

# Session 3

## WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON

*John 19:26-27 (Matthew 15:1-9)*

### Memory Verse

*<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.”<sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*

– JOHN 19:26-27, CSB



## Woman, Behold Your Son

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** The church is a family.

In an article from December 2016, Christian blogger and author Tim Challies launched a series of posts dealing with what it means to honor one's father and mother.

*It is a commandment of God. It is a commandment with promise, with divine blessings attached to it. It is a commandment positioned in a place of special honor and significance. It is a commandment pertaining to the whole life of every human being. It is a commandment with application to the home, church, and workplace, a commandment that provides a stable foundation to all of society. Yet it is a commandment that is sorely neglected today. It may not be overstating the case to call it the commandment we forgot. It is the fifth of God's ten great commandments to humanity: Honor your father and mother.*

*Today I am beginning a short series on this commandment and mean to focus especially on an angle few of us have seriously explored: What does it mean to obey this commandment as adults? We understand that it applies to children and teaches them the importance of honoring and obeying mom and dad. But does the commandment stop applying the day we move out or the day we get married? Does it expire when our parents die or when they prove themselves unworthy of our respect? Does it apply to those who have been abandoned or abused? Does our adherence to this commandment change as we grow older and become independent? Maybe our questions are urgent and practical: What are my obligations toward my parents? Do*

*I need to support them financially? Do I need to obey them even though I'm a full-grown adult? These are some of the questions we need to ask and answer if we wish to honor God by honoring his commandment.<sup>1</sup>*

One of the questions that should be explored as a result of these articles is how the Bible's teachings on the importance of the parental relationship and the church as a family (i.e. those who were adopted as sons and daughters of God through Jesus' atoning work on the cross) combine to inform the church's practices for ministering to one another and inviting others in. How does honoring one another practically look for the church today? What implications will that have on a culture that is wired to desire deep community?

**?** How would you explain what it means to honor one's father and mother? Do you think that practice still has a place in today's society? Why? What is it about honoring father and mother that makes it likely to be the forgotten commandment?

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**?** What similarities do you see between a nuclear family and a church family? What differences do you readily identify?

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## Session Summary

In this week's session, Jesus' third saying from the cross was an incredible act of mercy and care. As He prepared for the end of His physical life, He bound John and His mother together to ensure continued provision for Mary and guidance for John. This saying from the cross redefined the connection of family within the context of the body of Christ. Fellowship with Jesus meant caring for one another like family, across generational lines.

# 1. Family in the Fellowship of Christ (John 19:26-27)

Generally speaking, when tremendous personal crisis befalls someone, the natural effect is that one's attention turns inward and focuses intently on the source and substance of that personal crisis until such a time that a resolution is discovered. That is what made Jesus' third saying from the cross so remarkable. Jesus had undergone crises of every kind leading up to this moment. Relationally, His closest followers had deserted Him in fear at His arrest. Physically, He had undergone repeated beatings and lashings. He had been maligned by the theoretical justice system in a kangaroo court, accused of treacheries not of His doing, and mocked relentlessly by those who were, in fact, His own creation. He had been repeatedly, loudly, and venomously rejected by His own people as they screamed for His death. All of this had ultimately led to spikes being pounded through His hands and feet in order to execute Him in the most intentionally torturous and humiliating way known to humanity. If anyone in the history of history had a valid reason to be focused on his or her own crisis, Jesus certainly did.

Amazingly, as the Roman soldiers gambled for His clothing beneath His cross and onlookers continued to mock Him, Jesus continued to take care of others. John's Gospel recorded that Jesus saw Mary, His mother, standing nearby. He also noticed "the disciple He loved" standing there as well. Out of his own humility, John frequently referred to himself through some moniker similar to "the disciple Jesus loved" instead of using his own name. Noticing the two, Jesus made a pronouncement that would serve as a model for His church perpetually.

