

Attachment: The Gospel and Our Families

The Gospel and Parents

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June 1, 2008



THE GOSPEL AND PARENTS
Ephesians 6:1-4

If you have a Bible and I hope you do, I'll invite you to open with me to Ephesians 6. I would say at the start that we have a lot of ground to cover today in the Word, but let's be honest. We have a lot of ground to cover every Sunday in the Word so we're just going to jump right in.

While you're finding Ephesians 6 I want to ask every child and student if you are 18 years old or younger, I want to invite you to stand. Eighteen years old or younger, I want you to stand and remain standing for just a minute or two. Alright. Keep standing.

As you see the kids and students that are standing around you I want to share with you the current trends. Research today says that eight out of ten kids, 80% of kids in the church or part of the church as children and students, by the second year of college will be gone from the church.

In other words, to put a face on that, eight out of the ten kids, some say nine out of the ten kids that you see standing around you, by the time they're 20 years old will have left the church behind. That means this group in this section you can sit down. This group in this section you can sit down. This group in this section you can sit down. Maybe this group would be left. That's one generation.

You carry that on one more generation. We have a problem. You guys can have a seat. We need to talk about the gospel and parenting; the gospel and passing on the gospel from generation to generation.

Three Foundations

The challenge is how do you do that in one morning in one text. So what I want us to do is I want us to consider three overall Biblical foundations that we're going to see permeate this text, but really what we need is a starting point. Then we're going to dive into this particular text, Ephesians 6:1-4.

The Word is Sufficient

Foundation number one: the Word is sufficient. The Word of God is sufficient. This is the same starting point we are beginning at in each one of these messages; the gospel in womanhood, the gospel in marriage, the gospel in parenting. I want to confess from the very beginning I was not an expert on womanhood. I was not an expert on marriage and I am most certainly not an expert on parenting.

I mean, I've been at it for about 15 months now and I've read a few books so I know most everything about parenting, but there are a couple of things I have actually yet to discover

about this whole thing. So in light of that I want to give this caveat from the very beginning and knowing, knowing there are so many different circumstances represented around this room I hope it brings you good encouragement to know that I don't feel responsibility to give you advice on parenting today. That's not my goal.

My goal is not even to share with you my personal philosophy of parenting. My goal is to expose this Word that is true that is foundational for all of our parenting and to stick as closely to this Word as possible. And I want to remind you from the very beginning God knew exactly what He was doing when he gave us this Word. He is not wishing that he had come out with a revised and expanded edition of the New Testament that has a little more to do about parenting for teenagers and parenting for toddlers in the 21st Century.

God gave us exactly what we needed, which raises the importance of these words to such a high level. We need to unpack what the Word says about parenting. Now I know that as soon as I say that there are parents around this room that are thinking, "Well this is going on with my child" or "This is going on with my teenager and preacher, I appreciate your focus on the Word, but Leviticus or 2 Chronicles really don't have a lot to tell me about how to deal with this particular situation."

In fact, I would go so far this morning as to say I don't believe this book was written to give you the answers for all of those situations. In my own life, our sixth month old has been sleeping great until this last week and now he's waking up in the middle of the night and Habakkuk is not telling us whether or not to keep the monitor on or off or to turn in this way or that way in the bed. Habakkuk is just not providing the fuel we need for that answer.

However, however, the Word is sufficient in this way and please don't miss it. Last week I talked about an unhealthy dependence that we've created when it comes to marriage and family on books and conferences and seminars and professionals to give us answers. I am not saying in any way that all books are bad, all conferences are bad or all seminars are bad or all professionals are bad. That's not what I'm saying.

What I'm saying is there is a danger to run to those places or run to those people and bypass the Word that is sufficient for us. You say, "Well, Dave, you just said that the Word doesn't have the answers for what you're doing and this or that facet of parenting." But here's where the Word does have the answers. Every mom and dad please hear this. This is not in your notes, but it is key.

The most important thing you can do, mom or dad, for your children is to grow into the image of Jesus Christ. That is the most important thing you can do for your children is to grow into the image of Christ. Leviticus, 2 Chronicles and Habakkuk were all written for that purpose. This book is the only means that God has promised to bless for your transformation into the image of Christ and your kids need to see Christ more than they need to see Dr. Phil in you. And as a result, we must not bypass this Word that is sufficient for all life and all godliness and all parenting to make us who we need to be. I'm not saying you don't need to listen to this or that, but if we run right past this to these other places we will end up starving our souls and the souls of our children from the very Word of life that they and you and I need. The Word is sufficient.

So when you're struggling with this or that area in parenting don't neglect Leviticus, don't neglect Habakkuk, don't neglect this Word because it is the means by which God is transforming you into the image of Christ. The Word is sufficient.

