

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 6:1-3 - Children Obey Parents

This morning we switch gears in the household code to the relationship between children and parents. How many children do we have here? Raise your hand if you're a child.

That was a trick question. We are all children because we all have parents, or had parents. I did that little trickery for a couple reasons.

First, this command is not just for young children in the home. I think children in the home is the primary audience, but the command effects young adults as well as older adults and our relationship with our parents.

Second, I did it as an illustration that your parents are not always correct. They make mistakes. I know that and you know that and they know that too. But you're still called to obey and honor imperfect parents.

One thing we need to understand about this household code is that the way God has designed the family - all the back from the Garden - is radically different than the world. And we see that especially here with children and parents.

In the pagan world, throughout the ages, children were considered little more than property. They were not blessings from God, they were not looked upon as equal to a generous inheritance from a benefactor. They were looked on as burdensome. Another mouth to feed, another liability to take into account. As a result, children were often sacrificed to false gods in vain hopes of the betterment of parents. That's the picture of Molech we see so often.

We see this today in the abortion issue where millions of babies are murdered every year. They're destroyed because they are not a blessing, not a good thing. They are a hindrance to prosperity and freedom. This is completely contrary to the Bible which says the greatest earthly prosperity you can have is children.

We also see this with legislation around the world that makes having children difficult. China had their infamous 1-child policy for years, states and governments have made having families difficult through a variety of legislation. And now basically every culture around the world - except Muslim cultures - are facing catastrophic extinction. And we might think this isn't a really problem but replacement birth rate around the world is so low that societies will be wiped in 2 generations without a drastic change. That's not a hyperbole or exaggeration. It's simple math.

So now governments are trying to figure out ways to incentivize people to have babies. They're trying to do this in all kinds of ways. One is with tax benefits. I think it's Greece who says if you have 4 kids you're done paying taxes for life. Even Trump's savings plan, in part is to help make having kids more affordable.

But the world has told itself for 70 years that there's a population bomb - we have too many people. That children should be avoided, so here's contraception. That kids are too expensive, you have to make \$500,000 to scrape by with 3 kids. And it's compounded because when families are small, people don't understand how hard babies are to have. So they give up after 1 or 2 because they're drowning.

I'll often ask young couples if they grew up around babies and the vast majority say no. And so I feel somewhat obligated to have the talk. And the talk is that pregnancy and babies are really hard, but there's light at the end of the tunnel. And as hard as they are, they really are a blessing and good thing.

See, I don't think the true solution to population implosion is tax incentives or free government money. I think the true solution is God's vision for the family. A vision of millions and billions of families, who love Jesus and are obedient to his command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And that those godly parents will raise their kids to love Jesus and get married to spouses who love Jesus. And they'll have children and train them to love Jesus, and marry a spouse who loves Jesus and teach their kids about Jesus. And so forth.

And have a bigger vision for the gospel and the Kingdom than even just our own household. I tell my kids regularly at family devotions that what I want for them is that one day when they're at the table with their kids leading devotions, that they command their child to command their children.

Some of you, sixty years from now, when you're old and wrinkly and spend most of your weeks going to doctor appointments, are going to look on your great grandkids who are just memorizing their first Bible verses. And just asking about the Lord's Supper. And praying simple prayers. Because you were faithful to teach their grandparents and their parents about the Lord.

And then one day those great grand children will grow up become old and wrinkly and experience the same thing. Praising God for generations of faith that you had a part in creating. And you will only meet those great great grand kids in glory. But you'll have played a vital part in their life in the Kingdom.

My dad died last fall and I was going through old family boxes and I came across my great grandma's Bible that she got in 1900 for memorizing the most verses in Sunday School as a girl. Now I don't know the substance of her faith or anything about her, but I know at some point she professed to know the Lord and that in some part played a role in my life.

How do we do that? How do we get from our everyday experience now, to generations of kids and grandkids who love Jesus? It's our passage. **Read 1-4**

We've seen the proper order of husbands and wives. Here we see the proper order of children and parents.

Children have 2 commands: obey and honor. And they are given 3 reasons for obeying: it's right, it'll go well for you, and you'll have long life.

And then fathers are addressed. We're just going to focus on children this morning. But as we look at these things I'm also want us to remember this isn't just little children.

