

Homework – 6
Exodus 20:12
“What You Owe Your Parents”

1. At a website called babycenter.com, they have an interesting tool for parents. You put in the year your child was born, and some other information, and it will calculate for you the cost of raising your child.
2. I was just curious about what it was going to cost me to raise Tanner and Grace, so I used the calculator, and figured out that I can not afford to raise my own children. I'm going to need a government bailout! According to babycenter.comⁱ, I am going to need over \$502,000 to get my kids to adulthood.
3. All parents know that it takes a lot more than money to raise kids, and we also know that there is no way anyone could ever repay their parents for the gift of life, and a good upbringing.
4. Fortunately, the Word of God does not require us to repay our parents. However, it does teach us that all children owe their parents something.
5. In Exodus 20:12, God set forth the obligation that all children have to their parents. There, at the heart of the Ten Commandments, God said, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”
6. Far from being a command that only applied to ancient Israel, the Apostle Paul picks up this truth in Ephesians 6, and says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise). (6:1-2)”
7. Children of all ages and stages of life have been given a command by God regarding how they are to treat their parents. What this means is that the ingredients for a godly home are not just strong marriages and good parents. Children must do their homework as well.
8. As we consider this commandment, there are three truths that we draw from it that help us all to give our parents what we owe them. First of all, I want you to think with me about:

I. WHERE THIS COMMAND APPEARS

1. One of the first and most important rules of interpreting the Bible is to pay attention to the context of a verse. Someone once said that, “A text without context is just a con.”

2. The importance of context is simply that you will understand a verse more clearly and correctly when you pay attention to the verses around it, and to where it is found in the Bible.

3. The importance of context is certainly seen in the case of our text. In Exodus 20, God gives to Moses His Laws. Here we have the record of the giving of the Ten Commandments – the perfect distillation and communication of God’s demands for His people.

5. Understanding that the command to “honor your father and your mother” falls within this context, sheds some light upon the nature and significance of this command. Notice with me a couple of things we recognize from the place where this command appears. First of all:

A. This is an inspired command

1. In 1901, archeologists uncovered a seven-foot tall stone slab inscribed with a collection of some 282 laws that have come to be known as the Code of Hammurabi. Hammurabi was the sixth king of Babylon, and his code is one of the oldest written collections of laws.

2. Though the Ten Commandments came later than Hammurabi’s code, they carried with them a unique authority. While Hammurabi’s code was a collection of man-made laws, the Ten Commandments that were given to Moses at Mt. Sinai were the direct words and laws of God himself.

3. When we read the command to give honor to our parents, we are not reading a merely human code or law. Honoring one’s parents is a matter of obeying God.

4. While all parents may not be honorable, all parents are to be honored by their children because they are commanded to do so by the inspired Word of God.

5. I read about a weary mother whose 5 year old son was giving her more than she could handle. Finally, she reached her breaking point, and she told him, “Johnny, just do whatever you want to do! Let’s see you disobey that!”

6. The child who fails to honor their parents must understand that they are doing more than disobeying the instructions of their family; they are breaking the inspired law of God.

7. Notice not only that this command is an inspired command, but by noting where this command appears, we see also that:

B. This is an important command

1. All of God's Word is important. Every instruction of the Bible is valuable and profitable. All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is therefore significant and important.
2. With that being said, when God decided to summarize His expectations and demands, and communicate them to His people, He gave ten clear commands, and wrote them on tablets of stone.
3. Ten divine laws, given by God almighty, and one of those ten is, "Honour thy father and thy mother..." Think of that! Of all the things God could have included in these Ten Commandments, He chose to include the command that children are to honor their parents.
4. Does the fact that this command is found among the Ten Commandments not indicate to us how important this matter is to God?
5. All children should understand that honoring and obeying your parents is no small matter. If you disrespect your parents, and fail to give them the honor they are due, you break a command that is close to the heart of God!
6. An example of the importance of this command is also found in the New Testament. In Romans 1:29 -30, Paul is gives a list of the sins that mark those who are deserving of the wrath of God.
7. Listen carefully to this list. He says, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, *disobedient to parents* (emphasis added)."
8. Let no child think that dishonoring and disrespecting their parents is a minor offense or a small sin. Where this command appears, among the Ten Commandments, speaks to us of its importance.
9. Notice a second truth about this command. Notice not only *where this command appears*, but notice also:

II. WHO THIS COMMAND ADDRESSES

1. Again, in this fifth commandment, God says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."
2. If we are not careful, I am afraid that we will blunt the sharpness of this command, by ignoring its full application. What I mean is that we must not assume that this command only applies to a small group of small people.

