



# The Ten Commandments

Sermon Transcript  
May 8, 2016

Home: The Place Where Faith is Formed  
Exodus 20:12

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on May 8, 2016 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio copy of the sermon on CD is available by request at (860) 563-8286. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com).

## **Sermon Text**

### **Exodus 20:12**

<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”

### **Deuteronomy 5:16**

<sup>16</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

### **Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, <sup>2</sup> that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. <sup>3</sup> Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

<sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

### **Ephesians 6:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

## The Ten Commandments

You shall have no other gods before me.  
You shall not make for yourself any idols.  
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.  
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Honor your father and your mother.  
You shall not murder.  
You shall not commit adultery.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
You shall not covet.

## Introduction

As we continue to make our way through the Ten Commandments, this morning we come to a point of transition. This morning we are moving from one section of the Ten Commandments to another. The first four commandments teach us how to love God. That is what we have been looking at the last several weeks. The first four commandments tell us who to worship, how to worship, when to worship and where to worship. Here is what we learned to this point.

**Who to worship:** We are to worship God and God alone. There is no other.

**How to worship:** We are to worship God the way he has prescribed us to worship him. We are not free to make up our own way to worship God. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ and in the corporate setting of the church.

**When to worship:** Worship is a 24/7 deal. All of life is an act of worship. So whatever we do in word or in deed, we are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

**Where to worship:** By tracing the theme of the Sabbath through Scripture, we discovered that Jesus is our Sabbath rest and so it is through faith in Jesus we find rest for our souls and Jesus is the object of our worship. Jesus said, *“Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

This morning we transition into the second portion of the Ten Commandments, and it is here where we begin to learn what it looks like to love others. By being second, it doesn't mean that loving others is secondary to loving God. When Jesus was summarizing the commandments he said in Matthew 22 that *“the first and greatest commandment”* is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. But then he said, *“the*

*second is like it . . . Love your neighbor as yourself.*” In other words, you can’t separate the two. To love God means that you love people. And so these last six commandments teach us what our duty is to our fellow man. It starts by addressing our relationships at home. *“Honor your father and your mother.”*

One thing I have enjoyed about this series on the Ten Commandments is the conversation and “the chatter” it is causing. I have heard about some good conversations that are taking place in community groups and I have enjoyed that in my community group as well. I also had a parent tell me this week how he is using the weekly guide with his young children and how they are memorizing the Ten Commandments. He told me that he will often ask his boys, “what does this commandment mean?” I was so encouraged to hear that and it is an illustration of what we will be talking about this morning when we look at the fifth commandment.

I have also received some good interaction via email. This week I received an intriguing question in anticipation of this week’s message on the fifth commandment. The question centered around where this commandment fits among the ten. Traditionally, it is considered the first of six commandments that have to do with how we love others. This person wondered though, whether this commandment is better suited to be placed in the first section of the commandments. It sure would make for better symmetry: 5 x 5 is a bit neater than 4 x 6. And furthermore, the fifth commandment could possibly serve as a summary statement of the first four commandments because the issue at the heart of the fifth commandment is recognizing and honoring authority. I will make the case this morning that the first way a child learns to honor God is by learning to honor their father and their mother. However, given the fact that every source I consulted divides the Ten Commandments 4 x 6, makes me hesitant to announce the discovery of something new. Furthermore, the family and the home do serve as the most foundational for all human relationships and so it seems to be a logical place to start with the second tablet of commandments. But by pondering this question, at the very least, I am of the conviction that the fifth commandment serves as a hinge from the first tablet to the second tablet. What this commandment will tell us is that the home is the most significant place where I am to learn what it means to love God and love others. The family is where faith is most transmitted from one generation to the next.

