

## Part 6

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[ 0 : 00 ]      Keep your Bible open in Exodus chapter 20, page 78 of the church Bibles. If you're visiting tonight, or if you haven't been here at evening service lately, we're doing a series of sermons going through the Ten Commandments, which are the Bible summary of its moral law for Christians.

And so far we've gone through the first four commandments to have no other gods before the Lord, to not make images of gods, to worship God the right way, to treat God's name with respect, and to honour God with the balance in our lives between work and rest.

And tonight we're going on to look at the fifth commandment, the commandment to honour your father and your mother. But as we do that, at the very beginning I want to stop and take a minute to recap what the first four commandments are about, and what commandments five onwards are about.

And I want to do that by taking an example from the Gospel of Matthew, from Matthew chapter 22. You don't need to look this up unless you want to. I'll read the verses out.

Matthew 22, from verse 34 to 40, Jesus has asked the question, hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

[ 1 : 24 ]      One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your hearts and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, love your neighbour as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

Okay, so the summary of the ten commandments, the ten commandments in a nutshell, is number one, love the Lord your God with everything that you have.

And number two, love your neighbour, love the person in the pew next to you, love other human beings, love your neighbour as yourself, love your fellow human beings. And we can see that progression, can't we, from loving God with everything that we have to loving other people as we love ourselves in the shape of the commandments themselves.

Think about it, what we've seen so far, the first four commandments. To love the Lord, love the Lord by not putting any other gods before him. Love the Lord by worshipping him, by caring about how he's worshipped properly.

[ 2 : 38 ]      Love the Lord in the way that you speak about him, using his name respectfully. Love the Lord by taking a day each week to stop and reflect on him, and worship him, and be with other people who love him as well.

Love the Lord, it's in commandments one to four. And then love your neighbour, it's what we see from this commandment, commandment number five onwards. Love your neighbour, love other people, firstly by honouring your parents.

Love your neighbour by not murdering him. It's a really nice way to show love if you move into a new block of flats. Hi, I'm James, I've just moved in. I really love you, I'm not going to kill you. Love your neighbour by not murdering them.

Love your neighbour by not committing adultery. Love your neighbour by not stealing from him. Love your neighbour by not lying to him. Tell him the truth. Love your neighbour by not coveting his things and being greedy of what he has.

Loving your neighbour, how to love your neighbour as yourself, begins here in the fifth commandment with the command to honour your mother and your father.

[ 3 : 50 ] And you know, it's really interesting and it's important that when God sets out his manifesto, his plan on how to sort out the lives of his people, how to get them loving each other, loving their neighbours, it begins in the family unit.

That's the core of everything. He doesn't try and sort out this newly liberated nation of Israel by starting off at the national level, at the government level, by saying, okay, this is how to sort out your politics from the top down.

God starts kind of from the down up. He starts with the family unit, the core there. God doesn't begin with a commandment about what kind of national leader you need to have a good nation, to have a good society.

God doesn't start off with, this is the kind of legislation you have to make to sort your country out. God begins with a focus on the family, because society is built on families.

The world is built on families. Every child, in whatever kind of family it grows up in, learns there the way to relate to other human beings.

[ 5 : 01 ] That's what children learn in the family unit. And that child then grows up, takes what he or she has learned there, and replicates it in the way that that now grown-up relates to other grown-ups.

So if the child learns healthy ways to relate to others, and the Bible characterizes healthy relations between people as honourable, the society itself gets huge knock-on benefits.

The society will be good. Last week I was on the bus, and there was a woman who was sitting just across from me with a small boy, her son, he was an infant.

And she wasn't engaging with him, she wasn't talking to him. She was ignoring him completely, and she was on her mobile shouting at someone, effing and blinding away, not a constructive conversation at all.

She's shouting, swearing away at someone on her phone, not speaking to her child at all, neglecting the child. And this little boy is sitting next to her, copying everything that she is saying.

