

God's Word to Children

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Today's scripture reading will be taken from Proverbs 23 verses 19-26.

Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will cloth them with rags.

Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. By truth and do not sell it, by wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice. He who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad. Let her who bore you rejoice. My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

The second scripture will be taken from Ephesians 6, 1-3. Children, obey your parents and 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.

Good morning. And thank you, Alexandra. I want to encourage you to keep reading the scriptures. Sometimes, when I do this, I have to begin with a confession. I find that that's good for me.

[1 : 39] And I have a confession today to make. Usually, I'm very good with sticking to the text and being concise. But for some reason, after I finished my first draft, I estimated that it was about a two-hour scripture, two-hour message.

And it was just off. It was totally off. And I couldn't figure out why, and I really labored over it. And this morning, it struck me. As I looked through the bulletin, I realized that the text I was using went beyond what I was supposed to be delivering this morning.

So, today you get bonus. A bonus verse. All right?

Now, we used to buy DVDs all the time. It was great to get bonus footage. So, you get bonus footage today. But I promise you, what I'm going to do, I will radically edit.

[2 : 50] And I will cut out as much as I can. I will try to be as concise as possible. And I think we can definitely be out here by 1 p.m. I'm going to promise you that.

So, we better begin. Now, you might not know a novelist by the name of P.D. James. I had not heard of her until I was doing my preparation.

But apparently, she is well known for some quotes. And I found one from her regarding children and childhood. So, I wanted to read that for you.

And she said, I don't fully agree with Miss James.

I believe that most children, including the children who are present here this morning, feel that way about childhood. I'm sure they absolutely hate it.

[4 : 02] They don't like the restrictions. They're told when to go to bed. They're told when to get up. They don't have a choice to stay home and play.

They have to go to school and learn. And parents decide what they eat. Remember, you all know that every child would like to have cake and ice cream every evening for dinner.

Children just take orders all day. And they come to know the Nike slogan very well. Just do it. Right?

Just do as I say. They hate it. Well, this morning, I hope that our time in God's Word will begin to transform some minds.

And I hope that the scripture that we delve into will cause our children to see that there's a privilege in being a child. There's an opportunity in obedience to parents.

[5 : 04] So, most importantly, I hope that as we listen, we will see that obeying and honoring our parents reflect the divine work of Christ.

And give evidence of grace in our lives. Obeying and honoring our parents reflect the divine work of Christ.

And give evidence of grace in our lives. Let's pray. Lord, we have heard some hard truths over the last few weeks.

And this is similar. So, Lord, I pray that you would give us open hearts. Make our hearts fertile ground. We pray that you would give us believing hearts to accept your Word.

And we pray, Lord, that we would truly see that we can live by your Word. We can receive it. And we can walk in it as you have commanded.

[6:10] May you bless this time and bless our children. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. So, over the last two weeks, we've heard God's Word to wives.

We've heard God's Word to husbands. And we've heard some solemn teaching on the duties of each one of them. We've heard about what marriage in a home is supposed to look like now we come to God's word to children although we don't often think of children especially very young children as having a lot of responsibilities we think of them as being carefree God's word to children is no less solemn so we're going to focus on them very seriously today and our adults I know you might be tempted to kind of tune out because this is directed at children but I want to encourage you that there is something in this for everyone I know the last two weeks husbands have been listening intently to what wives should do and wives should be listening intently to what husbands should do well let's all listen because as I said there is something in this for all of us even if we are not a small child we are all someone's child or have been someone's child but to our very young people teenagers and younger especially listening please because I think you have the greatest opportunity to live out what we are about to hear and it will greatly benefit you not only now but in the years to come and finally to our parents like I said we have bonus material and so we will actually do very briefly Ephesians 6 verse 4 and you get to hear it again next week but from someone else so this morning we are going to look at two broad headings as we consider this passage we are going to look at commands to children and commands to parents so first commands to children we see here that children are called to obey their parents but it's not an absolute command tucked into this sentence is a condition and it's just three little words that make a difference we are told that children are to obey their parents in the Lord in the Lord means two different things first it means that we ought to view our parents instructions through the lens of God's righteousness so any instruction that we are given is tested against God's word and the child is therefore not obligated to comply with anything that goes against God's word either in the letter of God's word or the spirit of God's word so

I know some kids are happy to hear this right as you think this is the loophole this is the way out but really it's not I know you're hearing that okay I don't have to obey everything my parents tell me but that's not what I'm saying what I'm saying is that only things that contravene God's word you are not obligated to obey and I believe in most cases in most homes that's a consideration for a very small number of times this will come up you can encounter that very little especially in a Christian home so in other words normal daily instructions but not go against God's word so yes you still have to brush your teeth you still have to shower regularly now to some children especially very small children those types of things get in the way of playtime it gets in the way of having fun and you just don't want to move away from your video game or whatever it is to shower to brush your teeth but when you get the command to do those things and virtually almost any other normal regular command you do it they in no way contravene God's word but secondly we should view obedience in the Lord as an act of worship it's an act of worship because each time you submit to your parents instructions you not only do something for them but you do something for God and as simple as that sounds it's really a big deal

