

Back to the Basics

The Ten Commandments Pt. 4

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

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

We move now to the Second Table. The first three Commandments have to do with our relationship with God. The last 7 concern our relationship with other people. We have seen that we are better off if we allow the Commandments to speak to areas of life instead of taking them narrowly. For example, throughout Scripture we are taught to respect and obey those in authority. See **Romans 13:1-7** for a discussion on obeying governmental authorities. God is a God of order. This Commandment protects against anarchy and chaos. Everyone has an authority over them. Teachers are authority figures in school. They are answerable to the Principal, who is answerable to the Superintendent, who is answerable to the School Board, who is answerable to the people who elected them. So, what this Commandment says about our parents applies to all in authority.

In this Commandment, God forbids us to despise those in authority over us by disrespecting them. He also forbids us to anger them by disobedience, laziness, or any other sin (**Proverbs 23:22; Romans 13:2**). Unfortunately, we see a lot of this happening in our society today, especially toward governing officials. even by Christians (all of us are fallen and guilty of breaking God's Law). Does that mean it's always wrong to stand up against the government? What if the government is unjust?

In **Acts 5**, when Peter and John were told they couldn't preach about Jesus, they replied, "*We must obey God rather than men.*" When the government goes against the Law of God, we have the right and duty to obey God rather than men. But that won't exempt us from punishment by the government. During WWII, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor in Germany, took part in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Hitler was going against the Law of God and was responsible for millions of deaths. The plot failed, Bonhoeffer and the others were arrested, and put in a concentration camp. Shortly before the liberation of the camp by the Allies, Bonhoeffer was executed.

What about in the workplace? Does a Christian have the right to go on strike? There's no clear-cut answer. It depends on the reasons for the strike. Many times, it's just to get a better contract. But, if there are injustices in the workplace that are being addressed, then the Christian has a right to strike after much soul searching and making sure the reasons aren't selfish.

We fulfill the Fourth Commandment when we:

- 1) Honor our parents and other authorities by respecting them and treating them as God's representatives on earth. You may not like the man in office, but remember, God has put him there, so show him respect as God's representative (**Ephesians 6:2-3**; see also **Genesis 46:29; 1 Kings 2:19; 2 Kings 2:12**).

- 2) Serve our parents and other authorities by gladly providing what they need or require. This includes taking care of older parents when we have grown up (**1 Timothy 5:4; Romans 13:7**; see also **Genesis 47:11-12; John 19:26**).
- 3) Obey our parents and other authorities in everything in which God has placed them over us. This includes the laws of the road (**Colossians 3:20; Titus 3:1; Acts 5:29**; see also **Luke 2:51; 1 Samuel 20:31-33**).
- 4) Love and cherish our parents and other authorities as precious gifts from God. Remember, God has given them to us for our own good (**Proverbs 23:22**; see also **Ruth**).
- 5) Show respect to the aged. They make up the second-most vulnerable segment of our population, the unborn being the most vulnerable (**Leviticus 19:32**).

This Commandment carries with it a promise, *“that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you”* (**Exodus 20:12**). This wasn’t a promise of long life to individuals. This was a promise to the community that their nation would last if they maintained order. Look what has happened in our country as order and discipline have eroded away. We see first-hand the benefit of God’s Law and the consequences of breaking it. He knows us and what we need to survive and thrive. If only we wouldn’t see His Law as a burden, but as the blessing and guide it’s meant to be.

May the peace of Christ be with you.
