

Breaking Bad

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“Just Wait Till You Have Kids of Your Own”

Text: Ephesians 6:1-4

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As some of you might know, I grew up as a member of Woodside. Sunday school, youth group, confirmation. In fact I recently came across a copy of a 1972 service bulletin. Yup; that’s me scheduled to lead the “Assurance of Pardon.” But as I entered high school, and then college, I turned away from my relationship with God. And I stayed away, for about 33 years. Oh, I opened the door every once in a while to come out and spend some time with him. My wedding, here with Michelle and Pastor Steve, and both of my parents memorial services – officiated by Doug. But I never opened the door and invited Jesus back in. It wasn’t until 2006, after my father’s funeral that I began my return to faith.

At that time though, I have to admit that I didn’t truly know in what ways my life would change. I decided that there were a couple of things I could change rather easily.

1. Go to Sunday service every week. This has been fairly easy as I have found that I love worship and enjoy hearing Doug share the Word of God.
2. Another thing I decided to change early on – what came out of my mouth. Now I’ve never been the type that couldn’t say a sentence without cursing. I wasn’t a “serial swearer”. But as a teenager and as a young adult I used profanity. I even worked in a warehouse for a number of years and had friend and co-worker, Jose, patiently taught me how to curse in Spanish. I guess we both felt it would make me a more rounded person. Changing this habit took some time, but it is something I have really worked on. As a matter of fact, a couple of years ago when I fell down a flight of stairs, my daughter’s boyfriend, fiancé now heard me swear for the first, and I think, only time.

But even when I was a teenager and young adult, and I did swear; I was very careful not to do it in front of my parents. It was not because I was afraid of them. My parents rarely resorted to physical punishment. Oh I was spanked occasionally when I was very young. And I remember my mother slapping me once when I was a teenager. I don’t remember why; but I do recall that I deserved it. It was because they didn’t approve of it and since I loved them I didn’t want to disappoint them. So I made it a practice to never curse in front of them/in their hearing.

So far we have looked at the first four commandments (short versions):

- I. You shall have no other gods before Me
- II. You shall make no idols
- III. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
- IV. Keep the Sabbath day holy.

Which brings us to number 5

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. - Exodus 20:12 (NIV)

As I look back on it now, I realize that I was following the 5th Commandment. Not swearing in front of them was a way that I honored them. Why is this so important? Why should we honor our parents? Well, first of all, it is one of God’s commandments to us, and we should obey him. But let’s look at it and the other commandments in a different light. It is said that the first four commandments were given to us in order to improve our relationship with God. The rest of the commandments are about our relationships with each other. Honor your father and mother is the first of those relationship commandments. This makes a lot of sense when you consider the fact that our parents are the first people that we build a relationship with. They birth us and raise us. If it were not for them we would not be here. You can also say the same thing about other parents: adoptive, foster and step parents. Our parents protect, teach and love us. They sacrifice and give up parts of their own lives to do this.

But it’s more than that. Look at what Paul wrote in his letter to the Church of Ephesus.

6 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 go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:1-3 (NIV)

God has given us a promise in this commandment. If we honor our father and mother, things will go well with us. But why is that so important to God? Well, remember. God is the one who created us – as it says in the book of Psalms

¹³For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb. Psalm 139:13 (NIV)

(Sorry. I should have given a spoiler alert for those that are following Woodside’s Psalms challenge. Psalm 139 is not scheduled till August 25th.)

Anyway, even though God is the one who created us, he chose our parents to be the means of that creation. God could have created each of us, on his own, through no other means, but he chose to use parents. He even did that with his own son, Jesus.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost
Born of the Virgin Mary

And Jesus, honored his parents as well.

² On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman,^l why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

John 2:1-5 (NIV)

Jesus was not ready to reveal himself. "My hour has not yet come," he says. But he honored his mother's wishes. He turned the water into wine as his mother wished. He also honored his step-father Joseph. Why did Jesus spend so little of his short period on this earth, only 3 of his 30 + years, in his ministry? It is believed that Joseph died rather early in Jesus's life. Yet before he died, he raised Jesus as a carpenter and perhaps Jesus remained home, as the eldest son, to care for his widowed mother. This would have honored Joseph.

And of course he honored his true Father, throughout his whole life. Praying to Him; serving Him; and even dying on the cross for His purpose.

So naturally it is important in our relationship with God, and with each other, to honor our father and mother.

This brings us to the "how". How should we honor our father and mother? In some ways we just "do".

Babies – There is total faith, trust and love in a baby towards its parents. That is an instinct, given by God, as a response to the care and love that is shown to him or her.

Children – Children also honor their parents in how they act. I remember my mom telling me that there were times when she and my dad would take us out to dinner, all 4 of us, and people would comment about how well behaved we were. It made her so happy, and probably a little proud. And when I grew up, and had children of my own, I understood how good that felt. Granted my first thought was usually, "you should have been there as we were getting her dressed and out the door!" But I usually just smiled and said, "thank you."

