*Who is Your Hero: Why Your Father In Heaven Gives Weight to Your Parents on Earth*

INTRO

I’m sure you guys are aware of this but there’s a major television event happening tonight. I’m sure you are not unaware. Of course I’m talking about those new episodes of Shark Tank. Amirite?

Ok, actually I know you know there’s no small football game to be played this evening. If you are like me you likely have your afternoon and evening planned around this event. So I figured I would begin today with an obligatory, yet powerful, sports reference.

Tom Brady is the quarterback for the New England Patriots. They just so happen to be playing in tonight’s game. During the media day this past week Brady was bombarded with many questions. Questions about how much longer he intends to play the game, about whether his supermodel wife has an available sister to date, and his thoughts about playing a game in Mexico during next year’s season.

But two questions, at least that I saw, stopped Brady in his tracks and moved him to tears. The first was a softball question from a young report who asked, “Who is your hero?” Brady said, “Good question.” But as he answering this question with “my dad is my her” he could barely get all the words out before tearing up and trailingf. He stopped talking and looked down to gather himself and his words.. But with tears filling his eyes he could barely restate just a few words as he said again, my dad.

Later asked about his dad’s scathing comments about the NFL commissioner, Brady again got emotional. Not because he was defending his dad’s comments but his character. Again he seemed to tear up and didn’t fully answer the question because the thought of his dad moved him so much.

In an article I Brady was quoted to say more about his dad and his mom. Here are that quote in speaking first about his dad:

**He was just a great example for me, and he was always someone who supported me in everything I did, to come home at night and bring me out, hit me ground balls and fly balls. I loved baseball growing up.**

**And to have a chance to go to 49er games on the weekend with him and my mom and throw the ball in the parking lot before the games; those are memories that I’ll have forever.**

Perhaps a dad’s support has as much to do with getting a 39-year-old quarterback to his 7th Super Bowl as a strict workout and diet regimen. And you know what. I would guess that Brady’s dad will be there at the end of tonight’s game, win or lose.

Regardless of your love/hate feelings toward Tom Brady can we all agree that it is refreshing to see someone honor one’s parents. Perhaps through these comments we’re seeing a glimpse of what it means to obey the 5th command

And that’s what we’ll be diving into today. We are going through a series on the 10 Commandments and how they reflect the character and nature of God.

So after today we are at the halfway point in this series, halftime of sorts. Unfortunately there will NOT be any headliner entertainment. But because I tend to be a man of few words you’ll likely leave celebrating because this sermon was shorter than what you’re used to.

If you have your bible I’d like for you to read Exodus 20:12 along with me. It is short. If you have a version other than the ESV which I will be reading from you can simply read along from the screen. As always if you’d like a bible they are in the back corner. Take one home if you don’t already have one. It is our gift to you.

Let’s read these words together, shall we?

**Exodus 20:12**

**Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.**

1. **God’s economy places a lot of weight on the family.**

Sociologists, psychologists, and politicians from the right and left ALL agree that families are important. Study after study shows that families are foundational to physical, mental, emotional, individual, and social well-being.

God seems to agree. In fact the bible makes it clear that it was his idea.

God himself is a father. The Trinity is kind of like a family though they are a single unit. He knows family values because he practices them. Honor is a by-product of God’s Trinitarian relationship. And this is one that he has graciously shared and entrusted us with.

This godhead family unit is one filled with honor, love and delight. I would imagine that this was the vision that God established for our families to follow after.

The creation account in Genesis 1,2 display God’s establishment of marriage between a man and woman and blessed the creation of family.

And this command comes down to one word: **HONOR**. The Hebrew word translated as honor comes from a root that means **weight** or weightiness. It can also carry the idea of great financial worth. This means that there is a particular weight of authority and value that God has entrusted to parents.

And this is true, even if you aren’t a religious person. Family is where we should learn safety, care, responsibility. It’s where we learn to trust, the importance of honesty, and self-sacrifice.

In Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul centers his comments to the family around this command. Why? Because if family is primary in God’s economy and honor is its currency. Ultimately through this parent-child honor relationship the Lord himself is honor. And its two-way. That’s the way Paul put it in Ephesians.

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

Paul addresses both children and parents. And he centered the whole thing on the command in Exodus 20:12. Honor is the center of gravity in this family relationship.