So let's look at the commands.

1) Obey. Read 1

Children this is your obligation to your parents. Obedience. And it's just the simple old word for obey. God has given your parents authority over you in your life.

What they say goes. Clean your room, take a shower, mow the lawn, empty the dishwasher, do your homework, whatever - you are called to obey them.

And you're to obey them, Paul says, in the Lord. What does that mean? Does that mean you only obey them if they're Christians? No, it means you obey them just like you'd obey Jesus. Jesus, the holy, infinite Son of God in all of his glory and power passes his divine authority over your life, in part, to your parents.

If Jesus told you to go practice piano, how would you respond to Jesus? Would you complain or grumble? Would you do a half hearted effort? Would you have to be told 4 times and threatened with discipline? Or would you do it right away cheerfully?

Imagine Jesus, the perfect Son of God. Did he obey his parents? He did. They were imperfect, they were sinful - he was sinless. And he still obeyed them even as he obeyed God the Father. He did that on our behalf to redeem us and also give us an example.

What is obedience? In our home we define obedience as being told one time, doing it right away, with a good attitude.

Those are the 3 components of obedience. One time - your parents should only have to tell you once to do the command. Go take a shower. That shouldn't need to be repeated. It's just one time.

They don't want to nag you, they don't want to have to come back to the issue. If Jesus told you to go do something you'd do it.

It also needs to be done right away. When I was a kid hated cleaning my room. I'd take a 20 minute job and string it out for hours. That's disobedient. Not only do we need to obey after one command, but we need to do it right away. Sometimes it's hard to know if you're slow playing.

And I'll tell you, as a parent I groan if my kids are slow about obedience. Just get the thing done.

Parents, over the years one of the ways I've curbed the slowness is to give a command and a timeline for obedience. I go into the room - it's a disaster. If the kid was super diligent it could be cleaned in 10 minutes. So I'll say, you need to clean your bed, floor and dresser and you need to be done in 15 minutes.

They know I build in margin. I've told them in the past that when I give a timeline I try to be reasonable and charitable. So that if 15 minutes ticks by either something major has happened, or they have simply failed to be diligent to obey. But the timeline gives us objectivity. And I have disciplined kids because they've missed the objective timeline.

So the command is given one time, do it right away, and with a cheerful attitude.

The Bible says rejoice always and again I say what? Rejoice. **Phil 4:2?**

Do all things without grumbling or complaining.

We pray that the Father's will be done on earth as it is where? In heaven. I'm guessing when people are doing the Father's will in heaven they're happy about it. And so I think we too should be happy about it.

We have disciplined - and I think you should too - for pouting and complaining even if the child does the actual task. Why? Because complaining and grumbling is a sin. I will say I think there is some latitude we should be able to give our kids. Maybe we give children a hard command and we know it's hard and they're upset and trying to work it out. We have to give them some space to be naturally upset and work things out.

I remember my dad telling me to go get my math homework done when I was a kid and I hated math, I remember being so frustrated and angry. I'd do it, but it was basically asking me to go torture myself for an hour. So sometimes commands are hard. But for the most part, the reactions should be joy and compliance.

And I'll just say especially you teenagers and young adults, this applies to you as well. If you are under the authority of your parents, in their home under their command, you need to obey as well - one time, right away, with a cheerful attitude.

There is a point where you leave their direct authority, when is that? When you're married. Until that time, or the time you move out, you're under their headship and should obey accordingly.

What about older adults? Do we obey our parents? The answer is that it depends on what's being asked.

On the one hand we leave our father and mother and hold fast to our wife when we're married. We sever the relationship in terms of commands and obedience.

As an adult when I go to my mom's house or step moms house they don't command me anymore. They might ask me: Hey can you help me with this? Can you do this chore, or help with this project. And I believe that part of honoring them is to help them accomplish that if it makes sense and doesn't compromise my family or responsibilities. But if they were to say "Jason you need to do this or that" I'd probably smile, give them a hug and tell them see you next time.

One of the ways that marriages are attacked the most is parents who don't understand their place in the lives of their married children. They don't understand that their goal now is to make them thrive in their own home.

So that's the command. Obey.

