

# Ephesians 6:1-4 - Hey, Kids!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

We've made it to Ephesians chapter 6 this morning. This is especially for kids, the passage that we're looking at today. If you have Bibles, kids, you can turn to the book of Ephesians.

It's kind of towards the back. So if you're flipping around, it's Galatians and then Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians. Those are hard to remember.

When I was a kid, we learned General Electric Power Company, G-E-P-C. So it's after Galatians and before Philippians.

You'll find it in there. Or if you want to get a Bible out of the pew in front of you, you can just turn to page 979. And that's a little bit easier. You don't even have to remember the whole order.

[ 1 : 0 0 ] Listen, kids, every time we worship, every time we open God's Word together, there's something special there for all of us. It's one of the reasons why we have these children's bulletins for you every week that have a spot there for you to write what you're learning from the sermon.

Because every time God's Word speaks to us, it speaks helpful things that we need to hear and we need to learn. This morning in particular, you may want one of these blue bulletins.

If you didn't get one, you may want to get one of those. In fact, if you hold your hand up really high right now, if you want one of these, there's some ushers who will give you one. There's an outline on the back that you might be able to fill out as we follow along.

I need you to pay close attention this morning, kids. It's especially written to you and I need your help during the sermon. So this is God's Word, so we need to listen closely to what He has to say to us.

Ephesians 6 at verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Kids, you know why we almost always pray right now in the service?

We do it. We pray right now when we start the sermon because we really need God's help. God's Word is holy and perfect, but we're not.

The preacher is not perfect. The people who are listening are not perfect. And so we need God's help to understand His perfect Word better so that we would know Him more and love Him more.

So will you pray with me now and ask Him to help us? God, we do thank You for Your Word. We thank You that it speaks to all of us.

I pray this morning as we look at it that You would help us, that You would help us to know Your love more, and that You would help each of us to love You more.

[ 3 : 20 ] Having looked at Your Word together, we ask that You would help us in Jesus' name. Amen. Jesus seemed to like children a lot, didn't He?

Do you remember the story where parents are trying to bring their little kids to Jesus? And what did His disciples say to them? No, no, no.

Keep your kids away. Jesus is too busy. Jesus is too important to spend time with kids. You remember what Jesus said? His disciples were saying no, but Jesus said what?

Let the children come to Me. Don't stop them from coming. I want to be with them. He picked them up and held them and blessed them. And there are a lot of stories about Jesus in the Bible where He's especially thoughtful to kids.

We see that same thing in the book of Ephesians this morning. Our first point, the first thing we want to talk about, is the special position that kids have in God's family.

[ 4 : 24 ] Kids, this is something that makes you special. I want you to write this down, okay? God loves me. Can you write that down? God loves me.

I want you to say that with me. Can you help me with that? One, two, three. God loves me. Not you older people, just the kids. Kids, are you paying attention?

On three. One, two, three. God loves me. Yes, awesome. We'll get to you all in a minute. You'll get your turn. That's God's attitude towards children.

That's how He feels about it. You're precious to Him. He loves you and values you. All the way in this passage, you see that He's actually talking to children.

That's the first word, isn't it? Children. It's as though you're right there with your parents and your grandparents when God's Word is being read to the church, that you would be right there, that He would expect you would be listening and be a part of that group.

[ 5 : 25 ] That's interesting, isn't it? God loves children. And as you read this passage, what you learn, kids, is that God is looking out for your good.

He wants what's best for you. He's telling you how He's designed it so it will be for your best. In fact, He's even given you parents to care for you because He loves you so much.

Now, I know that sometimes parents can be embarrassing. Just imagine if I was your dad. I mean, how embarrassing would that be? But what they actually are is a reminder to you of how much God loves you, that He's given you parents and others who care about you to take care of you and to show His love to you.

That's part of what this passage is reminding you. But God doesn't just speak to children when the passage says children like this one. I said earlier, all of the Bible is for you.

All of God's Word because you're a part of His church, right? All of God's Word is written to you. In fact, this passage this morning is part of a passage that starts this way.

[ 6 : 33 ] It says, Be imitators of God as dearly loved children. As beloved children that God loves so much, we're to imitate Him.

That's Ephesians 5.1. All of us. All of God's Word for all of us, especially for you kids. So He loves you. God loves you.

But you know who else is a part of that group? Those beloved children in chapter 5? It's not just you. Who else is included in that? Your parents, right?

They're part of that group addressed as beloved children. Parents, you have a special position too. You're called to care for those loved by God.

You've been entrusted with the responsibility to care for something precious to Him. That's a high calling, right? God loves children. And if He does love children, it should make us marvel that He decides to make us, at a human level, primarily responsible for them.

