



Honoring Parents

How the blessors become the blessed by obeying the Fifth Commandment

Ephesians 6:1-3 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise:** that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.

What is the commandment referred to here?

The fifth of the Ten Commandments...

Exod 20:12 - Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

How is this the first commandment with promise?

The Ten Commandments were the beginning of the Law and many of the commandments in the Law also make promises for those who obey them. The fifth commandment was the only one of the Ten Commandments to describe a specific blessing for those who obey it.

Given that the verb translated as "honor" literally means "to be heavy." The word normally denotes treating a person or an object as being weighty in the sense of being exceptional or impressive. What does it mean then to honor your father and mother?

- To say a person "carries a lot of weight" implies the individual being described is important and should be treated accordingly.
- The position of responsibility and authority inherent in being a parent deserves respect and privilege.

Who is blessed by honoring your parents?

Honoring one's parents benefits the child and the parents, their families, and their nation...

It is obvious how children honoring parents benefit the parents, how does it benefit the children?

- God blesses them with long life which included eternal life in many cases. Note that long life on the earth includes eternal life because the redeemed will spend eternity on a re-created earth.
- There will be rewards both in this world and in the next for our obedience to God.
 - God is pleased with the faithfulness of God's people to His ordinances.

How does honoring parents benefit society as a whole?

The Bible reveals God's ideal foundation for society is the family.

- A family is more than a tool for propagation. It is the social unit whereby people define their relationship to one another.

A primary relationship within the family is that between parents and children.

- This imparts unity to different generations.
- Perpetuation of society relies not only on procreation but also on initiating children into its way of life.
- People develop their basic social aptitude and form their initial behavior patterns within the family. Parents should be the principal instructors for developing these essential skills of life.

What dangerous trend do we see in how society regards families today?

In our society today we see a tension between conservative values versus "progressive ideals." This is evidence that the theory of evolution has so permeated our thought process that we think any kind of change is good.

Isa 5:20 - Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

What is the significance of the Fifth Commandment saying we should honor both father and mother?

Both "father and ... mother" are treated with equality in this Commandment. Both have responsibility in rearing children and both are entitled to respect from their children.

Does this commandment apply only to biological parents?

- Adoption is an important issue with God who adopts us as children of God into His family.
- Likewise, adopted children should honor their parents for choosing them and for the love, security, generosity, and instruction they have provided through the years.

What is the significance to the reference to "land" in the Fifth Commandment?

The promise to prolong Israel's days in the land that God promised related to living in the land of Canaan. God gave

the Ten Commandments just prior to Israel's conquest of that territory. In essence God declared that so long as Israel maintained appropriate family values they would be able to hold the land conquered under Joshua.

Did Israel obey God's commandments?

What happened?

No, when children ceased to honor their parents, the fabric of society unraveled and the nation became unable to maintain the integrity of its borders. Then other nations came in and occupied their territory.

So what is the principle here about the importance of honoring parents?

Families are the basic social component of the larger societal entity known as the nation. If the smaller elements of society -- the families -- are weak, then the larger unit-- the nation--also will be weak.

Are there any differences to Paul's restating of the fifth commandment?

Exod 20:12 - Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Ephesians 6: 1-3 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

- Paul quoted this commandment as the basis for children's obedience of their parents.
- He pointed out the uniqueness of the fifth commandment in that it as a specific associated blessing as a promise.
- It is expressed in more general terms as he makes clear that it represents a principle that has broad application earth versus land).
- He gives us another motivation: to please the Lord.
Col 3:20 - Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

What is the significance of Paul addressing the children directly in these restatements of the Fifth Commandment?

Their presence within the church was taken for granted.

- Obedience to parents is part of the divine law.

Paul's theological understanding was complemented by pragmatic reasons.

- In every culture the stability of the society depends on parental control. Obeying one's parents is proper behavior.

Children need to recognize that some things have to be accepted even though at the time they may not understand them.

- Obedience is an expression of fidelity and trust.