When you read this commandment, it is addressing the child. *“Honor your father and your mother.”* But we would miss the point if we didn’t see how this commandment is also speaking to the father and the mother. There is the responsibility of the father and the mother to be honorable with how they carry out their responsibility. So as we look

at this commandment, I want to first address parents before I address children. Some of us are both! In discussing these things, my intention is to encourage both groups this morning. Often we leave a topic like this feeling beat up because if you are like me, you know all too well your struggles and failings as a parent or a son or daughter. Family life is often messy life. You don't get to pick who your parents are or who your siblings are. And even when you do get to pick family members, like spouses, there is no guarantee that it will be easy and it is a challenge. And so, I want to end with the greatest encouragement of all. The gospel and the Holy Spirit empower us to be the parent and the child God calls us to be. My prayer is that you leave this morning both challenged and encouraged as we reflect on the fifth commandment, "*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*"

### **Home: Where Honor is Formed**

At the heart of the fifth commandment is the role of the family unit in passing faith down from one generation to the next. In fact, the passing of faith down to the next generation is your highest calling as a Christian parent. I wonder if we lose sight of this as parents in middle-class America. It often seems to me that the most important thing on a parent's mind in America is that our kids do well in school so they can get into a good college so that they can get a good job and so that they can make a good living and consequently live a good life. I am all for college. Our third of four children graduates next week. And yet, as important as these milestones may be, the reality is that there is no guarantee of getting a good job and furthermore, there is no guarantee that a good job leads to a good life. And yet as parents, raising our children in this culture, we tend to put all our eggs in this basket and this is how we tend to measure our parenting.

Dr. Leonard Sax is a family physician and he wrote a book that I am going to be referring to throughout this sermon. The title alone was what enticed me to buy the book: *The Collapse of Parenting: How We Hurt Our Kids When We Treat Them Like Grown-Ups*. I think every parent ought to read this book. I don't know what his faith background is, but the title alone is counter-cultural. My fear for parents today is that parents are afraid to be parents. Dr. Sax says that "parents today suffer from role confusion."<sup>1</sup> "Role confusion" is the diagnosis of a German sociologist by the name of Norbert Elias. His study has shown that in the second half of the twentieth century in the West there has been a transfer of authority from parents to children. He concluded, "the authority of parents, and, even more significantly, the importance of parents, in the lives of their children has declined substantially."<sup>2</sup>

So what is our number one responsibility as parents? In our culture, we have made the achievement and success of our kids our number one priority in parenting. But if the push for our kids to succeed is divorced from meaning and purpose in life we miss the greater calling of parenting. Dr. Sax concludes, “one of our tasks as a parent is to instill a sense of meaning, a longing for something higher and deeper. Without meaning, life comes to seem pointless and futile. Without meaning, young people are more likely to become anxious and depressed”<sup>3</sup> Apart from knowing the meaning of life, not even success and achievement can satisfy. I am not sure how Dr. Sax defines “meaning” or where he finds “a longing for something higher and deeper,” but as Christian parents, we know where that meaning comes from. And so our highest calling as parents is to help our children know what it means to live with God as the center of our lives and what it looks like to live a life of humble service to others. Simply put, your number one job is to teach your children what it looks like to love God and love others. The Ten Commandments become the syllabus that lays out the objectives of what you want your children to learn from you.

As parents, we are called to teach our children what is important. In Deuteronomy 5, you find the Ten Commandments listed all over again. Once again, you find the fifth commandment here and the call to *honor your father and your mother*. It is stated in this passage with a little more information than what we have in Exodus 20. Here it says, in Deuteronomy 5:16, “*Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*” In this passage you find the added promise that “*it may go well with you*” if you *honor your father and your mother*.

