

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 6

Honor and Blessing

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:12
Subject:	What happens when we honor our father and mother
Complement:	our days will be lengthened in the land that the LORD our God gives us.
Exegetical idea:	When we honor our father and mother, our days will be long in the land which the LORD our God gives us.
Homiletical idea:	When you live with honor, you will be blessed!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to live with honor, honoring their parents/elders and demonstrating a life of honor.

Introduction

This cookbook may not look that special to most of us. But to the man who bought it, this blueberry cookbook is priceless. If this cookbook could talk, it would tell a wonderful story of honor and blessing. And we would all be encouraged to live in harmony with the fifth word of blessing that God wrote with His finger in tables of precious stone.

This is the sixth message in our series entitled “Words of Blessing—a fresh look at the 10 commandments. We began with a testimony by Moses from Mount Sinai. And in the past 4 messages, we have looked at the first four commandments. We have discovered that these commandments are not harsh requirements from a demanding Deity. Rather, they are words of blessing from our loving God.

Today, we are going to consider the 5th saying, recorded in 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.” In a perfect world, a sermon about honoring your father and mother would be an easy message to preach. All fathers and mothers would live honorably and it would be a natural response for children to honor their parents. But unfortunately, we don’t live in a perfect world. So this message on the 5th commandment may cause us some pain and some sadness.

Let's start by affirming what this commandment is NOT saying. This commandment is not saying that we should obey our parents no matter what they ask us to do. When Clifford Brown was a young preacher, he visited a juvenile detention center in the Washington, DC, area. After the group had listened to a short devotional about our loving heavenly Father, Clifford turned to one of the young boys and said, "Tell me about your father." Clifford was shocked by the young man's response. "I hate my father," the young man snapped. "My father is a crook and a robber. He tried to rob a post office and he forced me to be his accomplice. Now he is in jail, and I am in jail too. I hate my father!" If the young man in the juvenile detention center thought that honoring his father meant obeying him no matter what he asked him to do, then he was terribly mistaken. When asked by his father to do something illegal, that young man should have disobeyed his father because we ought to obey God rather than man. Isn't that right? It's true that the Scriptures call upon us to obey our parents in everything, but the same apostle Paul clarifies that we ought to obey our parents in the Lord. So this 5th commandment is NOT telling us to obey our parents no matter what they ask us to do.

Secondly, this commandment is NOT telling us to say wonderful things about our parents that aren't true. Some of you sitting here or listening on the radio or television grew up trying to hide the truth about your parents. People outside of your home thought that your parents were wonderful people, but you knew the truth about how they acted behind closed doors. This commandment isn't telling you to say wonderful things about your parents that aren't true just to make them look good. That would be bearing false witness, a transgression of the 9th commandment. For the young man in the juvenile detention center to say that his father was the most honest man he had ever met would be a lie. Honoring your father and mother doesn't mean

that you have to lie in order to make them look good.

So what is the LORD our God asking of us in this 5th commandment? Let's read it again. 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." Let's begin by examining the "honor". In the Hebrew, the word translated "honor" literally means to make heavy, to make weighty. To honor your parents means that you recognize that your parents carry more weight than the stranger walking down the street. Your parents have a unique relationship with you, and you recognize that relationship by the way that you relate to them.

To honor your parents when you are a child means that you listen to your father and your mother and obey them as long as they are not asking you to do something that's wrong. If your friends want you to stay out and play, but your parents ask you to come in for supper, you obey your parents. You don't say, "Well, I have 5 friends here who want me to play, and 2 parents in there who want me to come in for supper, so my friends win!" No! When you are a child, your parents carry more weight than your friends. You honor your parents by obeying them, as long as they aren't asking you to do something that's wrong.

When you get older and move away from home, you should still honor your parents. Your mother and father should still carry more weight than a stranger walking down the street. Your parents don't tell you what to do anymore—at least they shouldn't! But their opinion, their counsel, should carry more weight than the opinions of the multitude. After all, your parents gave you life. In most situations, parents have sacrificed to care for you. You don't have to do everything that your parents ask you to do, or even agree with everything that they say, but you ought to at least receive their suggestions with respect.

