



CHILDREN and PARENTS (Eph 6:1-4)

(Anglican Church of Noosa, 10/06/18)

INTRO

This morning we are examining this Bible teaching about children and parents. Now, the only people this morning's message may not be **directly** applicable to are those who don't have any children themselves and whose own parents have passed on. So, you are neither a parent nor a child in terms of current relationships. But even in that case, you may be an uncle or an aunt, so there are definitely ways that all of us are involved, to some extent, in adult / child relationships. So, this passage is relevant to all of us.

Now, there is no doubt that parent – child relationships can be fraught with difficulty. They can be a source of great frustration, tension, conflict – for both parents and children.

Here are some humorous images about parenting:





CHILDREN: OBEY AND HONOUR YOUR PARENTS

¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *"Honour your father and mother"*—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ *"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

*** **JOKE:** A couple was going out for the evening. The last thing they did was to put the cat out. The taxi arrived, and as the couple walked out of the house, the cat shoots back in. So the husband goes back inside to chase it out. The wife, not wanting it known that the house would be empty, explained to the taxi driver "He's just going upstairs to say goodbye to my mother." A few minutes later, the husband got into the taxi and said, "Sorry I took so long, the stupid thing was hiding under the bed and I had to poke her with a broom to get her out!"

Some children do love poking and prodding their parents. Deliberately irritating them. Provoking them. Some children find it difficult to obey their parents because they think their parents are ... well ... idiots. And even those who have reasonable respect for their parents will, at times, rebel.


- In this passage in Ephesians there a very simple instruction – for children: **obey** and **honour** your parents.
- Now the context here is children living in the family home. If you have left home as an adult, the relationship is transformed – but even then, the command to honour your father and mother remains applicable.

- But for children living at home, they are to **obey** and **honour** their parents.
- Notice please, that it doesn't say *"obey your parents, as long as what they're asking you to do seems reasonable, as long as you agree with it, as long as you think it's fair."*
- The responsibility of ensuring that an instruction is right and fair and just and reasonable is the responsibility of the parent – and we'll get to that – but the child's responsibility is simply to *"obey"*. And not just to obey, but to obey and *"honour"* your parents. To not obey resentfully, while making snide comments.
- The best example of honourable obedience is Jesus himself, in the way he honoured and obeyed his human parents, Joseph and Mary.  In Luke 2:51 we are told *"Jesus went down to Nazareth with his parents and was obedient to them"*. There are two amazing aspects to the obedience of Jesus here.
- **Firstly**, Jesus was God the Son, the second person of the Trinity! Who has existed forever, and will do so forever more! The God who created the whole universe! Yet when He came to earth, He still felt it was important that He obeyed His earthly, human, fallible, imperfect parents, because this is God's ordained pattern for society!
- The **second** reason Jesus' obedience was amazing, is that we are told that Jesus was 12 years old when Luke says he went back home with his parents and was obedient to them. A Jewish boy became a man at 12 years of age and his mother could no longer tell him what to do. Yet Jesus chose to continue to submit to the mother who had given him birth.
- To children who are struggling to obey their parents – because the parents seem foolish to them, and they, the children, think they know better – I say to them, *"Do you think you're wiser than Jesus? If God the Son chose to obey his imperfect parents, what grounds have you got for not obeying yours?"* None!
-  Notice, too, the little phrase, *"in the Lord"*. This tells us that this is God's ordained pattern for the proper functioning of society, and that the parents are effectively God's representatives to their children.
- Of course, when a child becomes an adult, the issue of obedience changes. I left home at the age of 18 because I found that I could no longer obey my father, who was forbidding me to go to church, and was *"grounding"* me on Sundays, for the most trivial of reasons, as a means of trying to undermine my new-found faith. I found I could no longer obey him, and I could no longer remain under his roof and live by his rules - so I left home.
- But until a child becomes an adult they have a God-given responsibility to obey their parents.



THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS

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

- I am going to broaden this to refer to parents generally, rather than just Fathers. I think Paul highlights Fathers in particular because they are more prone to “exasperating” their children by erring on the side of strictness, but I want to suggest that these instructions are equally applicable to both parents.
- There is no doubt that parenting is a tough job. One Christian writer stated, *“When my first child was born I wrote down “10 Rules For Parenting” that I was going to stick to. After the birth of our second child I changed it to “10 Suggestions For Parenting”. After the birth of our 3rd child I threw the list away!”*
- But the Bible here gives us two crucial instructions for raising children. The first is expressed in a negative form:  Do not **exasperate** your children (the word could also be translated **frustrate** or **provoke**).



The Importance Of Fairness





- Now, while it is impossible to ensure that your children never become exasperated or frustrated, it is our job as parents to ensure that it is not our fault. Your children will at times become frustrated and exasperated, because of their in-built sinful natures, leading them towards disobedience and rebellion. But we have to ensure that our parenting is not contributing to that, through unfairness, injustice, inconsistency or unnecessary harshness.
- PARENTS: Are you consistent? Are you always fair? Are you at times unduly harsh, particularly when you are tired and grumpy? These are questions we have to ask ourselves and address if we are to be the parents God wants us to be.





The Importance Of Discipline

- This, of course, assumes that we are going to discipline our children. This is the inherent assumption of this passage. In fact, the warning against *exasperation* here, is simply a **qualifier** for the assumed discipline that we will be engaged in as parents.
- Now, it seems to me, that discipline has become a dirty word in our modern society. In recent decades we have seen the rise of New Age liberal parenting, which has totally rejected disciplinary parenting, in favour of permissive parenting where children are negotiated with, where they are treated as mini-adults with equal rights, and where

their misbehaviour is not to be met with negative, painful consequences, but with distraction and even reward.

