

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT.

GOD in Our Relationships

The Difference Maker

Rey De Armas

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT.

GOD
in Our
Relationships

The Difference Maker

Rey De Armas

© 2014 LifeWay Press®

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to LifeWay Press®, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0152.

Item: 005688370

ISBN: 978-1-4300-3563-3

Dewey decimal classification number: 231.7

Subject heading: GOD \ TEN COMMANDMENTS \ SPIRITUAL LIFE

Eric Geiger

Vice President, Church Resources

Ed Stetzer

General Editor

Trevin Wax

Managing Editor

Faith Whatley

Director, Adult Ministry

Philip Nation

Director, Adult Ministry Publishing

Joel Polk

Content Editor

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, copyright 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

For ordering or inquiries, visit www.lifeway.com; write LifeWay Small Groups; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152; or call toll free (800) 458-2772.

Printed in the United States of America.

Adult Ministry Publishing
LifeWay Church Resources
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, Tennessee 37234-0152

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE GOSPEL PROJECT AND WRITERS . . .	4
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY	5
SESSION 1:	6
<i>Our Relationship with Our Parents</i>	
SESSION 2:	18
<i>Our Relationship with All of Life</i>	
SESSION 3:	30
<i>Our Relationship within Marriage</i>	
SESSION 4:	42
<i>Our Relationship with Possessions</i>	
SESSION 5:	54
<i>Our Relationship with the Truth</i>	
SESSION 6:	66
<i>Our Relationship with Our Desires</i>	
SMALL-GROUP TIPS AND VALUES	78

ABOUT THE GOSPEL PROJECT

Some people see the Bible as a collection of stories with morals for life application. But it's so much more. Sure, the Bible has some stories in it, but it's also full of poetry, history, codes of law and civilization, songs, prophecy, letters—even a love letter. When you tie it all together, something remarkable happens. A story is revealed. One story. The story of redemption through Jesus. This is *The Gospel Project*.

When we begin to see the Bible as the story of redemption through Jesus Christ, God's plan to rescue the world from sin and death, our perspective changes. We no longer look primarily for what the Bible says about us but instead see what it tells us about God and what He has done. After all, it's the gospel that saves us, and when we encounter Jesus in the pages of Scripture, the gospel works on us, transforming us into His image. *We become God's gospel project.*

ABOUT THE WRITERS



Rey De Armas serves as one of the campus pastors at Christ Fellowship in Miami, leading the Coral Gables campus. He is married to Lauren, and they have two daughters: Zoe and Lexi. During his free time, Rey enjoys dates with Lauren, playing with his daughters, and playing percussion.

Barry Cram adapted this material for use with small groups.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Welcome to *The Gospel Project*, a gospel-centered small-group study that dives deep into the things of God, lifts up Jesus, focuses on the grand story of Scripture, and drives participants to be on mission. This small-group Bible study provides opportunities to study the Bible and to encounter the living Christ. *The Gospel Project* provides you with tools and resources to purposefully study God's Word and to grow in the faith and knowledge of God's Son. And what's more, you can do so in the company of others, encouraging and building up one another. Here are some things to remember that will help you maximize the usefulness of this resource:

GATHER A GROUP. We grow in the faith best in community with other believers, as we love, encourage, correct, and challenge one another. The life of a disciple of Christ was never meant to be lived alone, in isolation.

PRAY. Pray regularly for your group members.

PREPARE. This resource includes the Bible study content, three devotionals, and discussion questions for each session. Work through the session and devotionals in preparation for each group session. Take notes and record your own questions. Also consider the follow-up questions so you are ready to participate in and add to the discussion, bringing up your own notes and questions where appropriate.

RESOURCE YOURSELF. Make good use of the additional resources available on the Web at www.gospelproject.com/additionalresources and search for this specific title. Download a podcast. Read a blog post. Be intentional about learning from others in the faith.

GROUP TIME. Gather together with your group to discuss the session and devotional content. Work through the follow-up questions and your own questions. Discuss the material and the implications for the lives of believers and the mission to which we have been called.

OVERFLOW. Remember ... *The Gospel Project* is not just a Bible study. *We* are the project. The gospel is working on us. Don't let your preparation time be simply about the content. Let the truths of God's Word soak in as you study. Let God work on your heart first, and then pray that He will change the hearts of the other people in your group.

