

# Paul's Parenting: Our Children's Role

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[ 0 : 00 ] Such a graphic visual of bowing down, surrendering all, claiming that there is no good in me, no righteousness in myself that can be found in me.

But our righteousness is totally found in Jesus Christ, and that righteousness was paid for us on the cross.

Please take your Bibles out to Ephesians 6. Ephesians 6. As I noted earlier, we're going to be talking about the parent-child relationship as it functions as part of the Christian household, which functions as part of the church, which functions as part of our witness to who Jesus Christ is. Just as we've been singing about this cross, all of those things tie into that. And that's why this beginning of this section actually begins, in Ephesians 5.18, about this whole idea of mutually submitting to Christ and the roles that he's given us and the responsibility that each and every one of us have in those roles.

We spoke about wives, and last week we spoke about husbands. And now we're getting into the dynamic of parent-child relationships.

[ 1 : 42 ] I am not a parent, but from what I am told, parenting is not easy.

In fact, some have stated that parenting is honestly the hardest thing that they have ever done in their lives.

And I thought that was such a remarkable statement, not because it's true, but to acknowledge something that is quote-unquote so common.

There's so many parents, but yet sometimes we don't think of it in that way. Some will tell you that family life is their greatest success.

Others will tell you that their family is their greatest failure. Some will tell you it's the source of their greatest joy.

[ 2 : 48 ] Some will tell you that it's the source of their greatest pain and sorrow. And that's from the dynamic of being a parent.

But then there is the idea from a child. And when I say child, when we notice in verse 1, it says children. But what Paul is making reference to in the Greek is basically offspring.

It is adult children, adolescents as well. Those who've been born to, born of. We are children of someone. It is all-encompassing.

And sometimes we think more about parenting and being a child from that perspective. And what I mean by this, I remember when I was in college, university, I would sometimes think as I was now with a lot of people who had a lot of material blessings and things of life, I thought a lot about what I did not have as opposed to what I was blessed with.

So there's these different dynamic perspectives that we have when we come to this subject. It was a recent poll that just came out that more and more couples who are married are deciding not to have children.

[ 4 : 13 ] And there's a myriad of reasons that they give. The first and primary reason is that we just live in a crazy world. And why on earth would I want to bring someone into this crazy world?

Some is just they're making decisions to have children later in life just simply because of the financial cost. Others are neglecting to have children because of emotional issues.

They've had a horrible childhood and they believe in no way could they be a good parent. And then the fourth primary reason that is giving is people just want to enjoy life and they really don't want to have this responsibility.

But I want to tell you right here that this is a spiritual work. We've talked about this, that everything depends on these relationships that are to be in Christ are a spirit-filled action.

And that should encourage us, especially for some of you new parents who have a young baby at home. I can imagine, and I ask a lot of questions, if I were to be a parent, I would have all the questions about what's he going to be like and think about all the different things that I can influence for that child's best.

[ 5 : 39 ] But it could be fear of not having a job, living in the right place, not providing the best home life. All these different dynamics that come into play. But what should calm our hearts is this is a God-ordained thing.

It begins in Genesis. As God's people, God is with us. He goes before us. He molds us. Brings us closer to Christ in the power of the Spirit.

But I understand that it is a daunting prospect. From a pastoral point of view, I am more acquainted with people sharing with me the pain of their parents or their parenting more than I get counseling over marriage issues.

And what I mean by this is I have met, prayed for, provided counsel to far more people regarding the issue of parenting and raising children than I have marital issues.

Even when I wasn't a pastor as a Christian in a non-Christian secular world, even working for the government, people would still come to me understanding that even I had an ounce of wisdom that they could share, that I could share with them.

[ 7 : 17 ] What was amazing, it'd be Christians and non-Christians as well. It's hard. Just this week, I was speaking to another Christian minister and he's dealing with, we were just talking about this dynamic.

There's a family in his fellowship that have four beautiful kids all under the age of 17. He would say that these guys are textbook Christians. They're mature adults.

They've walked in the ways of the Lord. And yet one child last month has tried to take her life twice and the other one is dealing with painful bullying issues and responding in a horribly secular way.

