

EPHESIANS 6:2-3 3-15-15
In Honor of Parents

(Ephesians 6) The week ahead is noted as one of our great cultural spectacles that goes by the name of “March Madness.” It is the NCAA men’s basketball tournament, and people who have not watched a college game all year will be glued to their sets. For some, they are drawn there by the allure of betting pools. For others, they enjoy the human drama that the tournament always seems to showcase. As one who has had the pleasure of coaching basketball teams that included my own children, I find myself rooting for coaches who are doing the same on a bigger stage. In last year’s tournament this meant University of Creighton where Dad Greg McDermott coached his son, Doug, the nation’s leading scorer. They had high hopes that got dashed and we were able to watch them share the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat while further bonding as father and son. But their positive relationship reminded me of other father-son dramas in the tournament that were not so sweet. I thought of 1997 when the University of Arizona team won, with a star guard named Mike Bibby whose dad was a former star himself, but in that case the dad wasn’t around for the big game and his son, Mike, was known to hate him and refuse to talk about him. Can you imagine?

Oh, families!! They can be so great or they can be so grievous. We said it last week and I say it again: Parent/child relationships bring to us some of life’s greatest joys and some of life’s greatest pains. God speaks to us in His word about how to make family the source of joy and strength He designed it to be. There are responsibilities here for parents, certainly. We will look at those soon enough, but there are duties for children too. Here is what God says **1-3** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.* The two words that sum up a child’s duty to his parents are the words “obey” and “honor.” Last Sunday we spent our whole time on the command to obey. You parents may want to purchase a copy for your kids to listen to every couple of days. This morning though we are going to look at the second duty which is to honor our parents. The command to honor is more comprehensive than the command to obey. There is a time when you no longer must obey, but you never get over the responsibility to honor your parents. To honor means you hold them in high regard and you treat them respectfully, even reverently. In a society like ours that is so image-conscious the older a person gets the less natural esteem he receives. He is physically diminished and maybe mentally diminished as well. But from God’s viewpoint this makes them a

fit subject, not of ridicule, but of special esteem. 2-3 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Except for the parenthesis in verse 2 that is a quote from the Old Testament, from the ten commandments. Paul simply picks it up out of Deuteronomy and drops it right here in the midst of his instructions to Christian children. You see that Christianity does not nullify Old Testament law. The moral law of the ten commandments still applies to Christian believers. If it did not, there would be no point in including it here. But Paul says, “Honor your Mom and Dad.” Why? What’s his reason? Well, it is a commandment. It is the first commandment with a promise. Before you get to the promise, you see it is a command of God, not something open to change by Congress. You are to obey because God says to, but the Lord goes on and says it is a command with a promise. Now that is neat isn’t it? God didn’t need to give a promise with the command but He graciously did so. The promise is two-fold. It speaks of a quality of life 3a SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU. And it speaks of a quantity of life, of duration. 3b THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. So, does this mean that if you honor your parents you are guaranteed to live to 90 without sickness and then die in your sleep? No, the promise, as it was made in the context of the ten commandments was directed toward Israel as a corporate people. It meant that if the children of Israel would keep this command then they would prosper and they would remain undisturbed in the land of promise, in Canaan, for a long, long, time. So the relevance of the promise is not directly to us in the age of the new covenant. But, I didn’t say it was irrelevant. Any society that cares for its parents, its elderly, will naturally be a society where the individual lives longer as well. Still, to me, the most important thing I get out of the inclusion of the promise is that God is saying, “Hey, this is important to Me.” He is saying that He is pleased when we honor our parents and that blessings will be poured out upon us as we do. That is as true now as it was for Israel. So, we honor parents because it is a command; and we gladly obey the command because it holds promise of blessing for those who do.

