

Fifth Word: Roots (The Ten Words)

Reconnect – August 1, 2010

Text: Exodus 20:1-2, 12; Ephesians 6:1-4

Key Thought: Honouring our parents creates a family legacy that will honour God for generations to come.

“Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” Exodus 20:1-2, 12, NLT

FIFTH WORD: Roots



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Pre-Intro: “Parents Just Don’t Understand” (DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince)

Intro: “The most quoted verse in the Bible...”

- There are, they say, about 31,102 verses in the average Bible
- Those verses deal with all areas of life – they talk about God, life, morality, ethics, history – everything you could imagine
- The Bible itself says that it’s all good – that there is benefit in every part
- And yet, when I was a kid, there was one verse that I heard the most – head and shoulders over everything else – to the point where I might have thought that the rest was just filler
- “Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long on the earth”
- Whenever I didn’t want to do something, whenever I didn’t want to listen, whenever I railed against the unfairness and unreasonableness of my parents, you could trust that this verse would be trotted out – if not by my mother, then by one of HER parents
- Even when I WAS doing the right thing, it would get brought up anyway, just out of habit, I think
- It was a chorus in my ears growing up, and it’s still ringing in them today, a half-life of baggage later



A Ten Words Turning Point

- We've been looking at the Ten Words for awhile now (**have people tell what the first four were**) – but this fifth word is the turning point of the list, where the focus shifts from honouring God directly to how we are to live with each other
- It's also the most positive commandment, and the first with a promise (more on that later)
- Of all the commandments that God could have laid down first, after talking about himself, God brings up parents – why?

The times, they are a-changin'

- Social upheaval of the Sixties – the various revolutions in our western society – the young were seen as the agents of change, sticking it to “The Man” – “Don't trust anyone over 30” – and the pillars of our society changed – in so many ways, for the better (maybe not all)
- And the idea was first put forward of a “Generation Gap” – that there was a huge gulf between the understandings and perspectives of parents and children, that was basically insurmountable
- We have grown up in that mindset over the last 45 years – that somehow, parents are inherently out of step, perhaps a little suspect – and the rise of technology and our society's fascination with the now and the next has just carried that to a whole other level
- And now, of course, the trend is now that parents aren't parents at all, they're more life coaches – they're in just as much need of help as anyone else – in movies, the children are the sensible ones, rescuing the parents, showing them their wisdom, making sure that they “make it”, while the parents act like children – “Alaska”
- We're told to be friends with our kids – to keep the lines of communication open – and the line gets blurry quick, including the parents who try to be cooler than their kids or somehow compete with them (which is always creepy – III. parent/son playing squash, and the son never once winning)
- That, and of course, we try to stay young and hip at all costs – to not “turn into our parents” and start wearing mom jeans or slippers around the house
- We're afflicted with generational confusion, and our society pays the price – kids in trouble, parents left wondering why? Or parents allowing everything, and then wondering why their kids don't show any gratitude – perhaps we need this commandment, this guidance, more than ever today

Read Text: Exodus 20:1-2, 12

Then God gave the people all these instructions: “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery... Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:1-2, 12, NLT)

- “Honour your father and your mother” – two questions – what does that mean, and how do I do it?

What does it mean?

- “honour” – to give glory, weight – same word that God uses, that we should treat him with that honour, glory, weight
- we talk about something being “heavy” or deep – my client this week asking for (and getting) my colleague’s heavy pen – or having weight, having importance – a “weighty saying”
- we give “weight” to the opinions of experts – we “weigh” our options, and then make a choice
- How do we give “weight” to our parents?
 - respecting their opinions
 - their views of the world
 - their traditions
 - living out what they have taught us / what we have learned from them
 - respecting their contribution to our lives / where we come from
 - heeding their voice in our adult lives
 - remembering them well
 - obeying them or treating them with respect, depending on our age
- God is saying that we should treat our parents the way that we treat Him – instead of disrespecting them, setting them aside, forgetting their ways or not listening to their teaching – how else would this faith in Him, this revealing of Himself be transmitted down the line from generation to generation of people, starting with the group of people huddled around the mountain, hearing God’s voice out of the fire and the cloud
- Instead of seeing ourselves as free from them, or leaving them behind, he wants us to give them weight – to continue to give them importance, no matter how old we or they get
- God says that He is into honouring parents, and therefore his people must be, too – think about the different generations gathered around that mountain with the fire and the cloud – inside a year, this group of adults is going to reject God’s leadership and refuse to go into the Promised Land – and the consequence of that decision is going to be that they will die in the wilderness, wandering for forty years – so those twenty and under are going to spend the next forty years living in tents – but they need, STILL, to honour their fathers and their mothers, even if they’re the reason that you have a huge redneck tan
- Interestingly enough, Bible scholars agree that this passage is actually about “taking care of them in their old age” - to do for them what God is doing for us – what God had done/was doing for his people in the wilderness
 - This is perhaps even tougher to do than the obeying when we’re young
 - After all, we’re in the middle of the “sandwich generation” and “helicopter parenting”
 - For many of us, this is future-facing
 - But depending on the relationship we have with our parents at that time, it could be tricky

How do it I do it?

