

Deuteronomy 5:16 “Honor Your Mother, and Father Too”**¹

Main Idea: In Deuteronomy 5:16, God clarifies for us two basic issues pertaining to honoring our mother (and fathers too).

- I. Honoring mother is a responsibility.
 - A. We are to honor our parents.
 - 1. To honor involves obedience.
 - 2. To honor involves respect.
 - 3. To honor involves taking seriously.
 - B. We are to honor God.
 - 1. Parents have delegated authority.
 - 2. God has ultimate authority.
- II. Honoring mother produces results.
 - A. It will be good for you.
 - 1. There will personal benefits.
 - 2. There will be societal benefits.
 - B. It will bring glory to God.
 - 1. Children are to honor parents.
 - 2. Parents are to pass on the faith.

Make It Personal: We must do the following...

- 1. Accept God's plan.
- 2. Accept God's provision.
- 3. Accept the opportunity you have to glorify God in your family.

Mothers Day is a special day, and we rightly stop on this important day to give honor to moms. But it's also a day of pain.²

For couples who want to have children, but can't.

For singles who desire to be married and have children.

For parents who've experienced miscarriage, or the death of a child.

For stepmoms who are helping to raise children who don't value them.

For couples facing hurdles in the process of adoption.

For mothers who've had an abortion (and fathers who encouraged them to do so).

For moms with wayward and estranged grown children.

So with all this potential pain in the room, why do we honor mothers on a day like this? I believe we find a helpful answer in today's text. So today, for Mothers Day, we'll hit the pause button on our Sermon on the Mount series, in order to address a vital passage that shows us what God has to say about honoring our mother, and father too.

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 5:1-21

Out of order. Those are the words you put on a sign and slap on a machine that's not doing what it was intended to do. If you put a document on the glass of a duplicating machine, hit start, and out comes a copy with black streaks down the middle, what do you do? You put *Out of Order* on the copier and call the technician. If you put a dollar in a pop machine, hit the button, and nothing happens, up goes the sign, *Out of Order*. And then the repairman is called. The purpose of the *Out of Order* sign is to let everybody know that the appliance or machine or whatever isn't working properly.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC on 5/11/2003.

² I found a helpful article online... <https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/05/08/dont-ask-moms-to-stand-in-church-this-sunday/>

I'd like to make an observation. Somebody needs to put an *Out of Order* sign on the American family these days. The family isn't working the way it was designed to work. Things are out of whack.

To make matters worse, the majority of people in our country don't know how the family is *supposed* to work. Many have grown up in broken families. They've never seen the family as God intended. There are others who have, but they've chucked the owner's manual for the family, and chosen to write their own rules.

It's time for drastic action, and here's the first step. *Out of Order*. Until we recognize there's a problem, we'll keep kidding ourselves and drift along like a ship that's lost at sea without a compass.

I'm not just talking about the families of the non-churched, either. The reality is, there's often not noticeable difference between families of those who call themselves "Christian" and those who don't.

There is hope for the family, but we'll never experience it until we admit that the machine is broken. *Out of Order*. But once we admit the truth, then we're ready to see change occur.

You say, "What needs to happen to the family today?" There are many aspects to the answer, but none more basic than this. We need to go back to the owner's manual.

God is so good. In His Word He tells us everything we need to know about life as He intended. Remember, He's the Creator. He designed this world. He designed the family. He designed *you*.

What does God think about the family? Fifteen centuries before Christ, the Living God addressed that question when He met with Moses on a mountain in the Sinai peninsula. It was there that God gave to His covenant people the Ten Commandments. And in the fifth commandment, He addressed the subject of parenting.

Unfortunately, the fifth commandment is sort of like a long lost treasure these days. We live in free-thinking generation that has turned to new, progressive ideas of parenting. Tragically, we're reaping what we've sown. Suicide rates among young people are skyrocketing. So is drug abuse, and the birth of illegitimate children, and violent crime in the juvenile segment. You know the statistics, the stories, the pain.

And all the while, the owner's manual is collecting dust. We need to go back, not just to the "old" ways, either. We need the owner's manual not because it's *old*, but because it comes from *God*. God created the family (not to mention everything else). And God tells us clearly in His Word how He intended the family to function.

In Deuteronomy 5:16, God clarifies for us two basic issues pertaining to honoring our mother (and fathers too).