God is big on setting up models of things that represent something more significant he establishes objects institutions and actions that represent these more significant things so for example we can see that in the bread and the wine that we take at communion which represents the body and the blood of Christ and last week Pastor Moore showed us how a marriage between a man and a woman actually reflects Christ's marriage to his church so those are examples of some things representing even more significant things and we have a similar situation here with obeying parents because we can draw a parallel between a child's obedience to parents and Christ's obedience to God

Christ was obedient to God the Father in all things and he constantly proclaimed that so if you go back to Ephesians 5 Paul was encouraging us to be imitators of God and to walk in the love of Christ so this is a way that we imitate God this is a way that we follow Christ by following his

example of being obedient to the Father and one of the times that he proclaimed his obedience to the Father was in John 6 verse 38 in John 6 verse 38 I think it's projected for you in fact I will read it from here John 6 and 38 says for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of the one who sent me so children how you relate to your parents should follow

[13:57] Christ's actions you're being Christ-like when you are obedient so in your actions you can show obedience in your actions you are showing that you are prepared to put your own wishes and your own preferences down and defer to the wishes and the preferences of your parents your actions are literally saying not my will but yours will be done so that's not a small thing an act of obedience to your parents is an act of obedience to God it is worship to God because it's actually a sacrifice that you make to him from a sacrifice of your own will to the will of others and I'm sure that people obey their parents for many reasons so this is where you have a carrot and a stick situation many children obey their parents because of a reward that they expect to get that's the carrot and I thought of my grandnephew Jordan who if you have any type of food especially food that he likes you could probably get Jordan to do anything and then there are people who obey their parents because of a stick they will get some kind of punishment if they don't do as they're told and

I thought of myself here because you know my parents really had a preference for the stick I I could not identify a carrot for all my time as a child but Paul doesn't take the carrot and the stick approach when it comes to obedience he tells us that we should obey our parents simply because it is right so we see this very infrequently sometimes people don't do what is right because it's right they do things for a carrot or a stick and I think of so many examples of maybe in organizations where people take positions not because it's right but because probably the most powerful person in that organization has that position and nobody wants to oppose that person but that's not what Paul is talking about he's talking about obeying your parents simply because it's right not because they are powerful and they can inflict punishment on you and what Paul is showing us is that is something as an absolute right so in today's world people don't really believe in absolutes they talk about these relative things and this is why

I talk to you about a loophole alright you don't want to find conditions to not obey your parents you don't want to find gray areas it's right to obey them so we do that Paul is saying that God in his rightful place as sovereign has put in place the order of things and that order of things calls for children to be subject to parents that's just how it is that is absolutely right children are accountable to parents they're under the authority of their parents there's nothing else to be said about it that is the absolute right thing in the order of God's ordination and in addition to obeying their parents children are called to honor them and it's interesting at least it's interesting to me that Paul puts obeying parents sequentially in this passage before honoring them and I don't believe that is an accident

I don't think that's coincidental there's more emphasis on obeying parents in our early years when we are small children and as we get older as we become mature and independent adults there's less of a responsibility on the child to obey parents but we are always whether we are younger or older children always required to honor our parents and obedience to parents in our early years when we are small children actually trains us to honor them even more in later years so children especially young children if you persist in obeying your parents you might start off doing it in a way that's probably you grumble when you obey and after some time maybe you grumble less and then eventually perhaps you reach the point where you gladly follow the instructions of your parents you're being trained and we might come to the point where our hearts are so postured that in all our ways we greatly we highly esteem our parents and we hold them in such high regard that we wouldn't even think of doing anything to insult or offend them in any way and that's what it means to honor our parents we revere them we cherish them with that great esteem so this is not just for small children it's for all adults as well we must all honor our parents no matter our stature or status and here again we honor our parents when we honor them we identify with Christ because we see this parallel again where we honor our parents as Christ honored

God the father and throughout scripture we again see Christ honoring God and here's what Christ tells the Jews on one occasion in the temple he says Jesus answered I do not have a demon but I honor my father and you dishonor me yet I do not seek my own glory there's one who seeks it and he is the judge so Christ's heart was postured to show reverence to God to God the father he honored God in his words and he honored God with his actions and we ought to do the same thing with our parents and that's regardless of whatever age we're at and if you think that there's ever an

age where you don't have to honor parents you just have to go a few verses deeper into John chapter 8 which we just read where Jesus explicitly said that he is eternal he is the great [21 : 55] I am none of them who were listening to him would ever imagine being at the age of the great I am and yet we still see Christ honoring the father now Paul points out that the commandment to honor our father and our mother is a special commandment and it's obviously special when we consider its prominence in the ten commandments and we've said before that the ten commandments are laid out in a way that we first see how we are obligated to act towards God and then we see how we are obligated to act towards each other this person to person relationship and the first commandment that deals with person to person interaction really is this commandment here honor our father and mother so it demonstrates that God really places a premium on the relationship of parents and child because even before