2) Here's the reason: It's the right thing to do. **Read 1**

I don't think I need to spend a lot of time on this, but the reason that Paul gives for obedience is that it's right. It's the right thing to do. It's good and proper and orderly.

This is the way God has built authority into the world. I think it's Paul Tripp who says that the first thing we begin teaching our kids is that they are under authority.

"Welcome to the world, you're not in charge." Parents are in charge. And actually, a lot of what we teach our kids as they grow up is who is in charge and who's not in charge. Police officers are in charge, the president is in charge, your boss is in charge.

And they figure this out soon. A common end to siblings arguing is "You're not the what?" Boss of me. Everybody is aware of who the boss is. We teach them to evaluate that and respond accordingly.

Well, in the family children are not the boss. They're not in authority. And often we have to teach them about the amount of authority they do or do not have over siblings.

But it is right for kids to obey parents. I think we've all had the grocery store experience where one of our kids has had a melt down in the aisle. Or maybe we've seen a kid have a melt down in an aisle. And everyone knows what's happening. It's this verse playing itself out in real time. Obedience is not happening, there's a power struggle happening. And it's not right. Because what would be right is simply obeying the parent.

So children, let me just say: it is right for you to obey your parents. One time, right away, with a cheerful heart. Because this is how God has designed your life. He has given you your parents on purpose for your good and for his glory. You might not always like that, you might wish you would do things differently than they do. But part of your place in the world is to show the order that God has built into the world but obeying your parents.

I'll give you a time I really had to struggle with this. It was with my dad. I was 16 and had been inviting him to church. He was finally coming. And our church had evening service, so we're sitting there in the evening service and he leans over to me and says, "Take off your hat in church." And I'm thinking, "What?" No one cares if I wear a hat in church. I don't think I'm losing church points for wearing a hat.

Now, he wasn't giving me a theological reason. We hadn't read 1 Cor. 11 where men are not supposed to pray with their head covered. He just told me to remove my hat. And I'm mad - I invited him to church and now he's telling me what I can wear? And so I sat there quietly for a minute and then got up went to the bathroom, took off my hat fixed my hair and came back and sat down. Still kind of mad. Was he right? Yes he was. Did I like it? No I did not. Was it right for me to take off my hat? Yes it was. He had authority in my life.

So the command is to obey, the first reason is because it's right. It's good and proper and pleases God because this is the order he has made.

3) Second command: honor. **Read 2**

You probably know this, but this is part of the 10 commandments. Do you know which command it is? It's the 5th commandment. The 10 commandments are broken down into 2 tables: loving God and living neighbor.

The first table are the first 4 commands which deal with our relationship to God. No other gods, no idols, don't take the name of God in vain, keep the Sabbath holy.

The second table of the Law, commands 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 - deal with people. So the 5th command is honoring our parents. Paul says that's still in force today.

And honoring and obeying are connected. You honor your parents by obeying them and you obey them as a way to honor them.

What does honor mean? It means to esteem them highly. It means to treasure them. If you walked into your house and found a bar of gold you'd instantly give it value. Why? Because it's has value all on it's own. That's how your parents are. They are to be honored because of the position they have in your life.

Think of a person you greatly respect. Maybe it's someone you know, or someone you don't know. Maybe it's an athlete - a baseball player. Maybe it's a historical person - George Washington. Favorite movie actor, whatever. If you were sitting on your couch and the door knocked one day and they were standing on your front porch how would you treat them? You'd invite them in, you offer them food and drink. You'd speak to them politely and kindly. Why would you do all that? Because you're trying to honor them.

That's how you should treat your parents. We are to honor them. Young children should treat parents with honor. We don't treat parents flippantly, they're not your buddy, not your bro, not your homeboy. They are your authority figures.

Adults, you also are to treat your parents with honor. Let me show you a couple passages.

Turns to Mark 7:1-13. When Jesus usually talks about the command to honor fathers and mothers, he rarely is talking to little children. He's usually talking to adults. And I think this is important: as we grow older we need to ensure we are honoring our parents. And it can be tough to do sometimes. But it's important. The thing I want you to see here is that Jesus has no tolerance for people who refuse to honor their parents financially in their old age. **Read 1-5**

So the issue is that the Pharisees think Jesus's disciples should be washing their hands. It wasn't a law, just a tradition - something to look religious. Watch how he takes them to task. **Read 6-13**

So here's what Jesus is calling out. When you are an adult, you are required to take care of your elderly parents financially. I believe that principle is true now as well, as we'll see in a little bit.

