

Command 5 - Honor Your Father And Mother

June 24, 2018

We are going to start a little different this morning. I want everyone to close their eyes. There is no need to put your hand on your wallet. We are in a safe place. Close your eyes. Now picture the face of your mother. Can you hear what her voice sounds like? Hold that picture. Feel the emotions. Remember the emotions. Now hear these words: "Honor your mother." Keep your eyes closed. Now I want you to picture the face of your father. Hold that picture. Can you hear his voice? What feelings wash over you? Hear these words: "Honor your father." Keep your eyes closed. I have one more for you. If you are a parent, picture the face of your children. Answer this question: "Do they honor me?" Now you can open your eyes.

For all of us, thinking about our parents or our children brings a flood of emotions. For many of us, the powerful emotions are great love, gratitude and respect. For others of us, the emotions that wash over us are pain, regret, and even hatred because some of us experienced abuse or abandonment from our parents. This morning, we are talking about one of the most emotionally charged relationships in our lives, the relationship between parents and their children.

As a church, we are studying our way through the Ten Commandments. This morning we come to the fifth commandment. This commandment talks about honoring your father and mother.

Before we study this commandment, we need to understand this is not simply the next commandment in the list. This commandment signals a change of focus for the rest of the Ten Commandments. A few weeks back, when we began

the Ten Commandments, we learned that the first four commandments are vertical in nature. They are about our relationship with God. The last six commandments are horizontal in nature. They govern our relationships with one another. The fifth commandment begins the horizontal commands. It talks about something we don't discuss much these days, honor. The command tells us to give honor where honor is due. The first and most important place to show honor is in the home, to our parents. The inevitable breakdown of honor in all other relationships stems from a failure to give honor in the home to our own parents, which is our original relationship. No other relationship is more fundamental and more important than the relationship we have with our parents. All other relationships are governed from there.

Let's read this command and dive into our study.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12 (ESV)

We will break up our study under these headings. First, what does this command mean? Why did God give it? How does this command apply to us? What does this command teach us about other authorities?

What does this command mean?

The key word in this command is the word honor. In Hebrew, the word honor is the word *heavy*. It means weighty. It is the same word used in the Old Testament to describe the glory of God's presence. It is weighty and overwhelming. To honor one's parents means to give them the weight they deserve because of the position they hold in your life. It is to give them the

recognition they deserve. It is to give them the respect, value and esteem they deserve. If parents are weighty, that means they should not be treated lightly.

Sadly, rebellion against parents is a common sin, especially for teenagers. While our culture claims teenage rebellion against parents is normal — even healthy — the Bible says something very different. The Bible speaks of a child's rebellion against his or her parents with deep revulsion, with a sense of horror.

For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him. Leviticus 20:9 (ESV)

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives,...Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear. Deuteronomy 21:18-19, 21 (ESV)

God considers dishonoring parents to be one of the worst sins we can commit. This is not just in the Old Testament. It is also in the New Testament. Rebellion against parents describes the godless depravity that will exist in the last days.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy... 2 Timothy 3:1–2 (ESV)

I want us to notice this commands honor be given to both mothers and fathers. While the Bible is clear that fathers have a unique responsibility as the head of their homes, mothers also bear a responsibility for leadership. They should be given just as much honor and respect as a father. Mom and Dad are like a left hand and right hand working together to raise their children.

My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Proverbs 6:20 (ESV)

Sometimes mom is unintentionally given less honor, especially in the area of discipline. This is because she defers on discipline and won't carry out discipline. When children misbehave, she will say, "You wait until your father comes home." Dad ends up as the disciplinarian. Dad is respected, but Mom is the pushover because she never disciplines anybody. That is not good. Mom deserves as much honor and respect as Dad. That doesn't mean there are never times to wait for a father to come home to enact discipline, but I am pointing out that the word of both Mom and Dad should be respected and honor.

Why does God tell children to honor their parents?

There are a number of reasons.

Parents deserve honor because of the many sacrifices they make.

Was there a meal on the table growing up? Thank Mom and Dad. Did you have a roof over your head? Your parents put it there. Did you walk to school or did you get a ride? Most likely your parents came to the rescue. Who was cheering for you loudest at your sporting events? It was your parents. Who helped you with your first car? I don't think you did these things on your own. Almost everything children and young adults have is because of the sacrifice of their parents. Mom and Dad deserve respect because of all the great sacrifices they make.

