

The Ten Commandments: Posted on our Hearts and in our Homes

Honoring Parents is Not Just for Children

Exodus 20:12

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Introduction to Text: We are in a series of messages concerning the 10 Commandments. Today we are considering the 5th commandment. Actually, today marks a major point of transition in this list of 10 commandments. We have observed again that the first four commandments deal with one's relationship to God. The remaining 6 commandments deal with one's relationship to others.

As we have done each week, we will read verses 1-2 as the introductory words to all of the commands and then read verse 12 which gives us the fifth commandment.

Text: ¹ Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

¹² 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.

Introduction: We will probably not be surprised by the observations of sociologist and historian Carle Zimmerman, in his book *Family and Civilization*. He suggested that the disintegration of various cultures parallel the decline of family life. He identified several specific patterns that typify this downward spiral. They are:

- *Marriage loses its sacredness...is frequently broken by divorce.
- *Traditional meaning of the marriage ceremony is lost.
- *Feminist movements abound.
- *Increased public disrespect for parents and authority in general.
- *Acceleration of juvenile delinquency, promiscuity, and rebellion.
- *Refusal of people with traditional marriages to accept family responsibilities.
- *Growing desire for and acceptance of adultery.
- *Increasing interest in and spread of sexual perversions and sex-related crimes.¹

What may surprise you is that Carle Zimmerman wrote these words in 1947.

What would Mr. Zimmerman say today? The more important question regards us. What about our families? What about our children? What about our parents? Once again—we have a basic choice before us. Are we going to encounter the word of God and only think of how others ought to apply the text or will we let this text penetrate our own hearts and our own sin?

¹ Chuck Swindoll, *The Quest for Character*, p. 90.

The Position of this Commandment

We have noticed that the first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. So, this commandment begins the focus on our interpersonal relationships. What's first? The relationship between parents and children! Don't miss this significance. First of all, let's think about the first four just a moment. If we do not get the relationship with God right, we will not get the relationship with others right. Second, of all the human relationships, the relationship between parents and children is addressed first. Refer back to our previous teaching in Deuteronomy 6 to understand why. We've been saying this all year: "As the family goes, so goes the nation."

The position of this commandment points to the priority of this commandment.

The Primary Meaning of this Commandment

The meaning of this commandment hinges upon how we understand the word "honor." Basically, the literal rendering of the word is "weighty" as in "give weight to" or perhaps better understood "give preference to." Therefore, the idea of this commandment is more than just simple obedience although the New Testament makes clear that this is involved. The idea of this commandment is that we give preference to our parents. We "give weight" to their opinions and positions so therefore we honor them by following them.

The Presupposition of this Commandment

Probably, pretty immediately and rightly so, someone is going to say "What about honoring parents when that would mean honoring evil?" First, let me say that we need to make certain that this is justified and not our excuse to not give honor in the sense of obedience. Second, in almost every instance there is something to honor even if not everything can be honored. Having clarified these two points, let me be clear about the presupposition of the text.

The context of this text and therefore the presupposition of the commandment is that this commandment is being given to families living under God's covenant—or God's rule.

The Perspective of this Commandment

Most will assume that this commandment is for minor children to give obedience to their parents. Children, listen very carefully. That indeed is one very certain application of this text. You will not be in right relationship with God unless you are living in obedience to your parents. That indeed is one application of this text.

Adults, we must understand that this is not the only application of this text. As I understand the context of these commandments, all 10 were given to everybody. As a matter of fact, we could argue that the commandments were primarily first given to the adults with the understanding that the adults would pass them along to their children. So, the point is, we never get beyond honoring our parents. Your parents may be long deceased, but you honor them or dishonor them in your life.

The Promise of this Commandment

Now we come to an interesting and peculiar part of this text. There is a promise attached to this particular commandment. On the surface, we might make some very bad applications from this text. We might assume that the key to old age is obedience. Now that is fine so long as we don't assume the reverse and that is that those who die young must not have been obedient.

The better way to handle this promise is to see it as a general rule to the society and not to the individual. In other words, when obedience in the home breaks down, the fall of the culture will not be far behind.

The primary meaning, presupposition, perspective, and promise of this commandment point to the purpose of this commandment.

The nation Israel was going to survive or die on the basis of their adherence to all of these commandments, but particularly this one is given special notice. Remember the quote from Zimmerman in the beginning.

The Practical Example of this Commandment

Jesus did not come to be our example; He came to be our Savior. However, because His life was perfect, He is a great example. He is an example of living in such a way that honored his parents. Let me show you two great examples.

Read Luke 2:41-52 and John 19:25-27.

He honored His parents by living in subjection to them. He honored His mother by making sure that she was well cared for upon His death. Whatever else the 5th commandment might mean to us, it must mean these two provisions: subjection to and service for our parents.

2 Closing Questions

- Is there anything in my life that does not honor my parents?
- Is there anything in my life that is not worthy to be honored?