

Ephesians 6:1–4

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Date: 29 May 2022

Preacher: Bing Nieh

[0 : 0 0] it's ephesians chapter 6 verses 1 through 4 if you get it say i get it if you need me to wait say wait on me okay and it reads like this children obey your parents and the lord for this is right honor your father and your mother this is the first commandment with a promise that it may be well with you and that you may live long in the land fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the lord this is the word of the lord it's a joy to be together this morning and once again congrats to the class of 22 whether it be high school college graduate school law school forgot to call out luke rothchild so we'll call him out right now but congrats to you and we're proud of your achievements let's just pause as we turn to the lord for help father we we assemble to hear from you these are not words of mere men or mortals but they are divinely given revealed disclosed so that we would love god with all of our might and serve him and his world with all that you give us and so illumine your word for us may your spirit be at work we ask for your help we pray these things for jesus sake amen when one becomes a christian relationships with others are all transformed your relationship to god changed and so does your relationship with people a christian has new obligations new responsibilities new behaviors there's a new way of thinking a new way of seeing a new way of speaking a new way of acting to continue the metaphor that we've used in this series on ephesians we have changed outfits we have put off old clothes our old self and have put on garments of the new self clothed in righteousness and holiness and if you've been with us through this letter to the church of ephesus i trust that you're beginning to see that being a christian is an all-encompassing thing the spirit of god overtakes all of us at all times in all places growing up i had this mistaken sense that i was only a christian when i was attending christian activities youth group saturday nights bible studies church on sunday mornings and when i walked into the door i was a christian and when i exited it no longer mattered on monday morning i was a student for nine hours after school i was an athlete for a few hours when i got home i was just the oldest of four kids at home i was great at making compartments out of my life i did my best to keep life's parts separate what i did on friday night didn't have any bearing on what i did sunday morning it wasn't until an acquaintance made a discovery and blurted out a passing comment

we were with close friends or i was with my close friends and we'll just call this gentleman eric and he wasn't in my inner circle but he was friends of friends and he was standing there and as the conversation progressed eric made a discovery as one of my friends said something about church and sunday and being being a christian eric blurted out christian bing you're a christian you sure don't act like one in that moment i was found out caught red-handed a fraud a phony a hypocrite a pretender i was learning the hard lesson that as a christian god claimed all of me at all times and in all places god was to govern my thinking my acting my speaking he would be over all of my relationships not only amongst friends and strangers but with my biological family and certainly with my faith or my church family christ would inform my public life and my private life he would have a say in all that was seen and unseen all of it matters all of it mattered and so i've titled this message family matters the short four four verses this morning demonstrate that the lord is over all family matters if like joshua of the bible you've made the declaration as for me and my house we will serve the lord if he is lord then you will not only serve him but you will also submit to him children are to respond to mom and dad in the lord according to verse one parents moms and dads fathers and mothers are to rear children in the discipline and instruction of the lord both child and parent fulfill their familial duties before the lord the underpinning reality of being a christian or being in a christian family is that every individual is not only accountable to one another but they are ultimately accountable to god it is him we aim to please well the text most clearly divides at verse four the first three verses are addressed to children while the final verse is addressed to fathers specifically more generally parents the two parts will be identified i identify them not creatively but clearly as a word to children verses one to three and a word to parents verse four a word to children this is where moms and dad kind of nudge their children to hey pay attention um you need to hear this children how do you please the lord how do you please the lord what makes god happy what does god require of you what does god require of you the verses don't say obtain straight a's it doesn't say get a successful job it doesn't say make millions of dollars it doesn't say keep your room clean it doesn't even say eat all your vegetables the answer is very clear to please your parents you obey the lord or to please the lord that's that works too to please your parents you obey the lord to please the lord you obey your parents oh but pastor bang oh you don't know my mom you don't know my mom no no if you had my dad if you had my dad you would write me uh um