[ 6 : 05 ] He's shouting at everyone else on the bus, swearing at them, out loud. It's tragic. He's taking the way that he sees to relate to other people, and he's going to grow up and do exactly what his mum does.

Ignore his children not be able to honourably engage with other people, just swearing at them, telling them where to go. And she's doing that because that's what she saw growing up, I suspect.

A society that destroys that basic relationship between parents and children, and family units actually destroys itself.

If you destroy honour in the family unit, you destroy honour in the society itself. Now, that's why this commandment is here. It's so important to sort out the lives of God's people.

It begins with family relationships. Now, the background to this is really important as well, the actual context in Exodus to get it. The story of Exodus is that the Israelite people, God's people, or slaves in Egypt, they have a terrible life there, as we've been saying in the sermons so far.

[ 7 : 15 ] They have this awful labour that they've got to do with cheap materials. They have a workload that they could not possibly keep up with. They're slaves to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh really despises them, so he oppresses them, he wants to kill all of their male children so that they won't rebel against him.

And they can't save themselves at all. So God saves them graciously, and he takes them out of Egypt through Moses so that they would become free people, and people who worship him, people who love him, people who know what his salvation is all about.

And really the story of Exodus is the story of Pharaoh's slaves becoming the Lord's children, going from being slaves to being sons and daughters of God.

The Israelites have got a new relationship to God. They've gone from being estranged from him and distant from him to being adopted as his sons and as his daughters.

He's not estranged to them anymore. He's their heavenly Father. So they've got a new relationship to him, and God wants that relationship between them and him to start to filter itself out in the rest of the relationships with each other, with their human relationships.

[ 8 : 32 ] Really the question that this is all about, this commandment, is how does our new relationship with God, if we are Christians, affect our relationships with each other?

If God is our heavenly Father, how does that affect? How does that transform the way that we relate to other people, beginning with our earthly Father and mother and then spreading itself out? And I want us to look at this in two points.

First, the command, and secondly, the promise. The command is to honour, honour your Father and your mother. What does it mean to honour?

What's that all about? What's interesting here is that the Ten Commandments are not given directly to children. This is not the Mount Sinai Sunday School, you've got all these infants and preschoolers down there, and Moses comes down from the mountain with all of its thunder and thunder with these big stone tablets and tells little kids, honour your Father and your mother.

The people that Moses comes to and delivers this to directly are grown-ups, they're adults. They're the grown-ups in the nation of Israel. They've just been freed from Egypt to be a liberated nation.

[ 9 : 50 ] So they have to restart their whole life together as a people. And what's really interesting and unusual and surprising about this is that as we were saying, God doesn't start off by telling these grown-ups, here is how to pick your national leader, here's how to have grown-up relationships with each other.

Instead, he tells grown men and women, he tells adult people how they should relate to their parents. Now that's something to bear in mind here, it's really important.

So keep that in your mind. What does it mean to honour? Well, start off by saying what honour is not. What honour is not, not the same as necessarily. It's not the same as affection.

It's not a kind of fuzzy feeling that you have to have for your parents, that this is commanding you to have. It's not necessarily the same as trust, this is not a command that you have to trust your parents implicitly.

It's not the same as confiding in them, where you have to share every deepest secret with them. It's not a command to necessarily admire your parents or things that you see in their lives.

[ 11 : 08 ] It's not even a command necessarily that everyone has to obey their parents throughout the entirety of their lives. I'm starting to sweat here because I can see that some of you are thinking, whoa, this is preaching anarchy here.

It's not what we're doing, and we'll see how this makes sense as we go through this. That's what honour is not. Honour is not necessarily the same as any of those things, affection, trust, confiding in, admiring, obeying.

What is honour? The reason that we're saying honour is not necessarily the same as these things is that relationships between parents and children are really complicated things.

They're things that change over your lifetime. Your relationship to your mother and your father is entirely different if you're three months old, if you're five years old, if you're 15 years old, if you're 50 years old, if you're 60 and your parents are 80.