When Israel receives the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, it is before their forty years of wandering in the wilderness because of their disobedience. They didn’t trust God enough to enter the promised land. You could say that because of their disobedience, “it didn’t go well for them.” Now in Deuteronomy, they are at the end of those forty years and they are being given a second opportunity to enter the land God promised to them. So Moses is reminding them of the Ten Commandments and what he has passed on to them from God. In Deuteronomy 6:2 we see the purpose for this reminder, so that “*you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son.*” In other words, putting God at the center of all of life was something that parents were to teach to their children. That is exactly what it says in verses 6-7, “*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children.*” Paul makes the same point about our role as parents in Ephesians 6:4 when he instructs fathers to bring up their children “*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” This is

our highest calling as parents. And the promise found in both Deuteronomy and Ephesians is that if our children embrace this instruction “it will go well with them.” And so your primary role as a parent is to teach your children how to live life with God at the center and how to humbly live a life of service to others.

Perhaps the task of passing faith to the next generation seems rather intimidating to you, a task seemingly beyond your capability and capacity. But you are more equipped to do so than what you may realize. Deuteronomy 6 gives us a template for how to pass faith down to our children and it starts with God being at the center of our lives. In verses 5-6 it says, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*” The study called “Sticky Faith” was an extensive research into how faith is passed down to the next generation. They discovered that parents were the number one influence on the faith of the next generation. Christian Smith says this, “Most teenagers and their parents may not realize it, but a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people’s religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents. . . . When it comes to kids’ faith, parents get what they are.”<sup>4</sup> So if you want your children to find their meaning in God, then that is where you have to find your meaning in life. By the way, if you add believing grandparents into the mix, the influence is even more powerful, because “faith will feel much more of a natural given.”<sup>5</sup>

Simply put, the passing of faith is something that is caught as your faith is on display in the everyday activity of life. In Deuteronomy 6:7 parents are instructed, “*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*” If God is at the center of your life, God shows up in the normal activity and conversation of your day. And so your job is to be fully present in the normal activity of life and enjoy time with your children. In the last seven days, how many times have you shared a meal together as a family? Do you realize that kids who had more meals with parents were less likely to have internalizing problems, such as feeling sad, anxious and lonely? They were less likely to have externalizing problems, such as fighting, skipping school, stealing etc. They were more likely to help others and to report feeling satisfied with their own lives.<sup>6</sup> Why is that? It is because through the context of relationship you are passing security on to your children and you are relating faith to life. By the way, make it a “screen-free” environment. No cell phones and no TV. Share your life with each other. I would also suggest that when you are in the car, limit the ear plugs and time in front of a screen. We found that some of the most significant conversations happen in the car.

Finally, I want to say this to parents. When you look at Deuteronomy 6, what is it that needs to be passed from one generation to the next? It is the observance of these commandments. It is teaching our children how to live. That implies that you have authority as a parent and you need to exercise your authority. I found it very fascinating that Leonard Sax has concluded that “teaching self-control is one of the first tasks of the parent.”<sup>7</sup> Studies have demonstrated that a child’s self-control at age 11-14 is a good predictor of the child’s health and happiness 20 years later. Kids need authority. In fact, a family can’t function without authority.

This is what concerns me. Parents are afraid to be that authority. Here is what Sax recommends to parents. “Command. Don’t ask. Don’t negotiate.”<sup>8</sup> You don’t even have to explain why you want your young child to do something. The simple fact that you have ordered it, is reason enough. “Because I said so,” is a legitimate response for a young child. When they get older, sure you can explain things more. But early on, your job is to teach them how to respond to authority. All of life is lived under authority and the first place a child learns that is in the home. Our kids learned early on that our home was not a democracy. There truly was “a king and a queen of the castle.” But do you know what, we never had a problem with our kids in school. Why? First of all, we taught them that the proper response to authority is to obey. Secondly, we told them that if they got in trouble at school they would get in trouble at home and our first assumption would be that they were the problem and not the teacher. We are under authority at work. We are under authority with government. We are under authority with God. We teach our kids how to live under God’s authority by first teaching them how to live under a parent’s authority.

