

## **Heidelberg Catechism 104 – Paternal Obligations**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Of the 6 laws that deal with your neighbor, this is the only one that is not negative. It is a command to do...not a command to “not do.” You will hear from God concerning his demand for honoring your fathers.

Our headings are: **Prescribed things (指定遵行的事项). Prohibited Things**

Our goals are: That you **will begin to earnestly consider how to obey this 5<sup>th</sup> command so that there may be order in all levels of society, and you can then advance Christ’s kingdom on earth.**

104 Q. WHAT IS GOD’S WILL FOR US IN THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT?

A. That I honor, love, and be loyal to my father and mother and all those in authority over me; that I obey and submit to them, as is proper, when they correct and punish me; and also that I be patient with their failings– for through them God chooses to rule us.

### **Prescribed Things**

**1. God requires that you honor all your fathers**, not just your biological fathers, and all those who are in authority over you, including your mother and your big sister. God used your closest father to represent all other fathers. This is the one you should love the most. But there are other “fathers” as well.

**a. You must honor your political fathers** – those in authority over you in the civil government, even if they are bad.

Isaiah 49:23 - Kings shall be your foster fathers, And their queens your nursing mothers... (列王必作你的养父，王后必作你的乳母)

**b. You must honor old men** – grandpas...like Elisha called out to Elijah...!

2Kings 2:12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" ...

**c. You must honor your spiritual fathers**...like your pastor, elder, and deacons.

1Cor 4:14 - I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.

**d. You must honor your economic fathers** – your employers.

Ephesians 6: 5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, (5: 你们做仆人的，要惧怕战兢，用诚实的心听从你们肉身

的主人，好象听从基督一般。6：不要只在眼前侍奉，象是讨人喜欢的，要象基督的仆人，从心里遵行神的旨意。)

**e. It is legitimate to include husbands as a type of father as well**, as wives are under the authority of their husbands. A godly wife will honor her husband irrespective of his education, employment, wealth, or social status.

## **2. How do you honor your fathers?**

**a. Have a good heart toward your parents.** Honoring starts in the heart...even of your civil leaders. Always think about what good you can do for them.

Leviticus 19:3 - 'Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths...

**b. Speak well to and of your parents.** This does not mean you defend wrong things your parents might say or do. It means you speak with respect of them and to them. Don't not criticize their weaknesses, but offer sensible solutions. You are commanded to be patient with your parents – all of them - and bear with them in their dimness, for the weaknesses are many. Don't tolerate them, be patient with them! Pray for them. Rebuke if necessary.

1 Timothy 2:1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions (代求), and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and **peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**

This is the only law of the 2<sup>nd</sup> table that has a **reward attached!**

**c. Honor your parents by your actions.** Eg. **Solomon rose** up from his throne when his mother entered the room.

1 Kings 2:19 Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand.

**Joseph bowed**, out of respect, to this father Jacob even though he was Prime Minister of Egypt and provided for him and his starving brothers.

Genesis 47:12 - Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families.

**Shem and Japheth (闪和雅弗) honored Noah by covering his nakedness. Ruth honored Naomi by helping her. And honor must with more than in just symbolic things.** Be prepared to **financially** help your parents, and **take time to attend to their needs.** Follow the example of the young storks (鹤) that instinctively bring food to the old storks (鹤) that can no longer fly. **Honor your parents by following their instruction and example.** After all, what brings greater joy to a parent than to see his children following the Lord?

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is **well pleasing** to the Lord.

**Spiritual fathers-Elders**: Show high reverence to your elders because they are there under the Lord's directions. It is not because of their great ability that you are commanded to respect them. It is because of the honor God put on them that you must honor them.

1Thessalonians 5:12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish (劝戒) you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

**Civil Fathers– Kings**: Many people don't believe that stealing from the government is wrong but stealing from individuals is wrong. But stealing from a thief is still wrong. Jesus paid taxes and you too are to submit to earthly authorities. Apostle Paul was willing to submit to execution by wicked Rome. Fight in the military if need be.

1Peter 2:17 - Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

**Economic Fathers – Employers**: It is always hard to honor and obey one who might be taking advantage of your good nature and not rewarding or recognizing you for all your good work. But you must!

Ephesians 6:5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;

1Corinthians 7:21 - Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. (你是作奴仆蒙召的吗? 不要因此忧虑; 若能以自由, 就求自由更好。)

### 3. How do you make it easy for your children to honor you?

**Think of your own unworthiness and see that you are unworthy of their honor.**

**Examine your motives it would affect the kinds of demands** you make on your children. Ask yourself: Is the way I deal with my children making it easy for them to honor me? Put your children's welfare first. The good shepherd must be willing to die for his sheep.

**Pray for your children**. Jesus prayed for his children in John 17.

**Instruct your children** so they are adequately prepared for their tasks.

**Admonish them** when they are wrong...so they get a sense of what their sins deserve.

**Encourage them** when they are struggling...to know they are not fighting alone.

**Keep your word** as a parent...this is how you picture your heavenly Father.

**Set a good example** for your children that is worthy to be followed. Let them not see a yeller

(大喊大叫的人) or a drunkard (酗酒者), but one who truly and fully honors his Father in heaven.

