visible person, all of a sudden there is a real live person? Suddenly there is a little person with everything a big person has, but so compactly arranged. Life! Life demonstrated in beautiful, mysterious awesome warmth. Velvety skin flowing with blood. Life!

We were at our granddaughter's birth two years ago. We gasped with overwhelming feelings of wonder. We praised and thanked God for making life possible.

John Sartelle, a pastor from Kentucky, writes that on the day of his first child's birth, he understood the Good News of Jesus Christ much more fully than ever before. He got it!

When he held that little warm body, he was flooded with an amazing deep love for this little person he had never met before. Yes, he got God's amazing love for him, a love that flowed from the heart of God even before John loved God.

On that day his child was born, John grasped that parent-child love relationship that he had with God. That little child was loved without doing anything. John was beginning a relationship of sacrifice and love that would mirror, in a minor way, God's love and Jesus' sacrifice for him. John got it. He understood Jesus' Good News, Deep Love, & the Parent-Child relationship and God got him! The Bible says:

1 John 3:1

3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God

And that is what we are!

God loves us, his children, with a parent's sacrificial love.

God established the institution of families so that parents will love their children.

God asks children to love or honor their parents.

God even offers a reward for those children who honor their parents.

This is stated clearly in the 5th Statement (some say Commandment,) from God:

Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you.

We are studying the Ten Laws that God gave to the Jewish people

through his prophet Moses, about three-thousand, five-hundred years ago. Most of us know them as the Ten Commandments. However, the Jewish people call them the Ten Words or statements or the Decalogue. The statement we will be focusing on today is the fifth statement: to honor our parents.

(AND the 3rd statement that is Positive. The first positive statement is I AM the Lord your God. The second is remembering the Sabbath and now honoring your father and mother...)

One of you asked why the church windows have the commandments listed with three numbers on one tablet and seven on the other. This is a good question that again reminds us that the Ten Statements of God are listed somewhat differently by various Bible believers. Plus their divisions on the 2 tablets are interpreted somewhat differently too. Before I explain why the windows are as they are, I want us to remember that no matter how we list and categorize these words of the Lord's, the content, the meaning is always the same.

(I mentioned before that the Ten Commandments are not listed by number in the Bible.)

The Catholics, particularly, the Scholar Augustine, stated that the command, Worship only God and Don't worship idols, was the first commandment. Therefore, the First three commandments, by their reckoning, were about our relationship to God, and the last seven were about our relationships with other people. (You can see these on your newsletter.) It is my guess is that these windows were made either by a Roman Catholic or Lutheran craftsman. Perhaps the Reformed church leaders (for this church is a reformed or Presbyterian church) were not paying close attention to the traditions of their faith. Otherwise they would have demanded that four numbers were listed on the first tablet and six on the second.

However, today I would like to propose a third way to list the Ten Words that God wrote on the two tablets of stone. This is the traditional Jewish way. Look again on the front left of your newsletter.

I suggest that the list be divided evenly: five on one tablet and five on the other. The first five are about our relationship to God. The second five are about our relationship to others.

Most people would agree that I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, worship no other gods, don't make or worship idols, and keep the Sabbath Day Holy are concerning our relationship to God.

Most people would agree that the sixth to tenth commandments are about our relationships to other But here is why I think that the fifth commandment, *Honor Your Father and Mother* which is the only commandment that comes with a promise, *Then you will live a long, full*

life in the land the Lord your God will give you, should be listed with the first four Commandments about God.

The First Statement given by God, as the Jewish faith counts them, is I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from Slavery in Egypt. If you remember how the Hebrew people often write, they use parallelisms and chiasms.

Note how the first and fifth statements have similar elements.

1. They both name authority figures (God and Father & Mother)
2. They both mention the land, one is the land of Egypt and one is the land of promise
3. They both give God credit for moving the people out of or into the land.
4. One speaks of slavery the other speaks of long life.

I see these as book ends of the first tablet which lays the basis for living a life close to God.

Note how the first and fifth Words or Commands imply the Trinity: The Father is the head, the Son of Life is in contrast to Satan's slavery and the Holy Spirit is the one who moves us from bondage into life.

The second set of five Commandments lists more specifics of how to live in society. Think of the two parts of the Cross: us to God vertical and us to others the horizontal.