I. Honoring mother is a responsibility.

The Ten Commandments appear in two locations in the Bible. The first place is Exodus 20. It's there we see Moses up on the mountain receiving the Torah. God never gave the Ten Commandments so people could keep them and *earn* a relationship with Him. Indeed, He gave the Ten Commandments to a *redeemed* people. He'd already rescued the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. They were His chosen, covenant people. He gave them the Ten Commandments to teach them how to live as His people in the promised land.

Of course, due to sin the trip from Egypt to Canaan took a forty year detour. Except for Joshua and Caleb, none of the adults that left Egypt lived long enough to enter the land of promise. Just before the second generation entered the land, Moses renewed the God's covenant with them. That's what Deuteronomy is, *the second law*. Moses restated the Ten Commandments for this second generation, as recorded in Deuteronomy 5.

My friend, the New Testament writers assume you and I know the Law. But the fact is, many today don't know God's Law. Many today have a version of Christianity that leaves out the importance of a *covenant community*, that's resulted in, "It's just me and God. I don't need the church, or family, or anything else to be right with God." They also leave out the importance of *commands* ("I do what I feel like doing"). In the Law God emphasizes that the life that pleases him is lived both in community and in obedience to His commands.

The first four commands deal with the vertical—our responsibility towards God. The next six deal with the horizontal—our responsibilities towards other people. And the first commandment in this second section is the lost treasure these days.

So let's recover it. Listen to what the Word of God says in Deuteronomy 5:16, "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

We're told that we have a twofold responsibility.

A. We are to honor our parents. God says, "Honor your father and your mother." Stop there. Notice God mentions *both* parents. In society which had a low view of women, that was significant. When Moses lived, it was a male world. Women were commonly viewed as second class citizens, even as property. But God said, "Not so for my people. *Both* parents are to receive honor. Though their roles are certainly different, their honor is to be the same.

But what really does it mean to *honor* your parents? In it's basic sense, the Hebrew word *cabade* means "to be heavy, to be weighty." The same root appears in Exodus 17:12 where it says that Moses' hands were *heavy*.

How do we make our parents heavy? By taking them out to eat a lot? Actually, we honor them when we give weight to who they are and what they say. Elsewhere the Scriptures teach us that parental honor shows up in three ways.

1. *To honor involves obedience.* "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right (Eph. 6:1)." In Ephesians 6 Paul admonishes Christian children to obey their parents out of allegiance to Christ. Interestingly, he supports his counsel by quoting the fifth commandment in verses 2-3, "Honor your father and mother--which is the first commandment with a promise..."

God expects children to obey their parents. That also means that God expects parents to *expect* obedience from their children. Modern thinking doesn't buy that. It promotes equal authority in the home. No one, including parents, has the right to impose values on someone else. Authority barriers should be removed. Parents should be friends with their kids. Discipline is out of the question.

You see it in the waiting room at the doctor's office. There's only one seat left, right next to a mother and her pre-schooler. Actually, the pre-schooler isn't sitting much. He's all over the place, knocking books off the table, pushing buttons on the television, and

writing on the wall with his crayons. His mother is frantic. She has a "what can I do" look on her face.

We've all been there. Parenting is hard, but what can she do? God says she can expect obedience. Indeed, she must, for her goal is to prepare this children to live in the real world where there will be other authorities.

May I say to our children? God commands you to obey your parents. If you want to please Him, you must choose to follow their instructions. Will you struggle? Yes, you will want your own way, and that's a problem we all have, including your mom and dad. Which is why we all need Jesus.

But there's more to honoring parents than merely obeying them. It should show up in a second way.

2. *To honor involves respect.* Actually, that's what God says in Leviticus 19:3, "Each of you must respect his mother and father (the KJV uses the term "fear")." God calls on us to esteem our parents, to give them a place of precedence in our lives.

Obedience involves action, while honor involves attitude. Parental obedience is temporal (children are to obey parents until they leave and establish their own homes). But parental honor is lifelong. In reality, you can honor (or dishonor) your parents even if they are no longer living.

This brings us to a third aspect of parental honor...

3. *To honor involves taking seriously.* God says that people in positions of authority deserve honor. Kings. Bosses. Parents. Do they always act honorably? No, and when they don't, He holds them responsible for their actions. But He holds us responsible to honor them, to appreciate the good He intends to accomplish through them in our lives.

So, young people, answer this question. "Do you take your parents seriously?" You may be thinking, "But you don't know my parents. They don't understand me. Frankly, they frustrate me."

