

Honour Your Father and Mother

Exodus 20:12

Every now and again I see a crazy court case make the news.

An example of this was a case involving a young man who was stealing flood lights from the roof of a high school and fell through a skylight.

He sued the school arguing the skylight was unsafe.

Just to be clear he was there stealing stuff, on a roof where he was not supposed to be and blamed the school.

He won!

When I see stuff like that I often shake my head in disbelief.

That happened again a few months ago when I heard of another lawsuit.

A business man from India decided to sue his parents (who are both lawyers) for having him without his permission.

I don't know how that one turned out, it may still be going on, but just the fact that it made it far enough to make it into the news is shocking to me.

It reminded me of just how far our world is drifting away from the LORD.

It reminded me of the need to for us as believers to strive to obey the fifth commandment given to us in **Exodus 20:12**.

[A great deal can be said about the meaning and importance of this command. In our time together I want to ask two questions of this command. First, I want to ask the question why? Why should parents be honoured? Secondly, I want to ask the question how? What does it actually look like to honour our parents. I understand this is a difficult command for some people. People who grew up with parents who set a bad example or were even abusive or those who grow up without a mom or dad or without either. What about those situations? I believe this command addresses that and I believe Christians can be obedient to this command even in those instances. Let's begin with the question of why. This command gives us the foundational reason for the command. Why honour our father and mother? Because...]

Point #1 – Honouring our parents honours God.

Every command God gives is rooted in the first commandment. Knowing Who God is and delighting in the unsurpassable greatness of His being moves us to obey Him. When we relate to our parents as God intends it reveals our delight in the LORD.

The word that is translated "honour" here is a Hebrew word that is often used in reference to God and is often translated with the word "glory".

Using that word here immediately tips us off that this is about more than a relationship with our earthly parents, this is about our relationship with the LORD.

One of the primary reasons for this is that God is the one who ultimately determines who our parents are.

This is the clear teaching of the familiar Psalm 139. In verses 13-14 it says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

That statement is true if you grow up in a stable loving home or if you grow up in a nightmare of a family.

In either case you have been created by God and your life is a gift from Him.

[Did you ever have to do a ‘family tree’ project in school? It is actually a big deal these days to find out more about your history. There are companies where you can send in some of your DNA and they’ll tell you more about where you come from. Sending my DNA to a total stranger creeps me out a little bit, so it’s not for me but it has turned into quite the business. I’d much rather have a piece of paper with the names of all my ancestors. If enough records existed we could do what Luke does with the Lord Jesus in His gospel, we could trace our relatives all the way back to Adam. Think of all the parents you met and had children which resulted in your parents which resulted in you! That would be a lot of people and each of those people came from a long family history themselves. If we could actually see how many events took place in order for us to be born is would enormous.]

The question that we need to answer is, why does your family tree look the way it does?

An unbeliever may look at that and see only random chance, the bible believing Christian should see God directing the course of history for the sake of His glory.

When we honour our parents we declaring and contenting ourselves in the fact that God is God and we are not.

[None of us have and no one is a perfect parent. Without a doubt some are better than others and I have nothing but empathy for those of you who grew up in bad situations, but no matter our situation we need to remember that God is the one who has given us life and He offers each of us the opportunity to have eternal life through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. That would not be possible if you had never been born to your parents. Why honour our mother and father, because by doing so we honour God. That is the why of honouring our parents now let’s look at the how. There is no better place to look for the answer to this question then to the example of Christ. From Jesus we learn the lesson that is implicit in the fifth commandment which is...]

Point #2 – Obedience honours parents.

While this may look differently depending upon our stage of life, it is always important to listen to Godly council from our parents.

The apostle Paul points out in Ephesians 6:2 that this is the first command with a promise.

We see the promise here in the second part of **verse 12**.

If you honour your parents you are going to live a long time in the land.

Why make that promise?

If you read Deuteronomy 6 and then 28-30 it fits perfectly.

Deuteronomy 6 commands parents to teach their children the commands of God in every aspect of life.

Chapters 28-30 God tells the people they will be blessed in the land if they obey and perish if they disobey.

So the promise is tied to obedience; which means then that obedience is directly connected to honouring your mother and father.

[This is the example Jesus sets for us. Do you remember when He was twelve years old and His parents unknowingly left Him behind in Jerusalem? After three days they find Him and Mary asks “Why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” Jesus points out that they should have known He was at the temple, but they didn’t understand what He meant. If anyone had the right to tell His parents they were clueless and to leave Him alone it was Jesus, but He doesn’t do that, instead the Bible tells us that He was “obedient to them.”]

There has been a great deal in the news in recent days about all of the problems that we have in our society.

There are all kinds of people talking about all kinds of solutions, but not once have I heard anyone address the breakdown of the family.

Not once have I heard anyone talk about the importance of fathers and mothers teaching their children the difference between right and wrong.

