

God’s Word for Your Family

Ephesians 6:1-4

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In the beginning, God established the family as the first of all human relationships. From that family, God built society. Nothing has changed! The family is still the foundational unit of society. In fact, no church, no community, or no nation is any stronger than the families that make it up.
- B. If that is true, then each of us should redouble our efforts to ensure that our families are all that they should be. Husbands and wives have a God-given obligation to love one another and to submit to one another for the glory of God. Parents have a God-given obligation to create a home that allows their children to become all they have been designed by the Lord to be.
- C. Allow me to point out the two groups in our homes that God is speaking to today. I want us to examine the subject: ***God’s Word for Your Family***.
- D. Lesson Text: **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 promise:

3 that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

v. 1-3 **GOD’S WORD TO THE GROWING ONES**

A. **There Is A CLEAR Word** –This passage has a very clear word for children and young people

1. **He Speaks About ACTIONS** – Children are told to “**obey**” their parents.

This word means “**to submit to, to comply with, to heed, to follow directions and instructions.**” It can literally mean to “**hear under.**” This means that a child is to listen to the voice of his or her parents attentively and they are to respond to what they hear with perfect submission. They are to do as they are told.

This obedience in the home lays the foundation for obedience throughout life. You see, everything in God’s universe can be boiled down to obedience. The planets and stars; the seas and the animal kingdom all operate in strict obedience to the commands of the Lord. **Humanity is the only part of God’s creation that walks in rebellion to the revealed Word of God.**

As children learn to obey their parents; they are setting the stage for obedience throughout their lives. They are learning respect for authority. And, they are learning to obey the other voices of authority, school, government, etc, that will become part of their lives later on. Kids, you will always walk under someone’s authority! Ultimately, they are learning to walk in obedience to the Lord when they walk in obedience to their parents.

2. **He Speaks About ATTITUDES** – Children are also told to “**honor**” their parents. The word “**honor**” means “**to respect, to revere, to hold in high regard.**” This speaks about a child’s attitude toward what his parents tell him to do. A wicked child may obey the voice of his parents; but secretly despise them in his heart. He may obey outwardly; but while he is carrying out their orders, he may be talking about them, cursing them or talking back under his breath. That is the wrong attitude!

Children should have great respect for their parents! They should be careful not to back talk their parents. They should never run their parents down to their friends. They should respect their parents, just as they would the Lord; even after they have grown up and married.

Again, when children learn to respect their parents in the home; they grow up with a natural respect for other people. Children who honor

their parents have little trouble honoring the Lord, other authority figures, or other people. **A child, however, who will disrespect his parents, will usually have little respect for others.** This fact is plain to see as our world has become increasingly filled with rude, insensitive, self-centered people.

(Note: We are living in a day when many children are displaying clear disrespect for their parents. How? Back talking, grumbling, disregarding instruction, speaking disrespectfully, acting like a “**know it all**”, refusing to listen, etc. Others do it through delinquency, crime, drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, abuse of parental and family property, etc. Adult children are often guilty of ignoring their aging parents and failing to minister to their needs. Nearly all children fail when it comes to gleaning from the years of wisdom and life experience contained in the minds of the parents. Listen to these verses:

1 Timothy 5:4, 8 – “But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Proverbs 20:20 – “Whoever curses his father or his mother, His lamp will be put out in deep darkness.”

Proverbs 30:17 – “The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.”

Exodus 20:12 – “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

Leviticus 19:3, 32 – “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD.”

Deuteronomy 27:16 – “Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.’ ‘And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’”

- B. **There Is A CONDITIONAL Word** – Notice the phrase “*in the Lord.*” While a child is told to obey his parents; that obedience is conditioned by the behavior of the parents. When the commands of a parent contradict the clear teachings of the Bible; the child, just like anyone else, has an obligation to put the Lord and His will first. Of course, this truth runs through every area of life. No parent, no spouse, no authority figure in our lives has the right to command us to do something illegal, immoral or that contradicts the Word of God. We are to always place God and His will ahead of the will of others. We have a higher allegiance!
- C. **There Is A CLARIFYING Word** – We are told in **verses 2b & 3** that obeying one’s parents brings God’s promise of blessing upon the child. **When a child honors his parents; he is honoring God.** And, God always blesses those who honor and obey Him!

