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Series: Proverbs: Living Wisely in a Fallen World
Message: What God Expects of Children

Transcribed Message
January 19, 2020

Jim Stafford wrote kind of an interesting, humorous, but very true-to-life role play and it goes like this: “I read somewhere that you should treat your parents with all the respect, patience, and understanding that you would have towards your best friend. “That is how I've always treated them,” I said to myself. But when I thought about it, I wasn't sure. I went on a little daydream excursion wondering what it would be like if my best friend, Ernie Estabrook, came over.

“Hi Ernie!” I said.

“Are you ready to go to the basketball game?”

“Would you get off my back?!” I said in my most exasperated tone. “You're always rushing me. What difference does it make if we're a little late?”

Ernie shrugged, “None, I guess. What did you do this afternoon?”

“Nothing,” I grunted.

“Did you have practice after school?”

“Nah.”

“You came straight home?”

“Yeah”

“So what did you do?”

“Nothing!” I exploded. “Why do you always pry into my private life?”

“Sorry,” Ernie said, as he looked a little bit hurt and went away.

I went on to say, “I'll be ready in a minute. Can I have five bucks?”

“Well, I don't know”, Ernie said doubtfully. “I don't have much money. Don't you have any money of your own?”

“Where would I get it?” I asked sarcastically. “I suppose you want me to get a job on top of a full day at school and playing in the band.”

“Who said anything about a job?”

“Everyone always want you to get terrific grades and practically be an Einstein but they won't lend you the money to go to a basketball game and relax once in a while. I supposed you'd prefer if I went out drinking. That's cheaper you know. It wouldn't cost you anything.”

“Forget I said anything,” Ernie said. “You can have the money. Let's just go to the game. We're late already.”

“You're always pushing me!” I grumbled all the way out the door. But I stopped. “Ernie do we have to go in that crummy car? It looks so old. Everyone else is driving a new car. Can't you get something new?”

Ernie said, “I would if I had the money.”

“That's the trouble with you,” I said. “All you think about is money. You're always so worried about spending a little money, a little bit extra. You're so tied up in cash you don't have time to think about meaningful things.”

“I guess you're right,” Ernie said with his head down.

“You bet I'm right,” I said. “And if you think I'm going to sit with you at the game you're crazy.”

At this point in my daydream, my father walked into the room. I took my feet off the coffee table, sat up straight, and said, “Hi, dad. How did your day go?”

“Now what do you want?” He sighed.

Depending on your place in life you can probably relate to either side of that equation, remembering if you're older some of your exchanges as a younger person and as a parent we can probably relate to that on some level as well.

We're back in the book of Proverbs this morning. We're going to take one last look at this matter of family life. We've only got a few lessons to go in the book. We'll take probably a couple of weeks to look at wisdom and money and then we'll wrap up the book in a couple weeks. We want to do one more lesson with regard to the family. Way back in December we looked at the subject of what it is that God expects of parents.

Quick review. We said there are two things that parents are to do. Of all the things that we could list, they fall into these two categories. The first one is to drive out foolishness. To drive out foolishness which is simply another way to talk about the need

for discipline. The inherent characteristic that every one of us is born into this world is we have this bent towards foolishness. It's our parent's responsibility and our responsibility as parents to help our children understand that their personal happiness is not the most important thing in all the world. So we bring discipline into their life.

The second thing that parents do is we build into their life and we disciple them. We try to drive out foolishness by discipline. We try to build in wisdom by disciplining them. As parents, we are the ones who are to teach our children how to live, how to walk in wisdom, how to walk in God's truth. We're to do that by example and by instruction. That's God's Word in summary of what we've seen with regard to parents.

Then we finished out the area after we went through the Christmas season. We finished out the year by looking at the sovereignty of God. Wisdom and the sovereignty of God the last Sunday of 2019. The first Sunday of 2020 we looked at wisdom and the matter of the will of God. We left all of the children, teenagers, and young adults hanging. They've been after me week after week – what about us? Are you going to say anything about us? So here it is. What God expects of children. The wisdom of Proverbs reflects the instruction of the 5th commandment of honor your father and mother and God will bring blessing into your life.

