

Series: Ten	Reference: Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-3	Title: The Fifth	Date: 07.17.2022
Website Writeup: God cares about the family unit. Loving your neighbor includes honoring your parents.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

God cares about the family unit & loving your neighbor includes honoring your parents. The Ten Commandments now transition from the first half of Jesus's answer to the scribe in Mark 12 to the second.

Remember Jesus' answer in Mark 12 to the question, *"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"* His answer broke down the Ten Commandments into two lists; the first four focus on our relationship with God, the next six focus on our relationship with others. When we focus on living our lives in such a way that we obey these commandments, then we show God & the world where our priorities truly lie - in loving God & loving others.

God wants our love, devotion & worship, and also cares about how we treat others, demonstrating this through the next six commandments. God understands that how we act in the world starts in the home. God cares about the family unit; how parents & children & spouses interact. We should always maturely resist outside control & negative cultural influences on children & family, since the family is the incubator of faith & character; where our witness shines brightest throughout the whole opus of our lives. And we must remember, strains of familial sin can be broken in Christ, newness can occur. God can redeem even a bad past, setting the future of a person in a new direction. In Christ, we're not bound by our past, negative family patterns need not govern. Even if our upbringing was done badly, we can build a family reflective of God & healthy in many ways.

The 4th Commandment is found in Exodus 20:12... *"Honor your father & your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."* In Hebrew, the word *honor*, means heavy or weighty.¹ It's of the same family & nearly identical to the Hebrew word for glory. We're called to glorify God, which means we live a life that reflects well on God & points to Him, giving Him the credit He's due.

When the Bible tells us to honor our parents, it means we live our lives in such a way that it reflects well on them. God wants us to honor our heavenly Father by glorifying Him through our life, and He wants us to honor our earthly parents by living in such a way that people speak well of them. In many ways, if you live a life of love, then you will automatically honor your parents.

¹ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, s.v. "H3513, *kabad* or *kabed*," <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3513.htm>

Consider 1 Corinthians 13:4-7...*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Apply that lifestyle & people will speak highly of your parents if you're patient, kind, avoid jealousy, not boastful, proud, or rude; aren't irritable, keep no record of wrongs; rejoice over truth; never give up on someone, never lose faith, are always hopeful & have endurance. You'll be living a life which reflects well on & honors them. **Notice then, honoring father & mother is not about them, it's about your character development in Christ. Honoring parents honors Christ.**

This is tricky when you have abusive or manipulative parents. It's important to read the command as it's given. God doesn't say to do whatever your parents tell you. He doesn't command blind obedience. God doesn't say make your parents proud by living up to their standards & expectations. The command is to honor your father & your mother.

In the movie *The Breakfast Club*, Andy ends up in all-day detention for an attack on another student. In the movie, he reveals he did it because of the pressure he feels from his father to be number one. He saw a guy in the locker room he thought was weak, and felt compelled to attack to make his father proud.² Oddly, that wasn't honoring of his father, although his father may've liked & respected it.

Today many live out of victimhood like Andy first does, bringing about strife in relationships. Blaming their past & upbringing. Pointing to families & parents who've failed them, justifying their own bad behavior on what's been done to them in the past. God directs us away from such immature behavior & thinking through personal responsibility for our words, actions & thoughts. He calls us to account for the things we've done & even in what we've thought. But many live now by the false axiom, 'Follow your heart'. The problem is our sinful human hearts are terrible guides! People currently place emotion above logic & rational. In our world today personal individual desire & emotion trump Truth. Increasingly, it's seen that it doesn't matter what is true, only what we want.

But in Christ, filled with the Spirit, and led by His Word, we gain self-control over our bodies & emotions. Emotion, along with the thoughts & desires which guide them are to be taken captive to Christ. As if we lead our emotions & desires by the hand to Jesus allowing Him to order them rightly & in perspective. He locks them down in the place they should be & they in turn become healthy instead of running destructively free.

Victimhood does no one any good, neither the person living out of it, or those surrounding them. It's a horrifying destructive place to live; but Jesus gives us value & dignity - we are new creations in Him! We may not be worthy of Him, but we are of great value to Him. The one simple truth that God loved the world so much that He gave

² *The Breakfast Club*, directed by John Hughes, Universal Pictures, 1985

His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him would have eternal life is enough to speak to our value in Christ!

Salvation's a legal matter, as if you were standing in front of a judge for killing someone out of sheer anger. The judge says, "You're on trial for murder, do you have anything to say?" And you reply, "Your honor, it's not my fault, if you grew up with my parents & their expectations, you'd snap like I did!" What would the judge say? He'd say, "Your families not on trial here, you are, for the actions you committed." And you reply, "Well judge, It's not my fault, I'm just a product of my environment, and I've done a lot of good things too! Let me tell you about those." Then you begin to list those good things... that judge is going to cut you off mid sentence & say again, "You're responsible for your own actions, no one can make you do anything. You're not on trial for the good things you've done, you're on trial for murder." Then he'll sentence you to life or worse.