Let me ask you a question. What would you do if you were a perfect child, and you had imperfect parents? That's precisely the position Jesus was in. He truly was a perfect child, and his mother, Mary, and his step-father, Joseph, were not perfect. They were sinners.

If any child every had the right to be *frustrated* by his parents, it was Jesus. Remember the time when He was twelve, and He stayed in the temple, and His parents were greatly distressed? How did He handle the situation? That's an important question, because Jesus modeled perfectly for us what honoring parents looks like.

Luke 2 tells us what He did. First, He asked them a couple of questions, in verse 49, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" He respectfully asked them to consider what they were missing. Did they get it? No. Verse 50 says, "And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them." They were upset because of what He had done, and His explanation went over their heads.

So what did He do? Did He say, "Well, until you figure out how to be better parents, I'm going to do things my way, because I'm perfect!"?

Of course not. Verse 51 tells us what He did next, and it's one of the most revealing statements in the Bible regarding the humility of Jesus. It says, "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them."

The perfect God-man placed Himself under the authority of His quite imperfect parents. He submitted Himself to them. Why would He do that? He knew better than they ever would know what was best. Indeed He did, but He chose to place Himself under their authority? Why? In order to fulfill the very Law of God we're considering this morning.

God does not tell us to honor our parents because we think they deserve it. We are to prize our parents, not merely because of *them*, but because of *Him*. He gave us the very parents He wanted us to have, just as He did with His eternal Son.

This brings us to our second responsibility. The first is that we are to honor our parents. Here's the second, which is the motivation for the first.

B. We are to honor God. Listen to the command again, "Honor your father and your mother, *as the LORD your God has commanded you.*" This parental-respect stuff isn't just some idea that Moses dreamed up. It came from God. As Moses himself clarified, "*This is what the Lord has commanded you.*"

Don't miss the connection. The reason we honor parents is because we want to honor God. If you want to honor God, you must honor your parents. Why? For two reasons...

1. *Parents have delegated authority.* Do you see how central the family is in God's plan for humanity? God set the family roles. He showed us what pleases Him, and what will bring maximum joy to us.

Yet what does "enlightened" man do? He reshuffles the roles. In our day, the God-given roles of husbands, wives, and children, are demeaned. Critics mock the notion that the husband is to be the leader in the home, that the wife is to be his submissive helper, and that children are to yield to parental control.

And so we usurp the place of the Creator. We create the family the way we think best. Not a God-centered home. Not a parent-centered home. But a child-centered home. We worship our children. What the child wants, goes. We think that's in their best interest.

Again, that's not God's plan. And it doesn't produce what it promises.

Notice the fifth commandment isn't a blanket statement giving grown-ups authority over children. God says specifically, "Honor *your* father and *your* mother." I am responsible for the children God gave me. And so are you.

I am God's delegated authority in the lives of my children. I didn't volunteer to be a delegated authority. There are times I don't feel like being a delegated authority (like when I'm relaxing on the couch, reading the newspaper, and hear angry words in the other room). But nonetheless, shirking my responsibility is not an option.

Listen, parents. You are God's representative in the lives of your children. Your family is a miniature society. Your children learn how to respect authority in your home. The way your children will respond to the authority of teachers and coaches and policemen is linked to the way you are teaching them to respond to your authority.

And all the while that we're acting as a delegated authority, we must not forget this.

2. *God has ultimate authority.* God is God, and He didn't give us Ten Suggestions, but Ten Commandments. Remember that when the next pop psychologist

comes out with another study that "proves" that parental authority hurts a child's self-esteem. Remember that God, who is eternal and all-knowing, knows what's best for our families. And He has told us in plain terms.

It's possible to take the *Out of Order* sign off the family. But to do that, we must first go to the Book and find out what the Creator says to do. God has given us a responsibility. We are to honor our parents. It's evidence of our commitment to honor Him.

Our society is crumbling, largely due to a neglect of this clear command of God. Instead of respecting parents, many young people despise them. Instead of earning and expecting respect, many parents sacrifice their children on the altar of their careers. And God is dishonored.

It's time to make changes. Perhaps you're not convinced. Perhaps you're wondering what the outcome of this will be. We need not wonder.

II. Honoring mother produces results.

Christianity is *reasonable*. The Bible is *reasonable*. It's not a blind leap in the dark. It's based on clear, well-documented reasons. Even here in the fifth commandment, God explains what He commands. He gives two reasons why His people should accept their responsibility to honor mother, and father too.

