

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:12

By Andy Manning

The title of this sermon is “The Fifth Commandment.”

Your success in life is determined in large part by your relationship with your parents.

If you grow up honoring your parents, then you are likely to have a happy, healthy, and prosperous life.

But if you grow up rebelling against your parents and rejecting their authority and counsel, then you are likely to have all kinds of trouble for the rest of your life.

This is why this commandment is so important.

Kids need to be taught how to honor their parents.

And parents need to be taught how to make it easy for their kids to honor them.

So let’s take some time this morning to study the fifth commandment.

This morning we’re going to answer one question. **How do you honor your parents?** Next week we’re going to look at two more questions.

Why should you honor your parents?

And how can parents make it easy for their kids to honor them?

Let’s start with the text. **Exodus 20:12**¹. “Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the Christian Standard Bible, 2017.

Let me make **eight observations** about the text before we answer our three questions.

1. The command is to honor your parents.

The Hebrew word for “honor” is *kabed* (kaw-bad’).

In his book on the Ten Commandments, **Mark Rooker** writes that *kabed* means “heavy, weighty, severe, or important.... Honoring someone or something carries the nuance of weighing down with honor or respect. It means to treat someone with the respect and deference that his position deserves.”

Philip Ryken wrote, “To honor one’s parents is to give due weight to their position. It is to give them the recognition they deserve for their God-given authority. To honor is to respect, esteem, value, and prize fathers and mothers as gifts from God.”

2. Fathers are mentioned first, indicating their role of leadership in the home.

In the New Testament it says that the husband is the head or leader of his wife.

Here we see that fathers are the leaders of their children.

This means that fathers should be involved in raising the kids, and not merely be providers.

There are unique ways that fathers and mothers add value to a child’s life.

Mothers are very nurturing, and encouraging, and comforting, and sympathetic, and compassionate, and patient.

Children need that because they are still growing. Their hands are little; their little minds don’t know very much yet. Their legs and

arms are short. Their muscles are small. Their willpower is weak. Their wisdom is limited. Children need a mother's love.

Fathers, on the other hand, bring a different dynamic to the table.

In an article in the Wall Street Journal author **Abigail Shrier** wrote about this. She wrote, "When my seven-year-old twin boys were first learning to play piano, I would check with them regularly to see if they were still enjoying it. Finally, their teacher, a Russian woman who was evidently unfamiliar with fashionable theories of child rearing told me that if I wanted my kids to learn an instrument, I needed to cut it out. Some weeks," said the Russian teacher, "they won't like it. So what? Stop asking."

She was describing her style of parenting as typical of mothers – it very compassionate, very sympathetic, very encouraging, nurturing. It errs on the side of being too soft.

She goes on to write that this is the reason children need both a father and a mother.

While mothers are soft and nurturing, dads are rough and challenging.

She summed up the typical father's approach to parenting like this: "Knock it off. Shake it off."

She writes about the statement, "Knock it off," "When a dad style parent says, "Knock it off," it's the child's job to figure out the precise behaviors from which to desist, accepting the definitive knowledge of what and why might never come. The pestering touch of persons and things, drumming of fingers and clicking of tongues, ululating and whinings each on its own might not be grounds for punishment but together, they can drive an adult to madness all the same.

"Discipline socializes children. They become tolerable to those who didn't already love them."

Then she writes about the statement, "Shake it off," "Children need to be told that when they experience a minor fall, a minor unserious injury, when they have a disappointment, they need to move on. They need to keep playing. They need to keep moving. Knock it off and shake it off."

Fathers need to be involved, and in fact, lead the way in child-rearing. Don't just provide. Raise your kids.

The fact that fathers are mentioned first also means that ultimately fathers, more than mothers, will be held responsible by God for how they raised their kids.

As a father, there's only so much you can control, but God will hold you accountable for whether or not you did everything you could do to bring up godly children.

