

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to [oakhillpca.com/wsc](http://oakhillpca.com/wsc)

Q. 63. *Which is the fifth commandment?*

A. The fifth commandment is, *Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

Q. 64. *What is required in the fifth commandment?*

A. The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.

Q. 65. *What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?*

A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongs to everyone in their several places and relations.

Q. 66. *What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?*

A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is, a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.

The first four Commandments direct our attention to our relationship and obligations to our heavenly Father. The last six Commands direct our attention to our "neighbor," starting with our parents and those in authority over us.

The family unit is the building block for society. Our relationship with our parents will shape and impact our lives and how we relate with people in every other sector of society. This command encompasses much more than "doing the dishes" when your mother asks you. It's about the fundamental building block for relationships between "superiors, inferiors, or equals": honor.

Calvin says that honor requires three parts: "reverence, obedience, and gratitude." Reverence is the act of respect and esteem. Obedience is the act of following direction. And gratitude is the act of giving thanks for all the parent has done. God requires us to honor our parents (and all those in authority), ultimately, because God has placed them in that position. We honor God by honoring our parents.

What about parents we deem as dishonorable, or unworthy of honor? Kevin DeYoung frames this question as "are their limits to honoring parents?" The short answer is "yes." DeYoung says, "If the choice is between obeying God or obeying man, we obey God." God does not call us to respect and obey God-demeaning character and activity. Our allegiance is always first to God. But sinful parents do not exempt us from obeying this command; otherwise, no one would have to obey this command. No parent is perfect. We ought to honor our father and mother to the extent that honors God as our perfect heavenly Father.