

The Ten Commandments
Lesson 12: Honoring Parents
Recognizing And Valuing Father and Mother

Introduction: Exodus 20:12 states, *“Honor your father and your mother,”* a command that seemingly should not be necessary. What does it mean to honor one’s father and mother? They were the instruments through whom God gave each of us life. They cared for us when we were absolutely unable to care for ourselves. They have endured our carelessness, stood by us in our illnesses, cleaned up our messes, and seen us through difficulties and trials, no one else would dare attempt. They are worthy of honor. Why would one not honor parents?

We know from daily observation that this command is often misunderstood and too often disobeyed. There are serious questions asked by many. What about when a father or mother acts in a dishonorable way? What is God’s will in such a case? Some do not agree that their parents are worthy of honor. Perhaps they have been abused, abandoned, misunderstood or misdirected. It is true that not all parents are sterling examples, but could there be more to this command than its surface meaning? As we look through Scripture, we will explore the true meaning of honor and the true calling and responsibility of parenting. We will see what the Old and New Testaments have to say and will examine how Jesus’ example and exhortations apply to our lives today.

This command is unique in that it is the first one with a promise. We will explore that. We have seen that the first three commands deal with our worship and reverence for the Lord. The fourth deals with our work and rest. The fifth command is the beginning of the commands dealing with our daily relationships with others. It is foundational to commands six through ten.

The concept of honoring our parents is unfamiliar territory for many in our culture, which prizes youthfulness (and too often the inexperience that accompanies it). For some, what God’s Word has to say about honoring father and mother will be fresh revelation. For all, this is a necessary reminder and an opportunity for the Spirit of God to evaluate each heart and life.

1. Honoring Father and Mother in Moses’ Day

God’s design has always been for a father and mother to bear children, raising them to know God and to live their lives according to His purpose. We see this from the beginning, in Genesis 2 and 3. To understand the role of father and mother and the honor that is due them, we must understand God’s plan. We begin by looking at God’s design in Genesis, the first of the books penned by Moses.

- a. Turn to Genesis 1:26-28. What do we see about God’s design in these verses? What did He intend for the home to look like?
- b. Read Genesis 2:8, 15-17. What “job” description (or life description) did the Lord give in Genesis 2:15-17? What are some of the characteristics of daily life as planned by God?
 - i. When God created Adam and Eve, He commanded them to *“be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.”* That would be the start of parenting, the first home providing the example of following God and His commands thus fulfilling His will.
 - ii. With that responsibility, God gave the authority for dad and mom to give clear guidance to their children. Children need to be trained in subduing the earth and ruling the creatures

- that God entrusted to humanity's care. God meant this to be done in a relationship with Him, a relationship in which bearing His image would be indispensable.
- iii. The image of God that Adam and Eve bore was more than a generic code, more than a biological reality; it was a moral and spiritual imprint that would be revealed in an obedient relationship with Him.
 - iv. God desired that bearing children be done in the light of the commands God gave Adam and Eve in their first home—to care for the Garden of Eden, to keep it or guard it from harm, and to live in close communion with God, forsaking any association with evil.

Into the garden came the Serpent, and with him the temptation for Adam and Eve to follow their own will and the choice to disobey the Word of God. Our first parents fell. Their sin brought shame, fear, blame, and hiding. God did not destroy them but met them in mercy and grace. He dealt with their sin and placed them outside the garden. Living on a cursed earth, they would face many hardships—hardships that would also affect the children they would bear. God's design did not change. He still wanted them to bear children who would follow Him.

He also knew that the redemption of fallen men and women would come through Jesus Christ and the salvation He would bring, so that one day His children would indeed bear His image and walk in righteousness. Before that would happen, however, many children would be born to many parents, some following God's wishes, but most rebelling against God and His will.

- c. The Scriptures record many years of parenting, with some children showing honor to their parents and others shaming them in countless ways. Then, we read the story of Moses and the Israelites. At Mount Sinai, God had a word to declare concerning the honor due father and mother.
- d. Look at Exodus 20:12. Restate this command in your own words.
 - i. What is the promise that God gives in verse 12?
 - ii. What additional aspect of God's promise is found in Deuteronomy 5:16?

God commanded, "*Honor your father and mother.*" Here the imperative verb tense for "*honor,*" carries the idea of continually causing father and mother to be honored. It is a command that calls for lifelong attitudes and actions. This is not just a command for children and teenagers; it lasts a lifetime. *Honor* is a translation of the Hebrew word *kabed*, meaning "heavy" or "weighty," as in heavy in importance and influence. Because of the great responsibility and challenge of parenting, parents not only carry the weight of burdens in fulfilling their role, but they also are weighty in their influence on children.

Their weight of importance and influence should be matched by the honor given them. In attitudes and actions, each child is to look for ways to honor his or her parents in words and deeds throughout life.

- e. The call to honor father and mother is the first command with a promise—"that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you." Deuteronomy 5:16 adds the phrase, "*that it may go well with you,*" using the Hebrew word *yatab*, which means beautiful, good prosperous, or pleasant. It was primarily a promise for the community's well-being more than for an individual's life span, though long life is more likely for those who honor father and mother.
 - i. Properly honoring parents brings stability and strength to the home and the community. That attitude and order help to establish the self-discipline and societal discipline needed to

build the strong relationships and solid partnerships so necessary in business and government.

