


END-TIMES ISSUES



#96 Commandment #5 – The obligations it represents (2).

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor* your father and your mother, ..."

Exodus 20:12a and Deuteronomy 5:16a (NIV)

*(Often translated as "glory," when referring to God.)

"Each of you must respect* your mother and father ..."

Leviticus 19:3a (BSB)

*(In most passages, this word is translated as "fear.")

SO FAR... We have looked at two issues involving how the Fifth Commandment principle applies to human relationships.

- The "narrow" focus, related to parents.
- The "wider" focus, the principle, as applied to other authorities.

TODAY... We plan to look at the third issue.

- The "broad" focus, how all people are to treat each other, in their various roles in society.

⇒ What we've observed ...

Scripture describes every category of human interaction that involves superiors, subordinates or equals, in terms of *family relationships*. This points to the connection between the Fifth Commandment and these other relationships.

- The interaction within the family is the *first* experience that children have, for learning about the nature of authority and how to respond to it.
- This experience teaches the child how to interact with other authorities, later in life.

Implied by this Commandment are not only the obligations of *subordinates*, but also those of the *authorities*. Each has responsibilities toward the other; and *each* needs to avoid sinning against the other.

- All of these interactions could be summarized by the word "*honor*" – a word that Scripture applies not only to superiors, but also to subordinates and equals. (Also, the word "*love*.")

⇒ Today ...

We plan to observe some of the specific obligations and prohibitions that people have toward each other, whether it involves interactions between authorities and those under their authority, or interactions between equals.

- This will be based on the questions/answers found in the Westminster Larger Catechism. But more importantly, we need to consider the Scriptures that the catechism uses to support its statements.*

We recommend focusing first on the general concepts, and then expand your focus to the details. Make it your goal to recognize these issues, when you come across them in Scripture, and in life.

.....

* [In rare instances, there may be a typographical error that leads us to a passage that they did not intend to use. Our copy of the catechism had one such error. (We did find the originally-intended passage.)]

⇒ Regarding the catechism's Scripture proofs ...

- Be aware that the Scripture passages used by the catechism tend to be *examples*, rather than *commands* or *instructions*. (They are *applications* of the commands and instructions.) The context will show us whether the example represents righteous or sinful actions. (We can also consider any relevant commands and instructions found in Scripture.)
- Since the various authority situations are *parallel* in nature (all being described in terms of family relationships), a reference to one type of relationship can be viewed as representative of them *all*.

If we don't understand the reason for a passage:

- We can read the context – and usually it will become clear.
- We can also look for other passages that have a similar focus. (There are often *many*, but the space in the catechism is limited.)

Q. What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

A. The general scope of the fifth commandment is the performance of those duties that we mutually owe in our various relationships, whether to those set over us, to those set under us, or to equals.

- We introduce this group of questions with a question we included last week. This is because it points out some Scripture references that tell us we *all* have responsibilities toward each other.

What does Scripture say?

- Having "brotherly love" for each other; honoring one another above ourselves (Romans 12:10). [Note the family concept.]
- Submitting to one another, as defined in the verses that follow in the context (Ephesians 5:21).
- Honor all people (1 Peter 2:17).

To make things easier, we are going to split the answers into small segments, and place them in the "What does Scripture say" sections.

Q. What is the honor that we owe to those in authority over us?

A. The honor that we owe to those in authority over us is the following:

- The obligations we have toward the authorities over us are ...

What does Scripture say?

- all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; ...
- *Our heart attitude*: The honor that we owe to our parents and other authorities (Leviticus 19:3; Malachi 1:6).
- *Our words*: Examples of verbally expressing honor (in the context of *their* culture) – the mother being called "blessed" (Proverbs 31:28); the husband being called "master" (1 Peter 3:6). (We might express this honor in a different way today.)

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- *Actions*: Examples – rising in the presence of the aged (Leviticus 19:32); the king bowing down before his mother (1 Kings 2:19). [In our culture, we may have different legitimate ways to express this honor.]

- prayer and thanksgiving for them; ...

- To be done for *all* who are in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

- imitation of their virtues and graces; ...

- When their life reflects an example of godly character, *follow their example!* (Of course, if they are sinning, do the opposite!)
- We can follow the examples of the apostles (as seen in Scripture), as well as other people who provide a godly example of how to live (Hebrews 13:7; Philippians 3:17).

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- willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; ...

- The key word is "lawful." *Don't* obey them if they want you to sin!
- A variety of verses can be found, applying this principle to our response to our parents, civil government, church leaders, masters/employers, people who have wise counsel, etc. (Ephesians 6:1-2, 6-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14; Romans 13:1-5; Hebrews 13:17; Proverbs 4:3-4; 23:22; Exodus 18:19, 24).

- due submission to their corrections; ...

