

5th Commandment: Honor Authority

Let's turn to our Bible, to Proverbs chapter 1. Proverbs chapter 1, verses 8 and 9. It's appropriate going through the Ten Commandments and focusing especially on the Old Testament to show us the spirituality and the heart of the matter of the Ten Commandments there from the Old Testament perspective to use Proverbs. There's a lot of good stuff.

It's a lot of law-oriented in the sense of a good sense of things we should do or not do. And, of course, general patterns and expectations encouraged and taught through the Proverbs. But here, especially, the theme of the Fifth Commandment is in Proverbs.

Let us listen attentively to the Word of God, Proverbs chapter 1, verses 8 and 9. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother, for there will be a graceful ornament on your neck and chains about your neck. Let us pray. Lord God, our Savior above, as we dig into the Fifth Commandment, to be reminded again in the day and age that it does not take seriously parental love and authority or authority in general, it seems.

And we thrive and we exalt ourselves, God, as a nation in so many ways and individuals and leaders of being independent and doing our own thing. Our Lord and Savior, there's a time for that. And so far as God, we follow You if that's what it takes.

But ordinarily, Lord, we are called to follow the authorities over us. And may we learn this lesson anew to be strengthened in this regard and to know that You are with us, that we may follow Christ, we may follow our Father above, who is the greatest Father of all for our lives. We pray by the blood of Christ, amen.

So the laws of God are the threads and the tapestry of good moral living. In Christ, the fullness of the law was expressed in His life and His death. He lived for God's glory by obeying it.

And He died for our sins by upholding God's justice. That is His law. And the punishments, the just punishments for breaking that law, for our breaking of that law.

This salvation is begun and finished by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the glorious Creator and Father of all creation, that His is the Judge, that He is the Judge being satisfied by the person and work of His Son, that is the Father, already reflects the Fifth Commandment. That is more precise, the Fifth Commandment reflects the Father and the Son there. Because it is our Father above who adopts us into His family, the spiritual family of God.

And from our human perspective, family is the root, of course, of all relationships, from the extended family to the clan and to communities, to cities and nations as well, as chosen relationships such as clubs and businesses could not exist without a family. And it began, of course, with Adam and Eve. It's an important topic, of course, in many ways in this day and age, because love of family, it seems to me, is dying in so many ways and manners.

We can sense it, I think, even if we can't always put our finger upon it. So I think it's good to go down this path. And it's a deep topic insofar as the Fifth Commandment covers all of life in a positive way, all the relationships that we have.

It's not just about authority, although authority is part of that, but the love we ought to have for one another as we are the family of God in particular. So the first, I want to give a background before going to the first proper point here, what is the Fifth Commandment? That is, what is the second table of the law? Because that's what we are going in, right? The first table of the law, the first four commandments are about God, who He is, that we ought to honor Him, His worship, His name, His day. And now we have the second table, which is our duty to man.

The first table is our duty to God. Here we have our duty to each other. Question 122 of the larger catechism, as I said, the Fifth Commandment is pretty deep, but not as deep as the First Commandment, which is God.

And so we have a number of questions here. One here is, what is the sum of the Sixth Commandments, which contain our duty to man? The sum of the Sixth Commandments, which contains our duty to man, is to love our neighbor as ourselves and to do to others what we would have them do to us. That's how the Puritan summarized the second table of the law, to love them and to do to others as we would have them do to us, which is a thumb, right, a shorthand way, a rule of thumb, we say, of how to live our life.

No need for proof text. I think it's pretty obvious. It's an Old Testament understanding.

Even during the time of Jesus, the Pharisees and the scribes, they asked Him, what is the greatest commandment? And Jesus gave them the answer, and they recognized it. They weren't arguing with Him about it at all. It's to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. And that clearly flows from the first table and the second table. They were summarizing the law of God.

They understood it, although they played around with it, of course, and turned it into justification by works, by their obedience, by their acts of love for one another, instead of God's love for them being the root of their salvation. The Fifth Commandment relates to the first table because we're under God's authority, as I mentioned in the intro, and He is our Father. He's our Heavenly Father.

