

**Channel Marker: The 10 Commandments
and the Beatitudes**

Command # 5

“Recognition of the Importance of Family”

Exodus 20:12

Times they are a’changing! *There was a day in America when a family was defined as a married man and woman and their biological children. But those days are over. Taking a good look at the western world we see that the home faces constant bombardment from every side. Even our contemporary definition of what constitutes a family has become very complicated, fragmented and reshuffled almost beyond recognition. Many couples live together without marriage, each with children from a previous marriage and perhaps a child that is “theirs.” There an increasing number of homo-sexual and lesbian couples living together as a couple and raising children. And many homes are led by as single parent trying to do everything that both parents use to do. Bit by bit, piece by piece, the framework of family is eroding.*

Is that so very important? *Yes, because the family is God’s idea. It is the foundation block for*

any civilization. Any civilization that has let this foundation crumble has not been able to stand. Strong families, make strong communities, strong communities make strong countries. If the family is destroyed the nation will fall.

When God gave His law, He wrote it down on two tablets (Exodus 31:18). The fifth commandment is the first to shift away from how we relate to God, to how we relate to others. The first table of the law consisted of four commandments dealing with our response to God. The second tablet of the law consisted of six commandments governing the way we are to relate to others. We are told how we are to relate to others beginning with our own families.

In Exodus 20:12 we read, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” It seems difficult to see how this command fits the dysfunctional families of 21st century America. But since this is a commandment from God and has never been repealed there must be some way to obey it no matter how difficult or painful it may be.

“Channel markers exist to guide us safely down the waterways of life. They set the perimeters of living while leaving us room to navigate our own way...What make the channel markers so relevant is that they highlight reality.” [William G.

Enright. *“Channel Markers: Wisdom From the Ten Commandments and the Sermon On The Mount.”* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2001) p. 13, 30]

Each of the Ten Commandments that we have examined has spoken to us about issues that touch our lives! The Fifth Commandment is especially relevant and important for our time.

First, The Provisions of this Commandment.

*The first thing we note is that the command says that we are to “**honor your father and your mother.**” What does **Honoring** our father and mother entail? First we will look at this from the children’s perspective and then from the parent’s perspective.*

- ***The Children’s Perspective.***

There are three categories that I want to include in our examination tonight.

- ***Respect.***

*The command says that we are to “**honor**” our Father and Mother. The word “**honor**” comes from a Hebrew verb (**kaved**) that means “**to be heavy or weighty.**” It means we are to give great weight or importance to our parents by respecting them.*

We should show honor to our parents because of their many sacrifices for us. According to a report released by the Department of Agriculture, a middle-income, married couple with two

children is estimated to spend **\$233,610** to raise a child born in 2015. And that number only covers costs from birth through age 17 -- so it doesn't include college expenses. [Kathryn Vasel "It costs \$233,610 to raise a child." Jan. 9, 2017, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/01/09/pf/cost-of-raising-a-child-2015/>]

Someone said this to college students, **“Be kind to your parents, after sending you through college, you are all they have left!”**

What this **“honor”** looks like changes as time goes on in our lives? In the early years, honoring your parents is expressed mainly through being obedient to their rules. As one becomes a teenager this need for obedience continues but is augmented by learning to show respect to your parent in your attitude. It is both discouraging and frightening to see a child or young person being disrespectful to their parents. Foundational to honoring our parents is the respect that is shown to them in public and private.

One author put it this way, **“Honoring father and mother means speaking well of them to friends. It means listening to what they say, including their warnings about spending time with the wrong friends and experimenting with things that can cause permanent physical and spiritual damage... Here are some questions for self-examination: **Do you ever talk back to your****

parents Do you ever hide anything from them? ...Do you speak well of your parents

(to your friends)?” [[Philip Graham Ryken. *Written in Stone*.

(Philipsburg, PA: P & R Pub., 2003) pp. 128, 131]

A lack of respect spells trouble down the road. Even as adults we are to continue to show respect by listening to our parent’s advice and by caring for their welfare.

As children grow up it is natural for them to leave their parent’s home (Gen 2:24) but teenager if you are dreaming of that day right now, you will probably find out that it not all it cracked up to be. And a general rule of thumb is that if you are chafing under your parents authority then you probably are not ready to be out from under it. And even when we are out from under their authority, we still owe them respect.