God’s promise to obedient children is that they will enjoy improved **Quality of life** (“*That it may be well with thee*”) and improved **Quantity of life** (“*that you may live long on the earth*”). I think the Bible is clear in this verse: **The Lord will bless that child who honors his parents!**

- D. **There Is A CHALLENGING Word** – Notice **verse 1** again: “*...in the Lord: for this is right.*” That statement reveals to the child why he should obey and honor his parents. When a child honors and obeys his parents, he is doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord. You see, children are not told to obey and honor so that they might please their parents; they are told to do so, because it pleases the Lord! You are to do this, not in an effort to please “*the folks*”; but in an effort to please your Heavenly Father.

When your first thought is living a life that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord; your obedience to and honor of your parents will be an automatic outflow. When God is your first parent, and you obey and honor Him, you will have no trouble obeying and honoring mom and dad in the home!

v. 4 **GOD’S WORD TO THE GUIDING ONES**

(There is a word to the ***Growing Ones*** and there is a word to the ***Guiding Ones***. The word “***fathers***” can refer to both parents in this context. **Paul now turns his attention from the children to the parents.**

Paul’s words were very necessary for the society in which he lived. **In Paul’s era, families were even more dysfunctional than they are today.** It was not uncommon in some Greek and Roman cultures for men and women to have twenty marriages in a life time. Mutual love among the members of a family was almost nonexistent. In fact, most fathers ruled the home with an iron fist. History tells us that in that day, the father held the power of life and death over his family.

- A father could force his children out of the home at any time, at any age.
- He could sell them as slaves.
- He could enslave them, chain them and force them to work in the fields.
- He could take the law into his own hands and declare any sentence he pleased.
- He could even have them put to death and answer to no one for his actions.
- Infants were placed at their father’s feet for him to inspect. If he picked up the child, it was accepted into the family and cared for. If he walked away, the child was simply disposed of. Babies like these, who were healthy, were picked up, taken to the forum and sold to be raised as slaves and prostitutes.
- The Roman statesman Seneca, who lived in Rome while Paul was imprisoned there wrote, “***We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge a knife into a sick cow. Children born weak or deformed, we drown.***”

- Such was the backdrop against which Paul was writing. He is telling His readers, and us, that there is a new and better way to be a parent.
 - Of course, in our day, wicked parents still abound. A recent study found that the primary reason most children end up in foster care is not divorce, death, or finances; but simple disinterest on the part of the parents. They simply do not care about the welfare of the child!
- A. **There Is A CAUTIONING Word** – We are told to “*provoke not your children to wrath.*” This phrase refers to a pattern of treatment that builds up resentment in the child. Parents are to avoid causing their children to “*brood with anger.*” When children are “provoked to wrath,” they may even act this anger out in open hostility to parents and other authority figures. So, how does a parent “*provoke a child to wrath?*” There are many ways, I will name just a few.
- **Being Overprotective** – Often parents will refuse to allow their children to grow up and make decisions equal to their age and maturity. Young people resent being treated like they are more immature than they actually are.
 - **Playing Favorites** – Comparing one child with another is always the wrong thing to do. Look at the problems caused in the lives of Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau. The problems that began then are still playing out today. You can place much of the blame at the feet of Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Rebekah!
 - **Unrealistic Expectations** – Children, who are always under pressure to achieve more, bigger and greater things, can become resentful. Let your children be children! Remember that not every child is an A student. Not every child is an athlete, a cheerleader or a model. Let them be who God designed them to be! Remember that you should never try to relive your own childhood through your kids.
 - **Constant Discouragement** – Children resent constant criticism and nagging. No child should ever hear, “*You are no good! You will never amount to anything.*” Parents should seek to find an area where the

child excels and find ways to compliment them on their achievements. Children need approval and encouragement far more than they need criticism and correction. A young person who is constantly criticized may develop an attitude that says, “***What’s the use? I am nothing but a failure.***” If all a parent does is tear them down; that child just may live up to your expectations!