you would give me an excusal card if that's even a thing if you knew how unreasonable they were then you would know i have an exemption and this is where it gets surprising this verse is not a suggestion it is not just good advice it's not even a biblical recommendation it is a command to children it is if you are a child and i have yet to define the age range an obligation obedience is your duty as a child why because it's right children are to obey their parents because of it is right it is proper and fitting for a child to obey their parents what does god ask of you what does god want you to do as a child god commands you to obey your parents because it is right the command and i'll talk about this a little bit more because i think you're you're immediately running to well i have what about this situation what about that situation what if this comes up and i'll address this shortly but the command to obedience is then followed by the a similar command to honor your father and your mother here the fifth commandment is brought out from it's uh quoted it's really conflating two verses one from exodus and deuteronomy to honor our father and our mother interestingly the commandment was not has not faded because jesus has shown up but it continues to bear authority in the life of god's people to honor is to treat with respect to revere to value one way to honor mom and dad would certainly be to obey them but for how long who are children paul didn't specify any age of his audience but it seemed to carry a range certainly young children were to obey as long as they were under the the authority of their mom and dad or their parents at least until marriage uh verse chapter 5 verse 31 alludes to that upon marriage a man leaves his father and his mother yet even after that departure children are to continue to honor them which would result in a promise longer life and greater quality of life it would seem that obedience and honor bring about long life let me explain it's certainly not always the case for there are children lost prematurely but it is it would be true generally as young children listen to their parents they are safeguarding and preserving their very lives i think of a trivial example but it makes the point as young children play outside in the city the street poses great danger given traffic and the potential harm of a parent a parent's command is always do not play in the street why it preserves a child's life it safeguards a child failure to do so is actually failure to parents certainly it's a clear example but you may be saying well there's some things that dad's commands that are just totally unreasonable they're not there to keep me alive they actually are there to like restrain the fun in life it prohibits this activity they don't want me in this friendship or in this relationship and i understand because i as a father do the same with my children there are prohibitions i set

and boundaries because to the best of my judgment i am attempting to safeguard them from harm and preserve their lives you may not believe it as a child you may think god gave you the strictest i was thinking of a different word but the strictest parents known to humanity they may be strict they may be stern but they know that their duty is to preserve your life i will tell you and to maybe the chagrin of some when i was growing up there were certain things that were hard at one age tying my shoe was hard eating my vegetables was hard going to school was hard doing double days for football was hard students i thought final exams nothing got harder i got married it was hard and then i had kids you think final exam week is hard run that for 18 years years and i i say it kind of jokingly but the stress and the strain and the challenge and the difficulty of raising kids there's nothing harder besides probably following the lord jesus it is true that not all of dad's instructions are matters of life and death but these instructions have intentions for your well-being that's why the phrase there that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land you might think oh it's just a promise to a long life possible but the connection paul is making here is a promise that god made to his people they had entered in what the bible calls a covenant a contractual agreement a promise between god and the people as his people promised to obey god promised he would prosper them and flourish them they would be protected and blessed their obedience would result in god's goodness and kindness toward them as long as they obeyed the lord and stayed faithful to him they would live long in the land there are places in the bible where warnings given levticus 20 verse 22 is an example where god says you shall therefore keep all my statutes all my rules and do them that the land where i am bringing you may live you may live in and may not vomit you out see to live long in the land would be to enjoy god's blessings his favor his gladness as you children as you obey your parents you will find this god is on your side and you will be protected from harm life would in general go well and you would enjoy god's favor as you choose to honor your parents for some of us we could attest to lives that did not go well because we failed to honor our parents i think there are many in this room that if they would be willing to share they would say me i disobeyed my parents and i wreaked havoc on my household in defiance and with great disrespect i treated mom and dad and my family situation was horrendous because i failed

