

## I Wish You Knew – Aging Parents – Sept. 2020

I believe it was Thanksgiving of 2014. Now I absolutely could be wrong on the date – I am not great with this kind of stuff and the years all run together for me now. If some of my siblings are watching they are probably shouting at the screen trying to tell me the correct date. Anyway, that Thanksgiving was a moment for all of us. My mom had already been diagnosed with Primary Progressive Aphasia. And had started to lose her words. It wasn't terrible – she would say something like "I just got this out of the...oh you know...the thing out there (pointing toward the driveway) that stuff comes in...the gal puts our stuff in it..." and one of us would finally figure it out and say Mailbox! We kind of treated it like a game – who could guess what word mom was looking for first. Like a type of charades. We'd noticed some changes in her personality – not huge but changes. But overall, it wasn't a huge deal at that time. Frustrating for sure – for her and for us but not out of control. But that thanksgiving several things happened that felt bigger – a little more extreme. I was hosting my whole family (which is around 65 people) which already was unusual – my mom had always hosted every holiday without any help – she did it all. But we knew the time had come that she just couldn't do the whole turkey meal. That morning she dropped some items off at our house and as she was pulling away, she scraped the whole side of her van on our mailbox. Now for me that is a normal occurrence, but my mom was a very good driver. And it was almost like she didn't even acknowledge it – like it didn't happen – she just drove off. A couple of other things happened that day that felt odd, but we got thru it. That evening everyone came to our house and brought their food contribution with them. My mom walked in and set down her pumpkin pie. And I looked at it and I looked at my sister and we knew it was not right. I made her taste it. And by the look on her face I knew it was awful. My mom had forgotten the sugar. That might not seem like a big deal – people forget ingredients, right? But not my mom. She had cooked full feasts for a 100 people. She had planned extravagant parties – multiple times a year. She was a hostess. Not only would she not forget an ingredient in a pie she had made multiple times, but she didn't realize it was wrong. One look at that pie and my sister and I both knew it was not going to be good. And yet my mom had taken it out of the oven. Wrapped it up and brought it to my house to present it as dessert – and not for a moment did she think this isn't right. Something was different. Things were progressing. Judy Bowman as I had known her had left the building. It was a turning point for her, for my dad and for our entire family. How were we going to navigate this new normal? How we were we going to navigate – what we would soon find out – would be an ever changing normal in our lives and in our relationships? It was a pivotal moment for us all.

*Fun Fact: My mom would host every holiday for all of us – the entire family – and she did it all by herself – the whole meal – all the decorating – all the gifts with perfect wrapping. She went above and beyond to make us feel special.*

Life is full of these moments – these pivot points – these turning points. Moments that are new and uncharted territory – moments we need to share with others – to help them understand what its' like and how they might be able to come alongside in community and assist. Stages that we wish others knew what they entailed for us. And

that's why we've decided to dedicate an entire sermon series to several of these key moments in our lives. It's part of our Good Life series that we continue to come back to – our goal with any of the series under The Good Life is to help us create the deepest, richest, fullest life we can possibly have. And in this series - - we're going to try to help us figure out life when we enter a new stage – that come with unexpected challenges and unexpected gifts. We're going to turn to the book of Ephesians to see what Paul has to say about some of these topics and relationships. You may be wondering why it's important to talk about these relationships. Why does Paul spend 3 chapters in the book of Ephesians talking about how we live, how we treat each other, our relationships – because all of this is a representation of Christ in us – God working thru us. When we serve our parents and respect our adult children and honor our spouse and navigate our lives and relationships when life has hit a wall – the rest of the world sees will see the evidence of Jesus in our lives. Over the next 4 weeks we'll cover all these areas. And the 5<sup>th</sup> week we are going to do something very different – the teaching team is going to answer some of the questions you submit to us during the series

As you listen – you may have some questions that pop up and we want you to send us those questions – [gracechurch.us/thegoodlife](http://gracechurch.us/thegoodlife) and to the best of our ability, we will answer some of those questions on week 5 of this series.

Some of you may be thinking some or all these topics don't apply to you at the moment, but I believe there will be principles and ideas that will apply no matter where you find yourself in life. And as a community we are called to engage in each other's lives and be a support and encouragement to those around us – helping each other as we all navigate different phases of our lives. While you might not be dealing specifically with each moment, someone in your life probably is and there are things they wish you knew so that you could come alongside them and help them and their relationships flourish. We're kicking off the series today looking at how we come alongside our aging parents. Something that is very personal to me.

But before we dig in, I want to say welcome to my friends at Fishers and N Indy – to all of you worshipping online with us today. So good to be with all of you. And it is worship together weekend – so to all the kids and students that are with us – either in person or online – so glad you are here and I think you will find that there are lots of ways that you can be a part of the topic today. On your way into the room you should have gotten a packet that you can use to follow along in the service.

But first - What is a parent? What is the definition of a parent?