Your relationship to them is really different depending on what stage in life you're at. It's also very different depending on what kind of parents you have.

[ 12 : 19 ] Small kids are completely dependent on their parents. When you're a baby, you're literally lost without them. You can't survive without them.

When you're five, when you're 10, the command from Scripture to you is that you have to obey them. It's what we read in Ephesians 6. But the thing is the goal of childhoods is to produce, not babies, the goal of childhood is to produce responsible adults who are not completely dependent on their parents.

The goal of raising your infant son is that you will produce a godly man who will leave his father and mother and be joined in one flesh with his wife. Obedience and dependence are necessary or ways of honouring your parents when you're a child.

But they're not necessary throughout the whole of your life. Some parents also are not wise and they're not good people.

Some of you and some of us have had major letdowns in life, emotionally crushing things where our parents have got it completely wrong.

[ 13 : 34 ] But regardless of your age, regardless of whether you're a small child, regardless of whether you're a teenager, regardless of whether you are a pensioner, regardless of what your parents are like, whether they're wise people, whether they're good people or not, there is no exception to this command that you must honour your parents.

You don't honour them necessarily because you physically descend from them because this command is also true for adoptive parents. You must honour your adoptive parents in the Bible.

It's the same thing, physical parents and adoptive parents. You don't honour your parents necessarily out of gratitude because we were saying some parents really let their kids down and do awful things to them that don't warrant gratitude or thankfulness.

You don't honour them necessarily for their wisdom because sometimes parents can be fools. Sometimes parents can get things really, really wrong.

And yet despite all of these things, this commandment says that all parents, whether they're your birth parents or adoptive parents, whether they treated you well or badly, whether they're wise or not, all parents must be honoured.

[ 14 : 56 ] And to that you say, well, why? What is honour? What's this thing that the Bible is talking about? The Hebrew word that's translated as honour is literally the word for heavy, something that's weighty.

What it says is treat your parents as weighty people. Your parents must be people that you take seriously.

Don't take your parents lightly. And this is the command that's given to grown-ups, to Israelite adults. Don't take your parents lightly. Treat them as significant people.

Because while we're not commanded to have affection for our parents, and I should add, I really hope that we do, and that for as many of us as possible that we have had a good experience of being raised by parents, and where we have part of honouring them, as we'll see is to express thanks to them for ways that they've been good to us.

But we're not, this is not the same as a command to have affection for your parents. Nor are you commanded to always admire the kind of people that they are. Nor are we commanded to blindly obey them, even when we've grown up and we've become adults in our own rights.

[16:10] We're not commanded to do those things, but we are commanded always to never treat our parents lightly, to never ignore them as though they're insubstantial people that we do not have to care about.

We must honour our fathers and our mothers. And why? Well remember, what we've been saying from building this up, that the command to all, to all people is specifically to honour our parents, rather than admire them or obey them necessarily.

And what that presupposes, what this being a specific command to honour rather than any of those other things, it presupposes that our parents won't be perfect.

It presupposes that if we are parents, that we won't be perfect. That we won't always get it right. God doesn't command you to treat your parents as though they never got anything wrong in raising you.

Because God knows that none of us get it right all the time, that when we raise our children, that we'll get things wrong, that we'll do things that aren't admirable, that we'll do things that our children won't respect.

[17:20] Instead, what God requires is that even though your parents will have got various things wrong in raising you, you nonetheless have to honour them.

That's what we have to do. We have to treat them as significant people. We have to regard them as weighty, important people. We don't have to think that they're perfect.

We don't have to, as adults, obey everything that they say, but we have to regard them as really important people.

As people that we factor into our decisions. How do you do that? How do we treat our parents seriously? Lots and lots of ways. There are millions of ways we could apply this.

Treat them seriously by remembering that we represent them wherever we go. We carry their names, we look like them. Wherever we go, whatever we do.

[18:20] The Bible makes a lot of, if you're a Christian, you represent God. You're Christ's ambassador wherever you go. You know who else we represent? We represent our mums and our dads wherever we go.

