

How to love mum and dad

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[0 : 00] 7. 7. Let me just read us in up to that verse and then we'll start reading.

Lead us in up to that verse and we'll start reading from there on. The Pharisees are in the beginning of chapter 7. The Pharisees are gathered around and they're questioning Jesus on the washing of hands.

The disciples are not washing their hands before they eat. And Jesus understands that the Pharisees have this particular tradition which the disciples are being questioned about and questioning Jesus.

But Jesus knows where their heart is, what the actual issue is at hand. And then in verse 8 he comes to the answer. And this is the very hub of what Jesus is saying and therefore the lesson for us this evening.

You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. And he said to them, You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition.

[1 : 34] For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. But you say, If a man tells his father or his mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is corban, that is given to God, Then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother.

Thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do. Well may God bless the reading of his word to our hearts this evening.

But of course we would ask that God would bless the actual reading itself with understanding to us. We're going to come back to that after we've sung this next hymn.

So if you'd like to turn again, or at least if you're there already, In Mark chapter 7, verses 8 through to verse 13.

So Mark chapter 7, beginning in verse 8 and through to the end of 13.

[3 : 02] As you sit here this evening, I want you to understand that there's a very simple title, Which is not something that I often do to a message. But the title would simply be, Look after mum and dad.

Look after mum and dad. Okay, or it could be for some of you, Just your mum. Could be for some of you, Just your dad. It could be for some of you, That where your children aren't around to look after you.

Or perhaps you don't have children. And I'm going to address answers to those as we go along. To understand that God has actually provided solutions, Provided answers for all types of situations, Of life's situations.

And so as we begin to consider the things of God in this matter, One of the things we begin to appreciate, Is that God wants us to consider the things of people. Okay?

This is the starting point. As you sit here tonight and consider the things of God, God is asking you, Through the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus is God, To consider the things of people.

[4 : 12] And that's quite apparent in these verses. Now, life gets complicated really, really quickly. And sometimes it can be difficult to figure out, Where all the problems started in the first place.

It's very similar, Perhaps when you have an argument, You get so far into the argument, That you can't actually remember the argument, That caused all the other arguments that follow.

And that's simply, Things unwind really, really quickly. Okay? Life gets complicated really, really quickly. And it can be very, very difficult to work out, Where all the problems...

And sometimes you have to be able to work your way back far enough, To be able to address what needs to be addressed, And then at some point where there can be no agreement, Of course, forgiveness is always the key.

But the fundamental issue is that order matters. Order matters. You know, what needs to be done first, What needs to be done second. And one of the things that God teaches us through his word, Is the order of things.

[5 : 24] God, being God, Tells us to put him first. And then God, being God, Tells us in this, In these passage here, That mum and dad, Or mother and father, Has to be put before, Okay?

Corbin. Okay? So there becomes an order. When you listen to God, God is not beyond addressing your life, Sorting everything out in its proper order.

So God has given an order to man and to women. They're to understand that order of importance, Because things matter. Lives matter. God matters.

How they operate. What is to give what? What is to give way to what? Okay? When is it to give way? And when is it not to give way? All of these issues, Is real life complications.

When do I do what I do? How do I do what I do? I'm called by God to love my mum. I'm called by God to love my dad. I'm called to honour my mother and father in the commandment.

[6 : 28] And if you're a child sat here this evening, You're going to want to know how to do that. And the reason you're going to want to know how to do that, Is because God is telling you that you have to do that.

Now, for you adults thinking, Well, he's just saying that to the young children amongst us this evening. No. I'm saying that to all of us this evening. Bearing in mind that we came from a mum and a dad.

Okay? And some of us have the privilege of knowing both mum and dad. I myself, as you know from my testimony, Know who my mum is. And know that I had a dad.

But who didn't know me. Okay? We knew that there had to be a relationship there. But he left before I got old. Or even began to walk or whatever.

I think I was walking. But you understand. So, even though the command is true, There are real life issues make the commandment applicable in different ways.

[7 : 25] So, the summary here is fairly straightforward of what we have read. The Pharisees always seem to have questions for Jesus. And Jesus is never short of asking questions of the Pharisees.

And we're used to Jesus doing this. They have a question for Jesus. And Jesus gives answers. But he's also one who gives questions. He is expecting them to answer his questions.

And often he answers their questions with another question. The issue is the commandments of God and the traditions of men. Both here seem to be legitimate.