(allow some to answer)

Here are some definitions I found

a person who brings up and cares for another

guardian

So, a parent is anyone who has brought you up – has cared for you – a guardian – that could be biological or adoptive or foster – or a grandparent – someone that raised you For many of us it would be a biological or adoptive parent or a guardian that raised us from birth

Another definition

something out of which another thing has developed

Who developed you? Shaped you? Invested deeply in your life as you grew up?

*Fun fact: I am the 4<sup>th</sup> child of Ron and Judy Bowman – my siblings are 16, 15 and 10 years older than me – I was the baby of the family and like an only child.*

That is a parent.

My biological parents are the ones that raised me. They both invested deeply in me. They had that kind of time and energy when I came along in the family. Their support and encouragement and love has made me who I am today.

So, if you like me – thank them and if you don't – blame them – just kidding.

They were both a force in my life. But particularly my mom.

(Pic of my mom)

She was by my side thru everything. Always there to cheer me on or give me advice or grieve with me when I was sad or celebrate me when life was good. Judy was one of a kind. Outgoing, funny, opinionated, talkative, smart – there was very little she couldn't handle.

*Fun Fact: When I did shows in HS my mom would invite all of her friends and have big parties for her friends and my friends after every show. She loved to entertain!*

My mom's mom lived until she was 96 and never missed a beat. So, imagine our surprise when my mom started losing words and then started forgetting names or losing her thoughts in a conversation or forgetting to turn off the car or not knowing where she was going in the car. All the sudden this woman that had been a force my entire life was falling apart in front of me. And at the time I was around 42 years old. What? This wasn't how it was supposed to go. Judy Bowman wasn't supposed to lose her mental capacities. How do we deal with this? How will my dad manage?

And many of us have found ourselves in these situations with mental or physical illness changing our parents lives forever.

Or the passing of one parent leaving the other alone and causing heartache for the whole family.

Or just basic aging that takes a toll on their bodies and makes them incapable of doing ordinary everyday tasks that were once easy.

And this is not how it was supposed to be when God created humans – death is a product of sin – and aging is moving us toward that.

So, it's going to be hard – our bodies and for some our brains are going to falter and fade.

And it's equally as hard if not harder for our parents as it is for us.

The ones that have cared for us, raised us, developed us – now need us in a new way – they need the care...

It's our turn.

So, what do we do – how do we navigate this?

Let's look to a few key verses in scripture to help us.

As I said we're going to be looking in the book of Ephesians – this is a letter that Paul wrote from prison – and while some believe it was written to the church in Ephesus – others also think it is very likely a circular that was meant to go to several young churches within a 100 miles or so of Ephesus. Some of the writing seems that Paul is writing to people that don't know him or his work firsthand – which would not apply to Ephesus – where he spent a long time.

In a moment we're going to look at **Ephesians 6:1-3**

The first 3 chapters of Ephesians really looks at Christ's life in us – and again the second half – chapters 4-6 looks at Christ's life thru us – how are we living out our lives so that the rest of the world sees Jesus in us – in our actions in our treatment of each other. And it is in that section that Paul talks about the way children treat their parents.

Take a look at Ephesians 6 verse 1:

**6 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord,<sup>[a]</sup> for this is the right thing to do. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: <sup>3</sup>If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”**

Children obey your parents because you belong to the Lord – if we are followers of Christ – we will obey our parents because we belong to Him and when we belong to him we do the right thing – we live the right way – it is what the Lord commands of us – it's one of the 10 commandments

Exodus 20:12

**1<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.**

Christians have normally divided the Ten Commandments into the first four (directed towards God) and the last six (directed towards their fellow man). But the Jews divided the commandments in two sets of five, seeing the law to **honor your father and mother** more as a duty towards God than a duty towards man.

And Paul continues with that way of thinking -when we obey our parents people see God in us – see Christ at work in our lives - we honor God with our lives - when we honor our parents in our relationship

And this commandment comes with a promise – it talks both in exodus and Ephesians about the promise that come with this commandment – it has a promise attached in Exodus 20:

**Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.**

and Paul specifically refers to the promise from Exodus in Ephesians

Ephesians 6 verse 2

**This is the first commandment with a promise:**

Some point out that the second commandment, not to make any idols, promises that God will show lovingkindness to those who love Him and keep His commands ([Exod. 20:4-6](#)). But that promise was not confined to that particular command but extends to the whole law. So the promise attached to the fifth commandment (honor your father and mother) was the first specific promise among the ten and the first of many promised blessings for obedience.

If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”

God understands the obedience of children to their parents is important – that honoring them is right – and will keep them from honoring or serving things that are not right or good for them – you will serve and obey someone or something - what/who will you serve – and there are other places in scripture that point to the disobedience to parents leading to the breakdown of society – a disrespect of your parents could lead to disrespect of all authority and lead you down a dark path but

Respecting your parents will lead to a fuller, richer life.

*Fun fact: Look at Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2 to see examples of disobedience and the breakdown of society.*

Verse 2

Honor your father and mother.

