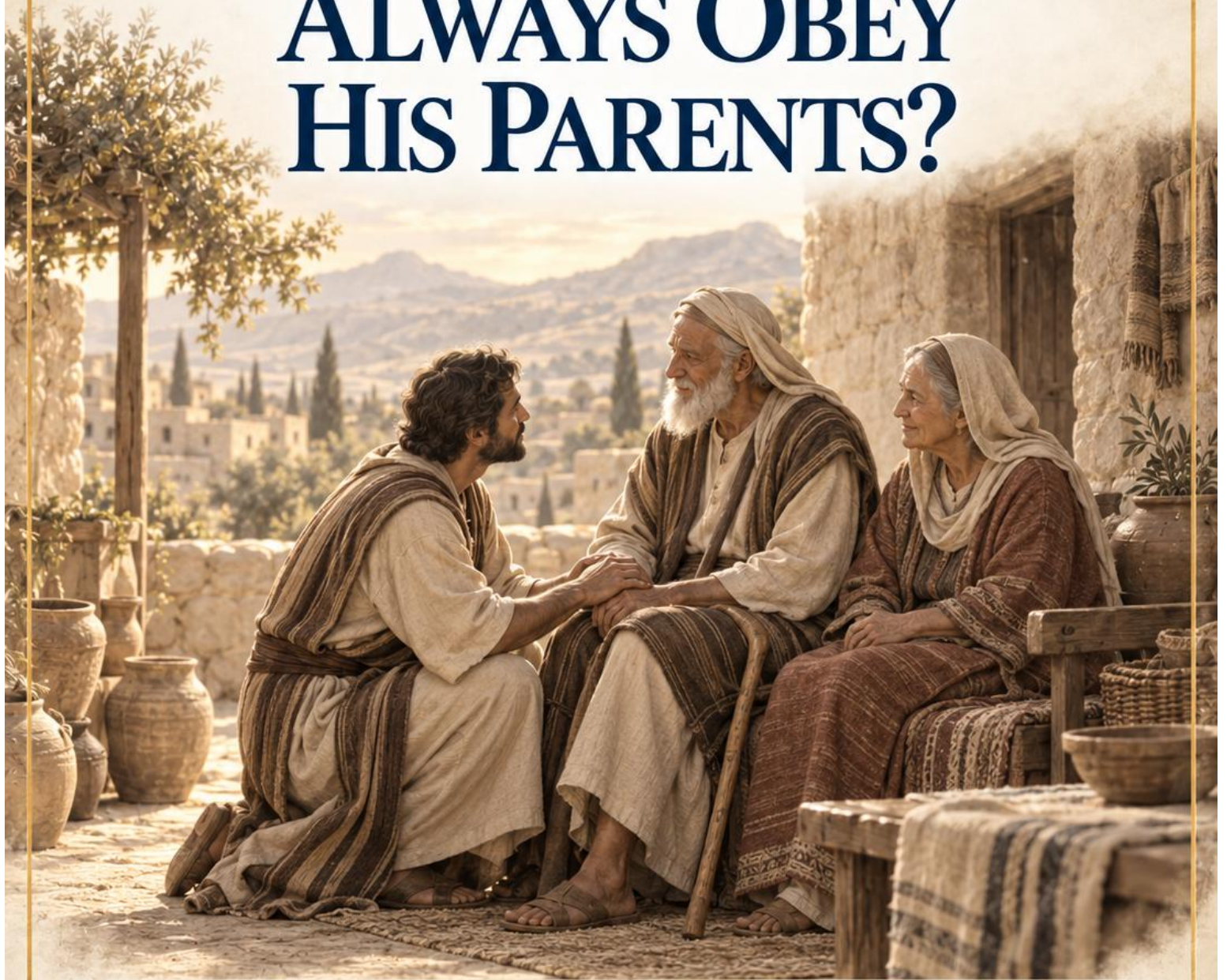


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

THE TEN WORDS WE THOUGHT WE KNEW

A TEN-PART SERIES | PART FIVE OF TEN

MUST AN ADULT ALWAYS OBEY HIS PARENTS?



DR. THOMAS W. HAWKSLEY

HEARING SINAI THROUGH ANCIENT EARS

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HIS PARENTS?**

HEARING SINAI THROUGH ANCIENT EARS

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Reason Together Church

Aloha, church family.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you arrived certain of what this commandment means or carrying a family story that makes the question difficult, you are welcome here.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

If you are visiting for the first time, you are an honored guest.

We will not ask you to stand or introduce yourself.

If you would like to stay connected, our guest card asks for only your first name and email address.

The Keiki Kids Center is available for our children.

Parents are also welcome to keep their children with them during the service.

Afterward, the Reason Together Cafe will be open.

Come for the coffee.

Stay for the conversation.

The coffee is free, and we offer free refills on conversations.

COFFEE reminds us that Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.

Today we reach the fifth Word in The Ten Words We Thought We Knew.

The fourth commandment taught Israel that even time belongs to God.

It gave former slaves permission to stop, worship and let others rest.

The fifth commandment now turns from sacred time to the first human relationship named at Sinai.

Father and mother.

For some people, those words are warm.

They bring memories of sacrifice, protection and wise counsel.