The pronouncement of Jesus was direct and brief. Literally "here is your son, here is your mother," according to D.A. Carson the pronouncement is "reminiscent of legal adoption formulae, but such formulae would have been cast in the second person (e.g. 'You are my son'). If Jesus was the breadwinner of the family before He embarked on His public ministry...it is wonderful to remember that even as He hung dying on a Roman cross, suffering as the Lamb of God, He took thought of and made provision for His mother."<sup>2</sup>

**?** How do you respond in seasons of personal crisis? What impact have your own circumstances had on your service and care for others in those seasons?

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**?** Application: What new relationships has your church involvement produced in your life? What is your role in those relationships? Who do you have the opportunity to serve? Who is gaining those “refrigerator rights” in your life?

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Peter, James, and John formed a subgroup within the disciples of those who were particularly close to Jesus. That being said, it would be impossible to think that John did not know Mary to a certain degree as a result of traveling with Jesus for three years. Even with that in mind, though, the relationship that resulted from Jesus’ pronouncement advanced through multiple layers of intimacy instantly. Not only were they to relate to one another as mother and son going forward, but John actually took Mary into his home from that day forward.

Interestingly, Jesus’ pronouncement circumvented His brothers’ legal responsibility to provide for their mother. The reason for the pronouncement was to forge the bond between two followers of Jesus. Their mutual fellowship of Jesus was confirmed by their presence at the cross.

## 2. The Foundational Command (Matthew 15:1-4)

Jesus noted His concern for the treatment of one’s parents in a debate with Pharisees and scribes. This was not an unusual occurrence as the Pharisees and scribes constantly attempted to provoke Jesus into an argument, seeking to trap Him in His words and erode His growing influence among the people. At the opening of Matthew 15, the Pharisees demanded that Jesus explain why His disciples did not wash their hands, thereby breaking the “tradition of the elders.” The act of washing their hands was more ritual than hygienic, so the question was over religious custom.

Theologian Leon Morris writes, “Jesus made no attempt to defend the practice of His disciples. That might well have invited the kind of argument that the Pharisees loved and in which they excelled... Instead He went to the root of the matter by drawing their attention to the fact that sometimes their tradition, which was intended to help people keep the law of God, could lead them to break that law.”<sup>3</sup> The charge of breaking God’s law that Jesus leveraged against the Pharisees was not due to their ignorance of the Law. In fact, their thorough knowledge of the Law was a contributor to their breaking God’s command. They had made their own traditions and customs effectively equal in importance to the commandments of God, blinding them to their own disobedience.

**?** Jesus refuted the Pharisaical custom with the fifth commandment. How should one value man’s customs in comparison with God’s commands? Why is it critical, then, to practice Bible engagement?

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**?** Application: What do you think it means to honor one’s father and mother? What do you base your answer on?

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Verses 3-4 set up a classic rhetorical tool of comparing the authority of sources. Verse 3 referred to “your tradition,” meaning the practices and customs that had been passed down through the generations of Jewish rabbis. Those traditions were interpretations of how to properly observe God’s Law. In verse 4, Jesus began, “For God said...” The change in authority would not have been lost on Jesus’ hearers. The effect would have been something like, “Why are you paying attention to what other men have said when God clearly said...”

### 3. Moving from Empty Acts to Real Caring (Matthew 15:5-9)

Jesus contrasted the clear teaching of God with the Pharisees practices of parental treatment. This group who claimed to be such stalwarts of piety were shattering the fifth commandment due to their observance of Corban laws. According to the biblical

scholar Craig Blomberg, “The Corban practice in view was that of pledging money or other material resources to the temple to be paid upon one’s death. These funds could therefore not be transferred to anyone else but could still be used for one’s own benefit while one was still alive. The situation turns ironic in that the Pharisees’ laws prevented compassionate help for others in need, including those, like parents, to whom one was most obliged.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the son was pledging to the temple anything he would have used to support his parents in their elderly age. Such was not only acceptable, but celebrated in the tradition of the elders.

The tradition of the elders had created a loophole in the law of God. So long as the money for supporting one’s parents was pledged to the temple, since the money was going to the things of God, that person was viewed as not having to honor his parents. Needless to say, Jesus was strongly opposed to such an atrocity. He accused the Pharisees and scribes of nullifying the word of God. They had become so proficient at following their own rules that they had cast aside the commands that reflected the heart of God for His people.

