

Podcast 234 Loving our Children as God loves His Children.

Let's begin with prayer.

Father, thank You for the excellent, perfect model that You gave us in Jesus who loved us just like You loved Him. So we're looking at You as our Father and how you loved Your Son, and then we're looking at the Son and seeing how He loved us. Help us today to grasp more of Your love for us and at the same time be able to put some feet to it so that we can love our children the same way. In Jesus' name, amen.

Initiator

The first principle that I want to focus on is that God took the initiative to love us. "This is real love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins." (1 John 4:11 NLT). And a few verses later we read "We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) When Jesus came to the earth, we were not like the children of Israel in Egypt asking God to send us a savior. There were a few devoted souls in the temple seeking for the Messiah to come back, but most people were running after their own ways and oblivious to our need for a savior. We're not much different today. Then God, by His Spirit takes the initiative and works in our hearts. We discover that we have a conscience and experience conviction of sin. Then the Spirit of God points us to the Savior and we are brought to Christ and born from above.

Since God takes the initiative to love us, we need to take the initiative to love our children. Now, what does that look like? I'm just going to share one way that it looks like to me, but that principle can be applied in a lots of different ways. One of my friends used to invite his children to breakfast. He had several children and he would take one per week on Saturday morning. He took the initiative to take them out to show that he cared about them and to have some one-on-one time with them. This was in my mind when I started thinking, "I have adult sons and I see them very frequently at work, and I see them at family events, and our lives are intertwined, but I still want to make sure that they know that they're special." So I've taken the initiative to ask my sons for lunch dates. We look at our calendars and find an open day that works for both of us.

My mornings are time devoted to spending time with my Dad and spending time in His Word, and praying for that's when I'm freshest. These lunches are my opportunity to be their dad. I told my sons, "I don't want to talk business, I don't want to talk sports, I just want to spend some time with you and be your dad." They appreciate that. I'm pursuing them to deepen our relationship. Regardless of how old they are, I'm always going to be their dad.

I was affirmed in this pursuit by the modern translations of Psalm 23. I had long ago memorized the last verse in Psalm 23 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." But in the modern translations it says, "Surely Your goodness

and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life and I will live in the house of the Lord forever." I like that idea that God pursued us initially continues to pursue us for relationship.

Taking our lunch theme a little bit further, in Revelation chapter 2, it's Jesus who is standing at the door of the Laodicean Church when He says, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear My voice, I will come in and share a meal with him." So Jesus does not only pursue us initially, but He continues to pursue us all the days of our life and develop our relationship with Him. This is our first principle.

Teach Them Diligently

Principle two for today is from Deuteronomy 6:7, "Teach your children diligently." My second son had three foster boys with him for most of 2019. When Christmas time came last year, they were surprised to learn that those boys did not know what Christmas was about. They had no idea who Jesus was or why He came to this earth. Anna had the joy of teaching them about Jesus being born, coming to love them, take away their sins, et cetera. She gave the gospel to these little boys and that's the first time they'd ever heard the true meaning of Christmas. We can't assume that just because we live in America, that everybody knows what Christmas is. We can't assume that people know who Jesus is, nor can we assume that our children have an accurate description of Jesus. So that's one of our jobs, as parents, to take the initiative and start the conversations and read the book of John, read the gospel of Luke to teach the truths to our kids.

Probably one of the highlights of my life as a father was presiding over family devotions for years, reading the Word of God aloud, talking about God, then discussing what we learned with our kids. This was in addition to going to church together and discussing what they learned at church. Communicating these truths is a beautiful privilege. It's not only a responsibility, it's a joy to be able to share eternal truths with your kids.

The rest of Deuteronomy 6:7 tell us when to do this? When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up. We need to spend time with our kids. I like to remember that the Father showed up at Jesus' baptism. Parents can follow God's lead and be there when our kids are baptized and when our kids celebrate significant times in their life.

Let's go back to the Father and the Son again and look at their relationship. It says in John 8:29, Jesus was speaking when He said, "He who sent Me is with Me, He has not left Me alone." And then in John 16:32, He's talking to His disciples again and He says, "Behold, the hour is coming. Indeed it has come when you will be scattered, each to his own home and will leave Me alone." He goes on to say, "Yet, I Am not alone for the Father is with Me." Someday our kids will go through times when their friends are going to leave them and they're going to go through times when they

feel alone, but I hope by God's grace that we as parents can make sure that they know that they will never be alone, we will always have their back and will always be with them.

I was talking to a dear friend last night and learned her daughter has serious health issues. So my friend Laurie went down to a different State and stayed with her daughter from December through the beginning of February. She was present to be with her daughter and help with her grandchildren. When they could see that there was no end in sight to the health situation, they put their house on the market, sold it and moved in with Laurie and her husband. They're planning on spending the next year together. That's what parents do. Parents have their kids' back and they spend time with them.

I'm still thinking about being there for our kids, because we just had our granddaughters for this weekend. I was gone at a men's conference for a couple of those days, but as soon as I got home, those little granddaughters came out before I could even get out of the car and excitedly jumped into my lap. Those sweet girls were joined to my hip the rest of the day. The next morning they got up and told me they wanted to play Monopoly. So I taught them how to play monopoly at 7:30 in a Monday morning. This is what parents and grandparents do, we spend time with our kids and our grandkids and we invest in them.

Honorable Parents

"Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise. If you honor your father and mother, things will go well for you and you will have a long life on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3)

I have four ways of interpreting this passage. The fifth commandment is for children. It's not written to parents. Paul explains what God gave in the 10 commandments and adds, "This is the first commandment that's got implications. It's accompanied with a promise because if you do this commitment, things will go well for you and you will have a long life on the earth."

