

Honouring Your Father and Mother

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from Deuteronomy chapter 5. You can find the passage in your bulletin. Verse 1, And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ruse I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.

Then in verse 6, Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

As the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.

You or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. And the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

[2 : 10] Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. 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 has given you.

You shall not murder.

Great. Thank you so much, Sherman. Thank you so much, Sherman. It is so exciting to be back. It's so great to be here together. What I'd love us to do is just before I begin to share from this passage, I'd love us just to pray and ask God to really speak to us through this.

Father, we just thank you that when you speak, you call us to listen because you desire to love us through your word. And you desire to change us through your word.

And you desire to make us into the people that you have created us to be through your word. And I pray you would speak this morning. Pray that you'd open our hearts to hear what you want us to hear.

[3 : 45] Lord, remove anything that is not from you. But I pray you'll come with power. Take these simple words and let them just drive, be driven right into our hearts, Lord.

That we may love you more. That we may truly worship you with every area of our lives, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Great. So, we have been going through the Ten Commandments online. Okay, who's been following online? Okay, most of you. So, you should know we've already gone through four of the commandments already. And so, we're going to come to commandment number five, which is honor your father and mother.

So, before we start, what I'd like you to do is I'm going to do a poll. Okay. So, I want you to stand up if someone has experienced childbirth to bring you into the world.

Okay, there's a few people who clearly have not experienced, that didn't have any parents.

[4 : 54] So, if you didn't stand up, then this sermon is completely irrelevant to you. You can walk out right now. You can sit down. If you did stand up, then this sermon has great relevance to you.

Okay. So, you just have to decide right now whether this is relevant or not. Okay. So, this command, I'm going to dive straight into looking at this command because I think this has a real weight for all of us in where we are 2020 in Hong Kong.

Honor your father and mother. First of all, what does that mean? Well, the word honor literally means to be heavy or to give weight to someone.

So, it's saying you take treating your parents seriously. It means giving your parents profound respect. The opposite is to treat your parents lightly or to disrespect them as if they don't really matter in your life.

And so, commentators have looked at this commandment and seen that it's actually a hinge commandment between the first four commandments, which are really about your duty towards

God, worshiping him alone, having no other idols, honoring his name above all other names, and keeping the Sabbath of worship to him.

[6 : 19] The hinge and then moving on to the commands which really focus on duty towards your neighbor and how you love your neighbor. But this one comes in between them.

It's the way that you move from that upward focus to that horizontal focus. And so, what you'll see is we move from loving God to loving other people through honoring our parents.

Now, why does he do that? Because your parents are the first and probably some of the most influential people that you've encountered in your life. And so, what you need to remember is God gave you your parents as a gift.

Okay? Some of you, whether you like that or not, your parents didn't choose you. Do you know that? And you didn't choose your parents either.

And so, what that means is both ways, you are a gift to each other, but you are a broken gift in different ways.

[7 : 26] But God is in the redemption business. So, what I want us to look at is the fact that this command is saying we don't honor our parents because they deserve it.

They don't honor their parents because they deserve it. Nowhere in scripture says you can only honor your parents if they've treated you really well or if they've been so sacrificially loving to you. It never says that anywhere. Because what the parents, what the Bible says is, frankly, we live in a broken world where some parents are not like that at all. But the command comes to us even if you've been hurt by your parents.

And God takes that really seriously. And we'll talk about that in a little bit. But the command comes to us not to honor our parents because they merited it in some way, but to honor them because in doing so we honor God who has given them to us as our parents, as a gift.

And so, that is what we are called to do. We're called to honor our parents. But why should we have this command? We honor them as we're honoring God. And I'm going to stand up here as it's easier for me to, rather than looking over.

[8 : 44] Why does God give us this command? Well, there's three reasons. Okay? Three reasons that I think God gives this command. The first reason is for our blessing. You see what he says in the passage here.

He says, Honor your father and mother, as the Lord commanded you, that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that your Lord, your God, is giving you.

You see what he says? That it may go well with you. Another way of saying it is that you may prosper in the land. The Israelites are on the edge of the promised land. They're about to go into this place of incredible blessing.

