

Honor Your Parents: The 5th Commandment

-Exodus 20:12-

**20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying,
“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery...**

**20:12 Honor your father and your mother,
that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is
giving you.**

INTRO:

Dennis Rainey, writing for the organization “Family Life”, in an article entitled “The Amazing Power of Honoring Your Parents”, shares a letter that a young woman wrote to him in response to a message he gave on this commandment. Here’s part of that letter:

“How thankful I am for the message you shared today. The truth of it rings loud and clear in my life. Growing up, my father physically abused me. Oh, he would beat me so bad that at times I didn’t think I was going to live. At other times my mom would be in such fear for me that she would call the police. But perhaps even worse than the physical abuse was the mental abuse. Oh, how he hated me! He would cuss and scream at me every possible thing you could think of and a lot that you probably couldn’t think of. I hated my father with a hate that few people probably ever realize exists.”

There’s more to the letter, and I’ll share the rest of it later on, but I wanted to start with this piece of it as a way of acknowledging from the start just how difficult this commandment is for some of you. I realize that some of you were abused by your mother or father. Verbal abuse, physical abuse, maybe even sexual abuse. I don’t know all of the terrible things your parents have done to you. But God does.

In the first chapter of Exodus, we read about the abusive way that the Egyptians treated the Israelites. We also read that they cried out to God- and God heard, God saw, God knew. If you were abused at the hands of your parents, God heard. God saw. God knows. And His hatred of that sin is intense. His desire for justice is unstoppable. And His heart is compassionate towards you. His desire is to be your healer. And His command to honor your parents is given with compassion and aimed at your healing.

You need to believe this, so that you will believe that this command to honor your parents isn't one that God gives out of ignorance. He knows the sins of your parents. And this isn't a command that He gives out of callous disregard for your pain. It's a command that He intends for your good, even if that good lies on the other side of pain.

ILL: When a person is diagnosed with cancer and a doctor prescribes chemotherapy, the chemotherapy itself is a terrible, painful ordeal. But if it kills the cancer, great good lies on the other side of that pain. God's prescriptions are like that, except they always work! When we take His prescriptions and apply them to our lives by the power of His Spirit, they always accomplish what He intends them to do, without fail.

But, this may not be an easy pill for you to swallow, so let's pray right now that God will grant us the faith to receive His good command to us.

Loving Father,

I pray that Your Spirit will help us this morning. Help us to see Your goodness, Your kindness, Your care for us, even as You show us these things through this word that may be extremely difficult for some here to receive. We believe, help our belief. Cause every heart here to be submitted to You as gracious King, trusting Your wisdom as Creator, and eager to show Your glory by walking in obedience even when it hurts. Because Jesus has walked this road before us and leads us on to follow Him, we pray. Amen.

The summary of this sermon today is simple and, I hope, easy to see from the text. Sermon Summary: You must honor your parents so that you can honor God.

This is true in at least two ways. 1. Honoring our parents trains us to honor God. 2. We cannot truly honor God if we don't honor our parents. It's as simple, and as difficult, as that. I hope to give you some practical suggestions for how to obey this before the end.

But, in order to feel the weight of this commandment as you should, you need to first see that honoring your parents is foundational and enduring.

1. Honoring Parents Is Foundational and Enduring

Foundational...

This commandment to honor our parents, which is the first to deal specifically with our horizontal- person-to-person- relationships, is foundational because all other horizontal relationships grow from this root.

Several things show us that God views this as foundational. **First**, its placement in the order that He gives the commandments. We saw several weeks ago that the 1st commandment "You shall have no other gods before me" is foundational for the other three commandments that deal mainly with our vertical relationship - us to God. The fact that "honor your father and mother" comes first in the list of horizontal commandments indicates that it is foundational for the remaining five.

Second, the importance of this commandment is seen in the fact that God attaches a great blessing to it. "Honor your father and your mother, *that* your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. It's not that the other commandments can be broken and you can still live a long and happy life, the idea is that if you keep this one, you will be keeping the others as well.

Third, the foundational aspect of this verse is made clear by the severe penalties that God requires for those who break it. Exodus 21:15 & 17.

“Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death. Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death” Exodus 21:15, 17.

Leviticus 20:9 repeats this penalty. In Deuteronomy 21, this is reiterated, but with more detail. There, God says that if a son is persistently rebellious, his mother and father are to bring before the elders of the city, testify against him, and the whole city was supposed to stone him!

