

# Deuteronomy 5:16

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-5/deuteronomy-516/>

*God asks the Israelites to honor their parents so that they might live a long and prosperous life in the Promised Land.*

## The Fifth Commandment

God places a great emphasis on family. Family was the entity that laid the foundation for all other forms of authority and submission within the ancient cultures. The LORD issued a command to His chosen people saying, “*Honor your father and your mother.*”

The term “honor” carries the idea of physical heaviness (2 Samuel 14:26; Job 6:3). The form of the Hebrew verb used here means “to lend someone weight,” or “to acknowledge someone as weighty or important.” That is, to honor someone by showing love, obedience, and support. Thus, God commanded the Israelites to *honor* their *father* and *mother*.

Then God goes beyond what might have normally been expected and gives two reasons as to why children were to obey their parents. Moses stated, “*that your days may be prolonged.*” Children who respect, love, and care for their parents will be rewarded by the LORD with the gift of longevity.

The other reason why children were to obey their parents was so *that it may go well with them on the land which the LORD their God gives them*. The Ten Commandments are the foundation for the social-organizing structure of self-governance, which is the governing structure God designed for His priestly nation. Children are to learn the rule of law through obedience to their parents. When they grow older, they can learn to transfer their obedience to God. When children obey their parents, they learn to govern themselves. Without governing themselves, they will not be able to set aside their own appetites and pleasures and love their neighbors, which is to be the unique governing culture God wants to exhibit to the world.

This commandment was very important for God’s people because it is the first that has a promise attached to it (Ephesians 6:2). When children obey and fear their parents, they build up rather than pose threats to their society. Self-governance leads to beneficial behavior that leads to a long life. People

cannot govern their appetites typically spiral into self-destructive behaviors that shorten life as well as making it less enjoyable.

The New Testament explicitly repeats this teaching in the book of Ephesians. Paul said, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth” ([Ephesians 6:1-3](#)). The honoring of parents leads to longevity and thus children would do well to follow this commandment because it was given by the LORD.

The New Testament promotes self-governance as the preferred organizing principle for human activities. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-governance, self-control, or discipline ([Galatians 5:23](#)). Believers are exhorted to use their freedom to love one another, thus fulfilling the whole Law, rather than choosing to “bite and devour” one another ([Galatians 5:13-15](#)). By obeying parents, children learn to make good choices to serve others rather than following their own appetites.

#### **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>16</sup> Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the Lord your God gives you.**