Obviously the parents are shattered, but they always tend to ask, what did I do wrong? It's interesting how many of you know children that were born of the same parents, attended the same church, heard the same gospel, yet turned out totally different.

I know many stories where parents were so broken over one child's brokenness that they paid little attention to the other children in the family which grew up a lot of feelings of unloved and unappreciated and unsupportive.

[ 8 : 51 ] There's a lot of issues and I don't believe there's any hope that I can cover them over these couple of weeks. But today I want to be able to build into you some principles, some responsibilities that God has laid before us.

But I want to tell you right now that one of the biggest lies that parents can buy into is that everything is their fault. As we're going to see from this text, Paul begins by actually addressing children first.

And then he addresses parents. Within that relationship, there is a responsibility that a child has. And as we're going to learn, even from a very early age, the child has a responsibility that can determine the outcome of their lives.

But I know and I believe it happens here in our churches as anywhere else that kids raised in the same way, in the same impartial way, loved just as equally as their siblings can turn out quite differently.

[ 10 : 13 ] Some love Jesus, some don't. Some struggle in life, some don't. Just to share a little bit about me, I come from a broken home. In fact, my parents come from what I would consider chaotic homes.

My mother was the 17th child of her mom. Her mom bore 16 children before her. And when she finally had my mother, she was my age.

She was 50. Talk about a tired mom by the time you got there. My father, his mother was disabled to the point of frustration to his father that he left quite early.

And my father had to go to work on the railroads even before he graduated grade 8. Both of my parents did not even have the opportunity to finish high school.

So when it came to them doing parenting, I think the only truth that they knew and understood that life is hard, it is not fair.

[ 11 : 29 ] And I'm sure in the best of their ways, they did their best. What's interesting is my sister and I have taken totally different roads in life.

Tended the same church, heard the same gospel, one believes, one struggles to believe. Who can explain such things? What gives?

Well, I'm hoping that today the text will be able to provide you some answers. For some of you, perhaps this text will provide for you a foundation and understanding of the responsibilities that you have and what you've been called to as a parent.

I pray that God would bless you with his wisdom. He would lead you and empower you to do the things that he has called parents to do.

So let's take a look at Ephesians 6. Ephesians 6, 1 to 4. Children, obey your parents for this is right. [12:46] 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.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

First thing I want to point out to you which I've already remarked is that this passage is actually addressed to two different people groups. Children and parents.

It's quite interesting in this whole section. We can almost call this a household code that Paul has put together as the result of the teachings of Ephesians 5 to come in that how husbands and wives interact, children and parents and we're going to even look at what slaves and masters and we're going to look at the dynamics of what that section is to us today but all those relationships happened in a household and what's amazing is that back then in that culture if someone was to address a household they're just addressing the husband but Paul and in God's wisdom is addressing everyone who has agency and what I mean by that is everyone who's a part of that household has their own individual responsibility to follow

God's commands God's statutes and God's instructions so we see even in this simple four verses children are given a command and as we're going to notice there's actually a promise attached to that command and then we also look at what for parents so this morning I want to concentrate or focus on the first section of this passage what is the role and responsibility of children as I stated earlier healthy marriages are only possible when each member of the relationship is following God's design plan for them wife and husband fulfill their assigned roles in the marriage and parenting the same thing holds true children have a responsibility to respond to God's command statutes and instructions in a way that brings glory to Jesus Christ the goal that we talked about last couple weeks in marriage is the same goals that a family has is to live a life which can bring glory and honor to the Lord it speaks of our true worship so in this children even have a part to play so notice it simply says 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 it's interesting that if you noticed for some of you who might know the command to honor your father and mother is a repeated instruction from the ten commandments one of the initial ten commandments that God gave his people as they were to become his people in the land of milk and honey and if you're familiar with the ten commandments the first part of the ten commandments are addressed to God it's the recognition that there is only one

