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# Raising Godly Children

## Colossians 3:20-21

### I. Introduction

1. Whether biological, adopted, or spiritual, raising Godly children is a high calling of God. If you have been blessed with this privilege, know that you have been granted great honor, distinguishment, and favor.
2. Indeed, God Himself commands that we populate the earth (Gen 1:28). He states that that children are a heritage (Ps 127:3) and in a rebuke of His disciples, Jesus said “Let the little children come to me and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” in Matthew 19:14. What’s more, in Matthew 19:15, Jesus goes on to say “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

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### II. Colossians 3:20-21: Responsibilities & Rights Overview

1. These verses form our starting points for digging deeper into what Paul is presenting here. Point 1 is what are the **responsibilities** of children and parents? Point 2 zeroes in on the **rights** of children and parents.
2. Turn with me to Ephesians 6:1-4. In this parallel passage, the Apostle Paul offers additional framing for us to consider God’s will for both parents and children.

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Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> *“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:* <sup>3</sup> *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”* <sup>4</sup> And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. - Ephesians 6:1-4

- A. Together, with the other Scriptures previously referenced and some yet to come, these reinforce that God intends the

parent/child relationship be one of order, function, and clarity of godly purpose in growing children into disciples of Christ.

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### III. Colossians 3:20: Responsibilities

In this verse, we have three (3) straightforward statements regarding children's responsibilities and stemming from them are several parental responsibilities.

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(1) Children obey your parents. This means, just as we read in **Ephesians 6:4**, that parents are to actually train and instruct their kids. In turn, children have the duty and discipline to receive and live out their training.

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A. Without turning there, but with clear reference to **Deuteronomy 6:1-9**, I want to note two important points making up a great summary in which children are to be trained and instructed...fear and love found in **Deuteronomy 6:2 & 5** respectively. It is good for us to note that this passage is in the shadows of the 10 commandments found in **Deuteronomy 5:6-21** AND together they speak of the character and nature of God (as well as Israel's responsibilities to Him).

B. Fear and love are to be central in parents discipling a reverent awe for the Lord and a love based on a close relationship with Him. The objective (know what you believe and why you believe it) is made clear as is the method – discipleship.

- i. It's here that we have an opportunity to pause and reflect. What are some of the teaching focal points for our children in our institutions and our families? To brush their teeth, how to clean themselves, a sport, an instrument, maybe the laundry, how to drive, how to dress, be polite, how to access the web and use their devices, and any number of other daily activities...and none of these are bad things. How about gender ideology, sexual idolatry, and a self-care comfort-

seeking consumer mentality among the many not-so-good things?

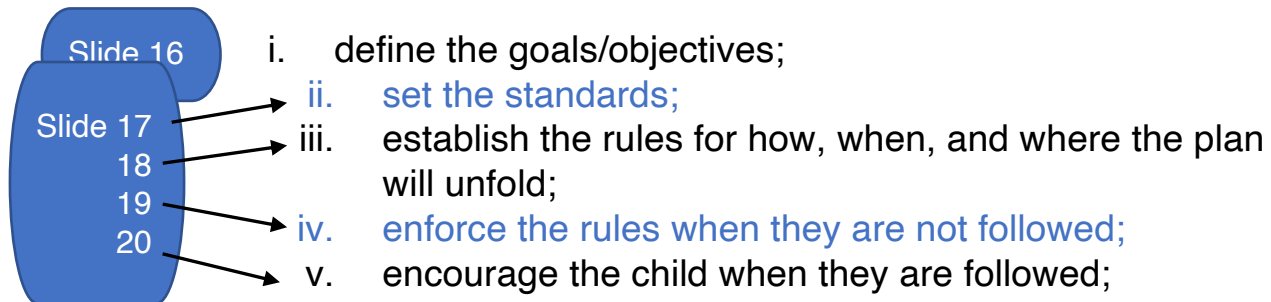
- ii. I share these to make the point that perhaps we should place more focus on things such as:
- Loving and fearing God and loving one another?
  - Training children in knowing and living out God's grace, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness?
  - Teaching them about the presence, power, and purpose of the Holy Spirit.
  - Training and teaching them about setting aside the busyness of this life in favor of prayer, quiet time, engaging in God's creation, and serving?