- f. God gave several guidelines for the parent-child relationship. What do we discover in Exodus 21:15 and 17? (See also Leviticus 20:9 and Deuteronomy 27:16). Let's also look at Deuteronomy 21:18-21.
 - i. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 describes an adult son who is stubborn, rebellious, and obstinately disobedient. He is obviously selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed, and undisciplined as evidenced by his ongoing lifestyle which include gluttony and drunkenness. He is totally unresponsive to any chastisement, training, or discipline, one who "will not even listen" to his parents. He is worthy of death according to the law.
- g. Leviticus 19:1-3 speaks about the holiness and reverence God calls for. God called Israel out of Egypt to be a holy people. This means that they were to be uniquely set apart to Him and His purposes, different from other nations. One of the first evidence of a life consecrated to God is a family in which children show reverence and "fear" for their mother and father. The Hebrew word *yare* translated "reverence" or "fear" in Leviticus 19:3 refers to a deep respect that entails a feeling of repulsion toward anything that would dishonor the person who is feared. ***It describes someone who has a wholesome fear of shaming a parent.*** Just as honoring God as God is the foundation of all ten of the commandments, so reverence for parents is an attitude affecting every attitude toward others. It is directly linked with the remainder of the commandments, which touch on respect for another's life, marriage, property, reputation, and overall well-being.

2. Honoring Father and Mother in Proverbs.

The Lord expressed in several ways the crucial importance of reverence for parents and the absolute necessity of avoiding attitudes, words, and actions that would in any way show dishonor, disregard, or disrespect to a father or mother. How is one to guard against such actions? How can one show proper respect? Let's look further into the Old Testament record, particularly the book of Proverbs and see how we should honor our father and mother.

The book of Proverbs contains several exhortations and examples concerning the parent-child relationship. For example, in Proverbs, the phrase "my son" is found 23 times as the recipient of instruction.

- a. Look at Proverbs 4:1-9. Notice the introduction in verses 1-3, and the mention of Solomon's father in verse 3. Who was Solomon's father?
 - i. What did Solomon's father, David, say to him? What kind of attitude would be essential for Solomon to follow the instruction in verse 4?
 - ii. What was Solomon urged to "acquire," according to verse 5?
- b. The lifestyle described in Proverbs 6:20-23 provides an example of the right way to live. Now read Proverbs 23:15-16. What pleases a father, according to verse 16?
- c. Proverbs 23:22-25 repeat what we have read before. How can we best please and honor our parents, according to these verses?

The commandments are a lamp, and parental teachings from them are a light to shine on each part of the path so that we may live according to truth and avoid the deceitfulness and dangers of sin. Teaching children to live in this way includes not only step-by-step instruction, but also "reproofs" along the way to correct and

train, starting at birth and continuing in some measure throughout life. The wise son who speaks “*what is right*” is a joy to a father. Sons and daughters should listen to their fathers throughout life and should never “*despise*” their mothers. Those who are “*righteous*,” walking in obedient faith toward God and living by His wisdom, honor their parents by doing so. In contrast, the son described in Proverbs 19:26-27 was “shameful and disgraceful.” Why?

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Let’s look a few more Proverbs about honoring or dishonoring parents. Proverbs 10:1; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:13; 28:7 (with 23:19-21) and 29:15, 17.

Put Yourself in Their Shoes: Steps to Honoring Parents

- Listen to their guidance and wisdom (Proverbs 1:8)
- Remember what they say (Proverbs 3:1)
- Obey them (Colossians 3:20)
- Speak wise words that agree with the Word of God and that honor them (Proverbs 23:15-16)
- Treat them with respect and reverence (Leviticus 19:1-3)
- Accept their discipline and training as that which is best (Hebrews 12:5-11)
- Always speak respectfully to them and about them; never belittle them (Exodus 21:17)
- Never abuse or harm them physically (Proverbs 19:26)
- Avoid ungodly friendships or any alliance that would shame them (Proverbs 23:17-21)
- Look for ways to honor them as they age, and be ready to care for them (Mark 7:10-13; Proverbs 23:22)

How are we doing honoring parents? Even more important, how are we doing honoring our Heavenly Father?

1. Am I holding fast the Word of God—reading, memorizing, meditating, and applying Scriptures to my life? (Proverbs 7:1-4)
2. Am I wise or foolish? A joy or a grief to God and to my parents? (Proverbs 10:1; 17:21)
3. Am I being led by the Word of God and wisdom of those who follow Him? Am I obeying what I know? (Proverbs 4:4-5; 6:20-22)
4. Am I speaking what is right and true? (Proverbs 23:16)
5. Am I experiencing and expressing the grace, peace, and beauty of walking with God? (Proverbs 3:2; 4:9)
6. Am I experiencing His reproofs and discipline/training along the way? Am I responding with humble obedience? (Proverbs 6:23)
7. Am I choosing friends who help me in my walk with God? Am I that kind of friend to others? (Proverbs 28:7)

Homework: Read and summarize Luke 2:41-52. Read Mark 7:1-13.

Lesson Topics: Honoring Father and Mother in Jesus’ Day, Honoring Father and Mother Today.