to obey and honor them we were sources of dishonor and disrespect and as a result it did not go well with us we were destroyers of a home that parents worked so hard to hold together lord forgive us as children and children before i address your mom or dad or moms and dads i want to share something with you how do you follow god you follow god clearly by obeying your mom and dad how do i please god i please god by honoring my mom and dad the norm the normal situation is obedience and i will say there are instances where permission for disobedience is acceptable but these are rare exceptions and if you think you have one write a proposal and i'll see if it's acceptable but you could think of an instance maybe someone grew up in a home no one knew of jesus they followed a different god of sorts they worshipped a different deity and one day a child becomes a christian and goes home and says mom and dad i'm a christian and i want to be baptized for some that's a death sentence in certain cultures and honor and obedience in that instance may be may may may not be possible i think of some whose parents put them in harm's way perhaps the harm came from mom or dad themselves and they had to run or hide or fight and this is those instances certainly the norm is obedience and permission for disobedience are rare exceptions a word to children secondly a word to parents this is where you children you could walk across the auditorium and say hey dad listen up a word to parents fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the lord paul here addresses fathers directly perhaps it's because moms don't have this issue no it's probably rather because fathers in the greco-roman world were seen as heads of the household they were responsible for all those in their home of course mothers are involved in this process as well but paul gives us the negative first he tells us what not to do we are not to provoke our children to anger the word provoke in other bible translations has been translated exasperate or irritate one version reads you must not go your children to resentment moms and dads paul points out for us there is a wrong way to exercise your authority there is a heavy handedness there is a severity there is an abuse of authority that will crush your children it will discourage

[20 : 23] them colossians 3 verse 21 it will dishearten them in the new testament world the authority of the father in the home was unrivaled this was unquestioned absolute William Barclay writes this a roman father had absolute power over his family he could sell them as slaves he could make them work in his fields even in chains he could take the law into his own hands for the law was in his own hands he could punish as he liked he could even inflict death penalty on his child and though we don't have such power the command is still binding to us today our God given authority as a parent does not make all of our parental actions permissible appropriate especially if they exasperate our children if our heavenly father treats us tenderly how could we treat our beloved children harshly of whom we are just stewards

John Stott gives a sobering insight it is during their childhood moms and dads that we represent God to them in our love and in our authority fathers while they are being formed nurtured and raised under your roof do not let it be lost on you that you are the closest embodiment to a heavenly father that they will see and experience his love must be depicted in you his patience must be seen in you his kindness must be experienced through you his tenderness and gentleness must be felt through you his forgiveness must be extended by you the portrait that God above gives of his heavenly fatherhood fatherhood is you as a dad wow

I can't help but wonder how many of our children we've lost because fathers have failed in this way do not be oh I can't believe I'm going to say this do not be the fault for which your children failed to seek the Lord do not be being you cannot be the fault for why your four children failed to seek the Lord oh Lord help us treasure these you've given to us and some of us may be completely unaware or oblivious it may be worth asking of which I did earlier this week asking your kids this question routinely asking them this question what is it that I do that makes you angry or upset what do

I do to provoke you to anger and the response will come and your defenses will go up and your excuses will be flagged and you'll make them aware and my challenge is you take heed to what they say because the Lord has commanded do not provoke your children to anger the positive facet of the command is to bring them up in the discipline of the Lord the discipline and instruction of the Lord it's an echo of a well-known verse in Proverbs 22 we are to train up a child in the way that they should go we are to instruct and discipline them in the Lord this discipline carries this connotation of correcting or chastening!

it's establishing boundaries set by our shared faith earlier in this book we have explored what it means to speak the truth to defend the truth and certainly we are defenders of the faith but here we are to discipline in the faith to discipline in the faith we're to correct errant behavior in our children we're to correct errant beliefs in our children we are to chasten blatant rebellion in our children and Paul's not naive here because you might be thinking he didn't have any kids but he understands this that children don't enter the world pure and innocent we would like to think that children when they're born they're these beautiful white canvases unstained uncorrupted but let me tell you this no don't be naive don't be misled though cuddly cute adorable inside that little heart in time you will discover anger pride envy selfishness deceit hypocrisy

