

The Fifth Word: Honor Your Father and Mother

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[0 : 00] American psychologist and family physician Leonard Sacks authored a book entitled Collapsed Parenting. And he recalls an encounter he had with a patient.

He says, Kyle was absorbed in a video game on his cell phone. So I asked his mom, how long has Kyle had a stomachache? Mom said, I'm thinking it's been about two days.

Then Kyle replied, shut up mom. You don't know what you're talking about. And he gave a snorty laugh. Without looking up from his video game. Kyle was 10 years old.

Sacks continues, I've been in a position for 29 years. Distorted language and behavior from a 10 year old was very rare in the 1980s and 1990s. It would have been unusual a decade ago.

It is common. America's children are emerged in a culture of disrespect. For parents, teachers, and one another. They learn it from television.

[1 : 05] Even on the Disney Channel, where parents are portrayed as clueless, out of touch, or absent. They learn it from celebrities or the internet. They learn it from social media.

They teach it to one another. Our society's belief in ineluctable progress and individual autonomy create a fertile ground for Christal independence and contempt for whatever is old.

So there's a general disregard and dismiss that toward all that is old and a favorable action of what is new.

And in this kind of environment, children, it's easy for children to learn that their parents and grandparents are not with the times. That they are out of touch with reality. That they don't know what they are talking about.

Respect for one elder is not one of the prized virtues here in the United States today. But this is not a biblical perspective. When it comes to our faith and life in Christ, Jeremiah 6.16 commands us to walk in the ancient past.

[2 : 16] Where the good way is. Not in the newfangled past, but in the ancient past. 1 Timothy 5.5 says, You who are younger, be subject to the elders.

1 Timothy 5.1 says, Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him that you would have followed. Leviticus 19.32 says, You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man. And you shall fear your God. I am the Lord. Why? Because Job 12.12 says, Wisdom is with the ages. And understanding in the length of days.

Proverbs 16.31 says, Gray hair is a crown, a glory. It is gained in a righteous life. According to Isaiah 3.5, When the youth are insolent to the elders, that's a sign of divine judgment.

It's a sign of a society that is on the brink of destruction. Even in the New Testament, in 2 Timothy 3.2, says that people who are disobedient to their parents will mark the times of difficulty in the last days.

[3 : 27] And that's why the fifth word of the Decalogue is this. Honor your father and mother, that your days may belong to the land that the Lord your God has given you.

This command serves as a bridge that links the first half of the Ten Commandments with the second half. The first half deals with how we have to relate to God, how to love God with all of our hearts.

And the second half deals with how to love our neighbors as ourselves. If you examine the Ten Commandments, the portion that we read this morning, you might notice that the first five commandments, all invoke the name of the Lord.

You'll see the Lord in all caps, which is the personal pronoun, the proper name, the proper noun of God's name. And by contrast that with the second half, the last five commandments, you'll see that the name of the Lord is not mentioned at all.

Instead, it all has to do with what you do with your neighbors, other people. And the fifth commandment straddles both of those because it invokes the name of the Lord and grounds the commandment what the Lord has promised, that your days may belong in the land of the Lord your God is giving you.

[4 : 38] But on the other hand, it addresses our relationship with other people, our neighbors, or specifically our fathers and mothers. So it's the pivot commandment of the Decalogue.

And as we study this, we're going to look at the importance of the commandment, the promise of the command, and the fulfillment of the command in turn. Let's look first at the importance of this command.

Notice where this command is placed within the Decalogue. I mentioned a few weeks ago that if you examine the penalties that the Bible describes for the violation of these commandments, you can see that the ten commandments are arranged in a descending order of weight and importance. The punishment for breaking the commandment gets less and less severe as you go down the list. That doesn't mean they're not important. They're still part of the ten commandments.

But there is a priority and an order in the ten commandments. Now look at where this command is. Honor your father and mother is the fifth word, which precedes even the sixth word, you shall not birth.

[5 : 50] Later, Exodus 21, 15-17, prescribes the death penalty for striking or hurting one's parents. Deuteronomy 21, verses 18-21, commands that a stubborn and rebellious son will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and though they discipline him, will not listen to them, and persist in being a glutton and a drunkard, that that such a man should be stoned to death in order to purge the evil from their midst, so that all Israel shall hear and fear.

