

CHAPTER 5

Parents



There are basically *two things* which God expects and demands from children. The Bible never says, "Children, *love* your parents." The "loving" part of the relationship is primarily the parents' responsibility (see Titus 2:4; Exodus 21:5; Proverbs 13:24; compare Hebrews 12:6). The way a young person can show his love to his parents is by doing the two things which God has told him (or her) to do.

Duty Number One

God gave the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5), and one of these commandments was given especially to those who are under the authority of parents. This is the fifth commandment, and it says, _____ thy father and thy mother." Compare Malachi 1:6. The word "**honor**" means "to treat with honor or respect, to value them, to honor them because of who they are, to reverence them (Hebrews 12:9), to be respectful, not to be disrespectful or discourteous or rude." Any child or young person who rudely talks back to his parents or tells them to "shut up" or raises his voice angrily or curses them (Exodus 21:17) has broken this important commandment.

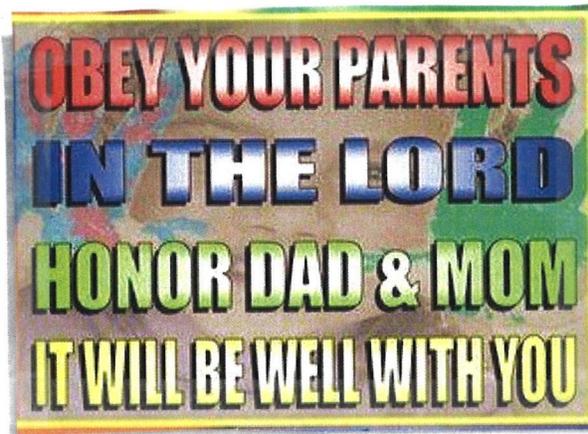
There is something which goes along with this fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), which the other nine commandments do not have. Do you know what it is (see Ephesians 6:2)?

_____ Great blessing comes to those who honor their parents! A promise accompanies the command!

Duty Number Two

The Apostle Paul gave many commandments in his letters, but there was one commandment which was given especially to children (Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20): "**Children**, _____ your parents." Not only must parents be honored, they must be obeyed!

The living God, your parents, your teachers, your employer, your President (the government), and the police all have something in common as they relate to your life. They all are **authorities** over you. God, of course, is the *Supreme Authority*. The others are people whom God has placed **over you** to accomplish His purpose for your life. We must **submit** (Eph. 5:21; Rom. 13:1) and **be obedient to God** and to those authority figures which He has put over us.



Our biggest problem is sinful pride and rebellion. We do not want anyone else telling us what to do or how to live. We do not want someone over us--controlling us, making rules for us and preventing us from doing as we please. We want to be the boss and we want to be the supreme authority. We want to do our own thing and have our own way! God in His wisdom has put parents and other authorities over us **for our own good**, and to keep us from going our own sinful way.

QUESTION: "Is it always necessary to obey my parents?"

OBJECTION ANSWERED:

Obedience to parents is almost always the right thing to do. There are, however, some exceptions to this general rule.

Is there ever a time when you should disobey your parents (see Acts 5:28-29)? _____ If a parent should tell his son or daughter to do something that would be disobeying God, then what should the son or daughter do? _____ For example, suppose the phone rings and the father says, "Tell whoever it is that I'm not here!" Should you obey him? [You might be able to handle this without lying by saying something like this: "It's not convenient for my father to come to the phone right now, could I take a message?"] What if a father should say, "You must never read the Bible!" Can you think of other examples? Do you think such cases are common or rare? Why do young people **usually** disobey their parents?

- a. Because they want to obey God instead.
- b. Because in their sinful pride and rebellion, they want to have their own way and do their own thing.

QUESTION: "It's fine to obey parents who are good and loving, but how can a person be expected to obey parents who are mean and unreasonable and old-fashioned and insensitive and bossy and set in their ways and lacking understanding?"

QUESTION ANSWERED:

In 1 Peter 2:18-20, slaves are told to be submissive and obedient not only to good and gentle masters, but also to tough and cruel ("froward") ones. According to this passage, are we to give respect and honor only to those authority figures who are good and loving? _____

If a parent fails to do his part, this does not mean that a son or daughter should fail to do his/her part. You are responsible to do what is **right** (Col. 3:20) before God regardless of what your parents may do. They may be wrong, but you can do what is right before God.

QUESTION: "If I obey, then how can I get my own way and do what I so want to do?"

QUESTION ANSWERED:

It is often difficult when your parents refuse to give you permission to do something you really want to do. Perhaps they were even wrong in their decision. Parents are not perfect. Take their answer as coming from God, and go to Him in prayer about the situation. As you know, God is very powerful, and He can work to change your parents' mind. In fact, He's even able to change your mind!

