

# Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 25

CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11

Title: “Honoring God at Home”

*Ephesians 6:1-4 ~ September 18, 2011*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help believers understand God’s commands for parents and children.

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## Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- “Courageous” movie – 9/30 – sign-up in courtyard
- Nursery need more volunteers

As we discuss the topics of marriage and families, it’s difficult for many to see God’s truth objectively because of their experience with marriage, parenting, or both. We must remember that both passages - marriage in 5:22-33, and the family 6:1-4 - are stated under the commands of being “filled with the Spirit” (5:18), and to “submit to one another” (5:21 – mutual submission).

Our memories and experiences, especially with regard to both the good and the bad memories of how we were raised are of value to us in many ways. But we must remind ourselves that the standard for our behavior – as parents or as children – is not our personal history or opinions, but the Word of God. The Apostle Paul was inspired and moved by the Spirit of God, so what he writes in Ephesians (and his other biblical writings) are God’s truth – the very words of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

I believe that God intends the family to be one of the greatest blessings we have in this life. But for many, this is not the case. Due to the influence of sin, many families have been burdens

instead of blessings. They hold memories of pain instead of comfort, uncertainty instead of security.

This has been the experience of history – and Scripture testifies to this reality, and it didn't take long for the family to bring forth pain instead of care and comfort! Cain killed his brother Abel, we see Jacob taking advantage of his brother Esau and deceiving his father, Isaac, and Absalom tried to kill his father, King David.

During the time of Jesus' birth – and a few decades later as Paul was writing this letter to the church at Ephesus, the family was still a dangerous place for most people in society. William Barclay tells us that:

“...under Roman law of *patria potestas* (“the father's power”), a Roman father had absolute power over his family. He could sell them as slaves; he could make them work in his fields, even in chains; he could take the law into his own hands, for law was in his own hands, and he could punish as he liked; he could even inflict the death penalty on his child. Further, the power of the Roman father extended over the child's whole life, so long as the father lived. A Roman son never came of age...there was the custom of child exposure. When a child was born, it was placed at the father's feet; and if the father stooped and lifted the child; that meant that he acknowledged it and wanted to keep it. If he turned and walked away, it meant that he refused to acknowledge it, and the child could quite literally be thrown out. Unwanted, healthy children were taken each night to the Roman Forum. There they became the property of anyone who cared to pick them up. They were collected at night by people who looked after them in order to sell them as

slaves or to stock the brothels of Rome. (The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, The New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay, p. 202-204)

The Roman statesman Seneca wrote, *“We slaughter a fierce ox; we strangle a mad dog; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown.”* (The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, The New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay, p. 204)

It is in this historical context and practice that the Spirit of God leads Paul to write these words. **(Read 6:1-4)**

In the same manner that Paul’s instructions to husbands and wives was radical and redemptive for women, his words here are the same – if not more for children, given their treatment and oftentimes neglect in the ancient world.

### **God’s command for children** vs. 1-2

Paul begins by giving a command to children, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” The command for children to obey is simple and direct. Children are commanded to obey – whether they agree with their parents or not. The only qualification on a child’s obedience is in the phrase “in the Lord”. Remember, we’re under the umbrella of ‘mutual submission’ (5:21), and the only way to disobey a parents command is if they are commanding you to do something that is contrary to God’s Word. Household chores, picking up your clothes, turning off the T.V. or radio, x-box or iPod, doing your homework, coming home from a friend’s house, clearing the table after dinner, doing the dishes, washing the car, mowing the grass, taking out the garbage, giving the dog a

bath, staying away from your brother or sister, or giving your father's feet a good massage (just checking to see if you're listening!) – just so you know – none of these commands are contrary to God's word!

Obedience is concerned with action.

Children – when your mom or dad tell you to do something, God commands you – He expects you to do it – to put action to it!

“...for this is right.” Probably refers more to natural law than to any specific command or precept in Scripture. In every culture, in every era, parents know more than their kids!

Parents know more about life, and how to live safely and in harmony with one another and how to live a productive life, and it's a parent's job to help their children learn these lessons and skills before they become adults. So, for children to obey their parents makes perfect sense...it's “right” – it's natural – it makes sense for kids to obey their parents!

If you take parental rights away – and give children equal status as their parents, the entire society will break down, and become incompetent and dysfunctional.

Children, you need to realize the blessing of parents...especially godly parents. Godly parenting will help and prepare you for a life of blessings! In fact, Paul points this out in vs. 2, when he quotes the fifth commandment from Exodus 20, “Honor your father and mother”. This brings forth a broader aspect than mere obedience. To ‘honor’ is a bigger deal than obedience.

Honor is concerned with attitude.

Kids...obeying with right action is not enough...God wants you to have the right attitude as you obey. Grumbling and complaining as you obey is not honoring your father and mother – and it's not honoring to God.

### **God's blessing for children** vs. 3

The promise “*That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.*” is proverbial – or a general truth of life, which means that in almost every case, when a child obeys and honors their parents, when they become an adult they will have the respect of others, respect of authority, and an understanding of life that will enable them to have a long and prosperous life as adults. Kids...you need to realize that your parents want the best for you! They want you to succeed! They want you to learn – to grow – to excel in life! Partly to insure that you will leave the house! Mostly to insure that you will enjoy the blessings of God as you choose a spouse, have children, choose a career, and serve the Lord in your family, neighborhood, workplace, and in the church.

