

February 15, 2026 (Lesson 11)

RESPONSIBILITY OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS

1. **Children Must Honor Their Parents** (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Matthew 15:1-6)
2. **Children Must Obey Their Parents** (Proverbs 23:22, 24-26; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20)
3. **Benefits of Honoring Parents** (Proverbs 1:8-9; 2:1-6; Ephesians 6:2-3)

Central Truth: God's Word instructs children to honor and obey their parents.

Focus: Highlight and reinforce the truth that children must honor and obey their parents.

Evangelism Emphasis: Submitting one's life wholly to Christ can enrich family relationships.

Golden Text: "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3).

Healthy relationships with others require mutual interests, understanding, and interaction. In a marriage, couples exchange love, respect, and commitment as they form a lasting bond. Among friends, qualities such as trust, loyalty, and selflessness are often evident and frequently expressed. In a family, there is a free interchange of affection, generosity, service, and protection. Parents have a natural obligation to their children to nurture, guide, and provide for them. While the greater burden in the parent-child relationship rests on mothers and fathers, sons and daughters are expected to demonstrate responsibility to them in turn.

In the early years of childhood, we were totally dependent on our parents for food, comfort, and guidance. We were mostly willing to submit to their efforts to meet our needs. As we developed, we learned to walk on our own and articulate what we wanted or desired. In time, we developed the ability to manage without the amount of oversight needed in infancy. We became teenagers and then adults, and many of us are now parents. Throughout the entire process, however, we have been obligated to trust, listen, respect, and honor our parents.

In our modern society, caregiving for the elderly has become a major industry spawning nursing homes, senior residences, and age-related healthcare. Adult children are often grateful for the opportunity to employ others to provide for the needs of their aging parents. The busy nature of the twenty-first-century lifestyle necessitates professional help in many cases. However, our

responsibility to our parents doesn't end with the intervention of others. The Bible speaks to the responsibilities of children to their parents and infers it is a lifelong obligation.

1. CHILDREN MUST HONOR THEIR PARENTS

A. The Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3)

Exodus 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Leviticus 19:3 Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.

The Book of Exodus relates the deliverance of Abraham's descendants from Egyptian bondage. Moses, their appointed leader, was given the task of bringing the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. In preparation, God outlined the terms of His covenant with them. Moses was summoned to Mount Sinai, where God gave him specific instructions and laws to govern the nation. Exodus 20 contains the collection of behavioral expectations known as the Ten Commandments (or Decalogue).

The fifth commandment obligates children to honor their parents. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* notes the word translated as *honor* is derived from a root word meaning "heavy" or "to make weighty." This implies parents are to be greatly esteemed by their children. The unique role they occupy demands a high level and abundant expression of respect. As God, our heavenly Father, is to be highly esteemed and honored by His children, so earthly parents are to be respected by their offspring. It is such a powerful commandment that God conditioned the Israelites' length of life on their dutiful obedience to this expectation.

Leviticus contains laws that were given to regulate the life of God's covenant people. In 19:3, children are told to "fear" their parents, which means to "revere" or "stand in awe of." God's intention is that we recognize the parental role as an exalted position that demands the reverence and respect of children. Throughout our lives, we will encounter people who hold positions of

authority that necessitate our reverence for them. Judges, law enforcement officers, and medical doctors can make decisions that will greatly impact our lives, and we readily respect their authority. Fathers and mothers are to be given that same type of honor by their children.

When children honor their parents, they give honor to God, who expects willing obedience. An article from *Focus on the Family* indicates, “Honoring our father and mother teaches us that God has placed people in authority over us. Honoring them also teaches us how to respect that authority and be respected by those we have authority over” (focusonthefamily.com).

§ *How does honoring parents bless both the parents and their child?*

B. Rebuke for Dishonoring Parents (Matthew 15:1-6)

¹ Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, ² Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. ³ But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. ⁵ But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; ⁶ And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

The Bible is clear concerning the expectation that children should honor their parents. It also reveals God’s displeasure with disobedience of the fifth commandment. In Matthew 15, Jesus was confronted by the scribes and Pharisees for His disciples’ failure to follow their traditions. In response, He pointed to their practice of dishonoring their parents by those same traditions and rebuked them for it. Those traditions concerned rituals and behavior supposedly based on the Scriptures, but they ultimately obscured the commandments of God and became the focus of Jewish religious expression.

