

### Adult Lesson Seven

# A Mom And Pop Operation

*Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12, NRSV).*

Commandment five marks the beginning of the commandments dealing with our relationships with other humans. In many ways this commandment serves as the bedrock for commandments six through ten in a similar way that the first commandment is foundational to all the others. Among the commandments that seek to answer the question "What kind of society does God want?" the first answer is "One that puts the family unit first." During a time when most societies around them viewed the elderly with contempt because they could no longer produce, the Israelites were told that their worth was not based on their ability to produce. Their worth was based on their relationship with the LORD. This point is driven home in the last six commandments, but most clearly in this one. Commandment five places the responsibility to make sure that all people are treated with respect squarely within the most basic structure of all societies, the family.



When teaching this lesson keep in mind that there are some men and women who have endured unbelievable pain and suffering at the hands of their parents. Stress that this is not what God intended. Be sensitive to these individuals' particular needs and frustrations. The biblical truth concerning the importance of honoring one's mother and father is not nullified by their bad experiences. A strict interpretation that this commandment refers only to biological parents is not necessary. You may suggest that class members consider adults who guided them or filled parental roles in their lives, then use these persons in some of the exercises.

Some class members may use the class discussion to sort through their needs in relation to their biological parents. Allow them to do so without dominating the entire class. At some point forgiveness may be necessary if they are to move on with their lives. If the issue threatens to overshadow the class session, you may wish to offer to speak with the individual after class or later in the week while firmly expressing the need to move on with the lesson.

#### OBJECTIVES

- To determine the importance of family in God's society.
- To examine on what basis we value people.
- To commit to change our lives to reflect the place of family in God's commandments.

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:12
- Luke 2:41-52
- Matthew 15:3-9
- Ephesians 6:1-3

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of Handout #7.1 for everyone in the class
- Chalk/chalkboard; marker/dry erase board; or something else to write on
- Pencils/pens

## Part 1 - Who's your daddy?

Say **Today we're moving away from the commandments that shape the kind of people we are to be in relationship to God and moving to those commandments that shape the kind of people we are in relationship to each other. The second half of the Ten Commandments deal with the type of society that God envisioned for his people. Today we're starting with the basics.** Distribute Handout #7.1 and give the class four or five minutes to complete it. When they are done, go over the worksheet together, allowing those who wish to share what they have written. Many, if not most, of these answers will deal with mothers and fathers. Be careful also to notice such phrases as "she was like a mother to me" or "he was closer than a brother."

Then say **For most people, their first significant relationship is with their parents, either adopted or biological. Science has proven that people need a family structure if they are to mature and become productive members of society. This is how God created us, and it is on this foundation that the commandments begin dealing with social issues.**

## Part 2 - Focus on the family

Have someone read Exodus 20:12, then ask **Why do you think it was necessary for God to make a commandment dealing with honoring parents?** (In the cultures surrounding the Israelites, old people were often viewed as insignificant and were left to die when they could no longer produce. Sometimes we think that our newer ideas and concepts are better than our parent's. We often need reminders that those who have gone before us have a great deal of wisdom to share with us.) Ask **What is wrong with viewing people as unimportant once they cannot support themselves? If we don't base someone's worth on what he or she can give to us or society, what should we base it on?** (People's worth is based on being created in the image God and their ability to be in relationship with him. In the time Exodus was written this was most clearly understood within the covenant community.)

Explain **The theme of commandments five through ten is "take care of each other." This was in contrast to the societies already in Canaan, and in many ways is in direct contradiction to what we teach in our own society. What are some sayings that we have that are in contradiction to the idea that we must care for each other?** (Look out for number one. Do what you have to do. The end justifies the means. In the end, you have to do what's right for you.)

Bring the focus back to commandment five by saying **The first place we are to look out for each other is within the family. This commandment is often quoted to kids and teens, but it is really aimed at the adults and how they interact with their elderly parents. How does our society deal with the elderly? (This should have a wide range of answers, from taking care of them to a lack of respect.) Is there a marked difference between how the well-to-do and the poor elderly are treated?** (Yes. Those that can afford it have nice retirement communities with attendants to assist when help is needed. The poor are often placed where they are not cared for properly.) It may be necessary at this point to revisit the earlier issue of what gives people value.

## Part #3 - WWJD?

Say **Let's look at two New Testament passages.** Have someone read Luke 2:41-52. Ask **What do you think it was like to be Jesus' parents?** Allow discussion after each question. **How would you have felt if your child was lost in a big city for three days? What would you have said when you found him?**

Ask **Do you think that it's important that Jesus was obedient to his parents?** (Yes. As a human, Jesus was subject to and shaped by the same commandments and rules that shape all of us.) **Do you think that Jesus would have increased in wisdom or in favor with God and people if he hadn't been obedient to his parents?** (No.)

## Part #4 - Children or church?

Have someone read Matthew 15:3-9. Explain **It had become customary for some Pharisees to make a sacred vow to give all that they had to the temple. However, the gift was not actually claimed until the death of the person that had made the vow. But, because the vow was considered binding, it would have been inappropriate, they argued, to then give some of this money to support their parents. This allowed the children to use of all their money until their death without caring for the elderly parents, a direct violation of commandment five. As Jesus points out, they were violating a commandment of God in order to honor a human custom.**

Ask **What do verses 8 and 9 say about people who worship God but do not honor their parents?** (Their hearts are far from God. They worship God in vain.) Now explain that **In the United States we have the luxury of rarely truly being in need. The honor and respect we owe our families, however, is more than just a monetary issue. While being relatively secure financially, we often leave ourselves emotionally and spiritually impoverished. Ask Are there things we do today that violate our responsibilities to our families in the name of God or our traditions?** Write these things on the board. Some of these things might include getting so caught up with church activities that there is no time left for your family. Allowing no time to spend with our parents as they get older. (Remember, the needs are often more than just financial.) Getting so caught up "providing" for our children that we don't provide the attention and love our parents crave.

Draw a line on the chalkboard and ask **If we are to allow this commandment to shape the kinds of people and families we are, what things do we need to change in our lives?** Allow the class to come up with answers.

In closing, read Ephesians 6:1-3. Offer a prayer of thanks for families and people who have guided and shaped the members of the class. Encourage the class to pray individually that God will help them to honor their parents and place emphasis on their families by changing the aspects of their lives that were talked about in class.

## Who Am I?

This exercise will help you think back to your early childhood and sort through old memories. Answer the questions as best you can.

1. What were the first words that you ever spoke? Do you remember saying them or has someone told you what you said? If someone has told you, who was it?

2. What is the earliest happy memory that you can recall? What people does it involve?

3. Who were the most formative people in your life before the age of ten?

Between ten and twenty?

Today?



4. What sort of things do you and your family do that is special or unique?

5. The fifth commandment says to "honor your father and mother." What sorts of things do you do to honor your parents?