For others, those words are complicated.

They may bring gratitude mixed with grief.

They may call to mind a parent who was loving but flawed.

They may reopen memories of control, abandonment or abuse.

So we must not speak carelessly.

Imagine an adult son who is married and has children of his own.

His mother tells him to make a decision that would harm his marriage.

She says, "The Bible says you must honor your mother."

Does honor mean he must obey?

Now imagine an adult daughter caring for an aging father.

He is no longer able to manage everything alone, but he resists every conversation.

Does adulthood mean she no longer owes him anything?

Between blind obedience and cold abandonment, Scripture gives us a better path.

The title asks:

Must an adult always obey his parents?

The short answer is no.

But the command to honor does not expire when childhood ends.

Honor never expires, but childhood does.

The distinction between honor and obedience will guide our entire study.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, You created families as places of nurture, instruction and love.

You also know every family as it truly is.

You see the sacrifices that deserve gratitude.

You see the wounds hidden behind polite appearances.

Give us truth without cruelty and compassion without confusion.

Teach children to receive rightful instruction.

Teach adults to honor without surrendering the responsibilities You have given them.

Teach parents to guide without controlling and to release without abandoning.

Protect anyone who has been taught that Your command requires submission to abuse.

Lead us toward forgiveness, wisdom and healthy faithfulness.

Above every human authority, help us honor You.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our first reading is Exodus chapter 20, verse 12.

The King James Version says:

"Honour thy father and thy mother:

that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

Now listen to Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1 through 4:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord:

for this is right.

Honour thy father and mother;

which is the first commandment with promise;

That it may be well with thee,

and thou mayest live long on the earth.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:

but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Before we begin our study, let us speak briefly about giving.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

Our guests are never expected to give.

If another congregation is your church home, please support the ministry God has entrusted to that church.

Those who call Reason Together Church their church home may give as the Lord leads through the giving box in the back.

Giving should be cheerful, voluntary and honest.

It should never become a religious excuse for neglecting our families.

Jesus confronted people who dedicated resources to God while refusing to use those resources to care for their parents.

They gave the practice a sacred name, but Jesus said it made the command of God ineffective.

Generosity toward ministry is good.

Care for a parent in genuine need is also an act of faithfulness.

One should not be used to cancel the other.

And that provides a natural entrance into the fifth commandment.

To honor father and mother includes far more than using respectful words.

It gives weight to a relationship God says must not be treated as disposable.

The Hebrew verb translated "honour" is kabad.

Its root carries the sense of being heavy or weighty.

In a positive moral sense, to honor someone is to treat that person as having real weight.

The same family of words can describe honoring God.

This does not make parents divine.

It does tell us that they must not be treated as though their place in our lives were weightless. Honor can include respect, gratitude, attention, provision and the protection of a good name. Dishonor can appear as contempt, ridicule, abandonment or the refusal to acknowledge legitimate need.

But notice what Exodus does not say.

It does not say, "Obey thy father and thy mother in every decision for the rest of thy life."

It says, "Honour."

Those ideas overlap during childhood, but they are not identical in every season of life.

Ephesians 6 makes the distinction visible.

Paul first addresses children:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."

The Greek word translated "obey" is *hypakouo*.

It carries the idea of listening under authority and responding to instruction.

Then Paul quotes the command to honor.

A child living under parental care ordinarily honors through obedience.

An adult with a household and responsibilities of his own still honors, but that honor does not require returning to childhood governance.

Honor is lifelong.

The form of honor changes as the relationship changes.

Scripture builds that change into the design of family.

Genesis chapter 2 says:

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,

and shall cleave unto his wife:

and they shall be one flesh."

Leaving does not mean despising.

It means a new household has been formed.

A married adult's first human covenant is now with his or her spouse.

If a parent may continue commanding every choice, leaving has never truly happened.

A husband cannot honor his mother by betraying his wife.

A wife cannot honor her father by allowing him to govern her marriage.

The command to honor parents and the command to leave parents are not enemies.

Together they describe mature love.

You leave their governance without discarding their value.

You receive counsel without surrendering responsibility.

You remain grateful without pretending you are still eight years old.

Honor never expires, but childhood does.

Now hear the fifth commandment through ancient ears.

Israel was not organized around the isolated individual.

Households were often multigenerational.

Land, work, identity and inheritance were bound to the family.

Older parents depended upon the faithfulness of their children in a world without retirement accounts, professional nursing facilities or government programs.

To cast off an aging father or mother could leave them exposed to hunger and disgrace.

The command therefore protected the stability of the household and the continuity of the covenant community.

It taught each generation to receive life, wisdom and inheritance with gratitude, then to care for those whose strength was fading.

The promise says:

"That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

The first setting is not merely a private promise that every respectful child will reach a particular age.

It concerns Israel's enduring life in the land.

A society that destroys the bond between generations eventually destroys its own inheritance.

Children who learn only contempt will one day become parents who receive contempt.

Wisdom that is never heard must be painfully relearned.

The covenant people would flourish as generations transmitted faith and cared for one another.

This position in the Ten Words is also significant.

The commands before it speak directly about loyalty to God, worship, God's name and God's time.

The commands after it protect human life, marriage, property, truth and contentment.