3. Mothers must be honored, too.

Parenting, of course, isn't just the duty of fathers. The father and mother must work together as a team to raise godly kids.

Children must not only honor fathers, but mothers, too. Children are not allowed to play favorites.

As well, this is a reminder that fathers and mothers need to come to an agreement about how to raise the kids.

There is no way a child can honor his father and mother if father and mother are placing conflicting demands on the child.

For example, how can the kid honor his parents if the mom says to avoid using a certain word, while the dad doesn't care and in fact uses the word all the time around the house?

There must be agreement and teamwork between the father and mother.

4. The fifth commandment rules out same-sex parenting.

Today LGBTQ advocates would have us believe that two fathers or two mothers are just as good as a father and a mother.

But that's not true.

God makes it clear here that the model family is a father and mother working together to raise their children.

The Bible describes marriage like this in **Genesis 2:24**. "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh."

Proverbs 6:20 says, "My son, keep your father's command, and don't reject your mother's teaching."

Every child deserves and needs a mother and father who are present, and attentive, and who model godliness and Biblical marriage.

There are needs that only a father can fill meet a child. And there are needs that only a mother can meet for a child.

This implies as well that single-parenthood is not God's ideal. Sometimes it is unavoidable, but it is not ideal.

The best environment for a child is to live with father and mother who are in a committed Christian marriage.

5. This is the first of the social commandments.

Remember that the Ten Commandments can be organized into two tables. The first table, commandments 1-4, teach us how to love God. The second table, commandments 5-10, teach us how to love one another.

Why is the first social commandment about honoring your parents, even before adultery, murder, and stealing?

The reason is because God expects parents to teach their children the Ten Commandments, and if children will honor their parents then they will end up following the Ten Commandments.

As well, the first relationship you have in life is with your parents. If you can learn how to relate properly to your parents, then you will be able to relate properly to everyone else.

6. The fifth commandment is unconditional.

Notice that there is no condition attached to this commandment. It doesn't say that you should honor your parents if they are honorable; if they have earned your respect; if they are worthy of respect. That's not the way it works.

Husbands are to love their wives whether or not they deserve it; wives are to respect and submit to their husbands whether or not they deserve it; parents are to love and care for their children whether or not they deserve it; and children are to honor their parents whether or not they deserve it.

Think of it like the military. In the military you respect and salute the uniform, not the person. In the same way, honor for parents has to do with their God-given position of authority in your life.

Honor them because they are your parents, not because of their behavior.

7. The fifth commandment has no age limit.

At what age do you stop honoring your parents? Never.

Mark Driscoll said, “You are a child for a little while, but you are someone’s child forever.”

The way you honor your parents changes over time, but the duty to honor remains constant.

You are required to honor your parents for the rest of your life and theirs.

8. God takes the fifth commandment very seriously.

Notice the severity of the penalty for breaking the fifth commandment.

Exodus 21:17 says, “Whoever curses his father or his mother must be put to death.”

Deuteronomy 27:16 says, “‘The one who dishonors his father or mother is cursed.’ And all the people will say, ‘Amen!’”

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 says, “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father or mother and doesn’t listen to them even after they discipline him, 19 his father and mother are to take hold of him and bring him to the elders of his city, to the gate of his hometown. 20 They will say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he doesn’t obey us. He’s a glutton and a drunkard.’ 21 Then all the men of his city will stone him to death. You must purge the evil from you, and all Israel will hear and be afraid.”

HOW DO YOU HONOR YOUR PARENTS? (10 Ways)

1. Obey them.

The first way to honor your parents is to obey them.

Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:1 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right.”

Thomas Watson said, “A child should be the parents’ echo; when the father speaks, the child should echo back obedience.”

What is proper obedience?

First, obedience must be immediate. Delayed obedience is disobedience.
Listen and obey, do it right away.

Second, obedience must be respectful. Follow orders with a good attitude.
Don’t complain or argue with your parents when they give you order.

When should you obey your parents?

First, when they give you a direct order.