The Home is Central

Second foundation: the home is central. This is where I need to be as the pastor of an American church in the 21st Century especially; I need to apologize to you as parents. We live in an age of professionalism where we are tempted to hire out even parental responsibilities. We want our son to excel in sports and so we hire a professional to train him in certain skills. We want our daughter to get into the best college and so we hire a tutor who will help her get that SAT score up.

We transfer this over into the church. We want our children to be good Christians and so we hire a youth minister and a children's minister to do that for us. What we're going to see in the Word today is that from the very beginning of God's people he has established that the home would be the central delivery system for the transfer of His truth from one generation to another. And with the way we have approached families even in the church, I'm convinced that we are encouraging families to abdicate our responsibilities in our children's lives in favor of a youth minister or a children's minister doing that for us.

I want you to hear very loud and very clear from the very beginning it is not the children's minister's job to evangelize your children. It is your job to evangelize your children. It is not the youth minister's job to disciple your children. It is your job to disciple your children and we cannot relegate the discipling function of the family to a children's ministry, a youth ministry, even a Christian school. You are the primary agent for the discipleship of your children.

I want to be careful here because we've created this. This is why I'm apologizing. Why I'm saying we need to repent because we've created this mentality. When you come to a building like this and you say, "Well go drop your kid off here and your youth student off here" and you even have people – we almost – we don't say it out loud, but what's basically that we're saying, "We'll take care of your kids. We're professionals at this thing with kids. You don't need to try this at home." It's wrong. It's unbiblical and it's ineffective because it's not God's means for the discipleship of your children.

I want to encourage parents today. You have everything you need to disciple your children. You do not have to be a seminary trained theologian to read the Bible with your kids and to pray with your kids to teach your kids how to walk with God. This is your responsibility and we need to work together. We need to work together. I know this is the heart of our children's minister youth student ministers. We need to work together to make sure that any children's and student ministries in the context of this church only equip you to disciple your kids.

This is so against the grain. There is a phrase in church growth circles. You want to grow your church? Three P's: parking, preschool and preaching; often times in that order. You got good parking, you got a good preschool, you got good preaching you're going to grow your church. That is not how this church is going to grow. We are not going to grow this church based on having world class children's ministries and student ministries that rob parents in this room of the God given responsibility he has given you to train up your children to follow Christ. It's very, very different.

But I believe it's what the Word dictates and we're going to see this today. Some of you are thinking, "Dave, that sounds good, but the parents won't do that. Parents don't feel equipped to do that. Can we really expect parents to do that?" If the Bible expects parents to do this, then we need to expect parents to do this.

We need to encourage parents to do this. Some of you are thinking, "Well what about kids who don't have Christian parents? What about them?" That's a great question. I bring a quote in here from one evangelism professor, Alvin Reed. At a seminary he said, "The largest rise of full-time youth ministers in history has been accompanied by the biggest decline in youth evangelism effectiveness."

The answer is not adding youth ministers. You know why? Because kids who don't have Christian parents don't need to see the glory of Christ in a youth building in special events once in awhile. They need to see the glory of Christ in homes that they hang out in all week long and on the weekends. They need to see moms and dads who love their children and show them how to follow Christ and God says that will shine. This is how the faith will be passed from generation to generation.

All this rise of youth ministry and children's ministry programs and those numbers, eight out of ten, don't we see we need to come back to the fact the home is central in God's plan for taking the gospel to the world. That raises the stakes. That raises the stakes for parents. We can no longer abdicate our responsibility to disciple our children. Home is central. The Word is sufficient.

The Gospel is Necessary

A third foundation: the gospel is necessary. We are discovering during these weeks I hope at Brook Hills how the gospel is the foundation for our lives, every facet of our lives. The gospel is not just something that we hear and we pray a prayer and we move on with our lives. This is foundational. I want you to think about why it's foundational in parenting.

What does the gospel have to do with moms and dads and kids? Has everything to do with it. Two reasons: first, because the gospel is our source of salvation. We talked last week about how marriage is the uniting of two horrible sinners. As we come to parenting I want to remind you when that baby pops out he or she, that little one greets you with a sinful nature that is absolutely ready to take you on. I don't mean to tamper with the beauty of that moment, but it's a reality.

Do I have to share with any parent that your child actually has a propensity to sin. I don't know if you've discovered that, but it's – don't laugh too loud. They're sitting next to you. Don't laugh, like – but the reality is they have a propensity to sin. They are prone to sin and guess what? So are you. So are you. You put that equation together, you've got trouble. You try to approach that equation without the gospel, you are hopeless.

This is what you won't find in many books, conferences, seminars and professionals. You won't find the gospel. You'll find different Scriptures ripped out of their context to promote a certain philosophy, but you won't find the gospel and the gospel is necessary. The gospel's our source of salvation. Our kids' ultimate need is to be saved from their sins.

This is a heart issue. We can spend all our time looking at behavior issues. We can spend all of our time looking how we can fix this or that on the outside. Until an internal heart issue is dealt with then we are hopeless in this picture of parenting.

