

**Series:** Seven Simple Truths about Life  
**Title:** Bonus Round: The Secrets of a Long Life  
**Text:** Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:30; Proverbs 3:1, 2; I Kings 3:11-14  
**Key Word:** Secrets  
**Proposition:** Everyone will enjoy the life God gives them by practicing these secrets of a long life.

Good Morning everyone. We're glad that you have chosen to worship with us. We're completing our series on Seven Simple Truths about Life. We've discovered how familiar these simple truths are, but challenging to put into practice. Sometimes we forget them, confronting more setbacks. Other times we remember and live them out. Life goes much better when we do. We're learning that as we live God's ways we find a fulfilling life. Jesus' words were right on target when he said, "*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*"

These simple truths of life derive from the Scriptures. We began this journey acknowledging God's gold standard: "*Do unto others as you would have them do to you.*" Bonita guided us toward our next step in the journey of life by reminding us of six of life's most important words: "I am sorry. I forgive you." Next, we found hope for surviving the setbacks and storms by remembering God's promises. God plays a vital role in our suffering, providing stretcher-bearers, prompting a health outlook and pointing us to the power of faith. Next, as we looked at our Father's Word, we remembered that we can't take for granted what we can't live without. Next, Matt explained that as humans we are plagued by greed, but real contentment can be found by learning to love Jesus the most. Last week, Bonita helped us discover how today's choices can determine tomorrow's outcomes. We can choose to love God or love

self. We can choose to love others or use them. We can choose to serve others or ourselves. Our choice will have eternal consequences. Simple truths for life serve to guide us in the way to Life.

Today, we will focus on our final simple truth about life. I invite you to pull your sermon-handout. Here we see our **Simple Truth for today: Honor belongs to our elders. Children deserve our care.** I hope that we will learn today that caring for generations ensures a long life.

Many are living with dual roles. Many parents care for their children, while caring for their parents. Children of all ages are called by God to honor their parents. Young children honor their parents by respecting their God-given authority, loving them with a hug or giving them hand-crafted gifts. Adult children honor their parents by caring for their needs and spending quality time with them. Some folks simultaneously invest in both their children and their parents. More middle-aged parents find themselves in this position as their parents get older and require more intentional care. These “sandwiched generation” caregivers feel stressed and overwhelmed by this dual responsibility.

As we read the Scriptures we see that our ancient mentors also found themselves living lives with a dual commitment, caring for children while honoring parents. In the book of Exodus we see God giving his people His blueprint for living. The Ten Commandments reveals God’s principles for a fulfilling life. These

commandments, authoritative principles are like a compass pointing us toward true north.

In chapter 20 verse 12 we read, “*Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*” To live in peace for generations in the promise land, the Israelites would need to respect authority and build strong families. Generations are part of God’s plan. No one is an island. The Psalms wrote that “*God sets the lonely in families.*” (Psalm 68:6) The nature of human life is that each generation begins where the previous generation places it. This means that the blessings and sins of previous generations impact succeeding generations. God promises a long life for those who honor previous generations.

Parenting is a both a gift and calling from God. Our children belong to God. When ever we baptize a child we recognize this holy gift and responsibility. A parent’s holy task is to love them well so they too can become loving. Our calling is to bring them up in the knowledge of God and in His Son Jesus Christ. God calls us to train them to walk in His ways.

At first parenting seems romantic. We love the idea of holding a cooing baby, watching it smile and laugh. We enjoy watching them chasing a butterfly in a flower garden; eating their first birthday cake or receiving their high school diploma. It seems that it would be a blessing all the time. Many tell all about the highlights of parenting yet purposefully omit the challenges.

Parenting begins at childbirth with the mother's pain and the father's weariness. Then there is the crying all night. The midnight feedings make the nights long. The processing of their regular, smelly gifts tests the resolve of some parents. Kids demand one's undivided attention. In later years they keep you running all weeknight and weekend long with their extracurricular activities. Parents lose sleep as they worry about their teenager's choices and behavior in their absence. Experts claim that it costs \$ 160,000 to \$ 220,000 to raise a child to 18 years of age.

Teenager hurt their parents when they say things like "you are the meanest parents in the world" or "I hate you," or "I can't wait till I can move out of here." That's hard to take when you have given so much of yourself from the moment they are born.

But parenting is worthwhile with a child's first step and first time reading out - loud. Every parent is rightfully proud when their child sings at church, hits a ball with a bat, marches in the band. Parents jump for joy when they clean their room without any prodding. A hug after a hard day at work or a charming card heals wounds. Driving their first car gives mom and dad a sense of accomplishment. Parenting provides life's greatest challenges and greatest joys. I love what Mother Teresa wrote: "I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love." Parenting gives love until it hurts, evaporating the hurt and resurrecting more love.

The calling of a parent is never over. Many say: "Once a parent always a parent." Over the years my relationship with my parents has changed. It's matured

from a parent-child relationship to an adult-adult relationship. My mom has taught me some important lessons about parenting. From her modeling, I learned that my daughters will need ten affirmations for every constructive comment. Actively listening is often better than advising or coaching. Investing time, energy, and love in the life of a child no matter how inconvenient it might be provides some of life's greatest joy. Her life simply says, "I am here for you."

