



The Fourth Commandment

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

Honor your father and your mother.

Having considered the commandments pertaining to our relationship to God (first table of the law), we now turn to the commandments pertaining to relationships with our fellow men (second table of the law). Jesus sums up the law in two commandments. We should love God above all things, and love our neighbor as self (Matt 23:37).

It is important to note that the establishment of authority is the first commandment of the second table. One would naturally think that murder, adultery

or stealing are more important prohibitions than disobedience to parents, but it is easy to underestimate the significance of this one.

Why does God begin with the home and parental authority in setting forth our duties and responsibilities to one another? Might it be because what happens in the home is far more important than the world estimates, and possibly far more important than we imagine it to be?

Could it be that we have been deceived by the world's priorities regarding stations and vocations in life? Have we followed the world in placing the vocation of mother and father on a low rung of the ladder when God exalts this office to the highest place of honor?

Is it significant that the office of parent ("father and mother") is the ONLY human office mentioned in the ten commandments, and that God commands it to be "honored"?

Seeing the world as God sees it and judging things as God judges them can turn everything upside down. It can make you look crazy before the world, but the world thought Jesus was crazy too.

If the family functions well in accordance with God's design (not man's foolish re-designs) the other issues addressed in the second table of the law will be manageable. If the family does not function well in accordance with God's design, the enforcement of the second table of the law will become impossible. There is a reason why God begins with the family and authority in the family when He describes our life together in this world. Those who think they can redefine the family without profoundly changing the way we live together are foolish. Those who think they can improve on God's order, confirmed in the commandments, are devilish.

This foolish deception is being propagated by the media today as it has never been propagated before, and it has already twisted the thinking of great numbers in

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Rembrandt, *Moses With the Ten Commandments*. 1659. Oil on canvas, 168.5 cm x 136.5 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

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That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31

Fourth Commandment, cont.

the world. It will not end well. God is not mocked.

All rightful authority comes from God who is “author” of all. God delegates His authority when and where He wishes, and when He does so, it is God Himself who is represented in the authority figure. The enemies of Jesus questioned his exercise of authority. Jesus claimed that the Father gave Him authority to execute justice (John 5:37). Jesus likewise gave authority to the disciples to cast out demons and to heal in His name (Luke 9:1). St. Paul says that rightful government has been “authorized” by God (Rom 13:1). But when God Himself came down from heaven in an awesome display of smoke and fire on Mt. Sinai, He gave His authority on earth to father and mother. He obviously intended for future generations to learn in the home how to live under authority. It is vitally important for children to learn the value and benefit of authority from their parents in their childhood and youth.

Children need love, guidance, counsel, direction, and discipline. The flesh needs to be tamed from the outside until self-discipline can be developed. If children do not receive this training they are usually unprepared and severely handicapped in their adult life. If they do receive this training they are usually well prepared to be productive citizens and to raise their own families. If children have seen and experienced loving, firm, wise authority, they will be able rightly to evaluate authority and to live under it. They will also be able beneficially to exercise authority in their vocations in life. Teaching your children to respect and honor authority is not accomplished by a lecture (such as in confirmation

class) but by on the job training. They learn it through experience in their homes. That experience may not always be pleasant, but it will eventually yield a harvest of righteousness for those trained by it (Heb 12:11).

When I played football in High School here in Texas, our team was trained by an excellent coach who understood the value of fundamentals. In Jr. High we had a coach who put in a few razzle-dazzle plays that we really liked, but they usually did not work and we had a losing record. In High School we worked and worked and worked and worked some more on the boring “fundamentals” – blocking and tackling. And after we worked we were lectured on fundamentals. We were reminded that if we can’t block and tackle we can’t execute plays, we can’t stop the other team from executing plays and we can’t win, no matter how complicated our play-book may be. He was right, of course, and his teams were usually District Champions and often went far into the play-offs. The same is true in life, as he also frequently reminded us.

The basic fundamentals of faith and life are taught in the home by mother and father. One of the most basic fundamentals of life is learning the value of authority and how to deal with it whether you exercise it or live under it. Many gifted and talented people crash and burn in life because they can’t live and work with others in a system of authority. Many people without exceptional gifts live highly productive lives because they have learned both how to use authority and how to submit to it. If you had parents (and coaches, teachers, pastors, etc) who used authority to shape and develop you well, give thanks to God for His

gift, and put your effort, time, and skills to work to pass the blessing on to your children.