[17:08] God and that God is whom we worship okay so that's all about loving God then the second part of the commandments is about loving your neighbor if you remember in Matthew and some of the other gospels when Jesus Christ was confronted with what is the greatest commandment the greatest commandment is that love you Lord your God with all your heart mind and soul and that you would love your neighbor as yourself that was a combination of all the ten commandments put together love of God leads to love of others so this love expands to that love and what is the very first relationship that we have as human beings in order to demonstrate that love is the parent child relationship that child's first act of worship as part of God's people is obedience it's obedience it is the starting point and foundation of all other human relationships that children have is loving and honoring their parents and what's interesting about this command is that it comes with a promise none of the other commandments have a promise they have warnings but this one actually has this promise and we call this a truism it doesn't mean it's going to happen in every individual case but as a whole for God's people they will live longer and healthier because they are pursuing God and honoring him in this way what's interesting about this command that it is simple there's no long list of duties there's no set commands and rules for children to obey or follow just simply says obey your parents that's it why don't we why don't children obey their parents and I believe this is us as parents older adults need to understand two things about our children the first

thing that comes up is that there is this thing called original sin that means your child when born is actually an enemy of God and not a friend of God and I know that's mind blowing for this social world we live in or our society it's got all this ooey gooey goodness in him or her and there could never be any evil in them but that's what it's not talking about but it's talking about when we understand from

Romans 5 Paul explains quite clearly that because we are born of Adam human beings we have inherited sin the sin is in us and because of that sin obedience does not come naturally our sin makes us naturally foolish and naturally rebellious in fact from the moment we are born and we're going to talk a little bit about this everything about me is about me as a child Psalm 58 3 says the wicked are estranged from the womb they go astray from birth this is our natural disposition Job would comment in Job 5 7 that we are born into trouble that the natural disposition of a child is trouble to leave him to or leave her to herself would lead her to her trouble and once we have this ooey gooey bundle of joy as soon as they begin to walk crawl over and reach for things then we start understanding that they actually have a mind on their own right when you tell them not to touch something what do they do their natural disposition is to touch something see it's born in them so when you're as a parent and you're wondering why my child isn't obeying me we need to understand that they are a fallen creature their disposition is towards self

Romans 3 10 18 Paul explains clearly none is righteous no not one there's not a single baby born that has some righteousness in them it's not true he further writes no one understands no one seeks for God Proverbs 22 15 Solomon writes Solomon writes folly is bound up in the heart of a child so a child's natural disposition is both foolishness and rebelliousness so when you're asking yourself why is it so hard to parent my children because that is their natural disposition now as we all know as parents there is this responsibility now to steward that child away from rebelliousness and away from foolishness and as you know the older they get the harder it gets and the reality is this command isn't just for children it applies for teens and young adults as well when we're working with them on something and we're trying to teach them a truth we need to understand that this is their natural inclination is to be rebellious and foolish so that's the first understanding that we need to have the second thing the second understanding on why is it so hard to obey and this informs both children and parents is that we live in an absolutely fallen world it is the predominant feature of our culture to undermine the family it is satan's whole battle if he targets the family destroys the church destroys the culture and every good foundation that exists within our world today this is where he places the most of his energy destroy mom and dad put a division between them child father try away we have unprecedented rates of divorce absent fathers infidelity delinquency and I know I'm preaching to the choir here you just got to turn on some music entertainment it's been going on since you know the 50s when rock and roll first came out that was the first thing people spoke about it was the rebelliousness that encouraged kids to no longer honor their mother and father our culture teaches that true glory comes from serving self and that rebellion and revolution is the thing that you want to do it was kind of interesting on this web page this week and no word of a lie on this there's this advertisement however you want to say it of this movie documentary that's saying that having sex outside of your marriage will enhance your marriage it's trying to advertise you you want to watch this film that's what they're saying and right after that and and it was just an ad underneath of a study that saying the worst thing you can ever do is be unfaithful in your marriage all right two things society is trying to change because studies show when you're unfaithful in your marriage you are bringing destruction into your home destruction that will wreck your trust of your wife or your husband and will bring destruction on your children but yet this stupid world still is trying to preach one and then when all that falls apart they've got all these statistics that show yeah that first action unfaithfulness that leads to destruction but we're still going to advertise that because that sells movies that sells music people feel good about that it's a twisted and perverse generation that we live in and the thing is as parents if you're not instructing your children in God's statutes or how to live life there is someone who is doing this they are learning if they are not learning from you they are learning from others

