
Honor One Another

Children

Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21

6/9/2019

Main Idea: God blesses the family with a biblical approach to raising children.

Lesson Objective: Know and become who we are made to be in Christ so that we can fulfill our responsibilities in life.

Introduction

As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

It had been a big morning at church. It was a family dedication service, and the parents had dedicated their 4-year-old boy that day. As they pulled out of the church parking lot, they noticed their son was whimpering in the back seat. They asked him what was wrong. Through tears he said, "The preacher said he wanted us to be raised in a Christian home, but I want to stay with you guys!"

Parenting consistently ranks as one of the top stressors in marriage. Not only does each child add another personality into the family dynamic and place an additional financial draw on the budget, but also mom and dad often find themselves in conflict over parenting decisions. What rules get set? What's acceptable behavior and what is not? How do you discipline unacceptable behavior? Who administers the discipline? The Bible doesn't answer every question we might wish, but Paul did set forth some clear principles for parenting.

Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus so they would know what a Christian home should be like. He begins with the household, because if the household is right, if husbands, wives, and children are living spirit filled lives, then the church will be better. If the church is better, then the community will be better. If the community is better, then the city will be better. If the city is better, then the state will be better. If the state is better, then the country will be better. If the country is better, then the world will be better.

If you have children, how did you learn to parent? Who or what serves as your model or guideline for parenting?

One a scale of 1 (They're only kids, let them do what they want) to 10 (I run a tight ship and the kids better fall in step), where would you place your parenting style? Explain.

How does your spouse's parenting style compare/contrast with yours?

What happens when differences arise between your styles? How do you get beyond the differences?

Obey Parents

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1 ESV)

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (Colossians 3:20 ESV) [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).

Last week, we studied what Paul taught about the husband-wife relationship. Today, we will see how God wanted the relationship between parents and children to be. When Paul wrote the above passage, he had the Christian family in mind. It is assumed that both partners, together with their offspring, recognize the lordship of Christ. Paul expressed his love for the children when he addressed them directly. He knew that the children would have been apart of the gathering and would have heard his words directly. They were part of the total Christian family, the church. The harsh reality of the rigid Social distinctions observed in the Roman empire and even in Judaism were transformed by the gospel so that the women, children and slaves acquired new rights in Christ.

With this new right, the children will now have greater responsibilities. Paul called on them to “**obey your parents.**” The instruction to “**obey**” means literally to “hear under,” that is, to listen to the parents and to submit to what they say. Obedience on the part of children consists of listening to the advice given by parents. Colossians 3:20 adds that this unswerving obedience is to be comprehensive in its scope (“**everything**”). Isaac’s willingness to be offered as a sacrifice is a model of such submission. Disobedience to parents is a symptom of a disintegrating social structure, and Christian families have a

particular responsibility not to contribute to the collapse of an ordered community. Disobedience to parents is a mark of depravity (Rom 1:30) and a sign of the evil of the last days (2 Tim 3:2). Children must be obedient to their parents (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; Eph 6:1-3); this is how they please the Lord. This obedience does not include immoral or idolatrous demands from a parent, because this is not behavior pleasing to the Lord.

Children need to recognize that some things have to be accepted, even though at the time they themselves cannot understand them. Children are invited not simply to copy the example of Jesus when he was subject to his parents, but to realize that both they and their parents are under the authority of the living Christ. The phrase “**in the Lord**” describes the general sphere in which children offer their obedience. Paul does not mean that they should obey only if their parents are Christian, nor even that they should obey only if the instructions are godly. Paul’s emphasis is that when children give obedience to their parents, they are acting in the will of the Lord.¹

Both Roman law and Jewish Scripture agreed on the duty of children to obey their parents. Josephus understood the O.T. to teach that “honor to parents ranks second only to honor to God.” Paul agreed with this and confirmed it with a resounding pronouncement: “**this is right.**” Jesus himself set the standard by submitting to his parents even though he was wiser than they. His parents were not perfect, but he returned with them from Jerusalem to Nazareth and “was obedient to them” (Luke 2:41–51.) He obeyed simply because it was the right thing to do.²

¹ A. Skevington Wood, “[Ephesians](#),” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 80–81.

² Kenneth L. Boles, [Galatians & Ephesians](#), The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993), Eph 6:1.

Parenting children with love and respect means helping them to both understand and do what God expects and what pleases Him. Expecting your children to obey is not self-centered or egotistical; rather, it is training them in obedience to the Lord and learning to please Him.

Why would Paul, and thus the Bible, have commanded children to obey their parents?

What rationale did Paul give in these two verses for children to obey their parents? What significance do you see in his statements that “this is right” (Eph. 6:1) and “this pleases the Lord” (Col. 3:20)?

Since Paul commanded obedience to parents and identified such obedience as right and pleasing to God, what is the implication for parents who fail to train their children in obedience?

Honor Parents

Ephesians 6:2-3

² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”
[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 are referenced in this passage. Paul quoted from the Ten Commandments and specifically identified obedience to parents as one way to “**honor**” them. The word means more than to obey. It is to respect and esteem. It is the form love assumes towards those who are placed above us by God.