Does the promise in Ephesians 6:3 mean obedient children will live longer than disobedient children?

- Not automatically... Yet as a general rule living according to God's laws permits an individual to live a longer and fuller life...

Prov 3:7-8 - Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

Prov 15:30 - The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy.

Prov 16:24 - Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

Prov 17:22 - A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

- Furthermore, living by the principle of honoring one's parents results in stronger families, which in turn results in stronger nations (which leads to longer life "in the land").

Did Jesus have anything to say about the fifth commandment?

Jesus quoted the Fifth Commandment on at least two separate occasions. Once he repeated it in conjunction with other Commandments (Matt. 19:19; Mark 10: 19; Luke 18:20). On another occasion Jesus pointed out the scribes and Pharisees deliberately were violating the Fifth Commandment. He condemned their practice of giving to God money that should have been used to care for their adult parents...

Mark 7:9-13

9 And He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

10 "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

11 "But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"--' (that is, a gift to God),

12 "then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

13 "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

How were the Pharisees dodging their obligation to care for their parents?

- "Corban" is a technical term from the Old Testament for an offering made to God...

- It denoted items to be sacrificed to God or used in the sanctuary. Greedy individuals who declared their wealth to be Corban were not required to immediately transfer ownership to the temple.
- This practice was the equivalent of making a will today. One could declare wealth to be Corban and retain it until death!
- Anything called Corban, even rashly, was a vow to God and could not be changed --not even if the one who made it wanted to change or if the vow wronged one's parents.

On what do you think the Pharisees based their reasoning?

- The Pharisees had a habit of adhering to the letter of the Law but not the Spirit of the Law:
 - Jesus understood what the scribes didn't -- God's Word is for the benefit of humanity.
- In this case...
 - Numbers 30: 1-2 - Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: "If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

What was the flaw in the reasoning of the Pharisees?

That obeying God's commandment is to take precedence over any vow that that made.

Why couldn't Numbers 30:1-2 be used as an escape clause for the Fifth Commandment?

- All Scripture is derived from the holy will of God and never contradicts itself.
- To ignore the Fifth Commandment is to declare invalid the Word of God, depriving it of authority!
 - There can be no valid justification for not honoring one's parents.

How does 1 Timothy 4:1-3 show that the break-down of the family in our day is a sign that the return of Jesus is near?

1 Tim 4:1-3

- 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,
- 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,
- 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Note the **"forbidding to marry"** in verse 3 – People are not valuing marriage today, they are just living together.

The rationale is that this way they can avoid the hassle of a divorce.

Why are divorce statistics as high or higher in the church than in society as a whole?

A book I studied in college titled, "How to Lie with Statistics" explains how you need to be careful drawing conclusions from such data...

- More cultural Christians value marriage so more people calling themselves Christians end up marrying.
- We need to define what a true Christian is and weed out from the "Christian" divorce statistics those who do not:
 - Regard themselves as being born again
 - Are never AWOL from church
 - Regular attend a Bible study such as Sunday School
 - Give a percentage of their income to the church (tithe)

How does 2 Timothy 3:1-5 show that the break-down of the family in our day is a sign that the return of Jesus is near?

2 Tim 3:1-5

- 1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:
- 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
- 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,
- 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
- 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

There is a lot we could talk about here but note the **"disobedient to parents"** (verse 2) – People are taught today to throw out the values of their parents and make their own. People are learning today to do what is right in their own eyes rather than what has traditionally considered to be right or what the Bible says.

How has the fruit of this attitude of "do what is right in your own eyes" caused problems?

- We live in an age of parents abandoning children either through divorce or abortion or trusting in the government and other public institutions to raise them (recall the book by Hillary Clinton, "It Takes a Village").
- This is all as has been prophesied...
 - 2 Tim 3:13 - But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Matt 24:12 - And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

- This trend will continue to get worse until the Lord comes back to straighten it out:
Mal 4:5-6 - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."
(note that before Elijah comes, parents and children will not be loving toward one another)