

RESPECTFUL KIDS

EXODUS 20:12

This morning I have a confession to make: *over the years I've battled a serious drug problem.* It started when I was a kid... My parents **drug** me to church every Sunday morning and Sunday night – even when I told them I didn't want to go.

I was **drug** to school Monday through Friday. I had no choice in the matter.

If I smarted off to an adult I was **drug** by the ear to be disciplined by my dad.

I was also **drug** to my room when I disobeyed my parents, told a lie, brought home a bad report card, did not speak with respect, spoke ill of the teacher or the preacher - or if I didn't put forth my best effort in everything that was asked of me.

I was **drug** to the bathroom sink when I let a dirty word come out of my mouth. (By the way, I know what soap tastes like.)

I was **drug** outside on Saturdays to help my dad work in the yard.

I was **drug** to the homes of family, friends, and neighbors to help them mow the yard, or rake leaves - and if I ever took money as payment for what I'd done – even if it was offered – my mom would've **drug** me, and made me give it back.

And all those **drugs** are still in my veins. They affect my attitude and behavior even as an adult... And if the kids of today had this kind of drug problem, our neighborhoods, and country, and world would be a far better place to live.

I may not have appreciated all my parents did at the time, but over the years since I've left home, I've grown increasingly thankful for their input in my life.

As Mark Twain once put it, *“When I was 16 years old I thought my dad was the dumbest man on the face of the earth. When I turned 21 I was amazed at what the old man had learned in five years.”*

Guys, the older I get the smarter and wiser my parents begin to

look... *which brings us this morning to the fifth commandment...*

In verse 12, from the cliffs and peaks of Mount Sinai, God thunders to His people - both then and now - **“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”**

Here is the fifth non-negotiable God wants us to decide on in advance. Here’s a truth that’s meant for all peoples, at all times, and who live in all places. Let’s value, **respectful kids**. First be one - and if you’re also a parent, then raise one.

In Murphy, North Carolina there is an interesting tourist attraction. It was built in 1945, and its centerpiece is *The World’s Largest Ten Commandments*. It’s a 300 foot wide display – the size of a football field - which occupies a mountainside.

On the mountain’s grassy slope, God’s Top Ten is written with five foot high letters. Each letter is formed by white stones. A staircase of 350 steps separates the two tablets. The first five commandments are on the left of the staircase, and the last five commandments are on the right. The whole display is said to be so gigantic it can be seen by the NASA astronauts as they orbit the earth.

The tourists who visit the World’s Largest Ten Commandments love to take photos next to specific commandments. Married couples will stand next to the seventh commandment, **“Thou shall not commit adultery.”** Parents like to pose their kids next to the fifth commandment, **“Honor your father and your mother.”**

But here’s why I bring up this monument...

The men who constructed it broke with tradition and made a provocative decision. Remember, the Ten Commandments were written on two stone tablets by the finger of God. The first tablet contained the four commandments that teach us how to love God - and relate to Him. While the second tablet instructs us on how to love our fellow man, and conduct our interactions with each other.

Because the fifth commandment deals with a child's relationship with his parents, most Bible students believe it appeared on the second tablet.

But the architects of the Murphy, NC monument placed the fifth command on the first tablet... And I agree with their decision... For a person's relationship with their parents is in so many ways interconnected with their relationship with God.

I believe the fifth commandment belongs on the first tablet for a very special reason... If you can't obey and honor an authority you can see - *your parents* - then how can you obey and honor an authority you can't see - *God*?

The willingness to respect your parents is critical to a person's attitude to almost every other type of authority they'll run across in their lifetime.

If you fail to learn to obey your mother, and respect your father, you probably won't respect your teacher, or coach, or the police, or your boss, or your pastor... *or even God*. I know loads of people - even Christians - who have a hard time obeying God because they've never learned to obey and respect their parents.