So we are but a pattern of Him, in that sense. Our Father, Abraham. Father, your Father.

Father, Adam. God is the original Father. The second table relates, of course, to the Fifth Commandment because it all flows from that.

Our relationships with one another, as you're going to find out, of course, is not just biological. It's all the relationships we have as humans, means we ought to treat each other

appropriately. And the other commandments, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, tell you how to treat one another in particular ways, but those are based upon the Fifth Commandment, which says we are in relationship with one another.

We ought to take that relationship seriously. So that's the background of the second table.

What is the Fifth Commandment?

Here we have, what is the Fifth Commandment? What is it about? Is it about mother and father as such? The biological mother, the biological father? Who are meant by father and mother in the Fifth Commandment? Question 124.

By father and mother in the Fifth Commandment are meant not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts, and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth. Look at it this way. This was all new to me.

Maybe it was new to some of you. I don't know how much reformed background all of you had. I know some of you were around and blessed that way.

I was not. And so I run across this and kind of like, well, that's kind of weird. But it makes sense whether you realize there's 10 commandments, and where are you going to put the other authority structures and the other commandments? They've got to fit under the fifth.

It's got to fit under the fifth. And that includes, of course, age and gifts. Or in general, it says, are over us in place of authority by God's ordinance, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

We would say family, church, and state today. So family, church, and state. Church, 1 Kings 2, Elisha calls Elijah father.

Remember that? Well, you haven't run across it yet, but you will, I think, this Wednesday. As we get there in 2 Kings. Society, Nahum, if you remember him, 2 Kings 5.13, and his servants came near and spoke to him and said, my father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more than when he says to you, wash and be clean, right? He had leprosy.

And he called him father because he was his leader in society. And then the commonwealth, that is the state as such. So Nahum was a military leader, by the way.

Kings known as the father as well, often in the ancient Near East, they're described not only as shepherds, but also as fathers. And we have in Isaiah 49.23, king shall be your foster fathers and queens your nursing mothers in description for the church of God and the future. It's a prophecy of today.

And he uses that language of father, both in the church, both in society at large and military in particular, in the king or the president or anyone else. It's all about authorities in our life. As strange as it sounds, the president is our father.

We don't think of that way in America. The Supreme Court leaders are fathers and mothers, as the case may be. Doctors, police, judges, and teachers at different times in our life are over us, and we are under them.

And that fits under the fifth commandment. So it uses the language, of course, of superior, inferior, and equals. You know about that.

They don't mean that in some kind of petty way. Inferior is those under your authority or influence of another, as employee is to employer, children to parents, students to teachers, and the like. We don't have, as much as we like to claim that we have egalitarianism in America, we really still don't.

You still have teachers. You still have bosses. You still have the police.

And you're still under their authority, their rule. Their decisions are out of your hands. And we rant and rave about it, to be sure, but it's not really there.

Equals. Your brothers, your sisters, of course, biologically. Your co-workers, insofar as they're not your boss, and they're not underneath you.

You're not their boss, right? Church members as well as citizens of America. We certainly push that with our democratic ideals. And what's interesting in this list, I went over inferiors and equals, and the list can go on and on, of course.

But what's interesting here is we can be superiors and inferiors and equals, all in the same person, depending on what we're talking about, what relationship we are underneath at that time. We like to say we wear multiple hats, right? Different responsibilities and callings in life. And I know that can make it a little messy sometimes, especially, you know, my daughter, my dad's my pastor as well.

This is kind of strange. These kind of things happen where we are in life, and we do the best that we can. So, in other words, a superior can be an equal and an inferior, depending on the relationship.

I am your equal, insofar as before God, of course, and before a number of things, with respect to the church or society in particular. We all have the same vote, for example. I'm your equal when it comes to votes and politics, and my opinion is probably just as good as yours, and that's fine.

And we should accept that. One of the interesting dangers you run across, at least I've run across in social media, pastor's trying to be experts in all things, something like that, and that's a danger. You're not, you're not.

That's fine. It's just where we are. And so he can be a superior and an inferior with respect to different things in life.

A father can be a citizen with his daughter, of course, and an employee of his son. His son could be a boss, although he's the father. And you can find out that could be quite something.