As the American way is increasingly unanchored from God's plan, **we are being given a wake-up call in seeing the evidences of a culture experiencing the shock waves of pandemics of fear, anger, depression, loneliness, anxiety, selfishness, and the crushing pressure of measuring up to the attractive-but-empty offerings of UNreal-tv and the nearly lawless digital playground of the internet. Folks, if our kids identity is in Jesus, these pandemics will no longer be the chains of bondage used to steal life from our kids – this points to the desperate need of discipleship.**

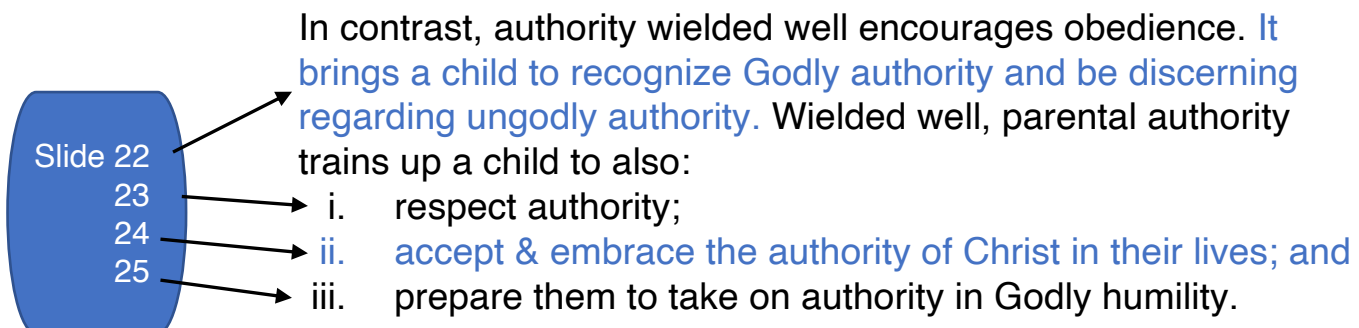
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(2) Obey them in ALL things. In this, God is vesting parents with authority and power to be His representative in discipling their children. **It is important to note that as His representatives, parents are to represent Him in character, conduct, and motivations – that is, we are to be walking, talking, breathing, living examples of the Gospel!**

A. Parents, victory comes NOT from having the child grow in your ways, but in the ways of the Lord. **Because of position of authority and power (especially over younger children), parents risk functioning as bosses or dictators rather than as God's stewards.** We are to be ambassadors of Christ AND, as they mature, increasingly help them to walk in their personal faith with the Lord. **So as part of being Christs ambassadors, all with pleasing Christ at the center, parents:**



B. We have all witnessed authority and power wearing out a child when they are exercised as near constant criticism, diminishment, and other put-downs. Frankly, if a child is not constantly shown that they are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of Christ, they will have a low opinion of themselves; meaning discouragement, having no value-meaning-purpose AND HAVING anxiety, fear, and other things warring against their God-given identity. Importantly, this is not a low versus high opinion of themselves, but a low versus “right” opinion of who they are in Christ Jesus.



C. God’s serious view of parental authority was also seen in the life of Jesus as He (fully God and fully man) subjected Himself to the authority of His earthly mother and father. What’s more, as described in **Luke 2:49, 51**, He did this as a pre-teen and teen that knew who He was and that He was to obey His heavenly Father’s will. What’s more, in **Luke 2:52**, we see the fruit of Jesus obediently following God’s plan...He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

D. What’s more, as one commentator noted, God takes a serious view of disrespect for parental authority. In the Old Testament

passage of **Exodus 21:17**, a rebellious son was to be brought before the magistrate and condemned to death. And in **1 Samuel 15:22-23**, God declared rebellion to be as the sin of witchcraft.<sup>1</sup>

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And if you are thinking that we are no longer under the law, you are correct. While the age of grace has come in the person of Jesus, His Godly character and will are unchanged...sin is still sin and the consequence of sin remains death. And so His grace revealed in the parable of the prodigal found in **Luke 15:11-32** is a GREAT encouragement as it also reveals His readily available forgiveness for any that having rebelled against Him, repent and turn toward Him.

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(3) Paul points to the kids proper motivation for their obedience being their obedience pleasing God. As we read in **1 Thes 2:4, Heb 11:6, 1 Jn 3:22**, and numerous other Scriptures, this is the same charge that adults are given...we too are to purpose to please the Lord!

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A. As with adults, a child's surrender of his/her will in favor of obedience to their heavenly Father marks his/her entrance through the narrow gate leading to life WHILE rejecting the wide gate leading to destruction that we read of in **Matthew 7:13-14**.

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#### IV. Colossians 3:21: Rights

1. The first thing of note is that a child as a "right" to not be provoked; meaning to not purposefully irritate, embitter, make angry, or cause him or her to be resentful.

A. Dad, Not Dictator. While directed to the dad, there is a general consensus that this was because of his role as head of household and not because the command of "do not provoke your children" does NOT also belong to the mom. That said

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<sup>1</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring Colossians & Philemon: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Col 3:20.

some have, probably rightly, opined that men tend to be inclined to try to enforce their will.