The command to honor parents stands like a bridge.

Parents were ordinarily the first people through whom a child learned the covenant.

Deuteronomy chapter 6 told Israel to teach God's words diligently to their children.

They were to speak of them in the house, along the way, at bedtime and in the morning.
The family was not merely a biological unit.
It was a place where the story of redemption moved from one generation to the next.
A father could tell his child, "We were bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out."
A mother could explain why the Passover meal was different from every other meal.
Grandparents could remember wilderness lessons that younger people knew only as stories.
To despise father and mother was therefore capable of becoming more than personal rudeness.
It could sever the channel through which covenant memory was handed down.
That does not mean every tradition received from a parent was correct.
The prophets repeatedly confronted generations that inherited idolatry.
Faithful honor listens seriously, then tests every inheritance beneath the Word of God.
We should keep what is true.
We should repent of what is sinful.
We should not confuse rejecting a destructive pattern with rejecting the person from whom we received it.
Paul applies the promise more broadly in Ephesians:
"That it may be well with thee,
and thou mayest live long on the earth."
The command ordinarily promotes stability and well-being.
It is not a mechanical guarantee that a godly child will never die young.
The Bible contains righteous people whose lives were short.
Jesus Himself was crucified in His early thirties.
The promise describes God's wise order, not a formula by which we can calculate a lifespan.
The story of Joseph and Jacob gives us a useful picture of adult honor.
Joseph was no longer a child living in his father's tent.
He had been betrayed by his brothers, carried into Egypt and raised by God's providence to enormous responsibility.
He was a husband.
He was a father.
He governed Egypt beneath Pharaoh.
When famine threatened Jacob's household, Joseph did not return to the role of a small boy waiting for his father to direct every decision.

He used the authority God had given him to preserve the family.

He arranged land.

He provided food.

He presented his father before Pharaoh with dignity.

Near the end of Jacob's life, Joseph listened to his father's desire to be buried in the family burial place.

After Jacob died, Joseph honored that request.

He mourned, secured permission and carried his father's body back to Canaan.

Joseph's honor was mature and active.

He did not surrender his adult responsibilities.

He used them for his father's good.

That is often what honor looks like in later life.

The direction of care begins to change.

The hands that once carried the child may now tremble.

The child who once needed every decision made may now need to make difficult decisions for a parent.

An aging parent may no longer be safe to drive.

Medication may be forgotten.

Money may become vulnerable to exploitation.

Honor in that season does not always mean agreeing with what the parent wants.

It may mean having a painful conversation because love refuses to look away.

Taking away car keys can feel dishonoring to a parent who values independence.

Ignoring obvious danger may be the easier act, but it is not necessarily the more honoring one.

Mature honor asks, "What protects this person's dignity and genuine good?"

It listens as long as possible.

It preserves meaningful choices wherever possible.

It does not treat weakness as permission to seize control for convenience.

But it also does not call neglect respect.

One of the clearest explanations of adult honor comes from Jesus in Mark chapter 7.

Some people had learned to declare property "Corban," meaning a gift devoted to God.

Once the resources were placed under that religious designation, they could be withheld from a needy father or mother.

Jesus said:

"Full well ye reject the commandment of God,
that ye may keep your own tradition."

Then He quoted the command to honor father and mother.

He said they were "making the word of God of none effect" through their tradition.

Jesus understood honor to include practical care.

Religious speech did not compensate for parental neglect.

A son could not say, "I gave it to God," while leaving his mother without food.

First Timothy chapter 5 makes the same responsibility plain.

Paul tells children and grandchildren to "requite their parents."

That means to repay care with care.

He says that anyone who refuses to provide for his own household has denied the faith.

Biblical honor is not sentimental.

It may look like groceries, transportation, medical advocacy or patient attention.

It may require siblings to have an uncomfortable conversation about what an aging parent actually needs.

It may require time when a card would be easier.

Proverbs chapter 23 says:

"Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,
and despise not thy mother when she is old."

Her age does not make her weightless.

Her slower pace does not make her an inconvenience to be discarded.

Her repeated story may deserve one more patient hearing.

At the same time, honor does not mean that parents are always right.

Every parent is a sinner.

Some are wise and humble.

Some are loving but mistaken.

Some are controlling.

Some have caused profound harm.

The commandment does not erase those differences.

Parental authority is real, but it is delegated authority.

God alone is absolute.

The phrase in Ephesians matters:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."

The Lord establishes the boundary.

No parent has authority to command sin.

No father may order a child to lie and then claim the fifth commandment.

No mother may demand that an adult child abandon a spouse, violate conscience or disobey Scripture.

When human authority contradicts God's authority, Acts chapter 5 gives the governing principle:

"We ought to obey God rather than men."

That principle was spoken to rulers, but it applies to every subordinate authority.

Government is under God.

Church leadership is under God.

Parents are under God.

None may occupy His throne.

Jonathan gives us a powerful example in First Samuel.

His father Saul was king as well as parent.

Saul commanded Jonathan and his servants to kill David.

Jonathan did not obey that command.

He warned David, spoke truth to Saul and appealed to his father's conscience.

He did not answer evil with casual contempt.

He said what was true:

David had not sinned against Saul.

