

Focus on the Family

Spirit-Filled Homes and Workplaces

Ephesians 6:1-9

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Spirit-Filled Homes and Workplaces

Scripture

Today we conclude our sermon series in Ephesians 5:21-6:9 that I am calling, “Focus on the Family.”

The governing command for this entire section is Ephesians 5:18, where Paul commanded Christians to “be filled with the Spirit.” Then Paul said being filled with the Spirit would have four consequences, or evidences (that correspond to the four participles in verses 19-21): fellowship (5:19a), worship (5:19b), gratitude (5:20), and submission (5:21).

This final consequence, or evidence, of *submission* (in Ephesians 5:21) then became for Paul the command for all that follows. Paul’s command of mutual submission is in fact the necessary foundation for the three sets of relationships (of wives and husbands, children and parents, and bondservants and masters) in Ephesians 5:22-6:9.

Previously, we have examined Paul’s direction to Spirit-filled wives and husbands. Today, we will examine the other two sets of relationships, that of children and parents, and bondservants and masters (although I shall be referring to this last set of relationships as employees and employers).

Let’s read about Spirit-filled homes and workplaces in Ephesians 6:1-9, although for the sake of context, I shall also read Ephesians 5:18b and 21:

¹⁸ ...be filled with the Spirit,...²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ....

¹ **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** ² **“Honor 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.

⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:1-9)

Introduction

One day after Dr. Albert Einstein had moved to his home at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N. J., the telephone rang in the office of the Dean of the Princeton Graduate School. The voice at the other end inquired: “May I speak with Dean Eisenhart, please?”

Advised that the Dean was not in, the voice continued: “Perhaps then you will tell me where Dr. Einstein lives.”

Dean Eisenhart’s secretary replied that she could not do this, since Dr. Einstein wished to have his privacy respected. The voice on the telephone dropped to a near whisper: “Please do not tell anybody, but I am Dr. Einstein. I am on my way home, and have forgotten where my home is!”¹

We live in a day in which many in our culture have lost their way to their homes. Not literally, of course, but certainly

¹ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 455.

figuratively. There has been a breakdown in society in terms of our homes and, to a lesser extent, even in our workplaces.

The way to remedy this is to return to God's direction for our homes and workplaces. Paul's basic instruction is given to Spirit-filled Christians in the church at Ephesus. He is giving them God's directions for their new relationships in God's new society, the church. Being filled with the Spirit means that there will be new relationships in our homes and in our workplaces.

Lesson

Ephesians 6:1-9 shows us the duties of Spirit-filled children, parents, employees, and employers.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Children (6:1-3)
2. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Parents (6:4)
3. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Employees (6:5-8)
4. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Employers (6:9)

I. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Children (6:1-3)

First, let's look at the duty of Spirit-filled children.

Only children who honor Christ as Savior and Lord can they fulfill their duty as Spirit-filled children. John MacArthur notes that the Minnesota Crime Commission issued a report which demonstrates the validity of this comment. The report said, in part:

Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it: his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes

with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty, he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children but all children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free rein to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist.²

In this section, I would like to examine two things.

A. The Command to Obey (6:1a)

First, there is the command to obey.

Paul said in verse 1a, **“Children, obey your parents.”** In the first set of relationships, that is, of wives and husbands, wives are to submit to their husbands (5:22). However, Paul used a stronger word in this second set of relationships. Paul's command is that **children** are to **obey** their **parents**.

Before going on to note the reasons why **children** are to **obey** their **parents**, it is important to make two points. First, the word for **“children”** (*ta tekna*) may refer not only to toddlers but also to older children still living with their parents. And second, Paul's letter to the Ephesians was almost certainly read in the congregation's worship service, thus indicating that **children** were certainly in the congregation's worship service.

B. The Reasons to Obey (6:1b-3)

And second, notice the reasons to obey.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 309.

There are a number of reasons for children to obey their parents.

First, children must obey their parents because obedience is the Lord's will. Paul said in verse 1b, “Children, obey your parents **in the Lord.**” Paul is writing to the church, and this portion of his letter is directed to Christian children in the congregation. Only Christians can live “**in the Lord.**” And thus, only Spirit-filled children can live as God directs in his word.

Second, children must obey their parents because obedience is right. Paul said in verse 1c, “**...for this is right.**” This second reason for obeying parents falls into the realm of natural law. In every culture in every corner of the world it **is right** for children to obey their parents. There is no culture where children do not need to obey their parents. God has placed his natural law into the heart of every human being, and there is an instinctive understanding that it **is right** for children to obey their parents.

Third, children must obey their parents because obedience is the requirement of the Fifth Commandment. Paul said in verse 2a, “**Honor your father and mother.**” There is a difference between “obey” and “**honor.**” John MacArthur notes, “Obey has to do with action, and **honor** has to do with attitude.”³ To “**honor**” parents means “to attribute high status, to respect” them.⁴ Sometimes children are Christians and their parents are not. Children must still obey their parents insofar as their parents act in accordance with God’s word. However, if the parents require their children to do something that is not in accordance with God’s word, then the children—while still respecting their parents—must obey God rather than their parents.