And God says, if you want to enjoy this land as I really want you to, then take this command seriously. That actually the path of blessing for you is actually goes through this obedience to this commandment.

And it's not saying, hey, like everyone's going to live to 102 or something. That's not the point of it. The point is, this is for your blessing. Paul says in Ephesians, this is the first command with a promise.

[9 : 46] It's a promise of blessing for us. Now, I don't know how many Disney movies you've watched, but so many Disney movies have this idea that there is this kind of princess or this prince, and the way that they're to get freedom and blessing in their life is to get out of the restrictions of their controlling parents.

You know, think of like Snow White or Tangled or Little Mermaid or Cinderella. All of them have that narrative. This command is saying, no, the way to blessing isn't to get out from your parents.

It's actually to honor your parents. And so what this means is you can be singing in church every Sunday. You can be serving all you like.

You can be evangelizing out in the world. But if you are not doing this commandment well, there's going to be a hole inside of your heart. There's going to be a wound there where you are not going to experience the blessing that God wants for you.

There's going to be a spiritual stuntedness in your growth until this command is taken seriously.

And we know that just from psychology and sociology, we know research shows that actually the parent-child relationship is essential for emotional health, for mental health, for your own sense of identity.

[11:12] It's also for wisdom and guidance. Like, I would have made so many stupid mistakes if I hadn't listened to some things my parents had said. And also for social support networks, you know, for like the elderly particularly.

Family is essential for creating a healthy, prospering society. And God knows that. That's why he gives us this command. And if we don't take this command seriously, there's always going to be a shadow hanging over your life, even if everything else is going well with you.

And you know that if you have a difficult relationship with your parents. So he says it's for your blessing. But also, he says, actually, secondly, it's also dishonoring your parents brings curse or judgment.

Now, this is a bit harder. But Deuteronomy 22 says that there's a rebellious son who is not listening to his parents. And he's basically going off the rails.

And God says in Deuteronomy, he says, listen, the punishment for that son, for the harm that he's doing on the community, is death. Now, that sounds pretty harsh.

[12:21] But what he's saying on the point of it is, willful disobedience against your parents not only destroys your own blessing, but it can harm society and harm the relationships around you.

You know that. If there is relational breakdown, you know it affects the poverty levels of both young and old. You know that? It affects the burden on hospitals and on the welfare system is totally different.

Just think about the, you know, the cultural revolution. Do you know when sons and daughters denounce their parents? And you see the devastation it just brought in the whole of society.

God takes this really seriously. In fact, in Romans 1, there's this passage where God goes through this list of things where people are under his judgment.

And he goes, you know, people who are liars, people who are envious, people who are gossips, people who are haters of God.

[13:28] And you go, yeah, that sounds about right for people who are under God's judgment. And then he goes, and those who are disobedient to their parents. And you go, wow, God really takes this seriously.

So why is he giving the command? He's giving it for our blessing. But he's also giving it so that we avoid his judgment and avoid harm and curse in our lives individually and as a society.

But thirdly, and more important, even more importantly than those, is because it actually is a way that we worship and please God. We worship and please God.

Colossians 3 verse 20 says this. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. I don't know, if you realize this, God gave the gift of your parents, or gift of parents to teach us how to listen and how to respond to authority, including God himself.

Because all of us are natural rebels. Anyone not a rebel in any way? All of us are in some ways. And primarily we're rebels against God, naturally. And where's the first place that you learn how to listen?

[14:50] Because you know the true saying that you don't have to teach a child to disobey you. They just do it naturally, right? I've got an eight-month-old. I know how it works. But our parents were given to us so that they would be the first place we learn how to listen, the first place we learn how to submit, the first place we learn how to lay down our will and say yes to an authority figure over us.

And if you don't get to learn that, just think what misery your kids are going to grow up with every teacher, with every boss, everything the rest of their lives. It would be miserable if you don't learn that.

And so what that means, if you are a parent, it's actually really important that you know that God has given you your role, not just to kind of get your kids a great education and get them a great start in life.

