

## **Catechism Sec. 12: The Preservation Of The Family**

by B. S. Poh

**Q52. What is the fifth commandment?**

**A52. The fifth commandment is, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”<sup>1</sup>**

*1. Exodus 20:12.*

**Q53. What is required in the fifth commandment?**

**A53. The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honour, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their various positions and relationships as superiors<sup>1-3</sup>, inferiors<sup>4</sup>, or equals<sup>5</sup>.**

**Notes:** We have left out the next question of the original Catechism which is, “What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?”

*1. Eph. 5:21-22, Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

*2. Eph. 6:1, 5, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.*

*3. Rom. 13:1, Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*

*4. Eph. 6:9, And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.*

*5. Rom. 12:10, Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.*

### **Comments:**

1. The fifth, sixth and seventh commandments may be considered as those that guard the institution of the family, which is the basic unit of the church and the state. The fifth commandment is concerned with *the sanctity of lawful authorities*. It is our duty to respect and obey all legitimate authorities, since they are God-given. In the family, parents have authority over the children, and the husband is the head of the family. In the church, elders are appointed to rule over God’s people for their good. In the state, there may be a king/queen or government of some kind. The Bible has much to say about the believing family and the church, while giving sufficient principles to guide believers in their behaviour in the world. No particular form of state government is favoured except that which conforms closely to the principles revealed in the Bible, e.g. justice, mercy, fairness, rewarding the good, punishing wrong, maintaining peace, promoting well-being, etc.

2. Parents have to teach children obedience to lawful authorities, in an atmosphere of love, and allowing for growth and development in them. Sternness and excessive control cause frustration in the children, provoking them to anger and discouraging them (Col. 3:20). Failure to exercise proper discipline results in self-will and rebellion that manifest in later life - in the family and society. There are those whom we respect as our superiors, others as our inferiors, and yet others as our equals - depending on the position and relationship between us and these people. This is reflected in our attitude, speech, and actions. How good it is if the respect is accompanied with love instead of terror!
3. Long life and prosperity are promised to God's people corporately, although this truth applies generally to the individual as well (Eph. 6:2-3). When God's people are careless or indifferent to what is taught in this command, the three institutions of family, church and society become weakened so that anarchy and violence might prevail. The blessing of peace and opportunity to serve God would be removed and lives may be lost (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-4). Christians have to resist the abuse of authority - whether in the family, church, or state. Resistance is legitimate when the authority is transgressing the biblical limits, and whenever there is direct contradiction against the Bible's teaching (Acts 5:29).

**Q54. What is the sixth commandment?**

**A54. The sixth commandment is, "You shall not murder."<sup>1</sup>**

*1. Exodus 20:13.*

**Q55. What is required in the sixth commandment?**

**A55. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others<sup>1</sup>, while forbidding whatever that tends towards taking away human life unjustly<sup>2,3</sup>.**

**Notes:** Spurgeon kept the negative questions for the sixth, seventh, eight and tenth commandments. We shall keep all the positive questions to all the commandments, and combine the positive and negative answers wherever necessary. We have added "human" to the answer of this question.

- 1. Acts 16:28, But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."*
- 2. Gen. 9:6, Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.*
- 3. Prov. 24:11-12, Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?*

**Comments:**

1. This commandment is concerned with *the sanctity of life*. Our lives come from God, through our parents. Since man is made in God's image, life is sacred (Gen. 1:27; 9:6). An animal has life, but it is not created like man (Gen. 1:30). The unjust killing of a human being is murder. The killing of another person may not be murder, as when a robber is killed because our lives are threatened. A Christian who serves in the army may be required to kill in defence of the country, or in a just cause. In this situation, the Christian is not acting in his private capacity, but as a proper agent of the government. Capital punishment, i.e. the killing of those who commit murder, is the duty of the government, not of the individual (Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:4 cf. Matt. 26:52; Acts 25:11).

2. Suicide is a breaking of this commandment (cf. Job 1:20). Deliberately placing ourselves or others in danger of life is also breaking this commandment, e.g. engaging in life-threatening sports, engaging in dare-devil stunts, etc. Failure to remove a potentially life-threatening situation is also breaking this commandment, e.g. children playing with knives. It is required that we seek our neighbour's good, e.g. warning him of dangers. The highest good we can do to others is to warn them of judgement day and to proclaim the gospel to them (James 5:20).

**Q56. What is the seventh commandment?**

**A56. The seventh commandment is, "You shall not commit adultery."<sup>1</sup>**

*1. Exodus 20:14.*

**Q57. What is required in the seventh commandment?**

**A57. The seventh commandment requires the preservation of chaste thoughts<sup>1, 2</sup>, words<sup>3</sup>, and actions<sup>4</sup> in ourselves and others.**

- 1. Matt. 5:28, But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
- 2. 2 Tim. 2:22, Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*
- 3. Col. 4:6, Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*
- 4. Eph. 5:3-4, But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

**Comments:**

1. This commandment is concerned with *the sanctity of marriage*. Sexual desire was included in the creation of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:24-25) and, therefore, to be regarded as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). It is this need which draws people together in marriage. The Bible condemns the unlawful satisfaction of the sexual urge outside the institution of marriage, which is fornication. Fornication covers illicit sex of all kinds, including rape (Deut. 22:28-29), premarital sex, adultery (Deut. 22:22), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22), and bestiality (sex with animals, Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16).
2. It is only by the grace of God that we are able to escape such sins (Eph. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:4). God has graciously provided ways for us to handle the sexual urge: (i) by the gift of continency (i.e. self-control, Matt. 19:12); (ii) by marriage (1 Cor. 7:39); (iii) by giving us holy desires and opportunities of spiritual pursuits (2 Tim. 2:22). Christians may marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14). If a person is married before becoming a Christian, he has a duty to keep that marriage as long as the unbelieving partner is willing to remain in that marriage. The Christian is free to divorce and remarry another only if: (i) the spouse commits adultery and is unrepentant; (ii) if there is breaking of the marriage covenant by physical abuse or desertion that cannot be remedied (1 Cor. 7:10-12; Matt. 19:8). Marriage to relatives who are closely related, by consanguinity (i.e. by marriage ties) or affinity (i.e. by blood ties) is also forbidden (Lev. 18, 20; Matt. 14:4; Mark 6:18; 1 Cor. 5:1). We must guard our hearts against sinning inwardly and by actions (Matt. 5:28; 2 Tim. 2:22).