

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

In the **Large Catechism**, Martin Luther talks about God's special place for parents. He says that God has commanded us to love other people, our siblings, other family members, and neighbors. But he commands us to love and *honor* our parents. He explains it this way:

*For it is a far higher thing to honor someone than to love someone, because honor includes not only love, but also modesty, humility, and submission to a majesty hidden in them. Honor requires not only that parents be addressed kindly and with reverence, but also that, both in the heart and with the body, we demonstrate that we value them very highly, and that, next to God, we regard them as the very highest. For someone we honor from the heart we must also truly regard as very great (**Large Catechism** Part 1, Fourth Commandment, 106—107).*

But this attitude of children toward parents also has implications for those of us who are parents. Since God has placed us in an office that demands such respect and honor, it is up to us to not abuse that respect, but to try to live up to it and be worthy of it. If children are to obey parents as they would God, parents must conduct themselves toward their children as God would. Let us live out our parent/child relationships pleasing to God, remembering the Fourth Commandment.