- We need to accept necessary discipline, and *continue to honor the authority* – even if the discipline seems unpleasant (Hebrews 12:9 and context).
- We must watch our attitude, even if the authority is unjust (1 Peter 2:18-20).

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- fidelity to, defense of, and support of them as individuals and in their roles of authority, according to their various ranks and the nature of their roles; ...

- *Fidelity – Trustworthiness*. Our actions need to demonstrate that we can be *trusted* (Titus 2:9-10).
- *Defense* – Doing what we can to *prevent harm* to the authorities who are over us (1 Samuel 26:15-16; 2 Samuel 18:3; Esther 6:2). These three examples show the extreme – protection from death. But as a *principle*, it also applies to *other* types of potential harm (such as the destruction of one's *reputation*).
- *Support* – Providing for them in whatever way need, so that they can accomplish the purpose for which God has placed them in that position (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Galatians 6:6; Genesis 45:11 and 47:12). Notes: ① This may include (but is not limited to) financial resources. ② The type of help will be influenced by the nature of their authority. ③ We also owe them certain things simply because they are fellow-humans – as indicated by the "all" and "one-another" verses that were mentioned previously.

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- and bearing with their infirmities and covering them in love, so that we may be an honor to them and to their oversight.

- *Infirmities* – i.e., their weaknesses. We might first think that this refers to the *sins* they might commit; but the focus here includes any lack of "management skills" or other shortcomings. *Not all weaknesses are sins*... an example being: the weakness of old age (Proverbs 23:22). But this obligation also applies to how we respond to authorities who are harsh or cruel (1 Peter 2:18, following Jesus' example, in vs. 21-23). There was also a situation, in which an imperfect parent was *literally* "covered in love" (Genesis 9:23).

- **The goal of doing these things**: To fulfil your obligation to "love your neighbor as yourself," as it applies in this situation. The authority will find working with you to be a joy and an honor, and will also be blessed by the relationship (two examples: Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 31:23). (If you do these various things and it *doesn't* happen this way, then it won't be *your* fault.)

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Q. What are the sins against those in authority?

A. The sins of subordinates against those in authority over them are the following:

- We now focus on the sins that we must *not* commit against authorities over us. Many of the Scripture references will be *examples* of people who are committing the sin:

What does Scripture say?

- all neglect of the duties required toward them; ...

- What you *omit*: Things you fail to do. An example of this: *not* taking care of one's aged parents (Matthew 15:4-6).
- The other parts of this answer focus on wrongdoing in your *actions* (what you *do*) and in your *words* (what you *say*).

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- envy of, contempt for, and rebellion against those over them as individuals or in their roles of authority in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; ...

- **Envy** – Scripture contains numerous examples of people who had envy or jealousy for the authority that others had. Dathan and Abiram were envious of Moses and Aaron (Psalm 106:16-18). Simon the sorcerer envied the apostle's ability (authority) to cause the Holy Spirit to come upon those who believed the Good News (Acts 8:9-24).
- **Contempt** – Disrespect, treating them as inferior or worthless. (This is often linked to exalting yourself or someone else.) Examples: The people wanted to be ruled by a king, rather than by God (1 Samuel 8:7); this is how people in Jerusalem and Judah treated the aged and the honorable – and this was one of the reasons God was going to punish them (Isaiah 3:5).
- **Rebellion** – An example: The rebellion of Absalom against his father, King David (2 Samuel 15:1-12).

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Two observations:

- ① The things we just described are wrong (i.e., sin), whether we are committing them against people as *individuals* (example: a parent, Exodus 21:15), or as *authorities who are simply doing their duty* (example: Saul, as the newly chosen king, 1 Samuel 10:27).
- ② This part of the answer assumes that the authority is doing what is "lawful." * If this is the case, it is sin if we refuse to pay attention to their:
 - **Counsel/guidance:** An example of some who *didn't* pay attention to the guidance they received (1 Samuel 2:25b).
 - **Commands/corrections:** An example of a stubborn and rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

* (If the authority is *not* doing what is lawful, these specific instructions do not apply.)

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- and cursing, mocking, and all such obstinate and scandalous behavior as proves to be a shame and dishonor to them and to their oversight.

- **Cursing/mock**ing – There are direct commands against this conduct (Exodus 22:28), statements about those who do it (Proverbs 30:11, 17), and examples (2 Samuel 16:5-8).
- **The end result of doing such things:** The *opposite* of the things mentioned in the previous section. Authorities working with you would consider the job to be a burden. Your obligation is to *honor* those who have authority over you; and you would instead be bringing shame and dishonor upon them (an example in the context of the family, Proverbs 19:26). This is *not* "love for neighbor."

Scripture generally deals with those *under* authority (= the subordinates) *first*; then it deals with the authority. Following that order, we now change our focus to the duties of the *authority* ...

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Q. What is required of those in authority towards those under them?