On the other hand, what do the Scriptures say about those who fail to honor their parents? By implication, if obedience here means longer life, disobedience means what? Shorter life. If obedience means that it will go well with you, then disobedience means what? It will go badly for you. In the book of Proverbs the miserable man is the one called *the fool*. 15:20 *A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish man despises his mother.* There you go. The word “despise” is the opposite of the word “honor.” God says that the man who despises his mom is a fool. I bet we have

some fools right here don't you think? The world is sadly full of young people who despise their mothers, who treat mom and dad with contempt and disdain. You young people, listen to me. Some of you think your mom is a dumb religious quack. At least you act like that. When she instructs you, you roll your eyes. You are slow to obey. You talk back to her disrespectfully; you argue about stupid little things, and you speak ill of her to your friends. That is despising your mom and God says you're a fool. You may get some sadistic pleasure in bringing your mother's head down in grief but God Almighty is noticing what you are doing. Proverbs 30:**17ab** *The eye that mocks a father And scorns a mother.* That is the eye that rolls back to say, "what goobers I have for parents!" Listen **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.* That is a physical picture of what is going to happen to the fools who despise mother or father. It will not go well with them, and they will not live long on the earth.

Now, what difference will this make in your life? How then shall we go and honor our parents? I know every one of you, especially you young people, are eager to find out, so let's chew on this a while. I am going to offer seven ways to express honor to your parents, and most of these apply to adult children as well as younger ones. #1 You honor your parents by speaking respectfully to them ®. You who are still in your parent's homes don't you go grumping and griping to your parents about what you gotta eat and the chores you gotta do and the rules around the house. I know that's a problem. I had to constantly remind our kids how to speak to their mother and to me and probably never did it enough. Griping, sassing, pestering for treats and toys is dishonoring to your parents. Watch how you speak to them. So often kids talk to their parents like they are addressing their peers or even worse. They are impatient and rude. You kids, that is a sin against God when you do that. Repent of that wickedness. I'll call it what it is, it is wickedness. Speak respectfully to your parents. When they instruct you or admonish you or give you a job to do, how are you going to respond? "Yes Mam, Yes Sir."

Second way to honor parents is to speak respectfully about them. ® This starts with what you call them. Christian kids do not refer to their parents as *my Old Lady* or *my Old Man*. You are not to go around to your friends bad-mouthing them and complaining about them. You speak well of your parents to others. Don't criticize them publicly or hang their dirty laundry for all to see. You protect their reputation by what you say and don't say. Speak respectfully about your parents. I know a man in our church who was just blown away because he discovered his son's Facebook page and

on it the young man had listed his father as being his hero and even said he was the greatest man he knew. Let me tell ya, that dad was so touched and energized by that, he was ready to do anything to live up to his son's praise. Kids your words can motivate your parents or they can crush them. What do you think God wants from you?

Thirdly, Christian children of all ages are to be sensitive to their parent's feelings. ® When I was in high-school my parents went through a divorce. Being the last of five siblings, I was the only child at home during that time and I saw my mother cry more times than I can remember. When we left my dad, it was just my mother and I living together. I got to see and touch her feelings in an unusually close way and I figured out that parents have feelings too. Just because your mom or dad don't cry when you disappoint them doesn't mean they don't feel it. They do. ® You treat your parents with some tenderness. Remember their birthdays and anniversaries and the seasons of life that are difficult for them. Write them letters or call them on the phone. Let them know you value their role in your life. Be sensitive to their feelings.

Way to honor parents #4 is to respect their views. ® It's amazing how often a parent will work hard to send his child to college and all he gets for it is a child that knows too much to listen to his parents anymore. God forbid that we should turn off the counsel of our parents. You may not agree with them, and that's okay, but you do well to listen to what they say. My father was in real estate for 30 years before he died. When I bought our first house I called him to talk about it, to find out what he thought I should be looking for. That made sense to me. It seemed wise for me to do so and I thought it would be a good way to bring him into my life. After he died, one of his realtor friends told me that I was the first of his five children to ask his counsel about a house purchase and that meant something to him. Ask your parents counsel about marriage and children and money and whatever else seems appropriate. That honors them.

