

# OpenTheo

## Families vs Individuals (Part 4)



### **Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture** - Steve Gregg

In this thought-provoking talk, Steve Gregg explores the concept of family within a Christian context. He argues that the family unit is a hierarchical structure ordained by God and that children are expected to respect and obey their parents. However, he underlines the importance of avoiding compromises and errors that may arise when children leave their homes to start their own families. Gregg also highlights the role of subordination in all aspects of life and the need to honor those in authority, without compromising one's faith in God.

### **Transcript**

Tonight, we're going to be looking again at the general topic of families in our overall series theme, which is *Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture*. We have to acknowledge that families are really not only the generators of culture and the perpetrators of culture, but their structure and the conduct of their members is really defining of what culture is. There's nothing more key to defining a culture than looking at the structure of families.

Sadly, I think we all have realized that to a very large extent, families have taken on, Christian families have taken on the cast of the dominant American cultural families insofar as the, I suppose the television and movies more than most things, and public school have been the factors that more than any other things have caused American families to change and to take on the values and the model of the secular families in our world because children are taken out of their homes and educated away from their parents' influence by people who may not share their parents' values. Certainly, many school teachers are not Christians, and even the ones who are may not share the radical Christian values of the parents. Children spend a lot more time at school, generally speaking, when they go to school than they spend interacting with their parents.

This has caused on the whole American Christian families to take on the attitudes that the American non-Christian families have, and especially as there have been several generations of Americans that have been in public schools, and then in the last couple of generations, there's been the strong influence of television. Many television programs

have depicted families and family life. That's always been the case.

Even the earliest days of television had sitcoms and so forth that were about families that were considered to be the normative families of the time. I mean, Father Knows Best, Leave It to Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet, and other early family sitcoms reflected the family norms, or at least what somebody thought the family norms should be, of the 50s when television first was introduced. And as you go through the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and now into this century, I'm sure that there's always been a lot of family sitcoms and family television shows that reflect what somebody thinks is the norm for families.

I remember, I guess it must have been in the, was it in the 70s or the 80s when All in the Family was one of the most popular sitcoms. That depicted a certain model of family life. It wasn't a very godly one, but now I almost hate to acknowledge that I'm aware of this show.

There are other sitcoms, much more modern, like Married with Children, which I hope none of you have seen. I only had the unfortunate opportunity to see them when I was visiting somebody once. And I mean, they're just so foul and they depict really a tremendously degraded concept of what family is.

Now, I don't think I've seen any television family related shows in probably a decade now, so I don't know what's on there now. But I know that the family as a social unit has definitely decayed tremendously. And I would say that to a very large extent, the television and other visual media that depict family life a certain way, and also public school, are the main culprits.

They are the main shapers of at least children's minds. And the children that were children when I was a kid are now grown up and have their minds all shaped by the TV shows they saw. And now their kids are being shaped by TV.

And the Christian family has seldom had the discernment to recognize that there is something distinctive and radically different about family life as God designed it and as Christians used to understand it. But we are like the frog in the kettle that basically warmed to the environment. I almost hate to use the example of frog in the kettle because it's so overdone.

Everyone always talks about the frog in the kettle and it's almost so overdone that it's embarrassing to use something that's such a cliché. But one thing I would point out to you is the reason that the frog that you put in the kettle remains comfortable as the water heats up even to the point where it kills the frog is because the frog is a cold-blooded creature. Unlike warm-blooded creatures, which we are supposed to be, amphibians and reptiles and fish, they're cold-blooded.

And therefore, they have no internal controls over their body temperature. Their body

temperature just assumes the temperature of their environment. And so the frog doesn't know if it's hot, cold or indifferent because its body temperature is just the same as that of its environment.

You feel cold sometimes because you go out and it's uncomfortably cold in contrast to the maintained temperature of your body. You're a warm-blooded creature. Your body has mechanisms to maintain a certain body heat and to resist radical change in temperature.

Even though you're out in environments that are exceedingly hot or cold, your body remains essentially the same temperature unless you're unhealthy. Now, what I was going to suggest is that Christians are supposed to be like warm-blooded creatures. In an environment that may shift from too hot to too cold, Christians should remain just right, like baby bears' porridge.

Christians should be able to maintain the right self-regulating cultural environment among themselves regardless of which direction the prevailing environment goes because we have the Word of God. And the Word of God is the regulating factor. But you may have noticed that a lot of Christians don't really read the Bible very much anymore.

And even churches that claim to believe in the Bible, much of the preaching doesn't really deal with the Bible very directly. And that being the case, I think we have a generation of evangelicals who've grown up largely biblically illiterate, not aware of the distinctives that the Bible teaches for the Christian life. And so we've lost it.

Now, last time I was talking about the roles of various family members as the Scripture describes them. We talked about the role of the head of the household and his activities and his responsibilities. We talked about the role of the woman of the home.

We intended, but we did not get around to talking about the roles of children. And we will talk about that this evening. I hope that it won't occupy our entire evening, but it might.

As there are distinctive instructions in the Scripture to husbands, and there are distinctive instructions in the Scripture to wives, there are also distinctive instructions to children. Now, not everybody becomes a husband, because there are women and they never become husbands. Not everyone becomes a wife, because men don't become wives, but all people are children at the beginning of their lives.

And therefore, the instructions of children are to children applied to both genders and to all people at some portion in their life, in their life cycle. Eventually, children grow up into either usually husbands or wives if they marry, but all people start out as children. And in their role as children, their basic ideas and values and habits and patterns of life, and to a large extent the patterns that will shape their marriages and the structure of their families are shaped by both the example of the parents and the training they receive.

But what are the children expected to do? Well, the most obvious place to start an exploration of that is at the Ten Commandments. I think it's the most obvious place to start, because it's the most obvious instruction and the most universal instruction given to children. There are many commands of various kinds and instructions in the Scripture given to children and other people, but one of the Ten Commandments, and there are only ten of the Ten Commandments, one of them is directed to children in particular, whereas the others seem to apply to all people, adults and so forth, and even to children.