The gospel is needed for us. We all need new hearts. We need new hearts. Our kids need new hearts and not just to be saved from the penalty of sin, to pray a prayer and move on. Once a child comes to faith in Christ there's still a proneness to wander from God. A propensity to disobey.

We need the gospel not only as our source of salvation, but the gospel is our source of transformation. This is Ephesians 5:18, the context in which this passage is found, "*Be filled with the Holy Spirit.*" The spirit in you through the gospel transforming you. Our kids need to realize. Do we realize? Do we realize that as parents we can't do this job apart from the work of Christ through his gospel in us, apart from his Spirit in us we can't do this.

In the same way there is no way any of our kids can follow what Ephesians 6 says apart from the spirit of God in them. No matter how much we teach them to be good, until the Holy Spirit enables them to be good, we're missing the point. That's why we need the gospel, why we need to saturate our children with the gospel over and over and over and over again.

Yes, tell them how great they are, but help them to realize that at the core of who they are there's a sinful nature and they need Christ. They cannot make it on their own. This goes against the grain of our culture. They need Christ. They need the gospel on a daily basis. We all do. The gospel is necessary when it comes to parenting.

So based on these three foundations, the Word is sufficient. Home is central. The gospel is necessary. Let's dive into Ephesians 6 and we're going to see these unfold as we look at God's commands to parents and children.

Verse 1: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise— 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'* Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-4).

Now what I want us to do is actually kind of work from the back part of this passage to the front. So we're going to start by first looking at the authority God has placed in the home in the parents and then we're going to work our way to children. So God's Word to parents. Then God's Word to children.

You see in verse 4 God's Word to parents. You look in all four of these verses and you'll see parents emphasized. Verse 4 it says "Fathers." That's a word that's actually used in Hebrews 11 and in Colossians 3 to refer to both parents. So it's not saying, "Fathers do this, but mothers you're kind of out of the picture at this point." It's showing both here, but there is and it's just what we saw at the end of Ephesians 5, there is a picture of a husband or a father being the head in a home and having a leading responsibility in the home. Not sole responsibility, but a leading responsibility. Based on what we saw in Ephesians 5 we've seen that.

So he says, "Fathers" and the implication is yes, parents and fathers, you lead the way in this. He says, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Going from the back to the front we'll start with that instruction.

Parents...

God Gives You Children by His Grace

What is the word to parents? Start with this. God gives you children by His grace. Parents, fathers, mothers, God gives you children by his grace. Again, just like, just like we saw in

Ephesians 5. The last part of Ephesians 6:4 instruction, *"Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

First part of Ephesians 6:1, *"Obey your parents in the Lord."* This whole picture, it's bookended. It revolves around God. The picture is God has entrusted children to parents. Your children do not belong to you. They belong to God and he has entrusted them to us. We are stewards. We have been given a trust by grace.

God Gives You Children for His Glory

Not only entrusted to us by his grace, but God gives you children for His glory. This is exactly what we saw last week transferred over into Ephesians 6. Marriage, last week, marriage exists for God more than it exists for you. This week, parenting exists for God more than it exists for you.

You have been given a trust to raise up children who bring glory to God, who love God, who honor God, who see their life in the context of who God is. He's given us children by His grace for His glory. This is huge but this is not how the culture around us perceives parenting. I want to put this picture, which seems simple. Okay, "He's given us children by His grace for His glory." I want us to put that next to what the world says about parenting and the goal of parenting. I want to remind you what the goal of parenting is not.

The goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children, first of all, not to help your children get a great education. The goal is not so that your child has the best grades, goes to the best college and has the best education. Now I'm not saying that education is bad. I'm not even saying that we don't have a role in encouraging our children to be responsible with the minds God's entrusted them. We're going to talk about the educational role in parenting in just a moment, but the goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children get the best education in the world.

Second: the goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children be a great athlete. What is most important, what is the priority in parenting is not to help your children be the best at every sport that they play. The goal is not to drag your children around town with their tongues wagging out of their mouths trying to compete and hang with all of the other people around them that are winning trophies that will eventually gather dust in all of our basements. That's not the goal of biblical parenting.

The goal of biblical parenting is also not to help your children go on great dates. Can I get an amen? Now we're going to talk more about singleness next week and hit on this a little bit there, but I would definitely say the goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children participate in glorified divorce practice where they unite their life with another person in a committed, exclusive, many times romantic, even sexual relationship only to stop that at the end of the year and move onto somebody else the next year. This is not biblical parenting and we should not encourage it. It's getting quiet.

The goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children have a great career; not to help your children have a great career and similarly the goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children make great money. I am not saying that all of these things are bad and they should be avoided. I am saying though all of these things put them together you've got the world's definition of success. All of these things is how the world defines success.

You want to see a successful teenager in the world? You've got a guy who's a great athlete, who's smart, who's got a great girlfriend and who's headed to a great college to have a great education to make a great life. He's got things figured out. This is the world's

definition of success and our culture is selling us, even in the church we are selling a bill of goods that says our kids need to be successful in this world and it is not true. It is not true. It's not true.

