



The Fifth Commandment

PROTECTS RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.”

EXODUS 20:12

KEY IDEA: Honoring God means respecting your parents.

OUTLINE:

- A. WHAT DUTY DOES THIS COMMANDMENT SPEAK OF?
- B. WHOM DOES THIS COMMANDMENT SPEAK TO?
- C. HOW ARE WE TO SHOW HONOR TO OUR PARENTS?
- D. WHY SHOULD CHILDREN HONOR THEIR PARENTS?

DISCUSSION:

- What makes honoring one’s parents difficult?
- Share one way that you are honoring your parents as an adult.

LESSON:

The Ten Commandments have been compared to Jacob’s ladder—the first part is the top that reaches up to heaven; the second part is the foot of the ladder that rests on the earth. The first four commandments speak of *our relationship to God*. The last six speak of *our relationship to man*. This fifth commandment is the link between these two parts.

The fifth commandment teaches us two principles that stand the test of time and space:

- **First, we cannot truly be right with man until we are right with God.** The two sections of the commandments teach us that we have to get the vertical relationship right first so that our horizontal relationships can be all that God designed them to be.
- **Second, we cannot be pleasing to God and be out of sorts in our relationships with men.** The two always go together. No one can be right with God and *always* at odds with men; and this starts in home! The writer of Proverbs tells us, “*When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him*” (Prov.16:7).

D.L. Moody, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, once said, "I have learned one thing if I have learned nothing else, and that is, no man or woman who has dishonored father or mother ever prospers."¹⁵ The fifth commandment is both a serious and a simple command. Many of the ills of our society are the result of breaking this commandment. I can say this without any fear of regret: the person who does not learn to honor those whom God has placed over him will never be true to God or to his own soul. Victory over the things that God wants you to overcome is linked to being under the things God wants you to be under. Learning to honor is the key to living an honorable life! Let's answer four key questions in this lesson.

FOUR KEY QUESTIONS:

QUESTION #1: WHAT duty does this commandment speak of?

It speaks of the duty of honor.

- Romans 13:7 says, "*Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.*"
- In 1 Samuel 2:30, God said through the prophet Samuel, "*...those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.*"
- In Malachi 1:6, we read, "*A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?*" says the LORD of hosts to you, O priest who despise My name."

What does it mean to honor? The Hebrew word for "honor" means "to attach weight to." This means to give significance to someone, to pay attention to and look upon him as a weighty person, worthy of our consideration. Stated plainly, honoring someone means attaching significance to and paying attention to what he says and who he is.

QUESTION #2: WHOM does this commandment speak to?

Everyone is a child of someone, but not all of us are parents. So, this commandment speaks to you since you are a child either by age, maturity, or birth.

This commandment not only speaks to every single person, but it also speaks of certain people in particular. Let us ask, "Who is meant by 'your father and your mother?'" Immediately, most of us think of our parents; however, a careful survey of the Word of God reveals that this commandment applies to four different kinds of "fathers":

1. **The natural father or your father of the flesh** (*Heb.12:9*)
2. **The domestic father or your master/employer** (*1 Pet.2:18*)—Naaman's servants called him "father" (*2 Kin.5:13*). The centurion called his servant "son" (*Matt.8:6*). When we work diligently and are submissive to our employers in things that are lawful and honest, God says it pleases Him, and He will reward us (*Col.3:22-24*).
3. **The spiritual father or your minister** (*1 Cor.4:15; 1 Thess.5:12-13*)—Other callings have only to do with men's health or wealth, but the minister's calling is about the souls of men.

¹⁵ As quoted by Adrian Rogers, audio sermon, *The Fifth Commandment*

4. **The political father or your magistrate** (*Job 29:16; 1 Tim.2:1-2; 1 Pet.2:17*)—The Scripture calls kings “fathers” (*Is.49:23*). We call George Washington the “father of our nation” and the writers of the Constitution, “our founding fathers.”

This commandment extends to those set over us in matters of the home, the workplace, the church, and the State.

QUESTION #3: HOW are we to show honor to our parents?