For non-adult children how are you to honor your parents? Obeying your parents. Now you can do this begrudgingly but is that honoring them? You may think the currency you deal with is negotiating your time on a screen, how late your bedtime is, what friends you hang out with, or how many of your vegetables you will eat. But simply doing what your parents ask is the lowest bar of honoring them.

That’s why you should just obey without arguing when your parents expect you to do stuff that is just normal, right, and honorable.

If your parents ask you to steal cash from your friends or slash the tires of your enemies, don’t obey that. God wants you to honor him by honoring them. But if we’re talking bedtimes, screen time, and family time, there’s really no room for your complaining or eyerolls. Honor the LORD by honoring your mom and dad.

So what about parents? Specifically Paul speaks to fathers. Why? Because God puts the responsibility of managing the home squarely in the lap of dads. Moms, we know you’re gonna love and nurture your kids. But dads need the reminder to step up and lead. And God expects you to.

But the way we lead, for moms and dads is important. We aren’t called to be heavy handed wardens in our home. We’re called to be teachers- TRAINING and INSTRUCTING our children to follow the Lord.

Training means giving structure, discipline and rules. Parents set the rules and the guardrails. We need to do this with the wisdom of the Lord and in the community of the church. The point of the training is the meet Jesus and to follow him. It’s not to make them perfect or keep them from annoying you. In fact it will do the opposite. It will reveal sin and cause conflict. But don’t be afraid to do your job.

Parents are you setting them or are your kids? And I’m not talking about your high schoolers.

Nothing will undermine your own parental authority more than abdicating your authority as a parent to your kids. Nap times and temper tantrums can undermine your authority just as much as sports practices and school projects. But the tail ought not wag the dog. Be wise in the way you are teaching your kids to honor the Lord by setting the boundaries and flow of your home.

But the other thing is instruction. The idea behind instruction is as much explanation as it is encouragement. You’re giving information as much as affirmation. You’re coupling the WHAT with the WHY. Its not just saying “You need to do this, but I believe you CAN do this.

And to be honest this is hard. There’s no question that my kids see me fail every day with this. I overtrain and underinstruct. I love the rules and hate when they’re not followed. But my love for order and guidelines gives selfishly to neglecting to encourage, affirm, and be gracious. I need to chill. We’re not a Super Bowl contender running a two-minute drill. We’re just trying to get to school on time.

You see if you are always setting the rules, yelling the rules, red-carding your kids when they’re out of line and never encouraging them things are out of balance. And if you feel the need to quote Exodus 20:12 to your children over and over you’re probably already losing. Show them how to honor the Lord.

But if you’re always coddling them, being their buddy, and never wanting to impose anything on them without giving guidelines then that’s JUST as out of balance. Encouragement without structure is a disaster as well. We need both training and instruction in equal measure.

Now it might seem that I’ve just been talking to a small group of people so far in the room. But this command actually is for everyone, not just little children, teenagers, and their parents. All of us are called to honor our parents.

In Exodus this was addressed primarily to little children but to adults.

In those days there was no social security, no reverse mortgages, AARP, or medicare. Your children WERE your retirement plan. Adult children were expected to continue honoring their parents as they aged. In fact, most homes would have had 3 generations or more living under one roof at all times. So honoring one’s parents was not just something you had to do until you turned 18. It was for a lifetime.

So let me say this. I get it. Our culture is different. But all of us in the room have parents. If you a relationship with them at all, honor them. Don’t forget the weight of their importance in your life. Find ways to honor your parents by including them in your life- whether through phone calls for advice and personally written birthday notes.

And later on be ready to help take care of them when they’re too old to take care of themselves. Honor them by taking care of them to the extent you possibly can. Do it without complaining.

And if your parents are already gone, you can still honor them. Speak of them well to your family. Honor them by honoring the Lord.

God’s command for us is to honor him as Father by honoring our earthly father and mother. Feel the weight of his glory by submitting to the honor of your mom and dad. But this brings me to my next point.

**2. Honor your parents by forgiving them instead of blaming them.**

And this is where it gets difficult. For the past several minutes you’ve listened to me rattle on about why we need to honor our parents. I doubt any of you disagree that we need to.

Some of you have GREAT relationships with your parents. It is certainly a blessing and encouragement to hear when your parents have been a blessing to you. For you the thought of honoring your parents is just natural and normal.