**Protect your children**—from dangers not only from strangers, but from the internet, and their friends, sometimes.

**Reward them** when they do well. Leave an inheritance for your children, not debts for them to pay.

**Give up your time to talk**...not just about their day...but about their desires.

### **Prohibited Things**

1. God forbids having envious, contemptuous (轻蔑的), or rebellious (叛逆的) thoughts against your fathers...biological, spiritual, civil, aged, or husband. You need to learn to subdue (克服) pride and resentment in your heart so you might honor those over you. Whoever God has placed over you, you must accept and honor, period.
2. God forbids your from speaking ill, cursing, mocking, or gossiping against those he has placed over you.**Look at Ham** 含.

Genesis 9: 20 And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. 21 Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

Instead of honoring his father by covering his sin and covering his father's naked body, Ham broadcasted his father's sin on the streets...dishonoring him. Ham should have shown his father his sin and called him to repentance. **Look how the 10 sons of Jacob** dishonored him with words.

Genesis 37: 31 So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. **34** Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

How amazingly cruel Jacob's sons were to hurt their father in such ways...and tragically...it was a multiplication of how Jacob had deceived his own father many years before when he joined with his mother and pretended to be Esau.

Genesis 27:8 "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. 9 "Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory (好吃的) food from them for your father, such as he loves. 10 "Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."

### **3. What specific actions does God forbid?**

a. God forbids rebellion against your biological parents. A consistently rebellious son was publicly executed.

b. God forbids any and all acts of rebellion against church leaders. One of the worst acts of rebellion is encouraging schisms (分裂). This hurt members and makes life hard for church leaders.

c. God forbids strikes against you employers. Strikes may be legal but they are not moral; they are a form of blackmail (敲诈). Be careful how you deal with this if you are part of a union. Some Christians have asked for exemptions from unions on religious grounds and have received it.

d. God forbids rebellion – the taking up of arms against the state. This is why David refused to kill King Saul, even though Saul was trying to kill him. Instead, David ran away. Even though the State may be corrupt and harsh, the leaders are still your fathers. This is why Jesus paid taxes to Rome. Grounds for revolution are very limited.

4. What happens if you don't submit to those in authority over you? Anarchy (无政府状态) happens.

Your house will be in confusion, churches will close down, traffic jams and robbery will be everywhere. And if you forget the order of importance of the fathers it will be just as chaotic. This is what happened in communism where the civil father usurped (篡夺) the authority of the family and tried to be more important than the father in the home. This is what the state is now promoting in North America. The state wants children to see it as the provider-in-chief.

5. On the other hand, God forbids parents from failing to do their duties to their children.

a. A father who doesn't discipline his children is working for their destruction. Consider Eli.

1 Samuel 2:21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD. 22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress.

Samuel, as Eli, was slack with disciplining his children. David made the same error with his son Absalom. They should have been more like Augustine's mother, Monica, who said she labored more for him after his birth than she did for his birth. She offered Augustine breast milk when he was a baby, but she offered him the milk of God's Word – for years and years...even through years of rebellion. Some parents push their children to do well in school and force them to study on Sunday, or avoid church to go to school or study for exams. If you do this, you are working for the destruction of your children and you must stop.

b. Civil father who imprison thieves rather than requiring that they work and make restitution (赔偿) to those from whom they stole are working for the destruction of those thieves. Civil governments were not given the task of rehabilitating criminals (改造罪犯) ...they are simply to punish them if they were convicted of crimes.

c. An economic boss or father who "pinches his employees belly so he could get fat" is making it difficult for his employees to honor him and work for his good. Not caring for his employees is an attack against the image of God in his employees. Don't be like the ravens (乌鸦) that eat their own chicks. Rather, know that you will have to give an account to God for what you did or didn't do to or for your employees.

### **Conclusion:**

Honor all your fathers. If you don't honor your father -anyone over you-it is a sure **sign of unbelief**. It is a sure sign that you do not honor your Father in heaven. Yes, your parents' demands may seem hard, and may actually **be hard**, but you have to obey and show that you believe in God. But fathers also have an obligation in this command. Fathers are to make it easy for their subordinates (下屬) to honor them by providing for them, loving them, instructing them, and disciplining them, rather than being cruel and crushing. Cruelty is a sign of unbelief.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Do you struggle to honor those the Lord has placed over you? Then let your mind be drawn back to what Christ has done for you and that you are willing to submit to him and his Word. Though pride and resentment of those over you are natural, honoring your father is supernatural. You have been given that supernatural gift of love as a redeemed child of God. And don't forget that there is a promise of great reward for those who honor their parents.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you can't even to begin to obey this command unless you learn to honor your Father in heaven. You can only honor him if you trust in Jesus Christ...trust that he lived and died for you...so you don't have to die for your sins. May you call on the Lord and plead for faith to receive what Jesus did, so you can trust him.