In the next few years our church family will be saying to future generations, "I am here for you." Our "Oasis" school supply drive says to single-parent moms and their children, "I am here for you." Our "Kid's Stuff and All-Stars" children's ministries under the leadership of Judy Riesser say to our kids, "I am here for you." Under the leadership of Ben Lilly, our student ministry, "Fuse" and "Orbit" say to our Jr. & Senior High students, "I am here for you." This generation desperately needs to know how much we care.

If we would look at the faces in our worship services, we would wonder where these kids are. In fact churches across America are asking the same question, even Mega churches. From across the Church, the reports are the same. There is a mass exodus underway. Most youth of today will not be coming to church tomorrow. Nationwide polls and denominational reports are showing that the next generation is calling it quits on the church.

When those who study the Church see that 20 something's are disengaged from the church, they first thought that we lost this generation when they went away at

college. However, recent studies have found that almost 90% were lost in the middle school and high school years. There is a disease, an epidemic that's fueling the loss of our young people. The good news is that this is a time of their lives when they are most spiritually open to the claims of Jesus Christ. We know that most people come into a relationship with Jesus Christ before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Friends, in the words of Mordecai to Esther, *“If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”*

(Esther 4:14) Friends, you are alive today, in Tipp City to be that voice of God, to be God’s agent of relief and deliverance for this generation. God has confidence in you for such a time as this. Wouldn’t you love to see God’s deliverance of our young people? Unless they are delivered the church in America will evaporate like it is doing in Europe today. We will see church buildings turned into night clubs, museums, restaurants, Islamic temples, Bingo Halls, or extreme sports complexes unless we seize such a time as this! We believe that now is the time to tell our kids we’re here for them.

Over ten years ago, I was traveling with a colleague, Harold Shimfessel. We were talking about life and parenting. Harold knew that Melinda and I were facing a critical time in our lives as a childless middle-age married couple. Harold said, “Chris, you need to ask yourselves two questions: “Do you want to be parents? Do you want some children to care of you when you are old?” We never thought about

nor discussed the fact that God gives parents children to care for them when they are old.

As we grow older we die to the attitude that the world revolves around us. We come to realize that life, real life, is found in selflessly loving others. We're resurrected to a new way of adjusting our lives. We see the needs of those around us, especially those who have spent a life time caring for us. Empty-nesters are more available to care for the ones who gave them life and love. It seems that this could be God's Social Security System.

Jesus told the Pharisees, "*God clearly says, 'Respect your father and mother,' and, 'anyone denouncing father or mother should be killed.'* But you weasel around that by saying, '*whoever wants to, can say to father and mother, what I owed to you I've given to God.*' That can hardly be called respecting a parent. You cancel God's command by your rules." (Matthew 15:4-6) Jesus clearly calls us to care for aging parents, before, during, and after Social Security. He invites us to seize the secret of a long life by caring for future generations and for honoring past generations. There is no better retirement plan.

I am reminded of what the ancient Hebrew writer wrote in the book of Leviticus. "*Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.*" (Leviticus 19:32) On several occasions I have heard the stories of World War II vets. On the flight to Washington D.C to see the World War II Memorial, Honor Flight, the non-profit agency who coordinates these trips,

announces the presence of these esteemed veterans. When the announcement is made; many rise from their seats and offer them a standing ovation. The audience knows that these brave men and women have gone before them, sacrificing their innocence in the face of violence and death, for the cause of freedom of the oppressed. They have built a legacy of perseverance, selflessness, and love for something bigger than themselves.

Many of you rise to our seniors each time you go and visit them in their homes or nursing home room. Many of you honor our seniors each time you drive them to the doctor's office. Jerry rises to honor our seniors when he greets them at their cars and assists them to our front door. Samantha and the rest of the VBS service squad honored the elderly when they visited them at SpringMeade. Someday we will all be the one who needs a friend to assist us, to love us when we are at that stage of life.

The older we get the more time seems to fly by. When we were young a day seemed to last for ever. But when we become an adult it seems that time moves so quickly. Time does not change. Our perception of it does. One day we were a child learning to run. The next day we're a teenager learning to drive a car. The next day, we're a parent teaching our child to say his first word. The next day, we're teaching a grandchild how to bake a pie or to fish for bass. There was a day not so long ago when Ilea and Kelsey were learning how to tie their shoes, sort their clothes, sing the songs of faith, and pray with the simplicity of a child. Now they are mastering cooking their own food, manipulating a computer, managing relationships, and

discovering the joy of serving others. It will not be long when Melinda and I will be teaching them to drive and guiding them in their post high school decisions. Along the way there has been and will be frustrations, disappointments, and heart ache. But more than anything else Melinda and I want them to know how much we love them regardless of their failures, setbacks, and decisions. When we are old and gray, it is our hope that just as we have cared for them, they too will care for us. After I have lived my life on this planet and made my transition to eternity, it is my hope, my prayer that they will pass on to the next generation, the faith, hope, and undeserving love of Christ.

Friends, your parents may not have been a loving presence in your life. However, you do have a God who loves through it all. He loves you the same as when you are at your best or your worst. He loves you so much that it hurts when he sees you fail or suffer a setback. I invite you to trust in this love revealed to you in Jesus. Live in it. Walk in it. Celebrate it. Share it. Then you will find the fullness of life. It's that simple. Let us pray.