Session 1

**Our
Relationship
with Our
Parents**

While on the cross, [Jesus] commits his mother to the disciple, teaching us to show every care for our parents even to our last breath.¹

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (CIRCA 347–407)

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

The Bible speaks to every aspect of life—including the family. God has something to say about our relationship with our parents. After all, He's the One who chose who our parents would be. And no matter our experience with our mother and father, God's Word speaks to us giving instruction on our attitude toward them.

Watch movies and television long enough, and you'll notice the different depictions of parents. Some stories reflect writers' idealistic views of parenthood. Other stories are a projection of the writer's own difficult relationships with his or her parents. Think of the current television shows that claim to be about the family. Each show has a different perspective on the roles of father and mother. If our media choices shape us more than God's Word, we're more likely to have a skewed vision of our parents. And how we view our parents will often determine how we treat them.

What image comes to mind when you think of parenthood? Does it line up with a view that honors or tears down?

In the Fifth Commandment, God promises life to those who honor their father and mother. We obey this Commandment by respecting the authority God has given our parents and by caring for them in their old age. Honoring our parents is also a way we reflect Jesus Christ. He perfectly loved and honored His mother and father.

In this session, we'll see that our parents are put in place by God to guide us and love us. Our respect for our parents demonstrates our love for them, in the same way that our reverence for our Heavenly Father demonstrates our love for Him. It's important that we recognize that God's Word is clear as to how we should treat our parents—in a way that honors both them and the Lord.

Over the next week, engage the daily study material. These three sessions center on how to find God in our relationships with our parents. Interact with the Scriptures, and be ready to interact with your small group.

1

Parental Authority is God Given

Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and so that you may prosper in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

DEUTERONOMY 5:16

The Fifth Commandment is different from the other nine for at least two reasons—it comes with both a tag and a promise. First, let's look at the tag: "as the LORD your God has commanded you." The other commands don't refocus attention on God as the Source of their authority. All Ten Commandments are from God, but here extra care is given to reinforce the truth that God is the One commanding us to obey our parents.

Next, let's look at the promise: "so that you may live long and so that you may prosper in the land the LORD your God is giving you." Long life and prosperity come from honoring our parents. God provides an incentive to obey this command. In the Old Testament the punishment for dishonoring your parents was serious. In some cases dishonorable children were put to death for rebelling against their parents (see Deut. 21:18-21). Just as disobedience led to death in the garden of Eden, disobedience to one's parents would lead to death in the promised land. On the other hand, obedience would prolong life and freedom.

What are some of the blessings children receive when they honor and obey their parents?

What are the blessings we receive as adults who honor our parents?

This Commandment reveals a foundational way we can honor God in our relationships. We do this by placing His design for family over our sinful nature. In other words, we honor God by honoring our parents. Because God is the One who put this command in place, we can honor and obey God through our obedience to our parents. As we get older and more independent, we may find it hard to believe this command still applies to us. But honoring our parents is a lifelong endeavor that God wants us to pursue with obedience.

We should remember that obedience with a poor attitude isn't honor. There is such a thing as disrespectful obedience, and it's not what God desires. God doesn't just want our actions to

be right while our hearts are not. If obedience were enough, then God would have said “obey” your parents. But He didn’t. This Commandment implies a respectful posture toward those who have authority over us.

Why are we prone to disrespect authority as children and teenagers?

What are some examples of a respectful posture toward authority?

Many Christians are discouraged by the idea of keeping this Commandment. Why? It’s because their parents have led them to adopt a distorted view of God. This command can be especially difficult for those who grew up without fathers or mothers who provided, protected, and cared for them. Still, it’s possible to honor our parents even when they make mistakes. The Bible doesn’t tell us to honor our parents because they are always right, it tells us to honor them because God has commanded it.

Scripture isn’t silent toward those who suffer at the hands of bad parents. God knows our pain, and He desires to fill the void left by an absent or abusive parent. Psalm 27:10 says, “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD cares for me.” Good parents reflect God by comparison. Bad parents reflect God by contrast. Either way, God desires to show us all a divine love that’s far greater than that of any parent. And He has demonstrated His love through the giving of His Son.

How does your relationship with your parents impact how you view God?

How can we show respect to parents who do not deserve respect?