Note that the parents have to have discipline him already. If the children are stubborn and rebellious because parents fail to discipline them, that's not the children's fault. That's the parents' fault. And in such a case, the children cannot be punished.

But in this kind of extreme case, where the rebellious son is a glutton and a drunkard, he's socially disruptive, and even after repeated injuries and disciplines, he does not reform his ways, then execution is the final resort.

This likely seems like overkill to most of us. So we need to ask ourselves, why does the Old Testament take this seriously?

There are three reasons. First, because children of today are the adults of tomorrow. And because healthy parent-children relations are essential for the health and growth of children, it is not an overstatement to say that parent-child relations are foundational to a functioning society.

[7 : 22] And for that reason, the subversion or disruption of parent-child relations unravels the very fabric of society. And this can happen subtly.

Murder is obvious. Everyone knows it's wrong. Almost everyone. And most people are not brave enough to do it.

But dishonoring one's parents is more insidious. There are millions who condone it in others and do it themselves. It is for that reason all the more dangerous and the evil must be purged from the Israelite congregation.

As an example. Second, while the fifth commandment has primarily to do with one's parents, as Paul confirmed in Ephesians 6 verse 1 where he cites this saying, children, obey your parents, it has implications still for other authority figures at all levels of society.

For example, throughout the Old Testament, it's not merely one's biological parents who are referred to as father and mother. Joseph says in Genesis 45 that God has made him a father to Pharaoh.

[8 : 34] In Judges 4.7, Deborah, speaking of her role as Israel's judge, said, I am role as a mother of Israel. In 1 Samuel 24.11, David addresses King Saul as father.

In Prophet Elijah and Prophet Elijah are referred to as father by kings and by other people that are under their charge. It's the same in the New Testament.

1 Timothy 5.1 commands us to speak to an older man as you would have father, older woman as mother. We are commanded to honor widows who are truly widows.

In the same way that we are commanded to honor our father and mother, the New Testament in various places tells us to honor those to whom honor is owed. In Romans 13. For example, let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of the whole honor.

1 Timothy 6.1, bond servants should regard their own masters as worthy of all honor. So you should honor your boss at work. 1 Peter 2.17 says, honor the emperor.

[9 : 35] So regardless of whether you voted for Joe Biden or not, regardless of whether you approve of the job he has done so far or not, you should honor him by the virtue of his station, his office.

Christians should take no part in the arrogantly disrespectful and contemptuous political discourse that characterized our nation. So this is yet another reason why honoring one's parents is important. it sets a precedent for honoring other forms of legitimate authority. John Calvin puts it this way in both the institutes of the Christian religion.

Now this precept of subjection strongly conflicts with the depravity of human nature, which is swollen with the longing for lofty position, bears subjection drudgingly.

Accordingly, he has put forward as an example that kind of superiority which is by nature most amiable and least invidious because he could thus more easily soften and bend our minds to the habit of submission.

[10 : 39] By that subjection, which is easiest to tolerate, the Lord therefore gradually accustoms us to all lawful subjections since the reason of all is the same. By teaching us to submit to our parents, which is the easiest and most natural form of all submissions, God humbles us and teaches us to respect other forms of legitimate authority as well.

The most important authority that we need to learn to be subject to, of course, is God. And that's the third and most important reason when we ask to honor our parents.

God reveals himself to us as our heavenly father throughout the scripture. Theologian J.I. Packer writes in his book, Knowing God, you sum up the whole of your text in the religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one holy father.

If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

For everything that Christ taught, it sums up the knowledge of the fatherhood of God. Father is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.

[12 : 07] This is how God has revealed himself to his people. Remember how earlier in Exodus 4, God called Israel my firstborn son. Let my son go that they may serve me.

As the father fights for and defends his children, our God has been fighting for the Israelites in Exodus. Psalm 103 says, As the father shows compassion unto his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

For he knows our praise. In the same way that a compassionate dad will excuse his daughter's tantrums saying she is only a child. Our heavenly father who knows our praise and knows our weaknesses is compassionate for them.

In Matthew 7, Jesus teaches us even sinful, earthly fathers do not give a stone to a child who asks for bread. If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

Our heavenly father is not begrudging or stingy. He is generous and eager to give good gifts to his children. Yahweh is our father.

[13 : 22] That's who he is. And the fatherhood of God puts into perspective the importance of the fifth commandment because earthly parents are tattered after our heavenly father.