[ 7 : 35 ] We may do that as parents through decisions we make about church or school or other activities our kids are involved in, where others care for them and where they learn from others.

But don't miss that parents are the ones here given primary responsibility for the kids. They have a special charge to care for those that God has entrusted to their care.

Okay, kids, I'm talking to you again, all right? You listening? You have a special position. What's your special position? God loves me. But you also have a hard job.

A hard job. Look at this passage with me. Let's see what God says your job is. It's at the very beginning. Verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

What's your job? What's the hard job that God has given you? God tells me to obey. Can you say that with me?

[ 8 : 38 ] Kids, you listening? One, two, three. God tells me to obey. Have your parents ever told you to obey before?

Has anybody's mom or dad ever said you need to obey them? Anybody else? Oh, they have. Okay. You know, they're not just being mean when they say that, are they?

They're not just making it up that it's important for you to obey them. God says that's your job as children. That's the special job that He's given you is to obey your parents.

So it's really important that we act the way our parents tell us to. That we do what they say. That's the first part of obeying. That we do the things that they ask us to do.

All the way back to the Old Testament, when God talks to His people about obeying their parents, it's so important because it's part of obeying Him. He says that the best way to show that you want to do what God says is to start by doing what your parents say.

[ 9 : 44 ] That's how important it is to God that we obey our parents. Now, I said it's a hard job. It doesn't sound very hard, does it? Is that hard to understand what it means to obey your parents?

No, it sounds pretty easy. Why is that such a hard job? Why do you think? We all have trouble obeying, don't we? You know why? Because we like to do things our own way.

Do you like to do things what you want to do? I like to do what I want to do. And so telling me that I have to obey and I don't always get what I want to do, that's hard.

Sometimes we really, really want to do something and our parents say what? No. How did you know that? They don't sometimes say yes? Okay, well sometimes you're right.

They say no. And you really, really wanted to do it. And what does God tell us when that happens? I mean, maybe you wanted to eat that piece of candy. Or maybe you wanted to watch this movie or go to that party.

[ 10 : 49 ] And you know what's really hard is sometimes you don't understand why your parents are telling you no, do you? It just doesn't seem to make any sense. I know that feeling. Sometimes it doesn't make sense.

And so you just want to do the thing that you want to do, right? And what does God say? What does the Bible tell us about that? He says, obey your parents.

He says, you can trust them. That's your job. Trust your parents even when you really, really want to do something different. Trust them because it's right. That's the way He made it.

And because He's the one who made it that way and because God's the one who gave you your parents, when you trust them and obey them, you're really trusting Him. Sometimes, because we love to do things our own way, we do obey.

We do what we're asked to do, right? But we might do it like this. All right. I'll clean my room. And we're sad and we're moping.

[ 11 : 54 ] Or sometimes some of us do it this way. All right. I'll clean my room. But I'm angry. Have you ever done that?

Have you ever felt like that? I mean, you're going to obey. You're going to do the right actions. But your heart's not very happy, is it? This passage reminds us that obeying is not just about our actions, but it's actually about our attitudes, our hearts.

Look at verse 2, the next verse. What does it say? Honor your father and mother. That's one of the Ten Commandments, isn't it? Honor your father and mother. That's talking about your attitude towards them.

What's going on in your heart? Your attitude should show honor and respect for your parents. At our house, we say obeying means the first time and with a good attitude.

It doesn't mean that's how it happens. That means that's how we talk about it. Do you say something like that at your house? Anybody else? Do you say something about obeying is not just what we do, but it's the attitude that we have when we do it?

[ 13 : 02 ] God says that's really important because, you see, God's always concerned about our hearts, isn't he? God's not just concerned that we do all of the right things. He wants us to love him, to respect and honor him in our hearts.

That's what God is really concerned about. So our job as children is to obey our parents in our actions, to honor them in our attitudes.

Sometimes that doesn't seem fair, does it, kids? Have you ever thought that was not fair? Have you ever said, I want to be an adult so that I don't have to be the one who obeys all the time, so that I can tell everybody else?

Well, yes, some of you have. Yeah, you've really said that a lot, huh? It doesn't seem fair sometimes. Let me tell you something. God gives parents a hard job too, okay?

You can listen to this part and see what your parents' job is. I'll say their job is to nurture obeyers. That's in quotation marks because that refers, again, to action and attitude.

[ 14 : 07 ] Look at verse 4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

This is addressing fathers here, not to the exclusion of mothers. Clearly, both parents are in mind in this passage, but there's a particular responsibility for fathers to their children.

And in the Roman world, Paul's writing to, fathers would have had unlimited power over their kids to do whatever they wanted to with them, even horrible things. Paul says, no, no, no, that's not the case.

