

## The Inheritance

8<sup>th</sup> in a series on The Ten Commandments

### Leaders Guide

1. Read Exodus 20:12 and paraphrase the fifth of the ten commandments.

Honor your father & mother, so that you might live a good & long life. This is the first of the commandments to contain a promise at the end.

2. Now read this same commandment in a New Testament context in Ephesians 6:1-4. In what way has the commandment been changed?

Now, instead of talking about living in the land (as one might assume to be the Promised Land of Palestine), verse 3 now talks about living long on the earth. Thus, this clearly applies to all people and potentially broadens the scope of the commandment in other ways too, as we will discuss later.

3. In verse 1 we are told to “obey” our parents, and in verse two we are told to “honor” our father and mother. Is there a difference between these two?

a) To obey is to do as you are told. You don’t have to like it, or agree with it, or even have any positive feelings toward the person you are obeying. It is a finite relationship, which ends when we establish our independent existence.

b) To honor is to treat with respect, love, and thoughtfulness - to submit willingly to another’s authority and expertise. In this case, there is no end to this kind of a relationship.

4. Pastor Steve suggests that this fifth commandment has a broader application that we see on the surface. Read 1Peter 5:1-4 and see if you can see how those verses relate to the fifth commandment.

In the body of believers, there are those we call “elders” who act in a parental role for newer Christians. Peter calls us to treat them with the same respect we treat our biological mothers and fathers (or more).

5. Peter instructs those called to be leaders of the church (“elders”) to do many things. List as many as you can find in these verses and then see if they relate in any way to the role a parent has with their children.

1) Shepherd God’s flock (notice that elders are acting on behalf of God) As parents, we are to shepherd or nudge or children in the way that God would have them to go. We can’t force them, but we can train them, encourage them, establish a strong relationship with them, such that they are inclined to follow our lead.

2) Lead out of eagerness to serve, not from obligation. As parents, we should not look at raising our children as a job forced upon us, but as a privilege given to us by God to help prepare new workers for His kingdom. It is a work of love, and the rewards can be beyond measure.

3) Serve in order to give to others, not to get something for yourself. As parents, we quickly figure out that the newborn is helpless and needs us for everything. We joyfully provide for that new life and continue providing in slowly decreasing proportion until they are ready to go off on their own. We do this because we love them, not because we think we will be rewarded at some future date with a huge return on investment, although most parents will tell you that they feel repaid many times over by the joy their children and grandchildren bring them.

4) Lead by example, not by force. It is easy as parents to try to teach with words – but not very effective. It is harder to teach by example (because sometimes we aren't very good examples), but much more effective.

6. In 1Peter 5:5-7 the spotlight shifts. Who is being addressed here, and what are they told?

The young Christians are to subject themselves humbly to the guidance offered by the elders. By learning from those who have already gone through many trials, they will become better prepared to take on the role of elder when their time comes. In addition, they are to learn to rely on God by laying their problems at His feet and learning to trust Him to lead them through the tough times.

7. Pastor Steve described our culture as “collapsing toward the middle”. What does that mean and why might it be the source of problems?

In modern western society, the youth (and even children) desire and are encouraged to act older than they really are. There seems to be a rush to act like adults (at least some aspects of adulthood) long before they are mature enough to understand the consequences of such actions.

On the other hand, as we get older, we do everything in our power to try to look and act younger than we really are. It is as if we are either afraid of or embarrassed by our advancing age.

Society seems to place great value on youth and young adults, while old people feel marginalized. Thus, there would appear to be an optimum age (20-somethings??), and everyone who is not that age is trying desperately to pretend that they are.

8. What is the role of the church in all of this?

The church is in a perfect position to bring all of the generations together in a constructive interaction. The activities and organizations within a church give opportunities for the elders to interact and shepherd the younger members in a safe and sincere manner. At the same time, the church can train the younger members to respect and honor in humility those who have gone before them while realizing that their time to be elders will come soon enough.

9. Once again, we need to look at this commandment from three different aspects. First, how do we read the fifth commandment as “Law”?

Honor our parents by giving them a place in our lives that is above that of other people in our lives. We are to respect them, esteem them, and speak well of them – even if they have not been perfect parents. They are still our parents, and we honor God by honoring our parents. (see 1Timothy 5:4)

10. How does it change as we look at the fifth commandment as a “Vow”?

We are to love our parents as we love God. Even if they do not return the love, we should try to stay involved in their lives, while offering them opportunities to stay involved in ours. We should seek to bring the best out in them.

11. Paul then takes the concept up to the third level – “Nature”. How would you describe this implementation of the fifth commandment?

We broaden our scope of honor and respect to all of those who serve as “elders” or “shepherds” in our lives. We establish a community of humility and natural submission to one another. And when we reach the stage of life at which we can begin serving as elders and shepherds for those who follow behind us, we do it willingly and lovingly. We honor God by honoring what He has given to the other generations.

12. Pastor Steve observed that Jesus did not always treat his mother and father as we might expect. What is the source of that seeming difference?

His focus was on His Heavenly Father, who had sent Him to earth with a very specific role. God is clearly the role model for our parents, so loving and serving God should be our top priority. Having said that, we are also to honor our earthly fathers and mothers by treating them with love and respect. As He died on the cross, Jesus made sure His mother was going to be taken care of. (John 19:26-27)

13. What is your reaction to Dr. Todd Voss’s comment that we should “do what is best for our parents”?

That can be difficult to do as we walk humbly in submission to our elders. Children (as he was when dealing with his mother) do not necessarily have the knowledge, insight, or maturity to discern what is best. As our parents age and become less able to take care of themselves, it can become tempting to take over their lives and too quickly begin acting as if we are the parents of our parents. We must always treat them as the parents and honor them and respect them in that role. Having said that, because we love them, we sometimes have to act on behalf of God to help them get the best out of life. It is a difficult and awesome responsibility, but as long as we approach it with prayer, love, and respect, God will honor our efforts.