3. I want you to think with me for a moment about who this command addresses, and who exactly God is speaking to when he commands that honor be given to parents.

4. Notice first of all, this command obviously applies to:

A. Growing children

1. The first group that needs to obey this command is the children who are still growing up in their parents' home, and under their parents' authority.

2. This might be a toddler who needs to quit throwing food at the table, or a teenager who needs to sit down and eat at the table. If you are still in the process of growing up into adulthood, then this command is primarily for you.

3. Paul expands upon this truth in Ephesians 6:1, where he calls upon children to "obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." As a growing child, obedience to your parents is your obligation to God.

4. You may not like your parents' rules, and you may disagree with the standards to which they hold you, and the restrictions they place upon you, but God never asked for your opinion; just your obedience.

5. I remember when I was about 17 years-old, and I first began to realize that I knew everything, and that my parents were dinosaurs whose rules and regulations were silly and outdated.

6. At the time, my curfew was set at 10:30 pm, and my dad made it clear that if I missed my curfew, I would be grounded 1 day for every minute I was late.

7. Of course, I thought 10:30 sounded like a curfew for a kindergartener. I was a grown man, almost, and had a partial mustache to prove it! I expressed my opinion to my dad, and asked that I be allowed to stay out later.

8. My dad informed me that if I wanted to *stay out*, I could *move out*. However, as long as I wanted the free room and board that he was giving me, I would be home at 10:30 pm.

9. God has commanded that growing children (which includes teenagers) are to submit themselves to the authority of their parents, and give them the obedience and honor that God requires.

10. Obviously, this command addresses growing children. However, note also that this command also addresses:

B. Grown children

1. Look again at the fifth commandment in Exodus 20:12. It says, “Honor thy father and thy mother...” Nowhere does this command indicate that growing up into adulthood frees us from obligations to our parents.
2. Obviously, how we honor our parents will change as we mature, but our responsibility to show respect and care for our parents is never lifted.
3. In Mark chapter 7, Jesus indicted the Pharisees, who were middle-aged men, for neglected or avoiding their responsibilities to their parents. Our Lord indicated that even into adulthood, we are bound the Word of God to give honor to our parents.
4. A couple of years ago, the website of CBS News posted an article entitled “The Sandwich Generation”. The article talked about how more and more Americans are finding themselves caring not just for their children, but for their elderly parents as well.
5. The article stated that 16 million Americans – more than live in all of New England – are caring for elderly relatives while trying to raise their kids at the same time.ⁱⁱ
6. Right now, I have pastor friend in his early forties, who recently remodeled his basement, creating an apartment for his elderly parents who could no longer live by themselves. He is determined to care for them while raising his own two children as well.
7. While not everyone has to, or is able to do what my friend is doing. All of us, as long as our parents are alive, have the obligation to honor them, in whatever capacity that may require.
8. There are some fully-grown adults who are currently breaking the fifth commandment. Though they are no longer a small child, they are still the child of someone whom God has commanded them to honor.
9. There is another truth that I want to consider regarding this command to honor our parents. Notice not only *where this command appears*, and *who this command addresses*, but notice also thirdly:

III. WHAT THIS COMMAND ASSERTS

1. Again, God spoke to Moses, giving Ten Commandments. The fifth of those is this: “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

2. Understanding the importance of this command, as well as the people who are to obey this command, what exactly does this command say to us about we owe to our parents?

3. There are two important truths asserted by this fifth commandment. Notice them with me. First of all, this command reveals:

A. The respect that should be given

1. Notice that word “honor” in verse 12. The Lord God instructs us to “Honor thy father and thy mother...” What exactly does it mean to “honor” someone?