A. Those in authority, according to that power they receive from God and the role they have been given, are required to do the following:

- Here, we begin to focus on the authority's obligations. *The specific application of each principle will vary, being depending on the nature of the role they have been given by God.*

What does Scripture say?

- to love, pray for, and bless those under them; ...

- **Love** – This is not the "romantic" type of love that the world focuses on, but a "commitment" type of love – a commitment that seeks the good of the recipient. This includes love within the family (Colossians 3:19), but is not limited to it. We are to have this type of love for *all* people.

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- **Praying** – Authorities praying for those under them: the prophet Samuel praying for King Saul (1 Samuel 12:23); Job praying for his children (Job 1:5).
- **Blessing** – Examples: King Solomon blessed the whole assembly (1 Kings 8:55-56); Jacob blessed his 12 sons (Genesis 49:28); also, it's a basic principle (Hebrews 7:7).

- to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; ...

- **Instruct / counsel / admonish** – Examples: parents are to instruct/teach their children in the Word of God and how it applies to life (Deuteronomy 6:6-7); training children in how to live, based on Scripture (Ephesians 6:4).
- Non-parental authorities may have to train those under them in other types of matters; but none of this training is to go against the teachings of Scripture.

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- approving, commending, and rewarding those who do well and disapproving, reproving, and chastising those who do bad; ...

- **For those who do well** (⇒ approving, commending, rewarding) – Treating them with honor/respect (1 Peter 3:7); commendation/praise (1 Peter 2:14; Romans 13:3); rewarding them (an example in Esther 6:3).
- **For those who do bad** (⇒ disapproving, reproving, chastising) – the "rod and reproof" for children (Proverbs 29:15); the punishment of evildoers by civil government (1 Peter 2:14); wrath/sword by civil government (Romans 13:3-4).

- protecting and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body; ...

- **Providing/protecting** – Job's example (Job 29:13-16); Isaiah describes this obligation (Isaiah 1:10, 17).

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- This includes a focus on *spiritual* matters (Ephesians 6:4).
 - This includes a focus on *physical* matters, such as providing for those who belong to your household (1 Timothy 5:8).
- and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary behavior, to bring glory to God, honor to themselves, and so preserve the authority that God has given to them.
- *Grave/wise/holy/exemplary* – a description of their godly conduct. ["Grave," as used here, means "serious."]
-
- **The end result of doing such things:** The authority is to set a good example for others (1 Timothy 4:12), which results in God being honored/glorified (Titus 2:3-5, especially the last part of v. 5). They gain the fear/respect of those under them (1 Kings 3:28); and provide no reason for their authority to be discredited (Titus 2:15).

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Q. What are the sins of those in authority?

A. The sins of those in authority are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, the following:

- An authority *not* doing his job is sinning. But there are other sins they could also be guilty of committing...

What does Scripture say?

- An example of leaders not doing their job (Ezekiel 34:2-4).
- inordinate seeking of their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; ...
- *Being self-focused (in various ways)* – A greater focus on *one's own* interests, reputation/glory, well-being, etc., than on what honors God, and what is good for others (Philippians 2:21; John 5:44; 7:18; Isaiah 56:10-11; Deuteronomy 17:17).

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- commanding things that are unlawful or not in the power of their subordinates to perform; ...
- *Ordering subordinates to do something that is illegal or sinful.* Examples: promoting idolatry (Daniel 3:4-6) and suppressing the Good News about Jesus (Acts 4:17-18).
 - *Ordering subordinates to do something that is beyond their capability.* Examples: a manager taking away resources, yet demanding increased production (Exodus 5:10-18); religious leaders placing heavy burdens on people, yet not doing anything to help them (Matthew 23:2, 4).
- approving, encouraging, or favoring subordinates in doing what is evil; ...
- *Encouraging and rewarding sinful conduct* – Even *knowing* about sinful practices being committed by subordinates, and choosing to ignore the situation, is sin (1 Samuel 3:13). An *extreme* example would involve encouraging murder (Matthew 14:8; Mark 6:24; 2 Samuel 13:28).

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- dissuading, discouraging, or disapproving subordinates in what is good; ...
- It's wrong to encourage what is *bad* (previous section) ... but it's also wrong to discourage what is *good*.
 - Examples: The leaders tried to discourage people from believing Jesus' words (John 7:46-49); someone who criticizes every tiny detail, until the other person becomes discouraged (Colossians 3:21); trying to keep people from doing good (Exodus 5:17).
- correcting them to excess; ...
- The statement that "our parents disciplined us as they saw fit" may imply parents do it imperfectly. This would mean it's possible for them to sometimes overdo it (Hebrews 12:10).
 - The Law limited the amount of punishment that could be given, depending on the nature of the crime (Deuteronomy 25:3).
 - Encouragement for those who may have to endure unwarranted punishment (1 Peter 2:18-20).

