

Back to the Basics: Luther's Large Catechism – The Fourth Commandment

The Ten Commandments Preach Repentance

The Ten Commandments show us our sin and how much we need a Savior.

- C** You shall have no other gods.
- You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
- Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.



Prayer: These are the holy Ten Commands
 God gave to us by Moses' hands
 When high on Sinai's mount he stood,
 Receiving them for our good.
 Have mercy, Lord! Amen.

Proverbs 23:22 – Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Proverbs 3:11-12 – My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

The Six Chief Parts:

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

The Fourth Commandment



Luther's Explanation from the Small Catechism:

Honor your father and your mother.

(God protects His gift of authority in home and government)

<i>We should fear and love God</i>	First Commandment Foundation
<i>so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities</i>	Negative Command
<i>but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.</i>	Positive Command
	Description of love fulfilled in Christ.

Second Table of the Law: Love for the neighbor

Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:36-40

Ham dishonors his father, Noah (Genesis 9)

The Fourth Commandment: *You shall honor your father and your mother that it may be well with you and you may live long upon the earth.*

1. The Commandments fall into two major categories. What are they? [103]

2. What is the distinction between loving somebody and honoring that person? [105-107]

3. What is our obligation toward our parents? [108-111]

4. How does living out our calling, in our station in life, provide us a much better and more God-pleasing way to honor and serve God than by self-chosen works that have no command from God? [113, 117-124]

5. How does the fallen world despise this commandment? [127-130]

6. What are the implications of the fact that God attaches a promise to this commandment? [131-139]

7. What does this commandment have to say about respect toward other authorities in our life? Who are these other authorities? [141-143]

8. How is a faithful Biblical understanding of what is truly a good, God-pleasing work such a liberating truth for us? [145-149]

9. How are governing authorities similar to our parents? [150]

10. What evidence do you see in modern life “that everyone wants to be his own master, accountable to no superior, caring about no one, and doing what only pleases himself”? [154]

11. Who are our spiritual fathers in Christ and how are we to respect and honor them? [158-163]

12. What are parents and other authorities to be urged and encouraged to do? [167-169]

13. What should be the particular concern of parents for the sake of civil authority and the Church? [172-178]

Closing Prayer

“You are to honor and obey
Your father, mother, ev’ry day,
Serve them each way that comes to hand;
You’ll then live long in the land.”
Have mercy, Lord! Amen.

These Are the Holy Ten Commands (LSB 581, stanza 5)

The Fourth Commandment and Vocation

From the Table of Duties, which teach of our calling, or vocation:

- **Of Civil Government** – 1 Timothy 3:2-4; Titus 1:9
Civil Authorities and civil leaders are among the “other authorities” of the Fourth Commandment. They are to be honored, regardless of their ways or failings, because of this command of God and because they stand in God’s stead in the “Left Hand” or secular kingdom. Christians may serve in the civil government.
- **Of Citizens** – Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1, 5-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14
Christian citizens are called to look to their civil leaders as “fathers of the community” who are set in positions of authority by God for the common good or welfare of the people. The Christian life includes honor and respect for civil authorities, obeying the laws of the land, paying taxes, and praying for the government and citizens of the country. However, civil authority is not to be obeyed when such obedience would constitute a direct violation of the clear Word of God.
- **To Parents** – Ephesians 6:4
Christian parents are to see themselves as representatives of God. They are not only agents of the “left-hand kingdom” who use the law for the sake of the Gospel, forgiving sin, and nurturing their children in the Christian faith. The exhortation not to “exasperate children” or “provoke them to wrath” is the exhortation to Christian parents to couple the use of the law, discipline, and punishment with compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, so that parents might be toward their children what God is for us. This is the “training and instruction of the Lord” Jesus of which the apostle is speaking.
- **To Children** – Ephesians 6:1-3
Children are to obey their parents (unless their parents instruct them to disobey God’s Word). Christian children are called to honor their parents regardless of their failings. Honoring parents who sin is not the same thing as condoning their sin.
- **To Workers of All Kinds** – Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22
The obligation of workers to honor and obey their employers and supervisors also falls under the Fourth Commandment. Christian workers are to obey and honor their employers and supervisors as they would honor and obey Christ. The word “slaves” is used for workers because they are to see themselves as totally devoted to their master or employer as they are devoted to God.
- **To Employers and Supervisors** – Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1
Christian employers and supervisors honor the Gospel of Christ and faithfully discharge their office under the Fourth Commandment when they treat their employees fairly and with respect and dignity. If, however, an employer treats his workers with favoritism, that is not justification for the workers to dishonor their employer with gossip or unfaithful service.
- **To Youth** – 1 Peter 5:5-6
Humility is characteristic of the honor and obedience that we are all called to extend toward those who are our elders and supervisors or those who occupy positions over us. The assertion that God “opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble,” along with His promise to “lift you up in due time,” continues to develop the theme that there are “consequences” in this life to both obedience and disobedience to God’s Law – particularly the Fourth Commandment – and that these “rewards” and “blessings are ways by which God governs the world in which we live.

**Let each his lesson learn with care,
and all the household well shall fare.**