David's service had been good.

Killing him would shed innocent blood.

Jonathan honored what could be honored in his father while refusing to participate in his father's sin.

That is not rebellion against the fifth commandment.

It is faithfulness beneath a higher command.

Sometimes the most honoring word an adult child can say is no.

Not a spiteful no.

Not a humiliating no.

A truthful no.

"I love you, but I cannot lie for you."

"I respect that you have an opinion, but this decision belongs to my household."

"I will help with your real need, but I will not finance destructive behavior."

"I forgive you, but I cannot allow you unsupervised access to my children."

The word no can protect what God has entrusted to us.

A boundary is not automatically dishonor.

Its purpose, manner and necessity matter.

The manner of disagreement deserves attention too.

An adult can make the right decision with a contemptuous heart.

We do not prove maturity by humiliating the people who once corrected us.

When circumstances permit, explain rather than mock.

Listen before answering.

Acknowledge the sacrifice behind advice even when the advice is not right for your household.

Do not recruit siblings to turn a family disagreement into public shame.

Do not display a parent's weakness for entertainment.

You may reject the instruction while still protecting the person's dignity.

Truth does not require cruelty.

At the same time, polite words cannot make sinful compliance holy.

Honor concerns both the posture of the heart and the faithfulness of the action.

This becomes especially important when abuse is present.

The fifth commandment has sometimes been used to keep victims silent.

A child reports harm, and an adult says, "Do not dishonor your father."

An adult daughter creates distance from a dangerous parent, and someone says, "You must forgive and go back."

That is a misuse of Scripture.

Honor does not require concealing a crime.

Honor does not require calling evil good.

Honor does not require giving an unsafe person repeated access to a victim.

Forgiveness and trust are not the same thing.

Forgiveness releases personal vengeance to God.

Trust responds to demonstrated truthfulness over time.

Reconciliation is a relationship restored through repentance, truth and safety.

One person can choose forgiveness.

Two people are required for reconciliation.

And where abuse or credible danger exists, protection must come before appearances.

Tell the truth to someone able to help.

Contact lawful authorities when a crime has occurred or someone is in danger.

Seek wise pastoral and professional support.

Do not send a vulnerable person back into harm merely because the person causing harm is a relative.

God does not ask us to preserve a parent's reputation by sacrificing a child's safety.

This commandment also speaks to adult children who use the language of boundaries to avoid ordinary love.

Not every uncomfortable request is manipulation.

Not every disagreement is abuse.

Not every parental flaw requires estrangement.

Sometimes "protecting my peace" means refusing to be inconvenienced.

Sometimes an aging parent repeats a concern because fear has replaced strength.

Sometimes the person who changed our diapers now needs help with a task that embarrasses him.

Honor asks us to distinguish danger from difficulty.

It asks whether our boundary is protecting a God-given responsibility or merely protecting selfishness.

Romans chapter 12 says:

"If it be possible,

as much as lieth in you,

live peaceably with all men."

The words acknowledge both responsibility and limitation.

Do what lies within you.

You cannot manufacture another person's repentance.

You cannot create peace by surrendering truth.

But you can refuse needless hostility.

You can speak without contempt.

You can pray.

You can keep a safe door open to genuine change when wisdom permits.

For some, honor may involve close companionship.

For others, it may involve limited contact.

For a few, it may require distance while ensuring that necessary care is arranged through safe channels.

The shape differs because families differ.

The calling remains: give the relationship appropriate weight before God.

Jesus shows us that honoring a parent and obeying the Father are never enemies.

Luke chapter 2 says that the twelve-year-old Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and "was subject unto them."

As a child in their household, He submitted.

Yet even in that account, Jesus said:

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

His earthly parents were honored beneath the authority of His heavenly Father.

As an adult, Jesus did not allow family expectations to redirect His mission.

In Mark chapter 3, His mother and brothers came while a crowd surrounded Him.

Jesus asked:

"Who is my mother, or my brethren?"

Then He said:

"Whosoever shall do the will of God,

the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

Jesus was not insulting Mary.

He was declaring that the kingdom of God creates a family deeper than natural descent and that obedience to God governs every earthly bond.

He later said that anyone who loves father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him.

Christ does not teach hatred of parents.

He refuses the worship of family.

Family is a gift.

It is a terrible god.

Then, while Jesus hung upon the cross, He demonstrated adult honor in one of its most beautiful forms.

John chapter 19 says that Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved.

He said to Mary:

"Woman, behold thy son!"

Then He said to the disciple:

"Behold thy mother!"

Even while bearing the sin of the world, Jesus arranged care for His mother.

He did not obey a parental command in that moment.

He fulfilled a son's responsibility.

His mission to the Father did not erase tenderness toward Mary.

Perfect devotion to God produced faithful care.

There is also a word here for parents of adults.

The fifth commandment is not a lifelong permission slip for control.

Ephesians does not end after telling children to obey.

It immediately tells fathers:

"Provoke not your children to wrath."

Parental authority must resemble the Lord who gave it.

It must nurture rather than crush.

It must admonish without humiliating.

As children mature, faithful parenting changes from command toward counsel.

A parent who refuses to release an adult child can make honor unnecessarily difficult.