And you ought also to be attentive to their needs. To care for someone who is begging beside the road and not to care for your own parents is dishonoring to them. To be preoccupied with your own wants and desires, and ignore the needs of your parents is dishonoring to them. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day for trying to sidestep their responsibility of caring for their parents. Apparently, there was a religious tradition that allowed irresponsible grown children to ignore the needs of their parents. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:4-6. “For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' [5] But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is (Korban) a gift devoted to God,' [6] he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

The words of Jesus are clear. We need to honor your father and mother by caring for their needs. Don't care for everyone else and neglect your own parents. Don't be absorbed with your own wants and desires and ignore the needs of your parents.

It's true that honoring your father and your mother is made much easier if your parents are honorable people. And here's where the young man at the juvenile detention center was struggling. You see, his father was NOT an honorable person. He was a crook and a robber. He was a dishonorable person. And that made it very difficult for this young man to honor his father.

But most of us, if we look carefully, will find at least a few reasons why we should honor our parents. A member of our Wednesday evening study group shared this testimony with me in connection with the 5th commandment. “My father was not a church member but he taught me more about honesty, hard work and faith than I can say. He encouraged me in my faith in God

and always reminded me of God's care. Even though he told my mother, my sister and me not to be baptized, he was the one who encouraged me in my faith. He is gone now, but when I fear and my faith begins to shake, I can almost hear his words of encouragement and faith."

That is an example of honoring your father and mother. Was this person's father a perfect individual? Far from it. But he had many qualities. And if this person was going to say good things about anyone, she was going to say good things about her father. After all, he carried more weight with her than others. So she found something good to say. And in so doing, she was honoring her father.

A mother in Tuscon, Arizona, shared this story about honoring her father, mother, and grandmother by simple acts of kindness"

I was out at my mother and father's house, a 70 mile round-trip from my own, because my mother needed a little help. She needed a little help because my father, who has full-blown Alzheimer's, had taped duct tape all over the three long windows in the bathroom so that the "little people" who haunt his days and nights wouldn't be able to look in. She needed a little help because her mother (my grandmother) who lives with them and who will be 102 in December, like to snack in bed and bugs were starting to show up in her room, which was generally a mess anyway.... There were certainly other things I'd rather have been doing that day, but I love them dearly, so there I was "helping." I emptied and washed my grandmother's reeking chamber pot, scrubbed the bathroom floor where she regularly missed the toilet, took Daddy shopping for a bathroom curtain, pulled off all the tape, hung the curtain, washed and hung out several loads of really stinky laundry, scrubbed and swept, changed bedding and tablecloths, loaded the dishwasher, etc. Then, weary and depressed, I sat down to dinner with my three darlings and a peculiar thing happened: I was overcome with a feeling of immense gratitude. It occurred to me that it was my honor to give them that measly gift of a single day's servitude out of the many thousands of such days my mother puts in single-handedly without a word of complaint." *The Ten Commandments* by Dr. Laura Schlessinger, 148-149.

That is an example of honoring your parents by simple acts of kindness.

I believe that we honor our father and mother by the way that we live. People used to

speak about “upholding the family name.” We carry a family name, and when we live honorably, we honor our parents. The wise man Solomon put it this way, “The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. [25] May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!” Proverb 23:24-25 And we can choose to live honorably even if our parents were dishonorable. We can choose, by the grace of God, and His mighty power, to break those destructive family traditions. And by choosing to live honorably, you honor your parents.

Conversely, if you live in dishonorable way, you bring sorrow to those who gave you life. Unfortunately, there are many children who live in such a way that they bring nothing but grief and sorrow to their parents. And it’s not acceptable to simply say, “This is my life. I can do what I want with it.” Living dishonorably is a direct transgression of the 5th commandment.

So in this 5th word of blessing from our loving God, we are called both to honor our parents by giving weight to their speech and to their needs, and also by living an honorable life.

And notice that there is a blessing attached. The apostle Paul calls this commandment the first commandment with a promise. “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

I love the Greek translation of the Hebrew expression “live long”—it’s macrochronios. That you may have a macro-chronology—as opposed to a micro-chronology! What is it about honoring your parents and living honorably that leads to a long life, a macro-chronology?

Let me suggest three ways in which honoring your parents might lead to a long life. First, when you choose to honor your parents, you will be a healthier, happier person. You know more than anyone else that your parents are not perfect, but you choose to focus on the positive,

rather than the negative. And as the wise man Solomon observed, “A cheerful heart is good medicine!” So honoring your parents can result in a healthier, happy, longer life here and now.