I view my children's obedience to me not as an end in itself... A parent is not a power-hungry person on an ego trip. I'm not trying to bully my kids just so I can be in control. I love my kids - *with all my heart* - and I see their obedience and respect *toward me* as an important step toward them learning how to relate *to God*.

We learn to obey and honor God by first obeying and honoring our parents. God uses our relationship with parents to deepen our relationship with Him.

At the very least the fifth commandment is a bridge between the first four commandments and the last five... Our relationship with God and our relationship with our parents tend to mirror each other. They both are definitely intertwined...

It reminds me of the Christian and atheist sitting side-by-side on the airplane. They were both old men, and boarded the airplane with their kids and grandkids.

All throughout the flight the Christian man's children were coming by to check on him... *Was he comfortable? Could they get him anything to drink?*

Finally the atheist noted, "My kids sure don't treat me with the respect your children show you." That's when the Christian explained the obvious... He told him, "What do you expect? To my kids I'm one step closer to them than God - whereas to your kids, you're one step closer to them than an ape." Guys our relationship with our parents, is closely related to our relationship with God.

In Ephesians 6 when Paul quotes the fifth commandment he states, "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise..."

Paul notes that the fifth commandment is special... it's the first commandment that comes with a promise. Read the fine print and you'll find extra incentive to honor your parents, "that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." *Long life* usually comes with obedience to one's parents.

But that's not the only promise that comes with the fifth commandment. In Deuteronomy 5 - the second generation – the descendents of the Hebrews who exited from Egypt, are about to enter the Promised Land, and there God repeats His Top Ten to them. In fact, the word "Deuteronomy" means "second law".

And Deuteronomy 5:16 adds this to the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you." Honor your parents and you'll both *live long*, and *live well*. Here's the surest way to *live long* and *live large* on the earth... honor your parents.

Generally speaking, fathers and mothers are wiser than their kids. A parent has been around the block a time or two. They know the ins and outs. They know stuff that kids don't. Why should a kid learn everything the hard way? If you'll obey and honor your parents you'll avoid tremendous hardships and pitfalls.

For most of us, God is the only person who loves us more than our parents. Most dads and moms deeply care for their child. That's why kids minimize life's dangers, and maximize its enjoyments... just by listening to their parents.

Proverbs 30:17 should be every father's favorite verse. Parents should teach this verse to their kids – *especially when they become teenagers*. This is a great verse for a *testy teen*. "The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it."

Don't you agree? Isn't that a great verse to teach a rowdy teenager!

When my teenagers begin to buck, kick, and start to rebel, I just warn them to stay inside. "Hey, if you don't honor and obey your parents, you could be walking down the sidewalk and a flock of birds land on you, knock you to the ground, and start picking out your eyeballs – *if it happens, don't say I didn't warn you!*"

Every time a bird flies over the head of a rebellious teenager without swooping down on top on his head, and pecking at his eye sockets... God is showing mercy!

Actually, I'm being a little facetious. But the accurate interpretation of Proverbs 30:17 makes the very same point. A rebellious teen is still food for the vultures.

This proverb assumes that a rebellious child is prone to make foolish and costly mistakes. As a result, he or she might die at a young age, and having so alienated the people who love him, there's no one left willing to give him a decent burial.

Thus in ancient times, his carcass would be thrown out as food

for the vultures.

The point is, if you want to avoid getting picked on, picked at, picked apart – if you want to live *longer* and *better* - then live a life that honors your dad and mom.

Again, the fifth commandment tells, "**Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.**"

The word translated "**honor**" is an interesting Hebrew word, "*kabad*". Literally it means "*heavy, or weighty, or serious*". It's similar to the Hebrew word translated "**glory**". We've been learning through the first four commandments that we need to treat God seriously. He's not to be *marginalized, or trivialized, or minimized*.

And neither should our parents.

No matter your age, your dad and mom should still be taken seriously. When you're young and at home - *their opinion should rule*. When you're out on your own - *their opinion should count*. Either way, when it comes to parents, we should give a weightiness to their words - a seriousness to their opinion.