Yet there is one command that is given to children in particular, it's the Fifth Commandment, and it is, Honor thy father and thy mother. Now, we would not deal with this in great detail tonight if not for the fact that this command is repeated in Scripture. In the New Testament, it is repeated by Jesus Christ.

When in Matthew chapter 15 and in the parallel in Mark 7, Jesus chastises the Pharisees because of their hypocrisy. The Pharisees were criticizing Jesus' disciples because they ate without washing their hands in the traditional manner. The traditions were not from God, the traditions were from the rabbis and they were of human origin and Jesus didn't have much respect for them, but he was criticized for allowing his disciples to violate these traditional ways of washing their hands.

And Jesus, when he was asked why he did this, he said to the Pharisees, well, why do you, in order to keep your traditions, violate the Word of God, which is of course far more important. And he didn't just leave it as a general accusation, he gave an example. He says, for Moses said, you shall honor your father and your mother, and he that curses father and mother, let him die the death.

Now, that's all what Jesus said on that, but he quoted two verses there in succession. One is the fifth commandment from Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12, honor thy father and thy mother. And the other one comes from a few chapters later in Exodus, he that curses his father or mother, let him die the death, let him be put to death for cursing his parents.

And so, Jesus said, that's what the Word of God says. Then he says, but you, Pharisees, you have your little traditional ways of doing and runs around your obligation to honor your parents. We'll maybe have something more to say about that further down the line here.

But the point is that Jesus repeated the command that children ought to honor their parents. And if that wasn't enough, Paul repeated it also, twice, in Colossians and in Ephesians. We'll look at some of those passages eventually.

But what does it mean to honor parents? There are two aspects of a child's honoring his parents when he is a child. One of them is simply respect, and probably that's the first

thing we think of when we think of the word to honor someone. You respect them.

You respect their authority. The Apostle Paul, in writing to all people, not only children, but all Christians, I shouldn't say all people because Paul wrote his letters to Christians, but in Romans chapter 13, Paul said, in verse 7, Romans 13, 7, Render therefore to all their due, that is what they have coming, taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. You should honor anyone who has it coming.

Now, in the context of the previous six verses, Paul is talking about governmental officials. Honoring governmental officials is a tricky thing because government officials are not always honorable. In fact, in Paul's day, there were probably very few Roman officials that could be said to be honorable.

After all, the emperor at this time was a very foul and corrupt and perverted man named Nero, and it's not likely that those who served under him were very much his superiors, morally. I know some people say, well, how can we honor a ruler or how can we honor a political figure if he's not honorable? Well, there are certain ways that you can't honor him, but there must be some ways that we can because Paul did not argue that we should only honor people who are Christians, for example, and anyone who's not Christian is rebelling against God and that's not very honorable. But in the context of honoring authorities, he says, pay tribute to whom tribute is due and honor to whom honor is due.

Now, here he's clearly talking about honoring their office, honoring their position, saluting the uniform, as it were. Sometimes you cannot honor a man's character. You cannot commend him.

You cannot recommend him, but you have to recognize he's in uniform and you honor the uniform. Now, this is the way it is in family life as well. We talked last time about the fact that the family is a hierarchical structure that God has ordained.

The husband is the head of the wife and both parents are in authority over the children. And as the husband is ordained in his role by God, it's as if he wears a uniform. I was talking to a man, a Christian man the other day who had been in, I won't say too much because it might reveal who he is, but he had been in one of the branches of the armed services.

He'd been an officer there some years ago and he talked about how his wife, he has trouble with his wife submitting to him. She has trouble submitting to him. Not because he's a bad man, but just because she was raised, like most women of our generation, to believe that submission is only to be done when you agree with what's being suggested to you.

We have a very egalitarian society we've all been raised in and most women of our generation don't understand submission. I'm not here to talk about women tonight, but I'm bringing this up because it applies to children as well. He was saying that when he was in the service and an officer, men would salute him and would obey him because he had stripes on his uniform.

And we were talking about how a lot of times Christian wives, and I tonight apply it to Christian children as well, don't realize that although husbands and parents don't wear uniforms, they hold an office. They are officers, as it were, in the home that God has ordained. It's as if they have invisible stripes that need to be honored by their subordinates.

And that is not because they are superior people. There are many times that children, especially as the children get older, can be sharper, maybe more spiritual, more intelligent than their parents. And there are many wives who are more intelligent than their husbands.

And Paul was certainly aware of that when he gave instructions in the scripture, but that's irrelevant. It's not the superiority of the person of rank that has to be submitted to or honored. It is the office that God has given them.

Now, I don't want to get into detail about Romans 13 because it's not really about family life. It's more about honoring people who are political figures. But when we talk about honor your father and your mother, it is not always the case that fathers and mothers behave in an honorable manner.

Remember you who are children. Your parents are just children who got bigger. They were just like you, just as inexperienced in life, just as ignorant at one time, and believe it or not, to their minds it doesn't seem very long ago.

They got bigger. They had kids of their own. They grew up and had babies.

They are just babies who grew up and had babies. And a lot of times they didn't get much training of the spiritual nature in their early upbringing. Or they may not have gotten a very good education or something, and therefore you may see your parents do things that are not very wise, not very spiritual, not very good.

And in some cases your parents may be really not very good people. I mean, not all parents are. Although more often in a group like this I would expect your parents are good people.

They just are struggling like anybody else to try to serve God with a lot of baggage that was fitted for them as they grew up, and trying to get over that. The point of the matter is though, you're not always going to notice in your parents' behavior that you can especially respect, that you would naturally look up to, that you would want to emulate.

But that's irrelevant.

That's always been the case. When the Bible was written, that was certainly the case. There were kids who were more intelligent and better kids than their parents.

The Bible gives examples of that. Jesus, for example, he was smarter than Mary and Joseph by a good bit, and more spiritual. And yet the Bible indicates that he played the role of a child in the home.

And he honored their authority. He honored their position because he honored his father. What we have to understand is that God is honorable.

God deserves honor. And if he says, okay, here's my plan. You are subordinate to that person there.

