

## **Honoring God Established Authority**

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This morning we will be reading from the Bible, which I hope is not a shock to anyone...  
Deuteronomy 5:16

*<sup>16</sup> "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."*

Family...for some of us the idea of "Family" brings to mind wonderful, warm thoughts. For some of us maybe the opposite. God designed family as one of the most basic structures where we are supposed to learn and live out biblical forms of love, care, forgiveness leadership, responding to leadership and a host of other Biblical mandates. Unfortunately, in a fallen world the perfect family doesn't exist. And what is often lacking is the principle of honor especially in relation to authority.

We live in a day and age where authority is not a word that carries many good connotations. In fact words like Power, Jurisdiction, Command, Control, Mastery, Dominance, Dominion and Rule - all synonyms for authority - are taken with a bit of skepticism. Meaning... what kind of power, who gave you jurisdiction, who are you in command of and why do you want control?

Honestly, it has gotten so bad that many people just want to speak out against any form of authority altogether. We don't believe certain people should have power and so we think of ourselves as against or anti-authority. We want governmental structures that have less authority over our everyday lives and authority that does exist should serve me personally and directly.

But really we are not anti-authority. We are just more for the authority of most sincerely-yours truly. We love having authority right? As long as I do not have authority to do what I want, when I want, how I want, I am against authority. Well no, then we are just for authority so long as the buck stops here.

And this really strikes at the heart of what I believe the Lord would have for us this morning. As we consider honoring and submitting to the authority of parents and the other figures of authority in our lives in light of the fact that they ultimately all point to and represent God and His authority.

And so, as we dive into the text we will consider the structure of how the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment fits into the 10 commandments. Then we'll consider the command, and finally we will look at the promise of Blessing.

## 1. The Structure

We are at a pivoting and transitional point in the 10 commandments. In the first 4 commands we saw commands that were focused explicitly on how we are to relate to God. We are to have no other God's before us. We are not to make or bow down to any other gods. We are not to take the Name of the Lord in vain, and we are to keep the Sabbath.

Now we change from these commands to commands that are more directed at how we relate to our fellow man. Honor father and mother, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false witness, and don't covet. This divide can be described as a shift from the vertical commands, directly between us and God, to the horizontal commands, between us and our fellow man. People who are much smarter than myself sometimes refer to this as the two tables. So the first table contains the vertical commands and the second table contains the horizontal commands.

And just before we move on let me just interject. Although the second table is in a sense man focused and horizontal, behind it all stands a God worthy of our obedience and honor in all things, above all else.

Now when I first got generously gifted a single verse from the Law of the Old Testament to preach this morning, I did not see much there, I mean it's one verse! But as is always the case with the Word of God, it is living and active and never ceases to amaze us.

And so, one of the first things we should notice is that along with keeping the Sabbath, honoring your father and mother are the only two commands that are given in the positive (as an admonition). As in, you should do this. The other 8 are given as negative commands or warnings (as prohibitions). As in, you should NOT do these things.

And I want to bring us back to something Matthew said last week that is extremely vital for us to see. He said: "The Lords 'Shalls' are just as authoritative as His 'Shall Not's'!" So don't think that the mandate "DO NOT MURDER" is more authoritative than "Honor your Father and Mother". This is important because we will see again in just a while that God takes this command VERY seriously.

Also, as a structural observation, when we consider the vertical commands, we see that God is claiming for Himself our sole Honor and Obedience. Nothing Else is to be Honored above Him! Full-stop! And yet, the moment we turn to the first horizontal command we are now no longer commanded to honor God alone, but we are to honor our father and mother also. Amazing! Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-39 when He was asked about the greatest commandment.

*And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment.*

By the way, Jesus just summarized for us the first table...and then He says:

*39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

Essentially this is a summary of the horizontal laws...or 2<sup>nd</sup> table.

So when God said, "Honor me alone" and then suddenly the 5<sup>th</sup> command says "Honor your father and mother" that is because the 2<sup>nd</sup> table or horizontal commands are like the first. We are called to Honor God alone as holy and just and deserving of all worship BY honoring father and mother and neighbor as ourselves.

Now, we would be prudent to consider a question as part of the structure...what is the actual command and who is included?

Until now God has been speaking to the nation as a whole and commanding them to Honor Him and Him alone. Have no other Gods before you, do not make or bow down to any other images or false gods. Do not use the Lord's name in vain, honor the Sabbath.

So, is it possible that God is now moving from speaking to the whole, to saying: Ok, now when it comes to fathers and mothers I'd like each of you to go and make a list of good things and bad things each of your parents have done. Then make up your minds on whether they are deserving of honor. If they are, would you please be so kind as to give it to them? NO.

This law, the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment, is as binding to humanity as all the others. It is overarching, it applies to everyone, and there are no exceptions. So the Lord's command to honor father and mother is both binding and two fold.

