

Family. That word likely brings up all kinds of emotions. Some full of hurt, some full of gratitude, some joy, some disappointment. Family shapes us in significant ways. Whatever your experience – good or bad – mad or glad – there is no doubt that the family is the most basic of human relationships. It is the foundational unity of society. It precedes the state and market.

It is God's idea. He creates the world and then the first command in the Bible in Gen 1:28 is get married and have kids: be fruitful and multiply and fill the world with my glory as my royal image-bearers. God starts with this foundation unit because the family is the source and core of a stable society. As Pastor Kevin DeYoung writes, "Civilizations, societies, cultures, and countries do not flourish apart from social order, trust, and mutual respect. All of that is meant to be taught and imbibed in the incubator of the family."<sup>1</sup> All people acknowledge that the single best predictor for being a healthy adult human being, graduating high school, staying away from crime, off drugs, and avoiding stupid decisions is whether or not you had a mom and a dad who lived you. That's just best. One man one woman covenantally committed to stay together no matter what. Ride or die. The world takes offense at such a statement, but this is the way reality works. Go against the grain of it and you'll come away with splinters.

Sociologist Bradford Wilcox writes, "The best community predictor of poor children remaining stuck in poverty as adults was the share of kids in their communities living in a single-parent family. Not income inequality. Not race. Not school quality. Family structure was the biggest factor in predicting poor kids' odds of realizing the American Dream in communities across the country."<sup>2</sup>

Healthy families are the key to healthy societies. They provide social stability. Which tells us something about the instability of our country today. There are nefarious forces at work to downplay and diminish the family. They're in bad shape today. One of four children do not live with two parents at home. It is even worse for AA families: three of four children are born outside of marriage.<sup>3</sup> Then you have the welfare state: many want the state to replace the family. So much of what the modern-day democratic party stands for are opposed to the family: penalties for being married, same sex marriage, the trans agenda, teacher's unions over parental rights, abortion, on and on.

Then we have individualism: we often think of me and mine rather than the family unit, the sexual revolution: the pill has changed the world for the worse. For most of human history, sex meant children. So you didn't play around with it. And women would evaluate a potential partner in terms of how he will care for her and the baby. Those days are long over. Then no-fault divorce, incentivizing daycare, the redefinition of marriage based on nothing more than feelings. Then you have feminism. Marxism. They took it down but the original BLM website stated "We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure." The whole LGBTQI+++ movement is completely anti-family. Literally, children cannot be produced from those people.

Today, people are pushed to spend time outside the family. Some neutral things have had bad side effects. Just consider central heating, for which I am abundantly thankful! But before central heat pushed heat to all parts of the house, how did you stay warm? All the members of the family gathered in the room with the fire. Or modern transportation. Mobility. Or the industrial revolution, before which you lived in productive households and kids took up the family business. Dad didn't leave to go to

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<sup>1</sup> DeYoung, *The Ten Commandments*, 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Get Married*, xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Leithart, 66.

work but often worked near the home and the rest of the family was a part of the productive household.

Why? Why would so many people, and institutions, and forces be opposed to the family? Spiritually, the main way the faith is passed on is through the Christian family. [Eberstadt on secularism]

God designed the family. He created male and female: binary genders. Equal in essence, complementary in roles. Each essential. He designed it he gets to define it. And he designed that this man and woman would come together and produce children who will be raised by a mother and a father. Children need both. I saw a video of a man baby rooting to latch in order to nurse.<sup>4</sup>

We are in the book of Exodus and in the middle of the Ten Commandments. God has delivered his people and now is telling them how to live. That order matters. These Ten Commandment sermons are about how to live practically, but if you are new here you need to know that the heart of the Christian faith is what Christ has done for us on the cross. But once you come to faith, then God tells you how to live. And that's where we are in Exodus.

God created the family and he clearly cares about what he creates. The 5th command as well as the 7<sup>th</sup> command: you shall not commit adultery are about the preservation of healthy family life. Two of the Big Ten about family. **20:12**. God says honor your father and your mother. Honor them. Prize them highly (pastoral privilege – Mom). Respect them. Same word used for glorify: *kaved*. It means heavy. It is to give weight to them. Consider them weighty. Authority is good and parental authority is the original form. This is one of the Big Ten. On par with murder. God thinks the family is a big deal. *Honor your parents*.

God cares about the family and children to honor their God-given parents. Listen to the severity in the Law of Moses in this regard: Lev 20:9: “For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him.” Exod 21:15, 17: “Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death. . . . Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.” Deut 21:18-21: “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.” What would society look like if the Law of Moses were still in force?