 The Pharisees excelled at performing the correct religious activities. As you were growing up, what were some things that would have appeared on a list of “the right things to do”? How was that unspoken list enforced?

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 Application: How does Bible engagement help protect personal and corporate worship?

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“Hypocrites” appeared repeatedly in Matthew’s Gospel, usually coming from the mouth of Jesus toward the scribes and Pharisees. The words from Isaiah applied by Jesus were strong and direct. They spoke of those who allege devotion to God through the saying of the right things that would indicate a heart that is devoted to God. However, there was no substance in their speech. They were mere performances, rendering their devotion to God a charade. Indeed, Isaiah wrote, “they worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands.”

## Conclusion

Marrying the pronouncement of Jesus from the cross, which bound Mary and John together as mother and son, with the emphasis God's commands placed on honoring father and mother leads to a model for how the church exists. Paul underscored such a precedent in his direction to Titus in how the congregation he exercised leadership over was to act toward one another with love and edification. Understanding this biblical model, there are several points of consideration.

First, even in the face of one's most difficult season, concern for the lost must burn deeply. In the midst of absolute agony of every kind, Jesus continued to advance His mission. Following His example means that, circumstances withstanding, the church must seek to become the place where love, care, mercy, and salvation are freely extended to those who desperately need it. Sometimes expressing that need can come in the form of inviting others to community with a party. Sometimes it can be fortifying and edifying someone that is struggling through a particular hardship. While the needs the church can address change, the mission of the church remains.

Second, actively look for ways to deepen relationships with others. What we refer to as "refrigerator rights" do not come about immediately. However, without intentionally looking for ways to increase vulnerability and transparency, those honest relationships never come about. It most likely was not a comfortable adjustment for John to suddenly have a new mother to care for. That also didn't matter. Jesus had called them into a new level of responsibility for one another due to their relationship with Him. That call to deep relationship has never changed for the church.

Third, everyone has a role in "the family." In other words, no one is excluded from the responsibility the church shares to minister, both to one another and to those outside the church. The job is overwhelming and impossible for a select group to perform on behalf of everyone else. But when the load is shared by everyone, the impossible becomes possible, the isolated become family, and lives are changed.

❓ How would you describe the current state of your relationships right now with regard to their openness and transparency? How would you like that answer to change in the next month? Who do you need to begin intentionally investing in in order for that to happen?

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❓ When you think of the church as a family that ministers to one another, how does that change the way you view your role? What about when you view it as a body that reaches out to those who are isolated?

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❓ Considering the model of John and Mary, which of the two do you most readily identify with right now? Why would you say so? Are you more comfortable investing in others or do you feel the need to be nurtured right now? How can you do both, as Paul indicates in Titus 2?

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**CHRIST CONNECTION:** As Jesus modeled caring for others, even in His weakest moment, so His followers are to do likewise.

**MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** Building the type of deep caring that Jesus modeled helps the church to welcome in those who deeply long for such transparency and love.



# FOR NEXT WEEK

## Why Have You Forsaken Me?

### Main Passages

- Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34 (Hebrews 4:12-16; Psalm 22)

### Session Outline

1. The Prayer of Desperation (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1)
2. Jesus Knows . . . (Hebrews 4:12-13)
3. Jesus' Suffering is the Pathway to Hope (Hebrews 4:14-16)

### Memorize

*<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son."<sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*

- John 19:26-27, CSB

### Daily Readings

- Monday - 1 Peter 5:10
- Tuesday - Romans 8:18
- Wednesday - Romans 5:3-5
- Thursday - James 1:2-4
- Friday - Revelation 21:4
- Saturday - Romans 8:28

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Challies, Tim. "The Commandment We Forgot." Challies.org. December 1, 2016. Accessed December 23, 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> Carson, D.A. The Gospel According to John. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.
- <sup>3</sup> Morris, Leon. The Gospel According to Matthew. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992.
- <sup>4</sup> Blomberg, Craig L. Matthew. NAC. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.