I put it to you that you can spend all the money you like and offer lip service to every interest group under the sun and you will end up causing as many or more problems as you solve.

A nation will never function with genuine peace and justice unless parents teach their children the scriptures and children honour their parents through obedience.

[Of course obedience is going to look different at age 30 then it will at age 3. As a father I know very well that my children grow older they are going to be making more and more decisions for themselves. My great hope is that our instructions and their obedience will shape in them a desire to live in the wisdom of the word of God. It’s not all about obedience though, looking to Jesus as our example we learn a second lesson about how to honour our mother and father. We learn that...]

Point #3 – Care and affection honours parents.

As parents enter the sunset years of their lives their needs tend to increase and the scriptures call godly men and women to look after them as best they can.

I realize in the day and age we live children often live far away from parents and that can make providing care challenging.

It is also important to recognize that sometimes the health of a parent can get to the point where it is both unsafe for the parent and impossible for a child to meet all of their needs.

No one violates this command by seeking out help to care for their mom and dad.

Caring for parents will look differently depending on the situation.

What we need to take away from this command is that we need to feel the responsibility and we need to take every opportunity to do what we can.

Jesus did this even the hour of His greatest trial.

[Jesus physical agony on the cross is exceedingly great, but the spiritual agony that He endures and He bears the weight of all of our sin is impossible for us to appreciate. When we look to the cross we must see our need of a saviour. That ought to be crystal clear as we work our way through the commandments that we have all broken we need to be forgiven and the cross makes that possible. In

that moment as He stands in our place He looks down from the cross and tells the apostle John to be sure to take care of His mother.]

Taking care of His mother in that moment has to be more than mere duty or sense of responsibility, it has to be love.

God the Father gave Mary and Joseph an enormous privilege and responsibility in watching over the incarnate Son of God.

How many hours did she hold Jesus in her arms?

She fed Him, made Him clothes, taught Him the scriptures, and cared for Him.

He could look down at her from the cross and love her like He loves all people, He could see her as a sinner in need of a saviour and lay down His life for her sake, but He also could see His mother whom He loved as a perfect Son.

[Honouring our parents has to do with responsibility but it also means having a tender hearted affection for them. I know that seems impossible for some people. When some people think of their parents they can think of nothing positive and as I said I have a great deal of empathy for you. There is one more thing that we need to consider from the life of Christ that shows us how we can keep this command even with parents that don't deserve an ounce of honour. Whether we have the best parents or the worst we need this fourth point which is...]

Point #4 – Loving God most of all honours parents.

The best thing we could ever do for our parents is to have our highest affection set on the LORD.

It seems like it would be easy to think of this commandment being primarily about making your parents happy.

We can easily begin to think to ourselves that if our parents think we are good kids then we must be good when it comes to keeping this command.

That misses the mark, however, because it is very possible for a parent to be pleased with their children going hard after gaining the world but all the while losing their soul.

It is also possible for a parent to be upset or disappointed in a child trading in the pleasures of this life for an eternal reward.

This commandment is not about pleasing parents it is about pleasing God.

Once we understand that this is first and foremost about God we can honour parents who don't deserve it or who don't appreciate it because the most loving and caring thing we can do for them is point them to the LORD.

[Again Christ sets the example for us. In chapter three of Mark's gospel we are told that Jesus' ministry is growing and all kinds of people are coming to see Him. Mark tells us that when His family heard about it they went to "take charge of Him for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" Just a few verses later we are told that His mother and brothers show up and want to see Him. When He is told they are there He says, "Who are my mother and brothers?"... "Whoever does God's will." We have a hard

time appreciating how offensive that would have been to His mother, but He says it because God the Father is first in His heart and that is the best thing He can do for His mother.]

Jesus lives what He teaches in Matthew 10:37 where He says, “Anyone who **loves** his **father** or **mother more** than me is not worthy of me; anyone who **loves** his son or daughter **more** than me is not worthy of me.

He not saying treat your parents badly, He saying love God more.

By the grace of God in the power of the Holy Spirit we can do that no matter who our parents are.

Maybe this command is an absolute joy for you because your parents are wonderful parents.

I’d count myself in that category, but I know God comes first.

Maybe this command is a real struggle, but listen, God can open your heart to forgiveness and peace through the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was through our parents that God brought us into being and we can be thankful for that no matter what.

God gave us parents to teach us about Him and regardless of how they did we can honour them in a way that pleases the LORD by growing in our obedience to His word.

This commandment calls us to care for and love our parents and we do that best when we love God the most.

I hope when you think upon this commandment what will come to the forefront of your mind is that when we are in Christ we are children of God.

We have a Father in heaven Who has made us the object of His infinite affection for the sake of Jesus because we have placed our faith and trust in Him alone for our salvation.

If our hearts can delight in that, then we can keep the command to honour our father and mother.