Do not require your adult son to choose between pleasing you and protecting his marriage.

Do not treat your adult daughter's independent judgment as betrayal.

Do not use money, illness or religious language to purchase control.

Offer wisdom.

Pray.

Tell the truth.

Then allow the adult before you to carry responsibility before God.

Parents are not asked to become irrelevant.

They are invited to become trusted counselors rather than permanent governors.

What if a parent has died?

Honor can continue without pretending the past was perfect.

You may give thanks for what was good.

You may tell the truth about what was harmful.

You may refuse to pass a sinful pattern to the next generation.

Breaking a cycle can be an act of honor because it refuses to let a parent's worst choices become the family's inheritance.

You can protect their dignity without rewriting history.

You can grieve both the parent you lost and the relationship you wished had existed.

God is not threatened by an honest lament.

The Psalms teach us to bring complicated grief into His presence.

Now we can answer the title more fully.

Must an adult always obey his parents?

No.

Scripture commands children under parental authority to obey in the Lord.

Scripture commands sons and daughters of every age to honor father and mother.

An adult should listen seriously, speak respectfully, express gratitude and provide appropriate care.

An adult must also obey God, protect his or her household and refuse participation in sin.

Where danger exists, honor may include truthful boundaries and lawful protection.

Honor never expires, but childhood does.

None of us has kept this commandment perfectly.

Some have dismissed parents who deserved care.

Some have spoken with contempt.

Some have allowed old resentment to become a permanent identity.

Some parents have demanded the honor they refused to model.

Some have provoked their children, controlled their marriages or used Scripture as leverage.

Some of us carry guilt because we failed.

Others carry false guilt because we were told that protecting ourselves was rebellion.

Both need the truth and grace of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the perfectly obedient Son.

He honored Mary and Joseph.

He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father.

Philippians chapter 2 says:

"He humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death,
even the death of the cross."

At the cross, Jesus bore the guilt of every dishonoring child and every provoking parent.

He died for our sins.

He was buried.

He rose again on the third day.

Through faith in Him, sinners are forgiven and brought into the family of God.

John chapter 1 says:

"But as many as received him,
to them gave he power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on his name."

The Gospel does not promise that every earthly family will immediately become healthy.

It does promise that everyone who belongs to Christ has a Father who never manipulates, abandons or abuses.

He disciplines in love.

He speaks truth.

He keeps every promise.

And Christ gives us brothers and sisters in a new covenant family.

If you are in this room, joining us online or reading this later, you can become part of that family today.

You do not enter by being born into the right household.

You enter by receiving Jesus Christ.

Turn from your sin.

Believe that Jesus died in your place and rose again.

Trust Him as Savior and Lord.

If that is the desire of your heart, you may pray with me now.

This prayer is not a performance or formula.

Jesus saves the person who truly comes to Him in faith.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner.

I have failed God and others.

I believe that You died on the cross for my sins.

I believe that You were buried and rose again.

I turn from my sin and place my trust in You.

Forgive me.

Save me.

Be my Savior and my Lord.

Bring me into the family of God.

Teach me to honor others and obey my heavenly Father.

I receive Your gift of eternal life.

I ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Let us pray together as a church family.

Our Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of family and for every parent who has loved sacrificially.

Give us grateful hearts and practical faithfulness.

Forgive adult children who have used independence as permission for neglect.

Forgive parents who have used authority as permission for control.

Comfort those whose family memories are painful.

Release those who carry false guilt for refusing sin or protecting someone from abuse.

Give wisdom where care is needed and boundaries are complicated.

Bring repentance where reconciliation is possible.

Give peace where another person's choices remain beyond our control.

Help parents release adult children with blessing.

Help adult children receive wise counsel without surrendering the responsibilities You have given them.

Make Reason Together Church a family where truth is spoken, the vulnerable are protected and grace leads us toward maturity.

Thank You that through Jesus Christ we may call You Father.

We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Before we leave, let us turn this commandment into one honest action.

If your parent has loved you well, tell them something specific for which you are grateful.

Do not wait for a funeral to give weight to a life.

If an aging parent needs care, identify one responsibility you can carry rather than assuming someone else will do it.

If a relationship is strained but safe, consider one truthful step toward peace.

That step may be a call, a letter or a conversation with clear boundaries.

If the relationship is unsafe, do not confuse a sermon invitation with an order to resume contact.

Seek wise help.

Protect those entrusted to you.

Honor God by refusing both hatred and harm.

If you are a parent of an adult, ask a different question:

Am I offering wisdom, or am I demanding control?

Can my child disagree without fearing punishment, withdrawal or shame?

One sincere blessing may do more than another command.

If you trusted Christ today, please tell us.

I will be available after the service, and our prayer team will be ready to pray with you.

If this message touched a difficult family wound, you do not have to explain it publicly.

You are welcome to speak privately with someone you trust.

The Reason Together Cafe is open, and there is a place for you in the conversation.

Next time we come to one of the most familiar sentences in the Bible:

"Thou shalt not kill."

But is that what the Hebrew text actually says?

Does the commandment prohibit every taking of human life?

How did Israel hear it alongside laws concerning war, capital judgment and protection of the innocent?

We will ask:

Does the Bible really say, "Thou shalt not kill"?