He's given you a role that your kids will learn to listen to God through listening to you. Now that's not a stick to beat your kids up with, but there is a responsibility that God gives to you so that your kids will experience the goodness of God's rule and the grace of listening and obedience to him through you.

It's serious. I mean, in honoring our parents, what we're doing is we are seeking to honor God and honor the authority that he has placed over us, and we want to please him above all else.

[16:24] God's serious about families. He wants us to honor him. He wants our blessing. He doesn't want our curse, and he wants us to learn how to please him. That's the why.

But what I want to go on to is how do we keep this? And I'm going to spend more time on this section because when we look at this, I'm sure there's a thousand questions that just raise up in our minds as we hear this.

But we've got to listen first of all and see how Jesus actually treats this command. So there's a couple of things that Jesus shows us of how he keeps us.

The first thing he shows us is how he holds this command in high regard. I don't know if you know, Matthew 15, there's this scenario where the Pharisees, the religious leaders, are criticizing Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands.

And Jesus comes to them and says, why do you break the commandment of God to honor your father and mother? By what you do is you say, hey, the money that you should give to your parents for supporting them, you can give to us or you can give to the temple.

[17:36] You don't have to support your parents, and God will accept it. It's fine. And Jesus says, no way. Your heart is far away from God's heart, he says.

And what he says is this. He says, your support for your parents, and Jesus is showing us this, your support for your parents in their old age, whether it's financially or in other ways, is a key way that you honor God in that.

And in Hong Kong, I think they actually do this much better than where I'm from. So you see that Jesus takes it seriously. At the cross, Jesus' mission has reached its climax.

He is in utter agony. He is emotionally exhausted. He is taking the sins of the whole world on his shoulders. This is the greatest moment in history.

And do you know what is right at the front of Jesus' mind? At that moment, his mother. Because he looks and he sees his mother, and he says to John, his disciple, please take care of my mother.

[18:47] Isn't that incredible? At that ultimate moment, he cares for his mother. And John takes her in and looks after her. You see, Jesus is saying, this is not just a cultural duty that you should do.

It is an act of worship to God, because God is pleased with this. And Jesus shows you that right in the hardest moment. God has designed things so that the parents who looked after you and took care of you when you were young, that when they get old, that we are to take care of them.

We're not meant to outsource all the care for our parents just to elderly homes. God designs it so that we have a responsibility.

And if I'm honest, I really wrestle with this, because my parents are in the UK, and they're getting older. And so we have to really wrestle with what that looks like in our situation.

I know many of you probably have similar wrestles. But I want you to see Jesus take this seriously. So he honors it. But then I also want you to see a second thing that Jesus does.

[19:57] This is really interesting. He shows that honoring does not always mean obeying. Here we go. Some of you are going, hmm, what's that about? Some of you are going, yes.

Before you're getting too excited, Jillian, we'll hear what the Bible says. Jesus goes to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem when he's 12 years old with his whole family.

The whole village is going along. And then Mary and Joseph are on their way back, and they turn around, and they realize, where's Jesus? We've lost him. And then they spend three days, and they're stressed out of their minds, trying to find Jesus.

And eventually, they come to the temple, and there is Jesus. And Mary goes to Jesus, why are you treating us like this? Didn't you know we've been looking for you everywhere? We're so stressed.

How can you do this to us?

And Jesus, calm as you like, says, didn't you know I had to be in my father's house? He's going, don't you realize that actually, the worship of my heavenly father has a priority, even over following your wishes in this moment.

[21:13] But before you think Jesus is just being a kind of rebellious, not even a teenager yet, he's 12, he then, the next line Luke says is, and Jesus went to Nazareth with his parents and was submissive to them.

Do you see that tension there? You see, his heart attitude as a child is an attitude of submission, but where there is a clash between the ultimate allegiance to his heavenly father and the wishes of his parents, he says, no, my heavenly father comes first.

Let me give you one more example. Luke 8. Jesus is teaching to the crowds and his mother and his brother turn up and they go, hey, we want to see you.

I think food's getting cold or whatever it was. And they say, and Jesus says to them and to the crowd and everyone watching, who are my mother and brothers? Which is actually totally culturally offensive.