Throughout the whole of our lifetimes. Honor them. Treat them seriously in that respect. Honor them by remembering and recognising the good that they do towards you.

No parent gets everything right. But your parents love you. I hope. Don't be shy about letting them know how much you appreciate that.

The huge sacrifices that many of them have made, that many of them do make for you to be here. Students at uni, think of the sacrifices your parents make.

Honor them for their love and for their loyalty towards you. Another way to honour them is by being willing to forgive them. Isn't it sad?

[19:22] When you meet someone who's still really bound and messed up long term, because they're unwilling to forgive their parents for some part of their upbringing.

Honor your parents. Honor them by showing them grace. Honor them by bringing your relationship with your heavenly Father and the forgiveness and the grace between you and him into the way that you relate to your earthly Father and Mother.

That brings us to another point about this emphasis here. Honor your Father and your Mother. And there's an implication there that both Fatherhood and Motherhood are inherently honourable.

That they're weighty things. That they are important vocations in life. And I want to challenge, in particular the students on this, because you are, as you study and then as you go into your career, you're about to enter into a world where the whole ethos is that if you want to find glory and honour and significance, the last place you would look is in having children that you love and that you're committed to.

If you want to find glory and if you want to literally be a weighty person, career comes number one, absolutely. For men and women, you sacrifice everything on that altar just to climb up that greasy pole and to get yourself ahead.

[ 20 : 53 ] That is so contrary to what the Bible says. That in being a Father and being a Mother, that there's honour to be had there. That that is important.

In fact, that is the place of foremost importance in society. Okay, so there's no shame in it. This is where honour is to be found.

Knowing and loving God as your heavenly Father, it gives us a new way to relate to other people, doesn't it?

That's what you start to see here. The people that God has made himself a Father to, a heavenly Father, immediately the immediate consequences for children and even grown-ups and their parents and how they relate to each other.

There's a new relationship there. And that is something that applies throughout all of our other human relationships. This really spreads out something that you see in the New Testament, like we saw in Ephesians 6 and Ephesians 5, which we read before.

[ 21 : 56 ] And it all begins in the way that we honour our parents and the way that we show grace to them and the way that we regard them as important, and we prioritise them, regardless of whether they are good or bad.

This is the first thing, is the command. The second thing that we have is the promise. Honour your Father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

In the context here in the Old Testament, the Israelites had left Egypt and they're on their way to the promised land in Canaan, and they were told that God has promised to give them.

But they weren't there yet, so God is reminding them of His promise that He is taking them there. God will give you this land. And here, He starts to explain how to enjoy Canaan, to enjoy the promised land to the fool.

Honour your parents. And in relation to that, He gives a promise, okay? So that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. And I want to frame this in a question.

[ 23 : 09 ] What I want to ask is, is this a legalistic promise? Or is this a gospel promise? Is the promise that you find attached to this commandment? Does it work in a mechanical way?

If you're good boys and girls, if you honour your mother and your father, will you automatically live well into old age? Is that how this works? I think that reading it like that completely misses the point, which is what we see in the contexts, which we were just speaking about for a second there, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

So we were just saying, the context is that they're on their way to the land God will give them, and God is telling them, this is how to enjoy all the benefits that come with what I'm giving you.

If you honour your parents, your children will honour you, they'll see that example. And you will be honoured by your children, and they will be honoured by their children. And life will be better for everyone.

The commandment here is all about how family life is at the core of national life. Because when society stops promoting healthy family life, it really starts its own collapse.

[ 24 : 23 ] So the Old Testament people are being told, if you want life to go well in Canaan, the first thing to do is get family life right. Learn how to honour your parents. And that really comes across when you see how Paul applies this Old Testament promise to New Testament people in Ephesians 6, which we read earlier on in the service.

Children obey your parents and the Lord for this is right. Here, for children to honour does mean obey. That's the application of this honouring principle to childhood. And then he quotes the Old Testament, he quotes Exodus 20.