The fifth way to honor your parents is to provide for them financially. ® Young children dishonor their parents by wasting their money or they can honor them by working to help make ends meet. Older children, adult children, are sometimes faced with parents who need your support financially. Honoring them normally means you give it for them gladly. Listen to this account of a wedding. *All eyes were on the radiant bride as her father escorted her down the aisle. They reached the altar and the waiting groom; the bride kissed her father and placed something in his hand. The guests in the front pews responded with ripples of laughter, Even the priest smiled broadly. As her father gave her away in marriage, the bride gave him back his credit card. Yes,*

there is a time when kids are called to start giving back to the ones who gave them so much. At least, to look out for their needs. Now, I am not talking about the situation where your parents “need” a cruise, or “need” a high-def TV. I am thinking of more basic provisions. In Mark 7 Jesus rebuked the Pharisees on precisely this point, for not providing for their needy parents and He said their failure to care for them in that way violated the fifth commandment. Financial provision for elderly parents isn’t all you can do for them, but it is a place to start.

#6 - way to honor your parents is to express your gratitude. I hope you feel grateful for your parents. A few of you had horrendous homes, and that’s tragic, but most of you didn’t. You have parents who have been faithful in their marriages. You never caught your dad in bed with some stranger. You never came home to drunken mommas. Some kids come home every day to drunken mothers. Your parents never let you go hungry for even a day. Have you thanked them? For whatever you can have you said thank-you, loud enough, often enough? Maybe what you should do in response to the Lord’s word today is go home and write a long overdue letter to your mother or father recounting before them the blessings that have been yours because they cared and gave and loved you. Express your gratitude.

Finally, I suggest you honor your parents by consciously seeking their happiness. ® We are going to spend a bit more time on this one, because I find that few Christians understand that God wants us to make it our ambition to have happy parents. You kids especially want to grasp this. The command to honor your parents goes beyond obeying them when they set forth the rules of the house. God wants you to see to it that your parents are really glad to call you their child. Proverbs 10:**1** *A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.* Proverbs 15:**20** *A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish man despises his mother.* One more Proverbs 23:**24,25** *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. 25 Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her rejoice who gave birth to you.* Did you hear that?! If I could grab you young people by the shirt and pull you close to me right now I would. Listen! God says you are to have as one of your chief goals in life to have happy parents who are proud to look at you and say, “That’s my boy! That’s my girl!” The primary way to do that is by living your life in such a way that makes your parents proud. Proverbs 29:**3a** *A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad.* Proverbs 27:**11a** *Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad.* The apostle John said something every Christian parent can relate to III John **4** *I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.* That’s an awesome thing. There is no greater

joy this side of heaven than to see and hear those in whom we have invested so much, bearing fruit of eternal life, demonstrating wisdom in practical ways. As children, we can endeavor to give our parents that kind of joy. For some of you that is a strong desire. But I know that for others you have cared little or nothing for how your decisions affect your parents and I pray God might graciously meet you in conviction of sin and repentance. You have not been bringing joy to your parents, but grief. You have been a pain in their necks and a thorn in their sides. And on the basis of God's word I stand before you today and command you to repent. Repent of rolling eyes and argumentative spirits. Repent of your lack of affection. Some of you won't hug your parents or kiss your parents. You fuss if they show affection at all, at least if its public. You act like you are ashamed of your parents. Can you see how wrong all that is? You take a simple issue like a haircut or like the clothes you are going to wear. How many times have American young people fought with their parents over something ridiculous like that? I read of Christian heroes who submit to torture in order to keep God's law and yet some of you won't get a haircut to obey the fifth commandment.

Read Proverbs one time through and you will see that in matters of hair and dress and the like the rule is not "let your peer group be glad and let her rejoice who flirts with you between classes." The rule is to let your father and mother be glad. This means that if you go to your dad and ask if you can dye your hair purple or stick something thru your lip or wear a certain kind of outfit and your father grimaces - you have seen enough. ® When you understand that a certain choice brings pain to your parents, unless that choice is a command of God then you do as your parents require - no, no, you do more than that. You do better than that. You also do as your parents desire. Let your father and mother be glad.

