

The God of Honour

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning, we will be continuing our sermon series on the book of Exodus, and in particular, over the last several weeks, we've reached the Ten Commandments, we're proceeding through the giving of the Ten Commandments, the giving of God's law.

We've been proceeding through them one by one, and so this morning, I've been privileged to preach on commandment number five, honor your father and mother. Now, it's a little funny getting up here and preaching on that.

I am not yet a father. I will definitely never be a mother. So the good news is you know you're going to be getting an unbiased perspective on this commandment. I've got nothing to gain, no incentives from telling you you need to honor your father and mother.

And thankfully, regardless, you don't have to rely on that. You don't have to rely on my credentials. You don't have to rely on my experience as we continue traveling together on our journey this year through the Old Testament book of Exodus.

It's the Lord who has led us through this book. We're retracing his steps, and we're retracing the steps of our spiritual ancestors, the people of Israel. As the Lord rescued them from slavery in Egypt, as the Lord brought them through the desert to Mount Sinai, where he gave them his law, where he taught them to live as a nation under his care.

[1 : 25] We've learned that God is great. We saw that in the land of Egypt. And now we're learning that God is good. Soon, this fall and winter, we're going to learn that God is with us.

God is great. God is good. God is with us. And it's the goodness of our God that we encounter as we examine the Ten Commandments that God gave to his people. That first set of four commandments that we just finished, they teach us how to love the Lord our God with all our heart. The second set of six commandments that we're encountering today, that we're beginning today, they teach us how to love our neighbor as ourselves. And so as we encounter the fifth commandment today, we're bridging the gap between those two great loves, the love for the Lord our God and the love for our neighbor.

The fifth commandment, it's found in Exodus chapter 20, verse 12. Now, if you're using one of the blue Bibles that our usher's handout, Exodus chapter 20, verse 12 is on page 61.

And here's what Exodus chapter 20, verse 12, here's how it reads. It's very brief.

[2 : 41] Honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. So here's what we're going to do. We're going to break this down, this verse down into God's command, God's promise, and our response.

So first, God's command, second, God's promise, third, our response. And so first of all, God's command is honor your father and your mother.

God's command is honor your father and your mother. Now, with those first four commands, with the first four commandments, God has shown you and me, he's shown us how we are to honor him. First of all, how we honor him as our ultimate authority, as our true father, with a capital F. And now the Lord is transitioning to our relationship with one another.

In particular, he's showing us how we honor those in authority over us. How we honor those in authority over us. We saw a couple weeks back that honoring the name of the Lord included honoring government figures in authority over us.

[3 : 54] But our first, our fundamental relationship with an authority figure is our relationship with our parents. So God says that to honor him, we must also honor our father and our mother.

That's one of the first ways that the honor that we show the Lord our God spills over into the honor that we show other people, is you honor your father and your mother. Now, like so many of the Ten Commandments, honor your father and mother.

That is very broad. It's almost so broad, it seems like an abstraction. Now, when I read this commandment, it's so broad. I feel, it's almost like I've gone to a counselor for advice on all of my life's problems.

And what the counselor does is, after I spill my guts for an hour, the counselor charges me \$100 for the session. He shows me the door and tells me, here's my counsel. Start being happy.

Just start being happy. Well, thanks. I'll get right on that. You know, that commandment, that counsel doesn't help me very much because it's so broad and so abstract.

[4 : 58] There's nothing concrete. There's nothing specific about it. And this commandment won't help us much either unless we have some other scriptures to color in the details. So if we're wise, the first place that we're going to turn is in the surrounding story.

The first place we turn is in the case law that follows these commandments, that follows the Ten Commandments. Exodus chapter 20 through 23 includes several chapters worth of case law. And in chapter 21, if we were to spend time there, we would encounter these two very helpful commandments. There are two very helpful commandments that tell us how not to treat your father and your mother.

Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death. Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death. So, first thing we learn is that honoring your father and your mother, that means that you don't curse them and you don't hit them.

Okay? Okay? We've got to start somewhere. So, if this is news to you, well, there you go. Don't curse your father and mother. Don't hit them. Now, the fact that the death penalty is prescribed, that is quite shocking to us.

[6 : 10] That's quite shocking to us in our culture, in our day and age. The fact that these two verses, in fact, if you look at the context they're in, they're surrounded by commandments against murder.

And they serve as bookends, that verse 16 in between them is a verse that forbids human trafficking. That shows you something.