While the commandments of God are clearly legitimate. And the traditions of men are not always wrong. Traditions in the church are not always wrong. But they do have an order of importance. Which comes first? Which comes second? Third? Fourth? And so on. But notice here that the contrast is not between the commandments of God and worldly passions. The commandments of God and worldly ways.

[8 : 27] Jesus is not saying, here's the commandment of God. And by the way, don't go wasting your money on frivolous things. Whatever it may be.

No. What Jesus is contrasting here is the commandment of God and you devoting something to God. Okay. This is the contrast.

You devoting something over to God and the actual commandment to God. Jesus knows your heart. He knows the ability that you have to come up with a tradition that you devote to God, a service in the church that you devote to God to not do the weightier matters of God's commandment.

Okay. Okay. We can all do that. I'm busy stewarding. I can't pray. I can't come to the prayer meeting. I'm busy serving tea and coffee. I'm busy on the back desk.

Right. We can all establish acts of traditions and service then that stop us or become a legitimate excuse, a devotion to God.

[9 : 31] Well, that stops us doing these other things. This is what Jesus is addressing. Those legitimate services, devotions to God that we do, even out of a pure heart, but maybe not out of a pure heart.

Jesus wants to order things. The Pharisees begin by questioning Jesus about the washing of hands, but Jesus quickly moves this on to the commandment and the tradition of men.

And the tradition here of Corbyn. And, of course, you know, it should go without saying that no political reference is being made here.

But you never know. You get some people who read the Bible in a very strange way and go, it must be the end times. I mean, his name is written here. There are those who read the Bible that way, but that's a strange thing that we don't do.

Corbyn is simply that which you dedicate to God. Financial money to God. I've dedicated it to God. And now you ask the question, well, how can something that I have devoted to God, that I have dedicated to God, be in opposition to God's commandments?

[10:45] How can there be something that I have given over to God as an act of devotion, now be in opposition to the commandments of God? And this is the very thing that Jesus draws out here.

So notice, please notice, that when Jesus raises the commandment, honor your father and mother, he's not speaking to children. He's speaking to adults.

And too often, we read that commandment and our mind goes straight to young people and think that only applies to those under the age of... But Jesus here, there's not a single child, as far as I can tell, in sight.

Jesus raises the commandment of honor your father and mother to adults who are in front of him, not to children. And too often, we miss out the level of importance placed upon this commandment because we simply read it in light of young children's responsibilities to their parents, which is true. You are to honor your mother and father. And God wants you to honor your mother and father. He commands you to. And he can encourage you how to do that. But the lesson here this evening is that this commandment is given to adults regarding their elderly parents.

[12:05] The care of their elderly parents. And these people and others who the Pharisees have taught are doing this practice of Corban.

And so their elderly parents are suffering because of it. Financially, perhaps because of care. It could be a number of other reasons. And so the issue laid out before us is how well do you look after mom and dad in their old age?

Now, some of you may have done this in mom and dad. Mother and father have gone to be with God. Okay, that may have already happened. And you may have obeyed the commandment in looking after them.

So I want you to understand the principle that Jesus lays out here first. And then I want to finish with the encouragement or the exhortation why it's right to look after your mother and father in old age. One of the things to appreciate here is that this principle clearly has a wider application. And the wider application is this. Understand the levels of importance that God places on different things.

[13:16] Understand the order that God places different actions into. Some are clearly more valuable than others. Looking after your mother and father here as a commandment is clearly more valuable than the tradition of Corban.

Way more valuable. And this is something that the Pharisees have to understand. And only when they come to understand the order of the commandment can they truly appreciate it, how it's so different than the traditions of men.

So the principle is this. That God has given a God-given order when it comes to serving him. When it comes to loving him. And he doesn't allow ever any tradition, however good it might be, however much it might be devoted to God, however much it may look like in the service of God in the church, ever to overtake a weightier commandment.

So two things can be done for God here, but whose voice are we listening to? Something that I have decided to devote to God or something that God actually wants me to be devoted to?

This is the issue. I can devote things to God that God has never asked for. And I can devote those things to God that God has never asked for and never do the things that God has actually asked for.

[14:41] I can listen to the commandment of God, but establish a tradition that somehow convinces me that I no longer therefore have time and therefore cannot do the commandment of God.

If the tradition, if the thing that you have set up, okay, the stewarding rota, the flower rota, the tea and coffee rota, the Sunday school rota, if these things stop you from doing the weightier things that God requires of you, then that's a tradition that's God in the way and therefore must be set aside. You need to go through reordering. You need to appreciate the order that God wants you to live by. God doesn't allow and doesn't want the traditions of us to be established ahead of what he has actually laid out for his church.