How have the roles of father and mother changed in pop culture over the years? Do you see the trajectory as positive or negative? Why?

2

Bring Joy to Those Who Gave You Life

So we see that this Fifth Commandment to honor our father and mother doesn't lose its relevance when we leave home. We're to honor our parents as long as they live. This isn't something we grow out of. Even when we begin families of our own, it's important that we honor our parents. The Bible shows us how in Proverbs 23:

²² Listen to your father who gave you life,
and don't despise your mother when she is old.

²³ Buy—do not sell—truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

²⁴ The father of a righteous son will rejoice greatly,
and one who fathers a wise son will delight in him.

²⁵ Let your father and mother have joy,
and let her who gave birth to you rejoice.

PROVERBS 23:22-25

Previous generations provide wisdom that helps guide our future. Throughout the Book of Proverbs, readers are encouraged to listen to the wisdom of their parents. The writer encourages his son to apply wisdom to his life. In heeding the wisdom and instruction we receive from previous generations, we can avoid troublesome mistakes.

What practical ways can we show respect to our parents in their old age?

Later in life, we honor God by caring for our parents. Paul said: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, that is his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8). God is serious about caring for family. This isn't just a command; it's a warning to examine our hearts to see if we are truly believers. We are to honor our parents by caring for those who once cared for us.

As parents, we must make sure we are reflecting God in how we treat our children. We answer to God for how we lead our families. Our kids are gifts from God, and He has given us the responsibility to bring them up in the Lord. In Ephesians 6:4, following the restatement of the command to honor our fathers and mothers, the apostle Paul wrote that fathers should not stir up anger in their children but instead bring them up in the training of the Lord. Here are some verses that speak of a parent's responsibility to treat children in a manner similar to how God has treated us:

Teach them the way of the Lord.

⁴ Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. ⁷ Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7

Discipline them in love.

¹² For the LORD disciplines the one He loves, just as a father, the son he delights in. ¹³ Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding.

PROVERBS 3:12-13

Provide for them.

⁹ What man among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him.

MATTHEW 7:9-11

Jesus compared God's love for us to the way we provide good gifts to our children. He spoke of prayer by appealing to a parental principle that is universally recognized—even imperfect parents give good gifts to their children. From this we recognize that parents should never intentionally harm their children but instead provide for them in a way that lovingly reflects the Father's heart.

How does the gospel impact the way we care for our parents? How does the gospel impact the way we parent our children?

How does our experience of forgiveness free us from living in regret and empower us to fulfill our responsibilities as parents and/or children?

3

Honor Parents as Christ Honored His

Caring for our parents reflects the very heart of Jesus. We can see the love Jesus had for His mother, especially at the cross:

²⁵ Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

JOHN 19:25-27

Imagine the difficulty of living through this moment. Put yourself in the scene as you watch the child you raised suffer and die a horrifying death. Mary mourned the loss of her child, but she was not alone. In this moment of physical torment, Jesus took time to demonstrate love to His mother. He acknowledged her presence and commissioned one of His disciples to care for her.

This powerful scene depicts the close relationship Jesus had with both Mary and the disciple He loved (most likely, John). If you were going to ask someone to take care of your mother, you would probably turn to a close friend. There would need to be a solid, trusting relationship between the one making the command to care and the caretaker.

We reflect the Savior when we put the needs of others above our own. In this moment, Jesus could have been focused on His own situation as He endured the agony of the cross. But even here we see His self-giving love. He placed the needs of His mother above His own. In this event He demonstrated what honoring one's parents looks like. Even in death, Jesus was obedient to God's commands.

What do we learn from Christ's love for His parents?

Why is it important to see in this story that Jesus is an example of love and also the Savior who forgives our failure to love?

In Jesus, we receive the love and acceptance we have craved from our parents. Whether your parents were present or absent, you understand the deep human longing we all have for affection. Only the love that Jesus provides is great enough to fill our need.

Too many times we see God the Father as a demanding tyrant who is never satisfied with our obedience. Always disappointed, He hovers over us with a rod of punishment. The gospel doesn't change our view of God; it reinforces what has always been true about God! Because of Jesus, we know that God loves us as His children. The Father sees us through His Son.

We often strive for acceptance and affection from our earthly parents. Thankfully, the love of Christ provides fulfillment that is greater and lasts longer than even the love our parents can provide. Not only that, the sacrifice of Christ covers our own failures as parents.