That tells you how much value, how much emphasis the Lord places on the way that we treat our parents. I think it suggests to us that our culture places far too low a priority on the way we treat our father and our mother.

We don't value it anywhere near how we should. So, if we want to be people who serve the Lord faithfully, we don't want to borrow our priorities from our culture.

We want to gather our priorities from the priorities that the Lord our God has given us. We want to share his priorities. We want to think the way that he thinks, value what he values.

[7 : 15] And this means that we want to do more than just not cursing and not hitting mom and dad. After all, honoring your parents, that's not a negative commandment. That's not a thou shalt not commandment.

That's not a prohibition. It is a thou shalt commandment. It's a positive commandment. It requires us to do something. Honoring your father and your mother, it takes more than just warm, fuzzy, happy thoughts about your mom and dad.

For some people, there won't be those warm, fuzzy, happy thoughts. And yet, we're still called to honor. Honoring our father and mother requires you and me to take action. Now, we don't get a lot of details here in Exodus about what that action should be.

The rest of God's word helps us a lot. It helps to color in the details. It helps to show us what this commandment looks like in the real world. In the real world, we find that the way that you honor a person, it depends on your relationship with that person, doesn't it?

That makes it a challenge. Because that means that the way that you honor another person is going to be very different from the way you honor a different person, a completely different relationship.

[8 : 29] The way a husband honors his wife is going to be very different from the way that a husband honors his boss. Unless his boss is his wife, I suppose. Your relationship with your parents.

One of the challenges is that your relationship with your mom and dad, it changes as you get older. So the way that you honor them is also going to change as your relationship changes.

Now, when you're just a baby, there's really not a lot you're supposed to do to honor your parents. When I was just an infant, I chose to honor my dad by spitting up on him and giving him chicken pox.

But your choices may have been different. I hope they were. Soon, though, we reach an age where we are making real choices about how we treat our parents. Real choices.

And as you and I go through life, we honor our parents in the following four ways. There's a progression of four ways that we honor our parents. So first, when we're young children, we obey them. First, we obey them.

[9 : 32] When the Apostle Paul quotes the fifth commandment in Ephesians chapter six, that's the angle that he takes. He draws this out. He says in Ephesians chapter six, verse one, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Now, that is hard for little children to do. Any of you who are parents of little children knows how hard it is for them to obey you.

They really don't want to do it a lot of times. And the funny thing is, you don't have to teach them to be disobedient. They figure that out on their own. Do your children trust your judgment of what's best for them when you take away their toys before dinner?

In my experience, children have very different opinions from their parents. And they trust their own judgment about what's best. They choose to disobey their parents because they believe mom and dad are just trying to make them miserable.

That's the only possible solution about why they won't force feed them candy at all times. Even young children, though, even younger children are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[10 : 44] Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled this commandment. And here's how the Apostle Luke describes the way that he related to his own parents. He's returning to his hometown of Nazareth.

And Luke says this, He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. He was submissive to them. In other words, Jesus obeyed his parents.

He respected the authority they had over him. He trusted their judgment. And Jesus was 12 years old. Jesus was wise enough to know that his parents were good, that they were godly people who were looking out for his best interests.

And so Jesus honored his father and his mother by obeying them. Now, in my own life, I can say with confidence, I have never regretted any decision to obey my parents.

I've never obeyed my parents and come to regret it as a child. Mom and dad, they were always looking out for me. They were wanting what was best for me. That may not be the case in every parent, but I'm very blessed to have parents who were like that.

[11 : 54] And so it was not simply a responsibility to honor them and to obey them. It was a privilege. Now, as you and I grow older, we not only honor our father and our mother by obeying them.

Second, we honor our father and mother when we learn from them. When we learn from them. We listen to them. We ask questions of them.

We learn from them how to understand how the world works. Now, some of you parents might be driven nuts by your kids asking questions of you constantly, all the time, but they need that.

That's what Jesus did, by the way, as a child. That's how he related to all of the adults in his life. So Jesus, we come to a few verses back in the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus is in Jerusalem, and here's what his parents find him doing. They found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions.

[12 : 56] Now, I have no doubt that Jesus behaved the exact same way with his own parents. If he was doing this with the religious leaders and teachers, this is a habit that he would have learned at home.

Jesus was the perfect sinless man. He was a perfect embodiment of wisdom. And wisdom, one of the most fundamental things about wisdom is a wise person is a teachable person.