A. It will be good for you. "Honor your father and your mother...*so that* you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you." God says it will be good for us if we heed His command. He didn't give us this command to burden us, but to benefit us. In fact, He specifies two benefits which will result.

1. *There will be personal benefits.* "So that you may live long." This is not a blanket promise of long life. For certain, not all Israelites lived to a ripe, old age. Nor is it a promise that breaking this command automatically means a short life. There are other biblical truths that must be considered as well (such as the fact that God uses adversity to refine His people; see Job 23:10).

But the fundamental point is clear. It's good to honor mother, and father too. It will be good for you to do this. God promised His people there would be personal benefits if they would obey this command. That's not all.

2. *There will be societal benefits.* "And that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you." Israel hadn't even reached the Promised Land yet, but God told them that prosperity in the land would be linked to this command. "Dishonor your parents, and the family unit and society will crumble, judgment will come, and you will lose the Land. Honor your parents, and I'll bless your nation with long prosperity."

But wait. Does this really apply to us? Remember, we live this side of the Cross. We are not Israel, but the Church. We don't live in the Promised Land, but are sojourners in a strange land. We don't live under the terms of the Mosaic covenant, but under the New covenant. So does the fifth commandment apply to us?

According to Ephesians 6, it does. There, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul applies this command to the Church. Though we do not live in the Promised Land, this principle, which was true then, is still true. If we will do what God says regarding father

and mother, God will pour out benefits into our lives. And these personal benefits will spill over and result in societal benefits.

It's well documented historically that the fabric of a strong nation is strong families. Harold Wilke shares this story about his mother, "I was two or three years old, sitting on the floor of my bedroom trying to get a shirt over my head and around my shoulders, and having an extraordinarily difficult time. I was grunting and sweating, and my mother just stood there and watched. Obviously, I now realize that her arms must have been rigidly at her side; every instinct in her had wanted to reach out and do it for me.

Finally, a friend turned to her and said in exasperation, "Ida, why don't you help that child?" My mother responded through gritted teeth, "I AM helping him."

God holds parents responsible to prepare their children for a life that honors him. And God holds children responsible to respond to their parents with honor and obedience.

So yes, my friend. If you do what God expects, it will be good for you. Yet, there's an even greater reason we should embrace this command.

B. It will bring glory to God. That's why God redeemed Israel and put them in the Promised Land anyway. He blessed them for His honor and glory. It's the same for us.

We who know Jesus Christ belong to God. We've been bought with a price, the blood of Christ, and are not our own (1 Cor 6:19). The fifth commandment offers us an opportunity to bring the One who redeemed us the glory He deserves. It applies both to children and parents, as follows.

1. Children are to honor parents. Young people, when you honor your parents, you are bringing glory to God. When you speak respectfully to mom, and dad, God is glorified. When you do what they ask even when they're not around to check on you, God is glorified.

It doesn't stop when we leave home, either. I am encouraged when I consider how some of you have tenderly cared for your elderly parents. Perhaps what you have done is unseen—those daily trips to the Care facility, the promotion you turned down at work so you could have more time to minister to your mother with Alzheimer's, the phone calls, the letters—all unseen. Yet it was seen. When we choose to honor our parents, God sees. And God is glorified.

Children are to honor parents. But there's more here. By implication, the fifth commandment speaks to parents as well. What does it say?

2. Parents are to pass on the faith. Why did God give us the fifth commandment? Here's why, for this vital reason. Because He wants His people to make it a priority to pass on the faith. And passing on the faith is to start at home.

The purpose of the fifth commandment isn't self-serving. It's not a club we are to use with our children with the mentality, "Hey, I put in my time doing what my parents wanted when I was a kid, now I expect my kids to do something *for me*."

That's not it. The fifth commandment has tons to say not only to children, but to parents. Listen dads and moms, the greatest investment of time you will ever make isn't to pour your life into job, or hobby, or community service. It's to spend time passing on the faith to your children. Do you believe that? Is that your priority?

Someone has pointed out that we live in a matriarchal society that leaves raising kids up to moms, especially when it comes to spiritual development. But who is it that God expects to be the spiritual leader in the home? Ephesians 6:4 says, "*Fathers*, do not

exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” It’s the *father’s* job to be the spiritual pacesetter in the family, and the mother’s job to follow and complement that example.