Fathers, you're under authority too. Not just the kids under your authority. Fathers, you too are to do this in a particular way. Don't provoke them to anger.

You see how immediately he's telling parents to be concerned with the heart? Not to crush their spirits? When he says this, he's talking about not discouraging them in their obedience and maturity.

[ 15 : 08 ] The word means don't exasperate them. In other words, don't give them just cause for anger. How would you do that as a parent? How would you give them just cause to be angry?

There would be an inconsistency between what you say and how you treat them. For example, I've had to apologize to my girls occasionally for saying, stop yelling!

That doesn't make much sense, does it? But parents are sinners too, aren't we? You can exasperate your children by requiring them to submit to your authority while you submit to no one and nothing else outside yourself.

It's exasperating. You can ask for their respect, but you can use shame to get them to obey. Those things that we do as parents so that we look good even if it embarrasses or humiliates our children.

Instead of that, Paul says what? Bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parenting is hard. Amen?

[ 16 : 21 ] Thought I could get one on that. God doesn't give a long list here of what age to use which discipline technique, how to parent with social media, how to handle each hard situation that you come across.

There's a lot of freedom for parents in deciding how to parent their children individually. But he is clear about one thing. He says the priority is bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, the teaching and the correction, the nurture and admonition we heard in our baptism vows.

In other words, parents, mold and shape children to love and obey God through loving and obeying you. Nothing else is more important than that.

Than their hearts being shaped towards loving and obeying God. Heart and life. Attitude and action. Parents, what do we value most for our kids?

There's one verse in this whole book of Ephesians about parenting. God says what? Help them learn to love and obey me. That's the thing.

[ 17 : 39 ] You got lots of priorities. Let me tell you the important one. Help them learn to love and obey me. And we care about what? Their academic prowess.

Their social connectivity. Their college acceptance. Their future viability. And we have absolutely lost our sense of what's important, haven't we?

Me too. It's so easy. There's so much going on and it moves so fast. God says let me make it a little bit easier for you.

Not a how-to list. A priority. What's most important for your kids? That they would learn to love and obey Him. Attitude and action.

Parents and children, we all fail, don't we? We all mess up sometimes. We have these really special positions because God loves us.

[ 18 : 44 ] And we have these really hard jobs. And when you have a hard job and it's really, really important that you do your job, sometimes you need to know there's some hope because you don't always do it right.

Isn't that true? You don't always obey. So the last thing this morning is that there's hope for all of us. Are you ready, kids? You got any guesses on the hope? Three blanks.

I'll give you a hint. You've seen it before. God loves me. Can you say that with me one more time?

God loves me. That's the hope. Look at why God tells you to honor and obey your parents in verse 3. That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

That's why God wants you to honor and obey your parents. Because He loves you and He wants what's best for you. He created you and He designed the world. So He knows that obeying your parents leads to blessing for you.

[ 19 : 49 ] That there's life there. Even when it doesn't feel like it. I was taking Caitlin to school this week. And we were driving, turned into the road in front of the school.

And I just wanted to drive down that road and drop her off. And I got lost in my own little world. And all of a sudden I had to slam on the brakes. And when I slammed the brakes on, there was this white hand with a glove on it right in front of my windshield.

Saying, stop. It was a crossing guard that I hadn't even noticed. And she was telling me to stop because if I didn't, I was about to slam the car that was turning right in front of me.

And I didn't even notice it. Was that crossing guard just being mean? I mean, I wanted to drive down the road and she told me to stop. Was she just trying to be mean and make me miserable and sad all day?

No, she wasn't. She was trying to protect me. She did protect me from running into that other car. She knew what was best for me and that I really needed to obey her.

[ 20 : 51 ] And so she told me to stop. That's what God is doing when He tells you to obey Him and obey your parents. Teenagers with your bodies and your relationships.

Younger kids with your friends. With your toys. Infants. Infants. I know you're listening. With electrical outlets and stairways.

He's telling you. It actually helps us to think about those things. He's telling you that obeying Him is what's best for you. And it's easier to see it when it's an electrical outlet. He's telling you that even when it doesn't feel like it, obeying is what's best for you because He loves you.

So what about when you don't obey? Have any of you ever disobeyed your parents? Come on. There are lots of adults' hands going up right now.

Yeah. Kids, have you ever disobeyed? Have you ever done something that they told you not to do or didn't do something they asked you to do? Is there still hope then?

[ 21 : 56 ] Does God still love you or does that go away then? Let me ask you something. Which came first in Ephesians this morning? God loves me or God tells me to obey?

This is a hard question. You may need to look at your notes. Which one came first? God loves me or God tells me to obey? God loves me came first, didn't it?

You know, that is always true in the Bible. Whenever God talks about obedience, it's in the context of a loving relationship that the love comes first and then we obey.

