

October
18

TAKING CARE OF FAMILY

We honor God when we honor our families.

THE WORD

**EXODUS
20:12**

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

**EPHESIANS
6:1-4**

KEY VERSE

¹Children, 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“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

ENGAGE THE WORD

**HONOR YOUR
PARENTS**

Exodus 20:12

The first four commands deal with our relationship to God: 1) His place, 2) His image, 3) His name, and 4) His day. The fifth commandment is the first commandment that deals with our relationship to others. This command speaks to children, sons and daughters, and urges them to respect and honor their parents—both father and mother. During this time, the father and mother were the central figures in the spiritual formation of their children (Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:4). Therefore, children learned about God from their parents and in turn obeying and honoring their parents, whether children were young or old, was crucial for family, spiritual, and community health. In essence, the people living in relationship with God, staying in rela-

tionship with Him, needed to live in godly relationship with others, starting with their family.

The Hebrew word for “honor” carries the idea of “giving weight (importance) to something.” The concept of “honor,” as it relates to this specific commandment, doesn’t carry the idea of feelings of affection, but more the idea of appreciation. Despite how children felt about their parents, they were to honor them—showing respect and esteem. There are two rudimentary thoughts in regard to honoring our parents. We are to honor our parents because they are our parents; they gave us life. We also honor our parents because they have walked the path of life ahead of us. We listen and submit to their guidance because of the position they hold as our parents. We honor our parents, for example, when we respect their authority, express gratitude toward them, and care for them in their later years.

We, with God’s guidance and strength, are to show honor and respect to our parents. However, the honor and respect due our parents is not without boundary. Honoring does not mean that children are to allow their parents to abuse them (verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, etc.), manipulate them, or coerce them into ungodly behavior (Ezekiel 20:18-19). It is not God’s design that we honor and obey our parents to the detriment of our physical, emotional, or spiritual health (Acts 5:29).

The fifth commandment addresses the importance of honoring your parents regardless of their age (even when they have not been completely honorable themselves). The keeping of this commandment is seldom a simple matter. Even in the most supportive relationships, there can be the need for reconciliation and forgiveness. But here is the good news: that pursuit can lead to healing, wholeness, and love.

Did You Know?

The command for children to obey their parents comes within the context of the exposition to the Ephesians on what it means to be “in Christ.” Paul focuses on the church and what the imitation of Christ looks like in a redeemed community. Therefore, every one of life’s relationships is transformed by the renewing power of God—even parent-child relationships.

their parents, are there godly instructions for parents? Yes! Parent-child relationships are two-way streets. In Ephesians 6:1-4, Paul begins by speaking to children. First, children are to obey because it is what is right (Colossians 3:20). Second, children are to obey their parents because it is in line with what is instructed in the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12). Third, obeying opens the door for blessing (Ephesians 6:3). Then, Paul speaks to parents. (In light of first-century culture, Paul addresses fathers, as males were the head of the households and responsible for the education of the children. However, today, this instruction is a message for all parents—both mother and father.) During this time, a father had unlimited power over his children. He could do anything he wanted. However, Paul calls fathers to not “exasperate” or “provoke” (NRSV) his children to “anger” (NRSV) or “resentment” (NEB).¹ Paul was cautioning fathers (parents) that with parenting comes responsibility. Parenting means “ruling out excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to the child’s needs and sensibilities.”²

Parents should consider the thoughts, feelings, and overall well-being of the child. This includes their spiritual life as well. Paul says fathers should bring children “up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (v. 4). Paul was pointing out that part of being a parent means that you are to provide spiritual training and instruction. Fathers were to bring up (feed, nourish) children in the training and instruction of the Lord. Both the spiritual training and instruction were to be focused on the Lord. William Hendrickson says, “The heart of Christian nurture is to bring the heart of the child to the heart of the Savior.”³ Spiritual formation begins at home.

What does spiritual training and instruction look like within a family? It begins with parents who have sur-

Think About It

It is no coincidence that the commands regarding interpersonal relationships begin by focusing on the family. How we learn to get along within the family affects how we relate to others outside our family.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

rendered to the Lordship of Christ and are living daily in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit—modeling Christlikeness before their children. This does not mean we are to be nothing less than a perfect parent, never making a mistake. But it does mean that we allow God to guide our thoughts, words, and actions. It also means incorporating things such as Bible reading, prayer, worship within the faith community, and service to others into the life of the family.

If you take a step back and consider the message of Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-4, it can feel overwhelming. You may feel discouraged thinking about what you have or have not done. The good news is that the purpose of the fifth commandment and Paul's instruction for children and parents is not to place a guilt trip on us as children and parents, but to guide us in developing healthy, godly relationships within our family, to strengthen the parent-child relationship, and to help families grow in their relationship with God and with each other.

1. George Lyons. *New Beacon Bible Commentary: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*. (Kansas City, 2019), 206.

2. Andrew T. Lincoln. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42: Ephesians*. (Dallas: Word, 1990), 406.

3. *Life Application Bible Commentary: Ephesians* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 123.

REFLECT

Read Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-4 several times this week. As you do, consider the ways to incorporate their instruction into your family life this week.