Parents deserve honor because of the wealth of their experience.

When you are young, you think you know everything and your parents know nothing. Later on you realize your parents weren't stupid. They were pretty smart. They gave you wisdom you needed to hear.

In our family, Cindy tells the story of when she turned 16. She wanted to buy her first car. Her friend's boyfriend was selling his 1972 Chevrolet Nova with double four-barrel carburetors. It had the big wheels and the loud exhaust. She desperately wanted to buy this old gas-guzzling project car. If she drove this old muscle car to school, she knew she would be the coolest 16-year-old girl in the school parking lot. Of course her father said, "No." There was a battle in her home. She desperately wanted to purchase that old muscle car while her dad told her not to waste her hard-earned money. She submitted to him and later realized he was right. She would have thrown all her money away on repairs and fuel. Honoring her father's life experience kept her from making an unwise choice.

Parents deserve honor because it glorifies God.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Colossians 3:20 (ESV)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Ephesians 6:1 (ESV)

Honoring and obeying parents puts a smile on God's face. Dishonoring your parents creates a deep anger in God. If we can't honor our parents, who are the God-given earthly authorities in our lives, there is no chance we can honor God, who is the invisible heavenly authority in our lives. If you can't honor the parents you can see, what makes you think you will honor the God you can't see?

While these are all good reasons to honor our parents, they are not the reason given in this verse. This verse has a very practical reason to honor our parents.

Parents deserve honor for our best interest.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12 (ESV)

God said the key to a blessed life orbits around the way we treat our parents. God honors those who honor their parents. Those who dishonor their parents will experience suffering.

The apostle Paul repeated this commandment in Ephesians. He also highlighted that this commandment comes with a promise. The promise is we honor our parents for our own well being.

“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.” Ephesians 6:2–3 (ESV)

I recognize that not all of us have healthy parental situations. Not all of us are in easy situations where we can honor our parents. This command tells us that, never-the-less, we honor our parents to the extent that we can honor them. For example, if your father is a bank robber, you honor him by visiting him in jail so he is not alone. If your father wants to teach you the family business of cracking safes, that is where you draw the line, and you can't give him honor in that area.

The principle is that we honor our parents as far as we can honor our parents. If our parents are asking us to sin, then we place the honor of God above honoring our parents and we say, “No.”

How does the command to honor our parents apply over life?

Obedying this commandment takes on different forms through different life. Let me show you.

Young Children

If you are a child, the primary way this command applies to your life is God wants you to obey your parents. Obey is the operative word.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Ephesians 6:1 (ESV)

If your parents ask you to eat your beans at the dinner table, you eat your beans to the glory of God. If your parents ask you to clean your room, you honor God by cleaning your room. If your parents ask you to come to dinner, you turn off the TV and come to dinner the first time. Mom should not need to ask you 15 times. If she does, that is not honoring her. It also means that when your parents ask you to do something, you honor God and your parents by doing it with a good attitude. Acting like a little whiner or a little stinker does not honor your parents. The Puritans said it this way: Children should be a parent's echo. When the father speaks, the children should echo back obedience.

Kids, learn to obey your parents when you are young or you will spend years of fighting with your parents when you are old. Remember that honoring your parents is the gateway to blessing in life. Dishonoring your parents is the pathway to a life of suffering and pain. That is a promise from God.

Teenagers

When someone is a teenager, while obedience is still essential to honoring parents, now respect is also essential. Most students are amazed at this stage of life by how out-of-touch their parents have become with reality. Trust me. Your parents are not as dumb as they appear. Later, you will realize they are pretty smart, but right now they look dumb. This means when your friends are talking bad about their parents, you don't talk bad about your parents. Everybody else

may express their sinfulness by dishonoring parental authority but you swim upstream and honor your parents' authority in your life.

You also honor your parents by listening to their warnings. In your teenage years, your parents will give you a lot of warnings, and they are so tempting to ignore. Parents will warn you about spending too much time with the wrong people. Honor them by heeding those warnings and listening to what they have to say. Honoring parents doesn't just mean listening to your parents' warnings about the wrong friends, but it also means listening to their warnings about experimenting with things you put in your body and on your body that can cause lasting spiritual and physical damage. It is one thing to grow your hair long and put it in a man-bun. If you change your mind, you can cut it. There are many things that teenagers experiment with that leave permanent changes. Your parents will warn to you stay away from those decisions. Honor them by listening to their words and heeding their warnings.

