

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

Today, let's have ourselves a top-ten list. A countdown. It'll be exciting. Let's call it the Top Ten Things You Might Not Know About the Fifth Good Word. Ready?

10. Originally addressed to adult children

When I was a child, adults told me that I had better obey this commandment. It was literally addressed to me.

But scholars point out that it's addressed to *adults* who need to honor their aging parents.

I had to hear about this commandment all the time as a kid. Now, as an adult, I find out that it's really about adults like me! But what am I going to do? Get bitter and resentful at my parents? The Fifth Good Word says to *honor* them. I'm stuck!

Society is always tempted to value human lives ... *only* if they are "productive." And as God began a new creation among his people Israel, they were called to stand out in a world that *dishonored* people who didn't seem "useful." People like aging adults.

Jesus went after the religious leaders of his day for inventing all kinds of extra laws, while they ignored this commandment. These hypocrites didn't want to provide financially for their parents in their old age, so they pretended that they had set up a savings account dedicated to financially supporting the temple. Jesus says: you think you're so spiritual, don't you? I'll tell you what's genuinely spiritual: to take care of your mom and dad when they become vulnerable!

Adults: how are your parents vulnerable? How can you honor them in the areas in which they are vulnerable?

9. "Father and Mother" is shorthand for "authorities"

Here's one that will make everyone uncomfortable. Christians have *always* believed that "father and mother" is a way of saying "those who are in authority over you." Anyone to whom the Lord has delegated responsibility for your instruction, nurture, or oversight.

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

It's amazing in the book of Acts (25) to watch the Apostle Paul speak with the pagan Roman rulers. He's proclaiming Jesus as Lord. It gets him into trouble. He's on trial before Festus and Agrippa and Bernice. He gets to speak. He speaks authoritatively but with great respect for the king. Festus interrupts him and tells him that he's gone crazy, Paul replies "I am not insane, *most excellent Festus.*"

Who are your "mothers and fathers"? How are you going to honor them?

8. The truest "Father" is God and the truest "Mother" is the Church

Cyprian of Carthage was a North African bishop who unfortunately had a pandemic named after him because he wrote about it so eloquently. (I better be careful what I write on Facebook about the coronavirus or they'll name it the Plague of Stager.)

Cyprian died for his faith in the year 258.

Cyprian said this: "You can't have God as your Father unless you will have the Church as your mother." The church is the mother God has given us for nurture, discipline, encouragement, and spiritual food. Want to honor the Lord? Honor his bride, the church, who is your mother!

7. God is *literally* Father: others borrow that title

When I say "God is our Father," what do you think of? Do you think of your own father? Maybe you subtract all the bad stuff. Add in the positive qualities you wish your dad had. Make those qualities eternal and infinite, and, boom, there's your "heavenly Father."

But here's the way it's *really* supposed to work: God is the one true Father. Forget for a minute everything you know about fathers. Think only of God. God's power and gentleness; God's vision and plans; God's closeness to the brokenhearted; God's defense of the defenseless; God's determination to hold the wicked accountable; God's patience and tenderness and forgiveness toward those who fail.

That's what "father" means. God is father.

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

And *then* he assigns that title to humans.¹

And human “fathers” either imitate the true Father, or they don’t.

Ephesians 3 (:14-15) says: we “kneel before the Father, from whom every fatherhood on earth is named.”

Do you need to forget your concept of “father” and focus on the one true Father?

6. The 5th Commandment “solves” the “worship wars.”

Kevin Twit is a pastor who started a church music movement: taking old hymn lyrics and writing new folk music for them. He says this about church music, from Ephesians 6:

“Children, honor your parents. Fathers, do not exasperate your children.”

What if we did? All the childish bickering about church music styles would stop. Wouldn’t that be cool?

5. We never outgrow the 5th commandment.

“Authority.” The *Bundesrat* gives pandemic guidelines. “Wait—I don’t like people telling me what I can and can’t do!”

We think that we evolve beyond the Fifth Good Word. We stop being “children.”

No. We’re always under authorities to which we did not give our *consent*! You didn’t choose to be born. You didn’t delegate authority to your parents. You didn’t choose your home country or its government. And you didn’t choose who’d be the true Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Do you have an authority problem? Can you actually honor fathers and mothers?

¹ Both John Calvin and Karl Barth emphasize this point.

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

4. Jesus and his Father fulfill the Fifth Word in his life and ministry

Now let's turn to the *real* parent-child relationship—between Jesus and his Father. How do Father and Son fulfill the Fifth Good Word together?

Number 4: Jesus and his Father fulfill the Fifth Good Word in Jesus' life and ministry. How?

