

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/1/91
Ephesians 6:1-4 "God's Design for the Parent/Child Relationship"

Intro:

Today, we are concluding a mini-series focusing on the family. For 4 weeks we have examined "God's Blueprint for Family Living." We have seen:

"How to be a Wife that Pleases God" (5:22-24)

"Straight Talk to Husbands" (5:25-30)

"The Marks of a Great Marriage (5:31-33)

The husband/wife relationship is the primary relationship in the home. That must be strong. God's Word addressed it first. But it doesn't stop there, as we'll see today.

Background for our Study:

Key: Christian homes ought to be different. And Christian homes CAN be different!

Why? Two reasons.

1. Because Christians are "in Christ", and have abundant resources for living the Christian life (see 1:1; 1:3)

2. Because Christians have the Holy Spirit.

What practical difference does the Holy Spirit make in your life?

5:18 "Be filled with the Spirit"--What happens when a person is controlled by the Spirit? Three by-products:

a. Your Praise (19)

b. Your Perspective (20)--Be thankful!

c. Your Personal Relationships (21).

Spirit-filled Christians have solid relationships with other people. This is basic. If I am right with God, I'll be right with other people. My vertical relationship and my horizontal relationship go hand in hand.

And where do right relationships start? In the Home (5:22ff)

The Holy Spirit ought to affect our marriages.

V 22 Wives submit

V 25 Husbands love

V 33 Summary Verse: "Let every one of you. . . love. . . reverence."

But in many homes, there's another sphere of relationships. The parent/child relationships. The Spirit ought to affect those too.

Q: What does God expect of children? What are the marks of a successful child?

Q: What does God expect of parents? What does God say it takes to be a Good Parent?

Approach: We'll take both services today to zero in on these questions.

Proposition: Ephesians 6:1-4 gives us God's design for the parent/child relationship.

I. God's Design for Children (1-3)

A. The Responsibility (1-2)

1. Involves an Act--Obey (1a)

- 2. Involves an Attitude--Honor (2a)
- B. The Rationale (1-2)
 - 1. This is Right (1b).
 - 2. This is Rewarding (2b).
- C. The Results (3)
- II. God's Design for Parents (4)
 - A. What NOT to do
 - B. What To Do

I. God's Design for Children (1-3)

READ vv 1-3

Unfortunate chapter break at 6:1 (all one section from 5:18 to 6:9). We're learning what difference Jesus Christ makes in our relationships.

What does God expect of children?

Key: There are 3 things God wants children to know. First. . .

A. The Responsibility (1-2)

V 1 "Children obey your parents. . ."

Notice who Paul addresses. Remember he is writing from a Roman prison to the church in the city of Ephesus. His letter would be read publically in the church service. And in v 1 he says, "Children." That's significant for a couple of reasons: --implies that children participated in the public worship services (not the extremes we see today in churches--one, remove children from services entirely, and thus fragment the home; two, tell children, "Sit there and be quiet. This is the adult service. Just put in your time until you're an adult." No. The teaching of God's Word ought to be relevant for all ages.)

--Who are children? Who is responsible to obey parents? Toddlers?

Elementary school age? Teens? Is Paul talking to 40 year olds? Who?

"children" = any offspring under parental authority

What is the child's responsibility? Involves 2 things. First. . .

1. Involves an **Act--Obey** (1a)

V 1 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord."

"obey" = compound greek word, the root of which is the verb "to hear, listen"; to obey lit means "to listen up." Children, your responsibility is to pay attention to your parents. That goes for teens too. This word indicates that you are to give heed to your God-given guardians. Your responsibility involves an ACT--obey.

Problem: Our humanistic society tells parents to let their children "discover" themselves. Parents, don't infringe your values on them. Children, you're bombarded by sources that tell you that you have rights, that your parents have no right to infringe on your rights, that you're justified in rebelling against your parents.

eg--the music, rock culture

eg--Nicolodian TV

But God's Word says that "children" have a responsibility (which means the parents have one as well, as we'll see in v 4).

And why? Because of our identity. As Christians, who are we?
"in the Lord"--The way you relate to your parents indicates the way you relate to your Lord. So obey your parents.