Okay, your mother and brothers are there. He says, no, who are my mother and brothers? The person who hears my word and does it, that's my mother and brothers. Imagine the parents hearing that.

[22 : 23] But Jesus is making a point. He's saying that your family identity, your blood family ties are important and significant, but they are temporary.

But your spiritual family ties are even more significant because they're eternal. and they're with me. And so, what Jesus is doing here, he's showing you that this tension, that he is to honor your parents, but also, we are to allow God to be the one that we are honoring ultimately.

Now, why is that significant? significant? It's significant because it's a challenge both to Eastern culture where we often idolize our parents, and it's a challenge to Western culture where we idolize our independence.

So, I'll just give you an example of this. When Fiona and I were dating, and we'd known each other a long time, so we were looking to get married actually quite early on because we'd been together for a long time as friends.

And Fiona told her her parents this, and they flipped out. For 10 months, her dad didn't speak to her. Her mom would ring up very emotional at 2 a.m. in the morning saying, you cannot marry Chris.

[23 : 46] And me as an independent Westerner, I was going, well, we're trying to honor God in this.

We're not going to let your parents control us in this. We mustn't be slaves to the kind of idolatrous, sinful expectations of your parents.

Let's just go ahead and do it anyway. But then the Eastern kind of side goes, but actually, your parents have given you everything.

Like, you owe them your life. Like, they've invested in you, so you've got to actually almost pay them back. So you can't rebel against them. You've just got to, honoring them means you do what they want and what they wish.

And so there was this tension that we felt. And so, how do we get through this? Well, we're wrestling. What does it mean to honor our parents without just being independent, but also not being a slave to their expectations?

[24 : 51] And so, what do we do? We asked a lot of people for advice. And then, we decided we'd be patient. So, I moved to Hong Kong and I spent every week for one year going to Delhi, France in June 1, meeting my future mother-in-law and her speaking Cantonese to me and me just nodding and smiling, not understanding anything that she was talking about, but because I wanted her to see that actually I was investing in her and she was important.

I wanted to honor her by trying to listen to her and engage with her. But after about a year or so of this, we came to the point where we really felt God actually saying, actually, you've been waiting long enough and I feel like you're actually more a slave to what your parents are thinking.

So, we ended up after a lot of discussion, we then went back and Fiona went to her mom and asked her if we could get married. And if they had said no at that point, I think in our hearts we would have prayed about it, but we would probably have said, actually, I think we've honored you and really been trying to do what's right, but we will go ahead anyway because we believe that honors God first.

but we didn't do that lightly because we need to see that in our own hearts, I can be idolatrous in both ways, independent or in slavery, but God calls us to take this command seriously and actually, by the way, as you may well know, they said yes and we've got a great relationship with them.

But here's the crucial thing, you place your parents and their wishes first and you will idolize them. And you know, if you ever get married, and that's still the case, you will destroy your marriage because your spouse will always know that your parents have a greater voice than your spouse has in your marriage and they'll feel that.

[27 : 00] But also, if you honor God first, it will humble your independence and it will make you seek to love and honor them when even at times that may lead to conflict, but you don't do that lightly.

So how do we honor our parents well without idolizing them? How do you get that tension right? Because actually, there's so many emotions with our parents, aren't there? I think the key to this is to realize one very important thing.

Your parents are not God. your parents can never fulfill what God has said that he will fulfill. You see, your parents will always disappoint you in some way, but God will never disappoint you. You know, when you're a kid, you think your parents can do nothing wrong. When you're a teenager, you wonder if they can ever do anything right. But actually, you know that as you go through life, some of us wanted our parents to accept us and they rejected us or they were absent. Some of us wanted our parents to listen to us and understand us and they just didn't get you. Or they were too busy for you. Some of us have been disappointed because they broke promises. [28 : 28] And even if you have amazing parents, like I've got pretty good parents, here's a truth, your parents are sinners.

And so are you, by the way. But God gave you your parents to make you long for the perfect parent, your heavenly father.

You see, John chapter 13, there's this beautiful verse which says, Jesus says, I will not leave you as orphans, but I will come to you. If your parents have abandoned you, God says, I will never leave you alone.