Now, he didn't say that person is better than you, and they may not be. He just said you're subordinate to them. And you honor him when you honor them, when you honor the one that God has made you subordinate to.

Now, there are some limits to this, but not anywhere near as many as most people under subordination like to think. For example, when we talked about wives last time, I think every good Christian knows that there would be some things that a husband might ask a wife to do conceivably that she would have to conscientiously object as a Christian. She'd have to say, well, if he's a non-Christian especially or if he's just a very unspiritual man, he might ask her to do some things that are plain sinful.

And in those occasions, she would have to conscientiously object. However, as I said last time, once women hear this, sometimes they almost take it as a cart blanche that whenever they disagree with their husband and can find maybe some moral aspect to what he's saying that they don't fully agree with, then they feel like, well, I've got to just have to say, I've got to obey God rather than man, you know. And what I said to wives last time, I have to say to children this time because they're in a comparable relationship only to their parents, and that is this, that the only time that you should violate the command of God that tells you to submit to your parents would be when there is a clearer command of God that would be violated by submitting to them.

In other words, if your parents say, go out and steal money for the family or go out and, you know, prostitute yourself, bring in money for the family or something like that, obviously, I can't imagine very many men doing that, although there's more and more men I hear about these days who actually are that perverted. But no Christian man is ever going to give those instructions. But in a case like that, there's very clear command of Scripture, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not do these certain things.

And when the person in authority commands you to do that which the Scripture clearly says not to do, it is at least my understanding that you have to conscientiously object to

that. But many times, children would like to disobey their parents or wives would like to, you know, avoid submitting to their husbands simply because there is something that's not maybe very clear. It may be the parents are good Christians, they're thinking about the Bible too, they're trying to obey the Bible, they just interpret something differently.

But sometimes on the mere difference of interpretation of something, the person in subordination will at times object to obedience and will not feel that they must do so. Well, as I said, the only time that you should not submit to your parents is if their commands would cause you to, to obey their commands would cause you to violate a command of Scripture that is as clear as the command to obey them. And there aren't going to be many times that good Christian parents do that.

In fact, I don't even think there's going to be very many times when non-Christian parents do that. Remember, it's not when your parents are making a mistake or when your parents are morally confused. That's not when you don't obey.

It's when they command you to do something that for you to do that would be for you to be sinning against God. But there may be many times when your parents are morally confused or wrong or not intelligent in their choices or whatever you may judge it to be that you may wish not to honor them because of those areas of inferiority that you think you see in them. And yet, if their instructions do not require you to violate a command of God that God's made to you, you should honor their authority in any case.

They are in authority. It is not them that you are honoring. It is God who authorized them.

It's God who put the stripes on their uniform that you're honoring when you honor your parents. And you cannot honor God without honoring your parents. It's very clear.

Jesus repeated not only the command, honor your father and your mother. He also in the same breath repeated the command, he that curses his father and mother, let him be put to death. Now, in the Christian church, in the new covenant, we don't put people to death.

We're not the executioners like the Jews. The Jews were not only a worshiping community, they were also a country with laws that they had to maintain and so forth. The church of Jesus Christ is a worshiping community, but it doesn't have its own courts and its own prisons and its own electric chairs and things like that.

It is not our place to execute people who do things worthy of death as Christians. But it doesn't change the fact that God views certain activities as worthy of death. You see, there are things I could get away with legally in this country, which I wouldn't suffer any legal penalty for doing them.

But in the Old Testament, I would be put to death for doing them. That should be enough



to make me not want to do them because it means that God believes those are acts worthy of death. They're that offensive to him.

It may be I could get away with it legally in this country, but that doesn't change God's attitude about it. And if God said, if a child curses his father or mother, let him be put to death. Well, that's not going to happen in this country.

No one's going to be put to death for doing that around here, nor does any parent wish that it would. But God still says that is an offense that warrants such punishment in his book. And Jesus, by repeating it, made it very clear that God has not lessened his stance on that.

God has not moderated his opinion on that. Now, cursing father and mother is simply an extreme form of dishonoring. It's the opposite of honoring at the other end of the pole.

There's a story in Genesis chapter nine that I think is illustrative of the requirement of honoring parents. In Genesis nine, after the flood, Noah became a farmer, planted some vineyards and harvested the grapes. And in the first vintage, he drank a bit much and got drunk.

And the story is found in Genesis nine, beginning verse 20. I want to read part of this. It says, And Noah began to be a farmer and he planted a vineyard.

He drank of the wine and was drunk and became uncovered in his tent. That is his maybe it was hot there in the Middle East. He was hot and he was and his inhibitions were gone because he was drunk.

In fact, he was passed out somewhat and he apparently kicked off all the covers and he was laying there in an undignified, uncovered manner. Now, people ought not to be walking into his tent in all likelihood, but still there apparently was the kind of thing where family members or servants might go in there to see if he needs anything. And one of his family members did go in there and saw him in that condition.

His son, Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it on both their shoulders and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away and they did not see their father's nakedness.

Now, it's an interesting thing how reverently the father's honor was protected by these two sons. Ham, by the way, or his son, Canaan actually received a severe curse in the verses that follow, whereas the other two brothers were blessed by their father. And that curse remained on Canaan's ancestors until they were exterminated.

Not ancestors, descendants, until they were exterminated. So, I mean, he brought a disaster upon his son's family, Ham did, by going in and doing what he did. Well, what

did he do? He walked in probably innocently enough and saw his father in an undignified situation.

That in itself, he can't be blamed for. Then it says he went out and told his brothers. Now, that in itself almost seems innocent enough too.

But the brothers had a different opinion. They, A, did not, if they knew their father was in that condition, they didn't want to see him in that condition. Because they knew that when he would awake, he would be embarrassed of it and it would be a great dishonor to him and a great embarrassment to him to know that he had been seen in that condition.

Ham could have done what the other brothers did instead. Instead of telling people about it, which brought a reproach just within the family on their father. They knew something about him that no one else in the family knew.

And they, I mean, Ham did. And Ham could have just taken up his father's cloak since he was there and tossed it over him. Or he could have done something else to cover his father's nakedness, going out there, say nothing to anyone and his father's dignity would have been somewhat more preserved.