Adult children with resources often willingly come to the aid of their aging parents in times of need. It’s a natural response of honor for the investment of time, resources, and guidance provided

to us as we grew up under their care. In Jesus' day, one of the religious traditions made it possible for children to evade assisting parents with their resources by claiming those resources were dedicated to God. While it was approved by the religious leaders, this claim violated the fifth commandment and brought dishonor to the parents. Jesus' response to the tradition reveals God disapproved of it.

It is remarkable to think God's specific command could be negated by a man-made tradition concerning children's parental obligation. Under the guise of honoring God, some were choosing to dishonor their parents by withholding aid. Jesus later rebuked the scribes and Pharisees by calling them "hypocrites" who pretended to obey God (23:13-15). He charged them with being guilty of the prophetic reproof uttered in Isaiah 29:13 (Matt. 15:8). They had become comfortable with opinion-based teaching, thereby undermining and negating the specific commandment of God to honor parents.

There are many ways parents are systematically dishonored in our modern world. Unwilling to submit to the discipline of the home, some children choose to run away, seeking to live on their own terms. Some laws have been enacted to provide children (usually minors) with the ability to make life-altering decisions without the consent of their parents. There have even been cases where children have sued for and won legal separation from their parents. In cases of abuse and trauma, no child should be forced to remain in an unhealthy environment, but parental rights appear to be diminishing while children's rights are increasing.

Self-Centered Son

A *Newsweek* report focused on the case of a forty-one-year-old unemployed attorney who sued his parents seeking \$500 a week to support his lifestyle. The London, England, resident was initially supported by his parents, who live in Dubai, but was cut off after a falling out with them. He had

become dependent on their generosity instead of seeking employment, and he felt he had a right to sue. The case was originally thrown out of court, and his subsequent appeal was denied. The parents' attorney commented, "It goes without saying that the parents are devastated that they are being put through this ordeal by their son and that they are being put to such enormous expense, particularly when set against their historic and ongoing generosity towards him" (newsweek.com/lawyer-sued-parents-faid-siddiqui).

2. CHILDREN MUST OBEY THEIR PARENTS

A. Producing Joy and Delight (Proverbs 23:22, 24-26)

²² Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

²⁴ The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. ²⁵ Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. ²⁶ My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

The Book of Proverbs is full of practical insight derived from the wisdom and experiences of King Solomon and others. Among the guidance of chapter 23 are admonitions related to the child-parent relationship. Verse 22 challenges children to take heed to fatherly instruction and maintain respect for mothers, even though they may be advanced in age. The implication is that the child is at an age where they can make their own decisions and choose their own way. The guidance of parents should still be respected until they are confident enough to grant full freedom of choice to their children. Even then, our parents can still help through their counsel and advice.

A *Reader's Digest* article touted the benefits of parental wisdom for adult children. It noted that parents are accustomed to giving guidance, whether requested or not, since it is an essential component of their roles. The article's writer, Charlotte Hilton Andersen, affirmed that parents are naturally positioned to guide us through the challenges of adulthood. "Their life experience

combined with their unique knowledge of their children can make them the best advice-givers” (rd.com).

In verses 24-25, Solomon noted how obedient children are a source of joy to their parents. One of the great satisfactions of parenting is to see our growing children making wise choices and follow the paths of virtue, integrity, and morality. Anne Frank was a Jewish teenager whose family went into hiding at the onset of WWII. She chronicled her thoughts and experiences in a diary which became published after her demise. She once remarked on the challenge of raising godly children: “Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person’s character lies in their own hands” (sermonillustrations.com). It is true that mistakes and missteps will occur, but it is comforting to mothers and fathers to see their children learning and growing through their challenges. It is especially gratifying when our children see our lives of righteousness and honor God themselves.