Here's why this is so important. Here's where this is so subtly dangerous because the picture is as parents we can tell our kids to get good grades and practice to get good at sports and work hard to learn this or that instrument and take the video games that we have bought them, spend hours getting good at them and prioritize taking them all over town and playing soccer and football and taking lessons in gymnastics and everything else. We tell them they need to go off to college and get a good degree and get a good job and make a good living.

We're teaching them all of these things. We're immersing them in all of these things every single day, but along the way we're not teaching them to serve God. God help us if our answer is to say we're going to drop them off at the children's room or the youth building to do that for us. No! This is the goal of biblical parenting. This is our goal in parenting. We can't accomplish this if we are immersing our things in this world. If dads in this room are more passionate about teaching their sons how to swing a club or a bat than how to study the Bible we have missed the point.

If moms in this room are more passionate about teaching their daughters about make-up than biblical womanhood and the unfading beauty of a gentle and quite spirit then we have missed the point. And the danger is one day our sons and daughters are going to stand before God in Heaven with all of these things that we've told them are important and every one of those things is going to burn up in the fire and our sons and daughters are going to stand as beggars before God on that day and it will be because of us. It'll be because of us.

Don't buy it. Don't buy it. Don't immerse our kids – we can't immerse our kids in worldly pictures of success in such a way they grow numb to Godly pictures of success and have no desire for it because it doesn't have fame, it doesn't have money and it doesn't have what we have exalted as a good life.

The goal of biblical parenting is not to help your children get a great education, be a great athlete, go on great dates, have a great career or make great money. The goal of biblical parenting is to help your kids accomplish a Great Commission. That's the goal of biblical parenting. It's from the beginning of Scripture.

God says to His people, "You raise your children to know me and to love me, to serve me and to glorify me with their life. You raise them to make my glory known in all the world." Is this what is driving our parenting? Really, really when it gets down to it is this what is driving our parenting? We might even say, "Well I'd like for it – to think it is" but look at how we're leading our children. Is this driving our parenting?

How can make the glory of God, how can my child make the glory of God known in the whole world. Is that driving us? I hesitate to say it's not because when I speak at college conferences inevitably almost every college will involve conversations with college students who want to go around the world, but their Christian parents are discouraging them from doing it. I want to remind us our children do not belong to us. They belong to God. They exist for God and His glory; not ours. In fact, Jesus even tells them in Luke 14 that if they do not hate their father and their mothers, their brothers and their sisters then they cannot even be His disciple. He expects them to prefer Himself over every family tie in their life.

Parenting, biblical parenting propels kids into mission. It never prevents kids from mission. God has given us children by His grace and He's given us children for His glory. How do we raise them for His glory? This one verse has so much packed into it. How can we be faithful with the trust that's been given to us? How can we avoid – please don't miss it – we can raise our kids to be doctors and lawyers and successful businessmen and businesswomen and musicians. If we have not trained them to honor us and obey God, we have failed.

Commands for Parents

So, how do we be faithful with the trust that's been given to us? Well, Ephesians 6:4. That last part, *"Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."* Let's take those one by one. Instruction commands for parents. Number one: instruct your children so they know the Word. Instruct your children so they know the Word.

Now this is the educational component here. It's a great word. Instruct literally means that the picture here is to put in your children's minds and to lay on your children's hearts, to impart to them.

Now here's where I want you to take Ephesians 6 and the truth here and put it together with what God's picture of family has been like since the very beginning. Hold you place here in Ephesians 6 and turn back to Deuteronomy 6. Go in back there. You've got to see this. Deuteronomy 6, fifth book in the Bible, Deuteronomy 6.

One other place we don't have time to go to. You might write it down, Genesis 18:19. Genesis 18:19 is when God speaks to Abraham about his children and it's the first time teaching is ever mentioned in the Bible. First time teaching, instructing is mentioned in the Bible and it's mentioned in the context of family. It's God saying to Abraham, "Abraham, instruct your children in my ways. Instruct your children in my commands." So the first picture we've got of teaching in the Bible is teaching our father to his sons and daughters, to his family.

So then you get to Deuteronomy 6 and listen to what it says there. Deuteronomy 6:4 is basically the Old Testament statement of faith. This is known as the Shema. If it's not underlined in your Bible I would encourage you to underline it. This is a huge passage in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 6:4, *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."* Statement of faith there.

Based on that, verse 5, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"* (Deut. 6:5). So he gives that picture its focal point in the Old Testament. Then listen to what happens right after this statement of faith, *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts"* (Deut. 6:6).

Now listen. Verse 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."* (Deut. 6:7-9). Do you get the picture here? From the very beginning, from the very beginning. This is what I mentioned before. From the very beginning the central avenue for disciple making, the central avenue for making and spreading the Word of God has been through the home.