Notice the promise: **12b**. If you obey your parents, you will live long in the land. Now, Moses is not dumb. He knows that plenty of obedient kids don't always have long lives and that plenty of disobedient ones do. This is not about the individual, but the people of Israel corporately. If there are stable, healthy, ordered families, it will go well for the nation and they'll stay put. But if at this most basic unit, there is disrespect and disorder, then it won't be long till the nation crumbles. They'd get ran over. Let the reader understand. Where families disintegrate, the nation will soon follow, which is why all believers – really all Americans – should have a vested interest in the flourishing of the nuclear family. No family health no national health (Ezek 22:6-8, Mic 2, 7).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://x.com/WombsNotForRent/status/2106996630578942283>

Deut 4:40 reiterates this truth: “Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.” (5:32-33).

Most of Christian history has seen fit to say this command entails honoring all our elders, beyond just parents: WLC 124: Q. 124. Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment? A. “By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God’s ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.”

Lev 19:32: “You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.” Rom 13:1: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.” 13:7: “Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” 1 Tim 5:1: “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

The Fifth Commandment *applies* differently at different stages of life. **Parents**, what can you learn from the Fifth Command? Two things: expect obedience and keep the gospel front and center. First expect obedience. Require it. First time obedience. Don’t count to three. That’s just delayed obedience which is disobedience. Some of y’all be like 2 and a half, 2 and three-quarters. What are you teaching your child? It’s fine to teach them fractions during their math lesson but not when it comes to your authority – which we learn here is God’s authority. You are loving God and loving your child by requiring obedience.

Obedience is a God issue. You are his agent. You are under his authority as well. They should be taught to obey all the way, right away, with a willing spirit. We started out saying with a joyful spirit but thought might be asking too much. Not necessarily joyful, but hopefully willing.

By requiring submission to your authority, you are training them to submit to God’s authority. Toddlers who are submissive to the authority of their parents are well prepared to submit to God’s authority. A tantrum may be cute at two; it aint at 12. Upside down funnel.

And keep the gospel front and center. Because they will disobey just like you disobey. Teach about Jesus, sing about Jesus, live for Jesus, and go to Jesus when you blow it. And you will. Confess, repent, forgive, wash, rinse, repeat.

**Grandparents**, yes, spoil them – you’re gonna do that regardless of what I say up here - but don’t just do that. Disciple them. Not just screens and sweets but Scripture and sanctification. / And live regret free. Sometimes I hear grandparents expressing regret about how they raised their kids. All of us will die with regret in a fallen world, but the gospel rids us of regret. You are forgiven. No condemnation. God is sovereign and God is good. Press on. Redeem the rest of your time, for the days are evil.

**Children**, I need you for like 10 min: honor your father and your mother. This is a command from God. Much could be said but let me just say four things: First, obey your father and mother. Sadly, this is rare these days. People would buy our lunch. All they did was not cuss each other out or be locked into a screen the whole time.

This should be basic. Augustine said, “If anyone fails to honor his parents, is there anyone he will spare?”<sup>5</sup> Calvin said, “Nature itself ought, in a way, to teach us this. Those who abusively or stubbornly violate parental authority are monsters, not men.”<sup>6</sup> Kids, don’t be monsters. Be respectful and obedient.

This should be basic, but it’s far from basic. Just think of when you watch movies or shows today, you rarely see this today, huh? The vast majority of shows made for kids actually do the opposite. They show the kids knowing better than the parents. Undermining their authority. Mocking Mom and especially Dad. Listen to God’s take: Prov 30:17: “The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.”

Eph 6:1-3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land’.” Obey them in the Lord. Col 3:20: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” You honoring your parents pleases God.

Children, honoring your parents is a big deal to God. Rom 1:29-31: “They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, *disobedient to parents*, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.”

God cares about obedient children. That’s why the Proverbs are full of such instruction. Children, follow the way of wisdom: **Prov 4:1-9, 10-11, 20, 23, 10:1, 13:1, 15:5**. Be wise. Don’t be a fool. The textbook Proverbial fool is one who doesn’t listen to his parents. Obey your parents.

Second, trust them. They’ve lived some life. If they are in this church, they fear God and love his Word. Assume that their rules, their curfews, their restrictions are there to bless you, even if you don’t see it. They are for you not against you. One day you will. Mark Twain: When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant... at twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned.”

Third, embrace discipline. Your parents discipline you because they love God and love you. If they didn’t discipline you, they would actually hate you. Prov 13:24: “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” Heb 12:7-11: “It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Fourth, be grateful. The life of a parent is constant sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> Time money energy sleep. Kids, most of your parent’s time, energy, and money revolve around you. Helping you flourish. Seeking to launch you into the world as a stable human. Be thankful.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 602.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.8.36.

