

INTRODUCTION

I must be pushing the right buttons, because the last two Sunday mornings our telephone counseling lines have been overwhelmed with discussion about husbands and wives. Families out there are really struggling. They do not really understand what the word of God says about how to build a strong home and family. The Bible says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Unless the Lord builds a strong, Christian home, there is not much chance for families today. God has ordained that the husband is to be the head of the home the wife is to be the heart of the home and the children are to be the hope of the home.

Today I want to talk to the young people about “How to Survive Your Teenage Years.” This is a message to families about how to deal with your children and how children can relate to their parents. Next week I’ll finish the series by talking about “Oddly Godly Parents.” How to be Christian parents in an increasingly non-Christian world. I feel like the preacher who got up one Sunday and said, “There is so much to say about the family I really don’t know where to start.” One little kid on the front row said, “Why don’t you start near the end.” We’re almost at the end of this series.

Ephesians 6:1-3. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you, and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

I know it is tough being a teenager and it’s tough to be the *parent* of a teenager. Mark Twain gave some advice on raising teenagers, “Things run along pretty smoothly until your kid reaches age 13. That’s the time you need to stick them in a barrel, hammer the lid down nice and snug and feed them through the knothole. And then about the time he turns 16 you’d better plug up the knothole.” Not only is it tough sometimes being the parents of a teenager it’s tough being a teenager. It is part of the sense of humor of God that he has arranged it that parents would be going through middle age at just the time when they have teens in their home.

Chuck Swindoll wrote a great book entitled *The Strong Family*, and he looks at the problems of adolescence through the eyes of boys and girls. He writes, “The little boy who once hung around mom and dad operated within a fairly close and predictable circle of events. He had no list of expectations of himself or others, but suddenly within a few months he finds all that changing as he becomes a teenager. As he enters adolescence he begins an incredible, awful, often painful process of change. He wants to be a man, but he just can’t quite pull it off. He wants his independence, but he just can’t afford it. He discovers that the world is bigger than his home, his school and the baseball diamond. Furthermore, his body starts doing all kinds of weird things that it has never done before. To add to his confusion that ugly, little girl that his buddies would never have thought of allowing to join their club suddenly starts to look pretty good.” It’s the same thing for girls, he writes. Speaking of girls, they have their own stuff to worry about and boy, do they worry! In the younger years a girl’s life was fun and games, dolls, a friend or two to spend the night, giggles at the table, summer vacations, birthday parties, Christmas holidays and a new dress for Easter. No big deal—except for having to take turns doing the dishes and cleaning a room every once in a while. It was so simple. Life was so easy. Then she becomes a teenager. Almost overnight she becomes extremely self-conscious. When she was a kid, she

couldn't care less if her hair cooperated and now every strand of hair is of mammoth concern. Her favorite place is in front of the mirror, any mirror. Every tiny zit assures her leprosy is just around the corner and clothes...we're talking daily nervous breakdown here. She has this body that won't make up its mind plus all the kids at school, the commercials on television, the glamour magazines in the rack, all team up in some kind of secret conspiracy that convinces a once easygoing little girl that she is horribly overweight, ugly beyond belief and hopelessly condemned to a life of embarrassment."

If you can survive your teenage years and make it to about 20 or 21 with your life and your family intact, life really does get a lot easier. It is tough being a teenager! And that's why God's word gives us some very specific commands on how we can survive.

I. DISPLAY OBEDIENCE TO YOUR PARENTS

I have three things for you today. Number one, if you really want to find God's will in your family, you must display obedience to your parents. That's the first command. I think most of you kids know that. I'm not telling you anything new when I tell you the Bible says "obey your parents," but you all have some questions about it and the first question you probably have is, "Why?" Kids like to say, "Why?" You tell them to do something and they say, "Why should I do that?"

1a. Why? It is the right thing to do

There are a couple of reasons why you ought to obey your parents. Number one simply because it is the right thing to do. Ephesians 6:1 says, "Obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." We live in an age of shifting moral values and relativism, where everybody is saying, "There is nothing necessarily wrong and there is nothing necessarily right." There IS right and wrong and you know it is the right thing to "obey your parents," because the Bible says, "It is right for you to obey them." Whether you believe it or not, I really think your parents have your best interest at heart. They are trying to protect you and prevent a lot of pain and misery in your life. That is why they give you all these rules that say, "No, you can't do that!"

