

# THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE & US

Understanding the Bible's story, Jesus' importance, & Our place in God's plan



Lesson 42-The Fifth Commandment: Honor Parents  
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## Introduction

We turn to the next section of the Ten Commandments (the Ten Words as the Jews called them). The first four commandments dealt with matters between a person and God. The final six commandments deal with matters between a person and another person (one's neighbor).

We must focus on ensuring things are right between us and God, this is the start. However, just having things right with God is not where it stops. God also cares that we are living right with our neighbors, other image bearers of God.

God cares not only that we treat Him in a manner He deserves, but that we also treat other people in a manner they deserve to be treated. People can be seen, God is not seen. It makes sense then that the invisible God cares how we treat visible people around us. People are not like animals, we are the only species that was created in the image of God. People are therefore very special. This is why God also had laws governing how we relate to one another and not just how we relate to God.

## The Fifth Commandment: Honor your Father and Mother

### **Exodus 20:12**

This is the only commandment that comes with a promise of blessing and this is very significant for us to consider. Other commandments sometimes came with a threat of punishment if violated. Other commandments are simply stated with no promise or threat. However, the fifth commandment comes with a promise of blessing if it is upheld.

God says if the people honor their fathers and mothers, "your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

God could have easily said something like, "If you do not honor your fathers and mothers you will surely perish." This would have also been true, but God did not say this. God focused on the blessings that come from honoring father and mother.

Why do you think God focused on the blessings of keeping this commandment rather than giving a warning of punishment if it is violated?

The word *honor* comes from the Hebrew word that literally translates as, *to be heavy, to be weighty*.

It was used in the nonphysical sense to convey the idea of *regarding someone as weighty*. By weighty they did not mean physically heavy, they meant important. It meant to regard someone as having an honored and glorified position over you. To show sincere honor to another due to their position and status.

God commanded that people show honor and respect to their fathers and mothers. People were to put a high value of importance on their fathers and mothers.

When I read the Bible I often ask, “why did they say this *that* way instead of *another* way?” Let’s think about the fifth commandment and ask this question. Why did God focus on children showing honor to parents when He could have said, “Parents raise your kids right so that it will go well with you in the land”?

Why do you think God focused on the children showing honor to parents rather than commanding parents to raise their children to show respect?

Don’t get me wrong, God has other verses in the Law where parents are commanded to teach their children to know God and respect their elders. However, within the Ten Commandments, God put the emphasis on a child’s responsibility to show honor to their parents rather than putting the responsibility on parents to raise their children properly.

My conviction about this is that God was showing Israel, and us, the high value placed on parenthood. God’s design from creation was that Adam and Eve, “fill the earth.” God wanted them to have children who have children, who have children, and you get the idea. Children need to be raised by parents. Therefore, God was communicating through this fifth commandment the eternally important role that mothers and fathers have within the family.

Parents are very important in God’s plan for the family and successfully spreading the Kingdom of God. God ensured Israel knew mothers and fathers are to be honored because God values parenthood.

We also must remember that each of these commandments was God’s way of saying to Israel they could not do what the pagan godless nations around them were doing. That means the other nations had a habit of dishonoring their fathers and mothers.

Why would honoring their fathers and mothers lead to long days of blessing in the Promised Land?

Honor means more than obey, it means to regard with honor. To treat with respect and value parents highly. Societies are built on families. The health of families in a civilization will largely determine the health of the civilization. If families are out of order in a society, society will descend into chaos.

If Israel wanted to have a long and blessed society in the Promised Land, they had to value parenthood and have healthy families that serve the Lord. If they produce future generations who look down on their parents and have no regard for them, they would surely decline into moral chaos and collapse.

This was God's way of preserving the order and respect of their people. Children honor parents and the cycle should repeat itself. If this happens on into the future, then their stability as a nation would last on into the future. If Israel's future generations cared nothing about their former generations, then the future was sure to be short and lack blessing.

Paul says in Ephesians 6:1-4 that children are to obey their parents in the Lord. Paul points out after quoting the fifth commandment that this is the first commandment with a promise. Paul's idea would be the same as we have already said. Societies collapse if they have no strong family units. Family units typically decay when the children show no regard for their parents.