This commandment is addressed to children, but the great authority entrusted implies tremendous responsibility for those who hold the parental office. Luther addressed this aspect of the commandment in the Large Catechism:

If this were done (i.e., rearing children in the fear and knowledge of God), God’s blessing and grace would become evident in the rearing of people who would be a benefit to land and nation, in the elevation of our citizenship, in the training of virtuous and domestic women, who in turn would rear pious children and servants. Then think for yourself what deadly wrong you are committing if you are negligent in this respect and fail to rear your children to be useful and to be a blessing. And because this commandment is disregarded, God terribly punishes the world; hence it is without discipline, government and peace. We all lament over this state of things, but we do not see that it is our own fault. (Luther, Fourth Commandment, Luther’s Large Catechism)

Let me close with a few observations on parenting.

- **Parenting is not instinctive.** Many excellent parents were educated to be parents by the way their own parents raised them. Your children are learning parenting from you every day. Unfortunately, a greater percentage of people today enter marriage and parenting without the benefit of being raised in a well-run home. This disadvantage does not need to be fatal. There are

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many excellent books, videos, and courses to teach basic parenting skills. USE THEM! Parenting skills can be developed and honed. Marcia and I were both raised in good family environments, but we gained much knowledge in reading James Dobson books on parenting. We have many of them and others in our church library. These books might be dated today, but they contain many excellent and ageless principles that work well.

- If you have minor children at home **parenting is your primary task**. Children are not a hobby that you can pick up or put down as you juggle other demands or goals in your life. You cannot delegate the RESPONSIBILITY for parenting to other entities while you pursue a career or pleasure or new relationships. God has not entrusted to you anything more precious TO HIM than your children. If something is more valuable in your priority system, you need to re-evaluate your priority system.
- **Great authority is always combined with great responsibility and accountability**. If the office of parent is the original and basic office of authority on earth, we dare not treat it as if it were a small and insignificant thing. If you are a person who prefers not to have authority, too bad. As a parent it's yours whether you like it or not. The question is not whether you want it or feel comfortable using it, but HOW you use it. Abdicating authority out of "humility" is not a godly option. It is a sin, as Luther so eloquently taught. Using authority to serve yourself is not a godly option. It is also a sin. God has given us authority to use for His

purposes to His glory, and we will have to give account to Him for how we have used it.

- **The primary task of parenting is spiritual and eternal, not worldly and temporal**. The primary purpose of the parental office is to raise up children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Many parents in America spend an inordinate amount of time and money on providing temporal benefits (academics, sports, clothes, piano lessons, etc, etc), but little if any on eternal matters (education in the Word, faith and its fruits, etc). I obviously do not have anything against the list of temporal benefits, but your life can be terribly unbalanced even with good things. What does it profit your children if they win sports scholarships, graduate at the top of their class, attend prestigious universities, and enter into highly lucrative careers if you never provided the "one thing needful"? Do your children know Christ? Are you doing everything possible to assure that their faith is growing and bearing fruit?
- **Parenting is not easy**. Sometimes people who have no children (or who happen to have a very complacent child) have no clue about how difficult, draining, humbling, and exasperating the parenting task can be. It isn't like putting paint on a canvass or building a house. It doesn't follow logical progression and results ("if A then B"). There's no secret formula. Parents can do everything right, and it still doesn't "work." This is so because children are people with sinful, corrupt, self-centered hearts, just like every other child of Adam. Each child has a mind of his own, and sometimes no amount of

discipline, love, and instruction can turn it from the way it is determined to go. It is vitally important that we commend our children to the Lord through baptism, offer up earnest prayer to God for their faith and its fruits, and immerse them in the Word of God, especially in their formidable years. The Holy Spirit can do infinitely more than we can in working faith and changing hearts.

When we reflect how important this commandment is for a prosperous and happy life and community, and how often and miserably we have failed both as children and adults, we must confess with Luther that the mess we so often deplore in our society is "our own fault." It is not going to be fixed by schools or churches, or by tinkering with government programs. Christians should lead the way by standing with the publican in the back of the Temple crying "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Receiving the assurance of God's unconditional forgiveness in Christ, we are empowered to lead the way by turning our homes into sanctuaries for God to dwell and bless through immersion in Word and Sacrament.

Hear, my son, your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Blessings in Christ,
Pastor Huebel



They Followed the Star—We Follow the Cross

by Paul Kohlmeier



"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:2)

The wise men sought Jesus to worship him. They saw his star rise and pursued the King. It was no ordinary star they saw, it was supernatural. According to Matthew 2:9, the star moved ahead of them until it was directly over the house where Jesus was and then stopped.