And fourth, children must obey their parents because obedience is

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, 311.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 734.

promised a reward. Paul said in verse 2b-3, “...**(this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’**” Paul conflates the two occasions the Fifth Commandment is given in the Old Testament (in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16). The Commandment promises a blessed and long life to children who honor their parents. It is helpful to note that it is a *general* promise and not an *absolute* promise because sometimes children do suffer and die young. Nevertheless, as a general rule, children who honor their parents enjoy a blessed and long life.

II. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Parents (6:4)

Second, let’s examine the duty of Spirit-filled parents. There are two commands given to parents.

A. *The Negative Command (6:4a)*

First, notice the negative command.

Paul said in verse 4a, “**Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.**” Paul’s command is directed to **fathers**, it seems to me, because **fathers** are the heads of their homes. However, the command would apply to both parents.

Parents are **not** to **provoke** their **children to anger**. Tony Merida notes some possible causes of angering children:

- Failing to take into account the fact that they are kids
- Comparing them to others
- Disciplining them inconsistently
- Failing to express approval, even at small accomplishments
- Failing to express our love to them

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- Disciplining them for reasons other than willful disobedience and defiance
- Pressuring them to pursue our goals, not their own
- Withdrawing love from them or overprotecting them⁵

B. *The Positive Command (6:4b)*

And second, notice the positive command.

Paul said in verse 4b, “...**but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**”

Parents need to invest time in raising their children **in the discipline and instruction of the Lord**. John Stott notes that “the second word (*nouthesia*), whether translated ‘instruction’ or ‘warning,’ seems to refer primarily to verbal education, while the first word (*paideia*) means training by discipline, even by punishment.”⁶ All of this takes time. But, Spirit-filled parents will invest the time in raising their children this way.

Samuel and Susanna Wesley were dedicated Christians. Samuel was a rector and his wife was a daughter of the manse. Altogether they had nineteen children. John was the fifteenth child and Charles, the eighteenth. Eleven of their children died; eight lived. Think of their heartaches!

There were precious few conveniences in those days: no automatic washers; no electric refrigerators; no running water in the home; no telephone; no radio; no quick means of communication or travel. Yet we read that Susanna Wesley expected each child to know the alphabet by the time he/she was five years old. At six, he/she started to school in their big living

⁵ Tony Merida, David Platt, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), n.p.

⁶ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 248.

room. Susanna taught her children six hours a day—from nine to twelve and from two to five. Later, of course, they went to various formal schools, including Oxford.

Furthermore, she gave one hour a day each week to each child's spiritual development. It made such a profound impression on her children that later, in times of distress, her sons declared that they wished they might have the privilege of counseling with their mother again.⁷

III. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Employees (6:5-8)

Third, let's look at the duty of Spirit-filled employees. Again, there are two things to note in this section.

A. *The Command to Obey (6:5a)*

First, there is the command to obey.

Paul said in verse 5a, **“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters.”** Paul is addressing slaves here. I don't have time to address the issue of slavery. (Perhaps I shall address it in a future sermon.) However, suffice it to say that the biblical writers never condone slavery. In the context of Ephesus—and the first-century church—the gospel was transforming the lives of slaves as well as their masters. Because of their union with Christ they were brothers and sisters in Christ, and that was one of the key features that eventually led to the downfall of slavery, although it still took far too long.

Furthermore, in Paul's day slaves were part of family households, which is why Paul addressed them here. They were

⁷ G. Curtis Jones, *1000 Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1986), 41.

to **obey their earthly masters.**

B. *The Ways to Obey (6:5b-8)*

And second, notice the ways to obey.

At this point, I believe what Paul said is instructive to employees and employers today. How are employees to serve their employers? In several ways.

First, Spirit-filled employees obey their employers by serving respectfully. Paul said in verse 5b, “...obey your earthly masters **with fear and trembling.**” This probably carries the same idea as Ephesians 5:21, “out of reverence for Christ.” Employees serve their employers by working respectfully because they are really working for Christ.

Second, Spirit-filled employees obey their employers by serving sincerely. Paul said in verse 5c-6, “...**with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.**” Work hard because God is watching you, and not only when your employer sees you.

Third, Spirit-filled employees obey their employers by serving conscientiously. Paul said in verse 7, “...**rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man.**” Employees serve well because they want to please their Lord.

And fourth, Spirit-filled employees obey their employers by serving expectantly. Paul said in verse 8, “...**knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.**” God notices every act of service that an employee renders, whether the employer notices it or not. And God will reward the Spirit-filled employee.

IV. The Duty of Spirit-Filled Employers (6:9)

And fourth, let's examine the duty of Spirit-filled employers.

There are two commands here.

A. *The Positive Command (6:9a)*

First, notice the positive command.

Paul said in verse 9a, **“Masters, do the same to them.”** Employers should treat their employees the same way they would want to be treated. They should treat them respectfully, sincerely, conscientiously, and expectantly.

B. *The Negative Command (6:9b)*

And second, notice the negative command.

Paul said in verse 9b, **“...and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”** This command speaks for itself.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Spirit-filled homes and workplaces in Ephesians 6:1-9, let us fulfill our respective duties as God calls us to do.

There is so much God-given wisdom in this passage. Let us pay careful attention to it, whether in our homes or workplaces. And may God be honored as we fulfill our roles as Spirit-filled children, parents, employees, or employers. Amen.

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is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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