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**Key Texts:**

Ephesians 6:1-3, Exodus 20:12, Hebrews 12:9-10

**Key Challenge:**

We should obey and honor our parents, because we want to obey and honor God. Our view of our parents’ honorability should have no impact on this.

We are beginning a new series tonight on relationships. I know that excites some of you. Perhaps you are hoping that we will be teaching you how to get into a relationship. Maybe you’ve been in or are in one right now, but you’re not very good at it, so you’re hoping we’ll help you learn how to be better. Or maybe you’re trapped, and you’re hoping for that one verse you can text him or her, so that you can break up with them for God.

Well, I have good news for you. We’re probably not going to be helpful with any of that. But we are going to be helpful with your most-important relationships.

This series will not just be about dating. This series will not just be about sexual purity. Those things will be discussed at some point, but not tonight, so don’t worry about it being awkward … yet.

In this series, we’re going to be talking about how to be who you need to be in your most­-important relationships. We’ll begin tonight by looking how you can be who God wants you to be in your relationship with your parents.

Next week, we’re going to look at how you can be the friend God wants you to be, to both your Christian and non-Christian friends.

We will end the month talking about being who God wants you to be in a dating relationship—and yes, that does involve some purity talk. But I promise it will not be a list of do’s and don’ts. It’ll be a discussion on why God wants what He wants from you, and how following Him really will lead you into a fuller life.

So tonight, we’re talking about how to be right in our relationship with our parents. Let’s address the elephant in the room: what does the Bible say about how we are to respond to and treat our parents? Yes, we are to obey them and to honor them.

Let’s look at every parent’s favorite verses, shall we?

**Ephesians 6:1–3 (ESV):**

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”*

There are two distinct commands here. The first is to children. Obedience is a primary goal for children who are still under their parents’ authority. I know it says it’s for children, and I know you do not feel like children. But “children” includes people who are living under their parents’ authority.

As my parents always put it, “As long as you live under my roof, you’ll live under my rules.” So until I married and moved out, I did my best to obey most of the time, and when I didn’t—regardless of how I felt about the rules I didn’t obey—I was wrong.

Although I am my parents’ child (obvious statement of the evening), I do not fall into this command any longer, because I am no longer in the position of a child. Most of you, however, do. You are living under your parents’ care, under their roofs, and under their authority.

The second command is to honor our parents. I do not believe this necessarily applies only to children. I believe that even as an adult, I should honor my parents. To honor someone means to revere them, or to acknowledge the value that they have. Although I do not need to obey my parents at this point in my life, I do still honor them. I do respect them, and I show them respect. I believe that honoring our parents should be a primary goal for all children, whether we are grown and out of the home or not.

Your position in your relationship with your parents is one of obedience and honor. Now, this isn’t mind-blowing information so far. I know that. I wanted to get the basic information out of the way, and get to something that I have been asked time and time again. In my years as a youth pastor, I have heard this similar question many times: “What if my parents are not worthy of honor?” Or, “What if my parents aren’t honorable, or haven’t earned my respect?” Or something along those lines.

**[Author Note:** I shared a story about my failure to properly honor my parents in my high school years. You may use my story, use your own, or no story at all. The message will flow the same in all cases.]

God’s command for you to honor and obey your parents is independent of their honorability.

I get it—this is something I struggled with in high school. There was a particular time span when my mom was really over-the-top angry and mean. I’m not saying that to be disrespectful. She knows about this time period, and we talk openly about it. She was miserable, and she was acting in a way that was making a lot of us miserable in the home.

I decided that I had had enough. If she was going to be mean and rude, I was going to be mean and rude right back to her. Though these are not great talents to aspire toward, I will say that when it came to being mean and rude, I excelled. So when my mom would start in on me, I would push the right buttons to make my mom leave me alone, which usually resulted in her crying. I would say mean things, I made fun of her, and I was otherwise openly disrespectful. And I didn’t feel any remorse. After all, she started it. I didn’t come home from school looking to pick fights with my mom, but if she started it, I wanted to win at all costs.

This went on for a few months. I participated in it, obviously, but I wasn’t happy about it. I’m a momma’s boy. I always have been. We were always close. I hated that my mom was being mean to me, and I didn’t like that our relationship was what it had become, but I was too stubborn to do my part.

Long story short, she ended up going to the doctor after a few months, because she was feeling terrible. Her body was going haywire, making her miserable, and she was just taking that out on anyone else. She ended up having to have surgery to correct some issues she was having, and after the surgery, she went back to who she had been before all that.

I wish I could say that our relationship immediately went back to how it had been before all that, but it didn’t. In my mom’s suffering—which I did not know about at the time—I added more pain to her pain. I disrespected her for months. We are good now, but it took time to repair that, not because she didn’t forgive me, but because we had grown so far apart.

But it didn’t have to be that way. If I had done my part through that, regardless of what my mom was doing, our relationship would have been stronger coming out of that than it had ever been. I should have continued to honor her and show her respect, despite doing what I thought she deserved in those moments.

Obeying and showing honor are independent choices you make on a daily basis. You can’t control how your parents live—and granted, most of your parents are very honorable people, but I understand that some may not be—but what you can control is how you live. Each person is accountable for whether or not he or she obeyed God. God’s command is to obey and honor your parents, and whether or not you do that is within your control. It may not always be easy, but it’s doable, and it’s the call on each of your lives.

Now, on a side note, if you are living in a household that’s dangerous or abusive or where you feel unsafe, the honorable thing to do is to report that you are being harmed. Please come talk to me or another adult leader after the service, and we will get you and your parents help.

What I want to do now is look at where these commands came from, the parents in question, and what God expected. Does anyone know where those verses in Ephesians 6 draw from originally? It comes from the 10 Commandments, given in Exodus 20.

**Exodus 20:12**

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”*

Who were the 10 Commandments given to originally? They were first given to Moses, who then gave them to the people of Israel. Moses went up on Mount Sinai and met with God. God gave him a lot of commandments for man to follow, not just 10. The 10 Commandments are really just the “highlights” of those original commandments.

And one of those highlights was to honor our fathers and mothers. The penalty back then for *not* honoring your parents was being put to death—so I guess you could say things were pretty serious in this area.

Do you think “honorable” is a good description of the parents whose children were the first to receive the command to honor their fathers and mothers? You probably guessed that if I’m asking the question, the answer is that they were not honorable.

In fact, while Moses was up on the mountain receiving the law from God, the people did something really stupid. They got tired of waiting, and in Exodus 32, they had Aaron make them a golden calf idol that they could worship. God was angry and sent Moses down to deal with it. Three-thousand men were put to death that day, but even more engaged in idolatry and adultery. They did the wrong, dishonorable things. But what was God’s command?

 *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”*

That wasn’t the last time those parents were dishonorable, either, but God didn’t change the law to account for that. Those parents didn’t even get to enter the Promise Land. They lacked faith and obedience, so God made them march around the wilderness for 40 years until they died off. God handled the punishments. It was not the children’s place to put their parents in their place.

It is not our place to put our parents in their place. It is our place to honor and obey our parents, because we love God and want to honor and obey Him. And this is what it comes down to, really. God is our heavenly Father, and He wants us to learn to honor and obey Him. Though God is never dishonorable, He may call upon you to do things that do not make sense to you, that do not make you happy, or that even make you afraid. Through our relationship with our parents, we can learn to obey God, to honor Him, and to respect His discipline in our lives.

**Hebrews 12:9–10**

*Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.*

When we obey, honor, and follow God, He brings us into full life through Jesus Christ. Our parents prepare us to obey, honor, and follow God. Our relationship with our parents prepares us to experience full life in Christ.