

Living to Please Jesus at Work and Home

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[0 : 00] Good evening everyone. For those who don't know me, I'm a member of this congregation. My name is Martin Pakula. I'm not Jono Smith, as the outline said would be the case today.

I might not be as good looking as Jono, but I'm taking his place. Don't smile too much, Jono. Last week, Andrew brought us the passage from the end of Ephesians chapter 5, and if you could open your Bibles to that, that would be good, page 952.

And the passage was too long for him to be able to deal with, so he's asked me to deal with the second part of the passage, chapter 6, verses 1 to 9, which was just read for us before.

So that's what we're going to look at tonight, and it's an important passage because together with last week's passage, what we're really looking at is how to live as a Christian at home and at work. And given that we spend most of our time at home and at work, that's going to be pretty important. And in fact, I think that's really where the rubber hits the road as far as the Bible goes.

[1 : 10] So I suppose every now and then you might think that Christianity is to do with the spectacular, maybe, incredible godliness like Mother Teresa or miracles and healings or the sort of feelings you might experience at church.

But I actually think it's more in the mundane day-to-day life that we live. So when we're at home, when we're at work, living out our lives as Christians, that's, I think, more where the Bible says the rubber hits the road for us.

So important topics that we'll look at tonight, how to live to please Jesus both at home and at work.

So let me pray for us that God would help us to understand his word on that topic.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can be here together tonight to look at your word, to study it, to hear it. We pray that you would help us to take it in, to believe what it says and to obey it.

We pray that you would help us to understand how to live more, to please you both at home and at work. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[2 : 18] Now we're in the middle of kind of diving into Paul's letter for Ephesians. And just to recap very briefly, for those who might not have been here week by week, Ephesians is in two halves.

The first half we looked at some time ago from chapters 1 to 3 is all about the gospel, basically. We saw God's grace, his undeserved mercy that Jesus has died and paid for our sins and we've forgiven our sins by God's mercy and grace.

And then chapters 4 to 6, the second half is looking at how to live in light of what Jesus has done.

To put it in the words of chapter 4 verse 1, how to live a life worthy of the calling with which we have been called.

So this is how we live in light of what Jesus has done. It will mean no longer living like the world around us. It will mean in the words of chapter 5 verse 15, how to live wisely as Christians.

Further on in verse 18, it will mean how to go on being filled with the Spirit. One of the things that that will mean is submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, verse 21 says.

[3 : 30] And we submit to one another in three types of relationships. The first one we looked at last week, husband and wife. Tonight we look at parent-child relationships and also slave-master or what we'll see is employee-employer relationships.

So how to live as a Christian at home and at work. And in fact what we'll see is how we're going in those relationships. Parent-child, boss-worker.

How we go in those relationships will be a direct reflection of how we're going in our relationship with Jesus in many respects. It will show how we are being filled with the Spirit.

How we are living a life worthy of the calling with which we've been called. So let's have a look first of all at how to live as a Christian at home. We've already looked at last week how to live as a Christian in our marriages at home.

So we're not doing that tonight. But we're looking at how to live particularly as children and parents at home. Now I know that there aren't many children here who are living at home with their parents. [4 : 38] But there's some. And the Bible addresses you. And here it addresses you directly. So this is especially for you. Paul in each of these three relationships first addresses those who submit in the relationship to authority.

And in this case that's children. So chapter 6 verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. So if you are a child living at home, you are to obey your parents.

And you are to obey them at all times and in everything. And not just when you feel like it. And not just when your parents get it right.

But always and in everything. And the reason why Paul says is because this is right. It's right for lots of reasons we could think of. It's right because the Bible says it's right.

It will go on in verse 2 to quote from the scriptures. It's right because believe it or not, your parents usually do know better. It's right because your parents usually do have your best interests in mind.

[5 : 44] It's right because we owe to our parents for what they have done for us. And it's right especially if our parents are Christian because it's their job to bring you up to know Jesus.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Notice there that children are to obey their parents in the Lord as well. Which I think means that you're to obey them because you trust in Jesus.

And again how you go in obeying your parents will be a reflection of how you're going in obeying Jesus. So for those here who are living as children at home, I know there's some of you, how are you going in obeying your parents?

If you want to follow Jesus at home, this is what it means, obeying your parents. Now I think in our society we teach individualism to such a degree that you're taught really by the world around you to assert your self-independence.

And to assert your independence almost against the authority of your parents. And I think our society teaches us not to trust our parents, to think that they don't have our best interests at heart, that they're being restrictive, that they're being harsh or unfair.