I believe it is our biggest responsibility as parents is not to be ignorant of what our children are exposed to even today I'm convinced a 10 year old is exposed to more unwholesomeness than I was exposed to by the time I was 25 it's crazy what they're exposed to we can't be ignorant and I know I'm a prime candidate to be ignorant because I can look back no my friends didn't talk like that they weren't exposed to that but they are today even some of the after school shows that are

supposed to be good for kids they normalize certain behaviors that are ungodly promiscuity rebelliousness drugs and I always find they're kind of interesting because they always act as if the adolescent is the source of wisdom and the teachers the educators are kind of the ones that need to be clued into reality they're trying to advertise that teens are the wise ones and the adults are the foolish ones the reality is we all know that rebellion leads children to brokenness and destroyed lives it leads lives that are characterized by violence drug and alcohol abuse profanity promiscuity and absolute lawlessness forgiveness

[ 29 : 16 ] I've been around the block long enough to know that most issues that enter the Christian home is when parents let their guards down it's when they give up filtering what's supposed to be coming in the closest thing I ever had to being a parent is when my nephew lived with me for a couple years and I thought it'd be a good thing to send him to a Christian school so I sent him to a Christian school and I'm ashamed to say he learned more about sin and sinful behavior at what was supposed to be an institution working with me but I found out they were working against me and encouraging all sorts of individualistic godless actions all in the name of love the reality is there's an internet out there that can be used for good but it also contains a whole section of anti-social behavior and subcultures that are just waiting to trap your children and the most children that they're the the children that are most susceptible are those that are looking for a tribe those that are looking for someone to accept them to love them to understand them listen if there's one blessing this COVID experience has been is that the family has become the tribe again that parents have more of a say that there was an interesting study that Al

Moeller had commented on that children are starting to find out that their parents actually have wisdom and care for them and have biblical wisdom and life wisdom to share with them and it's changed the dynamics even more parents are choosing even after COVID to continue homeschooling their children they found they're happier they're doing better so if there's anything this has been a huge wake up call for families not saying every family has the ability and capacity to do such things but it certainly makes us aware of certain things the truth of the matter is yes they need Jesus school in their school they need friends that know Jesus they need a church that knows Jesus but they most of all need parents who need Jesus they need you they need you modeling that relationship how close are the dangers first Timothy 3:15 says but understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty for people will be lovers of self lovers of money proud arrogant abusive get this disobedient to their parents it seems such a small thing but Paul is given the early church an incredible warning and because it leads to ungratefulness unholiness heartlessness unappeasableness slanderous without self-control brutal not loving good treacherous reckless swollen with conceit lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God that's where the world leads them that's where their original sin leads them it's interesting I was just going through this week about my time in high school and there was certain kids that were known as absolutely rebellious they were hard at home they were hard in the classes a lot of fighting bullies I believe they're actually all dead now just doing some searches online one was found outside frozen because of alcoholism several killed in motor vehicle accidents when they were speeding you see that heart of rebellion that can exist from the start in the home can spread to other areas of society and it always leads to destruction so for you children you teenagers you adolescents that are listening to this and there's a point where you're just fighting everything the Bible has a warning for you your life will not be long it will not be good it will not be fruitful in fact I can't think of a single one that had a good ending at the end of it that they were rebellious the whole time and all of a sudden had a fruitful friendship there was one guy I knew and just looking at him on Facebook I don't know how many times he's been married but he looks like a mess alcohol has obviously taken over his life it's destroyed his relationship with his wives and kids and he was like semi-functional but he was rebellious in a humorous sort of way in class but he always was against the system you need to obey your parents wise parents will minimize your exposure to the evils of this world even though you may think they are not evil your parents will understand one of the biggest triggers for kids falling away that are often Christians or in a pseudo-Christian home is when marriages fall apart it's like nothing is real anymore a child is left alone to his or own devices parents sometimes think that everything will be okay it's not there's a whole world calling to them and there's a sin nature in them that is so attractive to this world so how is obedience learned how is obedience understood the Bible actually speaks three different ways the first one is that parents are to give positive instruction teach positively to the second way as parents is to be that example

