

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
FAMILY & THE MAN IN THE MIRROR
LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON
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Good Morning, Men.

There was a man who was sitting in his seat on the 50-yard line at the Super Bowl and a guy came down and saw an empty seat next to this man. He said, "I can't believe this. It's the Super Bowl, the greatest sporting event in the entire world and here's an empty seat on the 50-yard line?" The guy said, "Actually, that seat belongs to my wife. We've been coming to the Super Bowl together every year for the last 20 years, and she died recently." The guy said, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. That's terrible. Couldn't you get somebody to sit in the seat like maybe a family member, a relative, friend or a neighbor?" He said, "No, they're all at the funeral."

Some of the most wonderful stories we have, some of the greatest humor that we have is a result of the relationships we have in our families. Over the next three weeks I am going to do a series with you called "Family and The Man in the Mirror." I am going to go ahead and preview to you the three messages that we're going to do. This week we're going to talk about your role as a son; a talk you probably don't hear that often, so I thought we would take a look at our role as a son. The next time we will talk about man in his role as a husband, then the third, and final, will be man in his role as a father. That previews where we're going together over the next three weeks.

I am starting this talk with our role as a son this morning, as I say this is a message that you don't really hear that often. Perhaps there is no word that is more emotionally charged than the word, "father." Very few words carry the emotional content as the word, "father." Think about your own father. What is the word that you have used to talk about or to address your father? Maybe it's Dad, or as I have begun in the last few months with my own father, calling him, once again when I was little, I called him Daddy. Now that's he's become old and frail, I have again found myself referring to him as Daddy. I was with him yesterday, and I said, "I'll see you later, Daddy," then I realized what I had done, and I made a comment to him that how interesting it is that when I was young I called him Daddy, and I've called him many things since, some things that I shouldn't have, but he has once again become Daddy. Maybe it's papa or paw. What's the word that you use to describe your father? He will always have a mystical hold on us, won't he, our fathers?

For some, the word "father" brings memories of things that Dad taught us - how to bait a hook or how to throw a football or maybe it was playing catch with your dad out on the front driveway. I remember when I played first base on my Pony League team, I remember my father coming to watch the game. I was the chatterbox. That was my role on the team. Sometimes the boys on the other team would make fun of me from the dugout. I remember one day I was pretty discouraged about it, and as my Dad drove me home, he said, "Son" and he explained to me the roll of a chatterbox and how important it was to the success of a baseball team, and that there needed to be somebody on the team that was the sparkplug that inspired the other boys to go further than they might otherwise go. He said, "Those other boys they're just jealous and they don't know what they're talking about. Don't pay any attention to them. You're doing the right thing, son." He mentored me that day in the area of leadership as he mentored me in so many other ways.

So, for some of us we have memories like that of our father as a mentor. Can you remember a great lesson that your father taught you? For some of us, father brings to mind memories of tussling our hair or saying something like, "Son, I love you." Or maybe it was a bedtime hug. How many of you, by the way, can remember your father tussling your hair? Raise your hand if you can. That's interesting because those of you who didn't raise your hand all have bald heads. There must be something to that theory of massage therapy working here. For others of you it's a blank. Like my own father told me one day, my grandfather deserted my father when he was two, and when I was an adult and my father was a very adult, my

grandfather made an attempt to reconnect with my dad, and my dad rejected him. I said, "Well, Dad, he was reaching out, why didn't you reach back?" He said, "Well, I just never knew the man." I disagree with what he did, but his point was it was a blank. He didn't really have any memories of his father.

Another man who attends this Bible Study told me one day, "You know, my dad was strong and a good provider, but he just wasn't around much." So maybe for you the word, "father" is a blank; for others, he's the one you could never satisfy. You wanted his approval, you wanted to make him happy, but no matter what you did, you could just never make him happy. One of our former table leaders told me one day, he said, "No matter what I did I could never please my father." For still others, the memory of Dad is an angry, bitter man who took out his daily frustrations on the family. Maybe he was an alcoholic, for example. Some of us deeply love our dads; others of us have been deeply wounded by our fathers. Some of us have had dysfunctional fathers and we're still reeling from it. So that's the word, "father."