In Psalm 104:1 the psalmist cries out, "**Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty...**" The God in heaven wears glory and majesty like a robe. He's clothed in glory and honor.

But here's what God has done... He's taken a little of His honor, and shared it with the position of a parent. To a lesser degree, we're to treat our parents with the same respect, and heaviness, and even admiration that we show toward God.

Realize how serious God is about His people honoring their parents.

Exodus 21:17 makes disrespect for a parent a capital crime. "**And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.**" That would certainly solve the overcrowding problem in the local

High Schools.

Proverbs 20:20 tells us, “Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness.” Deep darkness also sounds pretty serious.

Granted, these laws were meant for Israel, not us – but they certainly show that the fifth commandment is no joke. Even today, God wants us to honor our parents.

And understand, honoring your father and mother has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not your parent is honorable. Not all of us have been blessed with parents that represented God to us. Some of us have absolutely lousy parents...

They’ve been abusive, and arrogant, and stubborn, and prideful, and cruel.

I was talking to a friend the other day who described how mean and cruel his father had been to him. As he was growing up he was beaten unmercifully by his dad. Should that man ignore all his father did to him, and pretend his dad was a godly, loving, Christian man... *not hardly!* Yet neither should he turn his back on his father, and show disdain – and return cruelty for cruelty, and meanness for meanness. *At the very least even a bad father gave you some genes.*

If you can’t respect your parent as a person you can still respect the position your parent occupies... *for the position of a parent has been honored by God.*

Two people in my life have taught me a lot about honoring parents.

The first is my wife. When my grandpa came down with Alzheimers, Kathy would visit my grandparent’s house several times a week to help my grandpa care for his wife. Kathy would give my grandma a bath, and help with her grooming. Often my grandma would forget Kathy’s name. I’m not sure she never thanked Kathy for her faithfulness. Grandma wasn’t capable. It was a selfless act on my

wife's part.

And this wasn't even *her* grandmother – it was *my* grandmother.

Obviously, Kathy served my grandmother, and honored her - not because she had a relationship with her – *good or bad* – but because Kathy honored the God-given position of parents and grandparents. She obeyed the fifth commandment.

The second person who has taught me about honoring parents is my dad.

A year or two after my grandma died, my grandpa moved in with my parents. For several years my dad took care of my mom's father. He bathed him, and fed him, and put his pants on for him, and cleaned him up when he soiled his britches. And when they eventually had to put my grandpa in the nursing home my dad cried like a baby because he could no longer give him the care he needed.

For those several years my dad put his own life on hold to care for my grandpa. He even let his golf game suffer. And he received very little thanks. My grandpa was a proud man, and didn't want to admit he needed anybody's help. To thank my dad was to admit his dependence - *that was more than he could bear.*

And as with my wife, my dad served his father-in-law not out of a personal debt of gratitude – but because of a biblical respect for the position of a parent.

Remember David, when his father-in-law, Saul, was chasing him like a fox stalks a rabbit. David was hiding in a cave, when Saul needed a bathroom.

The best Saul could find was a cave. And when he walked in to relieve himself, unbeknownst to Saul, he was walking into David's hideout. Saul was grunting and groaning as David sneaked up behind him, and with his sword, clipped off the edge of his robe. David's men wanted him to kill Saul, but David refused.

When Saul departed, David bided his time. After Saul's entourage

moved a safe distance away, he appeared on a hilltop overlooking Saul. He told his father-in-law that the Lord had delivered him into his hand, yet David refused to kill him.

In 1 Samuel 24 David holds up the fabric, and shouts, "Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it."

David's example teaches two lessons... First, David not only honored his father, but his *father-in-law*. Apparently, the fifth commandment also applies to in-laws.

David shouted to his *father-in-law*, Saul, "Moreover, my father, see!"

It reminds me of the guy who was telling me about how well he and his mother-in-law got along. They had a wonderful relationship. He loved spending time with his mother-in-law. That's when I told him that my mother-in-law lived in Oregon.

