

# EPHESIANS

## LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

### Sermon 10 – Ephesians 6:1-4 “Children-parents”

#### 1. Introduction

- a. List the unique challenges of parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- b. For Christians, what will be the primary desire for their children?

#### 2. Children

- c. Do you think there has been a tendency *away* from expecting children to be obedient? If so, why do you think this is?
- d. Why do you think there has been an increase in young people pushing back against authority figures?
- e. How is Jesus’ obedience to his parents a model and challenge for young people today?
- f. Physical punishment: always inappropriate? What are the issues – and the results of the move away from this?
- g. Honouring our mothers and fathers: what are the challenges today in doing that? What will it look like in practice? What if parents have been abusive or unkind?
- h. What are the societal benefits of homes and families which function as God intended?

#### 3. Fathers/parents

- a. Mr Never-wrong; Mr Too-busy; Mr Too-high-standards, Mr Comparison. Any others to add to the list? What practical steps can we take to avoid exasperating our children?
- b. *Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord v4.*
  - What will this involve at a practical level? Share ideas and insights.
  - Your son and daughter-in-law (or brother and his wife) ask you for guidance in putting this verse into practice. What are your best tips and insights?
- c. A friend shares with you after the sermon: “Wow, I feel such a failure in this area. We didn’t do any of what Mark/Kevin were talking about, and our kids don’t want to know about Jesus now.” How do you encourage/help them?

*Pray for our homes and families, that Jesus may be honoured and children (and grandchildren) helped to see and to embrace the brilliant grace and mercy of God, shown to us in the Lord Jesus.*

**Date:** 10 June 2018  
**Services:** 730, 930 Tewantin  
**Series:** Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel  
**Passage:** Ephesians 6:1-4  
**Title:** Children-parents

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## INTRODUCTION

- An article crossed by desk as I was preparing, which couldn't have been more relevant.
- a frustrated parent who was so upset with his daughter's bedroom he threatened to put photos of her mess on the internet so all her friends could see.
- She didn't clean up and he put some photos up... and she took revenge by posting all the embarrassing photos from her father's youth she could **find!**
- Ah the challenges and frustrations of parenting in 21<sup>st</sup> century!
- And then of course, we hear more and more about the dangers of social media... the tragic and prevalent nature of sexting... of online bullying... sometimes leading to suicide.
- I remember my parents saying 20 years ago - "I'm glad I'm not bringing children into this world...!" wow - what would they be saying now!!
- The context of these verses? Chapter 4:1 - *living a life worthy of the calling we have received...* and chapter 5:18 *being filled with the spirit* and submitting to one another in the contexts of marriage, home and the work place...
- So let's look first at the instructions to:

### 1. CHILDREN

- *V1 - children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right...*  
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 obviously evolves - but even then, the command to **honour** your father and mother remains.
- 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 his earthly parents.

- 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!
- So the **Bible says** – the **godly** way a child lives, is in **obedience** to his **parents!** – *obey your parents in the Lord...* for the **Lord’s sake**. In keeping with **his will**. For this is **right**.
- Not just when you **agree** with them or you’re **happy** to do what they **ask!**
- The result of these commands will be that when your parents ask you to do **something** – even if you think it’s **silly** or **unfair** – **YOU DO IT!**
- ...and one you’re older and move out of the home, then you still have a responsibility to **honour**, to **respect**, **mother** and **father**.
- Even when the mother and father get **old** and **frail** and less **logical** – they are to be **honoured**.
- Notice there’s a **promise** from the Old Covenant Paul reminds us of here... the people of Israel were promised that obeying this commandment would result in things going **well** with them in the **Promised Land** when they **arrived**...
- That is, obeying parents will generally contribute to the **well-being** of a **happy family life** and **home life** – even to the well-being of **society** – and so will attract the **blessing** of **God!**
- That’s not hard to **imagine** is it? That children **doing** what they are **told** and **respecting** their **parents** will make for **happier homes!** //
- **How are things at home?** Can I ask? How are things with **mum** and **dad** at **present**... in a scale of **1-10**, where 1 is unbearable and 10 is **terrific** – what are things **like?**
- And then can I **ask** – where would you rate your **obedience** to **mum and dad**... **doing** what they **ask**, **when** they **ask** it... without **negotiating**, without **procrastinating**...?
- **Children, obey your parents in the Lord**, for this is **right**.