<sup>7</sup> DeYoung, *Ten Commandments*, 84.

And listen, if you ever think you are living life better than your parents. You're like I am doing better than them. Congratulations. You know who else lived better than his parents and still obeyed them.<sup>8</sup> Jesus of Nazareth. Luke 2:51 says, "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them." Jesus Christ was submissive to his parents. / Obey them, trust them, embrace discipline, and be thankful.

Teenagers – "AIT" – we know it's hard. Believe it or not, we have been there before. Those years were part of our journey too. They're not easy. We get it. You are learning independence and asking the big questions and your body is changing, and hormones are making it hard to have emotional self-control. But the main thing God calls you to do is honor your parents. We want you to keep growing in spiritual maturity and the main way that will show itself is how you honor and obey your parents. Make that a key focus of your spiritual growth during these years. / Remember, "honor" means weighty. Give weight to their opinion, their presence, and their boundaries for you. Don't treat them lightly.

**Adult children**, honor your father and mother. This is not just a command for children. It was given to the nation of Israel. Three ways: cherish respect support. First, cherish. They brought you into this world and they sacrificed much for you. You are where you are in large part because of them. Prov 23:22: "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

And the time is short. Some of you wish you could. They are gone, and you would give your savings account to have just one more conversation. Those of you blessed to still have your parents, cherish that. Before long, they won't be around. / Pick up the phone. Pay a visit. Send a card / Maybe consider living near them. As a general rule, if possible, we ought to strive to keep them from living in a home away from family. I know, I know, exceptions abound but generally speaking – if you can take them in, do so.

Those of you with some time in front of you, maybe make career plans around your parents if possible. We live in a very mobile society. There are many factors, lots of variables, but I think if you can live close to your extended family, you should. Young people who want to be married, this may mean looking to marry someone from Abilene, where you have roots now and can care for aging parents later. Rather than Pennsylvania where you might make a little more money which is pretty meaningless at the end of the day. Care for them. Cherish them.

Second, respect them. Maybe your own childhood is weighted down by baggage. That's many of us. Maybe it was rough. You are still called to respect them. That may mean you show honor by covering a multitude of sins and leaving some things unsaid.

Respect them. You leave and cleave as an adult, but still - do you *give weight* to their opinion, presence, and advice. That's not the same as doing everything they say – certainly if it is contrary to the commands of Christ. But, respect them, honor them, give weight to them.

And listen, it is very likely that you are discipling your kids more intentionally than your parents disciplined you. Y'all are top ten percent faithful. This is an amazing church. And just a generation ago, only on rare occasions were there practices such as NCC, family worship, all the amazing Christ-centered literature. Do not be condescending or spiteful because of that. 1 Cor 4: what do you have

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<sup>8</sup> DeYoung, *Ten Commandments*, 87.

that you did not receive? You have so many more resources and hopefully are a much better taught church. Don't be critical of them.

Third, support them – physically, sometimes financially. **1 Tim 5:7-8:** “Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (Mark 7:9-13). God cares about the family. Worse than an unbeliever. There's a basement in hell for those don't care for their families.

For all of us: kids, parents, singles, married - we should care about families like God cares about families. And there are a host of ways to do just that: pray for them, come alongside them, serve in the nursery, teach in children's ministry (email jacksonr@), have a family, a large one – round up. But hear this: children are not an automatic blessing. They can be a terror. *Obedient* children are a heritage. Sharp arrows, not broken ones. Having kids is the easy part. That's why this command is part of the Big Ten.

[Midterms are coming. You may not care about the culture war but it cares about you. Families especially will be made to care. So, vote for politicians who will enact policies that are good for families. Let me just tell you that voting is always the lesser of two evils, but when it comes to the family Talarico is the most evil. Listen to Peter Leithart writes, “To keep this commandment fully, we must reconstruct the social situation it assumes – two-parent families as a norm, the goodness of authority, the limitations of consent, the preservation of families through a lifelong commitment of a man and a woman.”<sup>9</sup>]

Moms, know that your work is so significant. The days are long, the years are short. Press on. You are shaping eternal souls. Tony Campolo (who has sadly gone apostate): "I am socializing four homo sapiens into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition so that they can become the eschatological change-agents God has designed them to be for all of eternity." / Dad's lead love provide protect. Young men, young women: obey your parents in the Lord that it might bring honor to God and go well for you.

**Benediction:** 2 Thess 3:1-5

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<sup>9</sup> Leithart, 67.