

Session 3

September 20, 2020

HONOR PARENTS

Exodus 20:12; 2 Samuel 15:7-14

So important is the family relationship to spiritual wellbeing, that the apostle Paul reminded the church at Ephesus, “Children, obey your parents as you would the Lord, because this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land” (Eph. 6:1-3). Clearly, there is a strong connection between honoring one’s parents, and honoring God. This week’s lesson looks at what to do, and what *not* to do when it comes to honoring parents.

What to do when it comes to your parents (Ex. 20:12). The fifth of the Ten Commandments bridges the gap nicely between those relating to God and those relating to man. Children are to obey their parents (Eph. 6:2) while still children; but honoring them is not limited by any age. To honor is primarily to revere, respect, and obey. But it stretches beyond that to supporting, comforting, and *easing* them into old age. The promise attached, “that you may have a long life in the land” might seem strange at first, but actually makes perfect sense. First, practically, how one treats his or her parents is a valuable measure of moral fiber and character, those attributes that make one’s life healthier, wealthier, and wiser. Second, from the spiritual perspective, our relationship with God is both demonstrated and understood in filial fashion. God is our Heavenly Father. We are children of God. Those who honor their Heavenly Father will honor their earthly parents, and vice versa. The importance of this deep devotion was not only supported by a *promise*, but failure to do so was met with the severest of *penalties*: death! (see Lev. 20:9). How could this possibly be? Just as honoring earthly parents indicated godly commitment, disgracing or abusing those who give life, nurture, and support indicates a thoroughly selfish disregard for those things God desires most. For reflection: *In what ways do we honor (or dishonor) the elderly in general? How about our parents specifically?*

What NOT to do when it comes to your parents (2 Sam. 15:7-14). The example we are given in this text provides a dramatic contrast to the fifth Commandment. The story of David and his son Absalom is filled with tragedy. Back in 2 Samuel 13, Absalom took the law into his own hands and killed a half-brother that his father David should have punished but let go. Once the deed was done, Absalom feared his father and fled (2 Sam. 13:37). Yet David longed to be reconciled with his son Absalom. Eventually, some measure of peace was restored, until Absalom again undermined his father’s authority and declared himself king (2 Sam. 15:10). This time, it was King David who fled in fear (2 Sam. 15:14). In the end, David’s army confronted Absalom’s, and defeated him. Unfortunately, Absalom was killed in the battle, leaving David heartbroken at the loss of a murderous, rebellious son whom he still dearly loved (2 Sam. 18:33).

The story highlights the treacherous path that awaits one who turns against his parent. Perhaps some of the descent might have been avoided if David had handled the sordid sin in his family (see 2 Sam. 13:1-15), rather than allowing the bitter wound to fester. Nevertheless, every attempt that David made to reconcile with his wayward son was met with betrayal and rebellion.

No parent is perfect. But one can honor a parent even without agreeing with everything that parent believes or does. Remember, honor involves respecting parents because of *who they are*,

not necessarily for *what they do*. For reflection: *As a parent, how does it make you feel when your children show you honor and respect, even though you have often made mistakes in their upbringing?*