What are some of your regrets in how you have treated your parents?

What about your children? How does the gospel apply to those regrets?

How does a Christian understanding of authority differ from that of the world?

GROUP STUDY

Warm Up

Honor your father and mother.

DEUTERONOMY 5:16

Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise.

EPHESIANS 6:2

The root word for *honor* in this passage is the Hebrew word *kabad*—which is the same word used for *glory* in the Old Testament. The idea here is to give something weight or make it heavy. This means children should hold their parents in high esteem. Also make note the verb is an imperative—which emphasizes the force of the command. It indicates there is no exception to the rule. The command doesn't depend on how the parents respond to the child. We are to honor our parents regardless if they have earned it or deserve it. We honor our parents out of respect, honor, and obedience to God.

Who do you know in your life (friends or family) that has personified this command? In what ways did they “give weight” to their parents and honor them?

What does God's promise look like to you?

As parents age, it is important that we remember to show them the honor they deserve. It can be easy to forget about our parents as we grow. Time becomes scarce. The distractions of life can keep us from showing love and honor toward those who provided for us in childhood. God does not promise our parents will be around forever. But He does give a promise to those who honor their parents for as long as they live.

Discussion

When you stop and think about it, the Fifth Commandment is God's way of extending this privilege of living with Him through us toward our parents. Through Christ, we have received the spirit of adoption as sons, and now have the right to address God as Father (see Rom. 8:15). As sons and daughters of God, we have a new kind of relationship with the Father—not as enemies but as family (see Rom. 5:10). So as we respond to God in obedience to the Fifth Commandment, we also reflect the kind of relationship we have with God to our parents. And we are all drawn closer to God.

Use this time to share what God has revealed as you connect the dots and pursue the gospel. The questions below are from your daily reading assignments. They will guide your small-group discussion.

1. How does your relationship with your parents impact how you view God? How can we show respect to parents who do not deserve respect?
2. How have the roles of father and mother changed in pop culture over the years? Do you see the trajectory as positive or negative?
3. What are some practical ways we can show respect to our parents in their old age? What do we communicate about ourselves if we are indifferent to our parents?
4. How does the gospel impact the way we care for our parents? How does the gospel impact the way we parent our children?
5. Do you think our culture as a whole honors and respects the elderly? Why or why not?
6. How does our experience of forgiveness free us from living in regret and empower us to fulfill our responsibilities as parents and/or children?
7. What do we learn from Christ's love for His parents? Why is it important to see in this story that Jesus is an example of love and also the Savior who forgives our failure to love?

Conclusion

How does honoring our parents impact our mission? In a day and age when children and teenagers are expected to rebel, we put forth a vision of adolescence that emphasizes obedience and honor. In a culture that despises the elderly, we put forth a vision of old age that emphasizes wisdom and respect. Our mission is enhanced by how we treat those in authority over us. In honoring our parents, we demonstrate to a watching world the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Spend some time praying this for you and for your group:

“God, I need You to help me in this. Give me the ability to show the respect and honor You want me to give to my parents. Let my relationship with my parents be a reflection of the gospel to others. Help me to forgive where there needs to be forgiveness. Amen.”

1. St. John Chrysostom, as found in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. by Philip Schaff (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1890), 318.
2. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: The Modern Library, 1920), 327-28

I have frequently gained my first real insight into the
character of parents by studying their children.²

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

NOTES

Bearing God's Image in Our Relationships

The last six of the Ten Commandments serve as a guide for our relationships with others. Love for God must overflow for other people, including parents, spouses, children, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even enemies. We're all created in the image of God. Respect for the His image shows respect for the One who gave the Commandments. *God in Our Relationships* will show how the Ten Commandments dictate how we relate to one another.

6 SESSIONS

- Our Relationship with Our Parents
- Our Relationship with All of Life
- Our Relationship within Marriage
- Our Relationship with Possessions
- Our Relationship with the Truth
- Our Relationship with Our Desires

The Gospel Project invites you to dive deeper into the things of God, lifts up Jesus, focuses on the grand story of Scripture, and drives you to be on mission. This small-group Bible study provides opportunities to study the Bible and to encounter the living Christ. And what's more, you can do so in the company of others, encouraging and building up one another.

ISBN 978-1-4300-3563-3