It is interesting that within this passage that honoring the parents was “**the first commandment with a promise.**” If we connect “first” and “promise” together it seems to imply that honoring the parents is the first of the ten commandments that comes with a promise. However, the second commandment contains one also, unless it is interpreted simply as a description. To offer an explanation, some have sought to divide the Ten Commandments into two groups, but the Jews did not divide the commandments into two groups of five. Or again it may be taken to mean that it was the first to be taught to children, though it might be thought that Paul would spell it out more explicitly if that is what he meant. It is more probable that the Greek word “*prōtos*” here means first in importance rather than in sequence. The rabbis regarded this commandment as the weightiest of all. Perhaps Paul was coming from their perspective in calling this action as the one of foremost significance.

Let's go back to Deuteronomy 5:16 (also found in Exodus 20:12) and look closer to see the promise given if one would be obedient:

¹⁶ “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

The promise attached spoke not to the church, but to the people of Israel as they were living in the Promised Land. This could be the reason why Paul stopped short of the final clause, which related to Israel as the land God had given them. What was originally a specific assurance to the Jews becomes a generalization for Christians. The prospect of longevity is not held out elsewhere in the NT as part of the Christian hope, and commentators have tended to spiritualize the application by linking it with eternal life. **“in the land”** rules out such an exegesis. Since Paul quoted this promise with approval, it must be assumed that it also applies today. It is more likely that he wished to emphasize that in obedience to their parents, children will live to give glory to God by honoring their parents, which in turn would affect how they lived on this earth because their lives were dependent on God.³ Respectful, obedient children will normally become productive, successful adults.

By looking at Ephesians 6:1-3 together, we can see that Paul gave four reasons for children to obey their parents: (1) it is **“in the Lord** (Ephesians 6:1),” (2) it is **“right** (Ephesians 6:1),” (3) it is a **“commandment** (Ephesians 6:2)” carried over from the O.T., (4) it has a **“promise** (Ephesians 6:2-3).”

Parents generally seek the protection and well-being of their children, trying to set boundaries for their benefit. While obedience to parents does not

³ A. Skevington Wood, [“Ephesians.”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 81–82.

necessarily preclude devastating illness or horrendous accident, it will tend to keep children from much risky behavior or circumstance. Parenting with love and respect means in part helping guide children in beneficial life choices.

From Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Ephesians, what is the benefit or “promise” associated with obeying parents?

Is there a connection between obedience and life going “well with you,” or is the benefit merely an arbitrary action on God’s part? Explain.

Do Not Provoke

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 ESV)

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (Colossians 3:21 ESV) [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

While children have the responsibility to obey parents, and parents have the responsibility to train their children in obedience, parents also have an additional responsibility—to perform that training in an appropriate manner. Parents have responsibility both to discipline and to instruct their children. Paul indicated that fathers are to take the lead in this responsibility. Parents are not to stir up anger in their children. Discipline is not to be arbitrary or something done out of anger. “Fathers” in Roman locales such as Ephesus and Colossae had absolute control over their children, even to the point of imprisoning them or putting them to death without trial. Roman law and social custom gave the fathers virtually unlimited authority over their children. However, we must remember that it is God who sets the limits. While Paul specifically addressed “fathers” in that context, it is clear that his admonitions apply to all parents in our context.

The wise parents must not “**provoke**” (it means to “make angry, enrage”) their children. This word is translated “exasperate” (CSB), “embitter” (NIV), and “aggravate” (NLT) among others. It literally means to stir up, to provoke, to excite, or to stimulate and can be used either in a negative sense (as here) or in a positive sense (as in the last part of 2 Cor. 9:2). The word implies being so heavy-handed and unreasonable with children that they are driven to a helpless

state of frustration and anger. Paul’s similar command in Col 3:21 warns that in such a situation the children will “**become discouraged.**”) Modern parents, however, often go to the other extreme. They discipline timidly and reluctantly, fearful of incurring the wrath of their spoiled children. They are constantly seeking the approval of their children and avoid any discipline that might displease them.

Parenting children with love and respect means in part taking care how discipline and guidance are administered. The remainder of Ephesians 6:4 (**bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord**) shows the balance in parental discipline which God has intended. As opposed to the kind of hard behavior which causes provocation, parents are to nurture their children in a supportive manner. Children are a heritage from the Lord; they are to be reared for him. The verb translated “**bring up**” has to do in the first place with bodily nourishment (Eph 5:29) and then with education in its entirety. Children are to be treated with tenderness. They are to nourish and protect the child in regard to two special concepts. The first concept includes the interrelated ideas of education and **discipline** (see Heb 12:5–11). It includes “punishment for the purpose of improved behavior.”¹¹ The second concept is “**instruction**” the verbal reprimanding or “warning” which is more appropriate for dealing with older children.⁴ Parents teach their children about sports and music and finances and fashion and personal hygiene and how to drive and a myriad of other skills. But part of parenting children with love and respect means preparing them in the most important determinant for success in life—“the training and instruction of the Lord.”

⁴ Kenneth L. Boles, [Galatians & Ephesians](#), The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993), Eph 6:4.

How can parents “provoke” their children to “become discouraged”?

What steps can parents take to stimulate their children to obedience instead?

What significance do you see in Paul’s exhortation that parents “bring [their children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord”? How do parents do that? Why did Paul address this admonition to fathers/parents, rather than pastors or children’s ministers or Bible study leaders?

How does your parenting style align with the principles of parenting Paul spelled out in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3?

What goal do you have in mind as you parent your child(ren)? How does your parenting accomplish your responsibility to provide “training and instruction in the Lord” to your child(ren)?

Would an observer in your home likely say you “stir up anger” and “exasperate your children,” or not? Explain. What might you need to do differently to more closely reflect Paul’s principles from these passages?