



Fourth Commandment

With the fourth commandment, we move from vertically oriented commands to horizontally oriented commands. The fourth commandment begins exploring a right relationship with our fellow man with the foundational relationships of humanity, the family. The family is the building block from which society can be organized into larger groups like tribes or governments.

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.

Each generation looks back upon the prior with a certain amount of loving contempt. I know that this is an odd phrase, but hear me out. We fundamentally love the generation that brought us into the world, yet at the same time, we struggle with that generation as we seek to assert ourselves and our own vision for the way life ought to be.

Yet, in this commandment, we are reminded to learn from and respect those who have come before us. We are reminded by Luther to honor, serve, and obey, as well as to love and cherish them. This reflects Solomon's wisdom in Proverbs 23:22 "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." The fourth commandment comes with the promise that in honoring our parents our days will be long. This makes good sense. Our parents, when they exercise their parental authority in a godly manner, look out for us, seeking to keep us safe to the best of their ability. Having a larger pool of experience to draw from, parents are in a position to see what lies ahead with greater clarity and offer advice and/or warnings to those with lesser capacity to see. Thus, as we honor and obey our parents, we likely ensure a longer life simply by avoiding unnecessary pitfalls and dangers.

Thoughts for Reflection

How has the advice you received from a parent helped you navigate your life thus far?