Let's look at how it is that we respond to our parents. There are going to be five things. I will start off by looking at this first one which comes out of that 5th commandment. You are to respect them. You are to honor them. If you look at the 10 Commandments, the essence of that 5th commandment is honor and respect your parents. You're familiar enough to know that in those 10 Commandments the first four of those commandments have to do with our relationship to God. There is only one God. Don't have idols. Don't take His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. The first four all have to do with our relationship to God. Then when you come to the 5th through the 10th it all has to do with our relationships to each other. Isn't it instructive that the very first commandment that God gave with regard to relationships to each other begins as it does with this 5th command to honor your father and your mother? It is as if God is saying right at the outset, right at the very beginning this is the most significant of relationships. The most important thing that you can be doing as a

child is you can be honoring your father and your mother. This is going to set the pace if you will for all other human relationships. So God starts there.

Let's just stop for a minute and ask the question: what does this even mean to honor your father and your mother? You might remember that the word "honor", the word "respect" is in this family of Hebrew words that means that something is heavy, that something is weighty, that something is significant, that it is of great importance. This is the word that we have in this 5th command. It underscores this relationship that is the key to all human relationships. You get this relationship right and God says you can get all of the other ones right. If you get this one wrong, it's going to impact all of the other relationships that you have all through your life. We see that, don't we? We see that in the breakdown of authority within our culture. We see that this 5th commandment that has to do with human relationships, the breakdown at this level is affecting every area of our culture and our society. We live in a talk back, push back, fight back, resist authority world. All of the different venues by which we see this, whether it's in the school realm or whether it's in law enforcement or just in any human relationships and interactions that you see with oftentimes adults and children and young people. We see this taking place.

So within that context God says to parents, it is your responsibility to push back against this condition into which we have all been born. No parent has ever had to teach a child to say no. of all the things that we communicate to our children, all of the words that we want them to say. We often as parents and grandparents will sit before our toddlers and will repeat words that we want them to say. Who has ever heard of a parent sitting and instructing a child to say no? and yet one of the first words undoubtedly will be no and they push back against authority. There is no footnote in this 5th command. There isn't any asterisk. They don't say to honor your father and your mother if they deserve it. Honor your father and mother if you feel like it. Honor your father and mother if you want to. No, it is just simply to honor your father and your mother.

What does that look like? What does it look like to honor your father and your mother? In some way, every other point we're going to make this morning answers this question. I want to press into it specifically just for a couple of points. I think first of all it

means you are going to speak well to them and you're going to speak well of them. You're going to speak well to them and you're going to speak well of them to others. One of the clearest indications of whether we're honoring our father and mother or lack thereof is what comes out of our mouth. We've seen that consistently in these lessons in Proverbs on how important our mouth is in revealing what's in our heart. Here it is again. Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 20 says it this way: "If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness." You don't have to be a Hebrew scholar to know that to have your lamp put out is not a good thing.

Remember the last part of the 5th command: honor your father and your mother that you may have long years in the land. There was a promise with that. There was a promise with that command that your days may be long in the land. God's promise is if you honor your father and your mother there is going to be blessing and that blessing is in general going to be a long life. The blessing of God on that life. Listen to what else Solomon says about this matter in Proverbs 13 and verse 9: "The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out." Same thing. Proverbs 24 and verse 20: "For the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out." Children and teenagers, one of the things that you can answer right at this point is how do you talk to your parents? How do you talk to your friends about your parents? It is revealing whether you're honoring your father and your mother. It is an indicator what's going on in your heart in regard to this 5th command.

I think a second thing is you don't treat lightly what they say. You don't treat lightly what they say. Again in Proverbs 15 and verse 20: "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother." Do you know what the word "despise" means? It is literally to treat lightly. To treat lightly. A wise son makes his father glad. A wise son honors his father and his mother. But a foolish son, a foolish daughter despises, treats lightly, what their parents say. The opposite of honor which is weighty, heavy, significant, important is to despise. Their opinion is to be important to you. Their suggestions are to be treated with significance. You want to know what they think. Let me give you this assignment. Next time your parents say something to you, say to them, "Dad, that was heavy." Better use that in an appropriate way. That's what we're saying here. To honor your father and mother is heavy. It's weighty. It's important and

significant. We value it when we follow this command. So first of all honor, respect your parents.

