

Honor Your Father and Mother
 Exodus 20:12
 Tampa Covenant Church
 July 5, 2026

Proposition: God desires His people to honor Him and those placed over them, starting first with our father our mother.

Fallen Condition Focus (FCF): Our sinful hearts can resist authority and reject honoring God's design, our parents and the duties we owe to them.

Redemptive Historical Focus (RHF): Jesus shows how to perfectly honor God and our earthly parents through reverence, care for their physical needs and obedience.

We are spending these summer months looking at the Ten Commandments—but in particular at how these commandments find their fulfillment in the gospel of grace through the work of Christ. Today's focus is on the Fifth Commandment, the one that focuses on honoring our father and mother. (Slide 2) Tim Keller once said in a sermon, *"It's respect for your parents that is the basis for every other kind of respect and every other kind of authority."*¹ In this broken world in which we live we see children disobeying parents, students disrespecting teachers, and employees disregarding supervisors.

(Slide 3) The ways in which we honor, respect and obey our parents shapes how we relate to the people we will meet throughout our lives. Honoring our parents is the training ground for honoring others in authority in over us.

So, this morning I want to spend some time unpacking the word "honor", exploring the promise of this commandment, looking at how Jesus fulfills it and how we live it out as God's people. Diane has already read our text so let's look to our Lord in prayer.

The Context of the 5th Commandment

It's key in our study of the 10 commandments to continue to remember what God is doing or has in mind when he is giving these commandments. (Slide 4) Mark opened this series with a sermon on Exodus 20:2, *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."* God reveals who He is and what he is done for them and is entering into a covenant with His people. And these commandments are the stipulations of the covenant He is forming with them. They're designed to give them guidance for their ultimate enjoyment of Him and His ultimate blessing of them. (Slide 5)

Bridge

I want us to see the uniqueness of the commandment in the context of the 10. It serves as almost a bridge commandment between our duties to God and our neighbor. This commandment marks the transition.

Recall, (Slide 6) Jesus distills the 10 commandments down to two,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

It would seem obvious that the first four commandments give guidance into how we are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. And the next six guide us in how we are to love our neighbor. As children, our parents are the first “neighbor” or vital-relationship we have. (Slide 7)

What’s important to see about this commandment is that we **honor God** when we **honor our father and mother**. We honor what He has ordained.

What does it mean to honor? (Slide 8)

Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. What does it mean to honor?

(Slide 9) The Hebrew word used here for honor is kavod (pronounced Kah – VOHD). It literally means “weight” or “heaviness” or to give weight to something. It is commonly translated as “glory” or “honor.” When used in the context of God it is used in terms of His glory or His presence...he is weighty or substantial. He is not to be ignored. Kavod is also used to describe his presence. For example, God’s kavod filled Mt. Sinai.

When used in the context of people we can think of it a giving weight to a person, to revere, respect. We may also think of one’s dignity and reputation.

(Slide 10) I want to look at three ways we honor our father and mother:

- We revere and respect them
- We care for them as they age
- We obey them

(Slide 11) Revere and Respect (All children; young and old)

To honor our father and mother is to hold them in high esteem, prize them highly, to give weight to their person and role in our lives. Given that the word kavod is used to describe God’s glory and His presence it guides our thinking in how God wants us to consider our father and mother. While they are not God, they do serve as a connection between the mortal and immortal as they do play a vital role in the process of creating life along with God.²

Because of their divinely established position we are to honor, revere and respect them throughout our lives. Also underlying this commandment is the assumption that parents will act in honorable ways toward their children, teaching the ways of God, demonstrating love for them and providing for their well-being.

(Slide 12) Care for Them (primarily adult children)

Those first hearing the 10 commandments would have been adults. In hearing the command to honor your father and mother it would have been to adult children thinking about their parents. God is establishing a place of honor and dignity within the community for the elders. They were to be revered and cared for.

We see an example of this in Scripture.