[7 : 05] And being a teenager for example in our society is synonymous with being difficult and rebellious. But of course if you're a Christian teenager then it will certainly not mean being difficult or rebellious because that is ungodly.

And rebelling against your parents here is rebelling against God and obeying your parents is obeying God. And of course that goes doubly if your parents are Christian as their job is to bring you up to know God.

Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. And then Paul goes on in verse 2 to quote the scriptures, he quotes the fifth of the ten commandments, honour your father and mother so that children at home not only obey their parents but honour them as well.

And again how we're going in honouring our parents would be a reflection of how we're going in honouring Jesus. Now I know that some children or youth here will be thinking well what about if your parents are harsh or what if they're unfair or even worse?

How does it work then? Well parents certainly don't always get it right. I'm sure I've made a mistake once or twice. And parents are sinful as well.

[8 : 28] So it will be the case that parents get it wrong and may well be restrictive or harsh or unfair. And Peter, the Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter what we should do if we're in that situation as children.

There's just a little bit of Bible flicking tonight. You can either listen or Bible flick. We're on page 984 if you want a Bible flick to 1 Peter chapter 2.

Page 984. 1 Peter 2 verse 18 says, Slaves accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh.

For it is a credit to you if being aware of God you endure pain while suffering unjustly. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you should follow in his steps.

He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was abused he didn't return abuse. When he suffered he didn't threaten, but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

[9 : 40] Sorry, skipped a verse there on purpose, forgot to tell you. Anyway, this is saying that as Christ trusted in God when he was treated harshly and unfairly, so too children in authority under

their parents, under that authority, if they are treated harshly or unfairly, should also trust God in that situation and continue to obey their parents.

And you're not obeying first and foremost for them, but for God. It's obeying God. And back to Ephesians chapter 6, you're given motivation here for obeying your parents.

Verse 2 says, Honour your father and mother, this is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.

So, the Ten Commandments here, the fifth of the Ten Commandments promises that if you obey and honour your parents, it will go well with you and you'll enjoy long life, which is saying that God will bless you for honouring and obeying your parents now in this life.

Well, if you're a child living at home, or teenager, youth, whatever, I would have thought this is fairly straightforward and clear. You need to obey your parents.

[10:58] You need to honour your parents. It's right. And God will bless you as you do so. Now, a couple more points for those of us who aren't children living at home.

First of all, for wives. Wives we saw last week are not in authority over their husbands, but are under the authority of their husbands. But here, you see that wives are in authority anyway.

They're in authority over their children. And children are to obey and honour their mothers. But secondly, also, we need to make a distinction, I think, between children who are growing up at home and adults who are still living at home, which is happening more and more these days, and also adults who aren't living at home but whose parents are still alive.

I think that if you're an adult, say, in your 20s living at home, which would be the case for some of you, or if you're living out of home, married or single, no longer with your parents, I think you are not called to obey your parents.

However, I think for all of us who still have parents who are alive, we are called to honour our parents and that that's something that never ends. So we might not obey our parents once we have grown up, but we will honour them.

[12:16] And I think honouring them means two things in particular. One, it will mean respecting them. But two, I think it does mean looking after our parents in their old age.

And I want to look at another passage where Paul talks about this, 1 Timothy chapter 5. So if you flick ahead to that, that's page 965.

Page 965. Paul talks about looking after your parents in their old age. 1 Timothy 5 verse 4, he says, If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents, for this is pleasing in God's sight.

And whoever does... Verse 8, sorry, down to verse 8. And whoever doesn't provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Now I realise we in the West have become so individualistic that there are many parents and grandparents who are neglected these days. And Paul is saying here, I think that part of honouring our parents will mean looking after them in their old age.

[13:30] And whether we're growing up at home or whether we've left home and whatever age we are, we're always called to honour our parents. And I think that will mean respect and will also mean looking after them in their old age.

Well, back to Ephesians, let's look at the flip side of this parent-child relationship and look at parents, fathers in particular, in verse 4. And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Now this verse is not to mothers, you can see, but to fathers, I presume because fathers are the ones who are in authority in the household. And they're being told in particular not to abuse their authority.

Much of what this verse says, though, I think will apply, of course, to mothers as well. Now I realise that many of you here aren't parents tonight with children, but many of you here tonight are single or are married without children.

And my guess is it's highly likely that many who are here tonight within the next 10 years will in fact have children. So this may apply to you, scary I know, sooner rather than later, so listen carefully anyway.

[14:47] Parents, fathers especially, are told here not to exasperate their children or to provoke their children to anger. Now I can't imagine how a father could do that.