"Here's my Word. Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all you've got. Now take this, put it on your hearts and impress it on your children." What does this mean? What does this mean for us today? How can we instruct our children so that they know the Word?

Well, first it means we must have a verbal commitment to the Word in our homes. This is verse 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"* (Deut. 6:7). That pretty much covers it. If you're at home talk about the Word. If you're away from home, well, talk about the Word there. When you're up talk about the Word. When you're going to sleep talk about the Word. When you wake up talk about the Word. All the time talk about the word more than you talk about baseball, more than you talk about football, more than you talk about make-up and math and dates. Talk about the Word all the time.

Make a verbal commitment to the Word in your homes. This is the point where I would say the best Bible teachers are the fathers and the mothers who serve alongside them. The best Bible teachers. The best Bible teacher is not me. It's not small group leaders. It's not the most talented teacher that you just love to sit and listen to.

The best Bible teachers in this room are the fathers and mothers and here's why I can say that with complete authority and confidence. Because God has designed it this way. He has designed the family so that fathers, you are the primary instructor of the Word in your children's lives.

Mothers and fathers doing this together, talking about it all the time. Do you feel the weight of this, dads and moms? If your children's primary nourishment from the Word comes from me or from youth minister or children's minister or children's small group leader or student's small group leader, then they're starving for the Word because they need it. They're created to receive it from you.

You're the best Bible teachers for your kids. That's the way God has designed it. So talk about it all the time.

Instead of doing VBS this summer – want you to think about it with me – VBS is a good thing. Instead of doing vacation Bible School in this building for one week in a way that requires predominantly female leaders because many men work in the week and can't do that here during the week, instead of doing that we're going to take the Bible and we're going to go into homes all across this community, over 50 homes and we're going to teach the Word in our homes to our kids and to the kids in our neighborhood.

It's not just going to be in the mornings. You can also do it at night so that husbands can teach the Word on their own. What a great thing. Husbands to teach the word to your kids, the kids in your neighborhood, in your home. Wives and husbands, dads and moms to do this together in the context of the home. This is the picture we've got here in Deuteronomy 6. So sign up for that, please.

God help us if we will bring our children to an institution for a week during the summer like everybody else in the biblical south does. We will not though rise up and take responsibility for welcoming kids in our homes to learn the Word of God from us, from our mouths. This is the picture here in Deuteronomy 6. We need to take advantage of it. Alright; that was the plug.

The picture is make a verbal, make a verbal commitment to the Word in your home. Talk about it all the time. Not only a verbal commitment, second, we must have a visible commitment to the Word in our home even when no one is speaking the words everywhere in Deuteronomy 6. You know, your mom or dad's not talking, but you've got it on your foreheads. Even when mom and dad are gone, you don't get relief because it's on door

posts, houses and on gates. It's everywhere. The Word is everywhere. How do we do that? Do we need to start stamping things on our foreheads?

Well I'm not throwing out that option, but the picture we've got here in Deuteronomy 6 is make the Word so visible in your home, so prevalent in your home that it is like life and breath to your family. That the Word dominates every conversation. The Word dominates every symbol. The Word dominates every facet of your family. This is the picture in Deuteronomy 6.

God help us. A few generations ago a man was looked at as spiritually responsible in his home. If he did this, if he led family worship in his home, if he led his family to study the Bible together and to pray together. Today a man is looked at as spiritually responsible if he can find the church with the best staffed nursery and a cutting edge youth program for his kids. We have missed the point.

Make a verbal commitment to the Word in your home and a visible commitment. This is how we instructed, based on Deuteronomy 6, coupled with Ephesians 6.

Second, instruct, going from back to front, bring them up in the training instruction of the Lord. Second, train your children so they show the Word. Train your children so they show the Word. In other words, the Word you impress upon them, help it to come alive in them so they show the Word. The Word here for training is literally discipline. It's used all throughout Scripture. Most often translated discipline. The picture is there's a mandate upon our lives as parents to discipline our children. Because they don't pop out honoring us and glorifying Christ for their lives, the reality is we have the responsibility to discipline them and train them so that they do.

The picture of keeping them in boundaries and training them to walk in obedience to us and honor to God, it takes training. It takes discipline. The reality is though I wonder, I've been studying this text, why, why is there so little training towards this kind of picture in our homes. Maybe it's because, maybe we don't discipline our kids in the way that Ephesians 6 is showing us here because we lack, so many of us lack so much spiritual discipline in our own lives.

To this point I want to remind you our children will never be, will not be what they cannot see. Our children will not be what they cannot see. Now, this applies to so many areas of our life. You look at Titus 2:12, it talks about how God's grace is training us in godliness and as we grow in godliness we're able to impart that to others. We're able to train others in godliness. This is the picture. You obviously can't teach your kids to do what you don't know how to do.

