



KINGDOM FAMILY LIFE

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Ephesians 6:1-4 ESV

(1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (2) "Honour 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." (4) Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Introduction

As Paul writes Ephesians, he is applying the gospel (the saving work of Christ) to every part of life. Last week we saw how Paul applies the gospel to marriage, and today we come to how Paul applies the gospel to children, and then to parents.

What does the gospel have to do with parenting? According to Paul, everything. The gospel is what God has done through Jesus Christ at the cross. Paul has explained in the first few chapters how God has reconciled all creation to himself and is creating a new people to himself in the church out of people who were formerly enemies – a Kingdom Community.

The gospel changes us in a radical way. Jesus lived and died and rose again not to make our lives a little more tolerable but to change us entirely into His image. And throughout the letter to the Ephesians, we see how radical that transformation is.

Today's passage flows out of the command in chapter 5 verse 18 to be filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit means that we are enabled to live as Jesus calls us to live.

Life in the Holy Spirit fulfils the law and principles of God. One result of this spiritual 'filling' is the manifestation of a submissive spirit, godly love, and a true respect for one another.

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Today's passage gives us two insights, one for children and one for parents.

1. Christian children love God by obeying and honouring their parents.
2. Christian parents love God by disciplining their children in **God's** ways.

Children

To obey your parents *'in the Lord'* means that children should carry out instructions they receive from their parents, as if it were God Himself who was directing them.

What does that mean? The key word in verse one is "obey". To obey means to both hear and respond to the hearing. The idea is of someone hearing a knock on a door and going to listen to the one who knocks. It's hearing and doing.

Obedience is not easy; it is often an interruption of what we are busy doing. It could also mean that we are told to do something we do not like doing.

When Paul uses that word children, he is talking to children living in the home under their **parents'** authority and care.

If your parents ask you to disobey Christ, you must say no to them. But Paul is speaking to a Christian family here.

Paul goes on to say obedience *'is right'*. No matter where you go in the world, obedience to parents is the norm.

But it is also right because it is connected to an old command. Look at verse two, "Honour your father and mother." Paul is quoting —Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16—the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments. With this quote, he shifts from young children in the home to all children everywhere. The Ten Commandments are the basic structure of a good life that God established from the beginning.

There is a **'promise'** linked to those who honour their parents. Through honour a Kingdom Way of life is established that results in the flourishing of its citizens. It promises stability.

Parents

But this scripture also implies that parental instructions should be in line with the will of God. Parents are responsible for instructing their children in line with God's will, while children are expected to obey their parents in the Lord, *"for this is right"*.

The wise and correct rearing of children is a thread that weaves its way throughout the entire Word of God.

Parents need to act responsibly towards their children, and those who walk in spirit, truth, goodness, and love are those who will be honoured by their own children. Those who bring their sons and daughters up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, will discover themselves to be praised by their children.

The parent-child relationship is vital for the whole of humanity. Those that embrace **God's** instructions will live lives that honour the Lord and provide a godly witness to others.

Some Historical Context

Though Paul uses the word "**fathers**" here, these words apply to fathers and mothers. But in Paul's day, the children were under the father's complete control.

What specifically does Paul uncover? At the time Ephesians was written, the rights of fathers were staggering. A father could sell his children as slaves. He could make them work in the field, even in chains. He could punish them how he liked and could even inflict the death penalty on them. And this power extended over the life of his children no matter how long they lived. A Roman son never came of age. His father had rights over him as long as the father lived.

When a child was born, the child would be placed before the father. If the father stooped and raised the child, the child was accepted and raised as his. But if he turned away, the child was rejected and literally discarded. Sometimes the baby would be picked up by those who trafficked in infants; and raised to be slaved or to work in brothels. Other times they were left to die.

Paul comes along and, like Jesus, elevates the value of children in an extraordinary way, so that fathers have a sacred responsibility to their children. Paul revolutionises the relationship between children and parents. You will remember that Jesus did the same as well, welcoming them when the disciples tried to turn them away. He warned that it would be better to be drowned with a millstone tied to your neck rather than to cause a child to **stumble**. **The gospel completely overturns the culture's views on children, completely turns them upside down.**

Paul begins with a negative command, "*Do not provoke your children to anger.*" We may not live as the first century did, but this is still a fitting statement because it's saying that there is a possibility for a parent to create in their children a settled anger and resentment that lasts for a very long time. Now, of course, there will be times a child gets angry. There's a big difference between intermittent anger and deep, abiding anger as a result of your upbringing.

How does that happen? Well, on the one hand, parents can be too hard. They can give unnecessary commands, be too heavy-handed, or just downright mean. They can be easily frustrated and lash out at small things where all bad behaviour is treated equally. They don't care about discipling and training the child. They just want the child to fall in line.

But it's also possible for a parent to be too soft and lenient.

Then there is a positive command; "*bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*"

Parents have a stewardship from the Lord to raise (disciple) their children in God's ways.

It starts by modelling Christ and His Church through your marriage. A Kingdom order and partnership.

A child then learns to obey and honour a loving God, by obeying and honouring their parents.

The result (reward) is an abundant and prosperous life that brings glory to God!

Conclusion

Do you need redemption in your family? It's yours in Christ.

Do you need grace to honour your parents? It's yours in Christ.

Do you need help valuing and forgiving your parents? It's yours in Christ.

Do you need moment by moment help to parent your children? It's yours in Christ.

Everything you need is yours in Christ Jesus because Christ Jesus gave Himself for you.

Discussion questions:

1. **Is it possible to live a life in line with God's laws and principles without the help** of the Holy Spirit? If not, how does the Holy Spirit enable us to live a godly life?
2. Why is it *right* for children to obey their parents?
3. What does it mean when Paul says that children must obey their parents *in the Lord*?
4. Give some examples how parents could *provoke their children to anger*? What are the consequences? How can we break this cycle?