

Sermon 23: Embracing God's Design to Shape the Next Generation: Ephesians 6:1-4

Text: Ephesians 6:1-4 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord..."

Introduction: Shaping the next generation starts with a right relationship to God: 5:21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God..."

- **Each sphere addressed in this section is addressed in balance:**
 - Wives and husbands
 - Children and parents
 - Servants and masters
- **Each sphere demands personally sacrifice:** "Submitting yourselves one to another..."
- **These personal sacrifices start with reverence for God and His design:** "In the fear of God..."
- **Harmony in each sphere is strengthened by humility and self-sacrifice.**
- **It is undermined by pride and selfish ambition.**
- **When people willingly submit to God's design and wisdom, they position themselves to enjoy the full blessings of that wisdom and design.**

Summary: Christian homes should be a place where order is maintained, and children's lives are properly nurtured as they are pointed to Christ.

Proposition: We must strive to cultivate healthy homes.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Part 1: Paul's balanced instruction on the Christian home:

- **First: Children must honor their parents: 6:1-3** "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth..."
 - **Observation 1: The command is direct to children: 6:1** "Children, obey your parents..."
 - It is not directed to children through their parents, but rather directly from God.
 - **There are at least two limitations to this command:**
 - **First: One day we will leave home and establish new independent households: Genesis 2:24** "A

man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh..."

- **Second: God is always the highest authority: Luke 14:26** "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple..."

- **Observation 2: It stands throughout all of life: 6:2** "Honour thy father and mother..."

- **The word translated "honor" means to treat someone with respect, reverence, or high value.**

- **Example: Leviticus 19:32** "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD..."

- **Example: 1 Timothy 5:1** "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father..."

- **The command to obey is how children in the home honor their parents.**

- This is more than doing what we are told.
- It is doing what we are told with respect.

- **Even when we establish an independent household, we are called to honor.**

- **Despite their flaws, we have a duty to honor.**

- Some of our most painful wounds are related to strained relationships with parents.
- Some of our deepest pains are caused by poor parenting.
- Honoring parents may mean releasing bitterness and extending grace.
- Choosing to honor them is something God blesses.

- **Observation 3: It is the first command encountered in human relationships: 6:2** "Which is the first commandment with promise..."

- This is the first command in the Ten Commandments relating to human relationships.
- It is also the first relationship we encounter in life.

- **Observation 4: It comes with a promise: 6:3** "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth..."

- **This statement is likely referring to one of two possibilities:**

- **First: It is a general statement similar to what we find in many of the Proverbs:** As a general rule, children, who honor their parents experience these blessings, though there may be exceptions.

- **Second: It is a collective statement describing the significance of strong families that have longevity and promote good stability in their societies:** Families that maintain order and proper respect will be strong and provide a long-term blessing to their societies.
- **Second: Father's must embrace God's calling:**
 - **Negatively: 6:4** "Provoke not your children to wrath..."
 - **"Provoke not to wrath"** means do not exasperate your children.
 - **Ways, we do this:**
 - Failing to prepare our children appropriately for life.
 - Failing to establish consistent expectations.
 - Failing to have age-appropriate expectations.
 - Disciplining in anger.
 - Hypocrisy
 - Failing to take personal responsibility for our actions.
 - Failing to spend time and communicate our love.
 - **Positively: 6:4** "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord..."
 - **What we must do:** "Bring them up"
 - The same word is used earlier in **Ephesians 5:29** "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it..."
 - This word expresses tender care.
 - Father should have a tenderness toward their children, not just a harsh or stern disposition.
 - **How we must do it:**
 - **"In nurture:"** this word speaks of the totality of the training process.
 - Discipline
 - Correction
 - Instruction
 - Encouragement
 - Inspiration
 - **"Admonition:"** this word speaks of exhortation or putting into the mind.
 - Coming alongside
 - Calling attention to a problem
 - Applying the right corrective measures
 - **Practically:** Fathers should be pointing their children to become disciples of Christ.

Part 2: The Old Testament background for these instructions:

- **There is continuity between Old and New Testament:**
 - **Deuteronomy 6:5-7** "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up..."
 - Parents must love God first:
 - They must diligently teach their children
 - They must do it in all areas of life.
 - **Psalms 78:3-6** "Our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done...he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments..."
 - One generation must pass on the contents of the faith to the next generation.
 - The next generation must take what they are given and do the same thing.
 - **Proverbs 4:1-6** Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee..."
 - The book of Proverbs is an example of this concept.
 - Children listen...my father taught me...
- **Summary:**
 - Parents must pattern a healthy walk before their children.
 - Fathers must take the lead in these areas.
 - Their instruction should be tender, consistent, and encompass all of life.
 - This instruction should be so thorough that it sufficiently prepares one generation to instruct the next.

Part 3: Application: We must strive to cultivate godly homes.

- **First: Be convinced you are responsible for the direction of your home:**
 - God gave the duty to raise up the next generation to parents.
 - It is not the church's duty to raise our children.
 - It is the church's duty to give tools, encourage, and provide support.
 - It is not the duty of the Christian school to raise our children.
 - We must be on our knees, in the Word, in the trenches, and embracing all the tools available.
- **Second: Purpose to fulfil your role faithfully:**
 - **Children:**
 - If you have godly parents, you are deeply blessed.
 - That is the result of God's grace.
 - Do not take for granted what you have been given.
 - Honor your parents.
 - Do not hold bitterness against them.
 - Pray for them.
 - Learn everything you can from them.
 - **Parents:**
 - Be godly Christians.
 - Never be a hypocrite.
 - Never put them in a compromising position.
 - Lead your children to Christ.
 - Faithful encourage them to be disciples of Christ.
 - Faithfully take them to gather as a church and teach them how to engage properly with the church.
 - Prepare them appropriately for life.
 - Establish consistent age-appropriate expectations.
 - Never discipline them in anger.
 - Take personal responsibility for your actions.
 - Spend time with them and communicate your love for them.
- **Third: Seek God's wisdom and strength:**
 - Set aside time each day to be in the Word.
 - Set aside time to pray for your family.
 - Read tested resources for edification.
- **Fourth: Learn from the best examples in your life:**
 - Get help before you are in crisis.
 - Find mentors who have successfully prepared their children for life.
 - Find mentors who have healthy relationships with their adult children.
 - Find mentors whose children are faithfully passing the faith to their own children.