Today, I want to come to you, whatever your circumstance. Romans 8 says this, we do not have a spirit that makes us a slave again to fear, but we have the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by whom we cry Abba, Father.

You know, when my eight-year-old son cries, doesn't matter where he is in the room, my ears prick up and I'm going to run to where he is straight away to see what's wrong.

[29 : 44] Your heavenly father is a billion times more attentive to your cry than I could ever be. he hears you, he knows you, and he cares for you.

Parents may disappoint, but your heavenly father will always be faithful to you. You know, the thing that gives God the greatest happiness, the thing that he thinks is the most amazing thing that he can do, that he gets excited about, isn't to point out all your mistakes.

It isn't to go, oh, I've got to love you because I'm God, but, you know, if you keep doing what you're doing, then maybe that might be in doubt in a few weeks' time. That's not what excites him.

What excites him is to pour out his compassion and his love and his mercy on rebellious children like you and me, again and again and again and again and he gets excited about it.

You know the prodigal son story? You know that story where the son has rebelled against his family and then he comes back and he prepares this little speech because he thinks, okay, maybe I can get my father to accept me if I just kind of make an explanation.

[31 : 12] And he gets back and while he's a long way off, the father sees him and doesn't go, oh, what have I got to say to him now? He runs with his arms open and the guy starts preparing his little speech and he cuts him short and he wraps his arms around and says, let's have a party.

That's what your heavenly father is like. That's the heart of God. That's who we have to find our rest and our security and our hope in because if we do not, then we will look for it in other places and even look for it in our parents.

And that will always hurt you. Some of us, our view of God as father has been colored by our own parents. But what God wants to do is to let your view of who God is reshape the way that you relate to your parents out of a security and a love.

And so I'm going to give you some practical steps in how we honor our parents in a minute. But all of these are useless. Maybe not useless, but they're going to be so less effective unless you know that God doesn't love you because he has to.

That God loves you because he loves to. And out of that knowledge, that's the security with which you can do these things that I'm going to share with you right now.

[32 : 40] when you are a kid, honoring fundamentally means obeying what your parents tell you, even if you don't like it.

Unless they're telling you to do something that God has told you not to do. But as you grow through the teenage years and become an adult, honoring your parents begins to look a little bit different in different ways.

And so here are some ways that I want to just give you four or five ways that we can actually learn how to honor our parents. Here's some practical things. The first one, and this is huge, forgive our

parents.

Do you know, I think one of the biggest reasons we struggle with this command is because all of us in some way have been wounded by our parents.

Some of it may be a scratch, some of it may be a very deep wound in our hearts. But the thing is, like, I hardly meet a person in Hong Kong who hasn't got some family hurt in their life.

[33 : 48] It was emotional absence, they never said I love you, there was all this kind of expectations placed on you, you never felt that you could meet up to the requirements that were expected, a whole load of things, even abuse and harshness and criticalness.

God doesn't take those wounds lightly. That's why he died for you. Because he wants to die for you, he died for you so he can heal you.

But some of us have been masking over those wounds inside with busyness, with a whole load of things we've been trying to do in our lives just to cover over the fact that we actually have deep wounds from our parents in our hearts.

And we're I think God wants today to say to some of you, stop pretending it's fine. I want to take off that band-aid, that plaster, that bandage, and I want to bring healing to you.

But the way I want to do that is through forgiveness. You see, forgiveness is a release from the cage of idolizing our parents.

[34 : 57] Do you know, what I mean by that is you idolize your parents when you put too much weight on their words or their actions, more weight than you put on what Jesus says about you and what Jesus has done for you.

And so today we're going to have some people who will be up to pray with you. If you know that actually there's areas in your life where you need to work through some forgiveness with your parents, I want you to come up afterwards for prayer.

Don't run away, don't go another day without dealing with it. Because this is so serious because God wants your blessing in life. And some of those wounds may be very deep.

And it's not going to be a quick fix. You need some people to journey with you. And I want you to come up and talk to me or talk to Kevin or Sylvie or a CG leader or one of the other elders.