Passing faith down to our children is the number one responsibility of a parent. At the end of the day, a child needs to eventually own that faith. I can’t produce that in my child’s life. That is a work of the Spirit of God. At the same time, my responsibility is to be a faithful parent and to recognize how God works through believing parents. And so, God needs to be at the center of my life. As parents, we need to make sure that we are taking time to be engaged in the life of our kids and to enjoy them. And then my God given role is to help them learn self-control so that when they are on their own, they know how to live a life of accountability to God. By God’s grace, you can do it. Even if there is a period of straying, many come back. Home is where honor is formed.

### **Honor Your Father and Mother**

I would like to say something to the children this morning. This commandment tells



you how you are to respond to your dad and your mom. It says it this way in Ephesians 6:1-3, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”* If you are still at the age where you are growing up, you honor your parents by receiving their instruction and following what they say. Now, the promise that comes with this commandment doesn’t mean that you will never have a problem in life if you obey your parents. At the same time, you can be spared a lot of problems if you learn to listen to what your parents are telling you. There is no one in this world who loves you more than your parents.

Do you know what my mom use to say to me when I didn’t want to do what she told me to do? She would say, “you may not thank me now, but you will thank me later.” I used to hate when she said that! Do you know what I used to say to my kids? “You may not thank me now, but you will thank me later!” I loved saying that! Do you know why? It is true. This statement tells us that your parents know more about life than you know. What they are telling you is for your own good. You need to trust them.

When our kids were really little, before they were even in kindergarten, we used to tell them that we hoped that someday they would find a husband or a wife that they could love like dad and mom love each other. For the fun of it, we would hug and kiss each other in front of them just to hear them feign their objection. But deep down, this brought them joy and security. And we would often say to them that when they did find someone to marry to make sure that person loved Jesus. We had a friend who was somewhat surprised that we were drilling this into the hearts of our kids at such an early age. Well, we sure weren’t going to wait until they were fifteen to tell them that. We wanted that to be a natural expectation of theirs as well. We have one daughter who is married. And so when this “boy” first expressed interest in “my daughter” she made my day when she said to him; “I don’t mind getting to know you. But before it goes any further, I need to know what kind of spiritual leader you are going to be.” And what a great spiritual leader he is. My greatest joy when we visit them in Portland is going to their church and watching him lead her in the worship of God. See, we know how important that decision is to shaping the rest of life.

As children, you honor your parents by receiving their instruction. That is the very definition of wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 3:1-2 says, “*My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*” So guess what I wrote on my mom’s Mother’s Day Card. The first word was “thanks.” She was right.

I would be remiss if I didn't add to this point the reminder that as adult children we honor our parents as they get older by being there for them. With rather strong language, in 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul says that if we neglect the care of our parents we are actually "denying the faith." He makes that comment in the context of caring for widows. And so this call to honor our parents is not something that just applies to us when we are children. It is ongoing as they get older. Cherish them.

## **The Gospel and the Holy Spirit**

Finally, one thing that is true about family is that no one knows us better than the people in our family. So what that means is that no one knows my faults and my failings better than my wife, my children and my parents. I have wondered to myself from time to time, "how in the world can I pass faith to my kids when they know me with all of my warts?" It would be relatively easy for my kids to identify the ways I come short as a parent. So where is the hope for this broken vessel?

It starts with the gospel. What is the gospel? It is the acknowledgment that I don't fully keep the commandments and that I do fail and that I need Jesus. Leonard Sax says that the first thing to teach children is humility. He said the number one sin for middle class America is "failure."<sup>9</sup> We don't have room for failure. We don't have room for our kids to fail. That is unfortunate, because we all fail. And the beauty of failure is that it leads to humility. And humility leads you to be interested in other people and to be gracious to others. That is the essence of the gospel. We model that humility by saying we are sorry when we fail. We model that humility by expressing our dependence upon God. We model our humility through our weekly worship of God in church. We model that humility by allowing our kids to fail. When they fail, we extend the same grace we need from them when we fail. We help them learn how to find their rest in Jesus and the cross. Also, as they get older, they ought to be allowed to ask challenging questions about faith as they try to understand where Jesus fits into their lives.