Young Adults

When you are in your early 20s, most teenagers snap out of the hormone-induced coma they lived in for their teenage years. They realize their parents are not as bad as they once thought. They realize their parents are actually gifts from God. The difference between a young adult and a teenager is that now you are an adult. You no longer need your mother to pick out matching clothes for you in the morning. You make your own decisions.

This is the time in your life when you are making your own decisions and you are making big decisions about your career, employers and marriage. The

worst thing you can do is completely shut your parents out of these decisions.

Your parents have a great deal of experience you can lean into. Your mother and father are on your side. The worst thing you can do is shut them out of the important life-changing decisions of a mate or a career. You can avoid a lot of pain by seeking your parents' wisdom. Of course your career and marriage decisions are your decisions to make, but your parents are some of the best sources of wisdom you can find when it comes to making those decisions wisely.

I realize not all parents are Christians. Some parents are very unhealthy and their marriages are unhealthy. It is hard to get solid biblical advice from their lips. Here, you once again honor your parents as far as you can honor them ,but you don't blindly listen to their advice.

Mature Adults

When you are on your own, the way you live this commandment is by not ignoring your parents but keep them as a priority in your life. It means you go out of your way to call them, to spend time with them, to let them know they are loved and appreciated. It means you go on vacation with them so you can make memories together.

It especially means you care for your parents when they age. The fifth commandment was not originally written for little kids. It was written for adults to give honor to their aging parents.

One ancient writer expanded on this commandment in these words.

My child, support your father in his old age, do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, do not despise him in your health and strength.

Many people take advantage of their aging parents. They drop off granny in a nursing home so they can go their own merry way in life and avoid the inconvenience of caring for elderly parents. They seldom visit. They seldom call. Their parents die a slow death by living in a small room without visitors and die of loneliness.

Now, nursing homes do play a good place in our society for those needing care a family can't provide. This is the best part of nursing homes. The problem is they are abused. They are the place to drop off your parents so you forget about them. That is not honoring.

Paul reminded us that Christians are to be different from the world when it comes to caring for aging parents. He said this to Timothy:

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8 (ESV)

As adult children, we have a responsibility to make sure our parents get all the physical, medical, spiritual and emotional care they need. That is the way we honor our parents when we are adults. That is the way we honor God.

This command instructs us to honor all God-ordained authority.

To fully understand this command, we must understand it was not exclusively designed to instruct just children to honor their parents. It was designed to teach us to honor all the other God-ordained authorities in our lives, such as work, church, and government. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says it this way.

The fifth commandment requireth preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals. - Westminster Shorter Catechism A. 64.

Why did the writers of the Westminster Catechism, which was written in 1646, say this command was not just about honoring parents but about honoring all other legitimate authorities in our lives?

One thing we haven't talked about in our study of the Ten Commandments is every that commandment stands for an entire category of sins and duties. For example, next week, we will study the command to not murder. When we study that command, we will see it doesn't just cover murder. It covers respecting human life, not just the taking of life. We cannot beat someone to within an edge of their death and claim we honored the commandment by not murdering.

In the same way, when God tells us to honor our parents — the primary authority figures in our lives — by implication, he is telling us to also honor all the other legitimate authority figures in our lives.

The ancient Israelites also understood this about the fifth commandment. In fact, when they were referring to someone to whom they owed honor, they would call that person their father, which was a way of referencing the fifth commandment. It was a reminder that they were giving honor to someone to whom honor was due. For example, after David dishonored King Saul by cutting off the corner of his robe, when he spoke to King Saul apologetically, he called Saul his father as a way of saying Saul should have been given honor.

See, [my father](#), see the corner of your robe in my hand. 1 Samuel 24:11 (ESV)

Elisha, the servant of the great prophet Elijah, showed respect to his boss by calling him by the term father, which is a way of saying he deserves honor because he is a god-ordained authority figure in his life.

And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more... 2 Kings 2:12 (ESV)

Since the Israelites applied this command to other relationships that involved a god-ordained authority. We should do the same.

Honor our government leaders.

This commandment therefore influences how we treat those in authority over us in our government. This commandment is the rationale for Peter’s words.

Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme... 1 Peter 2:13 (ESV)

Some of you say, “Be subject to the emperor! Are you trying to tell me to be subject to Donald Trump? There is no way I will be subject to that leader. Peter’s words were written in a different time with a better leader in power.” You are right that Peter’s words were written in a different time. You are wrong if you think they were written while Rome was ruled by a great leader. Peter wrote that when Nero was emperor. Nero took Christians, covered them with animals skins, then threw them in the Coliseum to be torn to shreds by wild animals. He ran sticks through their bodies, covered them with tar then lit them on fire to serve as human torches in his palace gardens. Peter’s command to honor the poor government leaders of his time was much harder to follow than honoring the poor government leaders of our time.

If this command to speak honorably of our governmental leaders was obeyed by the media I think the news would go out of business.

Paul said the same thing.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13:1 (ESV)

This means we submit to our government officials because God put them in their places of authority, even if we don't always agree with them, we submit to them. We honor them by praying for them.

Honor our employers and supervisors.

The fifth commandment also regulates the way we work. At work, we are to respect our bosses and our employers.

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ..., Ephesians 6:5 (ESV)

This means our attitude should not be, "What can my employer do for me?" but "What can I do for my employer?" If your boss needs you to stay late, you stay late with a good attitude. If your boss needs you to work on a weekend, you do that without whining. If you need to work overtime, you work overtime with gratitude to your employer for your job. You show them respect as a legitimate authority in your life.

In the break room, when people are talking smack about the boss, you refuse to join the party. As Christians, we honor the fifth commandment by showing respect to our companies and our bosses, even when they aren't around to hear our words.

Honor our church leaders.

The fifth commandment also tells us we are to show respect for church leaders.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

Personally, I think this is the hardest one for us to follow. We inherently don't like spiritual authority. We want to be our own spiritual authority. As a pastor for 25 years, you need to know there are times when people start teaching or believing things that are out-of-step with Scripture. There are times when people's lives do not match their walk. There are times when pastors and elders agonize and pray for people in the church who are walking out-of-step with the Bible. Sometimes we ask to meet with them to prayerfully, lovingly, and as humbly as we know how, discuss with them our concerns and share our love.

Most times instead of being humble, teachable, and sensing the pastors' and elders' love and concern, the first thing many people do is dig their heels into their position. They want to fight. Then they leave the church so they have no spiritual authority over them that cares for them. That is a violation of the fifth commandment.

What about those in authority that are hard to respect?

This is the question everyone is asking. In your mind you are saying, "I know I should honor my parents, but you don't know the things they said to me. You don't know the things my parents did to me." Others of you are thinking, "I know I should honor my boss, but she is terrible," or "I know I should honor my government leaders, but do you realize what they are doing to our country?"

In the Heidelberg Catechism, which was written in 1563, it talks about the fifth commandment. It also talks about the problem of honoring those who are hard to honor.

...that I show honor, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all who are set in authority over me; that I submit myself with respectful obedience to all

their careful instruction and discipline; and that I also bear patiently their failures, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand... — Heidelberg Catechism A. 104.

Even if those in authority over us have not used their authority rightly, we are to patiently work with their failures, because it is God's will to govern us by their hand.

Of course, there is always the other side of the equation. Those in authority have a responsibility to exercise their authority in a way that is pleasing to God. They should not abuse their authority or overstep the bounds of their authority, but even if they occasionally fail in leadership, we are to still respect and submit to their leadership.

As I was thinking about this, a story in the Bible came to mind that illustrates what this looks like. It is the story of two best friends, David and Jonathan. They were spiritual brothers bound by a covenant of friendship. Both were mighty warriors in battle. Both had proven character, courage, and leadership both on and off the battle field. You probably already know of David's courage in battle from the story of David and Goliath, but Jonathan was just as brave, although his bravery is not as well known.

On one occasion, the Israelites faced the Philistine army without any weapons. Only Jonathan had a sword. Rather than cowering in fear, he stepped to the challenge with these words.

Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few." 1 Samuel 14:6 (ESV)

With those words, Jonathan launched a one-man attack against the Philistine army. He killed 20 Philistines without a scratch and sent the entire army into a panic, so they ran for their lives.

The only person who gave David and Jonathan more trouble than the Philistines was Jonathan's own father, King Saul. God anointed Saul as king over Israel, but Saul was an angry, prideful, ill-tempered, and insecure man who often said and did irrational things.