So it means that if this is a reality then husbands, dads, moms, wives, got to step up to the plate. Think about one simple way based on the context here. We come to Ephesians 6 after Ephesians 5:22-33, which we talked about last week which has husband as the head of the home and the wife as the helper. If you missed that and that causes all kinds of red flags to go off in your mind, just please go back and listen to that from last week.

But the picture is the husband is the head of the home and the wife submits to her husband and to the loving authority of her husband, the sacrificial love of her husband. Now I want you to think about how this transfers over to our relationships with our kids. If a wife does not model submission to the loving authority of her husband, then it makes no sense for a child to hear "I need to live out submission to the loving authority of you as a parent in my life."

Similarly if they hear mom and dad talking about each other negatively, if they hear mom and dad talk about authorities in their life negatively, employers, bosses negatively, civic leaders negatively, church leaders negatively, then we should not be surprised when our children have a negative response to our authority in their lives. Do you see the picture here?

That's one simple example in the context of Ephesians 5 here, but the reality is they will not be what they cannot see. They need to see this in us and not just so that everything is ordered and working like Ephesians 5 and 6 has it, because they need to see what it means – don't miss it. This is when the stakes are highest in our relationship with God. Our children need to see what it means to submit to a loving authority in God.

You realize your children, my children are both young, two; six months old. They know me as father before they will know God as father. As a result the way I show them what a father looks like has huge implications for how one day I pray they will submit to Him as Father.

My wife's submission to me following the loving leadership of me needs to teach our kids how to be the church in submission to Christ. This is why this is so important. Not just for our sake. For the sake of the glory of God.

There's a danger here in this kind of discipline, which is why I believe we've got to – this is one of those parts where I've wondered. Of all the things he could have said to parents, why did he say, "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up*" (Eph. 6:4). What does that mean? Why of all the things he could have said does he say this.

A Caution for Parents...

It means, this is a caution to parents in your discipline, in your training up of your children, discipline your children with love that leads them toward God, not with anger that leads them away from God. Discipline your children. We can have all kinds of debates on how to discipline our children. I could throw out a couple hot button issues right now and I'd be in a lot of trouble with half the people in this room.

There's all kinds of discussions about how to discipline. The question is why discipline. Discipline is mandate. In Ephesians 6:1 does not say, "Parents obey your children in the Lord for this will keep things well at home and make the home peaceful." That's not what it says. Why discipline? And the reality is we discipline because we want to spur our children on toward God; not away from God.

Now think about that when the motivation for discipline, when it comes to discipline in our children's lives – it's what Scriptures teach. I'm not saying this – well my whole 15 months of experience with discipline, please listen. When it comes to discipline, Scripture says there's a kind of discipline that provokes a spirit of anger in children.

Now obviously to some extent. No child is happy when they're being disciplined. No child, just as a side note, you can walk away from here today and when your parent asks you to do something, tells you to do something that you don't want to do and you start to get angry, think well mom, dad, you're out of Ephesians 6 because I'm getting angry. That's not – that's called abuse of Scripture. Don't even try it. Don't even try it. That's not what Ephesians 6 is teaching.

Instead it's saying that we discipline our children not out of anger because they're not fitting in with our pattern for their lives. You discipline out of love because they're missing out on

God's pattern for their lives. There's a huge difference there. There's a huge difference there because over here you've got a Hebrews 12 kind of discipline. I would encourage you to go look at Hebrews 12. It talks about God disciplines us. Go to Hebrews 12, study it, ask, "How does God discipline me?" And then say "Now how did that teach me how to discipline my children." That's Hebrews 12.

It's a love kind of discipline. The reality is we discipline our children not because we want this or that to be controlled in their life by us and therefore we need to dominate them in this or that way. No; we discipline them because God says it will go well with children who obey their parents. It is good for children to obey their parents.

Why would He say that? Because He knows that children need to see a visible representation of authority in their lives that they do not rebel against. That they learn it's not good to rebel against authority because when they come to a knowledge of God they need to know very clearly it is not good to rebel against His authority. Does that make sense?

We want to teach them, train them with love so that when they disobey they're disciplined and trained to kind of come back and line that whole picture so that they will learn that when God disciplines them they don't rebel against that. They don't rebel against authority. Instead they come in line with what He says is best for them.

So discipline your children with love that leads them toward God; not with anger that leads them away from God. He says to fathers, mothers in this room, He says, "You will be held accountable before me. If you have provoked a spirit of anger in your child, if there is a spirit of resentment in your child that's come from the anger that you have shown in your discipline to him." "Do not be harsh with your children," Ephesians 6 is warning us. Saying be very, very careful.

I wish at this moment I had my dad here to explain this one to me. He disciplined me. I remember vividly, poignant moments, powerful moments of discipline. At the same time there has never been a question that my dad has always been my biggest fan. He disciplined me to bring me up, to build me up with love that I praise God led me toward my Father, God.

This is the way we feed our children scripture says. Instruct them, impress the Word upon them, train them. Show what that looks like in action and train them with discipline out of love that leads them toward God. Not with anger that leads them away from God.