The account of the magi is rightly celebrated as an epiphany of our Lord. The significance of this account is that God so wonderfully revealed the identity of Jesus as Messiah and King of the Jews to these Gentiles. A wonderful fulfillment of the prophet Simeon's prophecy, that Jesus would be, "a light of revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:31). What a thrill for the wise men and Simeon to see the child. Christ came to them and it was a holy marvel.

When Messiah Keller has the service of the sacrament we employ the processing cross. As the service closes we turn to follow the crucifix out of the sanctuary. He is leading us out to teach, confess, help and be like Jesus to our neighbors. If you think Jesus is to stay in our little sanctuary all safe and warm until we come back next week you are confused. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) The Messiah crucifix is our reminder of that direction from Christ.

I know that some of you are not

too sure of this practice of processing and other high church activities so I decided to find out where that crucifix went one day. You know, follow it.

It moved around Fort Worth and came to rest on a stone setting under a magnificent live oak tree. The image of Christ crucified for us reigned over the courtyard area of my daughter's wedding. Some would say that a church is a place for a wedding but the crucifix reminded us that we are to take the word out to others. People gathered for the nuptials and the Holy Spirit, through Pastor Huebel, brought our church to them. Just as the picture of the Messiah crucifix shows below the focus on the cross was clear.



There were non-Lutheran Christians present and probably some non-Christians. They experienced Christ's presence and blessings upon a young couple. The Holy Spirit and Pastor did a wonderful job of teaching while joining the two as one. The people

were absorbing and acknowledging as Pastor Huebel's stole wrapped around the couples joined hands. Teaching and confessing Jesus to our neighbors. I was blessed to follow the cross out of the sanctuary and help spread the good news. The crucifix has always been a symbol of Christ's death on the cross for us and for our salvation. In fact, there is no greater proclaimed image, "We preach Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 1:23). We showed, believed and taught that to know Jesus, know the Crucified One.

There was a purpose when God provided the guiding star. The Holy Spirit had a purpose that day when the crucifix was in front of everyone at the wedding with a message to all.

Take another look at that crucifix and follow it. Focus on what Jesus did for you – how He suffered and died for all your sins. *Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).*

Please Pray

Once, O Lord, You led the wise men and guided them into the presence of Christ by the light of a star. Through the Holy Spirit help us to shine the light of Your Word on those still living in darkness, that they may be brought into Christ's marvelous light and believe in Him whom May Your light shine on us and through us in our words and works of faith. Send forth Your blessing upon the proclamation of Your Word that those who hear may believe and believing have life in Your name.

Pax Christi - Paul Kohlmeier
Hebrews 12:2

Part III: The Burden of Proof

The Law of Gravity is nonsense. No such law exists. If I think I float, and you think I float, then it happens—O'Brien to Winston Smith in "1984"

If you will not have God...you should pay your respects to Hitler or Stalin—T.S. Elliot "The Idea of a Christian Society"

Live not by lies! —Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

To love the little platoon we belong to in society is the first principle...of public affections—Edmund Burke "Reflections on the Revolution in France"

We live in a world where 2+2 suddenly equals five. The defining worldview of the 21st century, post-modernism, denies the existence of objective truth, and that means a rejection of God and of reality itself. Post-modernism posits a world view as distorted as twisted images in a carnival funhouse mirror, a world view anticipated by George Orwell in his dystopian novel *1984*: the Party decides what is real and what is not real, and if the Party denies the law of gravity, then O'Brien of the Thought Police declares that he can float and it is so. Winston Smith, who has asserted that a reality and truth independent of the party does, in fact, exist, is tortured by O'Brien, who intends to "cure" Winston of his "insanity." It is not enough for Winston to yield to the Party. He must embrace it, acknowledge the Party's primacy, and think as the Party wishes.

It does not take a great leap in understanding to grasp the continuity between O'Brien's

assertion that he can float because he says he can and the post-modern feminist assertion that "gender" is a "social construct." Orwell's model for his dystopian world was the Stalinist Soviet Union: the Soviet utopians asserted that transforming economic and social "superstructures" could create a "new Soviet man" with an altered nature. Soviet "scientist" Trofim Lysenko claimed that acquired characteristics could be inherited—that a tree stripped of bark could acquire that quality as a trait, for example. If the Party said that agriculture could be organized by the principles set out by Lysenko and the result was disaster, then "wreckers," saboteurs and those who had not yet conformed psychologically to Soviet reality, retaining "fascist" and "bourgeois" characteristics, were to blame.