This is intense! Do *you* take the sin of rebellion against parents that seriously? When you think about the most heinous, awful, death-deserving sins that people can commit, do you include “Dishonoring parents?” You should, because God does! The intensity of the penalty that God requires for breaking this commandment indicates that God sees it as foundational.

It’s also **enduring**. As we’ve studied the first four commandments, we’ve seen that, even though these commandments are given as Old Covenant requirements, each of them contains a *principle* that is enduring and binding for all people, in all times and places. But, the specific *precepts* (commands) don’t all directly apply to us in the New Covenant in Christ. This was probably most clear last week as we looked at the Sabbath.

For the 5th commandment, though, both the underlying principle *and* the specific precept (Honor your father and mother) still apply to us. We know that it is an enduring commandment for a number of reasons... For one, the importance of keeping it is repeated over and over in the wisdom literature of the OT, especially in Proverbs. Here’s one example: “The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures” Proverbs 30:17.

Warnings don't get much stronger than that! This commandment isn't just attached to the Old Covenant. It's woven into the way that God has set up the world to work. We disobey it at our own peril!

And we also see that it's enduring because **it's reiterated in the NT**. We have the example of Jesus, who honored not only his Heavenly Father, but also his earthly parents. We also see the Apostle Paul directly applying the 5th commandment to children in Colossians and Ephesians. In fact, in Ephesians 6, he directly quotes Exodus 20:12. We also see the enduring principle of honoring our parents by caring for them financially in 1 Timothy 5. In addition to these, in Romans 1 and 2 Timothy 3, "disobedience to parents" is included in a list of sins that reveal a hatred for God.

The precept of the 5th commandment "Honor your father and mother" is foundational and it is enduring. It is a commandment for us today. It is a commandment for *you* today. You must honor your parents so that you can honor God.

Now let's look at a couple of reasons *why* God puts so much weight on this commandment.

First...

2. Honoring Your Parents Trains You to Honor God

What does it mean to "honor" someone? In Scripture, honor is given to someone when others recognize the weightiness of their position, their status, their importance, their personal authority, *or* the authority that they represent.

Honor isn't a word we really use much today is it? But there are a few places. Academic honors are conferred upon students in recognition that they stand out academically. They're in a class by themselves- sometimes literally- because high-achieving students often take what are called *honors* classes. So, honoring parents has to do with- in your mind- putting them in a different class or category than other people.

But maybe the place that the idea of honor is most obvious in our culture is in the courtroom. When the judge enters the room, the bailiff

says, “All rise. Hear ye, hear ye, the So and So Court for the District of Such and Such is in session -- the *Honorable* Judge Blank presiding.”

A judge isn't called honorable, and people aren't required to stand, because that judge is personally worthy of honor. We would hope that's the case, but we know it isn't always. There are dishonorable judges. But the honor is actually given for what the judge *represents*. Honor is given for the authority of the law that the judge is sworn to represent. We have to honor the judge because honoring the judge reminds us to honor the law that the judge represents.

And this is helpful, because the same is true of honoring our parents. We honor them, not based on how worthy of honor they are personally, but because they represent the authority and worth of God to us. Honoring your father and mother trains you to honor the God who *is* worthy of honor. It teaches you that you are not the ultimate authority in the world.

Why do we need this? Why the training wheels? Why not just honor God directly? Well, because you were born with a heart and mind that rebel against Him! These commandments train and teach rebellious and disordered people how to live in submission and order.

Kids, do you know what God says is the biggest way for you to honor your parents when you're young? Obey them. Obey your parents for this is right...this is pleasing to the Lord! Here's what I learned about obedience when I was a kid: “Obedience is doing what I'm told to do, when I'm told to do it, with the right heart attitude. Maybe you learned it this way: “Do it now, do it right, and do it with a happy heart.”

God doesn't say, “Obey your parents, as long as they deserve it” does He? No, He actually tells you to obey your parents *in everything*. That means that as long as they aren't telling you to do something that is sinful and wrong, you should do what you're told to do, when you're told to do it, with the right heart attitude. This pleases God and will bring blessing to your life!

Now, as Albert Mohler says in his excellent book on the Ten Commandments “The 5th commandment is *not* God stopping to have ‘children’s church in the middle of giving the 10 Commandments.” He says that because the idea that this commandment is just for kids is a common one. He goes on to say, “It’s not as if we have nine grown-up commandments and then all of a sudden a commandment that is addressed to children.”