When our first daughter was a baby, I came home one time and was walking into our living room and I heard some noise coming from behind the couch. I went to look and there was my daughter, Jenni, on the floor. She was chewing on an electric cord that was plugged into the wall. Every parent in this room knows exactly what I did. I jumped back there and I said, "NO!" And I pulled it out of her mouth. She did what most kids did she did, that silent cry where they can't get any breath and then when they finally do...WAAAAAH! I'm sure her little brain was thinking "This mean man! He is denying me the pleasure of chewing on that nice, cool, rubbery cord." I was trying to prevent a terrible, tragic accident of her electrocuting herself! You may not believe it but when your parents today tell you, "NO! Don't do that!" They are not trying to be spoilsports; they are not trying to make you miserable; they really are trying to do what's best for you.

1b. Why? It teaches you to submit to authority

Another reason you ought to obey your parents is it teaches you to submit to authority for the rest of your life, because all of your life you’re going to have to follow, obey different people. If you do not obey your parents, you are going to have a real tough time obeying your teachers in school. If you do not obey your parents and your teachers, you are going to have a tough time obeying your boss when you get a job. If you don’t obey your parents and your teachers and your boss, you’re going to have a tough time obeying the law and enforcement officials. What are the consequences of disobeying your parents? Get grounded...sent to your room...a spanking. What are the consequences of disobeying your teachers at school? It gets a little rougher. You may fail a class you may fail a grade, get suspended. What about the consequences of disobeying your boss? Then it starts hitting you in your pocketbook. You lose your job. Once you get a record of not being able to follow orders on the job, it becomes harder and harder for you to land a job and then if you disobey law enforcement officials, the consequences of that are a lot more severe. They will put you in jail. So do yourself a favor and learn to obey your parents now, because it will teach you to submit to authority.

2. Why is it so hard?

The second question is, “Why is it so hard? Why is it so hard to obey my parents?” The Bible answers that question in a passage from Proverbs 22:15. “Young people are prone to foolishness and fads.” (*The Message*) In every one of us there is that “sin nature” that never wants to follow any orders; it wants to do its own thing. I am not saying it’s easy for you to obey your parents, I am saying it is right for you to obey your parents. I know it’s tough. It doesn’t come easily. Nobody likes to follow orders!

That’s like the teenage boy that got tired of his parents always telling him what to do. He said, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to do! I’m going to run away from home and join the Marines where I don’t have to follow orders anymore!” Life is full of following orders all throughout your life and it never becomes easier. It’s not easy to do what your boss says at work. It’s not easy sometimes to obey the laws because we have that sinful nature. That’s why it is hard!

3. For how long? Until you have your own family

Here’s the third question. For how long do I have to obey my parents? Because I look forward to that day when I am no longer under the responsibility to obey them. You must obey them until you have your own family. The Bible says, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife.” That means when you go out and establish your own family, (You may *not* marry—it’s not God’s will for everybody to be married) you are no longer under the commandment to always obey your parents. You begin to live your own life. Some of you may be a little bit older and you don’t know whether you fall into that category or not. There’s a very simple way to find out, especially those of you who are 19 or 20 or so. Ask your dad if he’s still counting you as an exemption on his income tax form. If you are counted as an exemption, you are still under the requirement to obey your parents. It’s not something you do all of your life. You don’t have to obey your parents when you are 45 years old, you obey them until you start your own family.

4. What if they are wrong? Obey them “in the Lord”

The next question is one a lot of kids ask. “What if they are wrong?” Notice the Bible says we are to obey them “in the Lord.” That is a word meaning we obey them in the context of the lordship of Jesus Christ and in the context of the word of God. About 99,999 times out of a 100,000 your parents will tell you to do the right thing. So most of the time, just do what they tell you to do. Of course, if your parent tells you to rob a bank or to sell your body into prostitution or if they tell you to do something that is obviously against the word of God, then for sure you ought to obey God rather than them—but parents never tell you to do that. The problem is a lot of times your parents tell you to do something and you just don’t understand why they are telling you to do so. You just don’t understand your parents. Parents don’t have to be fair. They are your parents. You may not understand why they feel that way; you just do what they say.

When I was a kid, I thought my parents were really dumb. As a teen, I can remember thinking “How can anybody take a nap on a Sunday afternoon? Man let’s go out there and play football play basketball...do something! Take a nap on a Sunday afternoon???” These days I understand it a whole lot better than I did then. When you are 7 years old, your parents are geniuses. When you are about 12 years old, they get a little slow and when you are about 16 years old, they are idiots! When you are about 18, they are brain dead—but when you get to be about 20, they are just slow. When you get to be about 30 years old, your parents are geniuses again. You don’t have to understand why they are telling you to do something; you do it because the Bible tells you to. Do you want to live a long life? A good life? Obey your parents.