Teenagers – ahh, teenagers. Rebellion; testing limits; looking to grow. Parents expect that, or at least should. It is a part of life. But it can be done with honor and respect. Remember that your parents love you and usually act in such a way that they think is helping you, and keeping you safe. Talk to them. Listen to them. It's really not necessary to argue every single thing. And while I know that we often embarrass you – although I must admit to being a failure there. Lizz never seemed to be embarrassed by anything I did – it sometimes works in reverse as well.

Young adults – I've always liked a quote that has been attributed to Mark Twain - "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years."

Hopefully most of us do know how much our fathers, and mothers, do understand. This helps us to avoid some of the more costly mistakes that we might make in our early lives.

Raising children – We truly begin to honor our parents when we begin the difficult chore of raising our own children. Asking them for advice shows how much we appreciate all they went through for us. And I don't care how great certain parenting books claim to be. Every child, every situation is different. No book can answer all of the possibilities or predict results accurately. But in many situations our parents understand better because our situations often can be more closely aligned with theirs due to environment and heredity.

Aging parents – I am glad that we were able to take care of my father before we found it necessary to place him in an Alzheimer's facility. It wasn't always easy, but it was a blessing. But I also know that due to medical needs, our own commitments as well as a number of other reasons, it is not always practical, and even possible to do that. However we can honor them in so many other ways. Regular contact – in person, phone, writing, e-mail – is always a welcome act of love. Sending pictures of the grandkids, visiting as often as possible – and if it never seems possible, finding a way to make the occasional visit work.

These are all nice little anecdotes and opportunities for us to honor our parents. But I think we might be missing God's plan here. And that is that we live a faithful and trusting life in Him, as well as a true love – both for Him and for each other.

When asked what the greatest commandment is,

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22:37-39 New International Version (NIV)

Now unfortunately, I am sure that there are those of you whose parents did not raise you in a loving, caring household. Maybe you had parents that have abandoned you, beat you, abused you, ignored you or any number of other types of pain. Perhaps you are already struggling with the command to “love your enemies”. And now I'm standing here telling you to honor those people. It's difficult, but it's simple. And Paul did address that. Earlier we looked at Ephesians 6:1-3

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 go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:1-3 (NIV)

What I didn't read at that point was verse 4

⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)

The bible tells fathers, and in other places mothers, to raise our children properly; with a proper faith in the Lord. But look carefully. The Lord does not say, “Honor your father and mother, unless they are mean to you.” In the same way, Paul doesn’t say, “Fathers, as long as yours are perfect, do not exasperate your children.”

Throughout the bible we are instructed to love our enemies, bless those that persecute us, forgive, forgive, forgive. It works the same way with your parents.

We can honor our parents in many ways. We can respect them and speak well of them. We can seek their help, and wisdom. We can support them: emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually. Some of us will find these easy, some will struggle and some will find it nearly impossible. But we should all be able to do these:

Pray for them – We can always pray for our parents. I have never asked somebody if I could pray for them, or suggested that I would, and been told, “Please don’t.” When I once asked somebody that I knew struggled with belief, why they allowed somebody to pray for them, they responded, “It seemed to make a difference to them, and I couldn’t see any way it could hurt me.”

Forgive – Forgive your parents. Whether they are alive or deceased, great parents, average parents or terrible parents; there is always something that can be forgiven. Remember that really is no perfect parenting book, so we have all made mistakes at some time. Forgive them for it.

Be a disciple of Christ, and act like one – What better way to honor your parents than for them to know that they are the parents of a child that has a relationship with God. That relationship allows you to be a better husband, wife, father, mother, child, and friend – whatever. It just does that much.



He’s getting ready to enter his senior year and he plays baseball at Audubon High School. No matter where the game is, no matter what time of year it is, no matter what the weather is like, John West, Jr will be wearing under his uniform shirt a gray shirt with the name “West” across

the back and a little fire-department emblem on the front. The shirt was not originally his but was owned by his father, John West, Sr. His father was a fire marshal, K-9 handler and Mount Ephraim's deputy chief.

On July 4, 2002, when John Jr was 13 months old, John Sr lost his life when he rushed into a burning building in Gloucester City to try to save three young girls and two fellow fire fighters.

"It's great knowing he was a hero," West said. "But at the same time, I don't have a dad.

"But it is really special to know he's a lot of people's hero and he went down being a hero. That's how he would want it to be. That's what makes me happy."

John's coach has this to say about him, "He works hard, keeps his mouth shut, always does the right things. Just a great kid to be around."

West has a desire, to honor his father every day of his life.

"Everything I do, not only on the field, but in life, is just to put a smile on his face," West said. "The best compliment I could ever get is not, 'Nice play,' or 'You look nice today.'

"It's, 'That's what you have that is like your dad' or 'That would have made your dad happy.'

"There's nothing that could compare to that."

Please pray with me.