Until then, remember the difference.

Honor gives weight.

Obedience follows rightful authority.

God alone receives absolute allegiance.

Honor never expires, but childhood does.

May our families become places where love matures, truth is safe and Jesus Christ is Lord.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH
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A TEN-PART SERIES | PART FIVE OF TEN

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Must an Adult Always Obey His Parents?

Hearing Sinai Through Ancient Ears

Exodus 20:12

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

Introduction

The fifth commandment sounds simple until childhood becomes adulthood. A child ordinarily honors parents by obeying rightful instruction. An adult may still love, listen and care while carrying responsibilities that cannot be transferred back to mother or father. Marriage, children, conscience, safety and stewardship can make automatic obedience not merely immature but unfaithful.

The question is especially delicate because families differ. Some readers remember sacrifice, protection and wise counsel. Others remember abandonment, control or abuse. Scripture must be spoken with enough clarity to challenge contempt and neglect and enough care to prevent religious language from returning vulnerable people to harm.

This Commentary expands the sermon by hearing the command through ancient households, distinguishing honor from obedience, tracing the promise, examining adult care, identifying the limits of parental authority and following Jesus as both the obedient Son and the faithful adult son who cared for Mary. Its governing sentence is simple: honor never expires, but childhood does.

Controlling answer: An adult does not have to obey every parental instruction. Children under parental authority are commanded to obey in the Lord. Sons and daughters of every age are commanded to honor father and mother. Mature honor listens seriously, speaks respectfully, expresses gratitude, protects dignity and provides appropriate care. It also obeys God, protects the adult household and refuses sin or harm. Where danger exists, honor may require truthful boundaries and lawful protection.

1. Honor Gives Weight to Father and Mother

The Meaning of Honor

The Hebrew verb *kabad* carries the sense of weight. To honor father and mother is to refuse to treat the relationship as weightless. Parents are not divine, infallible or entitled to absolute allegiance. They are people whose place in our story must not be discarded casually.

Honor Becomes Concrete

Honor may include respect, gratitude, patient attention, protection of a good name and provision in genuine need. Dishonor can appear as contempt, ridicule, abandonment or indifference. Words matter, but Biblical honor reaches beyond manners into action.

2. Honor and Obedience Are Related but Not Identical

Children Obey in the Lord

Ephesians 6 says, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.' The Greek verb *hypakouo* describes hearing under authority and responding to instruction. For a child within parental care, obedience is ordinarily the fitting form of honor.

The Form of Honor Changes

Paul then quotes the command to honor. He does not make honor identical to obedience in every season. A dependent child, a newly married adult and a caregiver for an aging parent all honor differently. The relationship remains weighty while authority, capacity and responsibility change.

3. Leaving Parents Is Part of God's Family Design

A New Household Is Formed

Genesis says a man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife. Leaving is not rejection. It establishes a new household and a new primary human covenant. If parents continue to command every decision, leaving has not truly occurred.

Marriage Cannot Be Sacrificed to Parental Control

A husband cannot honor his mother by betraying his wife. A wife cannot honor her father by permitting him to govern her marriage. Mature adults may receive counsel with gratitude while carrying their own responsibility before God. Honor never expires, but childhood does.

4. Ancient Households Heard a Command of Continuity and Care

Family Was Essential to Survival

Israelite households were often multigenerational. Land, labor, inheritance and identity passed through families. Without retirement systems or institutional care, an aging parent could depend upon children for food, shelter and dignity. Abandonment could become a sentence of poverty and disgrace.

Families Carried Covenant Memory

Deuteronomy 6 placed the story of redemption in ordinary household life. Parents taught in the house, along the way, at bedtime and in the morning. To despise father and mother could sever the channel through which covenant memory moved to the next generation. Yet every inherited tradition still had to be tested beneath God's Word.

5. The Promise Describes God's Life-Giving Order

Long Life in the Land

Exodus promises long days upon the land the LORD gives. The first setting is Israel's enduring life as a covenant people. A community that protects intergenerational gratitude, wisdom and care strengthens its inheritance. A culture of contempt eventually consumes itself.

Not a Mechanical Lifespan Formula

Ephesians applies the promise as well-being and long life on the earth. This is real moral wisdom, not a guarantee that every honoring child will reach old age. Scripture records righteous lives cut short, and Jesus was crucified in His early thirties. The promise describes God's wise order rather than a calculation.

6. Joseph Shows What Adult Honor Can Look Like

Authority Used for a Parent's Good

Joseph was a husband, father and governor when Jacob arrived in Egypt. He did not become a small boy again. He used his adult authority to preserve the family, arrange land, provide food and present Jacob before Pharaoh with dignity.

Care Changes Direction

Near Jacob's death, Joseph listened to his burial desire. Afterward he mourned, secured permission and carried his father's body to Canaan. The hands that once carried the child may one day tremble. Mature honor uses present strength for a parent's genuine good without surrendering adult responsibility.

7. Aging Parents Need Dignity and Honest Protection

Listening and Safety Belong Together

An aging parent may lose driving ability, forget medication or become vulnerable to exploitation. Honor does not mean agreeing with every wish. It asks what protects dignity and genuine good. It preserves meaningful choices wherever possible and does not seize control merely for convenience.