The second word, which is probably very close, is the word, "mother." What does the word "mother" bring to your mind? Sacrifice, holding down two jobs to make ends meet to provide for the family. I got elected to be the king in my sixth grade class. We didn't have much money. Mom tore up a sheet, put it in the washing machine, died it red, then bought a little gold tassel fringe and sewed it around the edge to make me a cape so I wouldn't be embarrassed because I was the king in my sixth grade class. Now, I'm looking back and the thought of embarrassment never occurred to me at the time, but I now realize what a wonderful thing that was that Mother, "Mama" did for me.

Because each of us has different experiences with our parents, this message today will be a joy for some and maybe somewhat painful for others. But it's a message we need to work through together.

We're going to look this morning at Ephesians: Chapter 6, but I want to start at Ephesians: Chapter 5. If you don't have your Bible open to Ephesians: 5, please do that. All three messages that we're going to do in this series are going to begin at Ephesians: 5; 25 and end at Ephesians: 6; 4. What I want to do here first is to calibrate you to the text. If you will look at Chapter 5, Verse 1, it says, "Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Look over at Verse 17. "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." Then in Verse 18, it says, "...Be filled with the Spirit." In Verse 21 it says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." So Paul is telling us to imitate God, to know His will, be filled with His Spirit, and submit to each other out of reverence for Jesus Christ.

Now, if I were outlining this, I would put Roman Numeral Number I, Submit to one another. Then I would put under that A, B, C, D, and E. Look at Verse 22, it says, "Wives, submit to your husbands," that's A. B, Verse 25, "Husbands love your wives." Chapter 6, Verse 1, "Children, obey your parents," that's C. Letter D, Verse 4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children." E, Verse 5, "Slaves, obey your earthly masters." F, Verse 9, "And masters, treat your slaves in the same way." This idea of submission is to be understood in a much broader sense than, "Woman do what I told you to do because the Bible says you're supposed to submit to me." Submission should be understood in a much broader sense. The big idea in Verse 21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Then there are these six or so ways that we do that practically that are given - wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves and masters.

We're going to be looking at three of these. We'll be looking at husbands in Verse 25, children, or as I've said, son, in Chapter 6, Verse 1, then as a father in Verse 4 of Chapter 6. So that's the big picture.

Now, let's take a look. You see what I'm saying here? Some of you are probably going to want to think about this for a little more. You probably haven't heard the broadness of this idea. I think if you will just look at the structure of the text, you will see it's very clear that the big idea that Paul has here is to submit to each other and then here are several different ways, six examples of how you do that depending on the relationship in which you are involved.

Chapter 6, Verse 1. By the way, ordinarily we would read this text in the context of our role as a parent. But what I would like to ask you to do this morning as we read this is not to think of yourself as a parent, but think of yourself as a son. Read this in the context that you are a son. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." What Paul is saying here is this is how you submit in the context of your relationship with your son. Verse 2. "Honor your father and mother - which is the first commandment with a promise - that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." "Honor your father and mother" is one of the Ten Commandments. It's repeated several times in the Scriptures; one of which is, of course, right here. The big idea this morning, you may want to jot this down and think about it, you may want to jot it down and do something about it. Here's the big idea today. Out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will honor my _____ and my _____. In those two blanks, I would like you to insert that term of endearment that you would use, the most endearing term that you would use for your own mama and your own daddy.

You may have grown up in foster care. You may not even know who this biological mother and father are. You may not have adoptive parents you can identify with. So for you, it may be a blank. It may be father and mother, whom so ever they may be. Or, if you've had a rough experience with one, and not with the other, let your terms reflect it, but however gracious, how ever generous you can at this moment right now be toward your mama and your daddy. What I would like you to do is write down on a piece of paper out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will honor my _____ and my _____.

