

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

Drawn from “Responsibilities in Both Directions,” a Sermon on Deut 21:15-21

Pastor Nicoletti @ Faith Pres Tacoma

11/9/2025 AM

1. One of the main themes of the sermon and sermon text was the call to honor your parents. Growing up as child and teenager where did you struggle with this? Where did you do it well?
2. You are on a missions trip in a foreign country where polygamy is common practice. You are talking with a Christian man who defends the practice by pointing to today’s sermon passage, saying, “Polygamy is the natural order of things. It’s been around since the beginning of time, and it fits the differences between male and female sexuality. Most importantly, the Bible clearly allows polygamy. You modern Westerners only reject polygamy because you’ve bought into a Romantic view of marriage.” How do you respond?
3. You are on a secular college campus, having a conversation with a left-leaning agnostic. She turns to verses 18-21 of this passage and says, “This law about the rebellious child is an example of why I could never believe in the God of the Bible. Here the Bible is teaching that if your kid doesn’t obey you, you can just kill him or her. Talk about systemic injustice and oppression! What more proof do you need that the Bible is backwards, patriarchal, violent, ageist, and racist!” How do you respond?
4. Look again at verses 19-20 and talk about the role of Elders in the law of the Rebellious Son. What does this suggest about the role/office of Elder in the New Testament (cf 1 Thess 5:12, Rom 12:8, 1 Tim 5:17, Acts 11:30)?

5. Speaking of the law of the Rebellious Son (vrs 18-21), Pastor Nicoletti argued that, “elders and judges had the freedom to reduce the sentence...to something less than execution.” What proofs did he use to support this argument? Do you agree or disagree with his argument? Explain and prove your answer.

6. You are speaking with a young, culturally-progressive, broadly evangelical whose church generally avoids most of the Old Testament. She points to the law of the Rebellious Son and says, “This is an example of how the Old Testament makes me uncomfortable and why I just prefer to stay in the New Testament. Jesus is just so much gentler and more loving than the kind of stuff that comes up in the Old Testament, where God seems so harsh and angry all the time.” How do you respond?

7. Talk about what it looks like to honor your parents as an adult.

8. How can we teach our children and/or younger generations of our church to honor us as parents (and older generations more generally) while avoiding the pitfalls of being overbearing, self-righteous, or self-aggrandizing (cf Matt 23:9)? In other words, how do we teach our children to honor us without appearing and/or being, self-serving?

9. In the sermon, Pastor Nicoletti exhorted us to honor older generations, especially of our church family. Talk about what this can and should look like in practice. Where does our church do a good job of this, and where could we improve?

10. How does this passage show us Christ?