

The Ten Commandments

The Fifth Commandment

“Honour thy father and thy mother...”
Exodus 20:12

The Foundation

- The first four commandments primarily deal with our relationship with God, but these next six primarily deal with our relationship with our fellow man.
- This is not to say that they are wholly practical and not spiritual: you cannot divorce these commands from their sacred setting.
- This commandment deals with the most fundamental of all relationships: that of parents and children.
 - God is exalting the importance of home and family by its inclusion and prominent placement (see also Leviticus 19:3).
- By Divine design, the home is the foundational element of human civilization – Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-25, etc.

The Commandment

- The first key element is verb “honor” (Hebrew *kabad*, Strong’s H3513).
 - Literally means “to be heavy”, used 115x.
 - In about 60% of its appearances, it means “to honor or glorify”, while it can also mean such things as “to burden”, “heavy”, or “rich”.
 - This goes far deeper than just obedience. It is to “heap” blessings and honor on our parents.
 - This is not just during childhood – it is an obligation for our entire life.
- The second element is the object – father and mother.
 - It is a safeguard against selfishness – Romans 12:3
 - In a sense, this honors God by honoring the authority He has placed in our lives – Hebrews 13:17
 - Thus, a healthy home life helps develop a healthy spiritual life.
- The third element is the promise – Ephesians 6:2
 - In both Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 there is a promise of blessing attached to faithful obedience to this command.
 - That blessing appears to be:
 - long life - “that thy days may be prolonged”
 - peaceful life – “that it may go well with thee”
 - blessed community – “in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”

Historical Application for Israel

- The Jewish culture was, and today still is, more *collectivist* than *individualistic*.
- Much of Jewish identity in Bible times was based on a hierarchy of Tribe > Clan > Family > Father.
- A rebellious child was not just seen as a private family matter, but as a threat to society itself.
- There are many additional commandments based on this commandment: striking a parent (Exodus 21:15), cursing a parent (Exodus 21:17), heeding a parent's instruction (Proverbs 15:5), stealing from a parent (Proverbs 28:24), and making faces at a parent (Proverbs 30:17).

Practical Application for Today

- This commandment is reiterated in the New Testament – Matthew 15:4-6, Luke 18:20, Ephesians 6:1-3, I Timothy 5:4
- Christ fulfilled this command – Luke 2:51, John 19:26
- While Paul applies this commandment primarily to children in Ephesians 6:1-3, it is clear from its other iterations that we should continue to honor our parents for our entire lives.
- The importance of this commandment is highlighted in the qualifications for church leaders – I Timothy 3:4,12; Titus 1:6
- I believe it is implied that parents should raise their children and live their lives in such a way as to be worthy of honor.
 - The weakest leadership is simply demanding followship.
- Boardman: “But you interrupt me with a question: ‘Must the child always obey his parents?’ I answer, first, your question is a question in casuistry; and questions in casuistry are not to be answered dogmatically, for they are the most puzzling of problems. I answer again that there can be no real conflict between moral laws; whatever conflict there may seem to be is not between the laws themselves, but in our subjective apprehension of them. I answer once more that in all matters of casuistry, as in this particular matter raised by your question, we must be guided by general principles. For example: In the sphere of fundamental moral obligations, my father and I stand on an equality before God; in this sphere he has no more right to command me than I have to command him. But in the sphere of incidental, shifting duties, my father is over me, and has a right to command me. For instance: suppose, on the one hand, that my father command me to do something that has no moral quality in itself—say something that is simply irksome to me—I must obey: for he is my father, and I am commanded to honor him. But suppose, on the other hand, my father commands me to do something in itself morally wrong—say to worship graven images, or to lie, or to steal—then I must at all hazards disobey him: for my father has no authority to make or unmake moral laws. Listen again to the Apostle Paul: ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord’—that is, in the sphere of moral divine obligation.”