Astound your parents by the overly obedient method. Perhaps you ask your parents if you can go out with some friends on a Friday night. They refuse to give you permission, and instead tell you to do a job like washing the car, cleaning out the garage, or doing the dishes. Your parents have decided that you are not quite mature enough for the Friday night adventure. They have a chore that you can do that may give you more maturity. The worst thing you can do is to get upset and cause a scene. When you get upset, you only ***reinforce*** in your parents' minds that which they are already thinking: you are too immature to handle this situation. Use an opportunity such as the one just described to try ***the overly obedient method***. The next time they say "no" to you and then give you a job to do, make sure you not only do the job they requested and assigned, but also do one task they did not ask you to do. If your mother asks you to do the dishes—don't *just* do the dishes but clean the living room (or some other project) as well. Then go to your mother and say, "I've done the dishes and have cleaned the living room; is there anything else you want me to do?" This will amaze your parents, and after a few attempts at this method (*done sincerely by you*), you may see it begin to pay off! However, make sure your main motive in this is to honor God and please your parents, not just to be able to do what you want to do (*McAllister and Webster, p. 94*).

OBJECTION: "My parents don't know anything, so why should I listen to them?"

OBJECTION ANSWERED:

Your parents probably don't know much, but they know more than you! Our parents have already experienced many of the situations that we will encounter in the future. They have made mistakes and learned lessons that we could benefit from, if we would pay attention to their advice. They have tremendous insights that are valuable to us concerning:

* jobs

* dating

* friends

* finances

* education

* personal responsibilities

It is wise to listen to the instruction of your parents, for they may have already gone through what we are facing. In Proverbs 5, a father gives his son instruction concerning types of people with whom he should not associate. In verses 12-14 of the same chapter, the father warns his son of what he will say to himself if he fails to heed important fatherly counsel. In essence he will say, "Oh, if only I had listened! Why wouldn't I take my father's advice? Why was I so stupid?" (*McAllister and Webster, p. 90*)

OBJECTION: "My parents do not trust me at all. It seems as if they never let me out of the house. I feel like I'm never given the freedom to be out on my own."

OBJECTION ANSWERED:

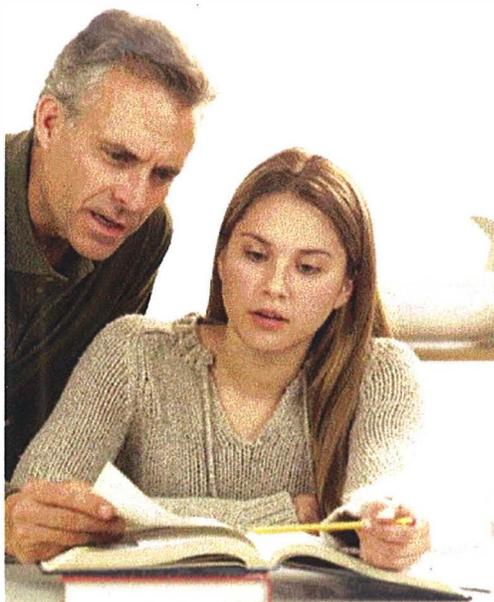
Freedom is something that must be earned. You must *prove* to your parents that you are trustworthy and that you can handle certain freedoms in a responsible and mature way.

Consider a dog who is tied to a chain outside the house. One day the owner decides to let the dog run loose to give it a taste of freedom. The dog immediately chases a car, gets into the garbage, bites the paperboy and goes to the bathroom in the neighbor's yard. Obviously this dog's freedom is short-lived! Another dog is let loose and it stays in the yard and does not get in trouble. Which of the two dogs is more likely to spend more time unchained?

Likewise, suppose a teenager is allowed to go out with his friends on a Friday night, but he returns an hour later than when his parents told him to be home. He is really saying, "Mom and Dad, I want you both to know that you can't trust me and you can't count on me. I have proven myself to be immature and irresponsible!" If you are like this fellow, don't complain if you find yourself continually on the leash! On the other hand, if you are faithful and responsible in the little bit of freedom that your parents give you, before you know it they will trust you on your own more and more and give you a measure of greater freedom and independence (compare Matthew 25:21,23)!

PORTRAY THE PROPER PICTURE

The parent-child relationship was intended to be a picture of a much more important relationship--the relationship between the Heavenly Father and His dear children. God's children are to *always* honor and obey Him! Disrespect and rebellion must have no part in our relationship with Him. The way we relate to our parents is a very good indication and reflection of the way we relate to our Heavenly Father. Children, honor and obey your parents! Children, honor and obey your Heavenly Father (Malachi 1:6; 1 Peter 1:14)! May it ever be!



Acknowledgements: Some of the material in this chapter was adapted from *Discussion Manual for Student Relationships* (Volume 1) by Dawson McAllister and Dan Webster (Moody Press).