

## Ages and Stages – Parenting Parents

1/21/24

Ephesians 6:1-3

Sunday AM

(3) expectant dads were together in the hospital waiting room as their wives were delivering their babies. The nurse entered and told the 1<sup>st</sup> man his wife had just delivered twins. He said, “What a coincidence I play for the MN Twins.” A few min. later, the nurse re-entered and told the 2<sup>nd</sup> man his wife just delivered triplets. The man said, “That’s amazing, I work for the 3M Company.” At that point, the 3<sup>rd</sup> man collapsed into the fetal position crying. The other guys asked if he was okay. He said, “No, I work for 7-Up.”

For (2) weeks, we’ve been in a series on parenting entitled – **Ages/Stages** – in which we’ve been looking at the key elements needed to love/care for our families thru the various stages of life. I shared last week that broadly speaking, the scope of parenting can be summed up in (5) major stages:

Stage 1 – **Forming** Stage – birth to the start of puberty

Stage 2 – **Preparing** Stage – puberty to graduation

Stage 3 – **Releasing** Stage – graduation to off-payroll

Stage 4 – **Partnering** Stage – walking alongside them

Stage 5 – **Caring** Stage – kids start caring for you

**Week 1** – we learned from Proverbs 22:6 that parenting/GP begins w/ the adults taking full responsibility for training their kids uniquely to who they are and how they learn in the ways of God.

Last week we talked about how the adolescent years are much like the struggle a caterpillar has to endure in the cocoon to strengthen its wings to be able to fly – and the (4) qualities our teens need to have wrestled w/ to face the world are convictions/character so that they have courage/civility.

Today, we’re going to look at stage 5 of the parenting process which is learning to parent our parents.

**DYK** according to the CDC that over 10 mil. adults over the age of 50 are currently caring for an aging parent. Couple that w/ the reality that 12k baby boomers have been turning 65 every day for the past 20 yrs and will continue to do so until at least the next 6 yrs screams that caring for aging parents is a top priority in our culture.

Thankfully, most people still feel that caring for an aging parent is a privileged responsibility yet this doesn’t mean that it’s not a great challenge.

In fact, according to AARP, the avg. U.S. caregiver is a 49 yr. old daughter who works outside the home and spends 20+ hrs a week caring for her mom/dad.

**Of course**, many in our church are in the throes of either parenting their parents or needing to be or being parented by their kids – so from the start – let me say... while this is seldom easy – it’s a part of life... and there are a few things we can do to help each other out.

**I know b/c I for one am in this stage.** In case you were unaware, last year, my dad, after many years of struggling w/ *Louis Body Dementia* finally passed away leaving my mom after 50+ years of marriage – and it has been a difficult transition for her. While my sister/brother, who live close to her take good care of her, I’ve spent many hours on the phone talking w/ her about any number of life issues.

I share this b/c if you’re not in this stage yet, you will be one day – and there are things to be done today to help care for those who once previously cared for us. Personally, I think it begins w/ a clear understanding of Ephesians 6:1-3 and Exodus 20:12

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father/mother" – which is the first commandment w/ a promise – that it may go well w/ you and you may enjoy long life on the earth.*

Let me begin by distinguishing the difference b/c the words **obey** and **honor**. To obey comes from the Greek word **hupoakouo** – and applies primarily to a child still living under the authority, responsibility, and care of their parents. **hupo** translates under in alignment, while **akouo** is the word from which we get our English word – acoustic – referring to having the ability to hear – **so to obey our parents means to hear under their instruction to obey them.**

To **honor** (*timao*) refers to our disposition towards our parents – it's the attitude behind our actions. More specifically, to honor is to give someone the respect and esteem for the seat/role they hold in your life – no matter whether you think they deserve it or not.

The Hebrew Word found in the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment in Exodus 20:12 denotes a similar idea – *Honor your father/mother, so your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.* 20:12

**honor** (*kabed*) to attach weight to or place superiority. It was used to express respect for the glory/majesty of God and His authority over His creation. So, to honor one's parents is to give them respect, value, and esteem for their Divine placement in your life.

**Of course**, I immediately think of if our President were to walk into our church today. Whether you like him or agree w/ him or not – b/c he's the President, we should show him honor for the role he serves.

**POINT** – obedience to your parents might end once you leave their home but honoring them – and valuing their place in your is a lifetime responsibility.

**Biblically speaking** – w/in the context of the home, incumbent to honoring our family is the idea of respecting our parent's role/authority, maintaining the dignity of the family name, family unity/preference, and of course, the safety/care of our loved ones.