*One last thing about respect and I wish we did not have to talk about it, because I wish it did not exist. But what about dealing with parents who do not deserve our respect. First of all the commandment does not say, “**Honor your parents if they deserve it.**” There are no simple cures for a painful childhood, but every recovery begins with honesty and ends with giving forgiveness to those who have sinned against you. But granting forgiveness in our hearts does not mean naively restoring trust in the relationship. If you father*

molested or abused you, forgiving does not mean trusting your kids to be alone with him.

➤ **Obedience.**

The Apostle Paul reaffirms the fifth commandment when he says in Ephesians 6:1, “**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**”

When this command is read almost immediately we hear the argument, “**But what if my parents tell me to do some that is wrong?**” Yet in reality how often does that happen? Even parents that are pretty lousy at the job don’t usually tell their children to do things that are wrong. I know that it happens, but certainly not most of the time. So honoring your parents implies obedience unless instructed to do something morally or ethically wrong.

The attitude of children toward their parents changes as they grow older. Teenager’s there is hope for your parents. Mark Twain once said, “*When I was 14 yrs. old, my father was so ignorant that I hated to have the old man around. But when I was 21 yrs. old, I was astonished to see how much my father had learned in only 7 years.*” But the simple truth is that you should honor your parents for their wealth of life experiences. Whether you want to admit it or not your parents know things that you do not simply because they have lived a lot longer than you have.

➤ **Care.**

Instead of looking to parents for nurturing, the children, now grown and probably with their own families, have to consider how to care for their parent's as they mature in years. Care can be shown by paying attention to parents, calling them, and visiting them. The way we treat our parents will likely be the way our children treat us as we age.

At least one little boy understood the value that his parents held in his life. "There was a little boy who expressed concern about his parents. He told his how his father worked hard to provide for all his needs and how his mother slaved around the house, cooking and cleaning up after him and taking care of him when he was sick. When asked what he had to be worried about he said, 'I am afraid that they might escape!'" [unknown source]

• **The Parent's Perspective.**

First I think that it needs to be noted that Mary and Joseph were imperfect parents of the only perfect child. Everyone else both parent and child have been imperfect.

But the fifth command speaks to the parents as well as the children. And while as we have noted parents have a right to expect respect from their children, children have a right to expect parents who deserve respect. Parents let me share you a

couple of mistakes that I think we see parents make repeatedly in our day and age.

➤ *Parental Responsibilities.*

❖ *Pass on the Faith.*

Home is the place where children discover who they are and formulate their ideas about who God is. Parents have a God-given responsibility to teach their children how to know and serve God. This spiritual responsibility is to both the fathers and the mothers. Solomon said, “My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; (Prov. 1:8) and “My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; (2) For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you.” (Prov. 3:1-2) These verses serve as commentary on the Fifth Commandment.

❖ *Pass on our Values.*

Someone is teaching your children values, the question is who. Television, Movies, School, Peers, Internet are all teaching values. Children soak up the values of those they come in contact with. Your child may not inherit your talents but they will absorb your values. By example every child learns what is truly important to their parents. It may be money, prestige, power, position, leisure or obedience to Christ.

❖ *Teach them to respect Authority.*

We learn to respect authority or to scorn it in our home. What we learn or fail to learn in this regard will either serve to equip us to live in the real world or it will cripple us. For the most part, the way we react to people in authority will be determined by how we hear our parents speak of them in our home. There will always be people in this world that will exercise authority over us; teachers, government officials, employers and God. Peter says, *“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, ...(17) Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”* (1 Peter 2:13, 17- ESV)

➤ Parental Mistakes.

One of the mistakes that we see over and over in our modern world is parents trying to live vicariously through their children - that is **– the desire of the parent to live out their lives as they wish they had been through the lives of their children.**

Rather than the parent trying to relive their desires through their children they should be trying to help develop those unique strengths and abilities that God has given their child. Proverbs 22:6 states, *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”* Although sometimes taken by individuals to be a guarantee what we have is a general promise. What this verse says is that we should *“train up”* which means literally

“touch the palate of your child.” Pay enough attention to your child to know “how they are bent” where their individual talents and abilities lie and encourage them in those.

