

Five!

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Date: 08 October 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Honor your father and mother. That's a great commandment. It's always exciting to see all the parents smile when you mention that commandment.

Actually, I'm willing to bet all my money, which is not very much, that at any given point in church history when this sermon was preached, there was at least one parent who looked to the side and said to his child, you should listen, you know?

Okay, so the fifth commandment, the fifth word of God, as you will have realized, we're almost halfway through or serious on the 10 commandments.

So let's talk a little bit about where we are. Honor your father and your mother. Actually, I think every time I say it, I think, my mother, if she's watching the live stream, she will be delighted that I have to talk about this commandment.

So let's dive right in, the fifth word. Just so you are aware, we will be talking about the commandment in its biblical context, in its ancient context.

[1 : 0 8] We will talk about what it means to honor our parents, why it's important, and finally, how we can do it. What I won't say or what I won't be talking about is, this commandment can be understood in a bigger sense.

The Westminster Large Aceticism talks about that honor your father and mother. It does not just apply to your father and mother, it also applies to any authorities, to those who are worthy of honor.

I won't dive into that tonight, because we could talk about that for hours and hours, but I won't. You can be relaxed.

So let's talk about where we find the fifth word. First of all, the fifth word is halfway through the commandment. We've got ten commandments. The fifth commandment is halfway through, as your maths will allow you to understand.

Usually we say that ten commandments can be divided in two parts. We've got commandments that talk about us and our relationship to God. You can say vertical commandments, and we've got commandments that talk about us and relationship to our neighbors, right?

[2 : 1 8] Horizontal commandments. Some people actually think that the two tablets of stone that the commandments were written on, they might have been that distinction, you know?

One tablet of stone talked about the first four commandments, and then the other tablet about the other six commandments. You can also use your hands to memorize them. Maybe, I don't know.

It's four and six, so maybe that's not a good mnemonic. It's up to you if you want to use that or not. So we've got commandments that talk about us loving God, and we've got commandments talking about us loving our neighbors, right?

And that's the distinction Jesus gives us as well in the New Testament. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, will, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. Now, the fifth commandment is interesting, because it actually functions a little bit like a bridge between those categories.

What I mean by that is your parents are not God, obviously, although sometimes they like to think that when they tell you what to do. But at the same time, your parents, they're not just your normal neighbors.

[3 : 29] They're not just your friends, your pals, or strangers on the street. Your parents are your parents. They fall into their own category if we think about it. And that's especially true for the time and context the commandment was given in.

The ancient Israelites, they had a very different approach to family. There was a very clear hierarchy there. The father and mother were at the top, and that level of authority was just given.

In our society, we don't care about our parents very much anymore. I mean, you can do that exercise. If I had to give ten commandments, would I reserve one commandment for father and mother, to honor a father and mother?

Probably, a lot of us wouldn't do that. But God says it's important. We've got to talk about it. And the Israelites, they knew that. Why did they know that?

Well, in Genesis, God creates the earth, the heavens, and He creates people. Now, your parents also kind of create you, right? If I was to ask you who created you, was it God or was it your parents?

[4 : 37] We couldn't say either or. We have to say, yes, it was God, but yes, also our parents. They're kind of involved in that. Biology and divine creation play a part in this, both of it.

And that's why your parents have a special relationship with you. You have their genetics ingrained in you. You are their flesh and blood, as it were. So the position of this commandment within the Ten Commandments is quite interesting, because parents are not God, but they're also not like your normal neighbors.

There is a level of authority involved. A friend of mine actually told me, he's a bit older than me, I have to say. He could be my dad's age. But when he was a young lad, he told his father, respect is something that needs to be earned.

Maybe we would generally agree with that statement. But it is a bit odd to hear that, because he would say that to his father. Well, now he's grown up and he realized that it was a bit foolish to say that.

Because it's different with our parents. They participated in your creation, and without them you wouldn't be here. And I know that some of us here tonight actually didn't have good parents, and we will talk about that in a little while, but generally spoken, parents have a level of authority over their child.

[5 : 59] So what does it mean then? What does it mean to honor our parents? If you were here last week and you listened to Corey Sermon, you know that this is one of the two positive commandments.

So last week we talked about the Sabbath. Keep the Sabbath. This week we talked about honor your parents. Honor your parents. It's not a you shall not.