2. The Hebrew word that is translated “honor” is a word that speaks of something that is heavy or weighty. When used in verse 12, it means to treat someone as if they are weighty in importance and significance.

3. The opposite of this “honor” would be to treat someone casually, lightly, or disrespectfully. To fail to give honor to someone is to take them granted, or to treat them as if they are unimportant.

4. If we are to honor our parents, in obedience to the command of God, then we will treat them with respect and care, and we will value them because of their position in our lives.

5. I understand that not all parents are honorable people. There are mom’s and dad’s who have failed to be the kind of parent God has called them to be, and some who have never been true parents at all.

6. However, there is no indication that this is a conditional command. God does not say, “Honor your father and your mother, if they deserve it.” He simply calls for children to pay honor to their parents, simply because they are their parents.

7. I knew a man once whose mother was by no means the ideal mother. In her old age, she became bitter, cantankerous, and mean. Parkinson’s disease affected not only her body, but her mind, and she was paranoid, and could say some cruel things.

8. This lady had a son who did not particularly love his mother. Much of what she had done through the years had hurt him, and had left him somewhat cold toward her. Nevertheless, this son loved God, and desired to honor Christ.

9. In the last months of her life, that son would travel almost 5 hours several times a month to visit his ailing mother. I am told that he would sit with her, care for her, even feeding her when her trembling hand could not hold the spoon.

10. She was not exactly an honorable person, but her son honored because she was his mother. That is what this command asserts. We must give respect to our parents.

11. Notice something else this command asserts. Notice not only the respect that should be given, but notice also:

B. The reward that can be gained

1. Look again at verse 12. It says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

2. Turn now from Exodus to Ephesians, and find the sixth chapter. There the Apostle Paul gives a little commentary on this verse. In verses 2 and 3, Paul says, "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

3. In Exodus God had promised His people that if they honored their parents, they themselves would live long in the land of Canaan. In Ephesians, Paul extends the command and the promise to us today.

4. Though some would no doubt laugh at this as being non-sense and fantasy, the Bible clearly asserts that those who honor their parents will be blessed themselves with a lengthened life.

5. I don't know how exactly this works. I am not sure whether your life is just naturally prolonged by being a good child, or whether God actually adds days to the length of your life.

6. What I do know is that if God promises a blessing, He will deliver it, in whatever way He chooses. Rest assured, if you honor your parents, God will honor His Word to you.

7. Comedian Bill Cosby once told about how his father had established his relationship with his son early on. Cosby said, "...when I was seven years-old, he looked at me and said, 'You know, I brought you into this world, and I can take you out. And it don't make no difference to me; I'll make another one look just like you.'"ⁱⁱⁱ

8. In reality, God is the one who "brought us into the world", and the length of our lives are in His hands. The fifth command carries with it a life-reward that can be gained by those who will honor their parents.

1. I read this week that before the great missionary, David Livingstone left for Africa, where he would eventually die, as a younger man at home he learned to speak the Gaelic language, just so that he could read the Bible to his mother in her native language.
2. When you consider what most parents do and give for the sake of their children, you realize that no task, no gift, no service could ever truly repay the price of parenthood.
3. However, though we can never repay our parents for the life they give us, that does not release us from giving them the one thing God says that we owe them – honor.
4. As a matter of obedience to the Word of God, children, both growing and grown, should strive to give honor to their parents, and show them the respect that God demands.
5. A preacher of a past generation once rightly pointed out that this command is the only command that it may one day be impossible to keep. No doubt, there are some here today who wish they had one more day to obey the fifth commandment, and to give honor to a mother or father who is no longer here.
6. Let those of us who still have our parents obey our God by honoring them. That is what we owe our parents.

ⁱ Cost of Raising Your Child Calculator, *babycenter.com*, accessed 4/2/09,
<http://www.babycenter.com/cost-of-raising-child-calculator>

ⁱⁱ Kreiser, John, The Sandwich Generation, 5/8/06, *CBS Evening News*, accessed 4/4/09,
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/05/08/eveningnews/main1600179.shtml>

ⁱⁱⁱ Bill Cosby: Himself, *IMDb.com*, accessed 4/4/09, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083652/quotes>