A wise person is a teachable person. We learn the way a wise child responds to his or her parents from Proverbs chapter 4.

And here's what Solomon teaches his sons. Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive that you may gain insight. For I give you good precepts.

Do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, Let your heart hold fast my words.

[13 : 58] Keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom. Get insight. Do not forget. And do not turn away from the words of my mouth. So we see that as children grow older, they honor their

parents by not only keeping their commandments, but also by being attentive and gaining insight from them.

And that's something that we should continue throughout the rest of our lives. To this day, I talk with my parents. They live down in Phoenix, so it's not often I talk to them in person, but I'll talk to them on FaceTime.

I'll get their advice on challenges that I'm facing in my life. They have insight into the world and experience with the world that I don't have.

They're wiser than I am in a lot of things. And so you and I, we honor our parents by learning from them, by obeying them, by learning from them. And then third, as we grow up from being, you know, these miniature adults into the full-size version, you and I, we honor our father and our mother when we delight them.

When we delight them. Now, how do we do that? We delight them by living wisely, by walking in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[15:16] That's why Proverbs chapter 10, verse 1 says, A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

And the apostle John, he writes the same thing about his children in the family of God. In 3 John, verse 4, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Now, that is the way that Jesus walked too. As Jesus grew into a man, Luke writes this about him.

Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. He increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Everyone who knew Jesus, they knew that he was a wise son who loved God and who loved other people.

[16:22] He perfectly fulfilled these Ten Commandments. He perfectly fulfilled all of the Old Testament law. And Jesus' parents, they were among those who found delight in him.

You realize that Jesus was a delight to his parents. Those of you who are parents of grown children, you can testify, you know, you never really stop thinking about them.

It's not like you've released them into the world and now, you know, that's a load off of my mind.

Don't have to deal with them anymore. No, they're never off of your mind. They're never gone.

You're still often thinking about them, worrying about them, caring for them. And if your children are walking in the truth, if your children are showing a constant pattern of wise choices, then the thoughts that you have of them, they're not thoughts of fear and worry.

They're thoughts of joy and delight. So that's how we honor our parents, by delighting them, by delighting them, by living wisely. So we honor our parents by obeying them, learning from them, and delighting them.

[17:30] And then finally, you and I honor our father and mother when we provide for them. When we provide for them. Now, a couple of years back, I heard a sermon in which the preacher mentioned a recent question he found on a website, debate.org, which I'd never been to, but it's a website where people get on the internet and argue.

Who would have thought? You know? And on this site, the question being debated was this. Should adults be responsible for their elderly parents' care?

Should adults be responsible for their elderly parents' care? And 51% of respondents said no. 51% of respondents said no. No, that is not something that children should be expected to do.

That's something mom and dad should have taken care of themselves. Mom and dad should have an RRSP. If they don't, well then the government should take care of them.

They do have a pension, right? CPP should be covering them. That's not my job. Now, to be fair, I think the reason that percentage was so high was because a few of those respondents, what they were saying was this, that they didn't have the resources, they didn't have the energy, they didn't have the training to care for their parents' special needs for themselves.

[18:46] In our culture, where people live to a much more advanced age more often than in the past, sometimes our parents have difficulties, have physical problems, have mental problems that are beyond our ability to provide care.

And I think that's what a lot of these people were getting at is that they said, they were saying, I personally don't have the ability to care for them. That being said, there were quite a few who just had this mindset that that is not my problem at all.

But Jesus challenges those of us who believe that we have no responsibilities to our elderly parents. He challenges anyone who believes that we don't have responsibilities to them. Jesus holds you and me responsible as the primary caregivers for our parents in their old age. In fact, just about any commentator I've read says that's actually the main intent of this commandment.

That's the main intent of this honor your father and your mother, that you care for them in their old age. In Mark chapter 7, Jesus gets into a bit of a tangle with the religious leaders of his day. [19:56] He does that a lot. And the particular issue was they were finding a loophole in their law, in their man-made laws. They were coming up with some sort of religious loophole that allowed children to duck this responsibility.

To say, whatever you would receive from me, it's given to the Lord, but then they would just keep it for themselves. And he says that the religious leaders, he says they are rejecting the commandment of God.

They are making void the word of God by allowing this to take place. And Jesus didn't just command that children provide for their parents.

He lived it. Jesus lived that out. He lived that out even as he was suffering and dying on the cross. And we know that because the apostle John tells us how he honored his mother.