I've worked in that relationship before. That could be kind of a struggle. But it's still there, and we have to do the best we can by God's grace within us.

So why use father and mother for non-biological relationships? The larger catechism asks that question, believe it or not. Why? Why this language of mother and father for all these kind of relationships? Again, in the American context, we're blessed, I think, with our Reformed background. We're like, okay, pastor, I kind of get that.

But I want you to learn it again so you can teach others, because we don't typically think that way in a lot of Christian circles. Your Christian friends perhaps don't. It encourages, this language encourages our leaders and bosses, of course, to what? To be more like a father, someone who's tender and considerate and even meek, right? When I use that word meek as strength accommodating to weakness.

And I think you want that, especially if you have to work 12 or 15 hour days. You want that kind of a boss. To encourage we, the rest of us, us who are under that authority, to perform our duties before them as though they were our parents.

And so give them a proper respect and due, even if they are not believers. That does not change. It'd be great if they were, of course.

And sometimes it's a hard burden to be sure that your boss, your whoever's head of the HOA in your neighborhood, in your community, is not a believer and has these crazy ideas and whatnot. But nevertheless, you still have to show a certain respect and submission to them as though they were your father or your mother. Now, of course, it's a comparison and not to be taken too far.

They shouldn't really treat you like a little child or little baby. Unfortunately, some people do that. 1 Thessalonians 2.7. 1 Thessalonians 2.7 we read, but we were gentle among you, Paul writes, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

What an interesting picture. So affectionately longing for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives because you have become dear to us. 2 Thessalonians 2.7. Gentle as a nursing mother.

This is Paul, the one who's hammering there at Galatia, right, the book of Galatians. Corinth in the book of Corinthians. What is wrong with you people? Nevertheless, we know there was more to what he did in his life because we don't have everything written down in the New Testament.

Here's a little snippet reminding us. I was gentle among you because I cared for you and I love you. And that's what we want out of our leadership.

Not men who bend over backwards and do everything you want him to do. Then he's not a leader anymore, is he? But you still want to recognize that he understands and is trying to take some things into consideration, even if he doesn't always do what you want, depending again on that particular relationship, to be sure. It's the idea that we strive for, this model of parents.

This brings us to our text, Proverbs 1.8 and 9. All that was a little bit of background to describe what is going on here in Proverbs 1, elsewhere in Proverbs as well. It talks about mother and father often. My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother, for they will be graceful ornaments on your head and chains about your neck.

Many of the texts there, family relationships, we can certainly learn from in the Old Testament. And this one in particular, this text calls children to submit and to learn from their parents. And who are they to listen to? Both the father and the mother.

And you can see the parallelism here, right? My son, hear what? The instruction of your father and do not what? Forsake the law of your mother. Clearly, instruction and law are the same thing because it's poetry. He wants to say it two different ways to be pretty, as it were.

Saying the same thing. Mom and dad, obviously, should be on the same page, teaching the same thing. The law and the gospel.

Here, of course, it's especially the law. Children need that discipline. They need the law.

They need the structure of the law or they go crazy. And you have a lot of that in the Proverbs. Especially for the young man who's got to control himself.

Need to learn that. We need to keep learning that, of course, the rest of our days sometimes, as we know. It's important, therefore, for fathers to reinforce mother's authorities.

Authority in this matter. The text doesn't emphasize that. It emphasizes, of course, both parents are involved here.

But I want to remind us, mothers tend to be more, a little more indulgent than fathers for obvious reasons. They're more compassionate, relatively speaking, on average, than men. Suck it up, buttercup, the guy may say, the father.

He fell, ah, you're okay. Mom's like, oh, he's bleeding, he's hurting himself. Ah, he didn't lose a finger.

And there's a lot of truth to that. And it has its place in raising a child. They have to be a little more tough, but usually not the daughters as much as the boys, of course.

And so he needs to reinforce her authority. And there's a reward for this. For they will be graceful ornaments on your head, something beautiful, and chains about your neck or a necklace, we would say today, a beautiful diamond necklace.