To do that is simply to ask God to stop speaking. And that's what it says here in verse 12. In other words, I'm speaking at the minute, God.

Okay, let me have my say. Okay, God's spoken and then the tradition says, okay, but these Pharisees make void the word of God by making their voice greater than God's voice.

[16:10] By simply, okay, my turn to speak. Just one minute, let me finish. And that's what the Pharisees are effectively doing. They're making void the word of God that is non-effective in their lives and non-effective in the lives of the people because they're shushing God.

And they're laying out their tradition ahead of the commandment. God is speaking his commandment, honoring your father and mother. And they're going, just shh, shh, shh, shh, shh. Here's the tradition. And that's what they're doing.

And that's the very thing that Jesus is picking up on. He's spotting even the very thing that they are devoting to God is the very thing that is actually getting in the way of them really honoring God in the way that they should be.

So here's the lesson for children. But the children here, you'll notice, are adults. Okay? Lesson for children, but the children here are adults.

We are to learn that we are to look after elderly parents in their old age. And those who do receive God's approval. God's approval for those who take care after mother or father in their old age are doing the very thing that God wants them to do.

[17:21] In honoring their mother and father, or honoring their father because their mother has passed away, or honoring their mother because their father has passed away, honoring your father and mother in whatever case it may be, you're honoring God.

And you're doing it because you're putting the commandment first. And if you say, well, I've not been able to serve in the church, I've not been able to give financially to the church, I've not been able to do this, that, or the other, then you're obeying God.

You're putting your mother or father first. And by putting them first, you are loving them in a way that only God approves of.

You're putting it right in the right order. But of course, those who just bypass this, then of course you're establishing, I've not got time, I'm busy doing other things.

Well, what are you doing? You're establishing one thing to come up with a reason to not do the thing that God actually wants you to do. Therefore, breaking the commandment, therefore telling God to shh, making void his word.

[18:26] And that's a serious problem because God is asking you, commanding you to honour your mother and father. He's asking you to give rest to your parents when they're old.

And the Pharisees here come up with this tradition of Corban of saying, well, I can devote this financial gain to the church. I can devote this time, whatever it may be, right?

And then they can go to their parents and say, well, I can't give you anything because I'm maxed out over here. And Jesus is saying, that's wrong. That's wrong.

He's picking up on people who are devoting things to God and telling them, don't do it. And the reason not to do it is because you're doing it in the wrong order.

And that's the point that Jesus is making here. Corban was a tradition where people were allowed under the teaching of the Pharisees to simply do one thing instead of doing another, devoting this to God and therefore leaving their elderly parents without the care that they need.

[19:36] And that's wrong for a number of reasons. It's wrong because it breaks the commandments. God is calling you, commanding you to honor mother and father.

And therefore, we're not to reject the more important parts of God's law. We're not to reject the more important parts of what God reveals. And the reason that happens is for a couple of reasons.

Number one, either you don't know that they exist, so you only do the parts of the Bible you do know, and you leave vast amounts of it undone because your Bible never really gets opened.

You never really sit and read and take it in, what God actually wants from you and wants from you regarding other people. Right?

And you may have a number of reasons for that, but none of them, of course, are legitimate. Of course, when your heart is not in tune with God as well, it's easy just to sort of almost laugh at God.

[20:42] And when you're laughing at God, one of the things that you're doing is you just, shh, right? I'm not paying attention. I've got other things on my mind. I want to talk about other things.

I want to do something else rather than actually commit my life to listening to you and do things your ways. And that's pretty important.

It's important because we can either do it following the command of God or we can do it because, well, it's just the right thing to do. And so I just want to address that ever so quickly.

You have two farmers out in the field, Proverbs says, and they're both doing the exact same job. They're both plowing the field, and at the end of the day, they've finished.

And God looks upon one man's work as righteous, and he looks upon the other man's work as wickedness. And we want to say, what's the difference?

[21 : 41] They've both done exactly the same. They've both done exactly the same in the same amount of time. How can one's work be righteous and the other ones be unrighteous? Can you explain to me why that's the case?

And God graciously explains it several times through the Bible, and he says, yeah, because one was done in my name and the other one was just done. One was done to the glory of God and the other one was just done because it seemed like the right thing to do.

So God doesn't want you to look after mum and dad, your mother and father, simply because it's the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do, but he wants you to do it because you honour God by honouring your mother and father.