God addresses serious interpersonal sins such as murder he chooses to say we must honor our parents that speaks to the importance of this sacred relationship between a parent and a child and we should notice that God's commandment in Exodus and Deuteronomy where we find the Ten Commandments it says honor father and mother but in Ephesians 6 Paul says that we are to obey and honor so this emphasizes the point that we said that we should respect our parents at every age if children obey parents they should obey with the right heart posture they should give honor to them in obedience also to honor someone is an inward thing so we really can't see your heart we can't see you that you honor someone with your heart with your emotions with your mind but in adding obedience when we see obedience we have some measure of evidence that we are honoring that there is honor for father and mother in that person there's some degree of evidence of God's grace operating in their lives but Paul reminds us that this is also the first commandment with the promise God places such a premium on honoring our parents that he gives a promise with this commandment I remember that the original audience of this commandment were the Jews who were about to enter Canaan the promised land and the original promise was about how God would treat those particular people in Canaan based on this condition so Exodus 20 says that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you but in Ephesians 6 Paul uses slightly different language he paraphrases the promise and he says that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land so he effectively removes the specific reference to Canaan to generally state just in the land so in this he gives assurance that this promise extends beyond the original audience in that specific geographic location and we can take this as revelation to Paul that he speaks this authoritatively and it has become established in scripture so we can be confident that God gives special blessings to us when we honor our father and our mother so then we have to consider again this carrot and this stick situation we have to ask ourselves do we honor our parents because there are benefits that come with it and the answer is no again we have to honor our father and our mother because it is right but when we do as we ought to do God has promised that we will benefit in these particular ways for doing what is right now that we have considered God's command to children we are going to look very briefly at God's commands to parents we see Paul addressing fathers in one sentence in verse four which I was not supposed to do fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and I'm going to confine my remarks on this to probably two brief points as the divinely appointed head of a household fathers bear the greater burden of these instructions but really this applies not just to fathers but to both parents and it really applies to anyone who has the duty of raising children and Paul shows that parents have a responsibility to help children obey and honor them parents are called to deal with their children in reasonable ways that build trust and affection between them and their children so we can think of this as similar to what [28 : 49] Pastor Moss referred to last week just as husbands are first called to love wives and encourage them through their actions to submit to the husband parents must first nature their children to encourage them to honor them and to obey them in some cases we have parents who actually get in the way of their children honoring them and get in the way of their children obeying them due to their actions a parent can deal so harshly with their children that it really damages the child parent relationship in some cases parents are so unreasonable with their demands on a child that it breeds resentment from the child now in saying this

I don't mean that parents should be pushovers and I don't mean that there should be no consequences for a child's actions but it does mean that a parent is to deal with children in such a way that the way in which they discipline and the way in which they instruct children is to really be

informed by God's word it's to be informed by scripture so firstly parents had to teach children how to live according to scripture and we have children's church we have youth ministries but these are really things that come alongside parents the primary place for the instruction of children in godly ways is the home and the primary person responsible for that is the father and this instruction has got to be done intentionally through biblical teaching but it's also done practically through example so our children need to see us practicing what we say they ought to do and that speaks more to them when we see that we actually live what we're preaching because it shows them that we believe what we say if they don't see it to them it's not a real thing and they see no real reason to do what we say and secondly when discipline is needed our discipline must be proportionate it must be fair and probably most importantly it must be done in love our discipline can't be so heavy handed that a child does not see love behind it because if our children doubt that we love them then we are going to have a really big problem we are actually going to be driving them away instead of drawing them there to us so in conclusion what can we say about this passage well knowing what we know about our fallen nature

I believe we can conclude that children will not perfectly honor and obey their parents in the Lord and parents will not perfectly raise children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and this should all drive us to look to the one who has been perfectly obedient to his father it should drive us to look to Christ so if we look at Romans 5 we can see what Christ's obedience has accomplished here's what Paul says in Romans 5 when he compares the work of Adam to the work of Christ therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men so one act of righteousness led to justification and life for all men for us by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous as we said earlier Christ was obedient to God the Father in all things but here we are forced to look particularly at his obedience to the Father in going to the cross in suffering and dying for the sins of his people he drank the bitter cup that should have been ours and through his obedience we have peace with God through his obedience we have eternal life so we can end with this children from today on I hope that you will see that obedience to parents is not a burden I hope that you will see that it's a chance to identify with Christ in his obedience to God this is a chance to show yourself and to show those who are looking at you that you are among those who are ransomed by the life of Christ so let's seize the opportunity to identify with Christ in his obedience let's pray Father we as children are called to be obedient and we are so aware that we need your amazing grace to do this Father we pray that you would touch the heart of all children especially our little ones and we pray Lord that you would make it a delight to them to honor and to obey parents and Father we pray that they will see the blessings of what obedience brings as your word has promised them we pray [36 : 12] Lord that it will go well with them and that they will enjoy long fruitful life and most of all Father we pray that by your grace through obedience to parents that a watching world will see your grace in the lives of our children may they truly reflect the obedience of Christ to you and may you be glorified let me pray amen to you to