He's saying you get great blessings from this, and indeed, they are greater blessings than gold and diamond, honoring and following what your parents have passed down to you, right? The heritage, that's the picture here. The law of God, Psalm 119, 111, is a heritage that we carry on from generation, given to us by God, to generation. Now, what do you see here in Proverbs 1, 8, and 9? You see a hierarchical structure.

You don't see egalitarianism, obviously. You see this relationship of superiors and inferiors, parents as superior, both in age, experience, and authority, where God has placed them as parents by dint of marriage and the like. And therefore, children should respect and obey them and love them accordingly.

And of course, it also assumes parental duties. The child cannot have the law of her mother or the instruction of the father if the parents are ignorant, if the parents refuse to teach the children these things. So it assumes that the superior here, the parents, have this duty and responsibility to know the law of God, to know the gospel of Jesus Christ, and teach it and apply it to the lives of their children.

That's their greatest duty, this side of eternity, besides watching over their own soul. And thus, this parental duty and responsibility that they are called is important for them. We have to know the Bible, we have to know the basics of the Bible, and we have to carry on that knowledge and not just assume the church will do it for you.

Sunday school, pick up the slack. The kids will grow up much stronger with a family who stands firm and gives them the whole counsel, the whole truth of God, lives it day in and day out, Deuteronomy 6-7, as we heard this morning. And the church helps too.

You only see us on Sundays, maybe Wednesday night. Maybe an email here or there or a prayer, but you're with your family all the time, you're with your kids all the time. Or your grandkids, as the case may be.

It isn't just the immediate family, right? It's where we are in our relationships with one another, do what we can to help the kids and the next generation, the grandkids, to grow.

What is Required in the Fifth Commandment?

Now, what is required in the fifth commandment? What is required in the fifth commandment? The fifth commandment is about mutual or reciprocal relationships. And responsibilities.

Relationships have moral duties that we owe to each other, from leading to submitting, including treating each other as equals. If every relationship, personal or collective, is reduced to equality, such as our current American thinking is, that is the rhetoric, at least,

then we end up, of course, in social chaos with judges of the law treating criminals as equals in all things and parents with no control over their kids. Unfortunately, we're actually seeing that now.

Note the language of owe in the phrase, duties we owe each other. It is not the language of rights, which is the American language. In America, even in families, we think of rights.

What others owe us. What do you owe me? Why aren't you doing things for me? Here, our parents and forefathers wrote about our duties that we owe to others, so that the selfishness that so easily besets us is now stamped down. In families, that would put the burden of responsibility, of course, upon each of us towards one another.

It reverses the emphasis from what we think others owe us, such as love and respect to what we owe them. Of course, this does not preclude us from ever thinking about what others owe us. If our parents are starving us, for example, or otherwise being a negligence, this is something that's important that should be dealt with, yes.

But it's important, I think, again, because we are swimming in this. I grew up with this stuff. I didn't realize it until I got a little older.

What's this other stuff about rights and the like, and it seeps into the church. That misuse of the idea of rights is perhaps a better way of saying it. And this puts it back where it needs to be.

What is my duty and responsibility to my parents, to my boss, to my nation, to my community, and the like? Or on the flip side, what's my responsibility as a pastor towards you? And what's the responsibility of the leaders of this nation towards you? It goes both ways. So what is required in the Fifth Commandment? The Fifth Commandment requires the preserving the honor, the performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations as superiors, inferiors, or equals. We already talked about that latter part.

There are some. So preserve the honor. I'm gonna cover some of these details here.

The name and character of those you are related to. Of course, again, your family at work and the like. You wanna make a reasonable effort to uphold their good name.

Your superiors, that is, laud their good characters to others. Your inferiors, that is, congratulate them on a job well done at work, for example. Your equals, encourage them to continue on in their duties and responsibilities before God.

That's the different ways in which you can do these things. And preserve their honor, their name, and their character. To build families, it's not mentioned here explicitly, but it seems to me Psalm 127, which we sang this morning, it was chosen for that providentially.

Both topics strongly overlap, of course, here. And so Psalm 127 is appropriate, of course, for the Fifth Commandment of having a family. Children, behold, children are a heritage from the Lord.