Neglect Is Not Respect

Taking away car keys or seeking a capacity evaluation can feel dishonoring. Ignoring obvious danger may feel easier, but it is not necessarily more loving. Adult children should listen patiently, explain honestly, involve qualified people when needed and carry difficult responsibility without treating weakness as permission for domination.

8. Jesus Condemned Religious Neglect of Parents

Corban Could Not Cancel Care

In Mark 7, people designated resources Corban and then withheld them from needy parents. Jesus said their tradition made God's Word ineffective. A sacred label could not transform neglect into obedience.

Provision Is a Spiritual Responsibility

First Timothy 5 tells children and grandchildren to requite their parents, repaying care with care. Honor may look like groceries, transportation, housing, medical advocacy or patient attention. A church should not absorb obligations that capable family members simply refuse to carry.

9. Parental Authority Is Real but Never Absolute

In the Lord Establishes the Boundary

The phrase 'in the Lord' matters. No father may order a child to lie and claim the fifth commandment. No mother may demand that an adult abandon a spouse, violate conscience or disobey Scripture. Every human authority is delegated authority.

God Alone Receives Absolute Allegiance

Acts 5 states the governing principle: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' Government is under God. Church leadership is under God. Parents are under God. None may use a God-given office to occupy His throne.

10. Jonathan Honored Saul While Refusing Sin

A Faithful No

Saul commanded Jonathan and his servants to kill David. Jonathan refused, warned David and appealed truthfully to Saul. He did not answer evil with casual contempt, but he would not participate in shedding innocent blood.

Truth Without Humiliation

Sometimes an adult child must say, 'I love you, but I cannot lie for you,' or, 'I will help with your need, but I will not finance destructive behavior.' The purpose, manner and necessity of the refusal matter. A truthful no can protect what God has entrusted to us.

11. Boundaries Can Protect Honor Rather Than Destroy It

A Boundary Is Not Automatically Dishonor

A boundary may protect marriage, children, conscience, finances or safety. When circumstances permit, explain rather than mock. Listen before answering. Protect privacy. Refuse to turn a parent's weakness into family entertainment.

Boundary Language Can Also Hide Selfishness

Not every difficult request is manipulation. Not every disagreement is abuse. Sometimes 'protecting my peace' means refusing ordinary inconvenience or care. Mature discernment asks whether the boundary protects a God-given responsibility or merely protects selfishness from love.

12. Abuse Must Never Be Hidden Behind the Fifth Commandment

Honor Does Not Require Concealment

The commandment has sometimes been used to silence a child who reports harm or pressure an adult to return to a dangerous parent. That use is false. Honor does not require calling evil good, concealing crime or giving an unsafe person access to a vulnerable one.

Protection Comes Before Appearances

Where abuse or credible danger exists, tell the truth to someone able to help. Contact lawful authorities when a crime has occurred or someone is in danger. Seek wise pastoral and professional support. God does not ask a family to preserve reputation by sacrificing safety.

13. Forgiveness, Trust and Reconciliation Are Distinct

One Person Can Forgive

Forgiveness releases personal vengeance to God. It refuses to make retaliation the center of one's life. A Christian can forgive even when the offender refuses truth or remains unsafe.

Reconciliation Requires More

Trust responds to demonstrated truthfulness over time. Reconciliation is a relationship restored through repentance, truth and safety. One person can choose forgiveness. Two people are required for reconciliation. Romans 12 calls believers to peace as far as it is possible and as much as lies within them.

14. Jesus Places Every Family Beneath the Father

Subject as a Child

Luke says the twelve-year-old Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and was subject unto them. Yet He also said He must be about His Father's business. Earthly submission existed beneath the authority of His heavenly Father.

Faithful in His Adult Mission

As an adult, Jesus did not allow family expectation to redirect His calling. He taught that those who do God's will form His kingdom family and that father or mother must never be loved above Him. Christ does not teach contempt for family. He refuses the worship of family.

15. Jesus Honored Mary From the Cross

Perfect Devotion Produced Care

While bearing the sin of the world, Jesus saw Mary and the beloved disciple. He said, 'Woman, behold thy son,' and, 'Behold thy mother.' He arranged care for His mother while completing the mission given by His Father.

Adult Honor Is Responsible Love

Jesus was not obeying a parental command in that moment. He was fulfilling a son's responsibility. His example joins absolute allegiance to God with tenderness, foresight and practical provision.

16. Parents of Adults Must Release Without Abandoning

From Command Toward Counsel

Ephesians does not end with children. Fathers must not provoke but nurture in the Lord. As children mature, faithful parenting ordinarily moves from command toward counsel. Parents remain valuable without remaining permanent governors.

Control Can Make Honor Unnecessarily Difficult

Do not force an adult child to choose between pleasing a parent and protecting a marriage. Do not use money, illness, silence or religious language to purchase compliance. Offer wisdom, pray, speak truth and allow the adult before you to answer to God.

17. Honor Can Continue After a Parent Dies

Gratitude and Truth Can Coexist

A person may give thanks for what was good without rewriting what was harmful. Honest lament does not threaten God. Grief may include sorrow for the parent who died and for the relationship that never became what it should have been.