It's nothing that's forbidding. It's something that's commanded, which tells us something. Usually the commandments forbid something that we naturally desire to do.

This one wants us to do something that we naturally struggle to do. Children don't usually wake up in the morning and say to their parents, Mom and Dad, I have tidied my room, emptied the bins, cleaned the whole kitchen, just because I wanted to show you that I love you and respect you.

Well, I did that as a child actually. It's quite obvious. No, all jokes aside, I didn't do that as a child. And if your child does that, congratulations. But usually that's not what happens, right?

- [7 : 03] We struggle with this and this commandment addresses all of us. All of us have parents. And as I said, there is some special circumstances, which we will talk about later.
- But in general, everyone has parents. So what does it mean then to honor our parents? Let's do a little word study. In seminary, you're actually told you should never mention Hebrew or Greek when you're preaching, but I don't care about that.
- So let's do that. The Hebrew word that is used here to describe to honor is very interesting. When we think about what honoring means, people will often say, to honor your parents means to do what they say.
- It means to obey. And we read Ephesians 6 where Paul says, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. And that's great. So obeying is part of it.
- And then he continues, honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. So Paul says obeying is part of it, but he doesn't stop there.
- [8 : 14] It's not quite enough, you know, because the Hebrew word, Kavut, which he has translated as to honor, it bears this meaning of heaviness, weightiness.
- There's something connected to this word that's just really heavy. It actually is used in negative context as well, like heavy labor for the Israelites.
- Or it's used in context with the Pharaoh and his heart was hardened. His heart was heavy. But here it's used in a very positive sense.
- It means something like honoring. And the Bible usually uses this word in its positive sense in connection with God. It's used to describe our response and our attitude towards God.
- It's actually a word of worship to honor or to glorify. And the Psalms over and over again, you'll find this, glorify Yahweh, glorify the Lord.
- [9 : 17] So it seems in a way that father and mother here are associated with God. So what's that mean? Shall we pray to our father and mother? Obviously not.
- Shall we worship them? No, of course not. Appearance are not God. But you see, God reveals in the 10 words his character.
- That's what the law, what the 10 words are all about. His character and his ideas so that we can become more like him. The role of the parents here is actually similar to the role of God because our parents participated in creating us.
- But also, and here's the difficult point for parents, if the children are to honor their parents, it presumes that God's intention for parents is to reflect his character to their children.
- And that's where it gets tricky. And that's where usually all the parents in the room stop smiling. Because we know that we, well, I'm not a parent, but I know that parents struggle as well.
- [10 : 27] God wants parents to be merciful, to be good like he is. The premise here is that the children honor their parents as the parents reflect God's character.
- So this commandment is about obeying your parents, partly. But it's also about so much more than that. It's about our attitude toward people who have authority over us.
- The commandment reveals God's heart about what he intends families to be like. Obeying is not quite enough, it's part of it, but it goes further. The reason for that is that you can obey your parents and you can hate them at the same time.
- You can obey your parents and you can hate them at the same time, but you cannot honor your parents and hate them at the same time. You see what I'm saying here?

I can do what my parents tell me, but I can hate them in my heart for it. But I cannot honor them, this posture, this attitude of honoring your parents, cannot be there and I can still hate them.

[11 : 34] That doesn't work, that's a paradox. You see, God gave this commandment to his son Israel. So the people of Israel, they were in covenant with God.

So symbolically, the Bible describes it as God is the father of his people, of his son Israel, you could say. And he gave it so they would become more like him and honor him through that.

So that's the big scale, right? And on the small scale, we can honor God by honoring our parents. Now, you and I know that it's impossible to be a good parent honoring child out of your own strength.

And all parents in this room know that it's impossible to be a good God honoring Christ reflecting parent out of your own strength. And the solution here is not to just try harder.

It's not just you have to be better. That's not what Christianity is all about. That's not what we are saying. What we need is grace. We need grace as parents and we need grace as children.

[12 : 39] And you know what? There's good news today. Some of you will have guessed it, but the 10 words, they're all about Jesus Christ.

We can honor God in our parents and we can dishonor them. Jesus always honored his parents, his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, but also his father in heaven.

So in Luke 2, we read all about Jesus being born and we have one story. It's very interesting. There's not much about Jesus' childhood, but we have that one story where Jesus is in Jerusalem with his parents and they lose him.

