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# THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

- The relationship between a child and his parents must be protected and valued. It is ordained by God to be a means of divine help and assistance. It should be treated as sacred. Before marriage, it is the most important relationship.
- The direction, health, and closeness of the parent-child relationship will in large part determine the outcome of a son or daughter's life, now and in eternity.
- <sup>1</sup>*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* <sup>2</sup>*"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),* <sup>3</sup>*that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."*  
<sup>4</sup>*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

*Ephesians 6:1-4*

- These four verses lay out the wisdom of God for the parent-child relationship. They contain a very important warning to children.

## II. UNDERSTAND PARENTS' JOB DESCRIPTION

"Children have to be trained to obey and honor their parents by their parents."<sup>1</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

### A. The Discipline or Training of the Lord

Parents are called to teach their children to obey the Lord by consistent discipline and loving chastisement. They must bring discipline to bear upon the words, attitudes and actions of their children in the same way the Lord would if he were physically present. Disciplinary correction is needed in the life of any son or daughter.

**"training.** The shaping of the will through discipline."<sup>2</sup>

--New Geneva Study Bible

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *Ephesians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> New Geneva Study Bible, p. 1879.

- Eli the judge and high priest (1 Sam 2:22-25, 29-30; 3:13) and also King David (see NIV Study Bible notes on 2 Sam 13:21; 14:33; 1 Kings 1:6) were consistently negligent in disciplining their sons with serious consequences.

## B. The Instruction or Admonition of the Lord

This includes correction, warning, restraining and reproof.

“What Paul is referring to here is training in righteousness. ‘Instruction’ (*nouthesia*) is correction by word of mouth. Remonstrance and reproof are implied, but also advice and encouragement.”<sup>3</sup>

--A. Skevington Wood

“**admonition.** The shaping of the mind through teaching.”<sup>4</sup>

--New Geneva Study Bible

<sup>12</sup>Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup>But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup>For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. <sup>15</sup>As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

*Hebrews 3:12-15*

“Appropriate and timely words that edify will very often include words that exhort, words that help others guard against sin. And we’re to speak in this way every day. It’s to be continual, not occasional—because sin is active continually, not occasionally.... As we guard each other’s hearts from the deceitfulness of sin, we’re seeking to guard the importance of God’s Word, because we are ultimately accountable to Him.”<sup>5</sup>

--C. J. Mahaney

<sup>11</sup>For you know how, like a father with his children, <sup>12</sup>we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

*1 Thessalonians 2:11-12*

## III. THE NEED FOR HUMILITY

- Parents are responsible to teach their children what they need to know. Children have deficiencies in almost every area in their lives .

*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.*

*Proverbs 12:1 (NIV)*

<sup>3</sup> A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 11, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Geneva, p. 1870.

<sup>5</sup> C. J. Mahaney, *Humility – True Greatness*, pp. 116-117.

- Pride is the greatest obstacle in a child's relationship with his parents. A child must recognize his desperate need for parenting. Many children, especially teens, think they have superior enlightenment into living and don't really need their parents. This reveals a serious case of pride and a lot of folly.
- A child must never resent his parents' involvement in his life. He must welcome it and pursue it! Permissive parents are not a blessing! Thank God for parents who will hold their children to the standard of God's Word.

*<sup>7</sup>Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. <sup>8</sup>Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. <sup>9</sup>Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*

*Proverbs 9:7-9 (NIV)*

#### **IV. SOME THINGS TO LEARN FROM PARENTS**

##### **A. Who God Is and How He Relates to Man**

##### **B. Who Christ Is and What the Gospel Is**

God is holy and his wrath is real, there are consequences for sin, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, hell is real, Jesus is the only Savior, and the gospel of grace is wonderful beyond description.

##### **C. How to Become a Genuine Christian**

You are a sinner, outside of Christ you are an enemy of God and hateful of God, your heart is exceedingly deceitful, you are powerless to overcome your spiritual and moral depravity without Christ, and indwelling sin is powerful.