Breaking a Sinful Cycle Can Be Honor

Refusing to pass destructive patterns to the next generation does not erase a parent. It prevents the parent's worst choices from becoming the family's inheritance. Dignity can be protected without turning falsehood into tribute.

18. Jesus Is the Obedient Son Who Gives Us a Perfect Father

Our Families Need Grace

Children have spoken with contempt, adults have neglected real need and parents have provoked or controlled. Others carry false guilt because safety was mislabeled rebellion. Every family needs truth and grace that human effort cannot manufacture.

The Gospel Creates a New Family

Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He died for our sins, was buried and rose again. Those who receive Him become children of God. The Gospel does not promise instant repair of every earthly family, but it gives believers a Father who never manipulates, abandons or abuses and a new covenant family in Christ.

For the Person Ready to Trust Christ

Turn from sin and trust Jesus as Savior and Lord. You may pray: Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I believe that You died for my sins, were buried and rose again. Forgive me, save me and bring me into the family of God. Teach me to honor others and obey my heavenly Father. I receive Your gift of eternal life. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Pastoral Summary

1. The fifth commandment gives father and mother enduring relational weight.
2. Honor can include respect, gratitude, attention, provision and protection of dignity.
3. Children under parental authority ordinarily honor through obedience in the Lord.
4. Lifelong honor and lifelong parental governance are not the same.
5. Genesis requires adults who marry to form and protect a new household.
6. The promise first concerns Israel's covenant life in the land and expresses God's wise order.

7. Ancient households depended upon intergenerational faithfulness and transmitted covenant memory.
8. Joseph honored Jacob by using adult authority for his care and dignity.
9. Jesus and Paul make practical provision for parents a spiritual duty.
10. Parental authority is delegated and can never command sin or displace God.
11. Jonathan demonstrates respectful refusal of a sinful parental command.
12. Boundaries should be judged by truth, purpose, manner, necessity and safety.
13. The fifth commandment must never silence abuse or require unsafe contact.
14. Forgiveness, trust and reconciliation are related but distinct.
15. Parents of adults should mature from governance toward counsel.
16. Jesus honored Mary while obeying His Father and completing His mission.
17. Christ is the obedient Son who bears family guilt and brings believers into God's family.
18. Honor never expires, but childhood does.

Honor and Adult Responsibility Worksheet

1. Identify the present season of the relationship and the responsibilities that belong to it.
2. Name one specific sacrifice, virtue or truth for which gratitude is appropriate.
3. Identify any real need involving food, housing, transportation, health, finances or companionship.
4. Separate advice worth hearing from a decision that belongs to your adult household.
5. Ask whether parental influence is strengthening or weakening your marriage and care of children.
6. Name any request that would require sin, dishonesty, unsafe access or betrayal of conscience.
7. Evaluate a proposed boundary by its purpose, manner, necessity and effect upon vulnerable people.
8. Distinguish ordinary discomfort from manipulation, abuse or credible danger.
9. Decide whether forgiveness, renewed trust or reconciliation is presently possible and wise.
10. Identify qualified pastoral, legal, medical or clinical help that may be needed.
11. If you are a parent of an adult, ask whether you are offering counsel or demanding control.
12. Choose one concrete action that expresses truthful honor this week.
13. Submit every family loyalty and wound to Jesus Christ, the obedient Son.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What does it mean to give father and mother appropriate weight?
2. How are honor and obedience related during childhood?
3. Why does the form of honor change in adulthood?
4. How does leaving and cleaving protect a new household?
5. How would ancient Israel have heard the promise of life in the land?
6. Why is the promise not a mechanical guarantee of longevity?
7. How did families transmit covenant memory in Deuteronomy 6?
8. What does Joseph teach about honoring an aging parent?
9. How do Mark 7 and 1 Timothy 5 make honor practical?
10. What limits are established by the words 'in the Lord'?
11. How did Jonathan honor Saul while refusing his command?
12. When can a respectful no be an act of faithfulness?
13. How can boundary language protect love, and how can it excuse selfishness?
14. Why must abuse and crime be told truthfully despite family reputation?
15. How do forgiveness, trust and reconciliation differ?
16. What does Jesus teach by His relationship to Mary and Joseph?
17. How should parents change as children become responsible adults?
18. How can someone honor a deceased parent without rewriting history?

19. How does the Gospel answer both true guilt and false guilt in families?

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of family and for every parent who has loved sacrificially. Give us grateful hearts and practical faithfulness. Forgive adult children who have used independence as permission for neglect. Forgive parents who have used authority as permission for control.

Comfort those whose family memories are painful. Release those who carry false guilt for refusing sin or protecting someone from abuse. Give wisdom where care is needed and boundaries are complicated. Bring repentance where reconciliation is possible and peace where another person's choices remain beyond our control.

Help parents release adult children with blessing. Help adult children receive wise counsel without surrendering the responsibilities You have given them. Make Reason Together Church a family where truth is spoken, vulnerable people are protected and grace leads us toward maturity.

Above all, thank You for Jesus Christ, the obedient Son. He honored Mary and Joseph, obeyed You unto death, rose again and opened Your family to everyone who believes. Teach us to honor others while giving absolute allegiance to You. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

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