it's not do what I say and don't do as I do but as you teach them about

Jesus Christ the example is to live as Jesus Christ has called you to live and the third way is to exercise discipline on your children often parents want to shy away from discipline but God calls us to use discipline with our children what's really interesting is that people don't realize that when Jesus Christ who was born fully man fully God at the same time still needed instruction and to learn obedience it's true he did we can look back to Luke 2 and if you remember the story they're traveling back home from Jerusalem after the festival they used to travel in these large caravans and Joseph and Mary last Jesus in the confusion of everything I'm sure they would leave them with their relatives or their friends that traveled in the same caravans as kids would do and he was missing for three days so verse 46 says after three days they found Jesus in the temple sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions so here is the child of God learning instruction that's biblical and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers no notice he's not teaching he's in a learning position and when his parents saw him they were astonished and his mother said to him son why have you treated us so behold your mother and I have been searching for you in great distress and he said to them why were you looking for me did you not know that I must be in my father's house and they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them and notice what it says and he went down with them and he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them

Jesus himself the perfect son of God without sin doesn't need to be punished once his parents who did not understand everything was going on still had distress still wanted them with him and he went along with him notice he wanted to be in his father's house he wanted to be there to learn and that was perhaps the goodest bestest thing except he's supposed to obey and honor his parents so that's what he did verse 52 and Jesus increased in wisdom in stature and in favor with God and man the hook of the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus learned this obedience and he learned much of the obedience by living under the law Jesus didn't look like a man he was fully man we know this because the

[ 39 : 32 ] Bible tells us he got hungry he got thirsty and he got tired he needed to drink he needed to eat he needed to sleep but even in that perfect God as a perfect human still obeyed still honored his parents so what are the most important things that a parent needs to do and we talked about they need positive instruction they need a good example to follow and they need instructions or punishment discipline when there's disobedience but the Bible actually listen I was reading a book on parenting this week and it says there's four primary areas and I want you to pay attention to these primary areas because I think for a lot of parents this might let you off the hook but there's four primary areas where you are to teach your kid the first one is your child has intellectual needs they are born without knowledge of what is good and bad and they need to be taught wisdom it is not naturally acquired and I believe most of our parents do these things they teach us what is good and what is bad

Proverbs 20 30 says blows that wound cleanse away evil strokes made clean the innermost part and he's using a term that is seems to be very violent and but the time that the terms don't always refer to corporal punishment but it's talking about tough discipline tough punishment unwavering punishment so Tom sometimes sometimes you need to be hard and sometimes that discipline is going to be hard for your child they might act to resent you it might even be painful and I'm not always talking about physical pain but sometimes we really want something we can't get it there's a pain inside of us when our friends are doing something we can't do something because we're grounded there's pain there but we need to discipline and we need to think of the world word as training so we need to teach them what is good and what is bad the next need that they have is physical needs right when they're born they need to eat the younger they are the greater the need they need to be covered they need to be taken care of as one author says of all the animals or mammals on earth babies are born human babies are born with the least strength and the least coordination and the least dexterity young babies born in the wild don't live in the wild they can't survive what's interesting is that when we had our little puppy he was jumping around and doing things he figured stuff out in four weeks the other need that your child has is social needs social needs they need to be taught how to interact with others when a child is a baby it only has one thing on its mind and it's him or her self that's why you teach them to say please to say thank you to help and to give others do not be selfish that includes communicating rationally that's why we teach our children speak going ah ah goo goo doesn't really communicate anything but we teach our children