Actually I can. How would a father do that? I think by being too severe in discipline, being unfair or inconsistent, or worse, being condemning, humiliating, or being abusive verbally or even physically. Now I certainly do know that I can be too harsh in discipline sometimes and this is saying for us who are fathers that we're not to do such things and we're not to provoke our children to anger.

There's a great book on fatherhood called Point Man. Has anyone read Point Man? Only one or two. The pastor's okay. I highly recommend it.

Stephen Farrar, Point Man, and he gives three tips on fatherhood I want to share with you which I think are very good and ones that I certainly need to do much better. The first one is he says, listen to your children.

[15:56] Listen to your children. Secondly, he says, if you're wrong or too harsh, apologise to them. And thirdly, he says, listen to your wife's input on your children.

Wise advice. I certainly need to do better on that myself. I should say though, these days I think we're in danger of going too far the other way.

Rather than being too harsh in discipline, I think many parents these days are far too weak in discipline or not disciplining their children at all. And this is a helpful verse to remind us that we do need to discipline our children.

Let me read a couple of proverbs to you. You might just want to listen to these rather than flick them up. Proverbs 13, 24 says, those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.

Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them. Saying if you love your children, you'll discipline them. Another one, Proverbs 22, verse 15.

[17:06] Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far away. Saying that discipline is for their good. So if you love your children, you will discipline them, it's for their good.

And I know that you could use those verses to abuse literally and to abuse what the verses say, but that would be no excuse to go to the opposite extreme.

The opposite of bad discipline is not no discipline. The opposite of bad discipline is good and godly discipline. A headmaster I knew once said to me that these days he is observing lots of parents submitting to their children.

And I think that's certainly the case when you look around. But this is telling us we as parents need to make sure that we do discipline our children, not to follow the way of the world in letting them do whatever they like, but to bring them up in the discipline of the Lord.

Secondly, and maybe more positively, we're told that parents are to feed or nourish their children in the instruction of the Lord. That our job, particularly as fathers, is to see that our children grow up hearing the good news of Jesus and hearing the Bible.

[18:21] Now, I recognise that this is a tough verse and I think it's certainly not tough to understand it, but it is tough to put it into practice. And I think that must be the case because Sunday school teachers in churches all over the place where I've been continually will tell you that the children from Christian families who are in their Sunday school classes are clearly not being brought up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

And this is a reminder to us as fathers that it is our responsibility to bring up our children in the instruction of the Lord. That with our authority comes that responsibility and that we need to do that. Over the years, I have tried hard to meet regularly with both my children to either weekly or daily read the Bible with them, even if it's just for a few minutes.

And it's an important part of our job as fathers. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Men in particular tonight, this is our responsibility and God will bless us and bless our children if we take on this responsibility well. And I think in the end our children's growth in Christ should be more important to us than their health or their education or their material prosperity or their happiness.

[19:47] I'm not saying those things aren't important, but their growth in Christ should be far more important and of course their true happiness will come in the end from godliness. All right, that's enough on living for Jesus at home.

Let's look at the second and last topic, living for Jesus at work. I certainly know there's a lot of people who are workers here or students and this I think will apply to you in particular.

Now I realise this is that we live more for the weekend than for work. Monday mornings are awful usually and Friday afternoons are getting more and more exciting as the afternoon goes on and work often seems a necessary evil that is getting in the way of our leisure time.

But funnily enough the Bible almost agrees if that's what you think. Our first reading from Ecclesiastes chapter 2 said this, What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun?

For all their days are full of pain and their work is a vexation. Even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity. Work he says is hard, full of pain and vexation because of our sin God has cursed the ground.

[21 : 01] We work it by the sweat of our brow so that work is now difficult and frustrated. And if you think about it, given sleep, if you work 40 hours a week that is one third of your waking hours and if you add travel time and some overtime to that, then almost half your waking hours are spent at work.

So given that we spend a lot of time at either school or university or work in our waking hours, this has got to be very important and we want to know how do you live to please Jesus at school or uni or work.

Now before we get to that, a couple of points I need to make. Paul is addressing here in verses 5-9 slaves and masters and he's doing that because slaves were part of the first century household just as wives and children were.

But there's a couple of problems that might have come to your mind if you were thinking hard as we read those verses before. And the first one is the problem with slavery itself as an institution.

Why doesn't Paul just come right out here and denounce slavery? If he's talking about slavery here's his chance. Well I think he doesn't do that because he's not so much talking about slavery as a topic here but he's addressing how Christian slaves can live to please Jesus.

