

Broomfield



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Christian Youth Groups

The Christian Family Part 1

A Wasted Day

Charles Francis Adams — the son of President John Quincy Adams — took a break from his very busy schedule as the US diplomat to Great Britain to take his son fishing. At the end of the day, this is what he wrote in his diary.

“Went fishing with my son today- a day wasted.”

Now you have to understand that Charles was a very busy diplomat who daily interacted with some of the most important people in the world. And so, to spend a day with a fishing pole on a lake no doubt seemed like a waste of time. And yet, Brook Adams — his son — wrote this about that very same fishing trip:

“Went fishing with my father- the most wonderful day of my life.”

Family of God, it is hard to overestimate the important position that parents have when it comes to their children, not just from the perspective of our children — as in the case of Brook Adams — BUT more importantly from the perspective of God.

Matthew 18:6, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

From God’s perspective, God has given stewardship to every parent in the form of children. You must see that there are few things more important. Business meetings, adventures, financial opportunities, and careers certainly are not more important. Each parent is given a divine call to raise their children to love, know, and serve the Lord! Consequently, it behooves each and every parent to take seriously their call when it comes to their children.

The Foundation of Parenting

In light of this call let's look at Ephesians 6 and God's plan for parenting.

Ephesians 6:1, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”

It has been said that familiarity breeds contempt. When it comes to this text and its subject — parenting — that unfortunately is the case. We read this verse and see a passage addressing parents and children all the while thinking of the family as it is manifested in our culture today. We think of parents — like the ones that neglected, ignored, were mean, abusive or abandoning of their children. — with some kind of excess baggage. In fact there are few today who can read this passage without some kind of negative excess baggage. Parents think of children —like the ones that inconvenience, disobey, disrespect, embarrass, or cause all manner of grief — as the ones that this passage addresses. Thus, we approach this text somewhat with misgiving.

Parents read this and use it as a tool to force their children unto obedience. “Ephesians 6 says you have to obey me; if you don't, God will get you!” Children both in youth and adulthood read this and shudder as they think of the hurt and injury caused by a parent. And yet as we read this verse, I want you to notice that Paul is using terminology which is packed with rich significance in the Bible.

Notice, Paul says, “Children.” He does not say slaves, property, toys, objects of fulfillment, accidents, or inconveniences. Paul also says, “Parents.” He does not say ogres, land-lords, owners, providers, coaches, dictators, or friends.

As people familiar with the Bible, we must understand that when Paul references “children... parents... father... mother” he has in mind a relationship which serves as the foundation upon which he gives the exhortations of this passage. This foundation is A RELATIONSHIP OF REDEMPTION. To show you this read verse 2.

Ephesians 6:2, “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise.)”

As most of you know, Paul is quoting here from the fifth commandment. To understand this exhortation, we must go back to its initial context and there see it as God intended.

Exodus 20:12, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

So many of us, when we read this passage, immediately think of the Ten Commandments. These are commandments which we believe to be God's standard for salvation. Yet, would you notice that in Genesis 47, God's people are brought to Egypt on account of the favor that Joseph found in the sight of the Pharaoh. And in Exodus 1:8 we find that a new king arose that did not know Joseph. Rather than treating the people of God with kindness, he harshly subjected them to slavery. In Exodus 3:7-9 we learn that God had not forgotten His people. Indeed, through a man by the name of Moses, God would deliver His people from slavery. The reason for this is in Exodus 7.

Exodus 7:16, “And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, **Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness:** and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.”

Literally this term serve can be rendered worship. That's exactly what happened here. In Exodus 9 – 11 we read of the plagues that God used to powerfully deliver His children. In Exodus 14:19-20 we read of the wall of fire that God used to protect His people from the pursuing army of the Egyptians. In Exodus

14:21-25 we read of the parting of the Red Sea such that God's people walked across on DRY GROUND! And then in Exodus 19 we read of God's redeemed people being brought to the base of Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments.

My question for you is this: Were the Ten Commandments were given to create a relationship between God and His people? Or were the Ten Commandments given as a guide for God's people in an already established relationship?

The answer is that the Ten Commandments given as a guide for God's people in an already established relationship! And thus, don't miss it; the Ten Commandments were given to a redeemed people! People who already had a relationship with God. People who were part of the household of God set apart unto God for to worship! "Let My people go, that they may worship Me" (Exodus 7:16).

When Paul quotes Exodus 20:12 as the basis for his exhortation to the parents/children of a congregation, he is assuming redemption. He is assuming that a love-relationship between the parents and God and the children and God already exists.