In John chapter 19, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold, your son.

[21:07] Then he said to the disciple, Behold, your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. So even when Jesus was no longer able to care for her himself, he made arrangements to provide for her needs.

He made sure she was cared for. I remember once a friend of mine making the difficult decision to place his mother in a nursing home, a decision many of us have had to wrestle with.

And this friend told me that this was one of the hardest decisions he'd ever made in his life.

Because her declining health, that did require specialized treatment, treatment, and that was treatment that he couldn't provide in his own home.

But you know what? He never abandoned her. He never relinquished responsibility for her care. He saw to it himself.

Because he loved her. And he was honoring her. And God loves to see that. Because we honor our father and mother by providing for them.

[22:18] So to review, God commands you and me to honor our father and mother over the course of our life by obeying them, learning from them, delighting them, and providing for them.

That's God's commandment to you and to me. Now, like most of these commandments, you're going to have a lot of what I was just reading yesterday, the author, David Powelson, calls BWAs. But what about? But what about? Some of you, this isn't an easy commandment to obey. This isn't an easy commandment to even know how to obey.

Maybe you're a father or a mother yourself. Maybe you're hearing this commandment explained and just hearing this gives you pain because you know this is not the relationship that you have with your son or your daughter.

You don't feel honored. You don't even feel respected by your children. You've done your best to provide for them, to raise them, to teach them, and it wasn't enough. They didn't respond by becoming wise.

[23:30] They're not walking in the truth. Maybe this commandment is hard to hear because you're worried that providing for your parents when they're old is going, it's going to suck every last drop of joy out of your life.

Now one of the reasons, one of the responses to that debate.org question, this one laid it all out on the table. What about what's left of my life?

Why should I give it up? My parents are in their 80s. I'm in my late 50s. I haven't got much good quality life left. I don't want to give up what life I've got left to care for my parents.

I love them, but they drive me mad. Now maybe that's what you're thinking, that obeying these commandments, that's going to leave you unhappy, that's going to leave you unfulfilled.

That's going to leave you with nothing but an empty husk of a life to call your own. Or maybe you've been listening to the commandments that God gave.

[24 : 33] You can feel, you can feel that blazing flash of anger in your head as you hear this. You can feel that slow pressure, that bitterness that's rising up in your chest and you're thinking, you don't know what they were like.

You don't know my dad. He was cruel, he was angry, he was abusive. When he wasn't assaulting me, he was neglecting me. To this day, he claims he did nothing wrong.

He hasn't repented of a single thing that he's done against me. Or you're thinking, you don't know my mom. She manipulates our family. She turns them against each other. She's a meddler. She's a cancer when we're together.

She makes all these passive aggressive comments and makes me want to put my fist through a wall. Real life is complicated. It's complicated, it's difficult, it's messy.

We need more than just a simple commandment. The Bible is not a formula book that gives you an easy if this, then that response to difficult life situations.

[25 : 34] We need wisdom and guidance from God's Spirit. We need the counsel of God's Spirit that he gives through his word, the Bible. And we need the perspective and we need the protection of other believers.

The Holy Spirit working through other believers who love the Lord, who love his word. God's Spirit is not going to God's Spirit. You know, if three people come to us as elders with the same problem, we might counsel them in three different ways because everyone's maturity, everyone's circumstances, everyone's relationships are different.

I'd like to say, especially, we would never want any of you to place yourself in a situation where you'll be abused or controlled by someone with that controlling power over your life.

But let me tell you about something else that we need. You and I do need life. We need life from God. That complaint that was just up on the screen that we heard a few minutes ago, what about what's left of my life?

I haven't got much good quality life left. I don't want to give up what life I've got left to care for my parents. That desire, craving for good quality life.

[26 : 51] Could there be anything more squamish than that? You know, I think at the core of every lie, there's usually a kernel of truth.

And I think this person has a kernel of truth. I think they're right, that we do need life. We do need life. And we need not just long life, that's something modern medicine can give to some degree, but we need good quality of life.

We need good quality of life in order to bless others. So where are we going to get that? Where are we going to get our energy? Where are we going to get our joy? Where are we going to get our strength to keep going on when relationships with other people are sucking us dry?

Well, let's go back to Exodus chapter 20 verse 12. Let's go back to the fifth commandment again.

Let me read this verse one more time. Because there is more than just a command here. This is a command that comes coupled with a promise.

Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. So here's what God promised to the people of Israel as they camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, as they were there in the wilderness.