That's what Paul says to us in Romans 6:23, *for the wages of sin is death...in other words, your being paid what you deserve for the actions you've committed. Those wages are in the form of death for any small infraction against God's holy Law. That's how high His standard is in the Moral Law. One small lie. One small lustful thought about the woman on the train Jesus says is adultery. One hateful thought towards another Jesus says is murderous. Remember, God's holiness & our sin are like oil & water, they cannot coincide - something had to be done about our sin. And, the good news is in the rest of that verse which says...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

That's why the Gospel is so unique, unlike any other spiritual construct. Because Jesus said with His last breath on the Cross, "Tetelestai!" Which we translate as 'It is finished'. But it actually means is 'the debt's been paid'. So, we stand before the Father as He judges us on His moral Law, and just one small sin condemns us to hell. But Jesus says, "Father, I've paid their fine, they can go." All due to His work on the cross!

It doesn't matter if your parents were good or bad, evil or virtuous, loving or absent, rich or poor, kind or mean - you're not perfect either, we all tend to grow up to be our parents anyway! The command is to honor them, not even necessarily to emulate or follow. Even if it's only for the fact that one amorous moment between them produced you, that fact's worthy of honor - just being mom & dad. It's wonderful to have good parents who walk with the Lord, raise you well, and treated you as you should be - but it's not necessary in order to fulfill this commandment - we can't sit by blaming others for our own choices & attitudes. We must grow up as we grow old in the faith.

In *The Breakfast Club*, Andy realizes how wrong his actions were, and how wrong his father is in his expectations for his son. He takes personal responsibility. This raises the question, What do you do if a bad parent says, "You aren't honoring me because you aren't doing what I want you to do?" Well, if it's something unhealthy, or a sin, then you stay true to the Lord by saying 'No' to them. And speak truth as well, that you're seeking to live a life of integrity & virtue which reflects well on God & family. By doing so, you'd be honoring your father & mother. Honoring them is more about you walking well with God being a witness in word & deed across the board!

The apostle Paul expands upon this commandment, since as in all these sermons, we have a parallel passage in the New Testament to our commandment which is found in Ephesians 6:1-3...*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father & mother” - which is the first commandment with a promise - ³“so that it may go well with you & that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

There's some sort of promise to well-being here in following this commandment! But Paul recognizes that while the children are to obey their parents, parents, especially fathers, are to treat their children well too. So, we can say a child is responsible as they grow for their own thoughts & actions in life & cannot blame others. But, how can a child honor a parent who neglects their parental responsibility? How will that child even know the importance of honoring their parents, if their parents live without any sort of integrity in their life? A child needs modeling & direction. So, although children don't get off the hook just due to bad, or absent parenting, parents also get trained in the Word of God as well with an expectation to parent in a healthy manner. God desires to see the whole family walking well reflecting Him as a unit. It's best for all.

After reiterating the fifth commandment, Paul goes on to say in verse 4...*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline & instruction of the Lord.”* While the text says 'Fathers', it's entirely acceptable to translate into today's reading 'parents' because what is in view is those in the home who have authority over the children should act in this way. A paraphrase of verse 4 could be: “Parents don't hurt your children, instead show them Jesus.”

Children are fragile, although not as fragile as some might think - God seems to have built a great resiliency into us all. Yet, it is also true that their mental & emotional state is such that a thoughtless word, or action taken too forcefully, has the potential to cause long lasting mental, emotional, spiritual, or even physical damage. We must be careful, as parents, with the words we use towards our children. John Calvin translated the first half of this passage in this way: “Let them be fondly cherished.” If we want our children to grow up as they grow old in the faith, we help them to fulfill their calling, including honoring their parents, by showing them love, encouragement & positive reinforcement, as well as healthy loving discipline for their good. This makes their job of honoring mom & dad much easier, let alone their walk with Jesus.

Again, if children are to honor their parents & obey this commandment, their parents have a responsibility to be raising them in the faith. Christian parents are to bring their children up in the training & instruction of the Lord. This is one area where parents may be failing in their duties. If the parent leaves it to the Sunday school teacher to teach their children the faith then only an hour a week they're learning what it means to follow Jesus - and not from their parent - that's a problem. It's a simple equation of mathematical influence. The more they see & experience of a thing, the more likely they'll adopt that thing. Moms & Dads greatest contribution to their children is the parents own personal intimacy with Jesus. A child watches & listens to words & actions, and intuitively picks up on intention & motivation. If you want them to walk with Jesus,

you walk with Jesus, invite them into the process allowing them to observe your convictions in action.