Secondly, you are to listen to them. You are to listen to them. Why do you suppose that we're to listen to our parents? We could list a lot of reasons. Let me offer this one in as loving a way as I can. We need to remember first of all that we don't know it all. We don't know it all. Some of us have to take that by faith depending on where we are in our life experience. Parents know what is best. Parents have experienced so many things that you haven't experienced yet as a child or as a teenager. Parents want what is best for you and they can offer that to you. we saw this from the very beginning. The passion of this father as he gives this instruction all through this book. But remember specifically in those opening nine chapters how this dad and mom are sitting down with their children and just how passionate they are that they get this wisdom and they get this truth. I just remind you of that again in the opening chapter verse 8: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching." Then you go to chapter 2: My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom, inclining your heart to understanding." Chapter 3 "My son, do not forget my teaching but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you." It just goes on and on. Verse 7: "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones." Parents have just experienced so much more than you have in terms of just life experiences. They have this wisdom. They have this understanding. They have this perspective.

But the other thing about this, parents. It is not just a matter of life. It's not just a matter of life experiences. What we have seen consistently in Proverbs to be a challenge to all of us as parents and grandparents this morning, and that is if you don't know you can't share it with your children. This wisdom that we have been studying is something that we need to take to heart, that we need to pursue. So here is this challenge that the writer of Proverbs gives to all of us. As parents, if we're going to be about this business of driving out foolishness by discipline and building in wisdom by discipling, then we have to be disciples ourselves. We have to be on this path of discipleship ourselves to be able to share with our children what we want them to know.

As we think of that matter of why we listen to them, we listen to them because we don't know at all.

Secondly, we listen to them to receive correction and rebuke. To receive correction and rebuke. This is a fascinating verse in Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 1 about this matter of discipline and rebuke. Just listen to what the writer says: "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." We might not use that word in our family circles, but there it is. That is the essence of that word. Somebody being foolish. But did you note that he said it is not just a matter of accepting discipline and review and instruction. He says whoever loves discipline loves knowledge. An amazing statement. Chapter 13 and verse 1: "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen." Verse 13: "Whoever despises the Word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded." This just goes on and on. 15: 5 – "A fool despises his father's instruction but whoever receives reproof is prudent."

The writer of Proverbs makes it very clear that one of the most encouraging things that a parent can see in the life of a child, of a teenager or young adult as they're getting farther and farther away from the authority of their parents is to see within the heart a teachable spirit. To see a heart that is receptive to truth. It takes us back to that previous point that we don't know it all. The quicker we acknowledge that, the more often we acknowledge that, the better position that we're in. One of the most discouraging things for a parent is to see a resistance heart. One that isn't welcoming this correction and instruction. In Proverbs we've seen this consistently. There's these two patterns. There's the path of a wise and the path of the fool. That's basically what he is laying out here. A wise son, a wise daughter welcomes correction, welcomes instruction. A foolish one despises it, turns away from it.

The truth of the matter is that God has given to children parents to act, if you will, as a filter in the context of our culture and our world. To filter out the evil and the harm and the destructive things that are just a part of our world at every turn. Parents really are in that place of authority to where they're to be honored and respected. They're in that place so they can literally be a filter for their children so that they don't experience and aren't exposed to all of these harmful things that are happening in our culture.

There are so many opportunities today for our children and for young people to be affected by our culture and by our world. Probably one of the easiest, most accessible is our phones. The whole world is literally available to us on that little instrument that we hold in our hands. We need to be very, very mindful as parents of what those choices and those issues that our young people face. The sinful tendencies of every one of our hearts is a part of what parents are called to bend that will back to that which is right. Bend that will without breaking the spirit is what Proverbs instructs us in. So we are to receive correction and rebuke.

Thirdly, the thing that children are to do is they're to obey. Honor. Respect. 5th command. We are to listen to them. We are to do what they say. We are to obey them. Proverbs 23 and verse 12: "Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge." The word "apply" there is a word that speaks of action. It is not just a matter of hearing. Being a hearer of the Word. It's a matter of applying and doing it, acting on what you hear. The New Testament echoes that in Paul's writing in Ephesians 6:1. Children, obey your parents. He is calling upon them to listen to their parents. Paul says children, obey your parents. He speaks directly to the children. He's expecting them at some level of comprehension for children to hear what God's Word says, to read what God's Word says, even for themselves. We know there are many instructions in which parents are to teach and instruct their children, but it's also neat that we have in these examples Paul saying children, you can take this in for yourself. You need to hear this for yourself. You need to read this yourself. That, of course, was what he was doing there in that Ephesians passage. God expects children to engage His Word and His truth.