Instead, he spread it to the whole town. After the flood, that was the whole town, you know, those two brothers. That's all the survivors.

Might as well put it on the headlines of the New York Times, you know. Dad got drunk and he's laying in his bed naked, uncovered. And the brothers that honored their father did not so much as want to, they wanted to be able when he woke up to honestly say, we didn't see anything in there.

We didn't know. We didn't see it, you know, because that's more honoring to his dignity. And they not only did not wish to see him, they went about to cover him.

And the difference between the way Ham dealt with his father and the way that the other brothers did is indicative of an attitude of honor in one case and of dishonor in the other. And I think that we Christians need to be careful ourselves. I don't know that, I think young kids do this too.

They talk to their friends about their parents' failures and their parents' mistakes. But I think adult children do that about their parents even more. It seems like people my age are never ceasing to mention the things their parents did wrong and, you know, how bad their parents were and so forth.

Now, there are times when that can be instructive and especially there are times when the parents have since become Christians and the parents themselves would publicly confess to the things they used to do before they were Christians. They're shameful things, but they consider it to be a glory to God for people to know what they've been

forgiven of. But the point is to talk about, if our parents have done things that are undignified and we have seen as it were their nakedness, it's not really appropriate for us to go out and broadcast to other people the nakedness of our parents.

They could not help but be seen by us because we lived in their home when they were growing up. They were exposed as it were, their lives, every flaw of theirs was exposed to our eyes as we grew up in their homes. And now their dignity and their reputation rests upon our discretion, upon our honoring their memory and their dignity and preserving it.

And that's what Shem and Japheth did. They wanted to cover their father's reproach as it were. Ham had no interest in doing so, but rather wanted to talk about it.

That is an instance where honoring parents had nothing there to do with obedience. It had to do with just wishing to honor, to respect. Even a man, now see here's the deal.

Noah was in a very dishonorable condition in that moment. He was in a condition that we could say he deserved to be embarrassed. Well maybe he did deserve to be embarrassed, but he didn't deserve to be embarrassed by his kids.

And no kid who is commanded to honor their parents and of whom it is said that if they would go so far as to curse their parents, they should be put to death for it. That's God's attitude about children's honoring their parents. No parent needs to be embarrassed by their children.

If God wishes the father to be embarrassed for his sins or whatever, then God has ways of causing that which is done in secret to be shattered from the rooftop. The children need to be very conscientious, not to be participants in the exposure of their parents' indignity publicly, I believe. I don't say that in order to protect any secrets I have at home, because as far as I know, anything my kids could tell you, I'd tell you myself.

But I say that because I think all of us who are children of somebody can be guilty. We live in a society where there is very free talk about the mistakes of parents. I know that my oldest daughter, who is 27, she was in a Christian high school.

We raised her before we were homeschooling. And all the girls she hung out with at the high school were Christians. It was a Christian high school.

I don't know if they were Christians, but they were from Christian families and professed to be Christians. They had to get in that school. And yet she said they were continually talking about how much they disrespected their parents and said all the foolish and stupid things that their parents did.

And I don't doubt it. I mean, I know we in public high school did those things. I guess I'm not too surprised that Christian kids in Christian high school did that, because Christians

aren't that much different, although they're supposed to be.

Honoring parents is something that is commanded, and there is a strict penalty as far as God is concerned to those who disrespect their parents. And another thing that is said of children, and this is over in Ephesians 6, where Paul actually quotes the fifth commandment, but then he makes his own application of it. Ephesians chapter 6 comes to the second directive to children from the Bible.

Ephesians 6, 1 through 3 says, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. Now, Paul quotes the command, Honor your father and your mother, which as we saw, means to respect.

But it means more than just respect. In the case of children in the home at least, it means to obey. And that's what Paul says.

Children, obey your parents. This is additional to respecting. You know you can obey without respecting, and you can in some measure respect people without obeying them.

But honoring your father and your mother involve both, respect and obedience to your parents. Now, as I said earlier, I think when it comes to commanding one class of people to obey or to submit to another class of people, like submit to government authorities, or wives submit to husbands, or children to parents, or servants to their masters, whatever. It needs to be reiterated every time we say this, that such commands to obey do not entitle somebody to disobey God in obedience to someone in authority.

If somebody in authority tells you to do that, which is clearly a violation of what the scripture says, that no Christian could misunderstand it. It's very clear. It's not just difference of interpretation of a verse by you and the person in authority over you, but it's a very clear thing, and they're clearly rejecting the word of God.

Then you're going to have to obey God rather than men. But other than that, obedience is commanded to the children toward their parents. Colossians chapter 3 is another place where Paul gives such instructions to children.

Colossians 3.20, Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. You see, you don't honor your parents and obey them to please them primarily. There may be times when you think they don't deserve to be pleased.

They're in error, they're unfair, they're making unwise decisions, they're not even being very spiritual. That's not the level that the child has to be concerned with. It is pleasing to the Lord.

Every Christian, adult or child, has that as their primary obligation, as to please the Lord. And children are told to obey their parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the

Lord. So, to honor parents and to obey parents is required.

Now, I should point out that obeying parents – a child's obedience to parents does not necessarily have to resemble a machine obeying someone who pushes the buttons on it, or a dog obeying its master, or a horse that's trained obeying its rider, or necessarily even a private obeying the officers over him in the military service. All of those are different because they have different dynamics in those hierarchies than the family has. Because a family is more than a machine or an animal being operated by an operator, or more than just a military regiment which has to operate like a machine.

The family doesn't have to operate just like a machine. A family is a family. And there are interpersonal human relationships between parents and children, between wives and husbands.

And it's not strictly speaking only an authoritarian kind of structure. It has that hierarchical structure that God has given it for orderliness and for various reasons that God may or may not have made clear. But it is not just a mechanical thing.

Obedience to parents, I believe, should be – well, let me put it this way. I believe that parents, when they give directives to their children, should be prepared to allow the children to make respectful appeals. I think wives should be able to make appeals to their husbands too.