Here are six practical ways to show respect to our father and mother:

1. **By giving them respect** (*Lev.19:3; Prov.30:17; 1 Thess.5:12-13; 1 Tim.5:17*)—How do we give respect to parents? By word and by deed. Disrespect is often heard in the tone of one’s voice before it is shown in the actions of one’s life. God requires that we show respect in both ways.
2. **By becoming advocates for them** (*1 Tim.5:19*)—Thomas Watson says of spiritual fathers, “Do the ministers open their mouths to God for you in prayer, and will not you open your mouth on their behalf? Surely, if they labor to preserve you from hell, you should preserve them from slander; if they labor to save your souls, you ought to labor to save their credit. He is an honourer of the ministry who is not only a hearer, but a follower of the word.”¹⁶
3. **By expressing thanksgiving to them** (*Rom.1:21-32; 2 Tim.3:1-5*)—A thankless heart is the first step on the slippery slope of rebellion. One of the main marks of perilous times is when children are unthankful and disobedient to parents. When was the last time you said to God, “Lord, I thank You for my parents. They are not perfect, but I did benefit in many ways from their sacrifice. Thank you, Lord!”? If your parents are still living on earth, when was the last time you expressed your gratitude to them for their sacrifice, no matter how small or great?
4. **By listening to their counsel** (*Prov.1:8-9*)—Eli’s sons “...would not listen to the voice of their father...” and were called “worthless men” (*1 Sam.2:25, 12*). Are we to listen to everything they say? No, no, our heeding of their counsel goes only as far as the Scripture goes—and the Scripture counsels us in things that are lawful and honest. This does not mean that we should not listen to their advice on things that are not clearly explained in the Bible; parents often have a wealth of wisdom learned at the school of hard knocks! We honor our parents by giving them the benefit of the doubt—by listening to their counsel, knowing that they love us.
5. **By relieving their burdens and caring for them** (*Gen.47:12; John 19:25-27*)—Joseph cherished his father and sought to provide for his needs, although there was history between them. When on the cross, Jesus charged John to take care of his mother. In the animal world, it is called the law of the storks. By nature, the young storks bring meat to the older ones when they are unable to fly. As children grow older, the needs of the parent grow greater. By caring for your parents when they are old, you make some return on their investment in your life when you were young; and in doing so, you honor God.
6. **By living an honorable life, yourself** (*Prov.17:25*)—Whether we like it or not, we are extensions of our parents. Under the providential purposes of God, you will always be your parents’ child. Therefore, when you live in a way that brings honor to God and to yourself, it brings honor to them; however, when you live in a way that brings shame to God and to yourself, it brings shame to them.

¹⁶ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, p.125

QUESTION #4: WHY should children honor their parents?

The number one reason to honor your parents and those over you is that IT PLEASES GOD.

- **Colossians 3:20**—Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

This command is so important to God that it is the first commandment that comes with a promise of long life! Can a man or woman die too soon? Ecclesiastes 7:16-17 implies that you can:

- ¹⁶ Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? ¹⁷ Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?

The Old Testament commentator Whatley reminds us, “We cannot have the religious sentiments and principles too strong, if only they have the right object. We cannot love God too warmly, or honor him too highly, or trust him too implicitly; because our duty is to love Him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength...the danger obviously lies in defect, not in excess; in stopping short, not in going too far.”¹⁷

Why should you die before your time? God has promised to bless all who honor those He has placed over them—not necessarily with 70-80 years of natural life, but with fullness of joy and power in spiritual life. God has provided the power that enables us to fulfill this command by His Spirit (*Eph.5:18; 1 John 5:4*). The golden key is faith. Anyone can believe in *established facts*, but it takes *faith* to believe the Word of God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (*Heb.11:6*).

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION

THE COMMANDMENTS and CHRIST—How did Christ fulfill the fifth commandment?

THE COMMANDMENTS and THE CHRISTIAN—Review the six ways to honor those God has placed over you. Then apply the three C’s of application:

- *Confess all sin to the Lord. (1 John 1:9)*
- *Crown Jesus as Lord in your heart. (Col.3:15)*
- *Claim the fullness of His promise. (1 John 5:14-15)*

What is your takeaway from this lesson?

¹⁷ As quoted by Charles Bridges, *Ecclesiastes*, p.162

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