

TEACHING GOAL

To study the broader concerns of the fifth commandment.

DOCTRINAL

Q. 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. 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.

S.C. 64-65, L.C. 124-132, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 92

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Support Passages: Genesis 4:20-22, 45:8; Numbers 12; II Kings 13:14; I Corinthians 4:14-21; I Peter 2:13-17, 3:6; Romans 13:1-7; Colossians 3:18-25

BIBLE STORY

II Kings 2:12-25; Elisha and the disrespectful children.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4, ESV)

APPLICATION

Given that the fifth commandment concerns relationships beyond that of children to their natural parents, we must therefore be careful to obey those who are in authority over us, and we are to care for and nurture those who depend on us.

SUMMARY

As indicated in the previous lesson, the fifth commandment has a broader application than that of children to their natural parents. In fact, we observe three different applications of the fifth commandment in our study text; the husband-wife relationship, the parent-child relationship, and the master-servant relationship.

In the immediate application of the fifth commandment, the parent-child relationship, Paul states that Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord". This phrase "in the Lord" is used some 40 times by Paul in his epistles as in the parallel passage, Colossians 3:18-25, where he writes, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." In this manner, Paul "sums up the relationship existing between fellow-members of Christ - a relationship which does not supersede earthly relationships but subsumes them and lifts them on to a higher plane."¹ He exalts filial obedience to the same heavenly domain as he does the marriage relationship. In addition the scope of the family is broadened to include all those who are "in the Lord".

It is a matter of personal godliness to obey your parents, however, such obedience demands a corresponding duty on the part of the parents. The children are to obey their parents and the parents are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In a similar manner a wife is to obey her husband but he in turn is to love his wife. Employees are to obey their employers but the employer is to be good to his employees. Younger people are to respect older people.² Members of a particular church are to submit to their elders who in turn are to watch over the members and to shepherd them.³ Citizens are to obey those who are in authority over them and authorities are to reward those who do that which is good.⁴

The term "father" is also broader in concept than the natural father. It includes all who are superiors in age and gifts, in particular, those who are over us in place of authority, whether in the family or the church or the commonwealth. Elisha addressed Elijah as a father saying, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"⁵ Joash similarly addressed Elisha as his father.⁶ Paul was a father of the Corinthian church, "for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel".⁷ Timothy is Paul's "beloved

son"⁸ yet Paul was not Timothy's natural father. Sarah "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right..."⁹ and here Peter is referring to those who "reside as aliens ... who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father... ".¹⁰ We hasten to note that we address God Himself as "Our Father".

Therefore we conclude that the scope of the fifth commandment is the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.¹¹ Let us therefore be careful to obey those who are in authority over us and care for and nurture those who depend on us as our inferiors.

¹ E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, p290, footnote 139.

² II Kings 2:23-25

³ Hebrews 13:7,17; Acts 20:28

⁴ Romans 13:1-7

⁵ II Kings 2:12

⁶ II Kings 13:14

⁷ I Corinthians 4:15

⁸ II Timothy 1:2

⁹ I Peter 3:6

¹⁰ I Peter 1:1-2

¹¹ *Westminster Larger Catechism*, question 126.