He said, "Wow, if my mother-in-law lived in Oregon I'd have her move." I told him, "I've tried, but she won't go to Japan!" That's just a joke. In reality the Lord has blessed me with a wonderful relationship with my in-laws. We're tight.

The story of David and Saul teach us that God wants us to respect our parents-in-law just as much as He wants us to respect our parents. *And it also teaches us that even if a parent is not a respectable person, he or she still should receive a measure of respect.* Even when you can't honor the person – honor the position.

All day Tuesday I was bracing myself for bad news. I know the Bible teaches we need to honor our political leaders even if they hold to dishonorable policies. I was afraid the other candidate might win the presidency - and I would have to spend the next four years respecting a position rather than a person.

I don't want to mention names, but I'm now relieved that won't be

the case.

But that's the place a lot of you are in with your parents...

Over the years your parents have not acted in honorable ways – they've done dishonorable deeds – *yet no qualification is placed on the fifth commandment...*

It doesn't say, "Honor your father and mother if... or when..."

Even if your parents are people you can't respect – and have done things that are disrespectful - you have to look beyond the person and respect the position.

And remember, if you're an adult, the way you treat your elderly parents is probably the way your children will treat you when you're old, and gray, and unable to care for yourself... Remember the bumper sticker, "Be nice to your children, they're the ones who get to pick your nursing home."

I heard of a family with four grown children. The mom became incapacitated and needed their help - but the children were always complaining about the time and effort it took to take care of mom. A neighbor who knew the family made the comment, "Isn't it remarkable? One woman can feed, clothe, house, and educate four children, yet four children find it impossible to take care of one woman."

Guys, no matter what kind of parents yours might have been – either *delights or duds* - as children, God has still called us to, "Honor our father and our mother".

Here's one more example of person who respected His imperfect parents.

In Luke 2, Joseph and Mary, and a 12 year-old Jesus, took a trip to Jerusalem. And you recall what happened... Joseph and Mary joined the caravan to return to home, and left their son behind in a strange city. They returned to retrieve Him.

It reminds me of the time Kathy and I were the last to leave on a

Sunday morning. I was about to lock up the building when there stood a four year-old Kyle. I walked back inside looking for Kyle's parents, but they were nowhere to be found. Before long up drove an embarrassed dad who had forgotten his son. It was the old parental goof-up... She thought he had him. And he thought she had him.

Maybe that's what happened between Joseph and Mary. But somewhere between Jerusalem and Nazareth it hit them - they'd left their son behind. It was not exactly an example of impeccable parenting. It was a mistake.

Yet when the family returns to Nazareth we're told in Luke 2:51, "Then (Jesus) went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them..." The word "subject" means "submissive, obedient". Hey, make note... Jesus, the sinless Son of God chose to honor and obey forgetful, flawed, mistake-prone parents.

Here was a teenager who really did now more than His parents.

Here was the first and only teenager who didn't just think He was smarter than his parents. *Jesus really did know more than Joseph and Mary...*

Jesus was the first teenager in the history of the world, who really was correct when He complained, "*Mom and dad, you really don't understand Me.*"

Here's a teenager who was God – yet Jesus became subject to His parents.

And if the fifth commandment was a non-negotiable in our Lord Jesus' life, how much more should it be a given in our lives. Guys, let's make it a conviction – a characteristic of the way we think and live. "**Honor your father and your mother.**"

And if this is the duty of a child – then it follows that this should also be the goal of a parent. If God wants children to respect their father and mother – then the purpose of a parent needs to be to teach their kids obedience and respect!

I've met parents who have great ambitions for their children. They want to make them child prodigies... *academically, or musically, or artistically, or socially, or athletically.* They spend time and money on camps, and lessons, and trainers...

And there's nothing wrong with providing your kids these opportunities – but you can do all I've mentioned and more – and not fulfill your purpose as a parent.