The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hands of the warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.

They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gates. So here in what is required of the Fifth Commandment, part of the requirement is growing a family. If you have a family, if you are married, having kids is a blessing.

It's a heritage of the Lord. It is from his hand that he has given us these things and our beautiful children. And in a day and an age, of course, in which more and more, unfortunately, even in the churches, look down upon having kids.

It's just another burden for them. We need to reinforce this message and encourage them and encourage one another that children are indeed a blessing and a heritage from God. Pass down from him, because God is involved in the fruit of the womb, isn't he? And it's not just merely us.

God is involved in all things. And without his blessings, we cannot have kids. They're a heritage of the Lord, Psalm 127 says.

Pass down from him to us. And one of the blessings here of this heritage, verse five. Happy is the man, Psalm 127, five.

Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. That's a lot. They shall not be ashamed, but what? Shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

There's a blessing here. And it's a public and social space because the gates is the place where the leadership deals with things. The judges and the elders would be there.

The gates, the city, it's a big public square or space. That's where everyone's gonna be. It's a bottleneck for one thing, so you can't help but go through the gate.

And so it made sense to put the leaders there, as you saw in First Kings at the end of that book, that they sat their thrones there at the gate. Because that's where everyone's gonna be. That's where we're gonna sell things, buy things and have judgments.

And so having that many kids, one of the blessings is it's a, not necessarily guaranteed they're gonna be an elder, but I look at it more broadly as it's a public thing. It's a public blessing upon the nation that you have a lot of kids because you're raising up the next generation. You don't want a nation shrinking.

Japan is shrinking. They're losing more and more every generation. They have the highest number of people age 90 and over.

And that's not a blessing anymore because they're finding out what it means not to have enough young people. And it's gonna happen to us, unfortunately, unless God changes things in the West in general. It is a blessing.

It is a good thing. This is part of the fulfillment. That's why I bring it up.

What is required in the Fifth Commandment? Part of it is be fruitful and multiply, one of the creation ordinances.

What is Forbidden in the Fifth Commandment?

What is forbidden in the Fifth Commandment? Neglect of honor in our duty, right? Neglect of honor and duty. So it's very broad, of course.

When our neighbor's good name is not defended when it should be defended, when we turn the other way at work when they are murmuring and complaining unduly with respect to their boss or something like that, we are not doing our responsibility. We're neglecting. We're holding back and not doing what we are called to do.

Now, on the flip side, of course, we shouldn't be busybodies running around looking for any kind of trouble and trying to defend everybody. That's not our calling either. And the danger there, of course, is, again, online for the younger generation.

You see all kinds of stuff and it's easy to jump into something. You just gotta tell yourself, it's not my business. I just have to carry on and scroll.

Scroll on. Go past that point. Someone else can deal with it.

Probably end their life. Now, transgression of the honor and duty or that is neglecting, not doing, holding back what ought to be done with respect to the honor of your equals, the honor of those underneath you and the like when you ought to honor them are right, is it called otherwise a sin of omission, right? The sin of omission, not doing what you should do. And if you think about it, the sins of omission can be kind of hard to detect at times because what we are called to do, our responsibility to give honor and to fulfillment of the fifth commandment is not to be done at all times.

We are not to be running around praising our parents all the time. Once is enough. You do the birthday as sufficient.

You don't do it all the time. Because you don't do all the time, that means other times you're not doing it, which is an omission, isn't it? Is that a sin of omission? Of course not. But when I'm giving an illustration of not doing something, it's sometimes hard to peg, does that mean they're sinning? It depends on the circumstances often.

And if it's a serious enough matter, again, if someone's name is being attacked and their good name as a company or a Christian, Christian leader is being smeared across all over the internet and you have an opportunity to vindicate his name and you refuse to do it, that's clearly a sin. That's a sin of omission, not doing your responsibility and upholding that man's good name. You have the evidence, no one else has to protect him, for example, just to give one illustration.