Similar to how God feeds man in his own image, in the image of God, in Genesis 1, in Genesis 5, it says Adam, the father, the son, in his own likeness after his image.

Parents image God in their beginning and rearing of children and that's why obedience to parents is so important because the parents are instituted by God to exercise authority over their children.

And that means how the parents behave for their children, especially the way the fathers exercise their God-given authority as heads in respect to apostles, is going to shape the way children perceive and relate to God the heavenly father.

And of course, the converse is also true. The way children are taught to honor the earthly authority of their parents is also going to affect the way those children honor the heavenly authority of God the father.

[14 : 31] That's why the English poet William Shakespeare puts it this way in one of his poems, the voice of parents is the voice of God for to their children they are heaven's lieutenants.

God has given parents authority over their children that they should exercise with love, humility, and wisdom and with his right for the children to honor them and listen to them.

So these are some reasons why the command is so important and note that the command includes both the father and mother. This inclusion of the mother is the same honor due to the father as due to the mother.

And this inclusion of the mother is exceptional among ancient Near Eastern literature. It is often the case that rebellious children will listen more to their father than to their mother.

So they will sometimes say things like You keep doing this. If you don't listen I'm going to tell this dad when he comes home.

[15 : 36] How many of you have heard this when you're growing up? Yeah, there you go. When our toddler is being strictly stubborn and refusing to go to bed while I'm away traveling which they are have a tendency to do to take advantage of my afternoon.

Hannah will sometimes call me and put me on the speaker phone and say Sean, tell me to go to bed. I don't know what it is whether it's the deep voice or the physical strength I don't know what it is but children intuitively grasp the father's authority.

But this is a warning to touch children who would refuse to listen to their mother. It doesn't say honor your father only it says honor your father and your mother.

The mother deserves as much honor and respect as the father. but what does it mean to honor them? The word literally means to be heavy.

So when it's used in a figurative sense like this it means to treat someone as weighty. Give weight to someone esteem someone to take them seriously to value them higher.

[16 : 58] For children this entails obedience and that means children should be oriented toward their parents to listen to their parents more than their peers.

Developmental psychologists Gordon Neufeld and Gabriel Lament the loss of this parental orientation among children in their book Hold On To Your Kids. They say this For the first time in history young people are turning for instruction modeling and guidance not to mothers or fathers teachers and other responsible adults but to people whom nature never intended to play in a parental role their own peers.

They are not manageable teachable or maturing because they no longer take their cues from adults. Instead children are being brought up by immature persons who cannot possibly guide them to maturity.

They are being brought up by each other. The term that seems to fit more than any other for this phenomenon is peer orientation. It is peer orientation that has muted our parenting instincts eroded our natural authority and calls us to parent not from the heart but from the head from manually the advice of experts and the confused expectations of society.

This trend has been accelerated by the pervasive use of TikTok Snapchat Instagram YouTube even among young children. Especially as children get older it becomes even more of a problem into their pre-teens and teenage years some of them resist the authority and guidance of their parents and turn to the affirmations of their peers.

[18 : 45] but I want to urge all of you to remember that God did not give you friends to bring you up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

God gave you parents to bring you up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Your peers generally speaking don't know any better that you do.

So why listen to them? Why learn from them when you can listen to and learn from your parents?

We don't have very many children in our church but we have some of the children.

In 1 Kings 12 Rehoboam the son of Solomon's son takes over as king after his father's dead.

Solomon oversaw the nation of Israel at the zenith of their power and glory.

And so Rehoboam gets a good start to his reign but soon after he begins to rule people gather themselves together before him and they petition him saying your father made our yoke heavy that therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us and we will serve you.

[20 : 03] Now Rehoboam tells them hey give me three days to consult with people and I'll get back to you with an answer and during that time he consults the old men who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive and they counseled him to give the people a favorable answer and

that he yields to them now and he serves them now that they will serve him forever but then he turned and asked his own friend the young men who had grown up with him and they told him to squash the complaint of the Israelites to work them even harder in order to nip their discontentment in the bud and keep them submissive unfortunately Rehoboam listened to his friends his peers instead of the counsel of his father and gave the harsh response and the result is that he loses 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel caused the schism of the nation of Israel this is a lesson in the fifth commandment if