If the husband is saying, let's do such and such, and she sees something he doesn't see, and she knows that if he saw that like she sees it, it would change his whole perspective. She has every right to appeal. Our child does, I believe.

Now, not all would agree with this, but we see that Daniel, for example, who is a youth taken into Babylon in the first chapter of Daniel, was under the authority of the prince of the eunuchs and so forth in Babylon. And a certain diet was prescribed for him and delivered to him. And it offended his Jewish dietary sensitivities.

The Babylonians didn't prepare their food the way the Jews required. Jews couldn't eat blood. The meat had to have all the blood drained out.

They probably had pork and other things the Jews couldn't eat. And Daniel made an appeal. Now, he was respectful, and he was under authority.

And he did not rebel. He didn't revolt. He didn't preach at those over him or argue with them.

But he made a respectful appeal. And I think that the appeal that Daniel makes is probably a good model for persons who are under authority when they are in a position where they're being asked to do something that they don't feel that they properly should do. You can see that in Daniel chapter 1, if you're interested.

It says in verse 11, So Daniel said to the steward, whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, here's what he said, Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. And then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies, and as you see fit, so deal with your servants. Now, notice, they were asking Daniel to do something that went against his conscience as a Jew.

In fact, the commands of Scripture forbade him to eat certain things, some of which were being delivered him. And he was a slave. I mean, he was captured from his land.

He was not in a bargaining position of any kind. But he respectfully asked for kind of an arrangement that might please them as well as him. First of all, he said, Please.

At the end, he said, Now, at the end of this, if it doesn't turn out how I think it will, then do as you see fit. In the final analysis, I'm still going to submit to what you want me to do here, but could we please try this instead? If you bring me this other alternative diet, it's a lot cheaper anyway. Not that the king would care about the expense of it.

But the fact of the matter is, we could try this for 10 days. And if you think we don't look healthy enough for the king, and you think he'll be upset, then you can put us back on the diet you would ordinarily have us on. It's entirely respectful.

It's entirely coming in the spirit of submission. And it was granted to him. And of course, it turned out all right.

I was reading just today from this book, which I find to be one of the best books I've ever read on child rearing. I haven't even finished the book yet, but I've about probably three quarters of the way through. It's called *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Ted Tripp.

I just learned that Wes Olson has gotten the 15 part video series from this man on this book. I'm looking forward to seeing it because this is, as I say, I had never heard of this man until recently, but reading it, it's the very best book on child rearing I've ever read. I just wish I'd read it years ago.

But he talks about the process of a child making an appeal. A child has to obey his parents. But he feels like Daniel, a child should be able to make an appeal at time.

Let me read just a little bit of this book, because I just read this today. I haven't processed it enough to give it to you from memory. He says the appeal process is a safety valve for the biblical requirement of obedience.

It is a safety check in two directions. One, it is a check against caprice on your part. Perhaps you have spoken quickly without careful thought.

Appeal provides a context for you to rescind a directive that was spoken in haste or was inappropriate. Two, it is a safety valve for your children. They know that they have permission to appeal a directive.

They know that mom and dad will honestly reconsider and will rescind the directive if that is good for the individual or the family. This keeps the kids from feeling they can't fight City Hall. There's an important before command safety valve for the parents.

The wise parent will weigh whether the directive he is giving is necessary and appropriate. For example, imagine your child is reading in bed. It is time for lights out.

You could simply throw the switch. You could tell him to shut off the lights. Either way, the child's duty is to obey.

Or you could ask how many pages to the end of that chapter. Oh, only a page and a half. Okay, you may finish and then turn off the lights.

As a wise parent, you must exercise sensitivity to your child's needs and wishes as you provide direction. Your true desire is to imitate godly authority that is truly kind. He says here are some important guidelines to follow in making a biblical appeal.

One, you begin. This is for the children. Now, parents, individual parents will have their own thoughts about this and may not do what he suggests.

I'm not saying they have to, but this struck me as good advice. Here's the directives to the child who wants to make an appeal of something he's been told to do. One, you may begin or you begin to obey immediately, not after the appeal.

As you start to move in the direction of obedience, and you can insert an appeal if that's appropriate, you must be prepared to obey either way. You must appeal in a respectful manner, and you must accept the results of the appeal with a gracious spirit. All of that fits really what Daniel did.

I mean, all of that is pretty much what Daniel did. And I'm not going to keep reading more on this, although there's a great deal. There's a great deal of valuable stuff in this book.

But I bring that up because when we say that children should obey their parents, it's possible that parents will take that as simply a, I mean, they may apply that in almost a military way or the way that a man trains a dog or something like that, you know, and treat the children as if they're not really members of the family. They're just objects under subordination. Remember, we are supposed to be discipling our children, not just controlling them.

And to disciple them, we need to disciple their hearts as well as their habits. But children

should be able, I think, and anyone under authority, a wife or anyone under any situation of authority should have some recourse to appeal if they really have some objection in their conscience. Or they know something about the command that the parent doesn't know, and they know that if the parent knew that, the parent might give a different command.

Like if I tell my children to do something and they know that their mother has already told them to do something else, then I'd probably want to know that before I send them on some other errand for them to tell me that. That's a legitimate situation to make an appeal. However, a child should not make an appeal simply because they don't like the command.

A child should not have an attitude that every time the parent asked them to do something that they'd rather not do, that they want to discuss it. The child should be quick to obey because that's pleasing to the Lord. And again, if the child knows some reason why an appeal should be made, they can begin to obey, but inform the parent.

I mean, they can be in a posture of ready obedience, but inform the parent that there is something that parent may need to know or that they might ask for a slight modification. But this idea of appeal should not result in endless bickering about everything the parent requires them to do. And some children do do that, as do some wives and some employees and some everyone in subordination.

And that is because the idea of one class of people being made to submit to another class of people is simply growing more and more unpopular in our culture. And the idea that wives have to submit to their husbands is pretty much thrown out by our culture back when in the 60s, I imagine. And it hasn't come back except in some Christian circles.