Not honoring parents or bosses and the like is a problem that can and I think goes on often in the American context because of the way our politics are, of course. But it's a reminder again that the Fifth Commandment isn't just about what we are called to do with respect to those over us, those who are equals, who work alongside of us and those who are under us, we direct them as their leaders. But also what we are called not to do, which is to belittle them, to look down upon them or to trample them down with oppression.

Lastly, here is kind of a postscript. What's the relationship of God to the Fifth Commandment? What about God in the Fifth Commandment? God is our father, right? Deuteronomy 1, 31, and in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you as a man carries his son and all the way that you went until you came into this place, Moses described the Lord God of the Old Testament. He was a father to them and he carried them, that is he preserved them and washed over them and fed them and gave them the water they needed and the protection from their enemies in this dry and thirsty land as a father to his son.

That's the beauty and the love of our God. He's a source of comfort, Psalm 27:10, when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me. What's he saying? God is my father.

He will do what my parents will not do, which is preserve and protect and to guide me. If they forsake me, if they leave me, if I'm abandoned by those who claim to be my parents and no longer treat me that way, the Lord is there for me. That's clearly a picture of God being our father, isn't it? It's a beautiful picture, Psalm 27:10.

Christians can lose families or sadly they never convert, so you don't lose them that way. Maybe your parents never abandoned you, but they're not Christians either. And so you feel left alone at times and left out of the family relationship.

But our Lord God is always with us and he will never leave us, brothers and sisters. And of course, in the New Testament, we have the great Lord's Prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven.

What's interesting is the emphasis upon the fatherhood of God in the New Testament. And it makes sense because who comes down to earth? The Son of God. The father and the son relationship is therefore all the more highlighted and exalted in the New Testament era.

There's not a lot of Bible verses in the Old Testament that talk about God as father explicitly in those words, like you read here. Father, our Father, our Father God, over and over again in the New Testament. So Christ leads us this way as we have greater revelation and truth and therefore I hope comfort in our time of need and the difficulties and trials that we've had and will have one way or the other as Christians, that our Father is our Father.

He's our divine Father. He is the original Father. And He will love us with an everlasting love as He's given us Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son, that we can be adopted and brought into the household of faith.

There's that picture and imagery again. Why? That we think of the fifth commandment. So the fifth commandment is clearly God is the greatest Father of all.

And we are in His household. And we are brothers and mothers and sisters and daughters to one another, 1 Timothy 5. Thus we can learn from the Old Testament a number of things with respect to the fifth commandment. Family is the foundation of society, of course.

You see that just in the history of Genesis as it moves its way through one family to the other, to Noah, to Abraham and the like. And of course, all of Israel is based upon the family of Abraham. Leaders in all fields should be treated like fathers.

And they should treat us like their children and not despots. Whether business leaders, whether social leaders, whether political leaders, that's the ideal we shoot for. Followers, that is we, all of us, should be willingly obeying and submitting to them to the best of our ability and even with a cheerful heart as occasion arises.

And in all this, brothers and sisters, depend upon the Lord God as our heavenly Father who loves us with an everlasting love in Christ Jesus, who carries us as though we were in the desert of our life and existence, granting us a spirit to obey from the heart the fifth commandment. And this we pray by the blood of Christ. Amen.

Let us pray. Our Lord and Savior, God above, as much to the fifth commandment as it involves all these kinds of relationships we have in life. Our God, may this not be daunting upon us, Lord, for we have grown up and raised this way from a childhood.

We recognize different relationships within the family itself. Here comes the aunt, here comes the grandpa. And we treat them slightly different, always with respect and love, to be sure.

But it's a little different in one way or the other. And as we grow up, God, we see these things at work, at school, in communities, and in clubs and the like. And this is good and natural and proper.

Our gracious God, may we continue to be examples to this nation that lifts up and idolizes so many ways egalitarianism, that we're all equal everywhere across the board, which is to say often for those who claim it, they're the ones who are equal amongst the equal, of course. Our Lord, and that they would see that we take seriously what we are called to do, which is to submit, to lead, and to be an equal. To support one another, whatever our particular responsibilities and callings in life are, God, that they would see that we do take these things seriously.

And we do it out of a heart of love because we are part of the family of God. And we praise you for that grace that you've bestowed upon us through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.