Rehoboam had honored his father Solomon by extension the man the counselor the old man that he had trusted in he would have avoided this national disaster Christians should honor their father and mother your parents were once teenagers too your parents were once newlyweds too your parents were once had young kids too people who mature in Christian humility grow in their appreciation for the sacrifice of their parents and for the wisdom and experience that they have we must not dismiss this command by telling ourselves well I'm not a child anymore this doesn't apply to me note that this command is primarily addressed to adults already the preceding command is commandment number four to keep the Sabbath he mentions your son or your daughter so this fifth commandment to honor your father and mother is given to people who already have sons and daughters there is an important sense in which a man and woman leave their father and mother in order to form a new family in marriage but the command to honor your father and mother still applies we're no longer under our parental authority as when we were children and so we no longer we're no longer required obedience is no longer required of us but deference is still required of us honor to give way to their counsel to treat them with respect even when we don't like the counsel they give regarding our choice of spouse or career we should express appreciation to them thank them for the sacrifices they have made and suffering that they endured in raising us we should visit them and care for them in old age they changed our diapers and time might come when they're confirmed that we have to change their diapers they diced up and pureed food to feed us when we're infants when we had no teeth and likewise time might come when we will have to puree food and feed our toothless aging parents unless you have the money to get dentures or dental implants honor your parents in the way you speak to them don't speak dismissively or scornfully to them in your pride and don't speak dismissively or scornfully of them to other people at the very least our parents gave birth to us at the very least that's that's what power 23 22 says listen to your father who gave you life even for the absolute failure of parents at the very least they gave birth to us we quite literally would not be here if it weren't for our parents this is not to ignore the fact that parents are sometimes wrong and sometimes wicked they often are because they are sinful human beings just like all of us but we don't always have to agree with them in order to honor them sometimes we will need to correct our parents but there's also a way to do that in an honoring way like I said earlier from verse 55 don't rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would applaud instead of an open rebuke you can bring gentle correction in the form of encouragement even the best of parents are not going to be perfect and they're going to instruct and discipline us as they see fit according to their fallible wisdom and discernment but even then we can rest assured that our heavenly father is sovereignly instructing us and guiding us and disciplining us for our good sometimes our parents are not only wrong but wicked and there will be times when they seek to lead us into disobedience to God and we have to say along with the apostles in Acts 5:29 we must obey God rather than men a good example of this is found in first king 15 where it says king Asa removed Maaca his mother from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asher and Asa cut down her image and burned it at the brook children the heart of Asa was wholly true to the Lord all his things here Asa is commended by scripture it was right for him to remove his mother's status as queen mother and cut down the idols that she had set up because it would be wrong to violate the first and second commandment in order to keep the fifth commandment the commandment of God cannot be pitted against each other God never expects us to honor our parents at the expense of honoring God and when our parents fail in their responsibility to represent God and instruct us in the way of the Lord we must not follow them we can still honor them some of you have sadly had parents who tried to abhor you some of you have had parents who abandoned you some of you have had parents who abused you all of which is a heartbreaking breach of the sacred trust that God has placed in parents if that's you you probably have a hard time relating to God as your heavenly father but don't let your sinful parents mar your perception of our perfect heavenly father maybe your father or mother walked out on you

but psalm 27 10 for my father and my mother have forsaken me but the Lord will take me in our father in heaven will never leave you nor forsake may your father and mother hurt you and make you feel unsafe insecure psalm 121 tells us that our heavenly father watches over us and he protects us and he never slumbers he will not sleep as he watches over you may your father and mother fail to provide for you neglected you Matthew 6 8 tells us our heavenly father knows what you need before you ask him he provides even for the sparrow will he not provide for his precious children maybe you had a father and mother who despised you you grew up knowing that they didn't like you at all you didn't know you never know a parent's tender care and love

[28 : 48] Isaiah 43 4 says our heavenly father says you are precious in my eyes and honored and I love you it says in stephaniah 3 17 that our heavenly father rejoices over us with gladness that he quiets us by his love and he goes over us with loud singing that's the love of the heavenly father for you so take heart even if you didn't have honorable earthly parents you have a father in heaven who is worthy of all honor and praise and glory and so we have ample reasons to honor our father and mother but scripture provides yet more motivation for us honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that the

Lord of God is given you this is why Paul calls this commandment in Ephesians 6 2 the first commandment with promise there is some debate over whether this is promising longevity or inheritance a long life or a continual occupancy of the promise land but the parallel in Deuteronomy 5 16 suggests that the answer is both that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God has given you it is an apt reward for honoring one father and mother by honoring the parents who brought us into the world we get to live well and long in the world by honoring our elders we get to survive through elderhood ourselves by honoring our father and mother and continuing in the faith of our father we get to inherit the land that God had promised to our father God had promised to our father this is very easy to illustrate from early childhood if my kids had not listened to their parents counsel don't swallow that magnet don't stick that metal chopstick in the outlet don't touch that fire no that kitchen knife is not your toy don't jump into the water check both sides of the street before crossing it wear your helmet when you ride a bike I mean they could have died many times over already but even as we get older this general principle remains true even if it's harder to demonstrate honoring our father and mother lengthens our days there are exceptions to this for example in 1st King 13 prophet Ahijah prophesied the king jeroboam son abijah will die of his illness and while this is intended as punishing for jeroboam it is intended as a reward for his son abijah because it says he only of jeroboam shall come to the grave because in him there is found something pleasing to the lord the fact that abijah dies early and is buried in peace is a reward for having something still left in him that is pleasing to the lord unlike the rest of

Jerusalem he will be spared the impending judgment and suffering and more that jeroboam his house will live here is 57 1-2 captures the same sentiment it says the righteous man perishes devout man are taken away for the righteous man is taken away from calamity he enters into peace they rest in their bed who walk in their upright so it is not true that long life is always place sometimes God gives us a short life in order bless us in some situations it is the Lord mercy to bring a seemingly premature death but generally speaking God grants the blessing of long life to honor their father and mother but if the Israelites fail to honor their father and mother their lives will be cut short and they will be exiled from the promised land and I'm sure that many of you can point to examples from your own life from among your own friends rebellious peers who did not heed the advice of their parents and teachers and now you can look around to see where they where they end up parents generally have our best interest in mind and they generally have more wisdom than their children so it generally goes well for children who honor their parents like all the other commanded scriptures the fifth commandment also finds the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus and Jesus fulfills this in a way you might not expect he says in Matthew 10 34-39 do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth

I have not come to bring peace but a sword for I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a person's enemy will be those of his own household whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me and whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me whoever finds his life will lose it and

whoever loses his life for my sake will find it the demand of Christian discipleship of following Jesus takes precedence over even the demand of filial tithing even here in the United States I know Christians who are ostracized within their families because of their faith in Jesus Christ but overseas where Christians are persecuted the situation is far more dire there are

[35 : 23] Christians who are disowned by their parents beaten and in some cases even killed by their own family members for renouncing their ancestral religions and putting their faith in Jesus Christ but that is precisely what the Lord Jesus demands because anyone who loves his father and mother more than him chooses his father and mother over him is not worthy and Jesus creates a new family structure right in Mark 3 when his disciples told Jesus hey your mother and your brothers are waiting for you so you should go and then Jesus tells them who is my mother and who are my brothers and then he stretched out his hand toward his disciples and he said here are my mother and my brothers for whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother we were all one spiritual rebel and orphan but by dying on the cross for our sins

Jesus reconciles us to God the father and it is by the spirit of God that we are adopted into his family under the fatherhood of God so we are bound together as brothers and sisters in Christ this does not make the biological father son mother daughter relationship obsolete but it does relativize that relationship that's why in the church we can call we call fellow believers brothers and sisters like Paul called himself the spiritual father of the Corinthian church the spiritual family bonded together by the blood of Christ now transcends in importance even the blood ties of a biological family because this is the family that will actually last not only in this life and so in Mark 10 Jesus promises those who leave their home and the family follow him he says those who have left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or man for his sake and for the gospel will receive a hundred fold houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and ladies do you grieve that you have no parents to honor do you grieve that you have no children to be honored by are you sad that your relationships with your in-laws are not what you had hoped it would be our God is the father of the fatherless and protector of widows and he settled the solitary home God invites you to find your home and family here in the church of God in the family of God honor your spiritual father and mother here be a spiritual father and mother to the young ones in the church love them pray for them exhort them and let us do all of it under the authority and in the love of our father now pray together father thank you for your love for us by your sovereign will you adopted us as your children thank you for choosing us thank you for providing for us God help us all to relate to you as we ought to as our loving heavenly father and as we do that teach us to honor the father and mother in our lives for your glory in Jesus name we pray amen amen andGH