Children...

Now to children. A word to children and this is where I want to encourage every teenager to, just in case you've tuned out, to come back in here with me. Every five year old, six year old, seven year old, eight year old, elementary school, middle school, high school, college students, children. I love this picture. Ephesians 6. It addresses children specifically. It's in the context of a worship gathering that a letter like this would be written. It says, "Children this is what you do." I want to remind you what the Word says to you in Ephesians 6.

You Are Made by God

It says, number one, "You are made by God." Now this seems real simple, real simple, but I want you to follow with me because it is foundationally important. We're going to come back to why this is so important.

You Are Responsible to God

You are made by God and second, you are responsible to God. "*Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*" (Eph. 6:1). In other words, God says "This is my law. This is right. This is not a suggestion. This is what I command."

Now I want you to listen very, very, very closely to me if you're a teenager, child, please listen very, very closely because you live in a culture, a self-absorbed culture that is trying to convince you that you are at the center of your universe and that you are the object of your own worship and that life is about what is best for you. That is what people are spending billions of dollars to try to get you to buy and it's not true.

Children, students, you are responsible to the God of the universe. He has made you and you are accountable to Him for your life. So when we look in this passage – this is why this is so important – when we look at this passage it talks about your relationship with mom and dad, that's not all its talking about.

This passage is talking about your relationship with mom and dad in a way that always affects your relationship with God. You can never disconnect your relationship with mom and dad from your relationship with God. How you respond to mom and dad is an indication of how you respond to God. I want you to hang onto this because what we've got here are some commands that He gives to children. The picture is this is what children are responsible for.

Commands for Children...

Command number one: honor your parents with your attitude. It's a picture of attitude and this word of honor. This is a word that literally says, "Children, respect your parents, value your parents, esteem your parents, ascribe worth to your parents, love your parents." That disrespect toward parents is not an option before God. It's not an option in any circumstance. That's the picture here.

Ephesians 6 is asking us this. Now Ephesians 6 is going a little lighter than the Old Testament went. Old Testament Exodus 21, "He who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death." That pretty much sums it up. "He who curses his father or mother shall surely be put to death." God takes this picture very seriously, very seriously. It's very important to God.

Ephesians 6 says to every teenager, every child "Are you right now in your heart, in your life, are you respecting your parents. When you think about your parents is it respect that comes out, flows out of your heart? Is it honor that flows out of your heart? Is it value that flows out of your heart?" You say, "Well how do I know?"

And it leads to the second command. Honor your parents with your attitude. Second: obey your parents with your actions. How do you tell if you're honoring? Look at what you're doing. Honor your father and mother. Then we worked all the way back to verse 1 now, "Obey your parents in the Lord."

This is a great word. It's a compound word in the New Testament, which means it brings two words together. The first word is "to hear." "To hear." The second word is, "To be under authority." So literally it says to hear under authority and the implication is two things.

What's involved in obeying your parents? Number one, hear what they say. Now that's huge. I'm not that far disconnected from teenage years that I remember. There is a whole switch that we've got that we kind of turn off that, you know, there's talking going on but we're not listening. God says you listen. Listen to your parents' advice, listen to your parents' words, listen to your parents' commands. God says this brings glory to my name when you listen to your parents. Hear what they say.

And second to be under authority is, I mean, once you here, you do what they say. So you obey your parents with your actions by hearing what they say and doing what they say. That's simple, right? I won't pretend that it's that simple. I won't pretend that this is always easy. I won't pretend this is always understandable.

I won't even pretend that God is saying here that everything your parents tell you to do you're going to like doing. In fact, the implication here is in this whole picture of training and discipline, the implication is and this is not the best news I guess in the world, but hear it kids, teenagers. God expects you to do things that you don't want to do in obedience to your parents. God expects you, commands you, God commands you to do things that you don't want to do in obedience to your parents.

This is the picture. Honor your father and mother, obey your parents and there are no footnotes in Ephesians 6 that go to the bottom and say, "Not if you think that they've lost it," or "...you think that they don't know what's going on in your life." It's not an option there. No footnotes. Obey them. Colossians 3:20, "Be obedient to your parents in all things." Without challenge, without excuse, without delay, obey your parents.

A Caution for Children...

And here's why and this is the caution and this is why this is so serious. Please, every student, every child in this room, please hear this. To dishonor or disobey your parents is to rebel against God.

There's one exception to this, one exception to this is if your parents tell you to do something that is clearly taught in God's Word that you should not go. It goes against God's will in His Word. Scripture never tells us to disobey His Word. Yes, that's a possibility, especially in non-Christian homes, but even supposedly Christian homes this happens.

Scripture's not saying that you should go against God's Word by obeying your parents. That would not be pleasing to God, but He is saying don't miss the correlation here, the picture here. You look in the Old Testament. The Bible talks about disobeying your parents as equivalent to treason and idol worship.

