

Children Obey Lesson 5

Family Life Overview: In the Bible we see three simple guidelines for the various roles with the family: husbands love, wives submit, children obey. Today we'll explore the God's role for children within the family: "children obey."

Introduction: There are those who say that children make a rich man poor. No; they have it backward. Children make a poor man rich.

ESV **Psalm 127:3** Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

The home is the university of life with parents as the professors, children as students and life as the lab (Rogers, p. 180).

Ephesians 6:1-3

Ask all the children under 18 years old to stand and read 6:1-3 in unison.

1. What in this paragraph indicates children stayed with their parents in first century church meetings (6:1-3)? *Compare Colossians 4:16.* Paul's letters to the various churches were read aloud in the church meeting (Col 4:16). Here in Ephesians 6, Paul wrote directly to the children of the church. If they had been off in children's church somewhere they would not have been present to hear what Paul wrote to them. It was normal in the early church for the children to be in church meetings with their parents. Paul expected that they could and would benefit from being present.

ESV **Colossians 4:16** . . . when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

Children's Church vs. Children in Church: Whereas it is understandable to have a special place for parents to take children who are crying or who need to be disciplined, the idea of a children's church, apart from the parents, is a departure from the New Testament norm.

Youth Pastors: I was asked one time if we had a youth pastor in our church. I said that we have quite a few of them: they are called fathers!

Example: When our daughter Eden was very young, she would sit with us during church coloring in a pad. While so doing she would softly make a groaning noise not unlike a chain saw running a block away. One Sunday while doing this, we the teaching was on head coverings. She seemingly heard none of it. However, the next in a grocery store my wife and Eden here in the checkout line behind a man with very long hair. Eden suddenly piped up, "Look Mommy! That man has long hair. The Bible says men should not have long hair." Little children have big ears.

Training: Having our children with us in church presupposes prior training has taken place at home. Many kids end up training the parents; they want to escape the meeting and quickly learn if they act up they'll get taken out. You cannot wait until you get to church to start training your kids to sit still. Time has to be taken at home to do this. Start out by training them to sit quietly on a blanket for five minutes, then increase the time to ten, and so on until you reach forty five minutes. It is also a good idea to take them to the toilet before church starts so they won't use it as an excuse to get out of church.

2. According to 6:1, why should children should obey their parents (6:1)? The main reason children are to obey their parents is because it is the right thing to do.

Steve Green Song: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (lead church in singing it).

3. Kids: What does it mean to obey someone (6:1)? See *Proverbs 6:20, 23:22*. It is to do what someone tells you to do. Obey is from *hupakouo* which literally means to hear under (*hupa* = hypodermic; *akouo* = acoustic). Thus it means to listen to, to hearken to a command, to submit to.

ESV **Proverbs 1:8-9** Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching . . .

Refrigerator Definition: "Obedience is doing what I'm told to do, when I'm told to do it, without complaining" (*write on board*). This definition is a good one to memorize and post on the refrigerator.

In Unison: Lead all those under 18 years of age in repeating the definition aloud.

ESV **Proverbs 6:20** . . . keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.

In Unison: Lead all those under 18 years of age in repeating the definition aloud.

ESV **Proverbs 23:22** Listen to your father . . .

In Unison: Lead all those under 18 years of age in repeating the definition aloud.

4. Some parents seem to think their kids are little angels. You'll find as their legs grow longer, their wings get shorter (Rogers, p. 191). **Parents: From a purely practical perspective (no theology), why is it important to train your children to obey (6:1)?** See *Proverbs 22:15, 29:15, 4:3-4, 30:17*.

a) Parents can expect a life of frustration from a disobedient child.

The Scriptures declare that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. Unless that folly is dealt with, there will be great heart ache.

NAS Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

ESV Proverbs 29:15 . . . a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

b) The child's life could eventually depend on it. Were it not for their parent's direction and protection, a child would soon perish.

ESV Proverbs 4:3-4 When I was a son with my father . . . he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live."

ESV Proverbs 30:17 The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.

c) It is good practice for later since throughout our lives we will need to obey someone else in authority over us (a teacher, a boss, a policeman, a general, the government, the church, etc.).