We never outgrow the need to be trained to honor God by honoring our parents. This commandment bears on everyone, not just kids.

So, I’ll give some more applications for everyone in just a bit, but I want to give one to parents right here: It’s your child’s *responsibility* to honor you, but it’s your job to *help* them. You can help them first by being *honorable*. If you fly off the handle and scream at them, if you demean them, if you’re dishonest, or manipulative or selfish- you’re making it more difficult for your kids to honor you. You’re not helping them.

Or, if you’re inconsistent with your rules and your consequences, if you let the kids set the tone of the house, if you let them force you to *always* have to justify your rules and decisions and explain yourself rather than requiring them to submit to you “just because I said so” (especially for younger kids), then you’re not helping your children to honor you.

Teaching your kids to honor by submitting to you may feel wrong/weird, but it’s not! It’s not inherently selfish- it’s loving. Proverbs 13:24 says Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24

Teaching your kids to honor you is the most loving thing you can do because You are helping them learn to honor and submit to God. And, if you don’t do this, then you are helping them learn to *not* honor God, which has eternal consequences.

So we teach our kids to honor us, and we ourselves honor our father and mother because it trains us to honor God. And, because...

3. Honoring Your Parents Is a Way to Honor God

We honor our parents, not because they are always worthy of honor, but because *God* is worthy of honor. Honoring your parents, *especially when it is hard to honor them*, is a way to honor God because it demonstrates your faith in Him.

It shows that you believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Honoring your parents- even when you don't why you should- demonstrates that you believe there is a higher authority than your own judgement, and that simply by making them parents, God has put them in a position that deserves your honor.

ILL: Hobbit...The Great Goblin: Well, well, well... look who it is! Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thrór, King Under the Mountain! (mockingly bows) Oh, but I'm forgetting, you don't have a mountain, and you're not a king, which makes you nobody, really.

Which was true, but the dwarves still honor Thorin as their king because they respect his inherited position, even when he doesn't deserve their respect. They follow him with a kind of faith.

Honoring our parents is worship, because it demonstrates our submission to God, our faith in God.

Missional/witness/counter-cultural aspect of this...

Six Practical Ways to Show Honor (Challies):

1. Forgive Them (my mom & her dad- Missional to her son!)
2. Don't Speak Ill of Them Christian teens... Showing your unbelieving friends that you honor your parents...

3. Speak Well of Them Publicly and Privately
4. Seek Their Wisdom
5. Support Them (relationally, emotionally)
6. Provide For Them- (financially, as it is needed and you are able)

As parents get older... 2003 European heat wave. 15,000 elderly dead in France. Many elderly people were left behind by vacationing families. Some, when informed of the death of relatives, postponed funerals, so as to not interrupt the Aug. 15 holiday weekend, and left the bodies in a makeshift morgue for storage.

Valuing aging parents more than freedom to travel, building your own retirement fund, etc... honors Your All-Supplying, All-Satisfying God who has promised that in the New Creation the whole world will be yours, so you don't have to cling to it now.

Encouraged and thankful for those at PRC who have and are honoring their parents as they get older...

Rewards? Different in the New Covenant.... Here and now- joy, peace, sometimes restored relationships, sometimes not... Here's the rest of the letter from the young woman with the abusive father that I read a portion of at the beginning of this sermon.

My freshman year in college I became a Christian. Over the next year and a half God took me from a tremendous hate of my father to a dislike to a like until I could say I loved my father. Then I began to find certain things out. My father was abused as a child. No one ever told me that before. His father kicked him out when he was 17.

Does this excuse what happened to me as a child? No. Does it make it more understandable? Yes.

My father still yells and cusses at me. But you know what? Not quite so loudly. I call him on special occasions. I share my life with him and ask his advice. His response? Not so good, but that's okay. The other day I heard

he was bragging about me at work. There's hope. You know why there's hope? Because God loved us enough to send His Son to die on the cross for our sins, and because people like you care enough to share life-changing messages like you did today.

Blessings for obeying this commandment?- How about hope!? Peace? Joy!? Giving glory to God!?

Communion:

Jesus' example...

- Submissive to his parents (Luke)
- Providing- (Mary, from the cross...)
- Honored His Father by speaking only what He told him to say.
- Honored His Father by submitting to His will for him, even to death on the Cross.
- Paying for our failures as children, paying for our failures as parents, purchasing our forgiveness so that we can forgive.