In the book of Ruth, we see this command fulfilled in a way that broadens our view of the of caring for one's father and mother. (Slide 13) Ruth, a Moabitess, travels back to Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi despite Naomi's urging her to stay with her people. Ruth states her commitment to her mother-in-law when she says,

"Where you go I will go and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." Ruth 1:16-18 (NIV)

Ruth then goes into fields to glean for grain to provide for herself and Naomi. Ruth is of no means and makes the sacrifice to labor to care for her mother-in-law. Her ultimate provision for Naomi comes when after marrying Boaz she gives birth to a son, a grandson for Naomi that could secure her welfare through the end of her days.

(Slide 14) We Obey Them

Children also honor their father and mother in their obedience. Parents are given the responsibility to tell, teach and instruct children in the ways of the Lord. (Slide 15) As we have recited together this morning in our Old Testament meditation text the Lord commanded the parents to "impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and your gates. And the Lord warns them, "be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Children demonstrate honor and reverence to their father and mother through their obedience to what is asked of them or taught them. (Slide 16)

This generation that received the commandments had the responsibility to honor their aging parents by ensuring they provided the physical support and care they needed and they were to in turn to teach their children the commands of the Lord. In demonstrating and modeling care to their parents and then teaching their children the commands of the Lord, they were ensuring their children would do the same for them when they grew old. The welfare of the elderly was to come from the family. This commandment seeks to provide for the well-being and dignity of the person throughout their life. Herein lies one of the reasons this commandment comes with the promise so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Obedience Brings Blessings and Fulfills the Promise

In obeying this commandment, God's grace is being extended to his people in the land he was giving them. As the young children listened and obeyed, they would not forget God and would remember his commands. As their parents grew older and needed help to care for themselves, they would not

question their duty to their parents to honor them by providing for their physical needs and well-being. And this gracious cycle of reciprocity was to continue from generation to generation, ensuring the blessing of long life and prosperity in the land God was giving them.

Disobedience brings condemnation

While God has decreed blessings for obedience, He also decrees punishment, even death, to those that attack, curse and rebel against their mother and father.³ In the New Testament (Slide 17) we see Jesus confront the Pharisees over their tradition of Corban which breaks the 5th commandment.

“And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father, whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God, he is not to honor his father with it. Thus, you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.” – Matthew 15:3-6 (NIV)

The Pharisees were giving permission to the people to forgo caring for their aged parents if they promised to give money to the synagogue. Jesus condemns this practice as breaking God’s command to honor one’s father and mother.

Jesus, the Perfect Son, Honoring his heavenly Father and earthly Parents

So how did Jesus, the Perfect Son, honor his father and mother?

The angel of the Lord tells Joseph,

“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Matt 1:21

(Slide 18) As a child, Jesus stayed behind in the temple, after searching for three days Mary (clearly she was no hover mother) says,

“Son why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know I had to be in My Father’s house?” - Luke 2:48-50

Jesus had not been disobedient to his parents but obedient to His heavenly Father. I think what else is important in this scene is what comes next in verse 51.

“And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.” – Luke 2:51

He was submissive to Mary and Joseph for the sake of his relationship with the Father. He honors His heavenly Father and His earthly parents.

(Slide 19) And in His final moments while hanging on a cross he makes arrangements for Mary's care after He is gone. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother." Jesus is honoring his mother even in death ensuring her welfare for the rest of her days.

(Slide 20)

For God said, "Honor your father and mother" and "anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death." Jesus never cursed his father or mother but he suffered death! Think about it, what would have happened if Jesus the Lord of glory had disrespected his parents. In dishonoring them, He would have also been dishonoring His Father in heaven. He would no longer be the sinless sacrifice. We know this was not the case because God the Father declares this is my Son with whom I am well pleased. He suffered death on our behalf to pay the penalty of our sin. We know that God accepted Christ's sacrifice because on the 3rd day he was raised back to life and ascended to the right hand of God.

Jesus perfectly honored His Father in heaven and His earthly parents and in his death and resurrection He secured the promise and blessing of eternal life. He secures the "so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." The new heavens and new earth replaces the land of Canaan. He succeeds where Israel failed in its obedience to this commandment. He secures the greater promise of eternal life for all whom God is calling to Himself.

How do we obey the 5th commandment?