II. DEMONSTRATE HONOR TO YOUR PARENTS

Here’s the second admonition: Children are to demonstrate honor to their parents. What’s the difference between obedience and honor? Obedience is an act, something you do when your parents tell you to do it or not do when they tell you not to do it. Honor is an attitude. Honor is the umbrella under which obedience takes place. If you do not honor them, you will find it hard to obey them. You do not have to obey your parents when you get to be 35 or 40 years old, but you must always honor them.

1. Respect them when you are young

What does it mean to honor your parents? Number one. It means you respect them when you are young. If you want to read probably the grossest verse in the Bible here it is: “The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.” (Proverbs 30:17) You’d better put your hands over your eyes and protect them, because the Bible says you can show disrespect in the way you even look at your parents. Your parents tell you to do something and you’re going to obey them, but you are not going to honor them. They tell you that you can’t do something you want to do and you look at them with sarcasm and say, “If that’s what you want me to do!” You’re obeying, but you are not honoring them. You can scorn them with your eyes! So kids, be careful in your attitude toward your parents because the command is not only to obey it is also to honor them.

2. Provide for them when they are old

And then it says (and honor involves this) you are to provide for them when they are old. For just a moment, I want to bring everybody into this message, because anybody who has a parent who is still alive you must honor them as long as they live. You provide for your parents when they become old even if they get Alzheimer's even if they get sick even if they become invalids you are to always provide for them and to honor them.

In the last church I served, there was a widow in our congregation who was so pitiful, because even though she had three grown sons with families in the Birmingham area, they ignored and neglected her. Our church met all of her financial needs. We provided a home behind our church for her to live in. I can't tell you the numbers of times I tried to contact her sons and tell them, "It is your job to take care of your mother!" The Bible says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8) Do you know why we need to provide for our parents when they are elderly? Because one day we're all going to need somebody to provide for us. George Washington Carver was a brilliant scientist and philosopher. He once wrote these words, "How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young compassionate with the aged sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong because someday in life you will have been all of these." You need to treat them with respect. Obey and honor your parents. Ephesians 6:3 says, "Then you'll have long life and you'll enjoy life. It'll go well for you." God wants to bless you and one way he can bless you is by you obeying and honoring your parents.

My kids hate for me to tell this story, but when I was a senior in high school, I learned something about relating to my parents that I wish I had learned earlier. It was the week of Spring Break and I had already planned out every part of that week. On Friday before Spring Break I was going to leave with a group of young Christians in our city and go from South Alabama all the way to Ft. Knox, Kentucky. I was preaching there even as a senior in high school. I was going to drive up there in my car and take some of my friends with me. I had made All State Chorus that year, so after the Revival was over on Monday, I was going to drive down to Tuscaloosa, Alabama for two days of All State Chorus. My church youth choir was on a choir tour in Florida, so after the All State Chorus, I was going to drive down to the east coast of Florida to St. Augustine, Florida, to join up with our choir tour. I had it all worked out. I had the money for the gas and everything. Two days before I was supposed to leave, I came in that night my dad was sitting there in the den and he said, "David, sit down. I need to talk to you." It was one of Those Talks, where you know something is about to happen. He said, "Your mother and I have talked about it and we have decided that it is just too much for you to do all these things. You are only 17 years old and it's just too much for you to do, so you can't do them all. You can choose two out of the three." Ft. Knox / Tuscaloosa / St. Augustine. I was tempted to do what I had always done before—argue! "Aw dad, come on! I've worked it out. Look, I've got the money I've got the map I've got the route I can do it I'm a safe driver!" I wanted to argue with him so much. Instead do you know what I did that night? I was really trying to get close to the Lord at this time. I looked at my dad and without saying anything else, I said, "Okay, dad. If that's what you all think, I understand." I walked down the hall went in my bedroom closed the door stuck my face in the pillow and cried. It was so unfair! I was angry yet I obeyed.

The next morning I went to the breakfast table expecting to say, "Okay, dad. I'm just not going

to go to All State Chorus. I'll go to Ft. Knox and then come back home, then I'll go with our choir tour down to Florida." I was willing to give up one of those that was important to me, but I looked at my dad and before I could say anything it was obvious that he had not slept as much as I had. He had had a rough night too. He said, "Dave Your mom and I were talking again and I was surprised at the way you reacted last night when I told you that you couldn't do all of those. I think if you could respond with that kind of maturity that you must be old enough to do all those things so, go ahead and do it all!" I promise you, I did not have *maybe he'll think because I obey him he'll let me do them all* in the back of my mind when I said, "Yes, sir," to my dad. I honestly thought that I was giving up one of them but by my attitude to my parents, being willing to say, "Yes, sir." they said, "We're going to give you more freedom."