Illust: Some obey, yet possess a bad attitude. Is that OK?
eg--

Young people, your responsibility involves an act, but it also involves. . .

2. Involves an **Attitude--Honor** (2a)

V 2 "Honor thy father and mother"

What does it mean to "honor?"

Paul quotes command #5 of the 10 commands. Where do you find the 10 commands? Ex 20/Dt 5 What are they? They were given to the Israelites. Moral absolute standards given by their Sovereign God so they would know how to live as His covenant people. Two categories:

Category #1 Your Responsibility to God (1-4)--1. No other gods 2. No graven images 3. No vain use of God's name 4. Keep the sabbath

Category #2 Your responsibility to People (5-10)--5. Honor father and mother 6. No killing 7. No adultery 8. No stealing 9. No f.w. 10. No coveting

Please note the first responsibility spelled out in the second category. God expects His people to honor their parents.

note: the act of obedience to parents may cease when a child leaves the nest, but we never outgrow the attitude of honoring our parents.

Q: What does it mean to "honor" your parents?

"honor"--it's a beautiful word = "to set a price on; to value; revere"

Unfortunately, in our society which promotes "rugged individualism," we've lost our understanding of and appreciation for "giving honor to whom honor is due."

Key: In Eph 6:2 children are told to give parents honor. Did you realize that's the same thing we should give to God?!

Pr 3:9 "Honor the Lord with thy substance. . ."

Mal 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master; If then, I be a father, where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord"

I Tim 1:17 "Now unto the King eternal. . . the only wise God be honor"

God deserves honor. Most don't question that. But did you realize that God used the same word to depict what some others deserve?

--Widows deserve honor (I Tim 5:3); so do elderly (Lev 19:32)

--Church leaders deserve honor, esp those who teach Word (I Tim 5:17)

--Servants are to honor Masters (I Tim 6:1)

--Husbands are to honor wives (I Pt 3:7)

--"Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King."
(I Pt 2:17)

--Christ is to be honored (Rev 4:11).

Listen. God expects us to honor Him, His Son, the elderly, church authorities, our bosses. And where does God expect us to learn how to honor? In the home. It all starts with this command--Honor your parents.

Problem in many homes today: The children run the parents. The parents see it as their duty to give their children everything they want. And they feel guilty if they don't.

Illust: Family vacation when I was a teen. We visited friends of my parents in Oregon. They had 2 children. One was a boy about 8 years old. I can still hear him at breakfast talking to his mother, "I want bacon! I want more!" And his mother went to pieces trying to satisfy his demands. I looked at my younger brother and sister, and we all gasped inside. We knew what he really needed!

Parents, the best thing you can ever give your children is to teach them to respond correctly to authority. If you don't teach your children to honor and respect your authority, it will have direct bearing on the way they relate to other authorities in their lives: Civil authority, church authority, and ultimately God's authority.

Children, do you honor your parents?

Listen. You can obey your parents w/o honoring them. But God is just as concerned about your attitude as your action. Your responsibility involves both.

Tran: Young people, there's your responsibility. But why?

B. The Rationale (1-2)

Why should you obey and honor your parents? Two reasons.

1. This is Right (1b).

V 1 "for this is right"

"right" = "righteous"

Why obey? Here's the reason. Because it's the Right and righteous thing to do. What makes it right? Obedience is right because it fulfills God's standard.

Illust: Jesus' developmental years--Lk 2:52 "Jesus increased. . ."

Notice something. God didn't say, Obey when it's convenient, when it's expedient." He didn't say, Obey your parents when you understand them. No. He said obey them because it's right. Obedience to parents is a moral absolute.

Col 3:20 "Children obey your parents in all things." Why?

"for this is well-pleasing to the Lord."

Objection: But my parents aren't Christian. Should I obey them? What if they tell me to do something that God forbids?

Obedience is the norm. If they would command you to do something contrary to God's will, your response would be that of Peter to the Sanhedrin in Acts, "We must obey God rather than men." But this is the rare exception, not the norm.

eg--John Stott uses the illustration of baptism (242)

2. This is Rewarding (2b).

V 2b "which is the first command with a promise"

Obedying and honoring parents is rewarding. In fact, it's the first command with a promise. Paul could mean that the 5th Command is the first of the 10 commands with an attached promise. Or as commentator Charles Hodge suggests, Paul could be saying that this command is "first" in importance. That is, this command is the chief command for harmony in society hinges upon it.