The reason for this is that means future generations show disregard for the former generations. When future generations care nothing about their history they lose sight of what it took to get their society to that point in time. When they lose sight of the hard work that former generations put in to get them where they are, they do not value the principles of the former generations. This leads to a decline in honor, respect, and values among future generations. That process will carry on until the society goes into deep decline and possibly destruction.

Why do you think the first commandment right after the first four dealing with a person's relationship to God spoke about a child's relationship to their parents?

I think God put this commandment right after the first four that deal with a person's relationship to God because God was teaching Israel that a person cannot show honor to God and show dishonor to their parents. To show honor to God must lead to one showing honor to their parents too.

Why do you think this might be the case?

God has placed parents in the life of a child to be their teachers, trainers, and a type of representative of the authority of God in the life of the child. A person who rebels against their parents is ultimately showing they have a heart that also rebels against God. Why? Because God has sovereignly placed parents in the life of a child. To rebel against them is to rebel against God's rule in their lives as well.

How can a person show honor to parents?

There are many ways a person can show honor to their parents. Show respect, obey, and more. For the Jews of the Old Testament, the primary way they showed honor to parents was they cared for them in their old age when they were unable to work and provide for themselves.

It was customary in Jewish homes to build on to the house so that one's parents could move in and be cared for until their death. In a sense God was saying through the fifth commandment, "honor your elderly."

Why do you think God commanded that the elderly be shown honor?

It is easy for a society to ignore their elderly. We live in modern societies where it's easy to cast out those who are unable to work and produce goods and make money. One's ability to contribute to society is highly valued. When a person becomes elderly and can no longer contribute, society may think they are no longer valuable.

God wanted to make sure people valued their elders. Elders may not always work and produce goods and services; however they still hold value to a society.

What value do you think elderly people give to a society even if they can't work?

The elder hold wisdom and experience. The younger generations should show honor to the older by seeking their wisdom and experience to help society keep going. Not only this, the younger should honor the older for the years of their lives spent keeping the society going.

The pagan societies were known to cast out the elderly if they could not longer 'contribute' labor to the society. God wanted Israel to be different. God views it an honorable thing to grow old and be an elder. It is honorable in God's Kingdom for one to have spent their lives contributing then be old and cared for by the younger generations. Their place is to be honored and revered by the younger.

Jesus Reprimanded the Jews of His day for violating the fifth commandment.

### **Matthew 15:1-9**

Jesus was criticized for letting His disciples violate the commands of Moses. He shot back at the hypocrites by informing they were also violating God's commands. He gave an example of a very bad practice by some Jews in Jesus' day.

Rather than taking care of their elderly parents, some Jews prided themselves on giving their money to the Temple rather than supporting their parents. The Jews had a law they created that said a son could avoid giving support to their elderly parents so long as it was given directly to the work of the Temple. This was viewed as pious thing to do.

Jesus informed they had once again left the true intention of the Law. Their hearts were not right with God.

## Conclusion

We spent our time focused on just the fifth commandment. This was important then, and it is still important today. What is important to grasp behind this commandment is God's heart for the family unit. God's intentions were that parents raise children in a

way that nurtures them in the Lord. Children were to in turn show respect and honor for their parents.

This principle is how things should operate in the natural order of a society. The family unit are the building blocks of a society. If a society loses healthy family units, it will eventually lose its moral foundation. Broken families lead to broken societies.

Dysfunctional families lead to dysfunctional societies. Morally confused families lead to morally confused societies.

God's promise in this commandment was that their days may be long in the land. This proves our point. If a society raises up children who in turn honor their parents, they appreciate the past generations who have gotten them to that point in time. They also promote the stability of the future growth of their society.

Societies marked by future generations who care nothing for the former generation's work will lose their way. Societies whose future generations are known for disrespect and dishonor of their elders, will quickly be driven into moral decay and possibly societal death.

God established the family unit and His plans for its future prospering are that the children (future generations) honor and respect the parents (former generations). One of the major ways the Jews did this was to care for their elderly parents when they could no longer care for themselves.

We need to recover in our society respect for our elders who have gone before us and continue to care for our elders so they can continue to live lives of dignity and be honored for their place in society. We need a recovery of God's idea for a healthy family so we ensure the future success of our society.