The idea that children don't have to obey their parents has been communicated or don't have to respect their parents has certainly been communicated by TV shows and other cultural influences. And Christians have to get back to doing it the way God wants it done, no matter how much that goes against the grain of the dominant culture. Another thing for children to do that has to do with the responsibility of children is found in Genesis chapter two, and verse 24, where it says, Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they should become one flesh.

Now, what this tells us is that the child leaves his parents home eventually, in order to marry, which means that while they are in their parents home, they should be getting prepared to be married, they should be getting prepared to be parents and to have families of their own. A child is being raised to have children and to rear children. And that is at least what they should be raised for.

Many times parents are more concerned, and sometimes the children are more



concerned, about teaching their children how to get a good career, how to make a lot of money, how to manage money even, and how to do other things that are important in life. But they never teach them how to be parents. I do not believe that I was ever taught how to be a parent.

I don't think my wife was ever taught by her parents how to be a parent. You know, it is, I guess, generally assumed that kids learn this just by growing older. They know how to be parents.

And it is true. Growing older does teach them how to become parents, but not how to be parents. It takes no training to learn how to become a parent.

All you have to do is conceive a child. But to be parents is something that is very difficult. And children should recognize that whatever else it is that God calls them to do, in most cases, they will be called to be parents.

Very few people have that exceptional call to celibacy for all their life. Most people, and the Scripture indicates this is normative, will be married. Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband.

Now he said, I give that not as a command, but as permission. But he indicated that that would be the normal thing. He also goes on in the same chapter to say there are some, both men and women, who will opt for perpetual celibacy so they can serve God with all their energies, but that would be the more exceptional situation.

My children, I hope, will be prepared when they leave my home to be parents. And that is part of the obligation of parents and children, is to see to it that when my son or my daughter leaves my home, they are prepared to cleave to a spouse and to start another family unit, and to operate maturely and responsibly in it. The question usually arises, once the children have left their parents' home, what is the nature of the honor to their parents that is owed? Last time, I made some reference in our talk to my opinion that when children are grown and married, they don't have to obey their parents anymore.

And there was some discussion of that afterwards. It didn't get on the tape. But there are some people I know who would say to be truly radically biblical, we really need to even see that adult children, even married children, have to obey their fathers and mothers.

And I know of at least one very godly teacher who teaches seminars on parenting, who believes that you must obey your parents even once you're grown and married. And we had some discussion about that after the meeting last time. And my position is this, that adult married children still have to honor their parents, but they don't have to necessarily obey them.

I'll give you my reasons for it, biblically, if I can. First of all, we know that grown children

must honor their parents. Because Jesus was talking in the passage I mentioned earlier, Matthew 15, to adults when he said, you're hypocrites, because you have found ways to get around the commandment that says, you must honor your father and your mother.

It was very clear that he considered them still responsible to honor their father and their mother, even though these were adult men, and almost certainly married men. Pharisees typically married. So we have every reason to believe that Jesus was saying to these men who had left their parents' homes and who had started their own families, that they nonetheless were to honor their father and their mother.

And that doesn't necessarily mean they have to obey their father and mother, because obedience has to do with hierarchical structure in relationship. And when a child is in their parents' home, they're under the hierarchical leadership of their parents. And the way that is expressed is by obeying their parents.

But when a person leaves their father and their mother and takes a wife or a husband, something changes. And the Bible even says that. They leave their father and mother, and they cleave to another person.

A different solidarity is begun. And that solidarity, that family, has its own authority, internal authority structure. For example, we need to understand that when a young woman leaves her parents' home and marries a man, she is no longer under her parents' authority.

Her parents, in fact, give her away to the man. And everywhere in the New Testament, we find that that young woman is now under her husband's authority, not under her parents' authority. This confusion, by the way, has led to many unhappy marriages.

Because a young woman who has always been on good terms with her parents and dutifully did what she could to please them, or at least honor their advice, many times after she's married, her parents have different opinions than her husband does about how they should raise their children, how they should spend their money, what kind of standard of living they should have, and a host of other things. And many a marriage has been put under great strain, and I know of some that have actually broken up, because the wife, when she left her parents' home, still felt she had to obey her father and her mother, where in fact the Scripture plainly teaches she does not. She has to obey her husband.

Well, if it is the case that a young girl who marries is no longer under the authority of her parents, what argument could be made that a young man is still under the authority of his parents? The command to obey parents is given to both girls and boys, but it's very clear that the formation of a new marriage breaks off that obligation, at least on the part of the woman. She doesn't obey her parents anymore, at least she's not under obligation to, she obeys her husband. It seems clear that since she is a child who is commanded to

honor her parents, but she doesn't have to obey them, that the new marriage creates a new situation where the parental authority no longer intrudes.

And I believe it is true of the young man as well. I gave the illustration after our meeting last week of Jesus. There are some good examples in the Old Testament of people who honored their parents and obeyed their parents' directives even after these children were grown and so forth.

But the real example for the Christian is Jesus. Jesus provides the norms for us in these things. And we read of Jesus at age 12 in Luke chapter 2, near the end of that chapter, that Jesus went home from Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph and He was subject to them.

Now this is an interesting thing since Jesus was so much their superior in all respects, and yet He was subject to them because that's the only way He could be honoring to His Father. And the only way a child can be honoring to God is if they're subject to their parents. But when Jesus left home, He left home to take a bride.

We know this because that's what John the Baptist said, right? As soon as Jesus began to have the crowds coming to Him, John's disciples said to John, Hey, Jesus has got more followers than you do, John. And John said, Well, the bride goes to the bridegroom, not to the bridegroom's friend. In other words, John was the matchmaker, the bridegroom's friend, to introduce the bride, which was the people, to the bridegroom, which is Christ.

Christ had come to take His bride. He left His parents' home in order to do this. And it's interesting, it was at a wedding that Jesus first expressed His independence from His parents' authority on this matter.

I don't know if it's significant that this was at a wedding, but it may be, because Jesus, although it wasn't His own wedding, it was the beginning of His ministry when He had in fact left home to take a bride Himself. And He was at a wedding when His mother came and said, They have no wine. And Jesus said, Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come.