There's God's rationale. Children should obey because it's right, and it's rewarding.

Illust:

Tran: What are the rewards specifically? Here's the third thing God wants children to know. The Responsibility, the Rationale, and. . .

C. The Results (3)

V 3 "That it may be well with thee. . ."

What are the results?

1. May be well with you.
2. Enjoy long life.

Q: Does that mean that all obedient children will live long lives? Does it mean that if a child dies, that child was disobedient?

Certainly not. Remember this command was originally given to the Israelites, a theocratic nation. How did God bless them? With a Promised Land. With abundant crops. With prosperous health. With long life. Physical blessings.

Q: How does God bless His people today? 1:3 "spiritual blessings"

Q: What then is Eph 6:3 saying to us?

**Principle: Obedience brings blessing.

Listen. God wants what's best for you. Young people, God's guidelines are not harsh, not binding, not some straightjacket. Rather God's instructions are the means for you to experience freedom and joy in life.

Illust:

Warning: Don't be like the pious sounding Pharisees. Do you know what they did? Look at Mt 15:3-9

They circumvented the clear command of God to do what they wanted to do!

Note: Some of us adults here today dishonored our parents years ago. And right now there's a nagging pain in our hearts. In a very real sense our failure to honor our parents hampers our Christian life now. What should we do?

1. Confess it as sin to God.
2. If your parents are living, go to them, confess to them, ask for their forgiveness. You may object, "But that was 25 years ago!" Q: Do you want to be hindered for another 25 years? Prov 28:13 "He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy."

Illust:

II. God's Design for Parents (4)

Key: Eph 6:1-4 was radical teaching in Paul's day.

Why was that? Callous cruelty prevailed in the Roman Empire. Unwanted babies were abandoned. Weak and deformed babies were killed.

Quote: Seneca wrote, "We slaughter a fierce ox; we strangle a mad dog; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle unless they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown."

When a child was born, it was placed before the father's feet. If the father stooped and lifted the child, that meant he acknowledged it and wished it to be kept. If he turned and walked away, it meant that he refused to acknowledge it and the child could quite literally be thrown out.

Unwanted children were commonly left in the Roman forum. There they became the property of anyone who cared to pick them up.

Even if the child lived, life depended on the will of the father. In Roman society the father had absolute power and authority over his family. He could sell his children as slaves. He could make them work in the fields, even with chains. He could punish his children however he wished, and could even inflict the death penalty. What's more, the father's absolute control over his child continued as long as the father lived.

Against this backdrop, the NT offered a striking and refreshing alternative, even a liberating alternative. The sanctity of human life is upheld. Guidelines exist both for children and parents.

Notice God's design for parents. . .

A. What NOT to do

V 4 "And ye fathers, provoke not. . ."

"fathers" = more appropriately "parents"

"provoke not" = don't exasperate; don't overcorrect

B. What To Do

V 4 "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition"

How do we do that parents? We'll see tonight.

Key: Parenting takes parents.

Lots of parents are willing to give their kids things, or money. But what God expects, and children want more than anything is this--for us to invest OURSELVES in our children. And that takes time.

Illust: Morley

Conclusion:

Who does God hold responsible for what's happening to the youth of our society today?

1. God holds parents responsible for their children.

Eph 6:4 tells us. Parents are to raise their children. Parents are responsible to teach their children God's values. Not the church. Certainly not the schools.

So parents are responsible.

2. God holds children responsible for their actions.

Eph 6:1-3 makes that clear.

Did you realize that acc to Lev 20:9, if a person cursed his father or mother, he could receive the death penalty. Why? Rebellion against authority is contagious.

God expects us to reverence our parents. His penalty is stiff for those who don't. No longer the death penalty. But there are some here today who have no joy, whose lives are a wreck, and it may be due to flagrant violation of God's command.

The tragedy is this. It could be different. You could be experiencing God's reward! God blesses the obedient.

Q: How are your family relationships?