So dads, are you embracing your assignment to bring up your children for God’s purposes? Is that your highest priority in your life, higher than climbing the job ladder, higher than making money, higher than pursuing your hobby? The greatest Mother’s Day present you could give your wife is to resolve to be the spiritual leader in the home God has called you to lead.

I read a helpful article this week by Aaron Wilson entitled, “Honor Motherhood Without Overstating the Calling.” He cites the following quotation, “The greatest role of a woman is that of a mother.” And then he offers this evaluation:

This proverbial statement, or some version of it, often makes rounds on social media and in churches around Mother’s Day. However, the saying offers hyperbole not found in Scripture.

Yes, motherhood is a great calling and should be esteemed by the church. However, the greatest calling of any woman—or man, for that matter—is to be a faithful Christ-follower. And that role can be lived out in the context of being single or married, having or not having kids.³

So back to the sign... *Out of Order*. Is that the sign that best sums up the condition of your family. It doesn’t have to be any longer. We have a treasure. This treasure is the priceless counsel of God’s fifth commandment. God has shown us what we must do. He’s shown us why we must do it. Now we’re faced with a response.

Make It Personal: We must do the following...

I challenge you today to make three choices.

1. *Accept God’s plan.* Accept His counsel for your family. Accept His owner’s manual and submit to its instructions.

Perhaps you’ve blown it. Perhaps you haven’t honored your parents. Then confess it to God right now. Then confess your sin to your parents, and ask for their forgiveness. Perhaps you’re an adult, and the problem goes back years to a time when you dishonored your parents and you’ve never reconciled the problem. You need to go to them. Perhaps your parents are no longer living, and you are living with the guilt of unresolved sin towards them. You, too, can experience cleansing. No, you can’t speak to your parents, but you can speak to God.

Perhaps you’re a parent and you’ve blown it. You haven’t taken seriously what God expected of you as a parent. You need to confess your sin to God and to your children. Resolve today to be God’s kind of parent. Accept God’s plan.

2. *Accept God’s provision.* The truth is, whether we are a child or a parent, we can’t keep the fifth commandment on our own. It’s impossible. The standard is too high.

But here’s the good news. God says in Galatians 3:24 that the purpose of the Law is to lead us to Christ. In fact, the purpose of the fifth commandment is to bring us to Christ. Jesus Christ fulfilled the demands of God’s law. He kept the standard. He is the only person who ever has. God sent Him to be our Savior. After He met the

³ <https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/05/08/dont-ask-moms-to-stand-in-church-this-sunday/>

requirements of the Law with His perfect life, He sacrificed that life as a ransom payment for sinners. On the cross He died to take the consequences of law-breakers like you and me. And God accepted His payment, as verified by the fact that on the third day He raised His Son from the dead.

Jesus Christ lived for sinners, died for sinners, and rose again for the benefit of sinners, like us. He alone offers life that is abundant and eternal. He indeed is all we need! The question is, will we accept Him?

Will you? Accept Him as your Savior, and the Bible says God will accept you.

There are three choices you must make today. You must accept God's plan. Then you must accept God's provision. Finally...

3. *Accept the opportunity you have to glorify God in your family.* Your family isn't really yours. Neither is your life. It's all on loan to you from God. Call upon Him today, yield yourself and your family to Him, and ask Him to use you for His purposes. If you do, He'll remove the *Out of Order* sign, and your home will become a neon sign that points the world to Him.

I want us to finish today by singing a prayer-song, written by Barbara Hart in 1965. May the Lord cause these requests to become a reality in our homes more and more, to His glory, by His grace in Christ Jesus.

*O give us homes built firm upon the Saviour,
Where Christ is Head, and Counselor and Guide;
Where ev'ry child is taught His love and favor
And gives his heart to Christ, the crucified:
How sweet to know that tho' his footsteps waver
His faithful Lord is walking by his side!*

*O give us homes with godly fathers, mothers,
Who always place their hope and trust in Him;
Whose tender patience turmoil never bothers,
Whose calm and courage trouble cannot dim;
A home where each finds joy in serving others,
And love still shines, tho' days be dark and grim.*

*O Lord, our God, our homes are Thine forever!
We trust to Thee their problems, toil, and care;
Their bonds of love no enemy can sever
If Thou art always Lord and Master there:
Be Thou the center of our least endeavor:
Be Thou our Guest, our hearts and homes to share.*

Closing Song: #535 "A Christian Home" (all three verses)