##### **D. How to Live for the Glory of God and Why**

Loving God is the highest honor, serving God is the most fulfilling endeavor, and worshipping God is the greatest joy. There is nothing in this life that is more important than living for the glory of God.

##### **E. How to Seek God, Pray, Understand and Apply the Bible**

The Bible is the most important book in the world, the study of Christian doctrine is important, and learning about the history of the Christian faith is relevant for you today.

##### **F. How to Identify and Overcome Sin and Temptation**

##### **G. How to be Encouraging and Grateful**

##### **H. How to be Wise and Avoid Worldliness and Other Enemies of the Soul**

## **I. How and Why You Need to be Involved in the Local Church as a Vital Means of Grace**

Why we must be devoted to the church, fellowship, and relationships that are based upon servanthood and not selfishness. How to resolve conflict: be loyal and forgive others.

## **J. How to Witness and Tell Others About Jesus**

## **K. How to Build Godly Relationships and Choose Friends Wisely**

- How to value what God values in a relationship, how to stand alone in a society that doesn't honor God, how to be brave and overcome the fear of man and how to confront sin with humility.

*He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray*  
Proverbs 10:17 (NIV)

*Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*

*1 Corinthians 15:33*

"Good friends are among our greatest blessings, - they may keep us back from much evil, quicken us in our course, speak a word in season, draw us upward and draw us on. But a bad friend is a positive misfortune, a weight continually dragging us down, and chaining us to earth. Keep company with an irreligious man, and it is more than probable you will in the end become like him. That is the general consequence of all such friendships. The good go down to the bad and the bad do not come up to the good."<sup>6</sup>

--J.C. Ryle

- How to greet others, be hospitable, take an interest in others, learn to converse with others, be friendly, be well mannered and polite.

## **L. How to Walk in Humility**

How and why to love and invite correction (from parents, family, friends, leaders) and how to confess sin.

## **M. How and Why to Honor, Serve and Obey Those in Positions of Authority**

How to submit to and obey those in authority with joy.

## **N. How to Live with a Clear Conscience and Grow in Integrity**

## **O. How to Remain Sexually Pure and Why It Is So Important**

<sup>6</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*, p. 59.

Teach why and how to remain sexually pure, be modest in dress, not be flirtatious or boy/girl crazy and that charm is deceitful. That sexual intimacy and fulfillment occur in marriage only and immorality invites the wrath of God.

- Clothes that are not too tight, too short, too low, too sheer.

**P. How to Prepare for Marriage and Choose the Right Spouse**

**Q. How to Manage Life, Time and Finances for the Glory of God**

**R. How to Choose and Prepare for an Appropriate Career**

How to value, enjoy, love and embrace work. How to be disciplined in studies and learn to work hard. How to discover interests and aptitudes, study job market, learn from others in fields of interest and choose a wise major if you go to college.

**V. INTERPRETING EPHESIANS 6:1-3**

**A. Children**

The word “children” refers to infants, boys and girls, and all young adults who are still unmarried and living at home. This passage is as applicable to teenagers as it is to small children.

**B. Obey Your Parents**

*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

*Colossians 3:20*

- This unswerving obedience is to be comprehensive in its scope.
- A child must learn to live under God’s authority by learning to live under his parent’s authority. This includes obedience in little things or those of relative unimportance.
  - Doing chores, cleaning bedroom, honoring parents’ preferences (e.g. music, cloths, hair, etc.)
- Every child has a sinful disposition to disobey his parents and not listen to them. He needs Christ to save him and help him.

“*Hupakouo* (obey) literally means “to hear under,” that is, to listen with attentiveness and to respond positively to what is heard. Children are to put themselves under the words and authority of their parents.”<sup>7</sup>

--John MacArthur

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, p. 311.

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*  
*Proverbs 1:8 (NIV)*

- Children must carefully practice what parents teach. Listen to them. Follow their instructions. Don't forsake them.