I've addressed groups of teens at conferences, and I'll ask, "What does it mean to honor somebody?" And the room gets silent. And I continue, "What does it mean to honor your father and your mother? What does that look like? What does that word mean?"

The word honor and the concept of honoring is out of vogue. One of the first things I think about is Haman, in the account of Esther and Mordecai. Haman comes before the King and he's all ready to hang Mordecai. But the night before the King couldn't sleep and was reading about how someone had rescued him by revealing an attempt on his life. The King asked his servants, "What was ever done for that man?" And they said, "Nothing was done." When Haman appeared the King said, "What shall

be done to the man whom the King delights to honor?" And Haman thought of course, that he was the one who was to be honored and responded, "Wow, call for your horse and put your robes on this man who is to be honored, and have your trusted advisor lead him around the city and shout, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delights to honor." Hamas then had to do this for Mordecai. God really turned the tables.

That was an outward expression of honoring a man. However I think honor is more of an attitude. Honor is something that comes from within and is hard to measure or define. Each of us should have the right attitude towards our mom and our dad.

I used to read the fifth commandment and think my kids need to honor me. I'm sorry to say that, but that was my first thought when I read that command. Sadly I spent too much time on this application by checking my kids' attitudes and their obedience, and I would discipline them if I sensed that they weren't honoring or obeying me. I apologize now for my behavior.

Another way I sought to apply this passage way to make sure that they honored their mother. If I heard them talk back to their mom or not obey her or make life hard for her, I was the avenger and I would step in and I'd say, "Hey, that's your mom. You need to honor her, you need to treat her well, you need to shape up."

The more I thought about these verses, the more I realized that the best thing I can do to help my children honor their mother is for me to honor my wife. Because honor is an attitude and attitudes are caught more than they're taught. If I treat my wife as a second class citizen (I've talked about this in a previous podcast) my kids are going to catch this attitude. When Sandi calls and says, "Time to eat." Do I come quickly or roll my eyes and sit there and keep working on my computer. If I do, my sons are going to catch these attitudes. Or if I make some jokes and belittle or look down on her at any way, my kids are going to catch this tone. The most effective thing I can do is honor Sandi myself.

I might need to specifically teach them what it means to honor their mom, but the correct attitude is the best way to help my sons inherit the implications of this promise. As men we can open doors for her. I still to this day open doors for women, I don't buy political correctness stuff. I've heard that the best way to combat it is to ignore it and that's exactly what I'm doing. So I want to stand up when a woman enters the room, I want to open the door for her, I want to treat her with respect and dignity and hopefully these attitudes can be passed onto my kids.

I'm a husband and a father, I'm also a son. Now, how do I honor my mom and my dad? Do I go to their house and then on the way home get in the car and grumble about them? Or am I treating them with honor, respect, and dignity? I've done both. Sadly, I've been a grumbler but I have also sought, especially when they were older, to do the best I could to take care of them, and to be with them, and walk beside them

in the hard journey when they're passing and saying goodbye to this earth. So that's the third way that I can help my children is to honor my parents.

And the fourth way is I'm going to ask myself "Am I honorable? Is the fifth commandment going to be a stumbling block to my sons, or will it be easy." If I work diligently at being an honorable man, I think it makes it easier for my children to honor me. Psalm 15:4 says, "He that swears to his own hurt." The NLT translates this same verse, "Keep their promises even when it hurts." Do I tell my children something and follow through? Because if I don't, perhaps I exasperate, discourage, or provoke them to anger, as Paul speaks to dads. Or perhaps I say one thing and do something else, or make a promise and don't keep it, that is not honorable. It's going to be difficult for my kids to honor someone who's dishonorable.

I'm going to close by talking about one of my heroes, David. Generally when we think of David, we think of Goliath, or Bathsheba, and perhaps we might recognize that he wrote many of the Psalms. But in all of David's achievements, I think the one that is the most overlooked and rarely mentioned, is the one that exemplifies a hallmark of his character, and that is the way he honored King Saul and his own parents.

King Saul was a dishonorable man, but David honored him because he was God's anointed king. I can identify with David in throwing rocks, and I can imagine what it's like to be in battles, and I know what it's like to sing and worship and pray. But the way David honored this King who tried to kill him, and his family, and his friends repeatedly for years, is exceptional. I can hardly even grasp his attitude. I don't know how he did it. But this was the mark of his sterling character that set David apart.

I believe David naturally had a struggle honoring his own parents. In Psalm 27:10, David said, "If my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will take me in." So I think David had issues with his own parents. And yet we see that when Saul was chasing him, he took his parents to another kingdom and asked the king, "Could you watch my mom and my dad because things are precarious in my neck of the woods and it won't be safe for them?" He put his parents first and honored them. Apparently all of his seven brothers never thought to do it, but David did it. David honored his mom and his dad, David honored a dishonorable king and that made him honorable.

I need to continue working at this commandment and all these different applications. Because if we will embrace a spirit of honoring, and if our children will find it in their hearts to honor us, God promises that things will go well with them and they will have a good long life on this earth.

We don't esteem this attitude anymore in our culture. We feel that perhaps it's an Eastern Asian thing where people still honor their mom and their dad, but not in America. However God's Word is eternal and we need to honor our parents. As a

parent, I want to be honorable and set good examples in the way I honor my parents, the way I honor my wife, and the way I honor my kids themselves. Amen.

Father, thank You for these insights from Your Word. I pray that You will come alongside of us and show us how we can apply them as dads to our kids, and help us to take initiative, help us to be honorable, honoring. Thank You for Your Word and all the examples. Help us to teach our children and help us to spend time with them, just like You taught us through Your Son in the way that You spend time with Your Son. But we commit ourselves to You, we commit these words to You, deliver us from condemnation. Thank You for any conviction that came along with them, and lead us in the way that leads to life. In Jesus' name. Amen.