Verse 26 makes the appeal for our children to pattern their lives after our godly example. *The Message* paraphrased it to read, “Dear child, I want your full attention; please learn from what I show you.” Our children will learn more from our behavior than from our words. Years ago, there was a television commercial which warned against the dangers of smoking. It showed a young boy following his father as he worked in the yard. While the father mowed the grass, his young son pushed his toy lawnmower behind him. Later, after a smoke break, the father threw the cigarette butt away. When he walked off, his son picked up the butt and placed it to his lips. The scene was a jarring reminder to be careful around our impressionable children.

§ *Why might someone “despise [their] mother when she is old” (v. 22), and how could such an attitude be overcome?*

B. Producing Righteousness and Pleasing God (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20)

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

In Ephesians 6:1, Paul advises children to obey their parents as part of God's orderly framework for family interaction and expression. Disobedience is characteristic of disorder and neither glorifies God nor honors parents. Obedient children, however, reveal the righteous standard and godly submission expected of believing families. The commandment given to the people of the covenant in the Old Testament is reaffirmed and encouraged in the New Testament church, and anticipated in our modern expressions of the Christian faith.

Colossians 3:20 encourages complete obedience to our parents. Their instructions, advice, and guidance should be adhered to in every way. *Strong's Concordance* notes the Greek word translated as *obey* comes from a root word which means “to hear under (as a subordinate).” This implies the authority of our parents is to be acknowledged by our willing compliance.

Note that Paul expected the parents to be obedient to Christ and walk[ing] in righteousness, saying, “Seek those things which are above” (v. 1). Believers should be seeking the higher things of God and revealing their connection with Christ through their living. In that context, children should honor the guidance and instruction of their parents in every way. God delights in the compliance of children to parents, even as He delights in our being “obedient children” to Him (see 1 Peter 1:14).

Parental Influence

Children typically develop their religious beliefs from their parents' example. Years ago, the Christian Business Men's Committee researched the matter. One of their conclusions revealed, “When the father is an active believer, there is about a 75 percent likelihood that the children will also become active believers” (sermonillustrations.com).

3. BENEFITS OF HONORING PARENTS

A. Wisdom and Knowledge (Proverbs 1:8-9; 2:1-6)

1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: ⁹ For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; ² So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; ³ Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; ⁴ If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; ⁵ Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

One of the benefits of honoring our parents is the knowledge we gain to help navigate our lives. Parental advice and guidance are necessary for our development in the process of maturity. Though often questioned in our ignorance, the instructions we receive tend to be appreciated and valued in our later years. In Proverbs 1:8, Solomon urged his son to pay attention to the guidance of his parents. Knowing how immature children resist adult directives, he likened parental instructions to precious jewelry (v. 9).

Earrings and necklaces are decorative pieces that can add beauty to our appearance. They can also communicate our status and mark us as people of means. Items crafted from precious metals, overlaid with silver or gold, or decorated with diamonds hold high value and are treasured. Some are passed down as family heirlooms. A father's instruction and a mother's law can add similar value to the lives of their children. As they heed, obey, and live according to the words of their parents, children demonstrate beautiful character and mark themselves as coming from a good family. They create moral habits and mindsets that can permeate the family line for generations.

In Proverbs 2, Solomon continued to encourage taking heed to parental instruction and the advantages it provides. Words of guidance and instruction are essentially intended to impart wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (vv. 1-3). They are so necessary that they should be pursued in the

same manner as some people seek material treasures. Many of the world's great treasures have been unearthed through archaeological expeditions that required huge investments of time, resources, and dedication. British archaeologist Howard Carter spent eight years searching for the tomb of King Tutankhamun. The discovery yielded well-preserved artifacts that are on display in Cairo at the Egyptian Museum and in London at the British Museum. The estimated value of King Tut's tomb exceeds \$1 billion (*thales-ld.com*).

The godly instruction of parents leads to treasure of far greater value than earthly riches. In verse 5, Solomon indicated children who earnestly seek the wisdom of their godly parents ultimately discover a relationship with God. The "fear of the Lord" indicates the response of someone who has encountered God. He is revered and respected as we become aware of His presence. The "knowledge of God" is also related to our connection with Him. The word here translated as "knowledge" differs from the one in verse 3, which points to a more general sense of knowledge as information. Here, it implies experiencing God.