Why should we do this? Why should we dredge all this up this morning? Why should we honor our mother and our father? We have a Biblical reason and we have a practical reason. The Biblical reason is transparent in the text. "Out of reverence for Jesus Christ," we should do this because we have the Gospel and because the Gospel is intended to have a transformational impact on our hearts and the way we live our lives. One of the ways that that transformation would manifest itself is that we would honor our mommies and our daddies, that we would have respect for them out of reverence for Christ. It has nothing to do with mama or daddy, do you understand, so if they were big jerks and ruined your life or you think they have ruined your life, it doesn't make any difference, you're not honoring mama and daddy because they deserve to be honored. They may, or they may not be, but it's out of reverence for Christ that we do this. Does this make sense? Are you following this with me?

If you don't have Jesus in your life, if the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ is not transformed or is not transforming your life, of course, this doesn't compute at all. The first step is to allow Jesus Christ to transform one's life, and then to expose ones self to different ways that this reverence to Christ would manifest itself, one of them being the way that is shown right here.

Francis Shafer founded a shelter where seekers could go to work out the questions of faith and Christianity with which they were wrestling. He started a place called LeBree???? Although not his first book, he has said that in some sense it should have been his first book, he wrote true spirituality. In the preface of this book he says this, "I felt a strong burden to stand for the historical Christian position and for the purity of the visible church. Gradually, however, a problem came to me, the problem of reality. This had two parts. First, it seemed to me that among many of those who held the Orthodox position, one saw little reality in the things that the Bible so clearly said should be the result of Christianity." Honoring your mother and father would be an example. "Second," and this is his moment of personal vulnerability, "it gradually grew on me that my own reality was less than it had been in the early days after I'd become a Christian." In other words, the reality of the Gospel, instead of growing in his life, had become smaller. "I realize that in honestly I had to go back and rethink my whole position."

Have you been walking with Jesus Christ for a long time and you have bitterness toward your Mom and Dad, for example, it could be many things? You might want to rethink your whole position. Interesting, very interesting. What does it mean to honor someone? What are some synonyms for the word "honor?" Respect, revere, love, bless, put on a pedestal, obedience, recognize, and look up to. These are all adequate and good synonyms for the word "honor." Also it means to attribute worth to the person.

To understand what it means to honor someone, you only really need to look at your own life, and you have been honored before and you know what it feels like. How tremendous it is to have an adult child call you on the telephone and ask for your advice. It's very honoring. You also know what it means to give honor because each of us has been dishonored before. We have been in situations where we've been publicly humiliated. I've had several situations where I've been publicly humiliated because I was a follower of Jesus Christ. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I handled it all like some sort of a saint, but after a period of time, you are able to finally lay it down at the foot of the cross and allow Christ to heal you of the dishonor.

How is that a grown man can honor his parents? How is it that we, as adult men, can honor our parents? They might be deceased. You might not know who they are. You may have cut off contact, or they may have cut off contact with you. There could be great pain that they caused. This may be a festered wound this morning. I may have already ripped off a scab and you're thinking, "My strong impulse right now is to get up and leave. I don't need this." Or the thought may come very easily of honoring your Mommy and your Daddy.

But the big idea this morning is out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will honor my... Let's say that out loud. You say the two words for your Daddy and your Mommy, whatever those two words are. Let's say that out loud together. "Out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will honor my Daddy and my Mommy." I recognize for some of us that is a huge step of faith to say that this morning. For others of us, it just rolls off our tongue because it's the most natural thing to us to do.

I want to give you two applications this morning - two ways that a grown man can honor his parents. First, we can forgive our parents. May I add also our brothers and sisters. Let's go ahead and lift them in here, too. What does the Bible say, we all know the theology, we all have our orthodoxy, we know what we're supposed to do? Peter says, "Lord, if someone sins against me, how often should I forgive him? Seven times?" What did Jesus say, "No, 77 times or 70 x 7 times." Jesus using hyperbole to say, "Hey, it doesn't matter how many times they've sinned against you, you always forgive." So we know that that's what the Bible says.