If you want to fulfill your call as a parent or a child then you must first fulfill your call as the children of God! Grow in your love for the Lord. Cultivate a deep and abiding relationship with God. Be long in prayer. Love, serve, and honor Him! In light of this, what is the command that God gave to His redeemed children at Mount Sinai — honor.

Exodus 20:12, "Honour¹ thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

The word honor literally refers to the weightiness of something. And thus, it became the term in Scripture for honor, reverence, glory, or worship. In essence, to honor something is to give it its due respect. In this context, this command is amazing! See, the call to "honor" is elsewhere used in the context of worshipping God.

Psalms 22:23, "Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify² him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel."

Proverbs 3:9, "Honour³ the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase."

Isaiah 24:15, "Wherefore glorify⁴ ye the LORD in the fires, even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea."

In fact as we just saw, this command for children to honor their parents was given to a people whom God had just redeemed that they might worship Him! I hope you catch a little of the tension here.

In Exodus 7:16 we read of the purpose of the Exodus. "Let My people go, that they may serve (literally "worship") Me in the wilderness." We then read of God's command to His redeemed people.

¹ כָּבַד kabad

² כָּבַד kabad

³ כָּבַד kabad

⁴ כָּבַד kabad

Exodus 20:4-5, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”

But then here we read in this context of worship that children are to honor — and let's translate this a little more literally — to worship their parents! How can this be? What is going on here? Why such a high view of parents?

Parents have been ordained by God to oversee, protect, and guide HIS possessions unto Him.

Deuteronomy 6:6-8, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.”

Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Consequently, the authority that a parent exercises in this regard must be understood as nothing less than the authority of God.⁵ Truly parents hold an “office” by which God works His will for His covenant children. Thus, a child honors his parents NOT because in and of themselves parents are worthy of such honor but because parents exercise a God-given authority — the rule of God given to lead covenant children to the Lord! In this regard you must see that when a child “honors” his parents, he is not worshipping them, but honoring/worshipping the Lord who is ruling through them!

An Act of Discipleship

Do you remember the rationale that David gave to his soldiers for not killing King Saul even though King Saul wanted to kill Him?

1 Samuel 24:6, “And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.”

This is what the parent/child relationship is all about. It is God exercising His authority through a chosen vessel the parent. A child willingly submitting to this authority because it is the Lord who has redeemed him. It is the Lord that they love. It is the Lord whom they ultimately are serving.

This is why rebellion in a child is so ugly. It ultimately is against God!

From all that we have seen from Exodus 20:12, I hope you see that as parents our chief goal when it comes to our children is not that they get good grades, wear the right clothes, sport the right hair cut, or act the right way. Rather our goal should be that they worship God. Our goal should be that they serve

⁵ Compare Romans 13:1-3

Christ and glorify Him in all that they do and say! This is the context of Exodus 20.⁶

This is what parenting is all about! This is what Ephesians 6 is all about! Our text contains strong commands to the child in terms of obedience and respect. But listen, divorced from its context, these commands will be empty and meaningless. They are just a bunch of moralistic verbiage.

One must understand that every command to the child here is given with the assumption of a relationship with God, the covenant community, and the parent! From this perspective we understand parenting as nothing less than a facet of discipleship!

Until we see the parent/child relationship as nothing other than the shepherd/disciple relationship, we will fall short of God's plan for parenting. The child who is to obey/honor, must first be disciplined to obey/honor God!

But this is where it gets difficult. There are so few of us who have become parents for the right reason: We have children and call them accidents. We have children and call them burdens. We have children and call them junior. But so few of us have had children in order to lead them to Christ!

And that brings us to an important theme that will be repeated throughout this study: Most parents want influence over their children. Until our children leave the home as adults, we rightly want influence over their behavior, choice of friends, attitude, character, dress, etc. Yet listen, a large component of “influence” in Scripture is “relationship.”

Ironically this is the very thing that most parents willingly forfeit as their children mature. Just about the time that our children get old enough for serious discipleship, that is when we abandon them to their peers. We ship them off to a youth group. Perhaps we stick them in a Christian school. So rather than cultivating a relationship with the parent, the child involves themselves with others.

This is where it gets “dicey.”

Most define parenting as the exercise of authority; the parent continues to bark their orders. Influence is secured by relationship. Children don't heed the commands of their parents but their peers — or whatever else with whom they are “relating.” This results in the clash of the generations. It is all out war.