Verse 6 further develops the idea that true wisdom, knowledge, and understanding derive from God. He is their source and origin. They proceed out of His being and are intended for our benefit. Consequently, parents who know and serve God are well-positioned to impart godly instruction to their children. The guidance they give to govern the thoughts and behavior of their offspring is based on the moral and ethical pronouncements of God and His Word. In heeding and obeying these instructions, children become aware of God and learn to honor Him. Thus, the guidance of their way leads to an understanding of His way.

Parental Determination

Parents, determine to make your children obey you, though it may cost you a lot of trouble and cost them many tears. . . . When you give them a command, let them clearly see that you expect them to do it.—John C. Ryle

B. Better and Longer Life (Ephesians 6:2-3)

² Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; ³ That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

In Ephesians 6, Paul continues a discussion from chapter 5 concerning godly family interaction. Husbands and wives have responsibilities to each other. Fathers and mothers have responsibilities toward their children, and God outlines how children should interact with their parents. Children are obligated to heed and obey their parents as God expects and approves. Paul had the fifth commandment in mind, and noted the promises attached to its fulfillment. Obedience to our parents can lead to our well-being and longevity.

Well-being in life doesn't mean our lives will be perfect and void of disappointment. Even the most faithful Biblical heroes faced severe challenges as they served God. Psalm 34:19 indicates believers will have many afflictions, and Jesus warned that His followers will face tribulations (John 16:33). In both instances, however, God promised His presence and our ultimate victory. *Well-being* means we are pleasing to God and can live assured of His provision and protection. Unbelievers and disobedient children cannot expect to have this confidence or experience.

The promise of longevity does not mean we will all live for a hundred years. Evidence from the lives of Biblical characters, as well as modern saints, reveals death is a reality among both young and old believers. In Deuteronomy 5:16, Moses' pronouncement concerned “the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Obedience to parental instruction would enable the Israelites to enjoy length

of life in the Promised Land. The inference was that disobedience would incur the judgment of God and a shortened life span.

In Ephesians 6:3, Paul expanded the idea of the promise to living “long on the earth.” The multicultural setting of the Ephesian church necessitated a revised understanding considering the new covenant. The Jews had long lost control of the Promised Land. Christianity had spread into other places. In a context where Jews and Gentiles worshiped God together, viewing the principles of the Old Testament through the current experience showed their enduring truth. Obedient children could anticipate leading full lives free of the threat of premature death. The godly instruction and moral guidance of their parents would set them on a healthy course of life. Disobedience potentially results in unwise and unhealthy choices that tend to shorten one’s life.

§ *List ways children can honor their parents.*

DIVINE ORDER AT HOME

Oppositional defiant disorder is a diagnosis characterized by fits of anger and aggression in children as young as age six. An article in *yalemedicine.org* notes other symptoms may include “continually challenging authority, being deliberately annoying to others and/or blaming others for mistakes or bad behavior.” As many as 16 percent of school-aged children are estimated to be affected by the disorder. Professional treatment involves cognitive therapy and parental management training.

While children with psychological and emotional deficiencies are common in our modern world, some dysfunctions can be addressed or avoided by adhering to the Biblical standard established for the family. Parents must ensure they are honoring God’s instruction for relating to Him, to each other, and to their children. When the family dynamic is marked by divine order, the blessings of God are present. Our children will honor and obey our guidance, resulting in their welfare and

fulfillment in life. Susanna Wesley is known to have said, “The child that never learns to obey his parents in the home will not obey God or man out of the home” (quotestats.com).

Daily Devotions

- M. Joseph Provides for His Father (Genesis 47:5-12)
- T. Rebellious Children Judged (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)
- W. The Wisdom of Honoring Parents (Proverbs 1:7-9)
- T. Jesus Blesses Little Children (Matthew 19:13-15)
- F. Pharisees Rebuked for Dishonoring Parents (Mark 7:8-13)
- S. Jesus Submits to His Parents (Luke 2:43-52)