And they're actually on their way back home and they realize we don't know where Jesus is. So they turn around and they find Jesus sitting in the temple discussing theology with some scholars.

And when his parents find Jesus, he says, didn't you know I must be in my father's house? And his parents, of course, don't really understand what he's saying. And then the Bible tells us something interesting.

[13 : 43] It says he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. You see, Jesus just went with his parents and was obedient to them and honored them. That's what the Bible says.

If you're a parent tonight, you know that your children behave like they know better. Now, you have to understand Jesus actually knew better. It must have been in some ways pretty difficult to be Jesus' father or mother because he did know better.

But he also honored his parents. He was obedient to them. And then we've got a story of Jesus at the end of his life where he's hanging on the cross and he's dying.

And he tells John to take care of his mother, Mary. He honors his mother even in his last hour. And he also honors God, his heavenly father.

He tells his parents, did you know I must be in my father's house? John 17, the high priestly prayer. Jesus prays to his father and says, I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

[14 : 58] So Jesus was the perfect example. Always honored his father in heaven. Always honored his parents, his earthly parents. So should we try to be more like Jesus in this regard?

Absolutely, yes. Will we fail to be like Jesus? Absolutely, yes. But here's the thing. Jesus is not only the example of our faith. We're not just to imitate Jesus and try better and try harder.

Jesus is so much more than that. He's the object of a faith. Not just the example, but also the object of our faith. So what do I mean by that?

I mean that we ought to become more like Jesus in the way we honor our parents. But without him and his Holy Spirit, we can't do it. See, we believe that Jesus takes away our sin and that the Holy Spirit enables us to do the things God asks of us.

Only through our union with Christ can we actually be good sons and good daughters and good fathers and good mothers. Only through Jesus and by looking at what he has done for us at the cross can we become God honoring children and God honoring parents.

[16 : 11] You see, other religions like Islam, Judaism, they say similar things about honoring our parents. But the whole weight is on you to do it. You have to be a good parent.

You have to be a good son. In Christ, we find the one who perfectly honored his father so that in him we can honor him too. We can honor God.

We can honor our parents and by honoring our parents, we honor God. Why? Why do we have to do that? Well, maybe you sit here, you listen to my sermon and you're thinking to yourself, well, why would I do it?

Well, first of all, as I said, your parents made you and second of all, God tells you to. You don't honor and obey your parents because they are perfect and have it all figured out.

First and foremost, you do it because the Bible, which we believe to be God's infallible world, tells us to do it. But there's also another reason that the Bible gives us here.

[17 : 15] See, the first four commandments all have an explanation tacked on to them, right? The first commandment promises something. Honor your father. Sorry. No, sorry.

The first four commandments, yeah, they have explanations tacked on to them, right? This is the first commandment that promises something to us. Paul says this in Ephesians 6. This is the first commandment with a promise.

Honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. The 10 words were given to the Israelites. If you recall the situations and where they are, they're on their way out of Egypt, going to the promised land.

It makes sense, right? Your days will be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You will remember that they are on their way to the promised land. So that's okay.

I can get behind that. But what does it have to do with me? What does that mean to us? Does it mean that we have to follow this command and then we will live forever?

[18 : 21] Or that we will live in another promised land or something? No, that's not what it means. In Deuteronomy, the fifth book of Moses, when the words, the 10 words are written down a second time, it actually says something a bit different.

It says, honor your father and mother so that your days may be extended. That it may go well with you in the land that he is about to give you. And Paul is using that sentence in Ephesians 6, 2.

So how do we understand this? And why should we care? So I think the reason is truthful. There's two reasons. So first of all, we can say that having two parents who are married is a good thing.

Physically, mentally, psychologically. And I'm not just saying that because I want to say it's... I say this because there is countless studies that confirm that.

It's very much observable. Non-Christians say that as well. There's countless studies that actually say growing up with one or two parents makes a difference on our health, on our mental health, on our career chances, on our education, to mention just a few.

[19 : 36] And I don't want to say this to hurt you. I don't want to say this to judge you. But I want to say this because the Bible is right. God's intention for what a family is supposed to look like works.

God is our Creator and He knows what's best for us. And we're actually in a crisis. In the 1960s, about 90% of babies were born to couples who were married.