[22 : 23] They don't have much of a choice about being in that situation of slavery and Paul is telling them how they can live as Christians in that situation which largely they couldn't change.

Elsewhere in the Bible Paul does say that if they can get their freedom they should take it. That's in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 21. So 1 Corinthians 7 verse 21 he says get free from being slaves don't make yourselves slaves to men.

But here he's simply talking about how to live in that situation. Secondly you have to wonder about relevance. I've already sort of hinted at where we're going there but we're not slaves so how is this relevant today to talk about slaves and masters?

Well what commentaries do is basically apply it to the situation of an employee and an employer or you could say of a student and teacher or student and lecturer and so it applies these verses to those situations which many of us here are in.

Now there is a problem though with doing that which you want to be aware of. Slaves are under 100% total authority. They're to obey their masters 24 hours a day 7 days a week because they're under the complete authority of their masters.

[23 : 39] If you're a Christian employee or student I hope you've noticed that is not the case for you. You are not under 100% authority all the time. You are not a slave.

And what that means is in this age of workaholic hearing or misunderstanding a direct connection like that could be the last thing you want to hear. so that if your boss at work is urging you more and more to work back at night and on the weekends so that it's causing you maybe to start missing your quiet times missing Bible study missing church you are not a slave and you should use your freedom I think to get a better job where your job is not getting in the way of your Christian life and your church life.

So that's a great freedom we have in not being slaves that you're not under the total 100% authority of your boss or your teacher. Having said that though nevertheless some of these principles will certainly apply to the work situation or to you as a student at school or university so where it does apply we need to listen and obey the word of God here so let's have a look at it.

Slaves are like children or wives are addressed first here as those who are under authority. In verse 5 it says slaves obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling in singleness of heart as you obey Christ.

So an employee a worker like a slave and a student as well is to obey their boss or teacher where they do have authority over them and to obey them this says with fear and trembling which I don't think means that you ought to be in terror of your boss or your teacher.

[25 : 24] I know some can be scary but I don't think it means that but that you have reverence towards those who are in authority over you because we'll be judged I think by our obedience to our boss or our teacher or lecturer and we're to obey it says with singleness of heart with single mindedness whole heartedness just as we would obey Jesus and in fact again I think how we're going and obeying our bosses or teachers would be a direct reflection of how we're going in obeying Jesus.

So Christian workers I would have thought would be excellent workers I would hope working for their bosses with singleness of heart with single minded devotion and not verse 6 goes on to say with false motives not only while being watched and in order to please them.

Literally it says not offering eye service as men pleasers. That is not just trying to suck up to your boss when they're watching you and slacking off when they're not.

I think we all know the sort of situation at school for example where the teacher suddenly called away from the classroom and once the teacher's gone a riot erupts and if the kids are smart somebody stands at the door on guard waiting to see when the teacher comes back so that you can all be quiet again once the teacher has returned.

This is saying we're not to be like that we don't want to muck up when the boss is away and we don't want to just work hard when they're watching us in the hope maybe of getting a promotion or sucking up to them.

[26 : 57] So we're to work hard for them all the time because they may not see, your teacher or your boss may not see all the time what you're doing but God certainly does. And we're to work and study, verse 6 says, as slaves of Christ.

Now again we're not slaves here in Australia but the Bible is saying one way or another we actually are slaves. If you're not a Christian Jesus himself says that you're a slave to sin, that sin masters you and there is nothing you can do about that apart from what Jesus has done.

And for those of us who are Christian the Bible is saying that we've been saved from our slavery to sin by Jesus dying in our place and paying for our sins and he has freed us up from that slavery but freed us up to serve him as slaves of Christ.

And in our jobs or in our study Monday to Friday we're doing those good works to please Jesus as his servants. It's our service to him.

And so we're to work hard for our bosses or our teachers or lecturers. Verse 6 says we're to work hard for them as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with enthusiasm as to the Lord and not to men and women.

[28 : 21] Paul's saying we're doing it for Jesus, not for our boss or our teacher or lecturer and so we should be working willingly, enthusiastically, wholeheartedly.

So if you're a student, you're not going to school or university so much because the government says you should or because your parents say you should but because you want to please Jesus and you would want to study hard and you'd want to follow what the teacher says and you'd want to work hard at your studies in order to please Jesus.

And if you're a paid worker, you're going to work not so much because you've got bills to pay but because this is your service to God and you want to work hard in order to please Jesus in your work.

And in fact, if you're a housewife, which I know is unfashionable these days, but if your job at home is cooking and cleaning full time, then you are doing that for Jesus as part of your service to him.