The fifth Commandment is the basis for society: the family. God has established only three institutions for the whole world. They are Government, The Church, and, the first one he established was the Family, or Marriage.

The Family is so close to God's heart for it is within the family that God planned three things to happen:

1. The family is the basis for human relationships. It is the core, the nucleus, the basic unit of society. The Family, - Mother, Father and Children- is where people are cared for and protected. It is said that "As the Family goes, So goes the Nation." Sometimes the family may include grandparents and other distant relatives. But God ordained that when a man and woman become one in marriage, they should leave their own parents and cleave to each other. It is like a cell dividing. The new family becomes complete.
2. The family is also where the individual is developed. We build our characters, we nurture our personalities, we practice our gifts first within the family. The family prepares a person to live in society.

A family can make or break the individual. If we had parents, especially fathers, that cursed us with the words: "You'll never amount to anything." or "You are a failure", then we spend much of our adult lives

trying to untangle the sticky webs of unworthiness. We try to PROVE ourselves. We crave to be the center of attention. We hope beyond hope that our parents will admit our worthiness, our value; That value was given to us by God. But parents increase our feelings of worth. Families are the structures where people feel loved. Families are the structures where people learn how to share. If you are a parent, the answer to your child's question: *Do you love me?* Is always yes. The answer to your child's question, *Can I have my own way?* Is not always yes.

3. The 3rd reason God ordained families is to provide a safe place where a person can learn about authority. Children learn to respect parents' authority so that when they enter society they will be able to obey not only the teacher, not only their boss, but particularly they will be able to respect and obey God.

When they get punished for their disobedience, they can get the big picture that that's how life is. If we disobey our authorities, we suffer consequences. How much better would the world be today, if everyone understood the authority of God and desired to obey God? This is not rocket science. This is cause and effect.

Respecting our parents helps us to learn how to respect God. Parents are God's hands and feet to help little people learn the most important lessons of life: God (like their parents) loves them and (like their parents) has a job for them to do and (hopefully like their parents) will punish them if they disobey or don't do their jobs. But God (again, like their parents) will forgive them if they admit their faults, turn around and try to do better.

God established parents to do his work. In legal terms the word used for parents is *in loco dei...* which is Latin for "In the Place of God."

Yes, this is WHY we must Respect our Parents. Our parents are standing in for God. They are God's best object lesson in life, to teach us to love, respect and obey God.

But what if I get old? Must I still obey my parents? And what if my parents are crazy or they ask me to do something that I know is wrong? Should I still respect my parents?

As I see it, there are three levels of honoring & respecting our parents. They have to do with our age. Child, Teenager or Adult.

Children should learn to obey their parents. Obey in Greek comes from two words, Hupo meaning Under, and Accuo meaning Hearing. Under the acoustics/sound. Kids should listen to their parents, and then obey

immediately, completely and with a good attitude.

Let's unpack that for just a minute.

When a child is really small, it is difficult to get them to obey. We can explain to them about not going into the street, but sometimes we must do what I had to do with my youngest. At fifteen months, he was too adventurous, and in order for me to rake the leaves, I had to tie him with a long rope to the tree. I am a little embarrassed about this. He wasn't a dog after all. But honestly, it was the only way to get my work done and keep him safely out of the street. He couldn't obey me, so I had to force him in some way so that he would be kept safe.

We hope that our children do not need to learn to obey by force. But it is extremely important to save their lives, both physically and spiritually. That's why we teach them early to immediately obey. When we say stop, they must learn to stop immediately. Perhaps we can see a car coming that they can't. If we do not teach them to obey us completely they may end up dead.

God wants us to teach them to obey us. Then they will be able to obey God, (we pray). A child's very future depends on his or her obedience to God and his ways. Whether that future is tomorrow, thirty years from now or after death, their future depends on their obedience to God's Plans for their lives.

2. By the time a child is a teenager, they can honor or respect their parents by not only by obeying them, but by cooperating with their parents.

When we put up the paper for Mother's Day last May, and you were asked to write a famous saying of your mother, many of you wrote that your mother said *Clean up your room*. Now would your mother have been happy if you took one month to clean your room? Would she have been happy if you cleaned only a quarter of it? Would she have been happy if you cleaned it while you were yelling about how much you hated your family and your bedroom? No. Part of the trimmings of obedience is to obey immediately, completely, and with a good attitude.