5. Why would it be important to train a child for immediate obedience? A parent who gives a command to a child, only to be ignored, and who then begins a threatening count of 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 10, has effectively trained the child for delayed obedience, not to obey until the last number is called. This serves neither the child nor the parent well. The same is true for tone of voice; if the child only responds to a shrill or stern command, rather than a calm command, it is the parent who has trained him not to obey until the shrill tone comes out (after repeated calm tones). If your kids bug you, it is your own fault! "Obedience is doing what I'm told to do, when I'm told to do it."

Example: A child is about to run into the street after a ball. The parent yells "stop!" Immediate obedience could save his life.

6. Do the words "in the Lord" go with obey or parents (6:1)? Why? See *Leviticus 19:3*, *Colossians 3:20*. All parents are to be obeyed, regardless if they are in the Lord or not.

ESV Leviticus 19:3 Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father . . .

ESV Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Thus it is best to take "in the Lord" to go with the word obey. A child who is in the Lord should obey his parents because Jesus wants him to obey. If a child is walking with the Lord, a spirit of obedience is the invariable result. As with a wife's submission to her husband or a husband's love for his wife, so also a child's obedience depends not with the worthiness of the parents, but because it pleases the Lord. It is a divine duty.

7. What in Romans 1:30, 2 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, and 12 shows the importance of obedient children?

God Gave Them Up: In describing a society that God had given over to homosexuality, Paul listed other sins that would run rampant as well. One of them is “disobedient to parents” (Ro 1:30). It is a sign of a debased society:

ESV **Romans 1:26-31** . . . God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents . . .

Notice how disobedient to parents is in the same list with murder and hating God.

Last Days: When cataloging the difficulties of the last days, disobedience to parents made the list (2Ti 3:2):

ESV **2 Timothy 3:1-5** . . . in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents . . .

Elders: Training our children in obedience is so important that a major qualification for elders is that their children be well behaved:

ESV **1 Timothy 3:4-5** He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

Deacons: The qualifications for deacons similarly include this:

ESV **1 Timothy 3:12** Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

Insight: Family management skills can be learned. Recommended books: *To Train Up A Child* by Michael Pearle and *What The Bible Says About Child Training* by Fugate.

****8. In 6:2-3, how did Paul prove that it is right for children to obey their parents (6:1)?
See *Exodus 20:12*. Paul proved it is right by quoting one the Ten Commandments.

ESV **Exodus 20:12** Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Insight: In dealing with children, Paul first **1**) spoke directly to them, then **2**) told them what was expected (6:1), then **3**) explained to them the biblical teaching on it (6:2-3). This shows the child the rule was not just made up out of the blue sky (Wilson, p. 134). Wise parents would do well to follow Paul's example.

9. What is the difference between obedience (6:1) and honor (6:2)? Honor is a much broader concept than obedience. Honor (6:2) is from *timao* (basis for the name Timothy); literally it means to price something (to fix its value). Then it came to mean to revere, to venerate. In our society it means to hold in high respect. Obedience is one way to show honor.

ESV **Leviticus 19:3** Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father . . . I am the LORD your God.

A child who obeys his parents but does so with a **bad attitude** is not fully honoring his parents. “Obedience is doing what I’m told to do, when I’m told to do it, without complaining.”

Application: Parents need to be sure their children treat them with proper respect. This is not somehow self-exalting. God commands children to honor their parents. *Who is to teach and instill this if not the parents?* (Wilson, p. 46).

ESV **Proverbs 19:26** He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach.

Timing: Spend time now training your kids or they will bring you shame later.

ESV **Proverbs 17:2** A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.

10. Even adult children are to honor their parents. How did Jesus, in Matthew 15:3-7, help us understand what it means for adult children to honor their parents (6:2)? See 1 Timothy 5:4.

ESV **Matthew 15:4-6** God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' . . . But you say, “If anyone tells his father or his mother, ‘What you would have gained from me is given to God’, he need not honor his father” . . . you have made void the word of God.