What the Pharisees had done was create a loophole. They said that since it's more important to give money to God, you could ignore financially providing for your parents and just give it to the Temple. So the parents were left out for a scam.

Jesus calls them out on that. They're hypocrites. The Word of God is to honor parents, specifically by providing for them financially. You can't make up imaginary loopholes to get out of that. God has always expected that adult children will take care of their elderly parents. **Turn to 1 Tim 5**

Here Paul is dealing with the issue of what do we do with widows in the church? In ancient times widows were poor and often destitute and might require financial assistance. That's true today as well, and for widowers.

What do we do? Well, we would urge their families to take care of them first. **Read 3-8**

So a few things. Children and grandchildren are called to take care of older parents, especially widows. That good and right. In fact Paul says that is showing godliness.

When you are taking care of your elderly parents - cleaning, mopping, going to doctor appointments, wiping bottoms - God is smiling at you because it's the purest expression of care.

It's also a return. Paul uses financial language here. **Read 4**

That word return is financial - it's a return on investment. The idea is that they took care of you financially when you were a kid, and now you take care of them financially. That's the return that they should expect.

The church shouldn't be burdened with financially caring for widows unless it's absolutely the last resort. That's the job of family. And here's the hammer. **Read 8**

Christian, it is your obligation before God to take care of your household. The context here is explicitly your older parents and grandparents. This is the base foundation of godliness in your life. It is your primary obligation before any other obligation.

That's why Paul says that if you don't do this you have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever. This is worse than the James 2 hypocrite who says go be warm and fed. Why? Because that was a stranger or another Christian. This is your own family.

If you don't take care of them, you are worse than an unbeliever. Like I don't know what is worse than hell, but this is a threat.

And this command is in full force today. You are to take care of your parents and grandparents. Full stop.

There might be some considerations for nursing homes and medical care. You might need to have really awkward financial discussions and end of life discussions. There might be a whole host of other issues you need to work through. But that does not exempt you from this command.

We are called to honor our parents. Let's look back at **Eph 6** for the 2 last reasons.

So command 1: obey, reason 1: it's right.
Command 3: honor.

4) Reason: It'll go well with you. **Read 2-3**

Here's the short story on this: if you honor your parents and obey them, life usually turns out alright. Children - young and old - who are generally compliant tend to do pretty well in life.

That's why there are so many proverbs saying "my son listen to my instruction and riches and honor and wisdom will be yours." Kids, let me tell you - your parents are in fact smarter than you. And adults, your parents generally have a lot more wisdom than you. Listen to them. Life will be better.

And I think Calvin is right that these commands are here to help urge us to obedience. Sometimes obedience is hard. So God cheers us up a little with some promises. Here's what Calvin says:

"The promises annexed to the commandments are intended to excite our hopes, and to impart a greater cheerfulness to our obedience; and therefore Paul uses this as a kind of seasoning to render the submission, which he enjoins on children, more pleasant and agreeable. (Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians (p. 327). Logos Bible Software.)

Kids, God knows this is a tough command so he wants to encourage you.

5) Final promise: long life. **Read 3**

How many of you want to live a long life? You know how to do it? Obey your parents. This promise in the OT was originally a promise to Israel that if they obeyed parents, they'd stay in the land forever. Paul shifts it to show God's true intention: long, prosperous life.

Is that promised with 100% certainty? No, of course not. But I'll tell you what: people who are obedient and honor their parents are usually those who have better lives. They live longer, they are more blessed financially because they don't get disowned, they learn the lessons their parents taught them.

Again Calvin:

"The promise is—a long life; from which we are led to understand that the present life is not to be overlooked among the gifts of God...the reward promised to the obedience of children is highly appropriate. Those who shew kindness to their parents from whom they derived life, are assured by God, that in this life it will *be well*

with them. (Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians (p. 328). Logos Bible Software.)

You want a long life? You want it to go well in life and do the right thing? Honor your parents. Obey them. This is right. And it brings glory to God.

Pray