Another very important key – and benefit of children learning to obey and honor their parents, is that if they do, they will also be learning to obey and honor their Heavenly Father. If a child refuses to obey their earthly mother and father, there is a good chance they will refuse to obey God, which will lead to a life of trouble, pain, and loss.

### **God's command and instruction for fathers** vs. 4

**4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

“exasperate” is a compound word - *parorgizō*

*Para* – meaning ‘close beside’, ‘next to’

*Orgizō* – meaning ‘to be angry’

So, the picture is to rouse someone to anger; to *provoke* them in a way that really pushes their buttons, i.e. to "*really get to them*" in an "up-close-and-personal" way.

Now this command applies to both parents – moms can do this also – but we dads have a special gift in this area, so Paul directs this a bit more at the fathers. There are many ways we can exasperate or provoke our children to anger. This is not talking about the anger our kids may have when they are rightly punished – or when we rightly give them chores, or put some other restrictions on them. When a child gets angry as a result of normal parenting (appropriate correction and discipline), then the problem is not the parenting, it is the child’s attitude toward the parent – and their attitude toward God. In this situation, they are not obeying – and they are not honoring their mother or father.

But there are many ways that we as fathers can provoke our kids to anger.

**First**, we can be overprotective of them – which sends a message to them that we don’t trust them – we don’t believe that they can make good, wise choices. Our kids need our guidance and protection, but we must teach them and give them opportunities to make good, wise, godly choices. “Their wills can be guided, but not controlled.” (The MacArthur New Testament

Commentary – Ephesians, by John MacArthur, p. 317)

**Second**, we can play favorites.

**Third**, we can demand perfection and unrealistic achievement. This communicates that we love and accept them only when they perform at the highest levels. This is an impossible standard for kids (or adults) to live up to – and it establishes a harmful pattern and example of love which will hamper their relationships in the future.

**Fourth**, we can withhold encouragement and praise. This will lead to discouragement and a lack of confidence in life.

**Fifth**, we can live selfishly, never sacrificing for our kids. When parents live only for their own interests and desires, and always relegate their kids interests below theirs, the message sent is that the parents view the kids as an interference and a bother.

**Sixth**, we can provoke them to anger by not allowing them to be kids! Insisting that kids grow up too fast – and not allowing them to act childish – when they are children – will rob them of a God-intended stage in their life.

**Seven**, if our love is conditional. When we express love to them when we are proud or happy with their behavior, and withhold love when they have disappointed us, our love is conditional, and unhealthy.

**Eighth**, you can provoke your child to anger by abusing them physically, emotionally, or verbally. Proper discipline is not unloving; it is an expression of love. Following up a time of discipline with an affirmation that you love him/her and that you will always love them is crucial.

Discipline and punishment should never turn abusive. Earlier in Ephesians Paul told us not to sin in our anger (4:26). As a

parent – especially as a father, we need to realize that if we are disciplining our child when we are angry, we are in dangerous territory. Appropriate discipline and punishment is not abuse. Abuse is never justified as a form of discipline or punishment.

(This list taken from The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians, by John MacArthur, p. 317-318)

**Ninth**...you can provoke your child to anger by not keeping your promises. Promising to watch their baseball game, or school play, but always having an excuse for missing it, will provoke anger in your children. Promising to spend time playing with them but when the opportunity arises, you choose to do something else. The broken promises to a child will not only lead to anger, but it will lead to the child breaking promises to their parent – especially later in life.

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger...”

The second part of vs. 4 gives father’s another command – to “bring them up” (nourish – same Gr. Word as 5:29). The goal for Christian husbands is to present our wife, holy and blameless to the Lord. And our duty as Christian fathers is the same – to present our children, holy and blameless to the Lord. We are commanded here in vs. 4 to ‘feed’ our kids with the “training and instruction of the Lord.”

“training” (NIV) has the idea of “discipline” (NASB) – and is corrective in nature – helping your kids see the sins in their life – pointing out the dangers if they make certain choices – helping them see they are going the wrong way.

“instruction” (NIV) involves more positive input – encouraging them to take the right path – helping them see the blessings of God for those who obey His Word.

You may have noticed that Paul in giving these commands, Paul has an underlying assumption that you *know* God’s Word! For a father – for parents to obey this command, you have to have an understanding of God’s Word – His instruction for life. You cannot pass on to your children something you don’t possess and practice in your own life! If you know it – speak it to them – but don’t live it, your hypocrisy will be obvious to your kids.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

## **Application**

Children (Under 18 and/or living at home) obey your parents.

This is action – not lip service. Obedience implies you do what your mom or dad says.

Children, honor your parents.

This is attitude. Do not obey while you call them names under your breath, roll your eyes, and get angry at them for telling you to do something that you didn’t want to do.

This is not only an issue of your obedience and honor to

your parents, but it is more importantly an issue of obeying and honoring God, since this is His command to you!

Parents...especially fathers: don't provoke your children to anger.

Col. 3:21 "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." (ESV)

Parents...especially fathers: know and live God's Word so you can teach and model it to your children.

Movie on 9/30 – "Courageous"?

Close in prayer