To put it a slightly different way, I don't have to do what the police officer tells me because the police officer tells me. I have to do what the police officer tells me because God tells me that I'm to obey the law.

Okay? That's the difference. I obey the law because God tells me to obey the law, not because the law tells me to obey it. Okay? The instruction, the commandments come from God and therefore it affects relationships down on earth.

[22 : 53] So the value here, as it gets extended, is clearly applied to all things. We are not to be committed to anything more than what we are committed to God.

We are not to be committed to any tradition more than what we are to be committed to the commandments of God. We are not to be given over to anything in any way more than the things that we are to be devoted to God first.

Okay? It's easy to say, I'm doing this instead of praying. The question is, you shouldn't be doing that instead of praying. It's easy to say, I'm doing this instead of studying God's word, listening to him speak to me.

But the question is, or the issue is, you shouldn't be doing that instead of listening to God speak. There's a God-given order for a God-given reason. Here, it's about children and their elderly parents.

But it could be applied to anything. It could be applied to anything. It's possible to get the order completely wrong. God gives us an order, and we're not beyond messing it up, reordering it according to our own fashion.

[24 : 04] And one of the explanations that God gives to this in the Old Testament is how can something like devoting something to God end up being considered sinful?

You know, how can something that I devote to God be wrong? And to use Old Testament terminology, it becomes the iniquity of a holy thing. How can something holy become sinful?

Well, in the same way, you're doing something that you're meant to be doing, but you're not doing it for the glory of God. There's no God motivation here. It could be to save face.

It could be to not appear to be the odd one out in the family membership. There could be a number of different reasons, but none of those are the reasons that God is addressing here.

The Pharisees have to take ultimate responsibility because they're the ones who have taught this tradition to men and women. They're the ones who have gone out and said, yeah, it's fine to do that.

[25 : 02] And Jesus is saying, look, you've got parents over here struggling because your tradition is actually led to that. The things that you've been teaching over here is actually led for elderly parents not to be cared for because such is the depravity of the human heart that even the good son, whether he's 10 or 15 or 20, cannot be so good when he's 30 or 40.

Suddenly he has pressures in his life and his mom and dad go out of the window. Well, in a family setup, that's not allowed to happen. When you understand family, that's not allowed to happen ever. Let me try and illustrate this a slightly different way. The Pharisees, by telling God to be quiet, making his word void. There's an interesting issue here, so I'm just going to illustrate.

Back in the day when the Reformation happened, Martin Luther knew that he would have a problem on his hands the moment the Reformation happened. And the problem was a fairly easy one to spot, but an impossible one to stop.

And it was this, that if we go forward with the Reformation, then suddenly everyone's going to have a Bible all for themselves. And you're going to go, well, what's the problem there?

[26 : 22] Tindale wanted every plowboy in the field to have a Bible for himself. What's the problem? Well, the problem is, which is what Alistair McGrath points out in his book, Christianity's Dangerous Idea, is that the moment everybody has a Bible, everybody becomes their own teacher.

Everybody can then determine for themselves what it says. Okay? And they can go out and come up with traditions and come up with different ways and their own interpretation can actually replace what the Bible is actually teaching because everyone's setting themselves up.

Now, it's good that everyone has a Bible, but it's not good that everyone then decides what it means. And Kevin Van Hooser, what a name that is. I've been practicing the pronunciation of it all week.

But Kevin Van Hooser points out that God gave teachers to the church. Everyone is evangelist. Everyone is to go out into the world and make disciples, but not everyone is a teacher.

Not everyone is a teacher. That God gave different gifts to different people, and one of those gifts that he gives to his church are teachers. Not everyone is a teacher, and therefore not everyone is meant to teach.

[27 : 37] And this is something that we don't always appreciate. Okay? So we think, well, anybody can do it. Well, if it's a gift from God, the quality of it doesn't lie in the person doing it. Right?

Because he's just been given a gift to do it. He has no ability of himself to be able to do it. If he did, he wouldn't need to be gifted with it. But if God gives the gift, then he gives the gift to some and not others.

He calls everyone to be evangelists to go forth and take forth the gospel. But in the church, he only makes some to be teachers. And this is part of the problem, that where are we going to get our instruction from?

Well, the key teacher is Jesus Christ. And whether or not those teaching the word of Jesus are teaching it like he teaches it. That is, he's just saying the same thing that Jesus is saying.

But the moment you begin to get a whiff of someone establishing a tradition, the moment you begin to get a little inkling that, hang on, there's something happening here that, I don't actually see this in scripture.