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- careless neglect or leaving them to being wronged, to temptation, or to danger; ...
- Examples: Judah neglected his responsibilities to provide for his son's widow (Genesis 38:11, 26; this eventually lead to more sin being committed); Gallio, the proconsul, ignored the mob, when the people beat up the synagogue ruler (Acts 18:17).
- provoking them to wrath; ...
- Example: anger being caused by an authority's *ongoing mistreatment* of those under him (Ephesians 6:4).
- and in any way dishonoring themselves or lessening their authority by unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.
- The conduct of the authority: Any behavior of his own that diminishes his honor and authority, his reputation, etc.

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- Examples: The loss of self-control by Noah, when he got drunk (Genesis 9:21); King Rehoboam, who listened to foolish advice, ignored the people's concerns, harshly responded to them, and lost their respect and loyalty (1 Kings 12:13-16); King David, as he apparently ignored his son Adonijah's self-exalting behavior, which resulted in Adonijah attempting to usurp the throne (1 Kings 1:6); the priest Eli, who honored his sinning sons (thus dishonoring God), by permitting them to continue their desecration of the offerings and their immorality at the temple (1 Samuel 2:29-31).
-
- **The end result of doing such things:** In all this, authorities bring dishonor upon themselves; their authority may be discredited; and God is not glorified. They can do this by the way they treat those under their authority; but they can also do it by their own personal conduct.

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Q. What are the duties of equals?

A. The duties of equals are the following:

What does Scripture say?

- to pay attention to the dignity and worth of each other; ...
- We are to honor *all* people – which includes equals (1 Peter 2:17).
- to give honor to others, letting them go before one's self; ...
- Honoring others above ourselves (Romans 12:10).
- and to rejoice in others' gifts and advancements as though they were one's own.
- Consider others more important than yourself; be focused on what is good for *them* (Philippians 2:3-4); be interested in other people and what's happening in *their* lives (Romans 12:15-16).

25

Q. What are the sins of equals?

A. The sins of equals, besides the neglect of the duties required, are the following:

What does Scripture say?

- NOT fulfilling one's duties is sin (Romans 13:8; also James 4:17); but there are other ways that equals can sin against each other:
- undervaluing the worth of others; ...
- This description of "terrible times" includes many forms of conduct that downplay the value of other people (2 Timothy 3:3 + context). An example from the book of James: the way the richer people were mistreating the poorer ones (James 2:1-4).

As equals, children learn there are relationships in which a person is *not* to rule over the others, or submit to the other's every demand. As equals, we need to honor/respect *each other*.

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- envying their gifts; ...
- Don't envy each other (Galatians 5:26). Example: Joseph's brothers envied him (Acts 7:9). The people at Corinth apparently wanted certain gifts that they thought were "better" than the others; in reality, *all* gifts are needed, and *all* are important, in the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12-14).
- grieving at the advancement or prosperity of others; ...
- Examples: Moses' brother and sister were upset that God spoke through Moses, and not through them (Numbers 12:2); Haman was angry that Mordecai was honored by the king, and *he* wasn't (Esther 6:12-13).
- and usurping one another in preeminence.
- Examples: Diotrephes wanted all the attention, and mistreated anyone who got in the way of that attention (3 John 1:9). Jesus' 12 disciples were arguing over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God (Luke 22:24).

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ONE ADDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.

⇒ The purpose of the catechisms was to focus on *human* relationships. So there is one relationship they didn't mention.

It's NOT that they don't believe it.
Rather, it just wasn't the issue being examined.

⇒ This commandment teaches us about our relationship to *God*.

⇒ Many Scripture passages describe God as our *Father* and we as his *children* (Malachi 1:6; Hebrews 12:9; this is a common theme throughout the New Testament).

★ This means: Many of the principles mentioned in this catechism apply to our relationship with God. ★
Just as we owe honor/fear to *human* authorities, so also we owe honor/fear to *divine* authority (i.e., God).

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OUR MISSION:

⇒ Most of us are in a variety of situations.

- We may have an authority role in one situation, and a subordinate role in another. We also have equals.

⇒ This means all aspects of the Fifth Commandment Principle will most likely apply to us.

We should make it our goal to...

- ✓ Review the various aspects and applications of this commandment, and consider how they relate to our lives.
- ✓ Focus on some of the issues that may be our greatest weakness.
- ✓ Recognize the seriousness of the matter.
- ✓ Pursue change, based on Scripture and the power of God.
- ✓ Don't use another's sins to excuse our own!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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The CATECHISM (in modern English, accessed 9/16/25):

- Westminster (larger) – Text: https://www.cityreformed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/wlc_in_modern_english.pdf; questions #126 - #132; Scripture references: https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Larger_Catechism.pdf

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

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