And yet we ought not to be surprised. Think about this.

Why should your child listen to you, mom and dad, when the only time you talk to them is when you are rebuking them or ordering them around? Is your relationship with your child is that of a master to a slave? Is your relationship that of an instructor and student? Or is it boss to employee?

You say, “Because God word says they should!” While you are correct, nevertheless you are taking this passage out of its context! Listen to the text.

Ephesians 6:2: “Honor your father and mother.”

Father and Mother

What is a father/mother? The only absolute that we have in answering this is by answering it in relation

⁶ Compare Exodus 7:16

to God!

Galatians 4:4-7, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

This verse presupposes relationship. “God as our Father” presupposes redemption, forgiveness of sin, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is all the restoration of a relationship whereby we cry and relate to God as, “Abba, Father!”

A father is someone who has a love relationship with their son! Think about this.

Does God as our Father blindly order us around? Does He just sit on His throne and issue forth His decrees?

Absolutely Not! Would you notice that while God could command us, rather in Scripture He draws His children by His love!

Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Jeremiah 31:3, “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

And thus parents if you want influence over your children and you want your children to respond to your exhortations, be a father! Labor to cultivate a rich and deep relationship with them. Lead your children not by threats, decrees, or force. Lead them by **CULTIVATING A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WHEREIN THEIR LOVE COMPELS THEM!**

Thus play with them. Invest your time in them. Learn their interests. Be with them. Walk the walk of faith with them. Pray with them. Be accessible to them.

Now I am not saying, “Be their friend!” Rather, I am saying, “Be their Pastor!”

Be a Shepherd

It is an interesting study, but two very influential Christians of the last century were Dr. Charles Hodge who taught at Princeton Seminary (d. 1878) and Archibald Thomas (“A.T.”) Robertson who wrote one of the most important Greek grammars of the twentieth century (d. 1934). Both were used mightily by God in the preservation of His church at a time when liberalism was gaining significant ground in America.

Now both of these men had boys. When Charles Hodge was in the study and his son entered the room, Hodge always welcomed him in — this was God's child entrusted to his care. Dr. Calhoun described Hodge's parenting this way:

“His study had two doors,’ wrote A. A. Hodge, ‘one opening outwards toward the Seminary for the convenience of the students, and a second one opening inward into the main hall of the home’- for the children. His son continued, ‘He prayed for us at family prayers,... and taught us to pray at

his knees with such soul-felt tenderness, that however bad we were our hearts all melted to his touch."⁷

In contrast, A. T. Robertson's demeanor toward his son was much the same as toward his students. In fact, the "flavor" of A. T. Robertson's demeanor is captured by his biographer, Everett Gill.

"Students all remember how abruptly he would enter class, comment on the ventilation, castigate janitors in general, pass right on to 'Let us pray'... The prayer over, he turned at once to the calling of the roll... Then calling for books to be closed, he scanned his class roll, while the students waited in suspense to see who the first victim would be.

"Having fixed upon [a] man, he would say with the solemnity of a judge summoning a prisoner to his feet to be sentenced, 'Mr. Blank, will you recite?' Brother Blank stood, bracing himself for the worst. 'Brother Blank, what is the title of the lesson?' Brother Blank, clearing his throat for time, replies weakly, 'The lesson is about the healing of the man who was let down through the roof.' 'Yes, but what is the title of the lesson?' 'I don't remember.' 'Well, did you ever know? That will do.' Mr. Blank sits down in mortification and with not a little resentment, as Dr. Bob records a mark against the name of Mr. Blank as all the class can see. There is no question in any one's mind that it is an F- a failure..."⁸

Such was the contrast between Hodge and Robertson's approach both to the classroom and parenting.

Interesting- both of their children grew up and went into the gospel ministry. A. A. Hodge, like his father, became a professor at Princeton and was used by God to shape a generation for Christ. A. T. Robertson's son also became a theologian and yet stood for everything his father was not. A. T. Robertson's son was used by Satan to level harsh attacks against the Bible.

What was the difference? Clearly, Charles Hodge was a father while A. T. Robertson was a task master!

Listen, the greatest measure we can take in preserving the souls of our children unto the next generation does not revolve around education, conduct, manners, dress, etiquette, the performance of duties, etc. but whether or not you are a father/pastor/shepherd to your child!

Let us so live as to present the face and affections of the Father to our children!

⁷ Dr. Calhoun, Princeton Seminary, Volume 1, page 192

⁸ A. T. Robertson: A Biography, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), page. 6

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About the Preacher

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