For example, during a battle, Saul swore an oath cursing any soldier who had anything to eat before he had a chance to avenge his enemies. It is a foolish thing to not allow your soldiers nourishment when they spend an entire day fighting.

Unfortunately, Jonathan, Saul's own son, did not hear of his father's oath. In the battle he saw honey dripping from a bee hive. He put the tip of his spear in the honey and touched it to his mouth. When Saul learned his son had tasted a little honey because he had never heard his father's silly command that nobody was to eat anything to regain their strength this is what Saul said to his own son.

And Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan."
1 Samuel 14:44 (ESV)

Saul was willing to murder his own son because he had innocently tasted a mouthful of food. Thankfully, the other soldiers intervened to spare Jonathan's life.

Saul treated David just as bad. At first, Saul loved David because of his victory over Goliath. But as David's popularity grew, so did Saul's jealousy. One day, in a fit of jealousy, Saul hurled a spear at David to kill him. The reason Saul

hated him was because David was more popular than him. Thankfully, David escaped that near-death experience. David was forced to run from Saul for his life. Saul ordered his soldiers to hunt down and kill David for no reason other than Saul's petty jealousy.

The point of this story is that if there ever was a father that didn't deserve honor from his son or a ruler that didn't deserve the respect of his people, it was Saul. Yet David honored Saul as his king, and Jonathan honored Saul as his father.

After David ran for his life, on two occasions, he had the chance to take Saul's life. Both times he didn't. Once Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. David and his men were hiding in that cave. They literally caught Saul with his pants down. David's soldiers encouraged him to finish off Saul once-and-for-all.

And the men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.' " Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. 1 Samuel 24:4 (ESV)

Yet even after cutting off the corner of Saul's robe, David regretted having done that because it was dishonorable to his king.

He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed." 1 Samuel 24:6 (ESV)

David would not kill Saul, even in self-defense. He regretted even cutting off the corner of his robe. Notice how David reasoned. He must show honor to Saul not because of the things Saul had done to him but because Saul was God's anointed king. To dishonor Saul's authority was to dishonor God.

The same was true for Jonathan. He showed great honor for his father by trying to stop him from the sin of murdering innocent David. This put tremendous strain on their father-and-son relationship. One time, out of frustration, Saul even threw a spear at Jonathan and tried to kill him.

Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him... 1 Samuel 20:32–33 (ESV)

Even after his father had attempted to murder him, Jonathan stayed loyal to his father and continued to honor him. The last time we see Jonathan in the Bible is on Mt. Gilboa when he was at his father’s side desperately fighting to defend him from the Philistines. Jonathan died trying to save the life of his selfish, prideful, and irrational father.

I tell you this story not to commend Saul, a poor model of what leadership should look like, but I commend the example of David and Jonathan. They were incredible models of what it means to honor someone in authority over us even when he or she doesn’t deserve it.

Incidentally, submitting to God-ordained authority over you does not mean we should endure domestic abuse. It does not mean living in a home where your life is threatened. It means submitting to the God-given authorities over us even when we don’t agree with them.

What if I failed to honor my parents?

If you are like me, this command is discouraging. There are many times when I have failed to honor my parents like I should. None of us are perfect child. Thankfully, there was a perfect child out there. His name is Jesus.

He is God's son in the flesh. He perfectly honored his earthly parents. He perfectly honored his heavenly father. Then he died on the cross in our places for our sins of dishonoring our parents and all the other authorities in our lives we dishonored.

The good news is when we ask Jesus' death on the cross to pay for our sin, not only does Jesus forgive our sins of dishonor and all the other sins of our lives, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to us. The same Holy Spirit that Jesus relied on to help him honor his heavenly father and his earthly parents comes and lives inside of you and me. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts. He gives us the desire and the strength to honor our parents like never before. This morning, I ask you to turn to Jesus if you have not turned to him. He will forgive you of the sins of dishonor and all the rest of the sin in your life. He will send his Holy Spirit to make you into a new person that desires to honor your parents.

If this morning, God has given you that conviction the you need to call your parents, need to confess to them ways you have dishonored them and seek to make the relationship right, I challenge you to follow through on that prompting from God and don't just experience forgiveness of your sin, but see what God can do to heal that broken relationship with your parents.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

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