First, God is calling us to honor parents as His image and authority bearers towards children on earth because their position and authority are from Him. Romans 13:1b says *"For there is no authority except from God"*! And Ephesians 5:21 says: *"...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."* So both of these scriptures carry with them the implication that we are not honoring the parent as a stand alone living breathing body only. Rather, that we honor them because the authority they have come from God. We honor them out of reverence for Christ. So the honor they receive is because they represent and have been placed in that honor receiving position by God!

Secondly, this command sets a trajectory for us of godly living in life and in society. Bear with me for a moment as we consider the social structure of Israel.

As Joshua was leading Israel into the promised land they were commanded to devote everything to the Lord for destruction. Achan disobeyed and so Joshua said that lots would

be cast to find the guilty person. First a lot would be cast for a tribe of Israel, then a clan, then a household. And herein, Joshua gave us a bit of the social structure of Israel. We have Israel as a nation, then as tribes, then clans, and finally households.

This is significant because the command to honor father and mother are at the household level. Honoring parents is a grassroot level of honoring, respecting and obeying. It is fundamental to the structures of honoring and respecting and obeying other forms of God's established authority.

As an Israelite may peer over the shoulder of His father, He would have seen the authority of the clan. And over their shoulders he would have seen the authority of the tribe, and the nation, and ultimately God Himself who is the owner and giver of all authority! So this command sets us up to realize and see that the honor due to our fathers and mothers are not theirs on merit. as in when they earn it. It is theirs because their authority is from above.

How kind of the Lord that He has given the family as an institution, the very first institution each of us belongs to as infants, so that we may there learn how to honor. That it would later then become an image or reflection for us of how to honor other earthly institutions and authority. Ultimately brothers and sisters it all points us to God, His authority, and our need to submit to that authority above all else. Amen!

Now this has all been structural, let's get into the actual command...

## 2. The Command

Honoring Parents. Honoring parents is not easy to define. It takes wisdom to know what honor looks like in different scenarios, especially as we become older. Hear me clearly, I did not say honor becomes more optional as we become older, but knowing what that honor LOOKS like is different. That being said, I think a biblically faithful definition of honoring parents and others would be: **joyfully and eagerly following, responding to, and respecting those whom God has given authority.** It is essentially an attitude of leaning into authority and being eager, as far as it depends on us, and is biblically permissible, to follow and submit to leadership.

What it is not. Honoring parents is not blindly obeying unbiblical abuses of power or being willing to submit to man rather than God. Acts 5:29 says: *"But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.""* Even so, in our endeavor to honor God by being obedient to all He has commanded us to do, we are not absolved from honoring those in authority who abuse that position. Even though we may have to disobey abuses of power that CLEARLY AND EXPLICITLY disregard and go against God's Word.

And although I think we would be well warned not to run to exceptions, as was the tendency of the Scribes and Pharisees. There are extreme and usually uncommon times that we will need to honor authority without obeying that same authority.

And we honor those in authority (even when we may not obey) by not taking to social media to rally troops around ourselves to bash a certain government official that I didn't vote for anyway. That is not honoring the person, the position, their God given authority or to God Himself!

You know, I wonder if unbelievers were to overhear our public or private conversations, and if they were to read our social posts, would they get a sense that we honor our local government officials. Or that he is a (fill in the blank) in your humble, but ever correct opinion? Honoring authority is joyfully and eagerly responding to bosses when we kindly decline lying about an order. Or not gossiping about our bosses at the water cooler or at home. It is being on time and doing our work with excellence even though others and they themselves may not be doing things on time or with excellence.

How about in the family? Honoring is something the Lord expects of the youngest child to the oldest adult. Things as simple as charitable judgments, how we talk about parents to anyone else including our spouses and being quick to forgive. Honoring parents and other forms of God's authority is as much a disposition and attitude of the heart, as it is an outward act.

Honoring our parents, could also be visiting your mother in the old age home and humbly sitting and listening to her when she tells you the story of how she met your dad for the 100<sup>th</sup> time. Even though we would rather be out with friends or in bed with a good book. Honoring our parents is kindly and gently differing with your dad about how you and your wife have decided to raise your children without venting to your friends about your nosy and overbearing parents. Honoring your parents is joyfully and eagerly doing your chores around the house without an attitude of rebellion in your heart. And may I add...there may be no better way of honoring your parents than by encouraging them in the Lord. Reading the Word together, and praying with them...

If you don't know how to do this best, ask them what would serve them in honoring them? Trust me, they have ideas.

If you have often thought of honoring parents as more of an outward act than an attitude of your heart. Read Romans 1:28-32 with me:

*"28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, **disobedient to parents**, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die..."*

Incredible! It seems that "Disobedient to parents" is quite out of place here right? I mean how can murder, haters of God, inventors of evil, heartless and ruthless be put in the same

category as one of my sons not taking out the trash as they were asked? It seems very much out of place. But I believe the point God is making is that it is NOT out of place in the least.

