

COMMANDMENTS

Honor Your Father and Your Mother (Exodus 20:12)

Bottom Line: Children should honor their parents as parents should strive to live in an honorable way.

How has your understanding of what it means to honor your parents changed or grown over the years?

The first four commandments deal with how we are to handle our relationship with God. The last six are all about how we handle our relationship with others. The first four commandments and the last six commandments are sometimes grouped together and referred to as the “first” and “second” tables of the Law, respectively. But even though these last six commandments relate to how we treat others, they are just as vital to our properly worshiping God as the first four.

How does the way we treat others relate to our worship of God? Can we properly obey the first table of the law if we do not obey the second table? What about the other way around?

God has made clear that if we are going to worship Him properly, then we must treat others properly, and first and foremost, we must treat our parents properly. The longest relationship that any of us will ever have is the relationship with our parents. We are born into this relationship and because of that, it has a place of primary importance in our lives.

What does honoring our parents look like in our culture? How do you feel when you see a child dishonoring their parents?

To honor your mother and father is to be respectful to them in word and in deed. We should have an inward attitude of esteem and respect for them, solely because they are our parents. Just like our political leaders are worthy of respect by virtue of their position (1 Peter 2:17; Romans 13:1), so also our parents should receive honor and respect for theirs.

Read Ephesians 6:1-3. What does it mean to “obey your parents in the Lord?” Is there ever a time where we should disobey our parents?

Of course, if our parents lead, instruct, or encourage us to do something that is an obvious sin, we should disobey them (Ezekiel 20:18-19; Acts 5:29). Honoring our parents does not mean being submissive to their authority if that authority is being abused. We never move beyond our responsibility to show respect to our parents and that includes if and when they do or say something that is hurtful or sinful. This can be very hard to do, at times. Some parents have so mistreated their children that it seems almost impossible that honor can be restored to that relationship. But nevertheless, it is possible to relate to our parents in a way that does not dishonor them.

How is it possible to relate to abusive or ungodly parents in a way that does not dishonor them?

COMMANDMENTS

Parents, how does knowing that this command is given to your children influence your parenting methods?

The command is clear to children, they should always honor their parents, even when the relationship is strained and difficult. But there is another command towards parents that is implied in this command. Mothers and fathers should parent, live, and act in a way that makes it easy for their children to honor them.

Read Ephesians 6:4. How are parents capable of provoking their children to anger? Why does Paul frame this as the opposite of “bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?”

Parents should seek to emulate for their children the joy and delight that is found in following Jesus. The rules, and the punishments for breaking those rules, should be such that they steer children towards peace and joy in the Lord, not towards anger or hatred of the things of God. Doing this will make it easier for children to honor their parents.

As Paul mentions, this commandment comes with a promise, that if we do this, “we will live long in the land the Lord has given us.” Today, we are not waiting to be brought into an earthly city, we are awaiting a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:16), and this promise finds its fulfillment in us through the Gospel. When we honor our parents even when it’s difficult, we do so not out of a desire to earn our parents’ love, but as people who acknowledge that we were shown perfect love from the Father at a time when we were not honorable or deserving, and we desire to show that love to the world.

What is your relationship like with your parents? How can you be more intentional about honoring your parents?

What is your relationship like with your children? How can you be more intentional about being an honorable parent?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

In Malachi 1:6, the Lord says, “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My fear?” Have you honored the Lord as a good Father? Through His Son, Jesus, God has made a way for you to become His child. Have you repented of your sin, embraced Jesus as Lord, and received God as a loving Father?

Is your obedience to God borne out of fear that He will be angry and punish you if you don’t? Or is it borne out of the desire to honor and please Him like you would a good Father? Do you see His commands as strict killjoys? Or do you see them as loving restraints from a caring Father?

COMMANDMENTS

How do you treat your parents? Do you honor them, even when they do not act honorably? Do you protect their reputation amongst others? Do you take the initiative in praying for them and seeking their good? How can you better obey this commandment, not only this week, but in your whole life?

Are you an honorable parent? Do you provoke your children to anger? Or do you point them towards joy in Christ? When they look at the way you talk about and serve Jesus, do they see Him as something to be delighted in? Are you someone that your children can point others to as an example of Christlikeness? How can you be a more honorable parent?