And in fact, this passage I think raises menial tasks to quite a great height, saying that is your service to Jesus. And so we should do our study or our paid work or our housework willingly, enthusiastically, wholeheartedly because that is our service of Jesus.

[29 : 42] Is that how you've been thinking of your work or study? Now, by the way, just a caveat, this is not endorsing workaholism, in case you mishear me.

Workaholics as Christians are getting this wrong because they're spending all their time at work and going so hard at it that they're neglecting their other priorities like their quiet times or family or church commitments and so on.

And this is not endorsing workaholism. What it's saying is that in the 40 hours or so that you are a student or a paid worker or whatever you're doing, that you're to work hard within that time, not so much for your boss or your teacher but doing it as for Jesus.

And again, as with children, there's motivation given here for slaves or we'd say workers or students in verse 8. Paul says that we should know that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again, we'll be paid back, rewarded from the Lord, whether we're slaves or free.

Since you work hard or study hard, you might be thinking, what if my boss isn't watching? What if he doesn't see? What if he doesn't know how hard I'm working? What if my teacher doesn't know how hard I'm studying?

[30 : 58] This is saying God sees it, God knows and he will pay you back, he will reward you for the hard work that you are doing because you're doing it primarily for him. So Christian workers and students, if you are living a life worthy of the calling to which you've been called, then you'll be submitting to your bosses and teachers, working hard in the time that you have, not so much sucking up to them, but working as for the Lord with eagerness, enthusiasm and single-heartedness.

And if your boss or teacher is a rotter, as unfortunately happens from time to time, it doesn't matter because you'll be doing it primarily for Jesus to serve him, not so much for them.

Well finally, the other side of this relationship, masters, or we could apply it to Christian bosses or teachers or lecturers. Verse 9, And masters do the same to them.

Stop threatening them, for you know that both if you have the same master in heaven and with him there is no partiality. Now it's almost a shocking thing if you notice it at first to say, do the same to them or treat your slaves in the same way.

It's not actually saying that masters are now going to be slaves to their slaves, but it's saying they should have the same godly motivation, just as slaves are to have a godly motivation to serve Jesus.

[32 : 26] So masters or bosses or teachers are to have a godly motivation in the way they exercise their authority over their employees or students. And that means once again not abusing the authority they have.

So this is saying that Christian employers and teachers will not be threatening their workers or students. And I would want to say not even subtly. I would hope a Christian boss would not even be subtly suggesting that his employees, for example, would be rewarded if they voluntarily keep staying back late at night or on the weekends and doing more work and so on.

That rather a Christian boss would do what is right and fair, to use the words from the parallel passage in Colossians, and would not exploit their workers.

And their motivation in verse 9 is that they should know, if this is your position, that both if you have the same master in heaven and with him there is no partiality.

That's saying in the end the Christian boss or teacher or lecturer is not the ultimate authority but Jesus is. And in fact the Christian boss is a fellow slave with his workers who are both servants or slaves of Jesus equally.

[33 : 43] And so the Christian boss or teacher will answer to God for how they have treated those under their authority. Well, are you living to please Jesus?

Are you living a life worthy of the calling of the gospel? Well, if you're a child at home it will mean obeying and honouring your parents. If you're a Christian employee or student it will mean obeying your boss or teacher and working enthusiastically and wholeheartedly as for Jesus.

If you are in authority it will mean not abusing your authority. For fathers it will mean not provoking your children to anger but bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

And if you're a Christian employer or teacher or lecturer it will mean for an employer in particular not threatening your workers but providing them with what is right and fair or treating your students fairly.

And in fact how you're going at this, I think, how you're going at home or work is a direct reflection of how you're going in your Christian walk. This is where the rubber hits the road.

[34 : 55] And if you want to live to please Jesus then how you live at home or at work really does matter. And I think it's an encouragement though as well that we can know that our jobs as housewives, workers, students, children growing up at home, whatever it is, that your work is of great worth in God's sight because you're doing it for Him and it's part of the good works that you are doing as a Christian.

So, honour your parents, work hard at your job doing it as for Jesus. Let's pray that He would help us to do that.

Heavenly Father, we pray for those who are children in our congregation here and in our church that you would help them to honour and obey their parents doing it as for Jesus.

We pray that you would help those of us who are parents, particularly fathers, to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and not to exasperate them. We thank you for those of us who are blessed with paid work and we pray that you would provide for those who are without work.

We pray for those who are with it that you would help us to work diligently and well. And we pray for those who are students that you would help them to study hard, to do it as for Jesus.

[36 : 24] And we ask this in His name. Amen.