Honour your father and mother, and he gives this comment, which is the first commandment with a promise. Then he writes, that it may go well with you, and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

From Paul quotes the fifth commandment. He rephrases the promise part. The promise is originally so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Paul rephrases it to bring out how the promise emphasises that knowing how to relate to your parents in a godly way, whether they were good parents or not, knowing that is crucial to making your own life work.

[ 25 : 40 ] If you know how to relate to your parents on the basis of the gospel, that is the key to so that it may go well with you. That's what this promise is all about.

The point isn't just that if we're all good boys and girls, we'll live to a ripe old age. The promise isn't just that, it's so much more than that.

And if that's all that we've reduced this to, we've missed out on the glorious technicolor that this is actually written in. It's so much better than that.

The idea is that you're already assured of your relationship with your father in heaven. Okay, God taking the metaphors from Exodus forward, God has taken you out of Egypt through Jesus.

God has saved us from sin. So we're already completely assured of our relationship with our heavenly father. We are his sons and his daughters. We're adopted. We know who we belong to.

[ 26 : 42 ] We know where we're going. We have our promised land in heaven. And we know where we're going for all of eternity. And because of that, we've now got a new way to relate to other people.

Completely new relationship dynamic that grows out of our grace based relationship with God. And that in life has to start in the most central relationships, the relationships that we have with our parents, with the people that on so many different levels, we are closest to.

The people who raised us. The people that are meant to be the most weighty and significant in our lives. And that at the core then, if we're doing that, it starts to spread itself out to create a whole new way of living, which Jesus summed up with the words, love your neighbor as yourself.

And it begins with honoring your parents. This is so far from being a legalistic promise where you've just got this a boring little mechanical ditty, be a good boy or girl and you'll live until you're 100.

This is so much more than that. The message of this is that by grace, you're eternally a son or a daughter of God. And on that basis, you have all the neighbors in the world to love around you.

[ 28 : 14 ] It's a gospel promise. This is a promise for people who know they belong to Jesus. Not a legalistic promise. We're saved by faith alone.

That's one of the things that we're huge on in St. Columbus. That we're not saved by any works that we do. We're not even saved by belief plus our best efforts. We're saved by faith alone.

But another thing that we believe strongly is that the faith that saves us never comes alone because faith without works is dead. So we're saved by faith alone, but that faith never comes alone.

If we love God, if we believe the gospel, if we're committed to commandments one to four, because we love God, the way that that works itself out, the way that we see that is in how we love our neighbors.

It's in how we treat other people. And that's what we're going to be seeing throughout the rest of this series, as we look at commandments six to ten. We love our neighbors so we don't murder.

[ 29 : 20 ] We love our neighbors so we don't commit adultery, so we don't steal, so we don't lie. So we don't get consumed in greed and covetousness. That's what we're going to see throughout the rest of these sermons, but I think tonight we'll draw that to a close.

Let's pray together. Our Father, God, we thank you that you are a Father to us, that you're a perfect Father, that you love us with perfect consistency, that you love us with grace and sympathy and wisdom.

Thank you for your patience with us. Lord, we also thank you for your grace shown from many of us in good experiences of earthly fathers and mothers.

Lord, we also thank you that where our experiences have not been so good, that where there's been let down and pain, that we can come to you as the God who redeems the family unit even.

We thank you for your concern and your priority for families, for mothers and fathers, for children to honour their parents, even well into adulthood.

[ 30 : 31 ] And we thank you that your Gospel gives us a new way to treat other people, a way that's not contingent on how good or bad they have been to us. And we pray that you would help us to embody the Gospel, to embody your salvation in the way that we honour other people.

Help us to do that in the way that we relate to our parents. Forgive us for when we fail to do so, for when we fail to treat them as important people, for when we dishonour them, for when we fail to stand for them well.

We pray that you would help us to be wise and to be sensitive with this and to put your word into practice. In Christ's name, amen.