You look at the end of Romans 1, disobedience to parents is listed in a laundry list of heinous sins, horrible sins. God takes this thing very seriously. What this means is if you are seven years old, sevens years old, six years old, eight years old, nine years old, ten years old, if you disobey mommy or daddy you are disobeying God.

Seventeen year olds, sixteen year olds, 18 year olds, 15 year olds, 14, teenagers, if you decide to go against mom and dad on an issue, then you have decided to go against God on that issue. This is why... This is Ephesians 6, "Obey your parents. Honor your father and mother." Because this is extremely important to God.

You go back to the Old Testament, look at the Ten Commandments and you will see that the first four commandments deal with our relationship to God. Next six deal with our relationships with each other. This is the first one of the second part of the Ten Commandments that deal with our relationship with each other. It's the top of the list. It's before do not lie, do not steal, do not murder. Most importantly obey your parents. Obey your parents.

Two Promises...

Now that's a heavy word. It begs the question, "Well why? Why?" I want to remind you at this point the gravity of this deal I promise you the greatest regrets in my life are the times when I have disobeyed or disrespected my dad or mom. I have never, ever regretted obeying them. There's a reason why that is. It's because of the promise of Ephesians 6.

As We Honor Christ in Our Relationships as Children and Parents, God Says...

Do these things so, *"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth"* (Eph. 6:3). Two-fold promise. As we honor Christ in our relationships as children and parents God says number one, "I will satisfy your lives." It will go well with you. It will go good with you. It will go fine with you."

God says to children in Ephesians 6, "Obey your parents. Not just for my sake, but for your sake. This is a really good thing for you." This is why I said God made you. God knows what is best for you. This is the good news. God is not out to ruin your teenage years. He's not. He's not out to ruin your life. You are out to ruin your life. The sinful nature at the core of who you are wants to pull you away from the satisfaction that God has designed for you.

So live in this fear of what God has said is right and you will be satisfied. You'll have a satisfaction that is far better than everything else in the world. Will not be a temporary satisfaction like all these things in the world. It will be an eternal satisfaction of walking with the God of the universe.

He says it will go well with you. Then he says, *"You may enjoy long life on the earth"* (Eph. 6:3). Now this is obviously open to misinterpretation if we rip this out of its context in the Old Testament. This is not saying if you obey your parents then you will live to be 80 years old. Anyone who doesn't obviously didn't obey their parents when they were younger. It's not the picture here. It could be abused in so many different ways. Don't forget it.

Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5, two places where this commandment is found, this promise is found. This commandment and this promise were given to a people. The people of God. And He said to them. Here's the picture of family and he said, "Honor me in this. Children obey your parents. Parents, love and lead, discipline and train your children like this and it will go well with you and you will live long on the earth." In other words, your life and the word that you impart from one generation to the next will continue generation after generation after generation after generation.

I want to tell you why this is so important. You go to scores of church buildings in the United States of America and in Western Europe that 100 years ago were thriving full just like this one is and you will find empty buildings scattered across this country and Western Europe today. Within a couple of generations it's gone. It's gone.

I shared those statistics with you for a reason. We got down to this group. Eight out of every ten over here that made it to 20 years old. You continue on in that picture. Within two generations this building is practically empty.

God says live like this. Take Ephesians 6 extremely seriously. Why? Because you want the Word to be passed down from generation to generation because you don't want the Word to stop with you. So fathers, mothers, stand up on your watch in the line of people who have carried this Word ever since it was given to us and pass it on. God says, "You live like this I will satisfy your lives" and second "I will multiply your legacy." I will multiply your legacy. The word will live on through you, live on through your families, but you will not survive as a people if you don't do this in your homes. You will not survive as a people if you do not do this in your homes.

Now I'm not saying that the church will completely disappear. It's not going to disappear. God's Word is going to continue all the way to the end. There's no question about that, but whether or not we're involved in that and our children and our children's children are involved in that has everything to do with how we interact with our children in our homes right now based on Ephesians 6.

So here's what I want us to do. I want you to write out a prayer. Here's what I want to ask you to do.

Children, teenagers, students, I want to invite you to take the next few moments and write out a prayer for your parents and specifically for your relationship with your parents. Pray for them and pray for your relationship with them based on Ephesians 6.

Parents, I want to invite you to take the next few moments to write out a prayer for your children and to write out a prayer for your relationships with your children. Take this time to do that. Now I know there are many parents in this room who may not have children. God may not have given you biological children at this point. At the same time I know without a doubt, this picture especially when you get the New Testament we're going to talk about this more next week, there is a strong picture of spiritual children. People in your life that you have that kind of impact on. I want to encourage you to pray for them or maybe to write out a prayer on behalf of parents and children that are sitting around you.

Maybe your parents are not here. Maybe your parents don't know Christ. I want to invite you to pray for them and I want you to write out that prayer. Today we want Ephesians 6 to be a reality in our homes. For the next couple of moments I want to invite you to write out this prayer.

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