Every Parent-Child relationship—every relationship with authority—is supposed to look like this: the child honors the parent. The parent lifts the child up to the place of honor.²

In John's gospel, Jesus constantly says that he is simply saying and doing what his Father called him to say and do, so that his words and actions would honor his Father. He *heals* to honor his Father by showing his Father's heart to heal. He *rebukes* the hypocrites to honor his Father's love of justice. He *exercises patience* with his dumb disciples to show his Father's incredible patience with all of us slow learners.

And then, as his life comes to an end, he prays that his Father would lift him up to the place of honor and glory as well.

Jesus honors the Father. The Father lifts him up to the place of honor.

3. Jesus and his Father fulfill the Fifth Word at the cross

How does Jesus fulfill the Fifth Good Word from the cross?

I had a toothache this week and I could barely think about anyone but myself.

But there's Jesus, in the midst of his suffering. Welcoming a thief being crucified next to him into the kingdom. Praying "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

² Peter Leithart, *The Ten Commandments*.

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

And how about this:

Jesus knows that it's his responsibility as son to take his mom into his home as she ages, to protect her physically and socio-economically.

But he *chose* the cross. He's going to *leave* his family. How will he fulfill the Fifth Good Word and take care of mom?

Well, he becomes John's best friend. At some point he said to John: "listen, if anything happens to me, will you promise to be a son to my mother, and honor her in her old age as if you were me?" And then, on the cross, he makes the arrangement official.

He looks down (John 19:26-27) at John. He looks at his mother. He says to his mom: "Woman, behold: your son." And he says to John: "Son, behold your mother."

The Son honors his mother *at the cross*.

How does the Father lift his Son up to honor at the cross?

Two ways, at least:

The Roman executioner, when he saw the way Jesus died—serving and loving to the end—said "surely this man was the Son of God." The soldier is there to make sure everyone leaves saying, "well, Caesar is Lord." But the Father grips this soldier's heart and shows him his glory in the face of his Son Jesus, and the soldier himself walks away saying "Jesus is Lord."

And, at the same time as the soldier was realizing Jesus is Lord, all the spiritual forces in the universe were realizing it too (Col 2:15).

The Father delights to give his Son this triumph, lifting him up to honor and glory, even at the cross.

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

2. Jesus and his Father fulfill the Fifth Word in Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and session.

And now, the number 2 thing you might not have known about the Fifth Good Word. Jesus and the Father fulfill this good Word in Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and session on the throne.

How? The Son has just lived a perfect life and died a horrible death, winning our redemption. But the Father calls him to take up a new job in his administration. He gives him the name and title that's above all names (Phil 2): Lord of Heaven and Earth.

After Michael Jordan won his 6th championship with the Chicago Bulls, he retired. He wanted to play golf and sit back and enjoy some of that money. But after Jesus becomes the champion of the world's salvation, he accepts his Father's assignment and serves in his Father's administration.

Remember: the Fifth Good Word means that sons and daughters honor their father and mother. Mothers and fathers lift their daughters and sons up into honor.

The Father and Son fulfill the Fifth Good Word as Jesus is raised to the throne.

1. We will fulfill the Fifth Good Word for all eternity.

And the final thing you might not know about the Fifth Good Word: you and I will fulfill the Fifth Good Word for all eternity.

God will never stop placing humans like you and me as authorities over the creation.

We will never stop submitting to the authority of those who are placed over us.

Only two things will stop:

1) Every authority will be completely freed from sin and completely free to bless the people they lead.

2) Every person under authority will be completely freed from sin and completely free to *joyfully* follow the people who lead them.

The Father's Ten Good Words: Treasure My Rule

Matthew 15:1-11 ; Exodus 20: 1-2; 12; Deuteronomy 5:16

You and I will forever have the opportunity to honor our Father by exercising authority, under his authority, in his name.

You and I will forever be able to honor Jesus, the truest human authority there ever was, by saying "yes" to his authority to appoint glorified human women and men to rule different aspects of the New Creation on his behalf.

You and I will be disciplined into new positions of responsibility and authority for all eternity.

You and I will get to play the role of honored mothers and fathers for all eternity.

You and I will get to play the role of daughters and sons for all eternity.

We will be honored. We will be lifted up to greater positions of honor. And without a *hint* of pride, envy, cynicism, or bitterness.

How can God make a world so new? Through Jesus: the one who makes all things new. By being the truest Son. By being the older brother whom we gladly follow. By lifting us up to true fatherhood and sonship. By granting us the promise attached to the Fifth Good Word: to live long, forever, in the country the Lord our God gives us.

Friends, maybe, like me, you're thinking: wow! The Fifth Commandment is a lot cooler than I thought. I don't want you to leave merely thinking that. I want you to leave thinking that Jesus is far more magnificent than you ever dreamed. Because he is.

How marvelous to be able to submit to and to honor, forever, a Lord of Heaven and Earth like the one we've got in Jesus!