



***“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” Exodus 20:12***



The first Four Commandments deal with our duty to God while the last Six Commandments deal with our duty to man. Our Lord Jesus Christ summarised the two tablets of the Law when He answered the question concerning the Greatest Commandment.

Jesus said: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and Great Commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.”* Matt 22:36-40

**TREAT YOUR PARENTS WELL**

The Bible says that we shall reap what we sow, and that the measure we use (to give) shall be measured back to us.

The way we treat our parents and our elders (regardless of whether one is a child, teenager or an adult) is setting a precedent for how our children will treat us. Grimm’s Fairy Tales include a story of an old man whose eyes blinked continually,

and whose hands trembled uncontrollably. As he had no place to live, he moved in with his son’s family. His daughter-in-law hated it when at the dinner table he con-

stantly rattled his silverware and spilled his drinks. In anger and exasperation she insisted he eat his meals alone in the corner, separated from the rest of the family.

**REAPING WHAT YOU SOW**

He began to eat alone, looking occasionally at the family sitting at the table. Then, one day, when his hands were shaking so much that he knocked his bowl onto the floor, his meal spilt onto the carpet.

The daughter-in-law screamed: “If you are going to eat like a pig we’ll feed you like a pig!” She placed a wooden trough on

the floor and told him that he would have to eat out of the trough like an animal. This he did. Some days later the woman’s young son came into the house excited to

show her something he had made: “Look Mommy! I’ve made a trough to feed you and Daddy out of when I get big.”

**ABANDONING THE ELDERLY**

The woman began to cry as she realised what a terrible evil she was guilty of. From that day forward the old man ate his meals at the table with the rest of the family and the daughter-in-law did everything she could to make up for the cruel way that she had treated her father-in-law.

Today a lack of respect for the elderly is evident in so many ways. Teenagers deny »

**The Fifth Commandment is the only one that carries with it a blessing - that of long life . If we desire to live long prosperous lives, we need to honour those in authority.**







The 5th Commandment  
**Honour  
Your Mother  
& Father**

them seats on buses, adults express frustration behind them in shopping queues and many children have little regard for the wisdom of their grandparents.

It is even worse that, in Christian homes, elderly parents are frequently abandoned in old age homes and neglected. Christians should set the example of caring for those in need and giving time to the elderly; God prizes the wisdom of grey hair and so should we (Prov 16:31). *"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old."* Prov 23:22

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**FIVE CATEGORIES OF PARENTS**

Thomas Watson articulated the Puritan tradition in his exposition of the Fifth Commandment, by distinguishing between five categories of parents that we need to honour: political fathers, ancient fathers, spiritual fathers, domestic fathers and natural fathers.

1. By 'political fathers' he meant kings and princes, governors and mayors, municipal, provincial and national leaders.
2. By 'ancient fathers' he meant our fathers in the Faith, either of Biblical times or in Church history. (This would include Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, the prophets and Apostles; the Early Church fathers; the missionaries, pastors and reformers.)
3. By 'spiritual fathers' he meant the pastors, teachers or mission and ministry leaders we are answerable to.
4. By 'domestic fathers' he meant employers, our teachers, or our boss.
5. And by 'natural fathers' he means of course our own parents and grandparents.

*"You shall rise before the grey-headed and honour the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord."* Lev 19:32.

**WHAT ABOUT BAD PARENTS?**

Some people may say: "Surely this Commandment cannot apply to me. My parents were horrible and abused me while I was growing up...God cannot expect me to honour evil parents?"

Actually, Yes, God does require us to honour our parents no matter how badly they may have behaved. Genesis 8-9 gives



an example of honouring a badly behaved parent. Soon after the Flood, Noah planted a vineyard. When the grapes were ready, Noah made wine and got so drunk that he passed out in his tent. He was in a shameful condition when one of his three sons, Ham, saw him. Ham immediately went out and told his two brothers. But Shem and Japheth honoured Noah by taking a blanket and covering him up.

The Scripture informs us that Ham and his descendants were cursed for failing to honour his father, even though Noah's behaviour was clearly dishonourable. The relatives of Shem and Japheth were blessed by God because of how they had honoured their father. We should do likewise, knowing that by honouring our parents, we are pleasing God.

**HONOURING THE AUTHORITIES**

Parents are commanded to teach their children to honour all lawful authority, starting with their own parents. The health of the individual family hinges on obedience to the Fifth Commandment. However, much more is at stake here. Those who do not learn to respect their parents at home, are not likely to respect teachers at school, and when such people graduate, they are unlikely to respect the law.

This Commandment does not require us to always obey our parents, but we must always honour them. This speaks of our tone of voice and heart attitude which should communicate respect.

The Bible warns of judgement on those who dishonour their parents - *"The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures"* Prov 30:17. »



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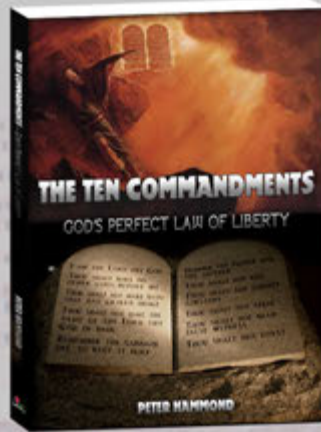
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### HONOURING OR OBEYING?

Honouring parents (especially unreasonable, unbelieving parents) does not involve giving in to all their various schemes to draw their offspring away from dedication to God. If parents are overly possessive, overbearing and domineering, their adult children are not obligated to invest undue time and energy pandering to their dictates and manipulations.

Our first duty is to honour our Heavenly Father, the Lord our Creator and Judge. Our responsibility to honour our parents comes second to our duty to God.

### PROTECTIONS AND STABILITY

The Fifth Commandment protects all people from pride and arrogance by calling for respect for elders and preventing the youth from doing just as they want. The Fifth Commandment offers protection against the instability of youth and the selfishness of adulthood. The Fifth Commandment gives stability by protecting us from impulsiveness, rashness and inexperience. Obeying this Commandment is a pathway to blessing.

*"The Lord said...Be Holy because I, the Lord your God am Holy. Each of you must respect his mother and father..."*  
Lev19:1-3. ■



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