

“Honoring Mamma (and Father)”

Exodus 20:12

Happy mother’s day! When I was working out the schedule for this year’s sermons based on the 10 commandments I was delighted to find that we’d begin the 5th commandment on mother’s day ... very fitting. Except for one thing, the 5th commandment isn’t for parents, it’s for KIDS. Honor THY Father and Mother.

I once asked my mom, on Mother’s Day, why there was a special day for mother, and a special day for father, but none for children. She said, “Oh honey, every day is a special day for you!” Of course, I wanted presents, and failed to see all the meals, and clothes, and school supplies, and provisions my parents gave me FAR exceeded the monetary value of that little handpicked bouquet of dandelions I gave mom each mother’s day, or the \$2 tie I gave my dad each Father’s day.

There is a gift we are commanded to give our parent’s on mother’s day, and father’s day, and groundhog day, and “star wars day” (may the fourth be with you!) ... and EVERY DAY, and that gift is “Honor.”

Exodus 20:12, “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

There are three parts to this verse: Commandment, commander, and consequence.

Part One: the commandment.

“Honor your father and mother.”

“Honor” Root “Ka-bawd” which means “heavy.” By implication, important, or “to make heavy” or “to give weight to” (their wisdom and insight, for example).

The command to respect our parents is mentioned in:

Leviticus	Matthew
Deuteronomy	Mark
Exodus	Luke

Proverbs	John
Genesis	Romans
1 Samuel	Ephesians
2 Samuel	2 Timothy
Malachi	
Micah	
Isaiah	

“Your” I’m curious, how long are your parents, “your” parents? In other words, does this command have an expiration date?

- Do we honor only until we mature into adulthood?
- Do we honor only until we are married?
- Do we honor parents beyond their death?

Answer: We honor our parents for as long as *we* live.

Honoring looks different during different stages of our lives:

-- Minor children are expected to have unquestioned obedience to parents. Be careful not to overplay that to the point of weighting them down with personal burdens ... Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.”

-- Adult children are expected to listen respectfully and act with personal responsibility.

-- Upon our parent’s death, we honor their memory and choose what qualities we want to pass to the next generation.

DANGER ZONE: Be careful not to mix the stages into a messy glob!

- Adult children should not expect their parents to support them financially.
- Adult children can act like adults in their parent’s home.
- Parents of adult children cannot expect unquestioned obedience ... or any obedience at all, for that matter. You hope for a listening ear, and pray that the Holy Spirit uses your wisdom in helpful ways.
- In-laws are not “your” parents or “your” children. In marriage a person “leaves and cleaves” according to Genesis 2:24. Understand that your child is commanded to respect you, but the spouse is not ... and vice versa.

MAIN POINT: God has assigned “the family” as the priority place where His plan and purpose for our lives is revealed and nurtured.

Part Two: the commander

Every command has a commander. Understanding the command begins with understanding the commander.

“... in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” The very nature of God is that He is giving ... but the gift has boundaries! Children enjoy pushing the boundaries, and parents must maintain a steadfast commitment to say, “NO, that part isn’t for us.”

ILLY: Bridge. The 5th command bridges the two major sections of the 10 commandments:

- The first four deal with submission to God’s authority in our lives.
- The last five deal with our behavior in the world.
- The fifth command shows us that God entrusts His authority to parents, to raise them to embrace God’s way of living.

Long before a child is aware of God’s authority, he is aware of the parent’s authority.

KEY POINT: Parents, you do not act AS God to your kids, you act FOR God to your kids. God’s authority passes through you to the children. You SHOW kids the loving nature of God by creating boundaries within which they live and behave. You reflect both God’s GIVING NATURE and His BOUNDARY DRAWING.

Remember, this commandment is NOT about your relationship with your parents, it is about your relationship with God! This takes the quality and “goodness” of your parents completely out of the situation.

- Some of us have great parents!
- Some of us have horrible parents.
- All of us have parents stained by sin ... I know because I’m a parent stained by sin. **“God loves and uses imperfect parents, because that’s the only kind there are.”**

- Do not give weight to their ability ... give weight to their place.

MAIN POINT: Honoring your parents is a spiritual discipline that can be practiced no matter the quality of your parents.

Part Two: the consequence.

“Long and Full Life.” The Lord gave the land, the people had to plant healthy families there that would provide a long and full life.

The book of Proverbs puts it like this ... Proverbs 30:17, The eye that mocks a father and despises a mother’s instructions will be plucked out by ravens of the valley and eaten by vultures.

Honoring parents is a key factor in trans-generational health. Children learn best by seeing their parents in action in their own home.

ILLY: When mom and dad cuddle and coo on the sofa, a middle schooler (child or grandchild) might protest that as being “gross.” But, the underlying lesson that affection is normal and enjoyable is really important, especially in the face of a culture that models all kinds of unhealthy expressions of affection.

Children DO give weight to what they see in their home growing up. A healthy family is vitally important to not only children, but to the nation. That’s why God reminds us ... Healthy families give us the opportunity for a long and full life.

Let’s close with a disturbing negative example we find in the Bible:

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 (NLT)

¹⁸ “Suppose a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or mother, even though they discipline him.

¹⁹ In such a case, the father and mother must take the son to the elders as they hold court at the town gate.

²⁰ The parents must say to the elders, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and refuses to obey. He is a glutton and a drunkard.’

²¹ Then all the men of his town must stone him to death. In this way, you will purge this evil from among you, and all Israel will hear about it and be afraid.

This passage highlights the destructive result of disrespecting God's plan for the family: death.

Sometimes people think of the 10 commandments as helpful suggestions that you can take or leave as you wish.

Others would look at this passage and say the 10 commandments are barbarically ancient laws with no relevance to modern life ... stoning a man to death because he's stubborn and rebellious? That's unthinkable.

Yes, unthinkable in today's world. But, honestly, this stubborn, rebellious person is a *dead man walking*. His life is empty, devoid of God's leadership, and he's headed nowhere.

The solution starts with me ... when I personally honor my parents ... when I empower my adult children to cherish and respect my wisdom ... I'm making my community stronger and, hopefully, preventing a stubborn and rebellious generation to follow.

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, help us to honor You by doing our part to create strong families in our community. In Jesus' name, amen."