In the same fashion, post-modern feminism asserts that there is no essential difference between male and female, or at least not any difference that cannot be altered by the will of the all-powerful self, if the dominant worldview of our time says it is so. And if you fail to accept that a "trans-sexual" is actually a male transformed from a female, or that a "family" is any assortment of individuals living together, or that the words "wife," "mother," "father," or "marriage" lack any objective, historical, or transcendent meaning, then you are ignorant or backward or even insane. It is not enough that you keep quiet about it. The assumptions of post-modern feminism must be embraced. And so right thinking people must be vigilant. There are wreckers among us.

Yet the burden of proof is not on those of us who accept that male and female are different and have different natures and different roles. It is not on those of us who understand the meaning and purposes of marriage, both practical and spiritual. It is not on those of us who see the father as head of the family and the mother as the heart. It is not on those of us who understand that these roles are essential to an institution we know is sacred, established by God. It is not on those of us who see the denigration of men in their roles as husband and father as a disaster for civilization. For as in the case of Lysenkoism as applied "science," the results are coming in: as marriage fades away, as traditional morality is rejected, as illegitimacy, divorce, irreverence and attacks on Christianity mount, as popular culture descends into a cesspool of perversity, celebrating ugliness and nihilism, we can readily see those results in overcrowded prisons; lives and marriages destroyed by self absorption; teen suicide; drug addiction; horrendous crimes (When did "serial killer" and "school shooting" become common place terms?) that would have literally been unthinkable in our own lifetimes; and the social fragmentation and alienation that have accompanied "diversity" and "tolerance." If proponents of "matriarchy" want to know what a real life, post-modern matriarchy looks like, I suggest that they visit a inner city neighborhood in practically any major metropolitan area in the United States—if they dare.

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There are probably lots of people who would deny that things are that bad. Denial is a common psychological game people play. Many of those folks likely had parents who never worried about, or saw any reason to worry about, their children roaming the neighborhood alone, either. Could those same parents have imagined a world where women use anonymous sperm donors to yield a child born to a “surrogate mother,” *sans* husband or even “significant other?” Does the now familiar phrase “child abuse” come to mind?

There are others who would agree that there are problems, but might say the price is worth it. I have met such people myself—and they believe that the “freedom” they now enjoy is worth the cost in social disruption, since things were worse in terms of “oppression” in the past. (I often wonder—do those who denigrate and downplay the feminine roles of mother and wife really hold their mothers and grandmothers and what they did in this world in such low regard?) As a Christian, I can pray for them to see the truth. I might point out that no one on our side is saying that our society was without fault in the past, but the proof is in the pudding, as they say: the America of the past may have had a lot wrong with it, but society was able to sustain itself, to carry on the blessed routine of marriage, procreation, family formation, and transmission of the wisdom about men and women and family and church and neighborhood and country that kept the wheels of civilization turning. With birth rates in the developed world now far below replacement levels in many countries, abortions occurring at a staggering rate, and the once great nations of the West

flirting with self dissolution, I can say with confidence that whatever faults we had, whatever sins we committed, life and the blessed routine went on. A society that embraces nihilism will commit suicide.

In taking such a position, we have the Bible, thousands of years of human experience, as well as the counsel of the church fathers and what some would call “natural law” and others simply “common sense” on our side. The other side has only the brash and shallow ideological slogans of the past fifty years or so as weapons to attack the wisdom of the ages. What is this but hubris? We can and must assert our position with confidence.

Finally, there are still others who might meet a prognosis of civilization’s suicide with indifference. To these people I have nothing further to say. They are our enemies and we must recognize them as such. We must pray for our enemies, too, that their hardened hearts might be softened, their consciences revived.

What do we do? We first have to recognize the scope of the crisis and what lies beneath—the ideological, social, political, and technological aspects of the crisis discussed in Parts I and II. Only in seeing those things that lie beneath can we begin to clarify what we must try to do, starting with taking whatever action we can to change those aspects of the crisis.