What it *means* to honor our father and mother may change as we grow into adulthood, but the principle always endures. The adult child does not owe the parent obedience, but they do owe the parent *honor*.

The word “honor” (in [Exod. 20:12](#)) is a Hebrew word with a root meaning of “weight” or “heaviness.”

Honor = weight or heaviness

It is the same word often translated “glory” in reference to the Lord. To glorify the Lord is to attach the utmost weight or significance to who He is and what He does. It means to assign Him the highest place because He is worthy of it. Coupled with the idea of weight is that of value, which is the root meaning of the Greek word for honor.

## Honor = value

To honor our parents is to have an attitude of respect for them that stems from the fact that we greatly value them and the contribution they've made to our lives. To honor our parents is to assign a high place of value to them. This attitude of respect and esteem will result in loving, courteous behavior towards them.

The rest of the world sees God in us and Christ thru us as we continue to honor our parents. It is a lifelong directive. And while as children we honored our parents thru obedience – (right kids?) - as adults I believe we honor them thru service.

**As adults I believe we honor our parents by respecting them and serving them.**

How can we serve our parents well? How can we place their needs above our own? How do we practice self-sacrificing love when it comes to our aging parents? In a culture that seems to disregard the elderly and push people aside as they age - how do we as their children and as the church show them respect and honor? Even those that we might not feel deserve it.

It starts by choosing the path of self-sacrificing love

**Choose the path of self-sacrificing love.**

– this is true in everyone relationship – put the other before yourself – put your parents and their needs ahead of your own – another definition of parent that I found was this:

**Parent: a group from which another arises and to which it usually remains subsidiary**

Good or bad we have arisen from our parents – and we remain a subsidiary – we are secondary to them – they come first

And this can be hard if you've had parents that weren't great – maybe you've been thru hard times with your parents but you can still choose to honor them – you may have to set boundaries – but you can still honor them. Here are some ways we can all serve them well – as their children and as their community

**Forgive them.**

They didn't do everything right – they weren't perfect. But forgive them – even if they haven't asked for it. It will free you and allow you to love them no matter what. They've forgiven you many times and someday you may be needing that forgiveness from your own children. Jeff

**Pray for them.**

**Spend time with them.**

During this time, it is especially hard – this is how I have to visit my parents right now.

**(Pic of my dad with mask)**

Generational living – Wendy is doing that. We need that more as a culture. May be hard at times but it is beautiful. My grandpa and his grandmas.

**Talk kindly of them.**

Just like your parents don't need to know everything about your kids - tor kids don't need to know everything about your parents

**Continue to learn from them.**

Best memories of my grandma are taking road trips with her.  
My niece made a video of my parents. Get the stories down – good, bad and funny

**Ask for their advice.**

They still have something to offer – and they want to feel needed. Jeff and his mom.

**Ask for help.**

This is where you come in as a community. My friend Abby visits my parents. My kids. My siblings. People want to help. Your parents are great – and other people like them too.

And talk to others in the same stage – round table

Kids – you can help too! Grandparents and great grandparents need you too – my mom loves little kids

*Fun fact: I have about 56 people in my family. I'm talking my siblings and their children and their children's children – 56!*

**Share them with others.**

My dad is great - my friends always loved my dad

**Give yourself a break.**

Doing the best, I can - just like young parents

If anyone understands that concept your parents do

We've had to move my parents twice in the last year – not easy – maybe not great but this is new territory

**Laugh. A lot.**

Humor always helps – it's a family distinctive for us.

**Ask your parents what they want.**

Early on – and tell your kids what you want. Kids ask your parents what they want when they get older. Don't make hard decisions in the midst of stress – try to know ahead of time.

**Honor the memory of your parents.**

If you've lost them – when you can talk about them – share memories of them – live a life that values what they taught you and the best parts of them.

**Grieve.**

It's ok to grieve what you're in the midst of. This is not how I ever pictured my mom. This is not what I wanted – this is not what she wanted. Some of you have lost your parents. Some of you had difficult parents. It's ok to grieve all of that. Grieve what you don't have or what you never had.  
But then...

**Find Gratitude.**

In the midst of the hard what can you be grateful for.

My siblings.

My whole family.

My mom is essentially gone but I have so much of what she's taught me

And I have slew of amazing strong women in my life – mother in law, sisters, sisters in law, nieces, friends and my girls – God gave me all sorts of fierce females to help fill that void

Watching my dad love my mom

My relationship with my dad

I have much to be grateful for.

**(Pic of my parents and me)**

This next generation is watching us. Right kids? My kids are watching how I treat my parents. And they are learning – we are the example for them. Teaching them how to treat us. And church we need your help as we navigate this stage in life.

**As adults I believe we honor our parents by respecting them and serving them.**

Finally

Don't waste time.

You never know how much you have left.

***"I've learned that regardless of your relationship with your parents, you'll miss them when they're gone from your life." –Maya Angelou***

Say what you need to say, do what you need to do – love them, respect them, honor them, serve them – while you still have them.