### 3. FATHERS

- OK – now to **dads**. Notice the **mothers** aren’t addressed here at all...? Probably because **it is a patriarchal society**... but I think we can assume that we can extend the application to mothers..
- In **similar secular household instructions** like this in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, **fathers’ rights** to **discipline** and **correct** are **outlined**.
- Fathers had absolute **rights** over their **children**... including the right to **abandon** them as **babies** if they were **not wanted**.
- Here – fathers are given **two clear instructions**...
- **First** – they were not to **exasperate** their **children**...
- *Do not provoke them to anger* is a **valid translation**.
- Do not **irritate** them **excessively**, do not **embitter** them, and do not drive your children to **exhaustion**... so they end up giving up on the **possibility** of **ever winning** your **approval**.
- And I **know** there are times when I’ve done this with **my children**... when to my **shame**, because I’ve been **angry** – I’ve made **THEM** angry... and the **heat** has gone **up and up**.
- Well guess what **fathers** – we are the **adults**... and we should not behave like **out of control children** throwing a **tantrum!**
- 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 MacDonald for a chocolate Sundae!"*
- some sociologists and psychologists are beginning to sound the warning bells regarding the long term consequences of liberal, permissive parenting.
- 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.
- 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. //
- It's a hard thing to get right because sometimes you DO need to simply stand in the face of children and say 'no'.
- "I know you think everyone else does it, I know you want to do it" but I'm saying "no"
- ... whether they be 3 or 13 or whatever the age, there are times when a **good father** or **good mother** WILL stand in the face of their children and take **hatred** and **manipulation**... because you do know what is best...
- this instruction to 'not exasperate' your children is not telling you to **stop disciplining**...
- – but it has to be said that there are parents who can **wear** their children **out**. God says – **beware of that**, and don't do it.
- **Mr never-wrong** can wear his children out... he's just **never wrong** – and even when he is wrong is not wrong...
- **Mr too-busy** – too busy **working** – too busy to spend **time** with his children – **that** will exasperate children.
- **Mr too-high standards** – I know a man in his 40s who is an **extraordinary** man but who **still** lives under the pressure of a father for whom **nothing** was ever quite **good enough**. I think the father **meant** well – I think the father **meant** to get the best out of his son – "well son, that wasn't too bad..." but **nothing** was an unqualified '**fantastic**' and even in his **adulthood**, he's still not getting **anything right!!** – **Mr Too-high standards. Terrible damage!**
- **Mr Comparison**... very **damaging**... The Father who will try and motivate his children by comparing **one** with the **other** of **his** children or with **someone else's** children. Now **kids** compare themselves to **others** all the time... but a **father** who does it **continually** is working very **quickly** at **exasperating** or **embittering** his **children**. //
- So, while it's our job to **discipline**, that's clear in the scriptures, it's our duty to make sure we **never ever abuse** our place as **parents** and cause our children to become **exasperated!**
- But there is a **second clear instruction** here to **fathers**... which is **equally** as important as the **first** but often **overlooked**.
- But it's not just a **second instruction**, it's how to **actively avoid exasperating** them...

- v4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; **instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***
- These are **very deliberate terms**.
- Paul doesn't just mean saying **grace** at **dinner** and sending them to **Sunday school** and **scripture**.
- The home is **meant to be** (and very much was in **Jewish culture** of the time) the **centre of childhood education** about the **ways** of the **Lord**.
- This was a **basic requirement** of the **Torah itself** (Deut 11:18-21). *Teach them 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...*
- Paul carries over this same language and practice into the new covenant. Here, though, it is the '**way of the Lord (Jesus)**' that must be passed on.
- Are we as families **instructing** our children about **Jesus' life** and **teaching** and how they apply to **daily life**?
- What our wonderful **children's leaders** do here on Sundays is only ever meant to **compliment** what happens at **home**. It can **never substitute** for that!
- Is the **culture** of your home **soaked** in the **love** for the **Lord Jesus**? Is he **spoken** of? Is the Bible **read** as a **family**? Do you **encourage** your children to **pray**? Do you **gather** around as a family before everyone **leaves** in the **morning** and **commit** the day **ahead** to **him**?
- Sometimes we are way too **fearful** of **alienating** our **children**...
- Now - to my **shame** we didn't read the Bible and pray often enough as a **family**...
- but I will remember the year we went to **Tasmania** for a holiday. I determined that every morning before we **set out** we'd **read the Bible** and **pray together**. We were there for **10 days**, and read through Paul's letter to the **Colossians** and then we'd all **pray** around the **family**.
- When we got **home**, we asked the children what was the best **part** of the **holidays**... **two** of them said without **hesitation** - **praying** and **reading** the **Bible** together each **morning**...
- And I'm so **thick** - that I **still** failed to do it as often as we should have!
- Dads, mums... **bring** them up in the **training** and **instruction** of the **Lord Jesus**.

## CONCLUSION

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, to the glory of God!

## POST SCRIPT

- 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 trusting Jesus, some children will choose to walk away from the Lord.
- And I know many faithful, godly parents who have experienced great 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. Keep making and taking up opportunities to share with them as you are able... and model in your life, the difference Jesus makes.
- 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 again, 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.
- Finally... if you look back with sadness and regret... then as for the last two weeks friends... stand at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ once again and find forgiveness and peace... and leave your regrets and failures there... don't dwell on the past that has been wiped clean by Jesus in his death and resurrection... and look now to the future and a life lived to his glory!