

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

### Honor Your Parents

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (Exodus 20:12).

The first four Commandments have to do with our duties to God, and the last six Commandments have to do with our duties to man.

This Commandment calls for an attitude of respect, reverence, courtesy, submission, loyalty, and obedience on the part of children toward their parents. How shockingly old-fashioned it sounds to our modern ears! Our modern version of this rule is not, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," as Paul states it. It is rather, "Parents, obey your children, for you can't afford to be bothered."

What is the purpose of this rule? To the minds of some it is seeking the well-being and happiness of fathers and mothers. It is seeking to guarantee to them the joy that comes from obedient children. It is trying to spare them the pain and anguish of being dishonored and neglected. Its purpose is to save parents the tragedy of knowing "how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

But this is not the primary purpose of the rule at all. While loyalty to it would spare parents endless pain and heartache, while obedience to it would bring them unmeasured joy, its real purpose is not to safeguard youth. It does not look toward the past, but toward the future. This is evident when we notice the ones who are to profit through obedience to it. This rule has a promise attached to it. This promise is not to parents, but to children.

#### I. Whom Must We Honor?

"Honour thy father and thy mother."

#### II. Why Should We Honor Our Parents?

1. We owe our existence to them.
2. We are made in their image.
3. Relationship demands it.
4. Gratitude demands it.

They carried us in infancy and early childhood, fed us, clothed us, provided shelter, sustenance, and protection for us, loved us as no one else could, and watched us with intense interest--in the opening of our minds to the truth, and in our progress in educational, social, business, and professional life. Out of gratitude to them, we ought to honor them.

5. Self-respect prompts it.
6. It is a privilege.
7. It is a duty.
8. It is right.

Parents know more than their children. A mother should know more at thirty than her daughter does at ten. A father will know more at forty than his son will at fifteen. Of course, your case may be an exception; but this command assumes that fathers and mothers learn something by the very process of living. It is the child's right to share in the treasures of this accumulated knowledge.

9. Christ set us an example.

He was under the control of Mary.

10. God commands it.  
"Honour thy father and thy mother." God established the family; therefore, it is a divine institution. It is the first institution on earth, both in time and in importance. As family life is, so will the church and the state be. When the homes decay, both the churches and the state decay.
11. It gives parents great satisfaction.  
Children should strive for the happiness of their parents. Disobedience to them brings heartache and suffering.
12. Many blessings result from it.
  - (1) National Stability.
  - (2) Longevity.  
"That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." A child who learns self-control, submission to authority, and obedience to law will obey the laws of health. When he grows up and enters business, he will obey the laws of business, industry, enterprise, perseverance, and success. One who will not honor his parents will not make a good man or a good woman.
13. The time is coming when it will be impossible for you to honor them.

### III. How Can We Honor Our Parents?

1. By Expressions of Respect.
2. By True Reverence.
3. By Constant Affection.
4. By Cultivating Proper Habits.
5. By Untiring Obedience.  
Disobedience to parents is appalling. An Englishman was asked what he had seen in America; and he replied, "Many obedient parents."
6. By Speaking Well of Them.  
The lack of respect for parents today is alarming. No child ever has a right to refer to his or her parents as "the old man" or "the old woman." Such expressions show a lack of culture, refinement, and Christianity.
7. By Right Living.
8. By Taking Care of Them in Their Old Age.  
Parents spend their lives in providing for their children. This fact involves a kindred obligation on the other side. Natural affection requires it. God's Word also confirms it: "Let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God." (I Tim. 5:4). Children must patiently bear with the weaknesses and infirmities of their aged parents. Many children today are so lacking in gratitude that they allow their parents to be taken to county infirmaries or force them to live on old-age pensions of small amounts rather than provide for them.

This command is reflexive. It speaks to the child and says, "Honor your parents." It speaks to the parent and says, "Be honorable." Parents should realize their God-given office. They should love their children. They should provide for their children. "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (I Tim. 5:8). They are responsible for providing shelter, sustenance, protection, and religious instruction. God holds parents responsible for taking their children to church services. Some say they will not go to church because they were made to go when they were children. That statement isn't any more sensible and doesn't have any more truth in it than to say, "I can't read because I was forced to go to school when I was a child." Parents are required to train their children--not just to make a living, but to live to the glory of God and for the good of others. As a parent, therefore, be sincere, unselfish, truthful, loving, and righteous.