**Small Group Sermon Study Guide: Fifth Commandment**

**Genesis 44:11-34 *The Holy Way: (5) The Lord’s People Honor Parents***

1) Read Genesis 44:11-34. In what ways does Judah honor his father Jacob?

Read Genesis 37:1-4 and Genesis 37:23-36. What was Judah’s relationship with His

 father Jacob like before this incident?

 Read Genesis 49:8-12. This passage contains Jacob’s parting blessing of Judah.

 What has changed in their father –son relationship?

 What effect did Jacob’s favoritism of Joseph have on the family?

2) We honor parents because we love and honor God. Read David Gill’s observation:

 *Parents are God’s primary representatives to us.*

In what ways, did your parents represent God to you? Have you thanked them for it?

 Consider writing a letter to your parents thanking them for showing God to you.

3) The fifth commandment comes with a promise: “That you will live long in the land the

 Lord your God is giving you.”

 Read Dallas Willard’s quote “*The Promise”.* Do you agree that to reject our parents is

 to reject God? Explain.

4) Read Dallas Willard’s quote: *Training Christ followers to honor parents.*

 Are there damaging patterns of interaction with your parents that you need to

 Identify? What are they? What could you do differently?

5) Christian teachers point out that the way we honor our parents’ changes at different

 stages in our life journey.

 How is honoring parents different for children in different age groups? (for example,

 Elementary children, teenagers, 20-somethings, middle-aged adults)

6) Hard cases. Do I honor abusive parents? Evaluate David Gill’s comments (quote

 sheet): *“Do I honor abusive parents*?

*Quote Sheet*

*Parents are God’s Primary Representatives to us*

The basic grounding of the fifth commandment is in the fact that parents are *God’s primary agents and representatives to us.* We honor them because we love God….just as God accepts us in the name of Jesus our advocate, so we accept our parents in the name of God. This is a command about agency and representation… Parents are God’s agents to give us physical life…they are also God’s agents in bringing us spiritual life and truth… If (people) think of God as a kindly, wise, forgiving being, it is usually because their parents told them about God and were themselves kindly, wise and forgiving.

--David Gill, ***Doing Right,*** *167, 168, 169*

*Promise: “That you may enjoy a long life…”*

The promise is rooted in the realities of the human soul. A long and healthy existence requires that we be grateful to God for who we are, and we cannot be thankful for who we are without being thankful for our parents, through whom our life came. They are a part of our identity, and to reject and be angry with them is to reject and be angry with ourselves. To reject ourselves leads to sickness, dissolution, and death, spiritual and physical. We cannot reject ourselves and love God.

--Dallas Willard, ***The Divine Conspiracy,***  339

*Training Christ Followers to Honor Parents*

In training disciples to “hear and do” the words of their master, a major point will often be to help them honor their parents. This is not something that can be bypassed…First the individual disciples must be honest about who and what their parents really are and how they truly feel about them. Then they must confess the wrongs of attitude and act they have done their parents and ask for forgiveness. Then they must accept their parents for who and what they are, have mercy on them, and forgive them….the child must take care not to get caught in old damaging patterns of interaction with the parent: for example, trying to make the parent understand, or trying to have the “last word,” or proving he or she was right. Such matters must be simply surrendered to God for him to work out as he will.

--Dallas Willard, ***The Divine Conspiracy,*** 339

*Do I honor abusive parents?*

What do we do about the embarrassing parent? The mentally ill parent? The addicted or alcoholic parent? The thieving parent? The crude and rude parent? Worst of all, what do we do about the parent who beat me or sexually abused me?

 We could say that even our enemies---including a parent who has become an enemy---deserve some minimal respect, if not honor, as humans made in God’s image, however degraded and repulsive they may have become…maybe we can do something to establish a minimal but honorable relationship. We can try to recognize the parent’s uniqueness before God, to destroy our images and stereotypes of him or her, to call out his or her name with respect, to ask for some time to develop a healthy (though careful) relationship and to begin to express some honor and care.

 I am not recommending that those with a dangerous or abusive parent *approach* that person. It may be that the best thing---the thing that honors that parent as a responsible person---would be to blow the whistle and get the parent some help. Such an action honors his or her reality far more than our papering over or denying evil deeds. In all such cases, it is crucial that we proceed in the company of wise and supportive friends.

--David Gill, ***Doing Right,*** 173