Kids I wish I had learned that principle earlier. I could have done a whole lot more. Instead I would fuss and argue. "I don't want to do that!" Learn the lesson; obey your parents—it will blow their minds! Try that some time. That's a new strategy. I'm going to ask every child and every teenager in this room, when you go home from church, catch your mom and dad sometime, maybe when you are all going to a restaurant to eat or when you are going home sometime this afternoon just get with them and say, "Mom and dad. I heard what the pastor said this morning and I just want to tell you that I haven't always done a great job, but from this day on I really want to show you obedience and I want to show you honor." Once they get up off the floor then, you can begin to practice it.

III. DEVELOP A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Number three. You should develop a personal relationship with God. That's what the writer of Ecclesiastes says, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.'" (Ecclesiastes 12:1) The relationships, habits and choices you make as a teenager will affect you for the rest of your life. If you don't get right with God before you reach the age of 20 or 21, it becomes real difficult after that to come to know God. As a testimony of this: If you are in this room today and you became a Christian before the age of 18, hold up your hand. Thank you. Put your hands down. How many of you became Christians after the age of 18? Probably 5% of you. It becomes tougher after the age of 18 to give your life to Jesus.

1. God has no grandchildren, only children

Number one. God has no grandchildren, only children. Sometimes a child or a teenager thinks, "I have such great Christians for parents, that surely that's going to make me acceptable to God." God doesn't have any grandchildren, only children. Your parents can give you a lot: Spiritual instruction, money, clothes, shelter...they can even give you an inheritance, but there is one thing your parents can't give you. They can't give you salvation. That's something you personally must receive from God alone. To this day I talk to some men who are not right with God and they'll say something like, "My dad was a Methodist preacher." as if their dad being a preacher gives them some kind of access to heaven. No. God doesn't have any grandchildren, only children. "My granddad was a Baptist deacon." What your granddad did has nothing to do with your relationship with Jesus Christ. Notice I didn't say "become religious." I said "have a personal relationship with God." I don't like religion and I don't like religious people. I'm not

into a religion, I’m into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and kids, that’s what you need to discover.

2. Spiritual habits are hard to change after age 21

Here’s the second thing. Spiritual habits are hard to change after age 21. Please get established spiritually before you reach the age of 21, before you leave your teenage years, because it will become so much more difficult for you to get back on track after that. It’s true in my own life. I became a Christian when I was 9, but I got away from the Lord. The two most significant spiritual decisions I have made since that time, even up until today, both were made when I was a teenager. When I was 15, I got back on track with God and Jesus became the absolute lord of my life. I am standing up here today preaching in this church because I made that first decision as a teen. Two years later when I was 17, God called me to preach. Why do you think I am the pastor of this church today? Because I made a decision when I was a teenager to accept God’s call. There are many of you in this room who could stand up and say, “Yes, pastor. The decisions and the habits that I developed when I was a teenager they are the ones that are carrying me through right now and it is tough after age 21.”

CONCLUSION

One final word. Teens may think they can break some laws, cheat on a test at school and get away with it. They may think you can drink alcohol underage or smoke a little dope and get away with it or exceed the speed limit and get away with it. You can break some laws these days, but there is one law neither you, nor anyone else can ever break and it is the “law of the harvest.” The law of sowing and reaping says, “Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” You will never break that law! Whatever you plant in your life right now as a teenager, as a child, you will harvest a bumper crop of it in your future. Do yourself a favor, because if you’re planting seeds of rebellion and seeds of disobedience right now in your life, you’re going to harvest a bumper crop in your future from your own children and from other people. Plant those seed of righteousness in seeking and following God right now, because if you do, you’ll reap a bumper crop of blessings in the future. You will not break that law! If you jump out of an airplane without a parachute, you don’t break the law of gravity—you only demonstrate it. When you follow the Lord and you obey your parents and you honor them, in your future you will demonstrate the blessings of the law of the harvest. God will give you long life and it will go well with you for the rest of your life. Do yourself a favor! Obey your parents. Honor your parents and seek the Lord!

OUTLINE

I. DISPLAY OBEDIENCE TO YOUR PARENTS

1. Why?

- a. It is the right thing to do
- b. It teaches you to submit to authority

2. Why is it so hard?

“Young people are prone to foolishness and fads.” *Proverbs 22:15 The Message*

3. For how long? Until you have your own family

4. What if they are wrong? Obey them “in the Lord”

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2. Spiritual habits are hard to change after age 21



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes