



Text: Exodus 20.12-13 || **Series:** 10 Ways to Be Perfect

Sermon #5: The Fifth Commandment – The Power of our Parents

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Introduction: The Power of our parents

Good morning. Today we are continuing our series in the 10 commandments and we come to the commandment today about how children are to respond to their parents. A really powerful command.

I think we can all agree Parents have a powerful presence in our lives. There is NO QUESTION the greatest influencers on how we function as adults are the people who raised us. They are certainly not the only influencer but they are the greatest. The language you speak is determined by who raises you, what you value, the assumptions you have about the way the world works, even your beliefs about God are all massively influenced by the people who raised you. How you respond to situations & circumstances...your very instincts were shaped through watching your parents. I'm prone to being a glass-half empty anxious pessimist in large part because Don Shelton is that way.

The emotional baggage we carry with us...a lot of us got that from where? Our relationship with our parents. King James IV of Scotland...he was 15 years old when he ousted his unpopular dad from the throne of Scotland. A Scottish army rose up against King James 3 and King James IV said yeah lets do it, but please don't hurt my dad, just win the battle. They said ok, then they went and killed his dad in the battle. Well, IV got what he wanted but betraying his dad was so emotionally scarring that every lent, 6 weeks from Ash Wednesday to easter, for the rest of his life, he wore a heavy metal belt tight against his skin and added weight every year to it to remind himself of his sin. Maybe you didn't hurt your parents, maybe your parents hurt you. Maybe it was both. Maybe you didn't have one or both of your parents and the reason you struggle to trust people today is because your trust was broken by a parent.

Here's what I know from pastoring a bunch of grown children: a lot of people are carrying heavy chains around with them that are the result of their relationship with their parents. And even if you are looking at me saying yeah I had good parents I'm a well-adjusted adult...you are probably over-compensating for something...but regardless, you are reinforcing the very point of how POWERFUL a parent's influence is on their children.

So today we are going to talk about the parent-child relationship. But, this is not a parenting sermon. It's a child-ing sermon. But if you get child-ing right, you'll be much more likely to get parenting right. Today, in the 5th commandment, we are going to see HOW God calls children to relate to their parents, WHERE the strength for that relationship comes from, and The Promise for us when we choose to trust God's way for relating to our parents.

Same outline: What does it say, how do we break it, & where do we go from here?

What does it say?

Context – first 4 make up the first table. 2nd 6 make up the 2nd table. So the first commandment, have no other gods but me, is the foundation of the first table. Everything about our relationship with God comes from him being our only source of worship. The second table, the next 6 commandments, are all about our relationship with others. We said last week that you **MUST** get the first table right, you gotta get your relationship with God right, if you want to have any chance at getting your relationship with others right.

It's like playing baseball. Until you know how to throw and catch a baseball, you can't really learn how to play the different positions on the field. Because EVERY position depends on you having good fundamentals of throwing and catching. And once you understand that, THEN you can begin to learn how your position relates to other positions on the field. Until you understand how you relate to GOD you cannot understand how you relate to others because your relationship with God is going to be THE most influential factor in how you relate to others.

That's why the first 4 commandments come first. Well, if the foundation for the first table was the 1st commandment, then the foundation for the second table is the 5th commandment. In other words, our relationship with our parents shapes **all** other relationships. This is where we learn to live with other people. Where we learn there are authority structures in the world. We learn about respect and obedience and ideally about love and protection. It is no wonder that when totalitarian regimes throughout history have tried to exert control over people, one of the chief mechanisms by which they've done so is severing that attachment to the family – making allegiance to the state the building block of society rather than the honoring of parents.

12 Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. -- Exodus 20:12 (CSB)

Told you we start with HOW God calls us to relate to our parents. And he wraps up all of how a child is to relate to a parent in one word: HONOR. So natural First thing to do: Figure out this word honor. What does it mean?

Honor is Hebrew word "**kavod**" – it's the OT word that means weight or, get this...glory. It's the word often used to talk about how we are to approach God. We are to give God "Kavod" in our lives. Which means we give him weight, significance, honor. And this should help us see the major significance God is placing on how we approach our relationship with our parents.

In God's design...and I know this doesn't always go this way because we live in a broken world where things aren't like they should be, but in God's design...the parent was meant to be God's

representative in the life of a child. Which is important parents. Listen up this isn't a sermon on parenting but you know, you can't really help it right because we are talking about the parent child relationship. So kids listen up we gotta understand the role the parent was MEANT to play.

Good parenting, and by Good I mean parenting as God intends you to parent, begins with the radical and humbling recognition that our children don't actually belong to us. Your children, my children...they belong to God. His plan for parents is that we would be his agents in the lives of these ones that have been formed into his image and entrusted to our care. This is what Paul David Tripp, in his fantastic book called *Parenting*, called the difference between ownership parenting and ambassador parenting. Ownership parenting emphasizes what WE want for our children or from our children. Ambassador parenting focuses on what God in his grace has planned to do in and through our children.

- Ownership Parents tend to get their identity from the success of their kids. So they put the pressure of making certain achievements in these categories like academic performance, athletic achievement, musical ability, and social likability. If they achieve, then you've been a good parent. And this is what causes kids to feel such pressure from their parents & the burden of living up to the reputation & expectations of parents.
- Ambassador Parents face the scary but real truth that WE don't have the power to PRODUCE something from our kids. Children are not their parents miniature living breathing trophies. They are people, created in God's image, who belong to God and are put on earth for his glory, not ours.

Ambassador Parents are there to TRAIN children how to "KAVOD" GOD in all of life by standing in for God. In God's design then children are to learn what giving God that "honor" looks like by first giving an elementary version of it to their parents.¹ Kids do you get that? Parents are God's appointed Stand-ins. To Honor them IS TO honor God. Parents, get the weight of your job.

** By the way, on this front: we are holding a parenting conference this October called "Are my kids on Track?" Its October 18-19. You need to go ahead and put that on your family calendar. Like RIGHT NOW. We don't have registration open yet, but we'll let you know. Because mom & dad we know you need some help.

So what does it look like to "kavod?" to give this honor? Well, as we survey scripture what you start to see is honor isn't just one thing but a combination of things.

"honor" is a mix of reverence, obedience, & gratitude.²

Now I feel like I need to pause and say something. We as westerners are probably the worst at this because we've been born and raised in an individualist culture. So if you come from an eastern culture or background, where there is a strong family or group culture that understands shame and honor, My guess this is going to make more sense to you. Which by the way is the beauty of growing into a more culturally diverse church. We get to experience the Blessings of brothers and sisters God has given grace to in different areas of life. Here's the main thing I

¹ Summarized from Tripp, Paul David. *Parenting* (Crossway Wheaton, IL 2016) 14-15.

² John Calvin as cited in DeYoung, Kevin. *The 10 Commandments* (Crossway Wheaton, IL 2019)

want to say: We are not trying to see what honor looks like Americanly, but biblically. And then we apply biblical honor to our present day and age. Make sense?

Ok with that said, let's look at that definition closely. First, revere.

We revere our parents not because of the type of people they are but because of the office they hold in our lives. This make sense? There is a certain amount of reverence children are to give their parents...and when I say reverence think respect, simply because they are your parents. Again not because of their character, but because of their role in your life. And God says revering them is going to instruct and form our minds in such a way that we will be able to have at least a beginner's orientation to what it means to revere God as holy. In fact, God made such a point in the old testament about this reverence that he said in the very next chapter, Exodus 21:

17 "Whoever curses his father or his mother must be put to death."³ -- Exodus 21:17

Is this your relationship with your parents? I'm telling you out of the 3 aspects of this whole "honor" thing, this one might be the hardest for us westerners. We just don't *revere* a whole lot.

Hey one other thing on this...this deepens my appreciation for how unexpected the prodigal son story is that Jesus tells to describe our relationship to God. If you are new to the bible or to mercy, this is a favorite of mine. I taught on it at Easter I think. But short version: There is a grown son who says to his father: Give me my inheritance, I wish you were dead. He curses his father by doing this. The foolish son squanders the money in foolish living. The son then returns home KNOWING he should be put to death for such an action. That's why the son's plan is to apply to his father to be a hired servant to pay off his debt, not a son. But instead of judgment...the father RUNS to his son. Hugs him, kisses him, restores him & throws a celebration. And Jesus' listeners had to think this is crazy! This son has brought shame upon his family & his father should not just welcome him back. And Christ says: This is probably how you think of God. You are not worthy of God so you have to do good work to pay off the shame you've brought on him. And Christ says...you could never do that. And the Shocking, offensive news of the gospel is: God is like a father who welcomes sinners home BEFORE they clean themselves up! There is no other God like this!

We obey our parents because submitting to them is training for a lifetime of flourishing as we submit to God. We submit to them when we are a part of their household and after we leave we try to honor their wishes where we can. Knowing that obeying our parents is training for the rest of our lives where we are called to obey God. Remember that promise that came at the end of our commandment? The only commandment with a promise like this btw.

³ 9 "If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or mother; his death is his own fault. -- Leviticus 20:9 (CSB)

12 Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. -- Exodus 20:12

The long life isn't necessarily about quantity of years. That long life is more about quality of years. And that's because there is a peaceful, joyful life that will come from one who has learned, from their relationship with mom & dad, how to submit to God's design for us in the world. If you spend your years fighting God, life will be difficult. And HOW TRUE is this so many of our stories? So many people who come to faith later in life will tell you "I can't change my story, but my life when I was rebelling against God caused me so much pain. Life is so peaceful now. I hope others don't experience what I did."

And the way scripture talks about disobedient children is SEVERE.

28 And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right. 29 They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 senseless, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. Romans 1.28-30.

Look at that list! YIKES! Doesn't that seem a little much? WHY IS THIS Such A BIG DEAL? Because **disobeying your parents trains you to disobey to God.** Now we are going to talk in JUST a second about what to do when parents may ask you to do things that conflict with God's commands. But first understand what God is doing. He's showing you the beauty of the gospel: **To The bible calls disobeying God sin. And the punishment is severe. And yet God says: The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6.23**

Jesus obeyed the father perfectly. And though we deserved death for our disobedience...he paid the price for it...giving us freedom from that penalty and restoring us to God. And he also gives us his Spirit within us to train us to like what God likes. So that our desires start to line up with God's desires and we start to enjoy obedience to him. The gospel news is that if you receive Christ's gift of salvation...you are a son or daughter again and you can now DELIGHT in the good commands God has given you for living here in the land. And it will go well with you.

We show gratitude to our parents because it trains us to be thankful God's work in our lives.

Ya'll most parents love being parents...but its hard work. Showing appreciation, gratitude, for what they've done in our lives teaches us something every time. Every time we do it, we move a little from being self-ish, to being self-less. See GRATITUDE by it's very nature moves us from being the center of our universe. And that is not a small thing right? If you never have anything to be thankful about...it means your life is VERY focused on you. And that type of living will implode on itself. And this is one of those things we see in everyday life. I mean parents LOVE to say: There are children in kyrgestan who haven't eaten in 3 days...you should eat your vegetables and say _____.

But before we just ungratefulness as a young child's problem let me ask you something: When you pray, how much of your prayer time is THANKING God for what he has done versus asking him for stuff? I'm not saying you don't ask...but I'm saying look at the Psalms. They are

FILLED with THANKFULNESS for who God is and what he has done. This is why we major on the gospel here in our church. Because it is good news about what God has DONE! He's created you to know him, He's been patient with you as you rejected him, He's sent his son to pay for your sin, and he's offered you a chance to come home to him now and forever! ARE YOU THANKFUL?

How can you train yourself to be thankful to God? Go write a letter to your parents, thanking them for all the ways they sacrificed for you. Serious: some of you need to do this. DON'T text or email. They are old ok so it will mean more on paper. Google what a stamp is. As you do that, you are going to be focusing on someone other than yourself. And maybe, more and more, you'll think of yourself less and less. That's what Tim Keller calls the Freedom of Self-forgetfulness. Not that you think less of yourself, but that you think of yourself less. And then, God can become the center of your universe as he should be. And you will be the kind of person, the others-first person, God has created you to be.

That's honor – a mix of reverence, obedience, and gratitude. And God has set it up so that honoring our parents, giving them that “kavod” will train us to honor him with our lives. Which is what we were created for to begin with.

Now with the commandment defined, let me answer a couple of questions that naturally come out of this. Because this command is SO personal. 2 common questions I get on this:

What if my parents are not Christians?

Because Christianity is a religion that involves each individual deciding for themselves to follow Christ, there has always been families where some believe and some don't. Jesus even promised it would be that way. Here's what I'll tell you: Nothing about this commandment is conditional on the faith of your parents. You can honor them even if your faith is foreign to them. Revere them, Obey them, and show gratitude to them. I'm going to talk in just a second about the obedience one but first let me say that when Christ saves you, he makes you HIS ambassador. His representative. And if your parents are not Christians, then he may have you there to introduce the gospel to them. You don't distance yourself from them, you lean in and love Just as Christ loved!

Sometimes high school or college students who are the first to become Christians in their family can return home thinking they know everything their parents never knew. Maybe we know something about faith our parents don't. But surely we don't want to show our unbelieving parents that becoming a Christian has made us less respectful and less willing to honor them.

INSTEAD their parents ought to say “I don't know what's happened to you at college this semester. You are talking about church all the time and wanting to read your bible. It's a little weird and I think you are carried away with this religion stuff. And yet I can't deny that you've changed. You are wonderful to be around. Maybe there is something to this God you profess to believe in.”⁴

⁴ DeYoung 86-87

You should be praying for your parents. And as you honor them, remember they've been around a minute.

What if my parents commands conflict with God's commands?

Sometimes parents will respond negatively to their children following Jesus. Which is a really tough spot because you feel forced into a hard place. Who do I show honor to? When Paul talks about how children are supposed to engage their parents he says they are to "obey"'in the Lord.'

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. Ephesians 6:1

'In the Lord' means obedience to parents is practiced inside of God's design for them as ambassadors. When they reject their job to be HIS ambassadors to you, that's on them. Where their commands conflict with God's commands, you choose to follow God's commands. One way to think of that is that the first table of the law takes precedence over the second table. And that is certainly not an easy thing for me to say. And this should not be easy for you to do nor should you take it lightly.

I've got a friend who came to faith in college and her parents were staunchly atheist. They were angry. When she came home on breaks, they forbade her from going to church. Because that's where she had been, in their words, brainwashed. At the end of the day: because God calls us to be an active part of a church family, she felt that to honor God it meant she had to disobey their wishes. HOW you do that is a huge deal. Because you can Show Reverence and Gratitude even in a moment of needing to disobey a parent's directive.

Listen up though: Christian Parents. The more common version of this question I get is:

How do I walk with my parents who claim to hold to the same faith I hold to, but seem to live it out with far less commitment than I'm trying to?

Because this gets into the gray areas doesn't it? Example: does God say you have to go on a short term mission trip? NO, that is not a command from God. Telling every nation the gospel is of course a command to us, but an individual trip is not. So this isn't necessarily a command for you to obey. My problem is: In that moment – my common experience is that CHRISTIAN PARENTS are the primary OBSTACLES discouraging their children from going to the nations to share the gospel. Parents that is ownership parenting, not ambassador parenting. Now there may be a reason for a season that you say no, but wow you gotta find a way to show them how you are going to say yes. In general Christian parents have to say yes to God's mission *themselves*, which will help you say yes to God's mission for your children.

But again this is bigger than a mission trip. And I'm talking to children. This is about honor. At SOME POINT: you are responsible for making your own decisions and so your parent is not. But this is different for every culture and every family so I can't tell you that at 21 you are of age or something. I'll say remember revere, obey, & gratitude. And where you sense you must disobey parents to honor God: Seek Christian counsel from spiritual parents in the faith.

I consider it such a joy that I get to serve with a couple of elders who are almost old enough...not quite but almost old enough to be my dad. I seek them out all the time. If you pray, seek counsel, and seek to show respect and thankfulness...and you feel like you must follow God in a way that disobeys your parent's wishes: it will grieve you. But honor the Lord.

How Can We Obey this Command Today?

Christians have always understood this commandment is not just about parents and children but about that relationship as a template for any other relationship of authority we have in our lives.

Four words for the immediate family

- **"Yes Mom" or "Yes Dad" instead of "UGHHH."** - reverence & obedience
- **"Thank you Mom" or "Thank you Dad."** - gratitude. Letter
- **"I'm Sorry"** – Own your mistakes. Parents, own yours. And extend forgiveness to one another! In admitting faults and forgiving you are rehearsing the gospel!
- **"Hello"** – Stop by, pick up the phone, send a text. Make a point to be there for the holidays. Nothing a grandparent wants more in the world than to see all their grandkids in one place at one time. But start here: never stop saying hello.

Love the Family of God.

Some of you may be new to the idea of a spiritual family. But when Jesus talks about his followers, he talks about them as brothers and sisters. When the apostle Paul talks about the church he talks about how women are to be spiritual mothers and men spiritual fathers to the younger in the faith. The church was designed to be a family! Where the gospel shines really bright. As we seek to be ambassadors of Christ to one another. In fact, God even gifts us differently so that as we grow closer to him, we display different aspects of his character to one another differently. So the more you know the people of God, the more you will come to celebrate the person of God.

Some of you should be spiritual parents and you've been on the sideline because that sounds either too weighty of a responsibility or too weird. If you think you have to be an OWNER, sure. But you are an ambassador! You are revealing how God has worked in your life. This is why we are so big on multi-generational church here. You need to know some people with gray hair, some people with no hair, some people going gray because of their kids, some single people, some married people...you get the idea.

The gospel redeems you – you don't have to prove yourself. Back to whole point of commandments. How to walk as free people...