When he says in that 6th chapter and the 1st verse: children, obey. That word "obey" is a compound word. It is the Greek word *hupacuou*. *Hupo* under. *Kuou* is to hear. It is a very picturesque word. Get underneath the authority of your parents and hear. Get under the authority of your parents and listen to what it is that they're saying to you. God has ordained them to be that authority in your life and you are to listen to them. You are to obey them. It is in the Lord. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. In Colossians 3:20 Paul uses that similar statement. He says for this is pleasing to the Lord. So when children listen to their parents, when they honor them, when they respect

them, when they obey them, the consensus of Scripture is that it is as if they are obeying and honoring the Lord. To turn against and rebel against your parents is then to rebel obviously against God's order. The bottom line is God is always interested in our hearts, our attitude, and our actions.

Fourthly, what are children to do? What is it that God expects of children? You're to care for them when they're old. You're to care for your parents when they're old. This is a good word. Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 29: "The glory of young men is their strength but the splendor of old men is their gray hair." I would appreciate all my children listening carefully as we go into this section. Every age, it seems in the Scripture, there is something to be honored in that timeframe of our life. Here there is special honor given to those who are older. Someone has rightly observed, and I don't think this is a news flash to any of us, that growing older in America, unlike many parts of the world, is not always viewed as being an honorable thing. You might find yourself being forgotten as well rather than being remembered and honored. It reminds me of what David said in Psalms 71:9 – "Do not cast me off in time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength is spent." So children, what are you going to do for your parents as they get older in life? You're going to honor them. You're going to respect them. You're going to listen to them. You're going to obey them. And now here we are told that you are going to care for them. You're to be attentive to them.

What does that look like? First of all, it can be as simple as simply expressing and showing appreciation and love. Proverbs 17:6 says, "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged and the glory of children is their fathers." None of us have perfect parents. We said that when we talked about what God expects of parents. None of us are perfect parents. All of our parents have fallen short, probably of our expectations as a child growing up and most likely of their own expectations of themselves. That is just the nature of life itself. But even if your parents weren't the primary instrument that God used to point you to Christ, even if your parents didn't have any spiritual influence in your life, you can still honor them. You can still show appreciation. You can still love them for all of the many things that they did do.

My mom is going to be 97 years old in March. It's really not possible to talk to her on the phone anymore. It's just a challenge to be able to hear and understand and get

that kind of communication going. So Bonnie didn't even know what I was talking about this week in this specific sermon, and she said why don't you start writing your mom letters? Write her a card and just express love and appreciation that way. My mom was a letter writer. She had seven children and as we moved out of the home and out of the state, she wrote every one of us a letter every week. You just knew you were going to get a letter once a week from Mom. She'd often slip in there a \$20 bill and Bonnie and I would eat out for a month. That was back a little ways ago, but she loved to write letters. I wrote her a letter this week and I hope that I will covenant before God to do that much more often and much more frequently. It is just a simple way of honoring and showing appreciation and love.

Secondly, we can do it by seeking their counsel and their advice. The 23rd Proverbs in verse 22: "Listen to your father who gave you life and do not despise your mother when she is old." The timeless principle of Genesis is leave and cleave. For this cause the man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife. God says in Genesis for a new family to begin, and to do so biblically, you've got to leave your parents. You leave and you cleave. Part of that timeless principle is also that you continue to honor them and one of the ways that you honor them is you continue to come back to them for counsel and advice. It doesn't mean you do what they say every time, but you seek their counsel. You understand that in honoring them you're treating them as if they're significant, weighty, important. What they have experienced by way of life and what they've learned in their walk with God is of help to you. You can do that by seeking their counsel and their advice.

Thirdly, you can provide for their needs. Paul speaks of this in 1Timothy chapter 5 and verse 4: "But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God." In verse 8 he even goes on to say, "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and he is worse than an unbeliever." The Scripture is abundantly clear. We have a moral obligation to care for the physical, emotional, spiritual, and yes, the financial needs of our parents. When children are young, God's Word says parents, provide for,

take care of your children. When parents get older, God says to children to provide for and take care of your parents.