As Christ followers, we don't seek to obey this commandment to earn the promise. Jesus has done that for us. Jesus shows us what it looks like to honor our parents. But even more than that He sends the Holy Spirit that indwells us and enables us to make the sacrifice, demonstrate humility, to practice longsuffering and to set aside our pride to honor our mother and father. The Spirit also gives us that eternal perspective that we are also honoring God the Father and His design. Through the power of the Spirit we can experience the beautiful fruit of joy and the love of the Father that comes from obedience. Let me share a personal testimony. The Lord called me to Himself when I was sixteen in 1987 on a summer Youth trip. One of the things I recall when I returned back home was how my rebellious and contentious feelings towards my parents had softened. The best way to describe what had occurred was I went from feeling I (Slide 21) "have to" honor my parents to (Slide 22) "want to." That is the work the Spirit. He transforms us so that we want to joyful honor our parents and follow what God commands.

Let's look at some ways we do this within our (Slide 23) Family of Origin and the Covenant Community.

Family of origin

(Slide 24) For adults with aging parents, we demonstrate reverence and respect to our parents in a physical and tangible way in how we care for their physical and material needs as they age and begin to need help and assistance. For adult children, caring for aging parents is to return the care we were shown as babies and toddlers when we could not care for ourselves. This will often require sacrifice, giving of time and finances, rearranging of schedules, late night phone calls and physically

caring for their physical needs. Through the power of the Spirit, we can do this in love seeking to honor, reverence, maintain their independence and preserve their dignity.

(Slide 25) For adults, raising youths and children this means to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord yet to do so in a way that does not provoke them to anger. God is sovereign over all and it is the Holy Spirit that regenerates the heart. As parents we find ways to point to our children to God's presence and the truths of Scripture as life's events unfold. We seek God's wisdom often. I have said to my children over the years, you guys didn't come with a manual. If only God would give us a manual on what will work well and not work well with each child.

(Slide 26) For children and youths, it means to obey your parents. We used to tell our children when we asked them to do something to do it, "first time, right away, with a happy heart." I would like to tell you they always responded in that manner. The apostle Paul says this pleases the Lord.

(Slide 27) I want to take a moment to tread carefully and sensitively to address some here in the room that may have had or even have a parent that has behaved in ways that were dishonorable even abusive toward them. When a parent betrays a trust, abuses, neglects or causes harm to their child it grieves God's heart. Those actions toward the child are not what He desires. Understandably this commandment can be difficult for those who have experienced betrayal by a parent as a child. For those with an estranged parent or strained relationship, honoring your father or mother starts with prayer and sensitivity to how the Spirit of God is moving.

(Slide 28) Covenant Community

One of the things we say is a distinctive of TCC is there are five generations within our covenant community. God has brought us all together to live this out. The Apostle Paul in addressing a community of believers in Ephesus references the 5th commandment.

(Slide 29) In Ephesians 6:1 – 3 he instructs children to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." He expands on the promise to include the whole earth. God's commands and promises for His people extend to wherever His people are located and whenever they practice obedience to them, even here at TCC.

(Slide 30) Within the covenant community we extend honor your father and mother beyond familial ties when we consider the elderly members (widowers, widows and singles) of our congregation who begin to lack the ability to care for themselves. Certainly, if they have family members that can provide for their physical needs, they should be first in line to fulfill the duty Scripture outlines. In situations, where that support is not there, God's people are to be that support.

(Slide 31) As a covenant community we obey the 5th commandment when we come alongside parents to pray, to teach and nurture the children and youth in the ways of the Lord. We even take vows during an infant baptism to spiritual nurture and set a godly example before the children. **(Slide 32)**

In closing, this 5th commandment is unique among the 10 commandments as it serves as the bridge between loving God and loving our neighbor. In obeying this commandment through the power of the Holy Spirit when can joyfully honor our first neighbor, our parents, and we also honor God and His design for now and from all eternity.

¹ Timothy Keller, “Orphans or Children” (sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, November 12, 1989).

² Philo, *On the Decalogue*, 22.106–107 [p. 61])

³ Exodus 21:15,17, Deuteronomy 21:18-21