

Ten Commandments (Part 37)
(The Fifth Commandment – Part 8)

*“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged
in the land which the LORD your God gives you.” (Exodus 20:12)*

The Distinction Between Power and Authority

-Power: the ability to do something

-Authority: the sanction for the *appropriate* use of power

1) The 5th Commandment requires children to conscientiously honor parental authority.

Wilhelmus A Brakel (*‘The Christian’s Reasonable Service’ Vol. 3 p. 193*): *“Take notice of the authority with which God has vested fathers, mothers, and all superiors. Yes, consider it to be a reflection of God’s majesty, and let this motivate you to be respectful and willing to joyously honor and obey them.”*

2) The 5th Commandment requires parents to carefully exercise parental authority.

Robert Lewis Dabney (*‘Discussions: Evangelical and Theological’ Vol. 1, pp. 682-686*): *“Let the extent of the parent’s legitimate or unavoidable power over his children be pondered. As he is industrious and discreet, or indolent and prodigal, he decides for his children whether they shall begin their adult existence with a competency or as paupers. As he is virtuous or vicious, he decides for them whether they shall bear an honored name, or be branded with the marks of infamy at their outset in society. As he is pure and courteous, or coarse and sensual, he assigns to his children a social grade creditable and elevated, giving them a passport to good society, or he condemns them to the association of the vulgar and low. His neglect of their early mental culture determines whether they shall reach adult life stupid boors or educated and intelligent men. Yea, more than this, character itself, at the outset of manhood, is mainly determined by the parents, and that chiefly by their example. So that they have the power of deciding with probable effect whether their children shall begin their careers with base or with virtuous principles and habits.”*

“But the whole of this power is not yet described. All men who understand liberty believe that spiritual freedom, the prerogative of the immortal mind to think for itself, in obedience to the law of conscience laid upon it by its Maker, to judge its own duty, to select its own moral and religious opinions, and to serve its God according to its own understanding of His will—that this is the cornerstone of all other liberty, and the most precious of all. We proudly erect ourselves and declare this to be the crowning prerogative of our manhood. This liberty, we exclaim, is, next to the throne of God, the most sacred thing in the universe. And he who presumes to intrude his fallible will between the creature’s soul and the immediate authority of its only Lord and Judge is guilty of a profane usurpation of the authority of Almighty God. Well, the parent has power almost to invade this sacred liberty of the soul. It is made both his privilege and his duty to impose the principles and the creed which he has sincerely adopted as the truth for himself upon the spirit of his child. Some men, it is known, vainly prate of a supposed obligation to leave the minds of their children independent and “unbiased” until they are mature enough to judge and choose for themselves. But a moment’s thought shows that this is as unlawful as impossible. No man can avoid impressing his own practical principles on his child.”

“There is no power beneath the skies, authorized by God, that is so far-reaching, so near the prerogatives of God Himself. And for that reason, there is none so solemnly responsible. When God has clothed you, O parent, with such powers, with results so beneficent and glorious, and has thus made you so nearly a God to your own children, do you suppose that you can neglect and pervert them without being held to a dire account?”

→Choosing a Spouse