- **Label Them A Nuisance** – Children should never be made to feel that they are “***in the way.***” They should feel loved and secure in their families. They should feel like they are a part of the home and that the parents are happy and thankful to have them there. A child that feels unloved and unwanted is a child headed for trouble later in life.
- **Trying To Mature Them Too Quickly** – Often, parents expect their child to be more mature than they are. Mom and Dad, it’s all right for your children to act like children. I know that there are limits, but they should not be expected to act like they are twenty-five when they are nine. They might respond by acting like they are nine when they are twenty-five.
- **Using Love As A Reward Or A Punishment** – That is, we love our children when they are good and withdraw our love when they are bad. We make them feel unloved when they do wrong. That is just the opposite of what the Lord does to His children, **Heb. 12:6**. Children should know they are loved unconditionally all the time! By the way, it wouldn’t hurt you to tell them you love them, and tell them often!
- **Using Physical And Verbal Abuse** – Often we will overreact to the things our children do and carry their punishment too far. I believe in spanking; but I believe that no child should ever be spanked in anger. ***There is no point in using a cannon to kill a mosquito!*** By the same token, no child should ever have to be berated and belittled by a verbally abusive parent. There are times when parents will say harsh, cruel things to their children that they would never say to any other person. We are wrong when we attack our children, either physically or verbally! When we do, we are causing them to be resentful and angry!

B. **There Is A COUNSELING Word** – We have just considered the negative side of the equation; now let’s consider the positive side.

1. **Parents Are To Enrich Their Children** – We are to “*bring them up.*” This praise has the idea of “*nourishing*” them. We are to tend to them like we would a tender plant. We are to help them reach their fullest potential in the Lord. We are to help them “*be all they can be.*”

If we are to do this, then we are going to have to invest the one thing that most parents are not willing to give up: time. According to a recent study, the average father in America spends a whopping 3.7 seconds with his children every day! What a tragedy. Is it any wonder that we are raising a generation of juvenile delinquents.

(If I could live my life over again, there are things I would want to do differently. I would slow down and be less busy. Second, I would take more vacations with the family. And, I would spend more time with my wife and children. I would throw more footballs, go to more tea parties, play with more baby dolls and build more roads in the dirt that go nowhere. If your children are still young, take it from me, give them the greatest gift of all: **give them you . . . give them your time.**)

2. **Parents Are To Educate Their Children** – The word “*nurture*” has the idea of “*the whole education of the child.*” It refers to the daily discipline of verbal instruction in the ways of life and the ways of the Lord. We are to see to it that our children learn all that they need while they are under our care. Then, when they leave the nest and enter the world; they will be prepared for the things they will face.
3. **Parents Are To Encourage Their Children** – The word “*admonition*” means “*counsel, encouragement, and discipline.*” It refers to the act of guiding children toward maturity. There are times when we must give them direction in life. There are times when we must give them encouragement. And, there are times when we must give them discipline. All of these things are used by the wise parents; in the right measure to help their children become the men and women God designed them to be!

4. **Parents Are To Evangelize Their Children** – All of this nurture and admonition is to be “*of the Lord.*” We are to steep them in the Word of God, not our opinions, our preferences or our prejudices. When we teach our children to believe like we do, they will be as messed up as we are. When we train them in the things of the Lord, they will grow up and live lives that glorify and honor God. In all we do for our children, we give them no greater gift than when we point them toward Jesus Christ. If our love, our discipline, our encouragement and our instruction are centered in the Word of God; we will more likely than not raise children that are in the will of God. Keep God in the center of all you do as a parent!

CONCLUSION:

How do we respond to the thoughts expressed in these lessons?

First, to the children: Children, God loves you and He has a wonderful plan for your life. In his time, He will make that plan known to you. In the meantime, let me encourage you to obey and honor your parents. They love and want the best for you. Get in line with them and do as they tell you. If you haven’t been as obedient and respectful as you should have been; you might want to ask God for forgiveness and then and ask mom and dad for forgiveness too.

Second, if you are a parent who has made some mistakes, you might need to make that right. You might even need to go to your children and apologize. Howard Hendricks said, “***Children are not looking for perfect parents, but they are looking for honest parents. An honest progressing parent is a highly infectious person.***”

Third, there are some parents here who tried your best, but your children are out of the Lord’s will tonight. Why not bring them up before the Lord once more and trust Him to bring them home. Remember, **Proverbs 22:6 is a principle and not a promise.** “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” Stop beating yourself up over your children!

Fourth, there may be some here today that have never been saved. Jesus loves you and died on the cross to provide a way of salvation. If you will come to Him, He will save your soul.

Whatever the needs, the supply will be found in Jesus. Just mind Him!