Which was a response I think she was not accustomed to. I think in all likelihood it was the first time He had ever done anything other than just dutifully, you know, hop to it when she had something for Him to do. He had been subject to her, we read in Luke chapter 2 up until that point, but now He's left home to take His bride.

He's no longer under parental authority, except of course that of His Father in heaven, but everyone's under that authority. That's God. But Joseph and Mary, His earthly parents, He did not continue to be subject to when He left to be married as it were.

And that agrees with Genesis 2.24, For this cause a man leaves his father and his mother to cleave to his wife. And they too become one flesh. And that's a very important thing, because a child in his parents' home are part of the one flesh relationship of his parents.

The children in the home, while they're still in their minority and still unattached, they are simply an extension of that one flesh relationship of their parents' home. But when a man goes out and starts his own home, he's no longer part of that solidarity in the same sense. He's now started a new one.

And he and his wife are one flesh, and the children they produce are part of that family unit. It's a sovereign unit. I know one thing that my children sometimes wonder about when I talk this way is, is it wrong for children to leave home, that is adult children leave home before they marry? Since Genesis says, For this reason a man leaves his father and mother, and then gives the reason to get married, to cleave to his wife, it suggests that the normative thing is for a young man not to leave his father and mother until he takes a wife.

And similarly, in the case of the woman in the Old Testament, throughout the Old Testament the assumption is that the young woman is either under the authority and protection of her father in his home, or else she's made the transfer into her husband's home, where she's under the authority and protection of her husband. For example, there was a law in the Old Testament that stated, if a man marries a woman that he thinks is a virgin, and turns out she isn't, and if he can prove that she isn't, she would be actually stoned to death. Not a very pleasant law, but that's not the issue.

The issue I want to bring out is that in the law it says, she would be stoned to death because she brought reproach upon Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house. Notice the assumption is, before she was in her husband's house, she was in her father's house. In the Old Testament there are several examples given of women who are, maybe they're widowed, or they're divorced, and they have nowhere to go but they go back to their father's house.

Now, the law doesn't say in the Bible that a man or a woman has to stay in their parents' home when they're unmarried. I'm not saying that the law commands this. I'm saying that this is stated everywhere in the Scripture as a norm.

And remember, there is a difference between legalism and wisdom. If we were to say it is sinful for a young man or a young woman to leave their parents' home before they're married, we would be imposing a rule that the Bible does not make. The Bible does not give such a command.

We would be legalistic to impose it rigidly and to condemn people for not obeying it. That would be legalism. But none of what we're interested in talking about in this matter of erratically Christian counterculture is about legalism.

It's about wisdom. It's about fitting as nearly as possible into the pattern that God has made for the best functioning of godly people in godly relationships. And it is, I think, assumed throughout Scripture that while there's no direct command about this, a young

man or a young woman are in a better position to retain their godliness uncompromised if they remain in the home of their parents until they marry.

When the Bible says a man shall leave his father and mother to cleave to a wife, it doesn't necessarily have to mean that he lived in their home before he left. It is possible that parents may approve of their sons or daughters being in some other living situation prior to their being married, but the children would still be under the authority of their parents until they marry. In general, however, I think that while what I'm suggesting goes way against the grain of our culture and therefore maybe way against our own grain because we're more the products of our culture than we are the products of godly biblical teaching, is there anyone here who would argue that your life would not have been more pure, any of you adults who are married, would argue that your life would not have been more pure, or let's put it this way, that it would have been less pure or in any other way made worse if you had stayed in your parents' home until you married.

Now maybe some of you had really, really bad homes and maybe getting out of your parents' home was the smartest thing you could do because maybe it was a broken home, maybe there's violence, maybe there's drunkenness. Okay, I realize there are times when some homes are simply not livable and it's not healthy for anyone to live there. But I'm talking about people who didn't come from criminally dangerous homes.

My home, for example, I came from, my parents' home. My parents are Christians, they're peaceable people. Their marriage has been intact for, I don't know how many years it's been now, it's got to be over 50 years now.

And yet I left home when I was 17. It was just the thing my generation wanted to do, to get out and get free and I rented an apartment with some other brothers, Christian brothers. I was a Christian, I was in the ministry, I was with men who were Christians in the ministry.

What could seem safer than that? And yet I would have to say that my life was compromised in many ways because of that lack of accountability, because of that lack of supervision, that lack of responsibility on my part. There are many errors and many compromises that I got into that I would have avoided had I stayed home. Now, some of you here who are adults didn't have Christian homes, probably didn't have homes where both parents were in the home.

But all the young people in this room come from Christian homes and have two parents at home, I would imagine. There may be some exceptions, but I'm suggesting that to stay in the home until married is a very good thing. And in the Bible times, it was just considered to be normative.

It was a given. It was not commanded, but perhaps because no one thought to command it since it was so automatic. It was understood a young lady doesn't just go out and live

on her own, unprotected from any man over her.

Her father was her protector, and then her husband when her father gives her to him. Sounds very old-fashioned, sounds very strange to our ears. But then I dare say if Jesus was here, he would seem strange to our ears, many of the things he would say, because he does not comply, he never made any attempt to comply to the dominant culture.

That's why he was crucified. There were too many ways he offended people who were the cultural leaders. And I suspect he'd offend our culture too if he was here.

So my own understanding of this is that adult children, once they are married, are not obligated to obey their parents. But I do believe that until they are married, there is, I don't know of any place in the Bible that signs some kind of prearranged release from the parental authority prior to marriage, just because someone turns 18 or 21 or something else. Now the government may have their own opinions and their own legal ways of looking at an adult child, but we're not going to be judged on the day of judgment by whether we comply to the government's ideas.

It's God's ideas that matter, and I don't know of anything in the Bible that releases a child from the authority of their parents until they marry. If there is some release, I'm willing to see it. I'm not going to be hard-nosed about this, but someone will have to show it to me in the scripture.

However, when married, I believe those children are no longer under the authority of their parents, because there's a new unit with its own internal authoritative structure, and that preempts the authority of the previous structure from which both of them came. Now, what does it then mean, even for adults who are married, to honor their parents? Remember, Jesus said to the Pharisees that they ought to honor their parents. Well, the example He gave of where they were violating this is an interesting one, because Jesus said... in fact, let's turn there.