[28 : 10] This was well before they entered this promised land where God would be present with them. He's promising them, if you obey my commandment, your days will be long in the land that I, your God, am giving you.

Even more simply, you could put it this way, honor your father and your mother and I will give you life. I will give you life. So God's command is honor your father and mother and God's promise is I will give you life.

God's promise is I will give you life. Now this is really important to understand. The life that God promised to the people of Israel, it wasn't just length of life, it wasn't just a long lifespan, it was a full and rich life.

It was the good life. The promised land of Canaan that the Lord was giving them, that was a special place on the earth, a place where God's blessing would be poured out on them.

And what made it special was this, the Lord, he was present everywhere on earth, but his presence would remain in the promised land in a special way, a special attention, devotion, a special intent to bless his people.

[29 : 34] And the life that he gave to those who obeyed his commands would be a rich, a full, a beautiful life, that life of rest we talked about last week, the good life.

Because it would be a life of God with us. The Lord himself would be their life. hear familiar words, and they tell us, these words are much loved because they tell us what kind of life the Lord would give his people.

A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

[30 : 55] My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, shall pursue me every last day of my life. That's the good life.

To dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now when Jesus Christ came to earth, Jesus became the new Israel, the new temple, that new place of God's blessing, the new house of the Lord.

Lord, and if you believe in Jesus Christ, if you are united with Jesus Christ by faith in him and faith in his broken body, his shed blood when he died on that cross, faith in his resurrection life, the good life that he gives us, if that's you, then God's spirit dwells in you.

And so this promise is for you. And I promise you this, when you obey God's commandment, first of all, you first of all will have to die.

[32 : 19] You will have to die to yourself. You will have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And you won't be able to draw life out of other people.

Like you've spent your whole life being trained and training yourself to do. You won't be able to draw life out of other people like all your friends do, like family members do.

But I also promise you this, the Lord will be your life. God will be taken away from you.

Then it will be taken away from you. And it isn't really the good life if it lets you down like that. But the Lord cannot be taken away from you. He is your life.

The Lord will be your life. And I can promise you this because the Lord is the one who has promised you this. the Lord is saying to you, even though you feel like you are dying, you will not be afraid of being hurt anymore.

[33 : 38] You don't need to be afraid anymore because I am with you. You're afraid that people will ridicule you, that people will forget you. But I will honor you even before those who despise you.

you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You're afraid that your face is going to grow weary. You're afraid that your cup is going to run dry.

But I will anoint you with oil until your face shines with health. I will fill your cup until it can no longer hold any more joy. And my goodness, my faithful, loving kindness, love.

It is going to hunt you down every day of your life and never let you alone. And you will find life with me, both now and forever and ever.

If you honor your father and mother, if you obey the Lord your God with all your heart, he is going to take care of you. He is going to provide all that you need. He's not going to allow you to go hungry or homeless or without clothing unless he also provides the strength to endure that.

[35 : 00] The Lord will give all that you need. And it may look intimidating. Well, how am I going to handle tomorrow's challenges? You're going to wake up tomorrow and like the people of Israel who went to bed with empty cupboards in the desert and woke up the next morning and there was manna on the ground.

And each and every day they did that. Went to bed with empty cupboards, woke up, and there was food again. And there was life. The Lord will renew your strength. The Lord will bring joy to your face again.

And at last you will truly live. So God has commanded you and me to honor our fathers and our mothers. God has promised you and me to give us life.

And so our response is to obey our life-giving God. Our response is to obey our life-giving God.

Because when we do this, in doing this, we honor not only our father on earth, we honor our father

in heaven.

We show that we trust our father in heaven as his little children. We obey even when it hurts. And our father loves us.

[36 : 10] Our father knows how he will show his grace, even in our weakness. God, our God, he is our life. Jesus is our life. And God, our father, he's given us his only son, even his own son.

Jesus of Nazareth, he was the perfect son of God. Yet he became a man, yet he surrendered himself to death for the sake of his father's glory, because he wanted to honor his father in heaven. And he did this so that we too could be forgiven of our sin. We too could be reconciled to our life-giving God and find life in him. And Jesus did this so that we could be raised to life together with him forever and ever.

So put your whole faith, put your whole hope, put your whole trust in Jesus Christ to redeem you from your sins, to empower you to show honor, to give you what is truly life.

Honor your father and mother. God will give you life. So let us obey our life-giving God. Let me pray. Okay.