Would the end of the world come if your room was not clean? No. But by your cooperating with your parents' wishes, you honored them.

Do you know what the punishment was in the Old Testament times for a child that disobeyed or dishonored their parents? They were stoned by the men of the city. (Deut.21:21)

Yes, God wants us to respect and cooperate with our parents, even when they are wrong.

Now there are times when we even as adults, must not cooperate with our parents.

1.If they ask us to do something illegal, we can disobey them, unless

life is involved. So sometimes during war, for example, the government might try to kill people. We saw this in Europe. Parents were hiding Jews, for example, which was against the civil law. And the children were participating with their parents in the saving of lives, even though it was illegal.

But if a parent asks a child to steal, for example, the child may respectfully refuse.

2. Another instance when a child can disobey a parent is having to do with faith. If a parent commands a child to not believe in Jesus, or not to listen to God, then it is OK for a child to disobey a parent. We must honor God first, then our parents. In our family, we have parents who are NOT Christians. They do not like what we believe and would like us to change. We can not. However, the rule of love must also apply. Usually God provides a way for love to win. We must be sensitive and look for creative alternatives that do not violate God's Will.
3. This leads me to the last reason we can disobey our parents and the last relationship of respecting our parents, the adult relationship with our parents.

First, I mentioned the child's way to honor their parents being one of obedience. The teenagers' method of showing honor is to obey and cooperate with their parents. Thirdly, the adult way of honoring our parents is to affirm them and provide for them.

We may not agree with our parents. We may even realize that perhaps they were not good parents, But we can affirm them as parents who sacrificed in some way for us. We can affirm them as people who are loved by God. We can praise them, even if they did not praise us. We must communicate with them, no matter how difficult that is. Because this is what God wants.

Then, if they need our help, we must provide for them. We must make sure that they are kept well. We must honor them with our presence even if it is only with a phone call or letter. We must sacrifice not only our time but our money to make sure they are comfortable. This pleases God. God wants to reward us for doing these sacrificial acts. He promises to bless our lives. And what a blessing it is, after our parents die, to know that we honored them as best we could. Do you know that pain of living with shame and guilt? Of course, Jesus forgives us. But it is not a blessed life to know that a parent was shunned and not honored.

Again I repeat, your parent may be difficult to love. Perhaps they are an alcoholic or abrasive. God said to HONOR them.

Recently, my parents moved to the Twin Cities. It is a real privilege for me to help them live better. But I know it will not be easy. I must sacrifice time. I must keep my mouth closed when I want to refute what

they say.

There is an area when I will not honor them, however. And this is the last of three reasons not to honor or obey our parents.

The 1st one was if they ask us to do something illegal.

The 2nd, if they ask us to do something that dishonors God or our relationship to God.

And the 3rd reason it is required that we do not Honor our parents' wishes is if they put a wedge between their child and the child's spouse. God commanded a married couple to leave their parents and cleave to each other. (Gen. 2:24) We must not obey our parents when they are causing trouble between us and our spouse.

We had a good friend whose parents never really liked his wife. There was always an undercurrent of disapproval from them about everything she was and did. You can probably guess that this marriage ended in divorce. This is wrong in God's eyes.

Perhaps you obey your parents because you hope that your parents will be nice to you. Perhaps you come from a culture where you had a family altar. Each day your mother or father gave your dead ancestors some rice, some flowers, fruit and incense, because they thought that the dead relatives have some control on their present lives. They worshiped the spirits of their parents or grandparents.

This is not God's plan for honoring our parents. We don't worship people! The reason we honor our parents is not for the good life we will have as a result. No, we honor our parents because God said we should. God knows it is the right thing for us to do. All of Creation will be better, when children honor their parents. It is the way God set up the world.

Look how God ended his message in the Old Testament. These are God's last written words before Jesus came:

Malachi 4:4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Sinai for all Israel.

5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.

6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Do you catch how Important to God it is for us to honor, to respect, to give weight and glory to our parents. (for that is what the Hebrew word for honor means)? If we don't, even the land will be cursed.

O beloved friends. Please consider your parents. Please know that how we treat our parents is a reflection of our relationship to God. What can you do today to honor your parents? They may not be alive tomorrow. Let's pray

Please help us to obey You, Lord.

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