

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 33 (Q3LES8) - HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: EPHESIANS 6: 1 - 10**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we completed our discussion of the fourth commandment. We learned that the sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from our work and normal recreations, and that we are to spend the whole day in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy. God requires us to dedicate one whole day in seven to His worship. We also learned that the reasons associated with this commandment are, God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employment's, his challenging a special propriety on the seventh, his own example in resting after the six days of creation, and his blessing the sabbath day.
4. **Introduction:** This lesson we will continue our discussion of the ten commandments, covering the fifth commandment. We will cover SC questions 63, 64, 65 and 66.
5. **Questions:**

Question 63: Which is the fifth commandment?

Answer: The fifth commandment is, *Honor thy father and mother, that thy days may be long upon the land that the Lord thy God hath given thee.*

Question 64: What is required in the fifth commandment?

Answer: The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, and equals.

Question 65: What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

Answer: The fifth commandment forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.

Question 66: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?

Answer: The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.

6. The SC, LC and WCF.

- a. The fifth commandment is covered in four questions in the SC, questions 63 through 66. The LC spends considerable more time on this commandment, dedicating 11 questions to it, questions 123 to 133. Much of this is spent explaining the duties required of the separate specified relations, and TV uses this approach in his discussion of the SC. The WCF does not contain any specific discussion of this commandment that I could find.
- b. It is of note that, at this point, the LC introduces the discussion of the next six commandments with a question concerning the sum of the commandments containing our duty to man, q 122. It asks, *"What is the sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man?"* It answers, *"The sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man, is, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them to do to us."* This question, combined with question 102, which asks what the sum of the commandments containing our duty to God, cover the same information contained in SC question 42. You remember that question 42 asks: "What is the sum of the ten commandments?" The answer is: "The sum of the ten commandments is, To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves."

7. Honor thy father and thy mother.

- a. What is the definition of "father and mother", as used in this commandment?
- b. This issue is not covered in the SC. The LC devotes a complete question to this important matter, question 124, and provides numerous scripture proofs. TV addresses the matter, but his answer is not supported by scripture proofs. This matter is important because we quickly jump from "father and mother", to relations with all people in the SC, with no discussion as to how we got there.
- c. Question 124 of the LC asks: *"Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?"* It answers: *"By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth."*

d. Let's look at some of the scripture proofs. Remember, what is being demonstrated here is the inclusion of all of these people in the within the scope of this commandment.

- father & mother – (Eph 6:2 ***“Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise:”***)
- superiors in age and gifts – (1 Tim 5:1 ***“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;”***)
- those placed by God's ordinance over us -
 1. family – (2 Kings 5:13 ***“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?”***)
 2. church – (2 Kings 2:11 – 12 ***“(11) And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (12) And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”***)
 3. commonwealth – (Isa 49:23 ***“And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”***)

d. So by “father and mother”, this commandment is not just talking about our relationship with our natural parents, but about the entire spectrum of relations between man and man.

8. What is required in the fifth commandment?

- a. Preserving the honor. What honor is due superiors? LC question 127 says of this: ***“The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, work and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands, and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defense, and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honor to them and to their government.”***
- b. Performing the duties. “which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations as superiors, inferiors, and equals.” SC q50 says ***“the duty which God requireth of man is obedience to his revealed will.”*** So we should guide our

duties which belong to us, to superiors, inferiors and equals in accordance with the direction provided by God.

- c. Belonging to every one in their several places and relations as superiors, inferiors, and equals.
- d. What are inferiors, as used in here? Those in subordinate positions. Youth in relation to their elders. TV defines inferiors as :”not only children, but also wives, servants, people, subjects, the younger, and the weaker in gifts or graces.” This definition does not appear to mean inferior in the connotation denoted today, but the order as defined in God’s Word. See 7c above.
- e. What is the duty of inferiors to their superiors? (LC q127)
 - All due reverence in heart, word, and behavior.
 - Prayer and thanksgiving for them.
 - Imitation of their virtues and graces.
 - Willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels.
 - Due submission to their corrections.
 - Fidelity to, defense, and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places
 - Bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, so that they may be an honor to them and to their government.
- f. What is required of superiors toward their inferiors? (LC q 129)
 - To love, pray for, and bless their inferiors.
 - To instruct, counsel, and admonish them.
 - Countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well.
 - Discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill.
 - Protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul, body and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God, honor to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.
- g. What are the duties of equals? (LC q 131)
 - To regard the dignity and worth of each other
 - In giving honor to go one before the other
 - To rejoice in each others gifts and advancement, as their own

9. What (sins are) is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

- a. What is forbidden in this commandment?
 - The neglecting of
 - Or doing anything against

The honor and duties which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.

- b. What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors? (LC q 129)
- All neglect of the duties required toward them.
 - Envying at contempt of and rebellion against, their persons, and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections
 - Cursing, mocking and all such refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonor to the and their government.
- c. What are the sins of superiors? (LC q 130)
- Neglect of the duties required of them.
 - An inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure
 - Commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform
 - Counseling encouraging or favoring them in that which is evil
 - Dissuading discouraging or discountenancing them in that which is good
 - Correcting them unduly
 - Careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger
 - Provoking them to wrath
 - Any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior
- d. What are the sins of equals? (LC q 132)
- Neglect of duties required.
 - The undervaluing of worth.
 - Envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement or prosperity of others.
 - Usurping pre-eminence one over another.

10. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment.

- a. Sometimes study pays off. When I read this answer, I thought that the second commandment has a promise when it says “and showing mercy unto thousands of them that obey my commandments” Yet, God’s Word (**Ephesians 6:2**) says, How can this be?
- b. Reading the commentary by TV, I found he dealt with this first. I’m not sure I totally understand the answer, but he says: *“The promise of God’s showing mercy unto thousands, annexed unto the second commandment, hath not respect unto that commandment only, but is made to those that love God and with that, keep all his other commandments; whereas this promise of long life is particularly applied unto the keepers of this fifth commandment.”*
- c. What is included in this promise of long life?

- Long life (Deut 5:16 ***“Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”***)
- Blessing and prosperity (Eph 6: 2 – 3 ***“(2)Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; (3)That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”***)

d. But what of those believers who see not long life or prosperity?

- TV says: ***“This promise is to be understood with this exception – except so far as it may serve for God’s glory and their own good” (Psalm 119:71 “it is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes)***

and

(Isa 57:1 “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.”)

11. Application to believers and non believers

- a. How is it possible to comply with this commandment considering many of the leaders that we have today, many of which are obviously immoral and in many cases profess a disbelief in God and demonstrate contempt for his Word & law? We see so many children who do not respect their parents. Elders no longer seem to have respect. Ourselves see a government which is not in compliance with God’s word. How does this commandment apply to believers vs non-believers?

12. SUMMARY

- a. While the fifth commandment appears to apply only to the relationship of a child to his parents, when the full scope of God’s Word is applied, it becomes direction for relations between man and man. This commandment requires preserving the honor and performing the duties which belong to all of us. The neglecting or doing anything against this honor and duty is forbidden. If we comply with the requirements of this commandment, God has promised us long life and prosperity, as long as it serves for God’s glory and our own good.