



[Exodus 20:12](#)

(12) "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

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Ephesians 6:2 states that the [fifth commandment](#) is the [first commandment with promise](#). The [second commandment](#) contains a very general promise loosely tied to keeping all the commandments. The promise in the fifth commandment is not general but specifically tied to meeting a specific responsibility—honoring parents.

Notice that the commandment does not say, "Obey your father and your mother." This is because honoring not only includes obedience but also goes beyond it. Honoring suggests adding to, glorifying, embellishing, and decorating its object. Obedience can be given in a resentful manner, but honoring requires admiration, respect, even reverence. This quality must be within one's heart, and it is acquired and built upon through thoughtful consideration, even meditation, on the sacrifices and gifts that the parents give to the child.

Honoring is something that usually does not happen in the child until adulthood, when the child has his own experiences as a parent to draw upon to appreciate his parent's loving labors. This fact shows us that it is not too late to grow in honoring our parents, and that [God](#) is aware, noticing and rewarding with the blessing of long life. Obedience to parents as a child gets one started in the right direction and produces its own rewards.

Yet, the honoring of parents greatly increases the appreciation for them. The real rewards lie in the practice of honoring itself, rewards that affect our place in the [Kingdom of God](#) because we have transferred giving honor to our physical parents to giving spiritual and moral honor to God, our spiritual Parent.

[Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) declares this commandment's seriousness to us:

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Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Notice that child-training is directly linked with the first and great commandment. The fifth commandment is aimed directly at parental responsibility. If children grow up not honoring God, the blame largely falls on the parents' shoulders. God intends this vital child-training responsibility to lead children to honoring Him.

That is its goal. It requires consistent and devoted attention. It cannot be accomplished by absent parents. If the parents do not know God, or if their knowledge of Him is shallow, and they are not practicing what they do know, what will they pass on to their children? Worldliness. Both parents must be dedicated and deeply involved in honoring God in their own lives, if their children are going to be prepared to perform the much more rewarding practice of honoring God.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[The Fifth Commandment](#)

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