

Honoring Our Parents
Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

When Moses came down from the mountain with two tablets of stone, the first four commandments were probably on the first tablet and the second six were probably on the second tablet.

Look at the wording of the commandments and you'll see what I mean.

In addition,

- the first four commands on the first tablet tell us how to relate to God.
- The final six commandments on the second tablet, comprised of one sentence each, teach us how to relate to others.

This is why, when Jesus was asked – *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”*

He responded by saying, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matt 22:36-40)

That's because the first four relate to God and the last six, to people.

And he then expounded on his answer – *“On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Why? Because all the law is given to teach us two things and the prophets continually urged the people to do these two things. What are those two things?

- 1 – How to relate well to God.
- 2 – How to relate well to people.

This fifth commandment creates a transition from the first tablet to the second tablet, from relating to God, to relating to people (or perhaps, more properly said, how to relate to God by rightly relating to people).

First: God's Glory is Our Good

Remember that glorifying God, which is synonymous with obeying him, is for our good because a good, omniscient God, offered these commands to us, as in, "*I freed you. Here's how to stay free.*"

This means it is always in our best interests to obey God.

Insofar as the commands go, even their order reminds us that we must love God first and most in order to love others best and well.

Second: A Word about Context

This command is specifically given for children,

- a) living at home or
- b) dependent on their parents.

"*I don't live in your house anymore,*" doesn't free you from this command, particularly if you are still dependent on your parents for your livelihood.

Then again, leaving home, and living on your own, whether married or not, does free you from obeying your parents. God's authority is absolute, but not parental authority is not.

But for all of our lives, we should give honor to our parents.

Third: A Word about 'Honor'

Honor = kabad = to be heavy

What does that mean? Your parents should carry weight in your life.

Once you have a husband/wife/children, they weigh more than your parents. We see that in the divine design of 'leaving and cleaving' in Matt 19.

The word, 'honor' appears 116 times in the OT as:

- a) honor 34x
- b) glorify 14x

- c) honorable 14x
- d) heavy 13x
- e) harden 7x
- f) glorious 5x
- g) sore 3x
- h) promote 2x

Let me give you three examples of how to live this –

- *Promote* your parents instead of speaking ill of or undermining them.
- *Glorify* your parents instead of thinking ill of them or behaving wrongly toward them.
- *Sore* = agonize/ache over (dis)honoring your parents

One more though about *kabad*. It is the exact same word as in these verses –

Psalm 22:23 - *You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,*

Psalm 86:12 - *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.*

Treat your parents as you do/would God because that is the purpose of your family.

Fourth: The Purpose of Family

- The first command was the foundation for the first tablet.
- The fifth commandment is the foundation for the second tablet.
- "*Honor your father and mother*" is the foundation upon which love for our neighbor is built.

Family is the place where you learn to live according to the Bible.

Genesis 1:27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Genesis 4:1 - *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain...*

- God created family before he created the church and society.
- Family creates the church and society.
- Family sustains the church and society.
- As the family goes, so goes the church and society.

It is no wonder that, when totalitarian regimes throughout history have tried to control their citizens, the government tries to become/replace parents.

I.e., These are not "our" children, Mr. President!

What does this mean for children?

1 - The parental relationship is the first and most important relationship. It shapes all other relationships.

2 - Family is where God prepares you to live for the rest of your life.

ILL – Several years ago, David Robinson, while a star for the NBA Spurs, moved about four houses down from my sister. David had enrolled in the Naval Academy, and, after graduation, even though he was obligated to serve in the Navy for two years, was drafted as the Spurs as their first pick. Robinson went on to be a 10-time NBA All-Star, the 1995 NBA MVP, a two-time NBA champion (1999 and 2003), a two-time Olympic Gold Medal winner (1992, 1996). When he moved into Janet's neighborhood, everyone was excited to meet him, but I wanted to meet his parents. Why? After graduation, he could have contested his naval service and went right into the NBA. But he chose not to, instead choosing to honor his commitment to the Navy and give the first two post-graduation years of his young life to the military instead the NBA. And I asked, "Who raises a child like that?" His home life taught him honor so that he became an honorable person. PS – Even while in the NBA, he taught Sunday school at Max Lucado's church in San Antonio.

This is the 1st commandment with a promise and the 2nd with a blessing (v 6).

Exodus 20:12 - *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*

You should treat your parents as you would treat God because honoring your parents is the training ground for relating to God and everyone else.

"If anyone fails to honor his parents, is there anyone he will spare?"

- Augustine

If you're going to hire or marry someone, watch how they treat their parents because this is how they will treat the job and/or you.

Point: Some children might think, "Well pastor, you've got to say this" or, "What else would you say?"

We started 2 Peter on Wednesday night and spent the entire evening on the opening verse because it is so powerful –

2 Peter 1:1 – Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

Apostle = sent one.

Before the crucifixion, there were times Peter spoke before he was a servant.

- When he stood between Jesus and the cross
- When he denied Jesus

To be apostles – sent ones – we have to first be servants or we're speaking our own message.

I'm telling you this as a servant of Christ, not your parents.

- To not say what Jesus says is wrong.
- To say what Jesus did not say is wrong.

This is a word to parents, children, and everyone: Servants speak, and they speak only what the Master says.

Think about all the major commands of the Bible and note that everyone one them can be and should be learned in family before they are practiced in the world.

In this case, the Bible clearly teaches children that they should glorify, promote, honor their parents, and should agonize over doing it well and wrong.

Fifth: What About these Verses?

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 gives parents' permission to stone rebellious children.

Exodus 21:15 says if you hit your parents, you are to be put to death.

What?