- “So often, we spend so long trying to be free only to realize freedom wasn’t really what we wanted”
- Maybe this is a hard “word” to hear this morning – maybe you have a lot of “history” with your parents – maybe you come from a very difficult or even abusive situation, and you’re scarred for life from them – so how can God ask you to honour your parents? I feel that... I understand where you’re coming from... and yet, put the shoe on the other foot – imagine not raising your children to honour your parents – we speak well of our parents to our children, or at least we try to, because there is a link between them – their family, their roots – and one day, we hope that our own children will teach THEIR children to honour us, when the situation changes and we are in the position of being elderly, of having passed the torch of our strength and drive on to our kids
- Other challenges to “honouring your parents” **(put it out as a question)**
 - distance
 - disapproval
 - divorce
 - history
 - their current situation / choices they’re making
 - non-Christians or even hostile to Christianity
- Constant temptation to take short cuts – Jesus and “corban” – instead of caring for their elderly parents, people were “donating money to God” (even though they were still hanging on to it) and not helping them – “corban”
- Jesus was really hard on them, because their “love” wasn’t love at all – they were missing the entire point and hiding behind their religiosity - Jesus – makes sure in his last moments that his mom is looked after (living this out practically)
- And here’s his point: How can we be said to love God if we can’t love or at least honour our parents? Because otherwise, it doesn’t line up – and how can we teach our children to honour us if we don’t honour as adults, our own parents?
- We have the choice to either create a legacy of good or of hurt, depending on how we treat our parents in front of our children
- So often we want to blame them – they’re an easy target – “I’d be in better financial shape if they had been better with their money”, “I’m that way because my dad didn’t show me enough affection”, etc. – but we have to make our own choices and take ownership for them – we can’t blame our parents forever for our lives – it’s not their fault – we don’t know what is genetic and what is environmental
- I think about myself – my attitude towards authority, my distrust of authority, my competitiveness, my bitter streak – I could blame that on the people I come from, but that’s not going to ever help me change who I am or improve at all – in fact, the opposite would be true – if I choose to do that, I will lurch from mistake to mistake, always having someone else to blame – and I’m sure we all know at least one person who seems to be trapped in that cycle – probably it’s not the same person for all of us, though ;)

- This verse is going to look different for each of us as we come from different backgrounds and experiences with our own parents – but God doesn't give clauses – He just throws out the principle, the guiding idea of “honour your parents”
- I think keeping it in our minds is the beginning of being able to do it – with every interaction with them, with everything we do on their behalf – that God wants us to honour our parents, just like we honour Him

The promise

“Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you”

- “that your days may be long on the earth” – we look at that with our Western, individualistic, health-obsessed mindset and see that as a personal promise – that we better be good to mom and pop or we won't live a good long life – but it's not pointed at people as individuals, it's to the entire nation – the idea that if they don't get this right, about honouring their parents, that they won't live long in the land that God is giving them – the land will be removed from them / they will be removed from the land
- Why does God give this commandment? Because he wants his people to be a society characterized by love and mercy and forgiveness and grace, and compassion – even when people in this society get to the point where they can't make an active contribution anymore, God says, this is where you will be different from the nations around you – you are to care for your parents
- I want to raise my children right – I want them to grow up serving God the way I do – I want the best of me, of what I learn, to endure with them, to be carried on in them, to save them from some of the bad decisions that I have made in my life and the consequences that I have had to bear as a result – so how do I raise my kids that they will continue as adults to “honour” me? To give weight to my ideas, my example, my voice in their lives, my opinions, my guidance and counsel, my love and acceptance of them? How can I raise them so that they will always take me seriously, for their own good, both positively and negatively?

Key Thought:

Honouring our parents creates a family legacy that will honour God for generations to come.

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do.

“Honour your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honour your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord. **Ephesians 6:1-4, NLT**

TAKE IT HOME:

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Ephesians 6:1-4, NLT



Conclusion: how do we create that legacy?

Q: Survey – those who have a good relationship with their parents – what qualities of your parents (either now or when you were growing up) help you have a good relationship with them?

If you first heard about this section of the Bible as a kid or a teenager, how has your understanding of this section changed as you've gotten older? As you're now a parent?

How do I "care" for my parents? How do I give them "weight"?

When I'm a child/teenager?

After I leave home?

When they grow older?

Response: prayer