Hey, feeding, clothing, protecting, educating, and entertaining your child are all part of parenthood - but if you're not teaching a child to respect authority you're not doing your job! A parent's primary purpose - is not to win their kid's friendship, or make their kids happy – it's to teach their children obedience and respect.

And that's true when the child is 15 months or 15 years. God puts no statute of limitations on the fifth commandment. Honor and respect should be lifelong traits.

Guys, it's impossible to be the parent God desires you to be until you realize a basic truth... *you're kids are little sinners.* They're born rebels. They exit the womb defiant and self-centered. You don't teach a baby to cry when it doesn't get its way. *I have four kids – and laboratory findings reveal... selfishness is a natural reaction.*

This is also what the Bible teaches... King David says it best in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”

Recently, I ran across an instructive document, “*Introduction to Property Law from a Toddler's Perspective*”. Law # 1, “If I like it, it's mine. 2) If I can take it away from you, it's mine. 3) If I had it a while ago, it's mine. 4) If I say it's mine, it's mine. 5) If it looks like mine, it's mine. 6) If I say I saw it first, it's mine. 7) If you're having fun with it, it's mine. 8) If you lay it down, it's mine. 9) If it's broken, it's yours.”

When kids are born they have no respect for other people, nor

are they ready and willing to obey standards that limit their behavior. The truth is, children are greedy, selfish, and totally preoccupied with three people... *me, myself, and I.*

Guys, your kids are sinful little buzzards – and they need to be taught, and disciplined, and encouraged with a single goal in mind – to respect authority.

Here's a few musts when it comes to teaching your kids respect for authority...

First, you've got to set boundaries, and establish consequences – and if the boundaries get crossed you have got to have the nerve to enforce your threats.

What if this Friday the local High Schools squared off in a football game – but all you had was a green field – with no white lines. No out of bounds, no way to know if you made a first down, or crossed the goal line to score a touchdown.

The players would be confused, and after a few plays, totally frustrated.

This is what life looks like for kids whose parents refuse to set and enforce boundaries. Kids like the freedom, but life ends up confused and frustrated.

Hey, when my kids were little we took away their toys - put them in time out - and spanked their little bottoms. As they've gotten older we've had to get more creative. Now we discipline them through unwanted haircuts - or take away car keys - or ground them on Friday nights - or ban them from instant messaging – and make them pay with their own money for the expense of their foolishness.

But here's the point, when kids become defiant - and cross a boundary you set for them you have to provide a consequence. If you don't, they'll never respect the authority that established that rule in the first place. Kids *learn* respect...

The second way a parent teaches a child respect is to just say “no” - and it starts in infancy... Put off a feeding to stay on schedule, even if the baby cries... Forbid a child from interrupting a conversation... Enforce a bedtime even if the child pleads for an exception... Respond to a request with the words “*not now*”.

Require patience. Delayed gratification builds character and teaches respect.

Pediatrician, John Rosemond, writes in his newspaper column, “The fact is, a child isn’t going to develop the strength of character to say no to things like drugs, alcohol, and sex in the absence of parents who themselves don’t have strength to say no when the child whines for a new *Nintendo* cartridge, the latest in stereo hardware, or a new car.” Every child needs parents with the guts to say no.

It’s been said, “Children are like stomachs – they don’t need everything we can afford to give them.” A child develops *self-discipline* from *parental discipline*.

Kids don’t need to be over-indulged and given everything they want. They need to learn how to suppress a desire - do without a whim - turn from a temptation - put principle above convenience. Be strong enough to say “no” and you’ll earn your child’s respect. Your child won’t respect you if you let them win the battles.

The third way to teach your child to honor his parents is for his parents to act honorably. Don’t be a parent who says, “*Do what I say and not what I do.*” That’s a recipe for disaster. Parents are examples whether they want to be or not...

In family life, values are more *caught* than *taught*. Every parent influences their child for better or worse. Kids pick up habits whether you want them to or not.

