

Class 11g: The goal of this class is to understand the fifth commandment of the *Decalogue*.

Fifth 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, ESV)

What does honor mean? Honor simply means the duties required of the relationship. Honor means that parents be treated with respect as long as the live, both in private and in public. Both the father and mother receive the respect and honor due to parents. It also includes **reverence** (Mal 1:6, Prov 31:28, 1 Kings 2:19), **imitation of life** (Heb 13:7), **willing obedience and submission** (Eph 6:12, 6-7; Rom 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-14; 1 Tim 2:9-10; Titus 2:9-10), **patience with the imperfections** (1 Peter 2:18, 3:1)

Responsibilities of Inferiors

- The fifth commandment is very serious. "Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death." (Ex 21:17). This punishment may seem harsh, but we need to remember the context of the nation of Israel. God established Israel a nation, which was to be typical of the perfect Kingdom of God in its consummation in Heaven. As such, they were to be a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Ex 19:6); therefore, the purity of Israel was extremely important. For this reason, the awful sin of insubordination, especially to parents, was punished by death.
- **In the Family:**
 - Children must do more than honor the name of our parents. Honoring them means respecting heir authority and submitting to it. "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." (Prov 23:22)
 - Wives owe honor and obedience to their husbands in Christ. The exemplary example is Sara who called Abraham Lord and obeyed him. (1 Pet 3:6, Col 3:18, Eph 5:22)
- **In the Church:** Members of the Church must honor the ruling elders and pastors. Paul calls the saints under his ministry, *my little children*. (Galatians 17-19) The Apostle to the Hebrews says, *obey [be persuaded by] those who rule over you and submit [yield to] to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls* (Heb 13:17). Notice that obedience to our elders carries the same blessing as the fifth commandment in Ex 20:12.
- **In Society:** The fifth commandment requires honor for older men and women other than parents.
 - We owe honor the honor due our fathers and mothers to older men and women (1 Tim 5:1-2)
 - We owe honor to those with superior gifts. Elisha called Elijah, the superior prophet, *my father*. King Joash called Elisha, *my father*, and gave him the honor and obedience due a superior. (2 Kings 2:12, 2 Kings 13:14)
 - We owe honor to or those who are our masters or employers. (2 Kings 5:13, Mal 1:6, Eph 6:5-8)
 - We owe honor the honor due our fathers and mothers to our civil fathers. (Isaiah 49:23)
- **What is the extent of obedience and submission do inferiors owe to superiors?** It is a question that is very proper, but sometimes too much emphasis is placed the extent of obedience. Sometimes the interest in the question reveals a heart that does not want to obey. The answer is given in Acts 4:19. Peter refused to obey the civil leaders when they required him to go against the will of God. Col 3:18, 20 and Eph 6:1 state that we are to obey *in the Lord*; therefore, our obedience to superiors is an act of obedience to our Lord. Our primary

authority is Christ, and we must not sin against Him. In 1 Peter 2:19-21, Peter encourages us to obey Christ first even if it may lead to suffering.

Responsibilities of Superiors

- The Lord gives more treatment to the superior than to the inferior or master than subordinate. The fifth commandment addresses fathers, mother, masters, and other superiors just as much as it addresses subordinates. The principle for the superior is that he or she must treat his subordinates with justice and equity. (Ex 21:1-11)
- Superiors bear accountability for their actions. In Heb 13:17, the elders of the Church keep watch over the souls of the members, *as those who will have to give account*. The principle is that anyone placed in a position of authority bears responsibility for their stewardship of that authority. In Eph 6:9, masters are warned to treat their slaves properly with the reminder that God is their *just* master in heaven. Superiors are to fulfill their role with love, tenderness, and consideration for those over which the Lord has given them authority.
- Superiors and parents especially bear a spiritual responsibility to their inferiors. The principle comes out of the context of the family in Eph 6:4. Negatively, fathers must not provoke children to the sin of anger. Positively, the Lord commands fathers to their children the *instruction of the Lord*.

What is the promise? In Ephesians 6:3, the Apostle Paul interprets the promise of the fifth commandment. He wrote, *that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land*. The Lord ordained layers of authority in the family, Church, and state for our good. If we obey our parents, we should enjoy life better than we would if we had to learn every hard lesson *the hard way*. The blessings we receive in this life come at the will of God, so honoring your father and mother will not guarantee that you will live to be 100 or be wealthy.

The General Principle of the Fifth Commandment: We are to perform the duties that we owe to equals, inferiors, and superiors in our human relationships. (Eph 5:21, Rom 12:10, 1 Peter 2:13-18)

What is the motivation to keep the fifth commandment?

- We do not submit to or obey our superiors or parents because we like them or respect them. We do not treat our inferiors with love, care, and justice because they please us. We do not honor our equals because we are good friends or they honor us. We don't honor and obey our president because we like his politics.
- In Romans 13:1, Paul reveals that all authorities have been established by God. Paul is specifically speaking about civil authorities, but the principle easily applies to all of the authority structures in life. We submit to the authorities because we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- Eph 5:21 says that we submit to one another *out of reverence for Christ*. This command applies for wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters. In each of these relationships, the inferiors – wives, children, and slaves – submit because of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord.
- Remember the motivation given in Ex 20:2. It went like this, *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*. Even in Exodus, the motivation is reverence to the Lord our God and redeemer. David gives us the exemplary example of a heart that kept the fifth commandment (1 Sam 24:6)
- The ultimate motivation is the Gospel. You will not love this commandment until you have died to your self in repentance and faith in Jesus. When the Holy Spirit unites you to Christ in humility and faith, your will desire to obey. Then, you will submit to your husband despite his imperfections, honor your parents despite all of the mistakes that they have made, and honor your president despite his bad politics.