But don't go away with a festering wound because that's only going to infect for longer. Yeah. God wants to bless us.

[36 : 01] He wants to do it through forgiving our parents. Secondly, he wants us to honor our parents through saying sorry. This is a hard one. You know, I was talking to someone the other day who said they still had just some real issues with their dad.

And God just kind of convicted them in their own heart of how they've been disrespecting their father even though there's just been a lot of tension. And so they went to their father.

They rang him up and said dad I just want to say I'm really sorry that I've actually disrespected you in different ways in life. And normally the dad would kind of just brush it off or do something like that but he didn't this time.

He actually responded by saying yeah and I'm sorry for some of the things I've done. And there was a beginning of a healing process which is what God loves to do in our family.

Do you see saying sorry is such a powerful way of honoring God and honoring our parents. Some of you may need to do that through writing a letter to them.

[37 : 13] Some of you may need to do that personally. And even if you don't get a great response do it anyway to honor Jesus. Say sorry. Third thing say thank you.

You know every birthday every mother's or father's day I write well I've actually I've written songs for my parents. I've written letters to my parents.

Poems to my parents. But often one of the things I'll do is I'll write a card and I'll just say I will detail the things that actually I really appreciate about them. Make a list of them.

You know I've actually run out of things because I've done it so often I've actually I'm trying to search my memory for like more things I can say. Like mom I thank you so much that you actually when we had meals you always served everybody else first before yourself even when we were ungrateful.

Thank you. Do you know how powerful that is? And what you can do is father's day coming up soon. Write something down and you can even read it out to them. I guarantee God will use that in a powerful way.

[38 : 22] Say thank you. Forgive. Say sorry. Say thank you. Ask them for advice. You know if you're a youth here even if you've got the most messed up parents in the world they probably still have quite a lot of insight into you.

So don't think that your parents actually are just kind of annoying old whatever's fill in the blank. Your parents actually know you better than you think they do.

That doesn't mean you have to agree with everything they say. But ask them for advice. That's a way to honour them. Finally pray for them and look to bless them.

How often do you pray for your parents? Really how often do you pray for them? Because when you begin to pray then you begin to look for opportunities to bless them.

Because some of us actually we can be dutiful children. We've been dutiful for a long time. God doesn't just want us to be dutiful children. He wants us to be loving children who are actively looking to bless our parents.

[39 : 35] And I don't know what that looks like for you. It's not just going through the motions of family meals. It's actually looking how can I show the kindness that God has shown to me to my parents.

Honour your father and mother that it may go well with you. That your days may be long. Because we have a great heavenly father who loves us and he wants us to be a conduit of his blessing to our families.

Let me just pray for us. And we're going to come and take communion in a minute. I want to invite the communion stewards to come up. But right now I want you just to think of what is God saying to you?

How are you doing with your own parents? Even as you think about some of the things that have happened in the past, where's your heart towards them?

Maybe you need to repent of the way you've treated them or ignored them. Maybe you need to repent of idolizing them. Maybe you just need to come honestly before God and just to be real about how you feel about them.

[40 : 53] Maybe you need to be more active in just saying thank you. Just ask the Holy Spirit just to work in your heart and just respond in prayer to him right now.

Möglichkeit he just had to oppose a man who you in and who have this We're going to come to take communion in a minute.

But communion is a time for rebellious children. For those of us who have treated our heavenly father badly, we haven't honored him.

But there's a time where he shows you that your parents may have sacrificed a lot for you. They may be willing to give their lives for you.

But they've never given their life like Christ has given his life for you. So that he can pour his love and his healing and his blessing into your life.

[42 : 43] To draw you back to himself. Your parents' love does not define you. If you're a Christian and you put your faith in Christ, his love, his father heart for you defines you.

Father, we just pray that you would speak into our hearts. Heal our hearts where we are wounded. Encourage our hearts where we are indifferent.

Fill our hearts with your love and your forgiveness that we can forgive with your grace. And as we take communion, I pray, Lord, that you would just minister again your kindness to us.

That we are not orphans. But we are sons and daughters of the King. In Jesus' name. Amen.