My Mom is in the hospital right now. A little over three months ago, we learned that she has bone cancer, stage 4, inoperable, metastasized bone cancer and they gave her two months to two years to live. That was a little over three months ago. A couple of weeks ago, Mama, Mommy started having some tumors popping up on her skin, a couple of them got to be the size of birds eggs very quickly, so she scheduled to have a biopsy taken of these. She was a little surprised when they only biopsied one of them. A couple of days later she found out why when the surgeon had opened it up, he could see the cancer and so he just closed her back up. Her regular doctor told her she didn't need to go back to see the Oncologist any more because my Mom has elected not to take chemotherapy that that would have been the only reason.

Then this past Monday, she started vomiting and having diarrhea, dizziness, loss of peripheral vision, headache and she was taken to the hospital. Yesterday, we just found out, as you would expect, that the cancer has now spread to her brain and metastasized in her brain. They kind of have some pain management things that are pretty good now. She doesn't want treatment. She's going to die and there's no real desire to just prolong for a few weeks a life of pain and suffering, so we're going to focus on pain management as opposed to treatment. So, they have her on some pretty good things, and it looks like today she'll go home and Hospice will take over immediately. She has been in a cue for this, and so she has the availability of Hospice. By the way, she is in very good spirits and so is my Dad. My Dad is pretty confused about everything. To give you an idea of how my Dad is doing, he said to my Mom a few weeks ago, "You know sometimes I can't remember where we live. Are we out at the golf course or do we still live on the lake?" There he is sitting in the house. So that's kind of where my Dad is. I was out there last Saturday, and we had the "last things" conversation. I said, "Mom, how do we handle it if Dad should predecease you? Dad, how would you like to handle it if Mom should predecease you? Where are the records? Let's go ahead and get signatures on the checking account. Where's the Will? Who's going to write the Obituary? All these things we were talking about. It was interesting, because Mom was extremely lucid on Saturday, which was God's grace, because on Monday she became deathly ill. On Wednesday night, I went into the hospital room, my Mama said this. When I left there I wrote it down

because it was so precious, and I want to read you what she said. I have two brothers and one of them was there and she said, "I am so mad at myself. I wanted to write each of you a note. I've not told you often enough how much I love you, and how proud I am of each one of you. I am not very good at expressing my feelings. I regret not telling you this more often." She was coming home at that particular moment.

I'll tell you why you should forgive your parents because parents rarely live up to their own expectations. Think about your own parenting. Have you lived up to your own expectations as parents? Why not give your Mama and your Daddy a break here. Out of reverence to Jesus Christ, I will honor my Mother and my Father.

The second practical application for this is to repay your parents. 1 Timothy: Chapter 5, Verse 4 - we're not going to look at that. You can look at it in the time you have after this. It talks about the responsibility that we have as children to repay our parents, to take care of our parents when they need us for all of the things that they have done and because it pleases the Lord. Out of reverence to Christ, forgive your parents. Out of reverence for Christ, repay them, and take care of them. How do you do this? You can't do this. Only the transforming power of Jesus Christ changing your heart can do this. Let Jesus transform your heart. Don't follow the Gospel of trying to be a good boy, don't follow the Gospel of do better, follow the Gospel of Jesus. Ask Jesus to transform your heart and then go do what you want to do. I have confidence that out of reverence to Christ, you will want to honor your Mama and your Daddy.

Let's pray:

Just take a moment and do some heart work. Just take moment to think about what is the desire that the Lord is putting into my heart right now perhaps in the area of forgiveness or taking care of a parent. Lord, some of us can't talk to our parents so we need to just forgive them in absentia. Or if some of us have parents we can go to, it's hard, Lord, it's hard to be humble, but I just pray that you would show each of us what we might do out of reverence to Jesus Christ. Amen

/cjb