<sup>1</sup>*Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. <sup>2</sup>I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. <sup>3</sup>When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, <sup>4</sup>he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live."*

*Proverbs 4:1-4 (NIV)*

### C. In the Lord

1. Children must obey and honor in order to please and bless their parents.

"Just as an obedient child brings happiness and tranquility to a family, a disobedient child brings the opposite. He brings "grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1), unhappiness and destruction to his father (17:21; 19:13), and disgrace to them both (19:26). He uses them shamelessly to his own selfish ends (28:24)."<sup>8</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

*A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

*Proverbs 10:1 (NIV)*

➤ What are you bringing your father and mother?

2. Children must intentionally obey and honor their parents in order to please the Lord, which should be their primary motivation.
  - Obedience should flow from a child's love, gratitude, and esteem for his parents; but also, and especially, from his love and reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - This means obeying parents for the Lord's sake. Obedience to parents is reflective of obedience to the Lord. Parents are to be obeyed and honored because to do so is to obey and honor the Lord.
  - If a child doesn't obey parents now, he won't obey the Lord later. Disobedience to parents is disobedience to the Lord. When a child obeys his parents he is obeying and pleasing the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 314.

*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*  
Colossians 3:20

➤ “I must obey my parents because the Lord commands me to do so.”

#### D. For This Is Right

A child must obey his parents out of biblical conviction that it is right because God commands it. He doesn't simply obey because they are older and wiser or bigger and stronger. Neither does he obey because they are perfect. Parents are far from perfect!

<sup>1</sup>*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup>People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,*  
2 Timothy 3:1-2 (NIV)

*Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

Luke 2:51 (NIV)

#### E. Honor Your Father and Mother

“To honor (*tima*) is more than to obey. It is to respect and esteem.”<sup>9</sup>

--A. Skevington Wood

“Obey has to do with action, and honor has to do with attitude.”<sup>10</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

“The right attitude behind the right act of obedience is honor (*timao*), which means to value highly, to hold in the highest regard and respect.”<sup>11</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

“Honor” them, that is, acknowledge their God-given authority, and so give them not only our obedience, but our love and respect as well.”<sup>12</sup>

--John R. W. Stott

Under God's providence, children owe their very existence to their parents. They make many sacrifices on their behalf. Children should be exceedingly grateful for them.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, p. 311.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>12</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today, p. 240.

## F. The First Commandment

- The commandment to honor parents is actually the fifth commandment in Exodus 20. What does it mean then when it is referred to as the first commandment?

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”*

*Exodus 20:12*

- It means this commandment is of foremost significance or of extraordinary significance. In other words, this commandment is of greatest importance.

“The word generally translated *first* may indicate *rank* as well as numerical sequence.”<sup>13</sup>

--William Hendriksen

“It is more probable that *protos* here means first in importance rather than in sequence. The rabbis regarded this commandment as the weightiest of all.”<sup>14</sup>

--A. Skevington Wood

“It is a commandment of the greatest importance, with the promise attached.”<sup>15</sup>

--J. Douma

- Is this the most important commandment to you? Have you memorized it? Do you meditate on it? Are you obeying it?

- The fifth law is the first law relating to human relationships. The first four commandments specify our duty to God. The remaining six our duty to our neighbor.

“It is the only commandment of the ten that relates to the family, because that one principle alone, when obeyed, is enough to secure the right relationship of children to their parents. Not only that, but it is the key principle behind all right human relationships in society.”<sup>16</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

## G. With a Promise

### 1. Blessing

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”*

*Exodus 20:12*

<sup>13</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary, p. 260.

<sup>14</sup> Wood, p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> J. Douma, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> MacArthur, p. 312.

*“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.”*

*Deuteronomy 5:16*

- The singular pronoun is used in Ephesians 6:3. It is a wonderful promise of blessing for all those who honor and obey their parents for the Lord’s sake.