to do these things so we can interact with others we can share demonstrate and show empathy so learning to obey their parents is the first step in learning social skills when they accept their their parents role and begin to obey them so we see intellectual needs we see physical needs we see social needs and the last needs that we see are called spiritual needs children need to be taught the gospel of jesus christ they need to be taught their need for the cross they need to be taught how to love the lord with a worshipful heart they need god's commands instructed to them that's why songs are so important in reading bible stories to them even though they may not comprehend everything they must trust and see that the lord is good just think that the first act of obedience unto the lord is to obey their parents as parents the role is to provide a safe healthy environment where a child can learn obedience and will lead to growth and spiritual blessings it's interesting those who parents who believe they are being spiritual or somehow good by allowing a child to learn on his own there there's so many studies that show that is actually an exact disaster for your kids in fact what you're doing is by letting your child act in complete selfishness and do whatever and crawl over into somebody's house or places without showing any respect you're really just passing on the burden to their eventual spouse if anybody will actually marry them you're passing the buck on to uh work who if they even want that person working with them and at this time you might think it's all well and good and cute that your kids are crazy and fun loving and doing all these things studies have shown over and over and over again that they don't do well until they're broken and someone else is there to do the loving and to caring and the nurturing that they didn't actually get at home book of hebrews chapter 12 verse 7 it said is for discipline that you have to endure god is treating you as sons for what son is there whom his father does not discipline if you are left without discipline in which we which all have participated then you are illegitimate children and not sons besides this we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and lives for they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them but he disciplines us for a good that we may share his holiness for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it so finally i just want to answer one last question to you this morning what is obedience the fact of the matter is obedience just isn't right actions obedience is right attitude a right attitude is a worshipful attitude it is very easy for parents to be fooled by positive outward behavior obedience by virtue of its word means to hear and understand it's not just doing the actions the word honor that is used care is this idea even beyond actions it means obedience without bitterness it means obedience without resentment it means obedience without anger and it means obedience without reluctance but what god is ultimately after in children even us who are older adolescents teens as we serve and honor our parents is that our desire for to obey has to flow from our hearts with an understanding that i honor my parents because i obey the lord obedience without honor is hypocrisy honor obedience without honor is hypocrisy and the unmitigated testimony of scripture calls for an obedience that flows from the heart from our inward attitudes

to rightly obeys to do it unto the lord the ones who struggle the most with this is what happens if you are born you become saved and your parents are non-christians notice when you grow up you don't always have to obey your parents if it's ungodly because notice it says it's unto the lord it's the same command that we see with wives submitting to their husbands it doesn't mean submit unto them into sin nor are we to do that but sometimes a child coming to christ will mean division in the family i have experienced that there's consequences to christ that's why he tells us to count the cost but at the same time we can continue to honor and honestly god blesses that one of the biggest things that i've been doing in my life when my father left was trying to understand him his background his ways of thinking do i believe he purposely wanted to leave us and hurt us and do all those things i don't but i believe there's a world that attracted his sin his original sinful disposition yes i can bring the gospel to him and i want to do that but i also want to understand his thinking but the dynamics of have him having to live with the fear of never having a father anyone modeled it listen the reality is none of us are going to be perfect parents it's true but i believe if you can teach your child and provide for their needs intellectually physically socially and spiritually you have done what god has required you to and it's your children that now have to make that decision before the lord of whether they're going to worship god by honoring and obeying you and you can only say lord i have done everything that i have can and able to here is my worship let's pray dear lord heavenly father i know this is such a big subject and i feel like i'm only scratching the surface lord i just think of the the faces in my congregation and all the different places of life where there are i don't think it

would be possible to answer every one of their concerns or thoughts or questions but what i do know is i do know what your word teaches us your word teaches us and how that is applied to different areas of our lives father for those of us who struggle or for teens that are listening to this or young adults i know sometimes it's hard to honor our parents sometimes we are now more educated than them more experienced in some areas of life but the blessed there is a blessing to be sought to honor them to love them to obey them father i pray that you prepare our parents hearts that they would be meeting at the foot of the cross for those whose families have been hard or they lived in a mixed family with a spouse that does not know you i pray that you would embrace them at the foot of the cross i think of grandmothers that their parents have fallen away and they're now trying to teach truth and pray truth into their grandkids lord may you bless them give them words of wisdom give them favor may you repent us of our coldness our selfishness of seeking our own needs rather than our children's own needs forgive us for our foolishness forgive us for our laziness father there may be much to forgive but there is much forgiveness to be found in you as we live for you may the worship that we have for you may be seeing in the obedience that we are to have for you we ask these things in your most gracious and holy name amen amen amen in or and amen amen