[25 : 59] J.C. Ryle writes you must not think it's strange and unusual that that little heart can be so full of sin remember the natural depravity of your children and take care close quote remember that your children are born with a bias towards evil and therefore if you fail to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord if you let them choose for themselves they will choose wrong they will choose wrong we are to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord we are to teach them about the ways of the Lord his word and his work we are to tell them about the nature of sin tell them it is at work not only within them but all around them as the horrors in Texas unfold as the horrors in Ukraine unfold you need to tell them about evil its prevalence and its effects teach them that the world is held captive!

to sin and teach them about the prince of the power of the air teach them that they are not surprised when they witness Satan and his devices at work teach them about sin teach them about a savior tell them of a superhero that it has vanquished sin in its power though evil persists one day will no longer be present and will be fully conquered tell them about the ultimate super weapon in the cross of the Lord Jesus it not only vanquishes evil but it achieves salvation to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus through it we receive the forgiveness of sins and are set right before God teach them about sin teach them about the savior teach them about the scriptures in this book is found the wonderful works of God there you will read unspeakable truth about unspeakable love for his people there you will find

God's mercy and tenderness you will read how God delivers his people protects his people provides for them and prosper teach them about sin teach them about their savior teach them about the scriptures teach them about sundaes sundaes ice cream sundaes no sorry I don't know why I said that I'm thinking about sundaes apparently but teach them about this day this gathering tell tell them the importance of song of hearing God speak through his word teach them about meeting with God teach them of its priority teach them about sin teach them about Jesus their savior teach them about the holy scriptures teach them about sundaes teach them about serving

God and serving others teach them that they are not to be self-serving but always to consider the needs of others above their own teach them that they bless the world by extending themselves in service to others we are to bring them up in the instruction of the Lord moms and dads how ashamed would we be how ashamed would I be if I were able to instruct my children on how the ways of the world but neglect the ways of the Lord what kind of father would I be if I taught my children how to make money but not how to make peace with God what sort of neglect would I be charged with by God himself if I taught them how to receive the approval of men yet withheld and failed to teach them how to be approved by God our task is immense as parents

I fear that my children see their heavenly father poorly because their earthly father has been such a poor model and teacher and once again I'm dependent on grace are we all not I'm reminded that my best efforts are insufficient I have no perfect days usually poor days my best days are still bad days and sin is at work in me as much as it is at work in them and if it were not for a merciful father in heaven I along with my children would have no chance or no hope you see the reality is both parent and child utterly fail at keeping these verses no child completely obeys their parents no parent never provokes their children to anger we are both bent towards sin as children we fail to obey and honor as parents we fail by provoking our children and failing to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord but you know it's astounding there is a merciful father in heaven and he sends his son from heaven to win the wayward back to him as all of humanity is plummeting to an eternal death in our disobedience

[31 : 59] God sends his only child to complete his mission of mercy he would restore and ransom those of which he is estranged from and listen to this the son that that God sends is Jesus and Jesus would willfully go to the cross on our behalf he would confront horrific suffering and the writer of Hebrews tells us this that he would offer loud cries and he would shed tears to his father who could spare him from death the Bible tells us he did not spare his only son rather he sent his son to suffer and the writer of Hebrews makes this astounding statement declaration that although Jesus was the son he learned obedience through what he suffered here you have a parent sparing not his own son and here you have an obedient child an obedient son going to the furthest lengths obedient even unto death even death on the cross and the result the writer of Hebrews says he becomes the son the obedient son becomes the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him you see the son honored the father and as a result that it would be well with you that you would not only live long in the land but that you would live forever more see the model you see here is actually a relationship between God the father and his son the Lord

Jesus it's a perfect model children obey your parents and the Lord for this is right honor your father and your mother that it may go well with you that you may live long in the land fathers do not do not provoke your children to anger instead bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord father we father faithful father that at your disposal is all blessing goodness favor tenderness and as sons and daughters as disobedient children who have squandered so much of your wealth who have loved so many things more than you would you woo us and draw us and lead us forgive us receive us that we would be reminded that we have a father in heaven who loves us oh so much and that we as children would be obedient sons and daughters to please him to display him to those around us help us to this end we pray we ask these things for Jesus sake amen