You can tell the difference between a suggestion and a command. When your parents give you an order, you must obey.

Second, when you don’t want to.

Your duty is to obey whether you like the command or not.

If your parents order you to turn the TV off, then turn off even if you don’t want to. If they order you to go to bed, then go to bed, even if you don’t want to.

Third, when you disagree.

When your dad tells you to do a job in a certain way, it doesn't matter if you think there's a better way to do it; you must obey.

Fourth, you must obey as long as your parent do not command you to disobey God.

Fifth, you must obey until you grow up and move out.

When you become an adult and move out from under your parents' roof, then you no longer need to obey them.

You must still honor them, but obedience is no longer required.

2. Respect them.

Honoring your parents goes way beyond obedience. It starts with obedience, but it involves much more.

It involves respect. Another word for honor is respect.

Treat your parents like they are important and valuable.

Leviticus 19:3a says, "Each of you is to respect his mother and father...."

How do you respect your parents?

First, respect them with your attitude.

Don't complain or argue.

Philippians 2:14 (NLT) says, "Do everything without complaining and arguing."

Don't give them the evil eye or the cold shoulder.

Don't roll your eyes at them.

Don't make the tsk sound with your tongue.

Don't make the frustrated sigh sound.

Second, respect them with your body language.

Leviticus 19:32 says, "You are to rise in the presence of the elderly and honor the old. Fear your God; I am the Lord."

King Solomon exemplified this with his mother, Bathsheba. **1 Kings 2:19** says, "So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him about Adonijah. The king stood up to greet her, bowed to her, sat down on his throne, and had a throne placed for the king's mother. So she sat down at his right hand."

Let everything about your body language communicate respect for your parents.

Third, respect them with your words.

This may be the most important way to show respect.

Proverbs 20:20 says, "Whoever curses his father or mother—his lamp will go out in deep darkness."

Don't say anything disrespectful to your parents, or about them behind their back.

Don't raise your voice and holler and scream at them.

Don't use words that are offensive to them.

Every parent has certain words that they think are rude and ignorant.
Respect your parents by avoiding those words.

Fourth, respect their responsibility to discipline you.

Proverbs 15:5 says, “A fool despises his father’s discipline, but a person who accepts correction is sensible.”

Don’t despise your parent’s discipline.

Recognize that the Bible commands your parents to discipline you.

It is their job to rebuke you when you do something wrong; and if necessary, it is their job to spank you.

And if your parents do not discipline you, then they are disobeying God and will be disciplined by God.

So when you parents discipline you, don’t get mad at them.

As much as it may hurt, be thankful that you have parents that love you enough to discipline you.

Fifth, you respect your parents by not harming them.

You should never steal from your parents or physically harm your parents.

Proverbs 28:24 says, “The one who robs his father or mother and says, “That’s no sin,” is a companion to a person who destroys.”

Exodus 21:15 says, “Whoever strikes his father or his mother must be put to death.”

3. Strive to please them.

Strive to make them proud. Strive to make them happy.

Don't do things that would upset them, or that would make them worry about you.

Don't disappoint them.

Now sometimes you may have to. You must please God before your parents; and you must please your spouse before your parents. But honor your parents by striving to please them.

Proverbs 10:1 says, "A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son, heartache to his mother." Strive to bring your parents joy.

Leviticus 19:3a (KJV) says, "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father..." What does it mean to fear your parents?

Phil Johnson explains this verse well. "There is a proper fear of parents; not a craven fear; an awe and admiration; a healthy respect whereby we fear their displeasure; it is deeply caring about pleasing them. We tremble at the thought of dishonoring them." We should care what our parents think; we should care how they feel about us and our choices. We shouldn't have a selfish mentality that says, "I don't care what my parents think or say. It's my life."

Proverbs 23:25 says, "Let your father and mother have joy, and let her who gave birth to you rejoice."