So, there you have your seven ways to honor father and mother. You speak respectfully to them and about them; you be sensitive to their feelings; you respect their views; you provide for them financially; you express gratitude and you seek for their happiness. And God says to do these things for parents both good and bad. For ultimately, when we honor parents we honor who? The Lord who gives this command. I close with a story about one young man who sought to do as God says toward a father in the most difficult of circumstances. The story is told by an evangelist named Lionel Fletcher who was preaching the gospel in a friends church in northern England 80 years ago. He says that at the service was a rough-looking man sitting in a pew near the front. He arrested my attention because his face showed such obvious signs of the ravages of sin. He did not sing the

hymns or even look at the hymn sheet. Sitting around him were people from comfortable backgrounds, mostly young men and women from good homes. Although surrounded by others this one man was clearly alone. When I invited those to come forward who wanted to accept Christ and confess Him as Savior this man was the first down the aisle. He stood at the center of a line of people who were standing to make commitments to God. I could see now that he was dressed poorly and his face was lined with deep furrows. Before I could address those who had come forward the minister of the church took me by the arm and at the same time grasped this poor man's arm and led us both into another room. He began to tell me the history of the man before me. His name was Jack and his life had been marked by drunkenness and cruelty. The minister held back nothing, but what broke the poor man's heart was the story which was told me of how he had treated his son named Charlie. Some time before Charlie had received the Lord in this church. He was only 16 years old and small for his age. When he returned home that night he bravely announced that he was going to live his life for Christ. His father, who was drunk, instantly seized him by the neck and beat him with his leather belt. He told him that he intended to beat him every time he dared go to that church. The next Sunday Charlie went to church and when he got home he was beaten again, but this time with such severity that his back was bruised and bleeding because of the brass buckle on his father's belt. Undaunted the brave young man continued to serve Christ, loving and honoring his father in every way he could, but continuing to attend church until his father became a raging madman and nearly carried out his threat to kill him. One bitter winter night, after a terrible beating Charlie was thrown out of the house. He ended up in the pig sty and was grateful to find a heap of straw to lie upon. Charlie's father later threatened his wife into telling him where Charlie was. When she told him out of fear that he was in the pig sty she begged him to leave him alone, but Jack, arming himself with his belt went downstairs and dragged Charlie out of the pig sty, and threw him into a cold cellar saying, "Try to find some warmth there!" But all through that weary night the young Christian prayed for his father's salvation. For months this unequal contest went on until the night of the meeting. Now Jack stood before the two preachers sobbing like a child. Then came the climax of that wonderful night. The ministers and those who had made professions were all standing in front of me. I was about to pray when the door burst open. Suddenly, standing before us was a white-faced boy with blue eyes peeping out from under a shock of red hair. He had clogs on his feet and a thick scarf around his neck. He was breathing heavily for he had been running as fast as his legs could carry him from the mill where he worked. I

knew it was Charlie. Two friends had run to the mill and alerted him that his father had answered the altar call. Although only a few of us knew the story behind this, everyone felt that something out of the ordinary was happening. In the silence I looked from the white face of the boy to the flushed face of the man, and I saw great tears splashing down both faces. Neither said a word, and then the boy's arms came out as if inviting an embrace. The man made a slight movement and with one jump Charlie was across the floor flinging his arms around his father's neck. He kissed him and they wept together. I was very close to them and I saw Charlie's hand slip up to his father's face as he began to pat it. I heard him say, "Father how I love you ...how I love you."

When the manager of the mill heard the story he changed Charlie's hours for the rest of the meetings. And night after night those two sat side by side looking as if the light of heaven had dawned on their faces. Jack soon picked up the choruses and their two voices would reach me in the pulpit as he sang, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear...." They were the last two to say goodbye to me after the closing meeting and I went away thanking God that I still believed and preached the gospel of His redeeming love." Honor Thy Father and thy Mother, that it may also be well with you. Let's pray.