We also have the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this verse, being filled with the Spirit is compared to being drunk with wine. When you are drunk with wine, you don't do what comes natural to you. So it is with the filling of the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, we don't do what comes natural to us. What comes natural to us? It is natural for me to think of me first. But when I am filled with the Spirit, I think of others before myself. When Paul talks about being filled with the Spirit, he applies it to our relationships at home. He applies it to husbands and wives and then parents and children. In other words, for me to be the

parent and the child God wants me to be, I need the power of the Holy Spirit to help me put the needs of my family before my own needs. That brings us back to where we started in Deuteronomy 6. That means that I am seeking first the kingdom of God and that God is shaping my heart to serve him and to serve my family.

## Conclusion

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”* The home is the most significant place where I am to learn what it means to love God and love others. The family is where faith is most transmitted from one generation to the next. The call is not to be a perfect parent or a perfect child. Rather, the call is to be a parent of faith and a child of faith and to embrace the truth that faith is best formed in the home. Parents, be faithful and tend to your faith knowing that whether you see it or not, you are having impact on the next generation. Children, wisdom is found in obeying your parents and listening to their instruction. May God bless our families and may this church be a family of families. We are God’s family and so no matter the structure of your home, whether strong or weak, you have a family here, united together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Leonard Sax *The Collapse of Parenting: How We Hurt Our Kids When We Treat Them Like Grownups* (New York: Basic Books, 2016) chp. 1

<sup>2</sup>This conclusion summarizes the relevant aspects of Norbert Elias’s essay “Changes in European standards of behavior in the twentieth century,” in *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth Centuries*, edited by Micahael Shroter and translated by Eric Dunning (New York: Columbia University, 1998) 23-43

<sup>3</sup>Sax, chp. 7

<sup>4</sup>Christian Smith quoted on <https://vialogue.wordpress.com/2013/01/01/sticky-faith-notes-review/> January 1, 2013

<sup>5</sup>Kevin DeYoung *Five Points For Parents Who Want To Pass On The Faith* [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) December 2, 2014

<sup>6</sup>Jerica Berge and colleagues, “The protective role of family meals for youth obesity: 10 year longitudinal associations,” *Journal of Pediatrics*, volume 166, pp. 296-301, 2015

<sup>7</sup>Sax, chp 3

<sup>8</sup>Ibid

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., chp. 8

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## COMMUNITY GROUPS

### Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Where did you grow up as a child? What were summers like where you grew up? When you were growing up, where was “a place of ‘sunshine;’ (joy) in your life?” How so?
2. Spend some time as a group reciting the Ten Commandments together and rehearsing the Q & A catechism for this week. Open with a time of prayer. Reflecting on the fifth commandment and the catechism for this week, what do you want to thank God for? What do you want to confess? What do you want to ask God to help you with in living out this commandment?
3. Share what you learned about the fifth commandment this week.

### Diving Into The Word

4. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Discuss the role of the family in passing faith to the next generation. Share with the group the role your family played in passing faith to you. What were some of the contributing factors from your family that impacted your faith (either positively or negatively)? Why do you think parents are the most influential factor in passing faith to the next generation?
5. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9 again. Take some time to make observations from this passage as to how parents pass faith to their children. What principles do you discover from this passage? Discuss how these principles of discipleship can be applied to other relationships in the church. How do you think your community group can live out some of these principles of discipleship?
6. Read Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-3. Based on your situation, what does it look like to honor your parents? How can you be supportive of parents in the church? What other areas of authority in our lives deserve our honor? Read Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:17; Ephesians 6:5-9 - share what it looks like to give honor in these areas.
7. Read Ephesians 5:18-21. Discuss the impact the filling of the Holy Spirit has on our relationships. How can this help us live out the principles we find in Deuteronomy 6?

### Taking It Home

8. Think of your family. What is one thing you would like to do this week in your family as a result of this conversation?
9. As a result of your study: What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask help for?