

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you, and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We were standing in the small, but nicely furnished home in Awahutkee, AZ. The boy stood next to his mother silently. Nearby stood his Junior High Principal from the local school, me and several other adults. The young man was being confronted about his chronic lying. He stubbornly refused the council of the adults present. He was up until that time one of my confirmation students. His problem besides lying is that the young man openly defied authority. He was unrepentant.

Soon after that fall meeting he dropped out of confirmation and I did not see him again. Many times I have seen in my ministry when children and young people don't obey their parents and teachers, they graduate to disobeying the authorities and end up in front of a judge and they spend time in the justice system. The saddest part is that when they don't listen to their parents and others in authority, they are not listening to their pastor. I will try to meet and counsel such young people, but if they aren't listening, then they aren't listening to God. Ultimately, they are headed to condemnation by God to Hell for all eternity. Hell is not a place where you can just shrug it off and ignore God's justice.

Someone might say, "I have raised my kids and even helped with my grand-kids. What does this commandment have to do with me?" Certainly, we will want to pray for those young people we know. It is our duty. Also you and I remain under authority. It happens that middle age and older adults sometimes defy those in authority. There is something for everyone in this commandment. As we have seen with the first three commandments, we need our Savior's help. So as we remember the **Fourth Commandment** today, the Scriptures call on us to **Honor Those in Authority as Christ Did.**

As we follow this commandment by the grace of Jesus, God's only Son, we will see that there are many blessings.

1. Honor and obey.

On Mt. Sinai, the Lord God is speaking to the people he has freed from slavery. In the first three Commandments he has asked his people to love him above all else. Now he is going to ask them to love their neighbor. It is no coincidence that he starts with the closest neighbor, **“Honor your father and your mother...”** I realize that some people were not raised by their biological father or mother. We would apply this commandment to those who acted in the role of a father or mother and raised us.

A. The Lord puts people in our life to take care of us. He gives them authority over us.

1. Those who are our parents give us food, clothing. They are to teach us about God, our Creator and Jesus, the Savior. At times when parents are working or taking a break, they share their responsibility and authority with grand-parents, baby-sitters, etc. They are temporarily the authority figure. The Lord commands through St. Paul in Ephesians 6, **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord...”** (1) Obedience is not optional or up for debate.

2. Parents cannot do everything. The Lord has created others in authority to help us. In the church we have spiritual leaders including the pastor and those who help him. In the governing bodies we have civil leaders. This includes national, state and city or local authorities. We are subject to them throughout our life. At times we may place ourselves under the authority of a boss at work or a doctor or nurse when we seek medical aid. As long as these people have authority over us, we are to listen and follow their lead.

B. You know that when there is flooding the Department of Public Safety (DPS) tells us people to not drive into flooded washes. On August 14, a man south of Tucson, drove around the orange cones and into a flooded wash and he ended up dying when his car flooded. The Lord gives us people in authority for a reason. He wants to bless us.

1. One of the blessings is discipline. When we go around orange cones on the highway, the Lord may decide it is in our best interest to get pulled over, so we can receive a warning. The way the warning has teeth is through a fine. The Lord does not want us to end up like that man in Tucson.

This is also why the Lord wants those in the role of a parent to discipline. Sometimes we have to find ways to put “teeth” in our discipline. The

children need to know that not only are we serious, but God is serious about obedience.

2. As we obey, there are blessings. The Lord promises in Exodus 20:12, “**so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.**” A long life isn’t automatic. But as long as we are on earth, we can count on blessings as we listen to and obey God’s representatives.

C. People will ask if there is an exception to obedience and there is.

1. In Acts 5:29, Jesus’ Apostles were commanded to stop preaching the Good News about Jesus. The Apostles responded, “**We must obey God rather than men.**” When someone asks us to do something that is contrary to God’s will, we must respectfully disobey.

2. What about children when they get older? When we attain a certain independence, then adult children should not be under their parent’s authority. However, we must always honor our parents.

2. Christ is the reason we do.

Keeping the Fourth Commandment is not easy. However, we will see that Jesus Christ is the reason that we can do it.

A. We heard in the Old Testament lesson, how Eli, a man of God, did not discipline his sons. We have broken this Commandment too.

1. Did you ever talk back to your parents in your youth or go against their wishes? Even if we simply rebelled in our head and thought, “*I hate you, Mom.*” We come under God’s condemnation.

2. Who of us hasn’t complained about authority figures in government, in school or at work? Emails, texts and posts to Instagram and Twitter make it easy to show disrespect to people that God has commanded us to respect. If we disrespect and fail to obey, we are under God’s condemnation.

3. God has asked the church and pastors in particular to watch out for our soul. If we are disrespectful and disobey, we stand to lose blessings for time and eternity.

B. We would all be lost if it wasn’t for Jesus.

1. In the Gospel of Luke 2 we are told that, “[**Jesus**] **went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.**” (51) He gave perfect obedience to his earthly parents. Later on we see him respecting the authorities who were dishonest and would even put him to death. Peter later on writes, “**He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.**” (1 Peter 2:22) Jesus kept God’s commands for us.

2. He also suffered and died for our sins against this commandment. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 1, **“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”** (7) God is our loving Father through faith in Jesus, the Savior.

C. It is precisely because of Jesus that we want to keep this commandment. As you are serving, remember the Lord. St. Paul says in Ephesians 6, **“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.”**

In Daniel 6, Daniel, a prophet of the Lord is wrongly thrown into a den of lions. After spending the night with the lions, he comes out and addresses the King of Persia who threw him in the pit. He speaks to him with great respect. He continues in his high-profile job faithfully serving the King. He doesn’t look for revenge. He doesn’t quit. He doesn’t bad-mouth those in authority.

The reason Daniel kept the Fourth Commandment is because he was raised to know about his Savior. When things were difficult he put his complete trust in God to work things out.

So we honor God when we all pray for the children we know. Christian parents honor God when they raise their children in the Lord. Then the children will not only respect their parents, but all who are in authority.

Those of us who are older may not have parents over us, but we still remember the training we have received. God continues today to train us through his word. We too can keep this commandment for Jesus’ sake.

Conclusion: Martin Luther, **“Therefore, this is a true and good saying of old and wise people: ‘To God, to parents, and to teachers we can never offer enough thanks and compensation.’ The person who thinks about and considers this will give all honor to his parents without force and bear them up on his hands as those through whom God has done him all good [Psalm 91:12].”** (Small Catechism 2017, page 73) Because of Jesus’ grace and through him, we can honor those in authority.