- The result is the increasing incidence of young people who have lost their sense of absolute rules and consequences. Young people who, for example, will stand toe to toe with their teachers at school and say, *“You can’t tell me what to do! I know my rights!”*. Young children who kick and punch and abuse their parents in public to the pathetic pleas of their helpless parents who plead with them, *“Please darling, don’t kick mummy. That hurts mummy. If you stop throwing the groceries on the supermarket floor mummy will take you to MacDonalld for a chocolate Sunday!”*
- I know I sound like a grumpy old man, but some sociologists and psychologists are beginning to sound the warning bells regarding the long term consequences of liberal, permissive parenting. A recent article in the Daily Mail was entitled, *“Why Liberal Parents Are Breeding A Generation Of Little Horrors”*, and it expressed grave concerns from a number of professionals regarding children who are being raised under this new permissive parenting regime. The article included some mind-boggling horror stories of appalling, unchecked behaviour, and parents who have completely lost control.
- I want to exhort you as Christian parents and grandparents to lovingly discipline your children. On the one hand, don’t exasperate them through unfairness or harshness, but on the other hand, don’t abandon your God-given responsibility to guide and shape your child’s character through the implementation of firm boundaries and clear consequences.
-  Proverbs 13:24 says, *“Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them”*. And yes, I do think it’s sometimes appropriate to smack a child, but putting that issue aside, the Bible is really clear at this point:  Discipline is an act of **love**. If you really care for your children, if you care about what sort of adults they will become, you must discipline them, so that they learn the difference between right and wrong, so that they understand that there are non-negotiable standards of behaviour in our world, so that they grow up to be responsible, reliable considerate adults.
-  ***We now need to focus on the second half of the verse:***
*“v4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, **bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**”*
-  **The Bible is telling parents that WE ARE TO DISCIPLE OUR CHILDREN**
- This doesn’t just mean saying grace at dinner and sending them to Sunday school. The

family home is meant to be the centre of Christian education. Children need to be disciplined by their parents and grandparents, it's not something to be sub-contracted out to outsiders. And it is to be a daily, moment by moment thing, in the family home.

-  This is why God commanded the Jews: (Deut 11:18-21) *“Teach [God’s commandments] to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*
- This will certainly involve set times of Bible reading and prayer with your children, but it is more than that. It is allowing your faith in Christ to permeate your family conversations, your everyday lives as you eat dinner or wash the dishes or drive in the car, your discussion of current affairs, your discussion of relationships, so that Christianity is not regarded as compartmentalised, but that your children will grow to see it as the core essence of your whole lives.
-  **We need to make Jesus NORMAL and CENTRAL in our family lives.**
- And your children need to see the love of God in the way you treat each other in the course of your daily lives. Do your children hear one message about God from your lips, but see a different message when they look at you, their parents?
- **Some Practical Suggestions:** Give them each their own Bible. Read the Bible with them every day. Pray with them individually every day. Say a meaningful grace at meal times. Use meal times to talk about God. Ask questions like, *“What good things happened to you today that you can thank God for? What challenging things happened to you today that we can pray about?”* Show your commitment to God and His people by going to church every week.
- **How are you going with this?** If you’ve done a poor job so far, don’t beat yourself up about it – just start over! It’s never too late
- **The Pain Of Rejection**
- I can’t speak about this topic, without acknowledging the fact that, despite our very best efforts to disciple our children and guide them towards faith in Christ, some children will choose to walk away from the faith. I stand before you today as a father of two adult children; a daughter who loves God and is serving Him faithfully as a Christian teacher, and a 30-year-old son who has rejected Christianity and is a professed atheist.
- And I know many faithful, godly parents who have experienced similar heartache as they watch their child reject the faith that they were raised with. I suspect that some of you here this morning are in that situation.

- Of course, there is absolutely no point in self-recrimination, no point in trying to work out what we did wrong, because ultimately, each child will make a decision for themselves, and there are no guarantees.
- If you are in that position this morning, keep praying for your child. Never give up. Keep conversing with them about God. My son and I continue to have long, profound discussions about God as I try to answer his objections and challenge his thinking. Never give up. And it should also make us doubly committed to discipling our other children and grandchildren – to doing everything we can to nurture the faith of the next generation
- And if you still have young children yourself, if you are still at that stage of being a young parent – can I urge you to make discipling your children the highest priority of your life. Nurturing the faith of your children is the highest call of God upon your life as a parent.

CONCLUSION

The great evangelist of the 19th century, D.L. Moody, was walking home one night from an evangelistic rally where he had just preached the gospel. He met a friend who asked him, *“How did the meeting go tonight?”* Moody replied, *“Wonderful. Two and a half people responded to Christ and were saved.”* His friend thought about it for a moment and said, *“So you mean, two adults and one child?”* Moody replied, *“No. Two children and one adult.”* When his friend appeared puzzled by this, Moody explained, *“You see, the two children have their whole lives ahead of them to serve God, whereas the adult only has half a life remaining in which to serve God.”*

Friends, those of you who are parents and grandparents have the incredible privilege of shaping and nurturing the faith of children who can go on to serve God with their whole lives. And through their lives, untold numbers of other lives may also be impacted.

Do everything you can to point these young ones to Jesus. Make it the highest priority of your life. Do everything you can to fulfil your God-given calling, to disciple these young lives, so that at the last, you might hear the Saviour say to you, **“Well done, good and faithful servant”**.