Today, it's about 50%. And these are the facts. And it's something to lament over. And it's something that we should change as a generation.

We should go back to that biblical view of what marriage is. A quarry delivered a great sermon about that the other week. So go back and listen to that.

And again, I don't say this to make you feel bad about yourself. If you come from that kind of a background, the Bible actually is full of complicated families and full of stories about God working through these complex family issues and redeeming them and healing wounds and using people for amazing things.

[20 : 51] Okay, the second thing, how does it make a go well with us in the land that God is giving us? So the second reason is spiritual well-being.

If you honor your parents, you will do what they say and you will thank them for it. Parents of God's heart will raise their children up to place their faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, I know it doesn't work like that. It's not as easy as that. There's a lot of mystery involved in all of that. No question. Ultimately, God has the last say. But I think we can all agree that parents who reflect the character of God want the best for you because they love you and they love God and this is for the children.

You will be wise to listen to your parents and to do what they say. Okay. What does this mean for us?

How can we practically honor our parents? The answer to that might not be so simple because for different people in different stages of life in different situations with different backgrounds with different parents, it might mean different things.

[22 : 05] So for some of us who grew up with God-fearing parents, it might simply mean to say, thank you, mom, and thank you, dad.

Thank you for everything you have done for me. Or maybe just yes, mom, yes, dad. I feel like I'm honoring your parents 101 here.

Saying, I'm sorry. Saying hello to your parents. If you don't live at home, give your parents a call. Spend time with them. Send them cards. Let them know that you're thankful for the way they have raised you.

For some of us here, the commandment can mean much more. For some of you, this commandment actually can be hurtful.

I have a friend who was born into a house with abusive parents. And I remember a conversation that I had with her, I was years ago, but I remember it very clearly that she quoted this commandment on me and said, look, I'm an Annoiur Christian, but I don't want to follow a God who tells me to honor my parents, who abused me and who did nothing but bad things to me.

[23 : 19] And if that's the case and you grew up with parents like that, then I'm sorry, and I want you to know that it's not right. And it shouldn't be like this.

God's heart that He reveals in this commandment is for families and for parents to honor Him and for children to love their parents.

Some of you here tonight will have grown up in broken homes, divorced parents, parents who have died maybe. This commandment that we are looking at, it reveals God's heart about this, good parents who reflect God's character and good children who honor their parents.

Look, if you never had parents who honored God or were good to you, then I've got news for you. We have a good Father in heaven, the creator of this universe.

We have an amazing God who's like a mother to us. That's what Isaiah 49 says. Hebrews 2 verse 11 speaks about Jesus, God the Son, becoming to us like a brother.

[24 : 27] Now, God cannot physically hug you, but He's giving you brothers and sisters in the eternal church family who can give you a hug. God actually tells you in His Word that you are honored and loved and precious in His sight.

If you trust in God, you will be adopted into His big family. He becomes a father to the fatherless as we read in the call to worship Psalm 68.

So maybe if you have a difficult relationship with your parents, God is asking you to go the next step towards forgiveness perhaps. See, this passage is actually very challenging.

It became from something that seemed a bit funny to us, to something that is really difficult and complex. They are still your parents. If you hate your parents, maybe it's time for you to pray to God and to ask Him to help you to find strength, to take the next step in forgiving them, to find healing for your family situations.

Or maybe your parents are already a bit older. Then the situation for you will be different again. Perhaps honoring your parents means taking care of them, making sure they're doing okay.

[25 : 45] Maybe it means visiting them more often, having more important conversations about life than ever before. You might be surprised by the things you will discover about your parents or rediscover about your parents.

Perhaps you are a parent who is struggling tonight. Maybe you're struggling with dealing with your child. You find it extremely difficult to reflect God's character and to raise them up in placing their faith in Christ.

Or maybe you are a parent and your children are a bit older and you only came to faith later on in life and you regret that you never told them about God. Listen, Jesus Christ came and fulfilled this law to make things right.

He came to make families right, to build bridges, to heal wounds. And you must never forget that it all depends on God's grace. You must never forget that He wants you to enjoy Him and become close to Him.

It's never too late to start praying for your children and it's never too late to ask for forgiveness from our Heavenly Father. It's all about Christ and what He has done for us.

[26 : 58] So therefore, honor your Father and Mother that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Amen.