God doesn't love you because you obey. He wants you to obey because He loves you. Kids, I want to make sure you hear that. Are you listening? Look at me for a second.

God doesn't love you because you obey. He wants you to obey because He loves you so much already. So when you don't obey, His love is called forgiveness.

[ 23 : 04 ] Because Jesus was the perfect Son and always obeyed and because Jesus died for your sins all of the times that you're not a perfect child and you don't obey, God can forgive you and still love you even when you disobey.

Isn't that awesome? Even when you disobey, guess what, parents? You too. There's hope for you too.

God is your loving Heavenly Father too. You are His children before your parents. You remain His children after you become parents.

And yes, because God loves you, there's blessing of parenting children to follow God that when we train up a child in the way He should go, when He is old, He will not depart from it. But none of us is perfect.

So that verse is no formula for guaranteeing godly children. When we fail, God still loves us. I want the parents to say it now.

[ 24 : 09 ] Now it's your turn. Say God loves me on three. One, two, three. God loves me. You who were too harsh on your child last night, God loves you.

You who were too easy, too lenient on them this morning, God loves you. And parents need to hear that as much as kids do. Because you have a Heavenly Father who loves you, you're not doomed to repeat your earthly parents' failures like you sometimes feel you are.

Your parenting can reflect His fathering of you. And when it doesn't, when you fail and you beat yourself up because you love your kids and you don't want to mess them up, He forgives you.

He loves you. And that's your hope. One of our favorite kids' Christmas CDs has a song on it that rewrites an old song that you all know and love.

Randall Goodgame put some new lyrics to it. Look at it up here. It goes like this. Jesus loves me when I'm good, when I act just like I should, when I say thank you and please, brush my teeth and wash my knees.

[ 25 : 27 ] Jesus loves me then. There's another verse. And it's not quite so expected. You know what it says? Jesus loves me when I'm bad, when I talk back to my dad, when I stomp and whine and pout and poke my bottom lip right out.

That's a funny song, but there's something really important there. Because you see, it's not that obedience doesn't matter. It's very important to God.

It's just that obedience or disobedience doesn't change God's love. It never changes your special position in His family. That came first, right? Your special position that God loves me.

You're His child, and that never changes. Parents, this is for you too, so I wrote up some words. Jesus loves me when I'm good, when I parent like I should, when I show my kids His grace, firm and kind at the right pace.

And another one. Jesus loves me when I'm bad, when I make my children mad, when I shout and scream and yell, don't show God's love very well.

[ 26 : 48 ] Even then, He loves you. It doesn't change your special position as His child and as one that He's put in charge of those that He loves.

I'll finish with one story from my family. Y'all have been great kids. Thank you for hanging in there and paying attention. I was longer than I meant to be. And I'm not finished, which is even worse, right?

One more story. Hang with me, okay? I've told you before that I like to take my girls and sit down with them on my lap and tell them how much I love them. And tell them, I love you so much.

And nothing will ever change that. That I love you because you're my daughter. So no matter what you do, you'll always be my daughter and I will always love you. And I'll tell them, don't you ever forget that.

Here's what that means. Sometimes my two-year-old disobeys. It happened this summer at the pool and she was running at the pool. You all know that you don't run at the pool, right?

[ 27 : 51 ] She was running at the pool and I told her to stop and she kept running. And you know what happened? What happens sometimes when you run at the pool and you're two years old? She fell smack on the concrete and got hurt.

Now what do you think I did, kids? Did I run over there to her and stare down at her and say, ha, I'm glad you got hurt. You're so foolish. I will never love you again.

And walk away. Is that what I did? What do you think I did? I ran over to her and scooped her up and snuggled her tight and said, I'm so sorry that you got hurt.

I love you so much. Why do you think I did that? She just disobeyed. Because I don't love her because she obeys me. I want her to obey because I love her.

Listen to me. Jesus loves you so much he doesn't want you to get hurt or die. He loves you so much that he would rather get hurt and die than to see it happen to you.

[ 29 : 00 ] And so he died for you. In your place, on the cross, Jesus died for you. That's how much he loves you. Children, parents, God loves you and he tells you to obey and to nurture obeyers in your home because he loves you so much.

Don't ever forget how much Jesus loves you. Okay? Let's pray. Father, we forget things very easily.

Would you remind us of your love this morning? Would you write it on our hearts from your word by your spirit in a way that we will remember the rest of our lives?

That you love us because we're your children. That Jesus loves us so much that he would die rather than see us be hurt.

Thank you for your love. We ask that you would help us to remember it today and tomorrow and every day. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

[ 30 : 13 ] For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org). For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org). For more information, visit us online for more information, on can definitely pour more information, to heaven communications, please ■ inni with us.