All of our adult children were together at Christmas so I sat them all down and I said this is a good time to review the future because there might be a day when Bonnie's and my health might not allow for us to live at home. So here's the plan, and I just laid it out for them. I said what we're going to do if we get to that point where our health fails, we're just going to come and live with each of you for like a month. We'll rotate between the four of you. You need to know ahead of time that we're probably going to talk really loud on our cell phones because our hearing isn't going to be very good. The TV is probably going to be up to the highest volume that it can be. We're going to have friends over and, oh by the way, don't expect us to be doing any of the chores around here. You know what the outcome of that is? Our children are praying for our health in a way that they have never before. It turns out to be a win-win for all of us because they are dedicated to our good health now for the next 20 to 30 years. They are very encouraged in that regard, so you might want to consider that for your family.

The last thing in our notes that God expects of children is you're to bring to your parents joy and not grief. And all the parents said? That was a good response. Look at the contrast of this principle in Proverbs 23 in verse 25. We just noted this similar principle: "Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice." What a great word that is. Then if you look back at the 17th chapter and verse 21 it says this: "He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow and the father of a fool has no joy." Children, there is God's word to you. Do all that you can to be a joy and not a grief to your parents.

What can we suggest? You can take the whole book of Proverbs right now and I just want to bring three things that Proverbs speaks of often in this regard. The first one is choose good friends. Choose good friends. Proverbs has so much to say about friendship and the kind of people that we hang out with and the kind of friends that we seek out and the kind of friend that we are. Good friends. Proverbs says the wise walk with the wise. The wise walk with the wise. If you are being wise as a child, as a teenager or young adult, you're walking with other people who are wise. It says the opposite of that too. "The companion of fools suffers harm." You hang out with who

Proverbs calls fools and you're inviting harm into your life. Who you choose as friends is so important and especially if you think in terms of a life partner. If God works in such a way that His desire is for you to be married, then who you find in that regard is of the greatest importance, to be a godly person, someone who is pursuing the same wisdom of Proverbs that you are.

I think secondly, be productive and hard-working. Work hard. Do you want to be a delight to your parents? Work hard. That is an encouragement to any parent. Proverbs chapter 10. Proverbs says so much again about the sluggard, about the one who's slothful and lazy. Proverbs 10 says this: "A slack hand causes poverty but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame." Proverbs has a lot to say about this matter of working hard, being industrious, being a self-starter. Don't put off to tomorrow what you can do today, and all of those other lessons that Proverbs brings to us in that regard.

Lastly, the third way to bring joy in your parents is to walk with God. Walk with God. Proverbs would say walk in the fear of the Lord. Walk in the wisdom of God's Word. We started off the first lesson in the first chapter the seventh verse: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. It is a fool who despises wisdom and instruction." Do you want to bring joy to your parents? Walk with God. We heard one of the dads quote 3 John 4 this morning. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth. Take it from Proverbs and you can say I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the wisdom of God's Word, that they are doing all that they can to walk in this wisdom that God has given to us.

What do we take away? God calls every child of every age to honor their parents. To do so is to honor Him. So we simply ask this last question. How are you doing in showing honor to your parents? If we answer that question in keeping with Proverbs, then we're walking in the way of the wise. If we can't answer it in the way of Proverbs, then likely we're walking in the way of the foolish one. God is very interested in our hearts being in tune with Him and walking in obedience to Him. God is interested in every one of us. Wherever we are in life – whether we're a young child, a teenager, a young adult, in the middle years, or a senior – God is interested in every one of us. The

essence of the Christian life, the whole message of the Word of God is that God wants to have a personal relationship with every one of us. God wants to be in a situation in our lives where we see and understand and realize who He is as the sovereign Lord of our world and yet the one who loves us so much that He gave His Son to be our Savior. That's God's heart. That's God's desire for each of us who have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We accept that gift that He has given to us through His Son Jesus. And then, God brings us into this amazing relationship with Him in which we get to live with Him, not only in time but for all of eternity.

Let's pray. Father God, thank You for the blessing of Your Word. Thank You for the instruction that You give to us, Father, in each phase of our lives. Our heart would be to honor You and to bring glory to You, to please You. We pray, Father, for the families of Covenant Community Church. We pray for parents of Covenant. We pray, Father, that our children will pursue the things that You have put before us in Your Word. We ask that we will walk in harmony with You and with each other. We pray your blessing on the gospel of Your grace in each of our homes, in each of our lives. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.