I have a friend who was raised in a devout Roman Catholic home. He got saved and started attending a Baptist church probably thirty years ago, but to this day he still hasn't told his parents that he is no longer Roman Catholic because he knows that they will be devastated and will fear for his soul; they will feel like failures. Now I'm not necessarily saying that I agree with that, but I do appreciate his attitude toward his parents. He is sincerely trying to honor his parents, and that is commendable.

4. Be honest and open with them.

Two ways that many people dishonor their parents is by lying to them, or by not being open with them; not letting them in.

Many kids live double lives. They act one way in front of their parents, but then they act entirely different when their parents aren't watching, or when they are at school with their friends.

This isn't right. God has given your parents the responsibility of watching out for you, but they can't do that if they don't know you.

This is one of the benefits of homeschooling and family integrated church. They help you to know your kids better.

Erwin Lutzer tells the story of how farmers use to place duck eggs under a hen that was sitting on eggs. She wouldn't know any better. When they hatched, she took care of the ducklings as if they were her own chicks. Eventually when they would go near the water, the little ducklings would jump in and start swimming, and the mother hen would go crazy. Many parents are like that. They are clueless about their kids true feelings, and true struggles, and many other things because their kids are lying and holding back crucial information.

Honor your parents by letting them into your world.

Open up to them and be honest with them.

Ephesians 4:25 says, "Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another."

5. Make them a priority in your life.

This is especially true for adult children.

Many kids essentially abandon their parents as soon as they graduate high school and move out.

They don't call. They don't visit. They don't write. They don't answer the phone or call back. They don't celebrate their parent's birthdays or anniversaries. They don't even visit for the holidays.

They have much more important things to do than hang out with their parents. That is completely dishonoring.

Your parents want to enjoy you; they want to do life with you; they want your friendship as you grow older; they want your companionship; they want to share life with you. They want to be involved in your life.

They want you to call and visit, and often. They want to celebrate holidays and birthdays and special occasions with you. And they deserve that. That's a parental right.

Don't just include your parents in your life. Give them a central role in your life.

Remember, to honor means to treat your parents like they are very valuable and important.

6. Seek their counsel.

When you move out you no longer have to obey your parents.

But you can honor them by seeking their counsel when you make big decisions – when you are choosing a college, a major, a job, and most importantly, when you are choosing a spouse.

Let me give you **two big reasons you should not only seek your parent's counsel, but seek their blessing on your choice of a spouse.**

First, your parents are much smarter than you.

Your choice of a spouse is the most important decision you will make in life.

Your parents are smarter than you, and they love you.

If they strongly disapprove of your choice, that's a huge red flag.

It's very likely that they are night right for you, or that the timing isn't right.

Second, your spouse is going to be your parent's son-in-law or daughter-in-law, and the mother or father of their grandchildren.

Your choice of a spouse is going to make a big impact on your parents.

It's not like your marriage is just about you. It's going to greatly affect your parents. They deserve the right to give their blessing.

This is one of the things that Lydia and I did right.

We didn't even begin dating without the permission of my parents and hers, and then we didn't get engaged without the permission of my parents and hers.

At our wedding, we didn't do the traditional bridesmaids and groomsmen. Instead, we set up two chairs behind Lydia, and two chairs behind me, and in those chairs we put our parents. We wanted to honor our parents. And we wanted to illustrate that this marriage was not just the union of two people, but also proud adoption of Lydia into my family, and of me into Lydia's family.

7. Let them enjoy their grandchildren.

Proverbs 17:6 says, "Grandchildren are the crown of the elderly, and the pride of children is their fathers."

I've seen adult children keep their kids away from their grandparents, and it is heartbreaking.

Family is one of the greatest blessings of life – marriage, children, grandchildren, grandparents. It is very cruel to keep your kids away from their grandparents.

Not only is it cruel to the grandparents, but it is cruel to the children.

Grandparents can be such a blessing to children.

I love letting my kids spend as much time as possible with my parents because I know it's a blessing to my parents, and it's also a blessing to my children.