It's almost like Paul is pointing us to the fact that someone who finds it easy to dishonor parents is in great spiritual danger and capable of doing just about any egregious sin imaginable. Ligon Duncan said: "God attaches the same penalty to disobedience of parents that he attaches to blasphemy and idolatry and the worship of false gods."

Ultimately...we cannot overestimate the importance of honoring fathers and mothers and all forms of God's authority. Not because they deserve or have earned it, but because they are image bearers and authority bearers of God. And so, it is the work of God in choosing them as our parents and leaders that we honor. Not our personal assessment of how well we think they are doing.

Now I do think an opportunity would be missed if we did not turn the tables so to speak for a moment on parents, mostly (albeit not exclusively) parents of children still living in the home. And that is because there is quite clearly, in society at large, an attack on families in the form of parents who do not exercise the necessary authority. Nor demand the necessary honor and respect they should from their young children.

Too often today we are told to see our children as our equals, and in the sight of God as His creation and co-image bearers they are. But in the sense that they are our earthly equals, not to the point that this causes us to shy away from exercising authority over our kids. We are doing them NO favors. How else are our children to learn to submit to authority outside of the house if they cannot even do so in a loving environment. Teaching my children to obey and honor myself and Lizee are part of how I teach them to honor all forms of God's authority on earth and in heaven.

Did you know that in Exodus 21 it says that children who strike or curse their father or mother are to be put to death? And Deuteronomy 21 says that children who do not heed and honor their parents were to be stoned. Now children, take heart, the death penalty is not what this pastor is promoting, but children and parents alike need to know with great confidence... that life and death are very much still at stake!

Now Parents, Where might we fail at this? We let our children make decisions about what they will eat or wear even though we prefer other things. We decline to discipline them because it's just exhausting and time consuming. We treat our children as equals to our spouses when in fact parents who prioritize their spouses provide a very stable and loving environment.

Prioritizing your marriage helps kids to know they have the love and protection of a complimentary, God designed, parentally led household. I mean, parental authority is the very first form of authority children are exposed to and required to submit to. It is part of our jobs as parents to see that they do. This is where they will learn to honor teachers, policemen, governments, and ultimately God.

Many years ago when my family first started going to Kingsway we were driving to church. There was a heated disagreement in the car. They told me and my two sisters to go into church and that they would be coming momentarily. We greeted people, did worship, did offerings and listened to the sermon, but Mom and Dad were not there. After the sermon, we walked into the foyer to find my parents entering the foyer hand in hand. And that was not a facade, they had resolved it. They were back to normal.

This blessed me. This made me feel my family is secure and confident. My parents prioritized their marriage and that made our home a wonderful home to grow up in!

Now I tried to be an honoring son, but thanks be to Jesus, we have the ultimate example of Him who honored His parents in every way. Hear what Kevin DeYoung says:

“Even Jesus obeyed his parents – and he was perfect, and they were not! If you ever have a moment where you think, “I know so much more than my parents. In fact, I feel like I’m living life much better than my parents. I’m much closer to perfection than my parents” – congratulations, you’re a lot like Jesus, and Jesus never disobeyed his parents.”

The fact is that no one ever submitted to God more than Jesus. No one ever obeyed God better than Jesus. No one ever honored God in everything except Jesus. And if ever there was someone who had potential grounds to claim exemption from having to do so, it was Jesus! But He didn’t, and praise God, he didn’t. He humbled Himself in obedience and became the substitutionary lamb, dying in our place so that He could fulfill promises of blessing. As He is now the one who says: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” And if it is God’s granted authority in parents we honor, we better be honoring the source of that authority in Jesus Christ our Saviour and our Redeemer!

Now I want to take a moment..because when you hear me saying that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and Redeemer... if that is true for you and you know that you are right with God, Praise Jesus, that is the work of the Holy Spirit in you. However, when I speak of Jesus and his obedience in dying in our place and you are not sure whether this applies to you, please if you hear nothing else today, please don’t leave here today without speaking to someone. We would love to speak with you and pray with you.

Because as we will see momentarily, the promise of blessing is not only a promise for earthly blessing but a promise of future blessing also, because Jesus is busy preparing that blessing for you and for me in heaven even as we speak. Thank God!

So...honor your father and mother (and all other forms of authority to which they point us) first out of obedience to God, but also, because we have a promise! A promise of Blessing. Which brings us to the final point.

### 3. The Blessing

Now, before we can take one step down the path of considering the promise of blessing that goes with this morning's text, can we just take a moment to consider that there is a God. A God in heaven who is entirely self-sufficient and completely satisfied in Himself. He could not be more satisfied in Himself. And yet, he desires and even longs to bless us, His creation.

