

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE

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EX 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

The first four commandments concern our relationship to Almighty God; and the last six commandments concern our relationship with our fellow man. I assume from this that relationship is the most important variable in living. From the order of these commandments, I further assume that relationally, we were intended first for God and then for our fellow man. Our duty to our Creator outweighs the things that concern ourselves, our social order, and even our families. But these relationships should never be mutually exclusive: I love God by loving my fellow man, and I love my fellow man by first loving God.

Moreover, commentators speak of the vertical and horizontal dimensions in our relationships, that is, Love for God, the upward look, and love for man, the outward look. The most obvious symbol for this is the Cross which points both upward and outward, so that we in the Christian faith are always reminded that our duty and our opportunity for living is Godward and Manward. Religious Devotion and Social Action are perfectly complementary and should never be separated, and a separation of these is heretical and disastrous. Herein, however, lies the greatest of temptations, for the socially active will always be tempted to feel that he has to outrun God and save the world on his own; and the religiously devoted man will always be tempted to 'wait upon God' and become too monastic to really help the world. Jesus of Nazareth thoroughly embraced both roles: He was totally devoted to His heavenly Father; He was also thoroughly invested in serving humanity. In fact, He saw His human service as bringing 'glory' (doxa) to God. And in the prayer that this Rabbi taught His disciples, we find the same division in unity, God's Kingdom and man's need.

There is a real sermon in this thought, and I am certain that it has been preached many times, but today, I am on the 5th commandment that tells us to 'honor your father and your mother,' and promises long life in the land of His giving.

Let's start by looking at what the author of the *Expositor's Bible* says about it: **12** "The fifth commandment, to "honor" one's parents, involves (1) prizing them highly (cf. [Prov 4:8](#); i.e., wisdom, when sought above everything else and prized more highly than all else, will bring honor to its seekers); (2) caring, showing affection for them ([Ps 91:15](#); i.e., God's honoring of individuals is shown by his care for them in being with them and delivering them from trouble); and (3) showing respect, fear, or revering them ([Lev 19:3](#)). When [Ephesians 6:1](#) says, "Obey your parents," it immediately and necessarily qualifies it with "in the Lord." Parents are to be shown honor (v. 2), but nowhere is their word to rival or be a substitute for God's Word." The author specifies that this promise of the

'land' given is the land of Canaan; but, of course, in Ephesians, Paul sees it as a promissory note to Christian families.

Yet, when we think of the context in which it was given, Roy Honeycutt, in *The Broadman Commentary*, reminds us that this commandment was not given to preadolescent children, but to the adult male community of Israel: These men to whom it was given were to honor their fathers and their mothers. The Lord God did not want them to forget that they came to the Promised Land on the shoulders of their fathers and in the wombs of their mothers. Specifically this was addressed to the adult male members of the community because the females and children had status only in their relationship to these adult males. But to honor both 'father and mother' means that we are to realize that if the man is the head of the family the woman is the heart of the family, and, regarding the family, one without the other is superfluous. In God's calculations, it takes two to make one. I need not remind you that the sole purpose of romantic love, this day after Valentine's Day, is to initiate the greatest institution of all, the Family.

Just how do we 'Honor' our parents, who formed a family and brought us into this world? To do so we must first know what the word 'honor' means. The word in the Old Testament for honor is KABOD. You may remember that, in 1 Samuel chapter four, when the Arc of the Covenant was captured in battle, Eli's sons were killed and Eli fell backward off a log at the news and died. His daughter-in-law, Phineas's wife, named her son ICHABOD, saying 'the glory has departed from Israel.' *The Broadman Commentary* reminds us that kabod was translated by the Septaugint Bible as timao rather than doxa, and carries with it the idea of valuing, and could be paraphrased, "You shall value, or treasure, your father and your mother." Also, *The Broadman Commentary* says that 'glory' and 'honor' are identical in meaning.

But for our purpose, let us use the *Expositor Bible's* three points.

I. If our parents are not with us, we honor them by REMEMBERING them and PRIZING THEM HIGHLY. These are the people who gave us life. I remember reading a story once of a mother whose daughter was thoroughly sad that she didn't have as much material things as her friends. She asked her mother why she didn't give her more. The mother replied to her, "I have given you the greatest gift of all. I gave you life." We would not be here today without our parents. We live because they gave us the gift of life. Too often we allow the busy schedules of our lives to diminish the memory of those who have given us life and have gone on to be with the Lord. We must not forget them. We prize them by remembering that they gave us life.

We must also prize them and value them and treasure them for the difficulties they faced on our behalf. I was born during the last half of the depression. My parents already had three children to raise, and the times were bitterly hard. I remember my Father getting up too early for me to see him walk from Bosco to Wayland with his lunch pail in his hand, working until almost dark inside a dark mine loading coal, and getting home after dark, black as any black man, and doing household chores after that. I know

that you have similar stories, but I value my parents for the hardships they faced for me. My mother worked just as hard, perhaps harder, with gardening, stringing beans, drying and canning everything she could so that her family would have something to eat in the winter time; and working sometimes late into the night patching our clothes, quilting quilts, and a hundred other things for us, not thinking about herself and her own pain.