Often parents will say they want to let their children decide what they believe for themselves. There are several problems with this train of thought. First of all, your children aren't blank slates. They are dry sponges. They will soak up any & everything they see, hear & experience. So unless you constantly show them a blank slate, then they'll most likely either adopt your worldview, or some sort of blended worldview of whatever they see from their parents, on tv, radio, or experience at school. The second problem of course is this isn't what God asks of you! It's abdication of your position of leadership into which you've been called. Parents are to lead, you're not a friend, you're a parent. When that baby popped out, so did your responsibility before God.

Ephesians 6:4 is clear: there's a way we're to bring our children up & the specific target of that child rearing is that they know & understand better the ways of Jesus. We're called to impart the faith to our children, and it makes life much easier for them to honor God when their parents do so as well. God cares about the family. He cares how the family interacts with itself & how that's reflected to the world. That's the point of this commandment: not simply that children do what they're told, but that parents raise their children in the faith so that their children know they're to live in a way that brings honor to their parents & by so doing, to Christ as well making the whole family unit a positive witness to the world for Jesus!

I'd like to end with a story, *How Love Transformed My Father's Life*, by Kong Caijun & illustrated by Nicole Chan. A story of a woman who honored her father, and of a bad father made good in Christ. She says..."During this COVID-19 season...I felt God leading me to reach out to my family. Growing up, I knew my father to be a responsible man who provided for the family. However, he was also a very strict disciplinarian, and I had always been fearful of him. Because of that, we've never had a close or loving relationship as father & daughter.

I've been praying for my father's salvation for 15 years. In the last few months, my father's work was badly affected by COVID-19, and he began to suffer from anxiety. He started to have breathing difficulties & insomnia, and became frustrated. The worst thing was he would vent his anger at us, straining family relationships further. This string of events affected me greatly. Though I've been praying for my father's salvation for 15 years, I felt helpless. The situation hadn't changed - I could only turn to God.

While I was waiting on God one day, I felt Him asking, "Caijuan, don't you like to cook for others? Why don't you cook for your father too?" My immediate reply was, "My father won't eat it & I'm scared to cook for him!" But God was undeterred. He went on, saying, "You accompany others when they need to go for checkups at the hospital? You can bring your father to the doctor to find the cause of his breathing difficulties." God kept encouraging me to take the next step to care for my dad. I plucked up the courage to reach out to him & brought him to see different doctors for his condition. I'd also initiate conversations with him. Each time we visited the doctor, I would cook a meal.

He refused to eat them in the beginning, but he began to look forward to them after a while & even gave me tips on how to cook better! Awkwardness dissipated & we grew comfortable.

After a while, I felt God leading me to take a big step of faith to invite my father to stay at my place so that I could take care of him. Up till then, my father's never stayed anywhere other than his home. He's never even visited my house, so I was very surprised he said yes. For 10 days, we ate, watched TV & went to the market. We had the chance to have conversations about his growing up years. We had heart-to-heart talks; cried & laughed together. This had never happened before.

One day he shared he wasn't a good son because he wasn't filial to his parents. He became so emotional he broke down in tears. I took the opportunity to share the gospel with him, telling him God is love. He was so touched he wanted to accept Christ! That night, my cousin & I led my father to trust in Jesus. For the first time in my life, I laid hands on my father to pray for the Holy Spirit to fill & heal him, and grant him peace. After praying, we both wept. I told him this was a day I'll never forget. We were no longer strangers. The reconciliation with my father brought healing & peace to my heart.

Since he became a Christian, my father's changed in so many ways. He smiles & talks naturally. He has a Bible which belonged to my grandmother - he reads it every day. He prays for the family every day & texted his elder brother to reconcile, putting aside years of hurt & resentment. The reconciliation with my father brought healing & peace to my heart. Not only did God work a miracle in my father's heart, He restored his health! He no longer struggles with insomnia & breathing. He can now sleep with ease.

One day, I saw my dad in his room, kneeling with his mother's Bible, praying, and listening to a worship song. I was touched. That image will forever be etched in my heart because it shows how Jesus transformed my father's life completely & restored my relationship with him. My heart's filled with thanksgiving. I know this is all the work of the Holy Spirit - His grace upon my family."³

She definitely honored her father, and he became a good father through Christ! Do you need to repent & begin to honor your parents? Do you as a parent need to repent & begin to cherish your children, all of them biological or otherwise without favor? I would urge you to make that step.

³ <https://thirst.sg/how-love-transformed-my-fathers-life/>