



Ten Commandments 2: Honoring Parents

Joseph and the Fifth Commandment

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study are from the New King James Version

The Fifth Commandment directs God's people to honor their parents. The Commandment teaches children and youth to obey and respect their parents but it has significant application for adults as well.

What happens when children break the Fifth Commandment?

When children break this Commandment, the harmony of the family is injured.

What happens when adults break the Fifth Commandment?

When adults break it, the nation suffers. So serious is the latter application that the most comprehensive teaching by Jesus on the Fifth Commandment concerned the treatment of parents by adult children.

How should the application of this commandment extend beyond the life of a parent?

Children can honor deceased parents by living in positive ways of which their parents approved and they can affirm the positive values that guided their parents' lives.

How did Joseph become separated from his father in Egypt?

Because his brothers resented and were jealous of Joseph, they sold him into slavery and thus forcibly separated from his father.

How did Joseph deal with his slavery in Egypt?

- Despite his misfortune Joseph remained faithful to the Lord in Egypt, even when it resulted in imprisonment.
- However God blessed Joseph and he miraculously was appointed to the second highest government office in the nation.

How did Joseph come to power in Egypt?

Joseph came to power through circumstances that could only have been by the hand of God... his brothers had sold him as a slave and he ended up in prison in Egypt but was

brought before Pharaoh to interpret a dream. Because he interpreted Pharaoh's dream with the wisdom of God, Pharaoh made him prime minister over Egypt to manage their resources to get them through the 7 years of famine that was prophesied.

What brought Joseph's brothers to Egypt?

A worldwide famine eventually led his brothers to Egypt on two occasions to find food.

Why didn't Joseph's brothers recognize him?

After many years there Joseph spoke and dressed like an Egyptian.

Why didn't Joseph reveal his identity to his brothers right away?

He used this situation to test their integrity and discovered their character had altered. They loved his father and were loyal to each other.

Seek knowledge of Their Welfare (Gen. 45:1-3)

Gen 45:1-3

- 1 Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers.
- 2 And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.
- 3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.

What did Joseph do as he prepared to reveal his identity to his brothers?

Joseph ordered the assemblage that attended an Egyptian of his status to leave the room.

Why did Joseph order all but his brothers to leave?

Because the occasion was so personal.

Why did Joseph cry as he revealed his identity?

He was overwhelmed by his emotions to the point where his weeping was so loud it could be heard throughout his residence. He certainly saw the providence of God in this situation.

What did Joseph do as soon as he revealed his identity?

Immediately after declaring "I am Joseph!" he asked, "Is my father still living!" Joseph wanted to know about the health and well being of his father.

Why didn't Joseph's brothers answer him?

His brothers hesitated in answering as a consequence of their fear:

- They recognized their guilt in causing the separation.
- Furthermore they realized Joseph was in a position to enact revenge.

Why could Joseph have taken revenge without any repercussions?

Joseph was the law in Egypt. He was accountable only to Pharaoh and could have executed eleven foreigners without any questions.

What can we learn about how we may honor our parents from Joseph in this passage?

We honor our parents when we seek knowledge about and keep up with their welfare.

Seek an Awareness of God's Actions (Gen. 45:4-7)

We also honor godly parents when we seek awareness of what God is doing in our lives and theirs...

Gen 45:4-7

4 And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

5 "But now, do not therefore be grieved nor angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

6 "For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

7 "And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

What did Joseph do instead of killing his brothers?

He implored them, "Come close to me." He wanted reconciliation, not revenge.

Why didn't Joseph want revenge?

- Because of his faith in God he viewed life with a radically different perspective than is common in the world.
- Rather than attribute his situation to circumstance or luck, he saw the hand of providence.
- This understanding went beyond the immediate events that elevated him from prison to power. He attributed even his misfortune to divine guidance.

v5 – How did Joseph console his brothers that he did not intend to harm them?

- Joseph reassured his brothers and told them not feel remorse and guilt about their past actions towards him.
- He recognized that while their motives had been evil, nonetheless God employed their actions for good:
 - God had sent him ahead of them to save human life.

v6 – What is the significance of the time-frame given for the famine?

The "two years" refers to the time the famine already had lasted. Nine years earlier Pharaoh had had bizarre dreams (Gen. 41:1-45):

- None of his advisors or priests could interpret the meaning of these dreams. Joseph alone had told him that seven years of unparalleled prosperity would be followed by seven years of famine. Furthermore he had advised Pharaoh to erect buildings to store grain and to stockpile food during the prosperous period. Here Joseph warned that "five years" of famine remained. "Plowing and reaping" signified the initial and the final tasks in agriculture. Joseph knew any effort to farm would be a complete failure.

v7 - Did God raise up Joseph just to save the family of Joseph from the famine?

No. The statement "to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives" reveals God's concern extended beyond just the family of Jacob. A significant percentage of the earth's population was threatened by this catastrophe. God had acted to spare Egyptians, Hebrews, and others. Joseph was the instrument of God's "great deliverance." This Hebrew term describes an escape from danger. Survival was not due to good luck but was an expression of God's mercy.

How was Joseph a type of Christ in his role as savior?

As God provided Joseph to provide the only way for many people to survive the famine, God also provided Jesus who made the only way for many to survive the penalty of our sin condition.

Seek to Provide for Their Welfare (Gen. 45:8-11)

We honor our parents when we are aware of their needs and seek to provide for their welfare...

Gen 45:8-11

8 "So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry.

10 "You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.

11 "There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine."

v8 - How did Joseph describe his position in Egypt?

The phrase "father to Pharaoh" described the position Joseph filled. It was an idiom for an intimate adviser. Just as a father instructs a child in the best course of action, so had Joseph instructed Pharaoh. (See Gen. 41:33-37.)

v8 – Who did Joseph credit with his position in Egypt?

Verse 8 shows Joseph credited God for being dislocated to Egypt.

How did crediting God for his position ease his relationship with his brothers?

- First he released his brothers from their blame in his misfortune. This ensured that no guilt marred the personal relationships between family members.
- Second he attributed his success to God and not personal ability or luck.

v9 – What message did Joseph want his brothers to tell his father Jacob?

About Joseph's being alive, the position he held in Egypt, and to come quickly to Egypt.

Why did Joseph want his father to come quickly?

Parents and children need to share time together. The pain of separation had lingered too long in the lives of Joseph and Jacob. Therefore Joseph requested that his Father come immediately to Egypt.

Why didn't Joseph go to Jacob?

Ordinarily one might expect the son to travel to his father. However Joseph knew Jacob and his family would "become destitute" unless they moved to Egypt. There Joseph could care for his father's physical needs and protect his family during the last five years of the famine.

How do you think Jacob would react to the news about Joseph?

- Parents who love their children want them to succeed in life. Joseph's message to his father Jacob in effect was, My life has been a colossal success!
- Jacob discovered his lost son not only was alive and also had attained position and status beyond anything father or son ever imagined possible. Second only to

Pharaoh, Joseph was the most powerful man in the world.

- What a jubilant shock this news must have been to an elderly father. Little wonder he had difficulty believing it...

Gen 45:26-28 - And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them. But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. Then Israel said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Responsibility of Honoring Parents

Honoring parents includes accepting and following through on our obligations to them. 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.

Benefits of Honoring Parents (Ex. 20:12)

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

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.

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.

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

- God blesses them with long life which included eternal life in many cases.
- 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 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.

Paul quoted this commandment as the basis for children's obedience of their parents...

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."

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.
Proverbs 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.
- Furthermore living by the principle of honoring one's parents results in stronger families, which in turn results in stronger nations and longer life..