The next step is taking Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s spiritual call to arms to heart: “Live not by lies!” Solzhenitsyn was the last in a long line of Russian writers who played the role of conscience of the nation,

like an Old Testament prophet calling his people to repent. *The Gulag Archipelago* chronicled the crimes of the Soviet regime and shook communism to its very foundations. And Solzhenitsyn, like many other dissidents of that era, began by refusing to acknowledge the lies told by the regime. Solzhenitsyn was blessed, as he himself told it, by persecution: thrown into the deadly maw of the Soviet prison camp system, he converted to Christianity and found his strength. He used the gifts God had given him, vision and insight and an ability to put that down in words, to counter the regime’s lies. And he faced the rejection of friends and family, as well as the persecution of the state, recalling the words of Our Lord as set out in Matthew 10:34-39.

Fathers and husbands, remember that in the context of our times, what you are doing in fulfilling your duties is nothing short of heroic, for what was once expected is no longer expected or honored. We have long exalted the physical courage of soldiers, explorers, and record-breaking athletes, men who have surmounted seemingly impossible barriers, and that is right and should be so. But what is needed today is our celebration of the everyday, humble courage that goes about the unheralded but absolutely essential task of preserving, protecting, defending, and supporting the foundation of any society, the family, one of Burke’s most precious “little platoons.”

Broadcast live from Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN on January 22—25, 2013 in Room A101.

Come, see and listen to the broadcast as some of the finest teachers and professors in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and elsewhere make their presentations to a large on-campus audience. You can come and go as you please. Stay for the sessions you'd like to see and leave when you must. The schedule is as follows:

**Theme for Tuesday and Wednesday Morning...
*Love and Marriage: Does the Bible Still Mean
What It Says?***

Tuesday, January 22, 2013

10:05 am: *Theology of the Body in the Old Testament.* Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, President Emeritus and Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

12:00 noon: *The Relationship Between God and Man: A Divine Object Lesson.* Prof. Jeffrey H. Pulse, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

2:00 pm: *Why Attempts to Make the Bible Supportive of Homosexual Practice Don't Work: A Look at Recent Scholarship.* Guest Prof., Dr. Robert A. J. Gagnon, Associate Professor of New Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

3:15 pm: *Does Ephesians 5:21 Support Mutual Submission?* Dr. John G. Nordling, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

4:30 pm: Panel Discussion (on theme) Moderator: Dr. William C. Weinrich, Professor of Historical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

Wednesday, January 23, 2013

10:00 am: *Galatians 3:28: Unity in Christ's New Creation Family.* Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr., Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology and Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

12:00 noon: *The value of Children According to the Gospels.* Dr. Charles A. Gieschen, Academic Dean and Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

**Theme for Wednesday Afternoon — Friday:
*Morality and Ethics in the Church and in the
Public Square: The Lutheran Challenge.***

2:15 pm: *Ethics as Part of a Seminary Curriculum.* Dr. Lawrence Rast Jr.

2:45 pm: *Abortion, Incarnation, and the Place of*

Children in the Church: All One Cloth a Common Basis. Dr. David P. Scaer, The David P. Scaer Chair of Biblical and Systematic Theology and Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

3:45 pm: *Man Reconstructed: Humanity Beyond Biology.* Dr. Brent Waters, The Jerre and Mary Joy Stead Professor of Christian Social Ethics, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois.

4:45 pm: *Lutheran Support for Pro-Life: A Case for Faith Without Works.* Dr. Peter J. Scaer, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary; President, Allen County Right to Life.

5:45 pm: *Liturgical Re-Adjustment: Off Ramp to Apostasy?* Dr. Paul Grime, Dean of the Chapel and Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, Concordia Theological Seminary.

Thursday, January 24, 2013

10:00 am: *The Church's Place in the Public Square: can the Shoes of Richard Neuhaus Be Filled?* Rev. Peter A. Speckhard, Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

12:15 pm: *Christian Challenge in the Public Square: A Lutheran Voice.* Mr. William H. Hecht, M.Div., L.L.D., Hecht Spencer & Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C.

2:30 pm: *The ELCA: Quo Vadis?* Dr. Mark D. Menacher, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, La Mesa, CA.

3:30 pm: *The NALC as Alternative to the ELCA.* Dr. J. Larry Joder, Director of the Center for Theology, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC

4:30 pm: *Panel Discussion—LCMS and ELCA as Dissonant Voices in the Public Square*

Friday, January 25, 2013

10:00 am: *Defining Humanity in the Lutheran Confessions and in Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology.* Prof. Roland F. Zieler, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.

11:00 am: *Marriage and So-Called Civil Unions: Biblical and Natural Law Arguments.* Dr. Gifford A. Grobien, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.