Jesus obviously interpreted honor to include material sustenance. The corrupt Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day would dedicate their possessions to God as an excuse to evade spending money on their aged parents. Parents being helped in old age by their grown children is Scriptural Social Security!

NIV **1 Timothy 5:4** . . . children or grandchildren . . . should . . . put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

11. Why did Paul point out that this is the first commandment with a promise (6:2)? Paul pointed this out to show its importance. It is arguably the only one of the Ten Commandments that contains a promise for obedience!

12. What was the original context of this promise (6:2-3)? See *Exodus 19-20, 24*. Context is everything. This commandment and promise were originally a part of the 600 laws that comprised the Sinai (or Mosaic) Covenant between God and ancient Israel (not modern Israel). This conditional covenant (if/then) offered for obedience **possession** of the Promised Land, **prosperity** in the Promised Land, **protection** from their enemies and a **prolific posterity** in the Land. Disobedience brought the reverse in every area. Moses also promised the opposite for dishonoring parents:

ESV **Deuteronomy 27:16** Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.

13. Is this promise of a long life still true today (6:2-3)? Why? See *Hebrews 8:13*. This promise has nothing what so ever to do with believing children in the city of Ephesus (in modern Turkey) moving to the Promised Land and living long there. Rather, Paul took a timeless ethical truth from the Law and applied it for new covenant children: obey your parents. The Sinai Covenant became obsolete with the start of the New Covenant. It had already expired when Paul wrote this to the church in Ephesus.

ESV **Hebrews 8:13** In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete . . .

14. Why is it wrong to conclude that any child who dies young had dishonored his parents (6:2)? Why? Paul's purpose in quoting the bit about the promise was to show the original importance of the command, not to suggest that the long life promised is still in effect. While it is generally true that obedient children are much more likely to survive into old age, the original promise is not for us; it is expired.

15. New Covenant Theology: What we can learn from Paul's example as to the proper use of Old Testament Law? Old Testament Law obviously still has application today. The Law of Moses reflects God's standards for right and wrong. What was ethical in the Old Testament is still ethical under the New Testament. We are not under the Law of Moses. Yet the principle remains that honoring one's parents is important to God.

Extremes: One extreme is to hold everything in the Law of Moses is still binding unless it is specifically set aside in the New Testament (such as the dietary laws). The other extreme is to hold that nothing from the Law of Moses is binding unless it is specifically repeated in the New Testament. Both approaches may be overly simplistic. God's moral law never changes. Imagine God's moral law as a cloud in the sky that at one time distilled as the Law of Moses and then later distilled into the Law of Christ. It is the same moral law, but different manifestations.

Caterpillar/Butterfly: The Law of Moses was fulfilled by Christ. Moses was given his ultimate meaning in Christ. It is as if the Law of Moses was a caterpillar that turned into the butterfly Law of Christ. The caterpillar that turned into butterfly is the same creature. In that sense there is continuity between Moses and Jesus. Yet clearly the butterfly is much more glorious than the caterpillar. Moses is changed; he is no longer left intact. We are to read Moses through Christian lenses. We are not under the Law of Moses, but what was ethical under Moses is still ethical in Christ (Wells, Zaspel, p. 153).

So What?

16. How does God want children to relate to their parents? Children are to obey their parents and adults are to honor their parents (which includes material support).

17. How does God want adult children to relate to their aged parents?

Close by singing Steve Green's song: Children Obey Your Parents In The Lord.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

Teacher's note: These lessons are based on the ESV and are designed for 45 minute sessions. If you can hand out or email out each lesson's questions a week in advance it will encourage people to think about the passage during the week. Coving each question in class will give importance to the questions and give incentive for the class to spend time preparing for the discussion.

• You can hear a recording of this actual lesson being taught at www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF

References:

McArthur, John *The McArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986)

Rogers, Adrian, *Adrianisms* (Collierville, TN: Innovo Publishing, 2015)

Wells & Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Ministries, 2002)

Wilson, Douglas, *Standing On The Promises* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997)

Stephen E. Atkerson

www.NTRF.org

07/10/16