A second way in which honoring your parents might lead to a long life is this: if you honor your parents, caring for them to the best of your ability, you are modeling honorable conduct to your children, who in turn are more likely to honor and care for you. It doesn't always work that way, but you are certainly increasing your odds of being honored by your own children if you honor your parents and care for them. Many older individuals just give up on life because there is no one who cares for them. Without meaningful relationships, they lose a desire to live. But if you are surrounded by people who love you and tenderly care for you, you'll probably have a macro-chronology rather than a micro-chronology!

A third way in which honoring your parents might lead to a long life is this: When you honor your parents, and live honorably yourself, you demonstrate a living connection with a loving and merciful heavenly Father. By honoring your parents, you are also honoring your heavenly Father. And the long life that He promises us through faith in Jesus Christ doesn't end at 70 or 80 years. Jesus said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Now that is a macro-chronology! Everlasting life. Now let's be clear that we don't earn everlasting life by honoring our parents or living honorably. No! We honor our parents and live honorably because we have a living connection with our loving heavenly Father. Keeping the 5th commandment is the result of a living connection with our great and awesome God!

If you are listening to this message, and you're thinking to yourself, “I am so blessed to have had wonderful parents!”, then I challenge you to tell them how blessed you feel! Say

something, do something to honor them. Make a phone call. Make a visit. Write a letter or send an e-mail. If you appreciate them, let them know. Build them up. Honor them!

Do you remember the blueberry cookbook that I referred to at the beginning of this message? I told you that it was priceless to the man who bought it. And if it could talk, it would tell a wonderful story of honor and blessing. Well, here's the rest of the story. Ten years ago, our church administrator, Roger Anderson, was on a work assignment in New England. Before flying home to Orlando, he decided to stop at the L.L. Bean store in Freeport, Maine, and buy a gift for his mother. Roger's father had died 8 years earlier of bone marrow cancer, and now Roger's mom was living alone. Roger's mother loved to cook, and so when Roger saw this blueberry cookbook, he decided to buy it for his mother. He would mail it to her when he got back to Orlando.

But when Roger got to the airport in Boston, he felt impressed NOT to fly home to Orlando, but rather to look for a flight to Lincoln, Nebraska. He felt deeply impressed that he needed to deliver this gift of love by hand. As you can imagine, Roger's mother was delighted to see him. They were able to spend the entire weekend together, eating, laughing, reminiscing, eating, viewing old family videos, eating. Remember, his mom loved to cook! They were able to attend church together at the College View church. Roger's father had served as the chairman of the building committee when that church was built. So there were lots of precious memories. Roger and his mother shared a wonderful weekend together. He honored his mother, not just by giving her a blueberry cookbook, but by the gift of his presence.

On Monday morning, when Roger said goodbye to his mother, he had no idea that this would be the last conversation until Jesus returns in glory. The following week, Roger's mom

had a cerebral hemorrhage, and three hours later she was dead. If you ask Roger if he has any regrets about taking the detour honor his mother, you all know what he will say, don't you? "No regrets." He honored his mother and they were both blessed!

So, if you're listening to this message, and you're thinking to yourself, "I am so blessed to have had wonderful parents, let them know." If they are no longer living, let someone else know what wonderful parents you had. Tell your children. Tell your friends. Honor the memory of your parents.

And if, like many of us, you had less than ideal parents, I hope that this message will challenge you to find something positive that you can say about them. You know the faults that no one else knows about. But don't forget to look for the positives. Just like the person in the Wednesday evening study group, say something good about your parents. Don't tell lies to make them look better than life. Just tell the simple truth. If your dad had a foul mouth, but he worked hard and provided for his family, then honor him for being a hard-working provider. He might be so shocked to hear you say such kind words about him that he might apologize for his foul mouth! And even if he doesn't, you have honored him by saying something good about him.

And what of those who can't think of a single good thing to say about their parents? Then think about those godly men and women who were spiritual fathers and mothers to you. Honor them. Build them up by your words and actions.

And we can all determine to live honorable lives ourselves so that our parents, our children and those within our circle of influence will be honored and blessed. And the blessing will not end with you. That blessing will be passed down to the generations that come after you. So live honorably, and you will be blessed.

“My father was not a church member but he taught me more about honesty, hard work and faith than I can say. He encouraged me in my faith in God and always reminded me of God’s care. Even though he told my mother, my sister and me not to be baptized, he was the one who encouraged me in my faith. He is gone now, but when I fear and my faith begins to shake, I can almost hear his words of encouragement and faith.”

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