

## The Gospel

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-4*

*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Colossians 3:21*

*"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Malachi 4:5-6 NIV*

In the movie, The Gospel, Bishop Taylor is a busy and successful pastor of a church, but doesn't have time for his wife and son. When the Bishop's wife is dying, the son, David, is by her side. The Bishop is busy with church business and arrives at the hospital too late. Children learn what they live. If parents are too busy for their children, the children often turn away from the parents. Are there times when you are too busy for your family? List some ways to improve your relationships.

David was frustrated and angry when his mother died and took his anger out on his father. "You were never there for us," he shouted. Although doing the work of the church is important, the first ministry God gives to each of us is to care for our own family.

What kind of relationship did you have with your parents when you were growing up? Were there times when you wanted more from your parents? How has that affected who you are today?

David rebelled against his father and at the same time turned his back on God. Bishop Taylor's failure to make his family a priority put his son's faith in jeopardy. Although everyone else in the community praised the Bishop for his time and commitment, his family needed him and he was busy.

Do you ever feel pulled between people who need things from you?

When David's father learned that he had cancer, he confided in Frank, a young pastor and David's childhood friend, instead of calling David. Once again Bishop Taylor chose someone in the church instead of his own family. When the Bishop needed to choose a successor, he chose Frank, instead of the pastor with more experience. Do you think that the Bishop thought of Frank as his son after David left?

When David returned, he and his father rebuilt their relationship, but at his father's graveside David still cried out, "You were never there." Do you think Bishop Taylor ever realized how much his son needed him? Who was there for you when you were growing up? Do you feel blessed by those years or like David, do you carry pain over someone's failures of the past? Do you have someone who relies on you now? Are you giving them the love and support that they need?

David's rebellion hurt his father, but it hurt David even more. When David rebelled against his dad, he also rebelled against God. David found peace when his relationships with his father and with God were restored. Anger is a wall that people hide behind so that they don't have to deal with the real issues of life. Even when others fail us, God will be with us. He says that He will never fail us or forsake us. Although we might turn away from Him, He will welcome us back if we ask Him.

*Dear Lord, there are many hurts and pains in all of our lives. We have disappointed other people and other people have disappointed us. You alone can make us whole. Fill the empty places in us so that we can live to be a blessing to others. Forgive our sins of the past and show us how to live vibrant, joyful lives in Jesus' name, Amen.*