[28 : 40] And we could come up with a number of things, you know, that are good, but are not in scripture. Okay? Youth work. Where's that in the Bible? Don't see it.

Sunday school. Where's that in the Bible? I don't see it. Do you want me to carry on? There's a list. Now, we recognize that there's incredible value in them.

But one of the dangers is, of course, that the value of them can overtake the greater commandments that are actually plain. Okay? And that's one of the things that Jesus is addressing here.

We are not to overtake the commandments of God with our traditions. So, here's the exhortation then, as we close. The moment the church, God's people, move away from God's word, it's easy to start a tradition.

And it's easier to start a tradition and get followers than it is for people to follow the word of God. Okay? Because a tradition can accommodate people's attitudes.

[29 : 44] A tradition can accommodate what people want to do and what they don't want to do. All earthly memberships are based on what the people want. Okay? What they would like.

We can change our membership to either increase our membership or shorten it. But not so with God. God sees the way that it is. And it will shape us accordingly.

So, here's the final consideration. P.J. O'Rourke said this. That, speaking of young people, he said this. That every young person wants to save the world.

Every young person wants to do the great big thing. Every young person wants to save the world, but they don't want to help mum with the dishes. Right?

And how many of us are like that? We all want to do the big things, but no one wants to help mum with the hoovering. No one wants to help mum with making the beds. No one wants to help mum with the dishes.

[30 : 41] No. Right? Poor old mum is laboring over here, and the child is dreaming, and rightly so, about taking over the world for God.

Okay? But the weight here matters. The things that actually matter in the moment are not getting any attention. And this is what Jesus is addressing.

Notice what needs attention according to the commandments of God. Don't reorder them with your own traditions. Jesus teaches us in the way that he does to get us to do the things that we don't want to do by nature.

And so the battle is not always what it appears to be. There's plenty of battles, as I pointed out this morning in this morning's message. The father could be putting work before the family.

The mother could be putting work before the family. That could come before church. Okay? There's a number of things. You've also got the children who are encouraged to put football before the worship of God or to put a club before the worship.

[31 : 45] All of these things can be encouraged. All of these things which are man-made traditions, modern traditions, that don't always have their proper order in the life of God's people.

But Jesus' point is simple. No tradition of man is ever to get in the way of God's commandment. No tradition of man is ever more weightier in its content and its benefit for God's people or all people than what God's care is of them.

The pastor has to remember, and he has to remember more often than he does, that he too has a mum. And that while he lives in a church with everybody else's mums, he's reminded, reading this, that a phone call more often than what you do wouldn't go amiss.

Right? That perhaps going down and doing it a little bit more often than what you do. So I feel the conviction as much as all of you here might, that suddenly, you know, hang on, I haven't phoned in a while, I'm bringing myself to that point, now is commanded.

Right? Now it's commanded. Right? Because I'm coming back in line with God's word. So I want to finish then with what is clearly evident in this church. And that is the amount of sons and daughters that have looked after elderly parents over recent years or who are currently looking after elderly parents right now.

[33 : 13] To do so is to honour God. To do so is to love God. If you are honouring your mother and father by making the bed for her, by providing meals, by doing a number of other things that I don't want to go into, but you know the type of things that are included.

I want you to know that God's approval is upon that. He actually encourages you to do that. And if you ever feel guilty about not doing this or not doing that for God in other areas, you shouldn't.

Because Jesus is saying here that what you do for your mum or for your dad in those areas is the weightier matter. The fact that you go out of your way and love your mum in that way is something that God approves of.

The fact that you go out of your way and love your dad in that way is something which God approves of. You are keeping the commandment of God. You are honouring your mother and father or mother or father, whatever the case may be.

And for those of you sat here this evening and you think, well, actually, I don't have any children that are near me. Okay? Or perhaps I don't have any children. Yes, you do. I'm one of them.

[34 : 22] Jesus rearranges family relationships in the church. Jesus says, who is my mother and father, my brothers? Who are they? Anyone who does the will of God.

So if you're sat here this evening and thinking, well, I don't have that family strength. Yes, you do.

Okay? Those younger than you are your children. And they're here, commanded by God, to honour you.

They're to honour you in the way that Jesus wants you to be honoured as spiritual mother and father. As Isaiah says and as Jesus says here. In a family, the children are looked after by the elder ones, Sunday school.

And then, those, as they grow up, they look after you when you get old. And if that's not happening, then we know what we need to concentrate on. Amen.