

Sept 20 Healthy Relationships with Children (**Parenting**) Ephesians 6:1-4

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** 2 "**Honor** your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." 4 **Fathers, do not exasperate** your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

There are two groups (children and parents) mentioned in this passage who have mutual relationships. It seems odd to me that the kids get the first & the longest instruction, but maybe that is a reflection of Jesus. He didn't overlook kids or shove them to the side.

Children were of sacred worth to Jesus. His motto seemed to be: "Kids Come First"

**Matt 18:2-6** He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

**Matt 19:13-15** Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

*Vs. 1 **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** 2 "**Honor** your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise—*

**Children** – obey your parents

**"in the Lord"** – This brings the Lord's presence into family relationships. Spiritually based relationships are not the exclusive domain of something that happens "at church" but the relationships begin within the home.

Then it quotes the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment. It says not only to "obey" but also to "**honor**." One can obey without honoring. It's called being "Passive-aggressive." One can obey and having a bitter and resentful attitude about it.

**"Obeying"** your parents has to do with living under their influence @ home; whereas **"honor"** is a life-long engagement. "A man shall leave his father & a woman leave her home." The two become one. They move from obeying parents to mutual submission in marriage. Marriage, or when an adult moves from the home, becomes the transitional point.

The command to honor one's parent is not absolute. If the parent tells the child to do something evil, then they shouldn't follow through. There's a story in the Bible where this very thing happened. Saul told his son, Jonathan, that he was going to have David killed. Jonathan "dishonored" his father by telling David what was going down. (1 Samuel 19:1-7)

*4 Fathers* (or Parents) – *don't exasperate* (make them frustrated, angry) *your children*. It's interesting that he specifically names dads. Why? Maybe dads have more of a tendency to abdicate their responsibilities & moms generally don't. Children have a huge need for both mom & dad to engage. They will do it in different ways. It also reminds us that our single parents need the help/support of the church!

*But bring them up* (nurture)...Raise them up to maturity...

*In the training and instruction of the Lord* (tutor them). This "education" seems to be practical, as well as informational. Teach them not only what to believe, but how to live. Like so many things, there are two sides to every coin. This isn't just something that kids do or that parents do, but that they do it together. The context of Ephesians 5-6 is a discussion about mutual submission. As members of the Body of Christ (the church) submit to one another, as spouses submit to one another, so parent and child are to submit to each other. There is a balance of loving accountability and continuous support.

There are some things parents should be teaching their children:

- \*Love for God
- \*Respect for authority & their elders
- \*Manners & social etiquette (texting)
- \*Financial responsibility
- \*Self-discipline & strong inner convictions
- \*Boundaries
- \*Forgiveness
- \*Accountability

3 styles of parenting:

**Permissive:** The parents let the kids run wild. "No rules – just right!" This is an abdication of parental responsibility. We see a variation of this with the permissive and neglectful way King David dealt with his family. He may have hit a home run in business but he certainly struck out at home.

**Authoritarian** or Dominating: This is the opposite of permissive (which has no rules). This style is all about rules.

**Active** – This style seeks to build a relationship with the kids. It provides structure and communication. It sees children as people who are maturing who will someday be on their own. The image of "training wheels" on a bicycle is a good one here! They are temporary until the child gains a sense of balance. An "active" parent is one who is engaged with the child, and gives the child a balanced perspective. It sees the role of the law, discipline, and order; but it also offers grace, forgiveness, kindness and understanding.

These 3 styles of parenting are also 3 different models of living out one's faith. In the Book of Romans, Paul lays out the "permissive" lifestyle (Romans 1). These folks are doing bad things. In Chapter 2 he describes the "Authoritarian lifestyle" which is full of judgment, anger, and wrath. His conclusion is that no one is righteous, not one! Thus, he introduces the 3<sup>rd</sup> way of dealing with faith: that of grace. Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Some years ago, Dr. Nick Stinnett of the University of Nebraska supervised a study of several families that had a great deal of happiness & parent/child satisfaction. His conclusions were:

6 characteristics of a close-knit family:

- 1.) They expressed a lot of appreciation for one another
- 2.) They spent a great deal of time together
- 3.) They had good communication patterns
- 4.) They had a strong sense of commitment
- 5.) They had a high degree of religious orientation
- 6.) They had an ability to deal with crises/problems in a positive manner.

This is not just something for parents with little kids...as long as you have your parents, you are to honor them.

Sometimes children have to erect boundaries with their parents if there is violence, abuse, or destructive emotional responses. Just because a parent is annoying doesn't give the child the right to disobey and they should never try to dishonor the parent.

***3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."***

This is a "proverbial saying," in the sense that it doesn't happen 100% of the time. It's not an ironclad promise. There are always exceptions to the rule. But generally, this is true. If you want to have a long life (and enjoy it, too), there are some basic things you need to do. Speak directly to students @ this time:

- 1.) Stay in school – having an education gives you options
  - 2.) Learn to work - builds character & you learn to handle money
  - 3.) Avoid addictions – these can seriously shorten the quality/quantity of life
  - 4.) Don't divorce – ask any CPA about this
  - 5.) Have healthy relationships with the Lord & w. your parents
- Trust Christ with everything – including relationships.