We honor our fathers and our mothers for giving us life, and by providing for us that we might live and not starve. But as much as we appreciate life, we should prize our parents who knew Jesus as their Savior and Lord, and lived the Christian Life before us. They said with Joshua (24"15 "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." My mother was a Christian, but her entire upbringing was different from my father. She was somewhat earthy in her approach to life. My father breathed the love of Jesus to everyone around him. He was kind to everyone and, often to my mother's chagrin, he never turned anyone away from our home, even those who wanted to stay overnight.

We have our memories, don't we? And we should never give up these memories, but always prize our parents, and honor them by remembering them. We should not wait till Memorial Day to memorialize them. What a value they should always be to us. Some of our parents died in foreign wars; some of them were prisoners of war; some of them remained victims of war throughout their lives. Let us prize and value them all.

II. If our parents are living, we adults should CARE for them, and show AFFECTION to them. Perhaps the most tragic times in our lives are when we have to be parents to our parents. We are to Honor them by providing them the best care that we can provide. It is much too easy in our day to drop them off at the nursing home like an unwanted baby is dropped off at the church door. When parents are unable to care for themselves, they must be cared for by someone; and there are times when they need constant supervision that children cannot give them, medical conditions that only professional care can address. Obviously, then, if that is the case, we honor our parents by regularly visiting them, and caring for them where they are.

Having been associated with two nursing homes through Martha's work, I have noticed that some children never seem to care a lot for their parent in the nursing home, for they seem never to visit very much. But there is a beautiful contrast in the caring children one sees who seem so gentle and so tender with their parents, and who visit them quite often and spend valuable time with them, even when they are senile and difficult to handle. The *Bible* says in Proverbs 17:6 "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers." So when you visit your family in the nursing home, be sure and take your grandchildren along. The stark reality of aging and dying is always there, I know, but love makes all of that more acceptable.

I recall a couple of Sunday's ago when we went to the Knott County Nursing Home with the Don and Liz Sparkman. While there we visited Adam Bentley's grandmother whom I've known for many years. I mentioned her little great-granddaughter, Kalli, and she brightened up in an unbelievable way. I forget what she said, but the gist of it was, "Oh, that little girl is my life." These precious relationships must be nurtured and preserved.

It has been said that America is afraid of aging. We do our best to hide it. When one reaches a certain age, even though he/she may be much more capable and productive, the 'company' starts planning a way to remove them from their responsibility. Aging is not 'cool' in America. But, in other parts of the world, the family reveres and loves and cares for their older people. They are celebrated and venerated and listened to by the young for their wisdom and their experience. We should have the same reverence and respect for our fathers and our mothers and our grandfathers and grandmothers who populate our nursing homes.

III. Again, the *Expositor's Bible* mentions a third meaning of the word 'honor.' I mentioned part of that in the last paragraph. We are to 'SHOW RESPECT, FEAR, AND REVERE our parents.

This is the meaning most often thought about in this 5th Commandment. The Apostle Paul saw it in this way: ^{EPH 6:1} Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Looked at in this way, this Commandment means that God has established an order of things in the world, and that parents, due to their role in that order, must be revered and respected by the children. For the child, the parent, in God's order, is the next step to Deity. Therefore, the child, though he may question the commands of the parent, must nevertheless obey them.

Jesus gave the example of a son who would not obey his father, but instead took his life in his own hands and took a journey into a far country. We know what happened to him. His error was very nearly fatal. He realized how wrong he had been and he 'came back home.' Unfortunately disobeying the parent often is fatal. Here is a father who has a son that runs around with the 'wrong' crowd. The father requests that his son go to church with him, but the son refuses. The father suspects that the son is drinking with his friends, and perhaps taking dangerous drugs with them. The son denies it, but the father can tell something is very wrong, by the breath of his son, and by the wild look in his son's eyes. He prays, he worries, and one day his worst fears come to pass. He gets that call in the middle of the night that every parent fears. His son has overdosed on drugs. He races to the hospital only to find that the drug oxycontin, called OC, was too much for his son's liver and heart, and his son is now dead.

A mother gives her son the present of a new car, and advises him not to abuse the privilege of driving, but to obey the rules she sets down for him. Trying to impress his friends, he drinks at the party, gets into his new gift and wrecks it, killing himself and his two friends. Truly, obeying the parent gives longer life to the child.

However, I quickly remind you that there often comes a time in the life of the child that he need not obey the parent. When the parent, who is equally morally responsible for his behavior, encourages the child to do wrong, the child then stands not just before the parent, but before the God of all Creation. At this juncture, the child must

do God's will, not his father's will. He must obey the Heavenly Father. At 12 years of age Jesus said, "I must be about my Father's business."

Jesus spoke much about putting the Heavenly Father first in all things. In our Lord's time, a Rabbi was considered by his disciples as more important than his earthly father, since the Rabbi taught God's Law and how to follow it. That's partly why Jesus said, "Unless you love me more than father or mother, you are not worthy of me." The greatest reason He said that was because He was the very Son of God; He was God the Son. Obedience to Him was indeed obedience to God.

We must remember these words 'in the Lord.' They are very important.

The father must Love his son in his discipline, and the mother must Love her son in her nurturing.

I think that above all, however, that in your love you are to guide them Godward. Deuteronomy 6:6,7 tells us what to do as parents: 6. "These words..shall be in thine heart: 7. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

This 5th Commandment embraces both adults and youth. Are you keeping the 5th Commandment?