A second parenting mistake that we see far too often in our day is one of the parents attempting to be their child’s best friend. Can I say as plainly as possible, your children need you to be a parent not a best friend. What they need to see is a parent who is firm and fair. That is firm in what we say, with actions tempered by love. There are two extremes when it comes to disciplining children. Unfair discipline – parents whose answer to every infraction is a beating. Unrestrained Behavior – parents whose children do as they please – Oh there may be a lot of yelling, threatening and pleading but no consistent discipline imposed.

I ran across a little poem out of a religious paper. It sums up—with convicting clarity—the power of a father's example:

***There are little eyes upon you,
And they're watching night and day;
There are little ears that quickly
Take in every word you say;
There are little hands all eager
To do anything you do;
And a little boy who's dreaming
Of the day he'll be like you.***

***You're the little fellow's idol;
You're the wisest of the wise.
In his little mind about you,
No suspicions ever arise.
He believes in you devoutly,
Holds that all you say and do,
He will say and do, in your way,
When he's grown up like you.***

***There's a wide-eyed little fellow
Who believes you're always right.
And his little ears are open,
And he watches day and night.
You are setting an example
Every day, in all you do,
For the little boy who's waiting
To grow up to be like you.”***

[“Little Fellow” by Shirley Mitton
<http://100poems.com/poems/life/o837001.htm>

From the Provision of the Commandment now to ...

Secondly, The Promise of this Commandment.

Paul in Ephesians 6:2 says that the fifth commandment is “***the first commandment with a promise.***” The second part of Exodus 20:12 says, “***Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.***” So is it a promise to those who keep it OR a threat addressed to those who do not? I believe it is both.

Paul compresses both the Exodus and parallel account in Deuteronomy of the fifth Commandment when he writes in Ephesians 6:1-3, *“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.”*

What we need to understand about this promise is that it is a general promise. What is given is not an absolute guarantee that you will live into your nineties or beyond. Rather it is a general promise that affects you and the society in which you live. Perhaps it would be better not to think it of a promise at all, but as just plain common sense, a reminder that actions have consequences.

This is not a trivial thing. With all the concern we have today, about child abuse, we are in danger of forgetting that God's first concern was for the abuse of parents by children; honoring parents was never considered a small thing in ancient Israel. The Old Testament gives its sternest warnings for children that disregard their parents and choose to go their own ways. The civil law in Israel remedied the problem. *“He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death”* (Ex. 21:15). *“He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death”* (Ex. 21:17). *“If any*

man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear" [Deut. 21:18-21).

Notice that the son's disobedience affected not only the family but the entire community, so that all are involved in removing him. Although we don't have any New Testament precedent for carrying out this kind of sobering discipline, we do understand by this that God considers a child's treatment of his parents as no trivial matter.

Volumes could and have been written to explain the dangers of disobedience, disrespect and dishonor directed toward one's parents. But Paul has already told us that we should do it because it is "right" and in his letter to the Colossians (3:20) we are told that we should "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord."

Application

This evening in closing I want to share with you two fundamental reasons why the family is so important.

First, because **it here that we find acceptance and love**. The family is the place that God created to shelter us from the stresses and demands of daily life, one place where we it's safe. It's should be one place where we can get close to someone else, be loved and accepted for simply being a part of a family, not because of what we look like, what we do or how smart we are. So there are two places in this world in which we should be accepted and loved just as we are; the home and the Church.

Secondly, the family is important because **it is here that we learn to relate to Others!** Children learn how to treat others, how to relate as husbands and wives, even how to honor father and mother at home. “Since the family is the primary source of revelation being passed from one generation to the next, and since parents are the key transmitters, dishonoring parents has a double impact. When children of whatever age dishonor their parents, not only was that act sinful itself, but they cut themselves off from prime source of truth and God’s will.” [Bill and Kathy Peel. Where is Moses When We Need Him? (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1995) p. 130.]

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- ***The Children's Perspective.***
 - Respect. - "honor" means "to be heavy or weighty."
 - Obedience. (Eph. 6:1)
 - Care.

- ***The Parent's Perspective.***
 - Parental Responsibilities.
 - ❖ *Pass On Our Faith. (Prov. 1:8, 3:1-2)*
 - ❖ *Pass On The Values.*
 - ❖ *Teach Them To Respect Authority.*

 - Parental Mistakes.
 - ❖ *Trying to live vicariously through their children.*

 - ❖ *Attempting to be their child's best friend.*

Secondly, The Promise of this Commandment.

(Ephesians 6:2 - Ex. 21:15, 17, 18-21- Col. 3:20)

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