“The apostle Paul, however, prefers to enforce God’s commandment with a promise than with a threat.”<sup>17</sup>

--John R. W. Stott

“When the objection is raised that in spite of this promise many disobedient children prosper and become very old, while many obedient children die early, the answer is that the principle here expressed is, nevertheless, entirely valid. To be sure, obedience or disobedience to parents is not the only factor that determines a person’s span of life, but it is an important factor.”<sup>18</sup>

--William Hendriksen

- The promise relates to the number of years a son or daughter will live and the quality of life he or she will experience.

“The original promise was to Israel and involved many tangible, physical, earthly blessings.”<sup>19</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

## 2. Cursing

In ancient Israel a child who either physically or verbally abused a parent was guilty of a capital offense (Exo 21:15, 17; Lev 19:1-3; 20:9; Deu 21:18-21).

## VI. PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS FOR CHILDREN TO HONOR THEIR PARENTS

### A. Valuing and Asking for Input

- Go to them for consent, advice and direction. Honor their opinion and value their judgment. Do nothing of consequence without your parent’s consent.
  - Avoid being argumentative, interruptive and contentious with your parents.
- It is a serious fallacy for parents to allow their children to make important life choices on their own.

<sup>17</sup> Stott, p. 240.

<sup>18</sup> Hendriksen, p. 260.

<sup>19</sup> MacArthur, p. 315.

- Parents are going to see things in your heart and life you will not. You have “blind spots” and you desperately need their help to see them.

*A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.*

*Proverbs 13:1*

## **B. Pursuing Intimacy**

- Share your every thought and challenge. There should be nothing hidden from your parents.
- Your parents should know the thoughts and intentions of your heart. You must do everything possible to build a relational bridge with your parents.
  - Your parents should not feel like they are competing with your peer group.

## **C. Guarding Words**

*The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience [despises to obey] to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.*

*Proverbs 30:17 (NIV)*

*If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.*

*Proverbs 20:20 (NIV)*

- Always speak well of your parents to others. Never slander them. Learn to humbly resolve conflicts with your parents. If you don't you'll become resentful and speak ill of them to others.
- Deal ruthlessly with any bitterness or anger in your heart. Focus on your sin not the real or perceived sin of your parents.
  - “My parents are so strict. They never let me do anything!”
- When you disagree with your parents learn to accept their input and remember you may be wrong. Be willing to adapt to their preferences with a glad and submissive heart.
- When you appeal a decision by your parents that affects you, do so with a pure heart and not a manipulative one.

## **D. Walking in Integrity**

- Deceiving parents is one of the most serious forms of dishonoring imaginable.
  - Children pretending to follow the Lord only to get their parents off their back.

- Sexual temptation and crushes.
- TV, videos, and movies you are watching. Books and magazines you are reading. Internet sites, chat rooms, posts you access. Music you listen to. E Mail you are writing and receiving.
- Friends' children keep. Topics they discuss with others.
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, etc.
- If a child has a friend who is deceiving or sinning, he must talk to them. If they don't respond he must involve others and notify parents.

*He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out.*  
*Proverbs 10:9 (NASU)*

#### E. Loving and Serving Parents

- Children should constantly be looking for ways to express respect and appreciation to their parents.
- Constantly be looking for ways to practically serve parents. In what ways can you take initiative to serve rather than waiting to be asked?

“Honor of parents encompasses providing for them when they can no longer provide for themselves.”<sup>20</sup>

--John MacArthur, Jr.

<sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup>For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ <sup>5</sup>But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ <sup>6</sup>he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

*Matthew 15:3-6*

<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, p. 313.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH PARENTS

1. In what ways do you wish your parents were more involved in teaching and helping you to grow? Share these areas with them.
2. How often in the past month have you thanked your parents for their discipline and asked them for their correction?
3. What does it mean to honor your parents? Make a list of ways in which you have dishonored your parents and ask their forgiveness.
4. When are you most tempted to disobey your parents? Why?
5. Make a list of ways you can show your parents greater honor and respect. What do you appreciate most about your father and mother? Express this to them.
6. What are fathers called to provide their children with according to Ephesians 6:4? How does pride hinder this from happening in your life?
7. Is there anything in your life you are hiding from your parents?