I have an ugly habit. When I’m in the yard I like to spit. I enjoy a

good spit! My wife hates it. But I don't even think about it – over the years it's become a habit.

I'll never forget the day many years ago now – I was out in the yard with my two toddlers – Zack and Natalie. Kathy was standing on the porch, as we rounded the corner of the house. And my wife saw it so clearly... I spit. Zack spit. Then my precious, little princess clears her throat of saliva, and blows out a wad of spit.

My wife launched into a lecture, “Sandy, what are you teaching our daughter?” And that's the question every parent needs to ask, “What am I teaching my kids?” Hey, if you want your kids to honor you, then you act in an honorable manner!

And the fourth way to help your kids honor and respect their parents is to love them with an unconditional and sacrificial love – even when they act unlovable.

One Mother's Day I saw an ad in the newspaper for a wireless telephone service running a special. The copy read, “She loved you when you had no hair, no teeth, and no money.” Then the fine print, “The least you can do is give mom a call on mother's day - even if it's to tell her that not much has changed.”

Parents need to love their kids with an unconditional love – with God's love.

I didn't think I'd ever need to be reminded that I should love my kids... We had *such lovable babies*. They cooed and cuddled. Love oozed out of my every pore.

But it didn't take long for those same lovable kids to start turning up their nose and talking back. Ever heard of the *terrible twos*? The term was coined by a parent whose kid didn't live to be three - *it only gets worse*. The *terrible twos* give way to the *defiant fives*, then the *sarcastic sevens*, and the *whiney nines*, and the *testy tens*. Then they become teenagers and your babies are no longer cooing they're bucking and kicking... *and loving them becomes much more of an issue*.

By the time your kids become teenagers they've now been around long enough to embarrass and disappoint you. They've spoken mean comments to your wife - and have lost a few of your tools. Your teenage kids are not as lovable as they once were – or as deserving of your love... *but they don't need it any less.*

I'm so thankful my parents continued to love me even when I acted unlovable. That's one of the reasons I honor them today. I owe them a debt of gratitude.

Bill Maher is the host of the TV show, "Politically Incorrect". Trust me, I agree with very few of Bill's opinions, but he did make a comment about fatherhood that resonated with me... He was asked, "[Were you and your dad good friends?](#)"

Bill replied with a very politically incorrect answer. He replied, "[Friends? We're friends now, but while growing up I didn't need him to be my friend, but my dad. This idea of dads getting mushy, and being friends is overblown. Dads are supposed to be the guy who tells you right from wrong.](#)"

Hey, as a parent I want to be my child's friend, and we do all kinds of activities to cultivate that friendship – but I also know, at times, **a parent's place is in his kid's face.** My kids have lots of friends who tell them what they want to hear, but they have only two parents who'll put their foot down, and insist on what's best!

Guys, except for the church, a parent isn't going to get a lot of help from this world when it comes to teaching kids respect. The institutions of this world - the spirit of this age – has no interest at all in teaching kids obedience and respect.

Trust me, the MTV executives aren't sitting down tonight plotting ways to teach children to respect authority. The next CD released by *Eminem*, or *Britney Spears*, or *Nelley* ... won't be entitled "*Obey and Honor Your Mom and Dad*". The next episode of *The OC* won't be about children respecting their parents.

Media moguls, advertising agencies, film producers, video game

creators - all spend millions of dollars to advocate disobedience and disdain for authority. Your children's classmates and peers – often the public schools - aren't helping either. Other than the church, parents today are operating in a hostile environment.

That's why we need purpose! Parents today are in a fight for their families!

We need Nehemiah's battle cry ringing in our ears. He told the workers on the wall: "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

Guys, let's make **respectful kids** a non-negotiable. Let's *be one* and *raise one*.

The parent-child relationship is the nearest thing on earth to a Christian's relationship with God. Let's *honor our parents*, and be *honorable parents*. Let's *show respect* and *teach respect*. Hey, *we honor God by honoring our parents*.