**NOW** – I doubt that many of us w/ disagree w/ such a notion – yet as our we age and our parents age – and our roles begin reversing – the idea of honoring our parents takes on an entirely new meaning. It's to this idea that I want to offer some practical advice to those of you who are aging and to those of you who are sitting in the seat of serving as a caregiver.

Of course, I am not an expert on this subject, yet as a pastor, I believe that as a faith community, we need to find ways to help one another meet God's expectations to honor our parents until they step into His arms.

Whether you are an aging parent or the child assuming the role of caring for your aging parent...

1 – **ACCEPT** that Things are Changing

Whether you like it or not... it's happening – and the sooner you have these conversations, the better I'll be for everyone involved. This isn't giving up control or autonomy of your life, it's preparing your kids to care for you and your dignity in the future.

For the **aging parent** – while you are of sound mind and body – you have a better opportunity to be clear w/ your kids about your hopes, wishes, and resources. For the **caregiving child**, it should provide some relief to have a game plan for your aging parent so that you have a working game plan to execute instead of having to wander in the wilderness.

## 2 – **EXPECT** that it will be Emotional

Don't be naïve to think this will not be hard. It likely will be. It's not an easy thing when you've been caring for yourself and others for all these years. **AND** – don't be surprised if all the children/siblings are not in agreement – they probably won't be. Statistics show that only 1 in 3 of the children/siblings actually ever help in the care of an aging parent yet they want to have a say in their care (which is usually not helpful). Still, you can't stick your head in the sand and pretend that things aren't changing when they are. Yet at the same time – you have to walk thru the grieving process b/c a great loss is occurring.

## 3 – **WORK** on a Game Plan Together

You've all heard the phrase – *people who fail to plan, plan to fail* – this is especially true when it comes to the care of an aging parent and end-of-life decisions. Yet it is essential for the preservation of our loved one's care and dignity to have a working game plan.

### (a) **BEGIN** w/ the Basics

- Is there an up-to-date Will?
- Is there a Power of Attorney?
- Is there a Healthcare Directive (DNR)?
- Is there a Medical File?
- Is there a Financial Access File and Plan?
- Is there a plan for your passing?
- Is there a list of people to be contacted?

**LISTEN** – you can have all of these things in place to enable your loved ones to carry out your wishes and honor your life/dignity w/out having to surrender your autonomy – **BUT** you have to have a plan. But what happens if something unfortunate were to occur – does your spouse or loved ones have immediate, helpful access to make prudent decisions on your behalf?

### (b) **SEEK** Reliable Professional Help as Needed

Don't be afraid to find people to help walk you thru this gauntlet. There are many resources and professionals available to assist. This is one of the reasons a few years ago we began working w/ the GA Baptist Foundation. It was to help our church families w/ estate planning b/c we want to make sure all of you have a plan in place to care for you and your family.

## 4 – **NEVER** Lose Sight of the Objective to Honor

We can never lose sight of the spiritual responsibility we have to honor our parents – yet according to the Scripture – **it comes w/ a caveat.**

*It's the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment w/ a promise – that it may go well w/ you and you may enjoy long life on the earth.*

I used to joke that by honoring our parents we'd have long life b/c they wouldn't be inclined to kill us. And while that might be tongue-in-cheek true – I think there is a deeper meaning.

My grandfather, whom I cherish above all others for His influence/investment in my life used to tell me – ***how you treat others will be how you will be treated.***

**I think this idea applies here.** While the objective of honoring our parents by caring for them when they can no longer sufficiently care for themselves is honoring – the simple truth is that we are paying it forward to our children and how they will ultimately be empowered to one day care for us.

Parenting our parents (or being parented by our kids) is no easy transition – yet not only is it necessary, it is the right thing to do to honor our parent’s lives/dignity.

Back in 1993, the MLB Hall of Fame in Cooperstown was getting remodeled, when a worker removing a display case discovered an old photograph of a stocky, friendly-looking man in a Sinclair Oil baseball uniform. Stapled to the photo was a note that read, “You were never too tired to play ball. On your days off, you helped build the Little League field. You always came to watch me play. You were a Hall of Fame dad.” Of course, no one knew how the picture had gotten there or the identity of the man in the photo. But after a national sports magazine picked up the story, a man came forward to confess that he’d tucked the picture and the note behind the display case during a visit. He explained his dad’s love for him and for baseball – and how he viewed this as a fitting tribute to his hall-of-fame dad.