I mean does that not just humble you? It's worth pondering over and probably an entire series of messages. But it is good for us to slow down and consider that we are about to discuss being the recipients of blessings and grace that we do not deserve! Wow!

Now, let's be sure, God's blessings are not a mathematical law. Put in honor and get out blessings on the other side. Rather these promises are general rules that put us in the position of being able to receive blessing as God sovereignly decides.

Do you know people who dishonor parents and yet seem blessed? Do you know people who honor parents and yet seem "Unblessed?" This shows us that we may have attached to this promise, things that we have decided to associate with God's blessings. Money, house, no debt, health, obedient children...all these are good things so the list could be long.

Now, it might be that God gives us these things and when He does it is glorious...but even without these things, the very reason that you and I are here this morning, singing songs of worship and giving of what we have been given. Hearing from the very Word of God and it doesn't repulse us, but brings us great joy is A BLESSING! We have MUCH to be grateful for and many blessings from God, they just may not always be what we have decided they should have been.

And let me also say that it is not bad for us to be motivated by blessings. They are good. They are from God and He is unable to give bad blessings! James says that *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above..."* So let's just begin by acknowledging that if God offers promises of blessing that this is a good thing. In fact, just as warnings are a means by which God seeks to keep us from sinning against Him, just so promises of blessing are another means by which God seeks to motivate us to keep His commands.

Now that being said, there are two pitfalls when we consider God's promises of blessing and both are to be avoided.

The first pitfall would be when we are so cautious of a prosperity Gospel (as well we should be) that we ignore God's blessings and passages of blessings, rather than longing for and cherishing the promised blessings. We fear making them more important than the Gospel. And as good as our intentions may be, the question has to be asked, WHY? Why would we shy away from a God who says in Matthew 7:11 *"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"*



God is a God who gives good things and longs for us to enjoy them. So let us not run from them as if they are Taboo.

The second pitfall on the other hand, and on the complete other side of the spectrum is when these promises are worked for as the driving force for why we honor or are obedient. Because our obedience cannot and must not be grounded in the blessing, that would violate the first command *"You shall have no other gods before me"* because it would mean that we value and cherish the gift above God. The blessing becomes an idol.

Rather let us ground the motivation for our obedience in a sincere desire to honor God. Then the promises and blessings can be what God has intended them to be...motivational. And as I've said, it is not wrong that the promises of blessing are motivational, that's their intended purpose, they just cannot be our main objective or goal.

And if, in faith, we can strike that balance where we are not avoiding blessing but eager for the Lord to kindly lavish His blessings upon us. And we are not chasing after the blessings themselves, then we will be in a position to receive God's blessings AS blessings. Not repayment for a job well done. Not remuneration or an award but true unmerited favor. Because for everything we may have done that might, if it were possible, warrant blessing from God. We have done enumerable more NOT to warrant blessing from God. Because even in the moments we have honored our parents most, we are still unworthy and undeserving of the blessings God bestows.

Now...what was the actual blessing God promised to Israel for honoring their father and mother? *"That your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."* And this was both a spiritual promise as well as a physical one. There was a promise of being with the Israelites, blessing them and that they would live long and peaceably in the promised land. For us today it's different yet the same. Jesus has fulfilled these promises and we now find ourselves in the ever present "Already not-yet". Because this promise of blessing is very much intended as a promise for blessings that we get to enjoy in this life. (Already). But they are also promises of not just living long in an earthly home, but a heavenly one for eternity with our Savior (Not-yet).

Amazing. Amazing that God should so desire that we bring glory to His name, through the honoring of our father and mother and all the other authorities He has established. And this is so vital that He does so not by threatening us, but by giving us promises of blessing if we honor our parents. Promises of blessing both in this life and the one to come.

Brothers and Sisters, what the Lord is asking of us is not impossible. It brings Him great joy when we desire to grow in how we obey His Word and He delights to supply us with the grace we need in order to do so. The ultimate goal of honoring father and mother is NOT fathers and mothers who's cups are running over with honor. The ultimate goal is for God to receive the Honor He is due.

And with our eyes fixed on Him, His promises of blessing, and a desire to glorify His name, I have no doubt that we will all be more eager and able to honor our parents to the glory of God. But be warned, we bring God honor by obeying His commands in the way He has prescribed. And today in reading the 5th commandment, we have been instructed to Honor Him by joyfully and eagerly following, responding to, and respecting those whom God has given authority. And what better place to start than with our Father and Mother?

In closing, read Romans 9:30-32 with me.

*30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.*

Brothers and sisters let us not approach this 5th commandment, especially because it has a wonderful promise attached to it in any other way than faith. Trying to reach the law as if it were based on works. But when we do approach it in faith, we can be sure that the outcomes and results of our honor to authority will be one of favor with God where, in faith, we can receive with joy the promised blessings of Yahweh.

Let's Pray.