But for many in the room this morning this is like reopening old scars or poking fresh wounds. Many of you have had strained relationships with parents if at all. I know that specifically about several of you and statistically about all of you.

So when I say that your parents should have weight and value in your life you see that as burdensome. It is not precious, it is painful. The weight is not one of honor but one that feels like it crushes you, has broken you.

So obeying this command doesn’t just seem hard, it seems impossible. You’re thinking there’s some sort of loophole for you.

I’ve heard you say that they abused you. I hear you when you say they chose addiction over you, chose men over you, chose selfishness over you. I understand that they drove you to seek their never-given approval. I hear you when you tell me they never told you they loved you or were proud of you.

In our society today we are quick to shift the blame others for our failures and shortcomings. I’m not here to doubt or discredit anything that’s happened to you. But I am going to challenge it.

And what I’m going to tell you is that despite ALL those things, all the pain, all the hurt, the crushing weight you feel…. Those reasons are why you ought to forgive them NOT blame them.

The ironic thing is that for many of you the influence and weight of your parents feels like a millstone tethered to you, not them.

Do you remember when Jesus talked about that?

**Matthew 18:5-6**

**Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.**

Not exactly what you’d think of as bedtime bible reading is it? You know Jesus is holding a kid in his lap while he said this.

Here’s the more ironic thing. This verse is what you might use to justify not forgiving your parents. But then why does that millstone feel like it is wrapped around you?

Perhaps it isn’t tied to your neck like it might be to theirs. Perhaps through your unforgiveness you are holding on to that weight in unforgiveness.

Forgiving them is how you let go. Will you open your hand? Honor your parents by simply taking the step to forgive them in your heart. That’s step one for you.

You see you and I don’t deserve the grace of God in Christ any more than the next person. But Jesus took the weight of other people’s sin on HIMSELF first. He stands ready to forgive.

We must see ourselves, not just our parents or anyone else, as first a sinner, before we see ourselves as sinned against. Jesus went through great effort to ensure forgiveness of people who did not deserve it, namely you.

How then can we claim the love of God in Jesus Christ and not be willing to forgive those who have sinned against us. Will you do that this morning? Will you dwell upon the gospel and let God move you to forgive?

Parents in the room: perhaps some of you have made mistakes with your children that you regret. Do you receive Christ’s forgiveness for them? Have you pursued your children’s forgiveness as well? The honor you deserve may be that you are humble enough to admit you were wrong, you sinned against them, and you need their forgiveness.   
  
Furthermore, you may have children who need your forgiveness. Their dishonor and disobedience of you is not primarily your offense. It is an offense to God. Will you honor the Lord by forgiving them as he has forgiven you?

Here’s what we all need to remember and believe:

**3. Jesus carries the weight of our family and brings us into His.**

The NFL promotes itself with the slogan that Football is Family. Football, like many team sports, becomes a source of camaraderie.

The weight of honoring of our parents and raising children is great. But will you allow Christ to carry that weight for you?

**Matthew 11:30**

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

Can you hear Christ’s heart in these words this morning?

Children, old and young, stop striving. Your parents’ approval is not ultimate. Neither is anyone else’s. You’re weighed down by sin, your sin, your parents’ sin. You are heavy laden. You’re weighed down by shame. You’re stuck in the pride of worrying. Only Jesus can rescue you from the weight that brings on your life.

Parents, old and young, be gentle. Give rest and not burdens. In Jesus you find your children’s achievements or failures do not change your standing in the family of God. In Christ, find rest for your souls to honor the Lord by loving your children well and pointing them to Him.

His yoke is easy and burden is light. Christ’s yoke is easy because it fits. You were made to honor him.

And his yoke is light because he is the one pulling the weight. The weight on you can be transferred onto him. You don’t have to be crushed under the weight of your sin or the sin of your parents. He was crushed on your behalf, even on their behalf.

And the best part is that we get to be part of God’s family. You even see it just before Jesus’ words here in this passage. The Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father. Access to the Father goes through Jesus. But that access opens us up not to a dysfunctional family but a diverse one. One where we’re all adopted orphans. He sought after us in Jesus. He brings us into the family through Jesus.

So the real question is not whether you will or can honor your parents. Its not even about whether you will be a parent that deserves honor. The real question is whether we will honor our Heavenly Father?