I've alluded to this passage a couple of times already. We might as well look at it and read it. In Matthew 15, we can see what Jesus felt even adult married children should do in terms of honoring their parents.

Matthew 15, right from the beginning, Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. And He answered and said to them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God? Because of your tradition. For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and your mother, and he who curses his father or mother, let him be put to death.

But you say... Now, here's their tradition that canceled out their obligation to obey the Scriptures, He says. You say, Whoever says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you

might have received from me is a gift to God. Or, in the original, it says it's korban, which means a gift.

Then he need not honor his father or mother. Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Now, what is he referring to here? There was a law in the Old Testament that if you were feeling particularly devout, you could devote something to God that he did not otherwise require.

Now, there were things he did require. A tenth, for example, of all your grain was owed to God. The first born of all your livestock was owed to God.

There are things that God had a prior claim to, but there were other things that God did not have an automatic claim to. But a person who really wished to show devotion or thanksgiving to God for something he'd done, could devote something to God. Maybe an extra bull would be sacrificed next time they went to Jerusalem, or maybe an additional 10% because they'd prospered so much they were going to give to God.

And they'd devote it to God. They'd say, I'm going to just... This is korban. The word korban is a Hebrew word.

It means a gift to God. And Jesus said that what the Pharisees had done in interpreting this was, there might be a situation where adult children have resources that are needed by their less well-off parents. Their parents may be poor.

And yet these children not wishing to help their parents for whatever reason, because there's some problem in their relationship, and who might otherwise be expected to help out their parents because the children have resources their parents need, that the Pharisees allowed, and the rabbis allowed, that the children could say, well, these resources are korban. They're a gift to God. And under the Pharisaic tradition, that meant, well, you can hold on to those indefinitely until you finally give them to God.

Maybe on your deathbed you'll give them to God, but you've dedicated them to God. In the meantime, you can act like they're yours, but you can't use them for anything else. You can't give them to someone else.

So by giving this religious excuse, someone who otherwise would be under obligation to financially help out their parents would slip out of it. And Jesus said, that's hypocrisy. And he said, it's a violation of the command of God.

So it's clear that Jesus thought that honoring your father and mother, even when you're adult and married and so forth, at least involves not allowing your parents to be needy when you have what it takes to support them. The apostle Paul agreed with this and spoke about it, or wrote about it in 1 Timothy 5, verses 3-8. 1 Timothy 5, Paul is writing to Timothy about how the church ought to take care of certain needy persons, in this case, widows, who would be destitute and needed support.

He suggests basically that if the widows fit a certain criterion, the church should support them. But there are certain situations which would make it desirable for someone else to support them, other than the church. For example, he said, the younger widows should remarry, and let them have husbands to support them.

And he said, if a widow, even an older widow, has adult children who could support them, then the church shouldn't be burdened. And that's where he begins in verse 3, Honor widows who are really widows, but if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents. For this is good and acceptable before God.

Now, she who is really a widow and is left alone, that means she doesn't have children or grandchildren, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command that they may be blameless, but if anyone does not provide for his own, and in this case he means his own widowed mother or grandmother, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Now, it's very clear that this is an extension of what Jesus was saying about honoring parents.

The Pharisees had made a loophole, so if someone didn't want to help their needy parents, they could get out of it. And Jesus said it's hypocritical, that's violating the command of God. Now, Paul says the same thing.

If a widow, who would naturally be needy, has children or even grandchildren, who could shoulder her support, then he says, let them do it. He says, let them show piety at home. Now, piety means godliness.

Let them show piety by the way they accept their domestic responsibilities, in this case for their parents. When the Scripture says, if any man does not provide for his own, especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever, we usually think of that as a man not providing for his children. In the context, it's about a man not providing for his mother.

Or we could say his father, if his father was similarly needy. Or grandparents who are needy and had no one else to care for them. That's the context here.

Honoring one's parents, therefore, requires that you do not allow your parents to go financially needy when you are able-bodied and capable of helping with their support. Now, that doesn't mean... Let me just say this. Some of you may be just barely scraping by financially.

You might even have parents who could stand to be supported, but at the standard of living they insist on living at, you couldn't support them. That's not too uncommon. I've known a number of people my age who are willing to support their parents, but their



parents would not be willing to live at the standard of living that their children could provide for them.

And an awful lot of parents these days, frankly, aren't needy anyway, because they have Social Security, or they have a pension, or they have... If their husband has died, they might have something their husband left them. They might own a house without a mortgage. They may not be very needy.

Obviously, Paul is not saying that every grown child needs to support his parents. But he's saying, if they have need, then you should. However, I would say this.

When a widow comes under the roof of her son, her adult son, to be supported, she becomes part of his household, not the reverse. He still has left father and mother. She's not the boss of the home.

She was the boss of... One of the bosses when he was a kid at home, in her home. She's now in his home. He's the head of that home.

And she comes in, basically, I believe, under his authority. And for that reason, she can't demand that her son support her at the standard of living that she would prefer. The son should honor his mother, or father, if it's the father who is in need, in such cases, and should see to it that they lack nothing that is essential.

But at the same time, many of us have chosen deliberately to live at a standard of living less than what our parents chose to live at. My parents would not want to come be supported by me. Because there's no possibility that I could support them at the standard of living they're accustomed to.

And I'm not sure they'd want to take a reduction that way. They don't have to anyway. They've got other provisions.

But that would often be the case. To say that you need to honor your parents, and sometimes that might even mean taking your widowed mother or grandmother in, does not necessarily mean that she begins to call the plays as to how you're going to live, how you're going to spend your money, how you're going to raise the kids. The widowed mother who comes to live with her adult children has to realize she's coming into a home that has its own internal authority structure.

And in this case, her son or her daughter's husband, as the case may be, is the head. And she needs to fit in just like other members of the family have to fit in with it. Now, those are the things that I understand the Bible to teach about children's responsibility.