- 1 - These are civil laws for Israel that don't translate into other societies and times.
- 2 - They teach the seriousness of parent-child relations for the health of society

Sixth: What Honor Includes

Parents: You don't parent a 15-year-old like you do a 5-year-old.

Children: Fifteen-year-olds should not behave like 5-year-olds.

Natural independence does not give you a license for meanness, disrespect, disobedience or rebellion.

"Honor requires three things: reverence, obedience, and gratitude."

- Calvin

I hope every child will memorize Exodus 20:12 and that phrase.

1. Prompt obedience
2. Sincere "Thank you."
3. Genuine "I'm sorry."
4. Cheerful "Can I help?"
5. Stay in touch.

1 Timothy 5:8 – *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.*

Proverbs 23:22 – *Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

APP: Parents, I know it is wearying and you'd often rather surrender than fight. But you love God by loving your children.

APP: Children (of whatever age), this might be a good time to thank your parents for your childhood.

You want to excuse your dishonoring by saying, *“Well, you don’t know my parents. They are...”*

1 - No parent is perfect. And, as a parent, I can tell you that your parents will live with the knowledge of their failures for the rest of their lives...as you will, should/when you become a parent.

2 - Obeying this command is not about your parents anyway. It’s addressed to children.

- For parents: Parenting is a kabad/weighty thing, so live to be honored.
- For children: Parenting such a weighty thing, your parents deserve honor.
- For parents: Being a child is a weighty thing (Immaturity) Remember that.
- For children: Being a child is a weighty thing (Growth) Remember that.

The command isn’t given because your parents are deserving but because God is and because God has given your parents their position, for which, they will answer to God.

IMP: What are a child’s protections?

Ephesians 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), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

1 - One way to think of this commandment is to is that the first tablet of the Law is the foundation for the second. So, parents should obey the first four commands in order to parent well and children don’t have to obey parents who tell them to disobey the first four commands, but they still need to honor them.

2 - If a parent is abusive, tell someone.

Seventh: I Don’t Have Family Close By

Matthew 12:50 - For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Love the church body as your father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Learn here, in these walls, to live well outside of these walls.

Eighth: Jesus and this Command

If anyone could have looked at their parents and said they weren't perfect, it was Jesus, because he was and the difference was glaring. And yet,

Luke 5:51 – Jesus *"was submissive to them"* [his parents].

We don't know the particulars, but that one line is enough. If perfect Jesus could honor his imperfect parents, you, as an imperfect child, can honor your imperfect parents.

Of course, the penultimate example of this is Jesus in the garden praying, *"Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done"* (Luke 22:42).

Conclusion:

Picture of Isabella Juliette. It goes by so fast....

Any honest person in the social sciences field, will acknowledge that what happens in the home sets the stage for an adolescent and teen's public behavior. You can kick against that all you want, but you're only kicking yourself.

Addendum:

A word about corban.

Mark 7:9-13 - *And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ¹¹ But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

From selfishness, the Pharisees taught that adult children were exempt from taking care of their older parents if they dedicated their funds/goods to the temple. Jesus said they had replaced God's command to honor parents with a human tradition. Basically, the Pharisees took a legitimate Corban offering and used it in an illegitimate and devious way to defraud their parents and enrich themselves.

Community Groups:

- 1 – Read the text.
- 2 – How is glorying God synonymous with our good?
- 3 – Explain the two sets of the Ten Commandments, 6 and 4.
- 4 – How does Matt 22:36-40 summarize the TC?
- 5 – Why do all the commandments depend on those two?
- 6 – To what specific people is this commandment given?
- 7 – What are 3 definitions for ‘honor’?
- 8 – In connection to this command, what is the purpose of family?
- 9 – Why should we treat parents like we treat God?
- 10 – What might ‘honoring’ parents include? Think about the different life stages.
- 11 – How is parenting a ‘weighty’ thing?
- 12 – How is being a child a ‘weighty thing’?
- 13 – What are a child’s protections?
- 14 – How can someone who doesn’t have family close-by, live this out?
- 15 – How did Jesus fulfil this commandment?

Daily Devotion

Monday, September 4th. Happy Labor Day. Read Ex 20:12. If possible, contact your parents today, and thank them for their parenting. This might be difficult. If so, find something positive to connect with your parents today. Sometime today, find a way to encourage others to do the same.

Tuesday, September 5th. Read Ex 20:12, Ps 22:23 & 86:12. Define honor to yourself. Find an occasion today, to promote your parents to others. If you don’t think well of your parents, find a way today to ‘glorify’ them, i.e., to think well of them in your own mind. This may require concentrated reflection, but you don’t want to ‘agonize’ over your parents your whole life. If there is something for which you need to forgive them, start that process today.

Wednesday, September 6th. Read Ex 20:12; Gen 1:27 & 4:1. Why did God create family first? How does it resource the church and society? What can you do to encourage families other than your own? Do that today. Perhaps you can call a father or mother and encourage them. Perhaps you can speak to a child today and encourage them. Do that with intent today!

Thursday, September 7th. Read Ex 20:12; 1 Tim 5:8; Prov 23:22. If you are not living at home, how can you offer honor to your parents? Find a way to do that today. If you hear someone criticize their parents, don’t be silent. Come alongside them and help them get to the place they can honor their parents. It’s in their best interests.

Friday, September 8th. Read Ex 20:12; Matt 12:50. Look around Heritage. Do you know someone who has no local family? What about at your job, in your neighborhood or at your school? If you are without local family, how can you integrate into the church body? Think about

that and then practice it. If you have family nearby, what can you do to help someone live out Ex 20 in the context of believers? Discuss that with your family and then begin doing it.