Every Thursday afternoon some of my kids go hang out with my parents. My mom gives the girls sewing lessons, and my dad gives the boys wood working lessons.

I love it because Lydia can't teach them sewing, and I can't teach them wood working, but my parents can.

I also love it because my parents love the Lord, and they are reinforcing all of the values that we are instilling in our kids.

And then, just about every Sunday afternoon we go to my parent's house for tea.

We go to spend time with them, but also so that my parents can spend time with their grandkids.

8. Care for them in their old age.

One of the most practical ways to honor your parents is to care for them in their old age.

According to the Bible, it is the responsibility of kids and grandkids to take care of the elderly; it's not the job of the church or the government.

The church and the state can provide a safety net for those rare situations in which an elderly person doesn't have kids or grandkids; otherwise, it is the duty of kids and grandkids to care for their parents.

Unfortunately this is no longer a universal value in our society. Only 50% of Americans believe that it is the children's responsibility to look after their parents.

Philosopher Jane English wrote, "What do grown children owe their parents? I will contend that the answer is nothing. We have learned mutuality, we have learned that the responsibility of the parents should earn the friendship of their children and parents who do not earn the friendship of their children deserve no mutuality."

Pastor Erwin Lutzer was in a nursing home one time and asked the director how many of the residents had relatives or friends that visit with some degree of regularity. She said 30%. 70% have no one. That's not just a shame. It's a sin. A national sin.

Let's look at what Scripture says. 1 Timothy 5:3-4,8,16 says, "3 Support widows who are genuinely in need. 4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn to practice godliness toward their own family first and to repay their parents, for this pleases God. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 16 If any believing woman has widows in her family, let her help them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it can help widows in genuine need."

The Bible says you need to care for your parents in their old age.

Hopefully they can live with you when they can no longer live alone, but if they have to live in a nursing home, Christians should be the most frequent visitors; the most devoted and attentive and caring children.

As your parents get older, take care of them.

Step in to take of their yard, and their cars, and take them shopping, and take them to the doctor, and most of all, keep including them in your life.

9. Be a fully-devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

The absolute most important way to honor your parents is to be a fully-devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

Why? The more mature you are in Christ, the better you'll treat your parents.

As well, if you are a fully-devoted follower of Christ, then your parents can have peace knowing that you are teaching their grandkids to follow Christ, and that when you die, you are going to heaven.

More than anything parents want to know that their children and grandchildren are going to spend eternity in heaven when they die.

Proverbs 23:24 says, "The father of a righteous son will rejoice greatly, and one who fathers a wise son will delight in him."

I am one of five brothers, and I know that this is what my parents want more than anything in life. They want their five sons to know Christ, and to spend eternity in heaven.

10. Treat them the way you would want to be treated.

Finally, when all else fails, if you're not sure how to honor your parents, simply follow the Golden Rule. **Treat your parents the way you would want to be treated when you are their age.**

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:12**, "Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

CONCLUSION

Ten ways to honor your parents.

Listen to how the **Heidelberg Catechism** puts it.

Q. What is God's will for you
in the fifth commandment?

A. That I honor, love, and be loyal
to my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
that I submit myself with proper obedience
to all their good teaching and discipline;
and also that I be patient with their failings—
for through them God chooses to rule us.

So how are you doing when it comes to honoring your parents?

Let me close with some questions for reflection²:

- Does your relationship with your father and mother bring glory to God?
- Do you ever talk back to your parents?
- Do you ever hide anything from them?
- Do you ever silently curse them?
- Do you speak well of your parents?
- Are you taking the time to strengthen your relationship with them?
- Are you giving them the care they need and the honor they deserve for their position in your life?

I hope you'll join me next week as we continue to look at the fifth commandment and talk about why you should honor your parents, and what parents can do to make it easier on their kids to honor them.

² These questions come from Philip Ryken's book on the Ten Commandments, *Written in Stone*.