2. A too often realized consequence of parental provoking is discouragement of their kids. The word for discouragement here is to be disheartened and carries with it the idea of having their spirit broken.
  - A. This speaks of the great balance a parent must exhibit in discipling their children...too little and they raise undisciplined, self-focused, entitled, ungrateful adults...too much, and the parents contribute to insecurity, fears, anger, and assorted other destructive beliefs, feelings, and attitudes. The principle of parents NOT provoking their children is for all children and parents, but the “how-to-AND-how-not-to disciple a child” is very much dependent on how the child is wired. Parents need to adapt that they may NOT discourage even as they build a God-centric discipleship environment.
  - B. We sometimes need to be reminded of the obvious - children are people. And people, inherently free in Christ, do not like a bully or dictator. What’s more, the heritage of Adam is that of rebellion with the enemy on constant standby helping parents down the path of feeding a child’s depraved heart.
  - C. PARENTS need check their hearts before issuing demands, commands, and edicts. They need to exercise their authority diligently and with God’s grace. They are to help their child understand and connect to the bigger picture God has for them. While “because I said so” can be effective to gain compliance in the moment, parents need remember that compliance is NOT the goal, growing in spiritual maturity in Christ is.

Keeping in mind the balance required in NOT provoking our children, it seems clear that Paul’s words in **Ephesians 5:18** of “being filled with the Spirit” are for us that we may have the wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit needed to please God with our parenting.

D. While not a complete list, it seems helpful to consider some of the common ways parents can discourage kids:

- i. Training them in the temporal things, but NOT the spiritual things (hope, a healthy identity, and life itself comes from God not from man);
- ii. Lack of involvement (neglecting them);
- iii. Too much involvement (telegraphing they are not trusted, good enough and/or capable);
- iv. Abuse;
- v. Helicopter Parenting (not allowing the child to travel the road of being overcomers);
- vi. Too high or too low expectations;
- vii. Legalism and Hypocrisy (kids have great hypocrisy meters);
- viii. Inconsistencies (in many areas, but especially discipline);
- ix. Lack of affection;
- x. Self-focus rather than kid or better still, God focus;
- xi. Being prideful. E.g. Never apologizing when you're wrong;
- xii. Using them as a confidant (especially with respect to your marriage);
- xiii. Majoring in correction/overcorrection and minoring in encouraging; and
- xiv. Lashing out in frustration, anger, self-righteousness, and disappointment, rather than "constructively engaging" from a place of Biblical love.

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## V. Five Additional Parent & Child Thoughts

1. Overarching Cultural Thoughts: Under the influence of the father of lies:

A. Our culture says "obey your thirst". Obey your felt wants. Obey your hurts. Obey your desires. Christ says die to yourself.



- B. Culture will feed your children...*Given the opportunity, culture will fill the holes in your kid's hearts with its ungodly influence.* Said differently, if NOT you, someone is discipling your kids.

## 2. Parent/Children Thoughts:

- A. Obedience is a responsibility. *Obedience says you are part of something bigger than yourself and you share in the duty of work, effort, and otherwise in helping that group achieve its responsibilities.* No more than an adult functions in a vacuum does a kid. *Obedience is to meet expectations and expectations, like boundaries, are a mark of love.* More generally, knowing how to obey benefits a child's relationship with God, family, and society.

- B. Continuing down this line of obedience, a child's obedience is not the measure of child or parental love. *While it is right to want and give obedience, love is NOT contingent on obedience.*

- i. Parental love is given because that child has inestimable value...*that child is given meaning and purpose by the same One that gives the adult value, meaning, and purpose...*the One in whose image every human is made.
- ii. Rather, parents are to purpose to love their child to obedience (as a loving response to good parenting). *If a child does not respond in this way, it could be the child, the parent, or some combination.* God is painting the ideal AND He gives us the tools to use toward that end AND those tools for when the ideal is NOT met.

3. The Role of Discipline: The frequency, intensity, setting, types, and cause for discipline have become hotly debated in culture. Some things to consider include:



- A. Scripture tells us that physical discipline is biblical when used to teach and instruct AND when done in Godly love. As children grow, the effectiveness of this kind of discipline as a Godly teaching and training tool lessens. So, if physical discipline is a tool in your parenting toolbox, because of our own unrighteousness, parents are wise to check their motivations and heart before using this tool.
- B. Discipline does NOT supplant instruction. Except in the most urgent of circumstances, a child's obedience and compliance is not the goal. Rather, parents are God's instruments in discipling their children to follow and increasingly be like Jesus.
4. Busyness, in all of its forms, often hinders our efforts to teach and instruct our children in the ways of the Lord. What's more, the content of the busyness-of-our-choice may increasingly grab the attention of our children (and, frankly, us) AND feeds (disciples) them with the evil rot of the enemy in his war against Jesus. Examples include TV, Gaming, Social Media, Pornography & Online Sexual Idolatry...even "Entertainment, Sports, Activities, and Hobbies" must be diligently examined in the light of the narrow and broad path described in Scripture.
5. Last thing to note, the FAILURE to parent in God's way is a "pay me later" decision. You see, children NOT maturing in obedience as pleases the Lord will find themselves increasingly drifting away from the One that gives meaning, purpose, and life.

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- VI. Closing Thought:** Godly parenting is God commanded, God, honoring, and hard work. Godly parenting is a gift from God and from parents to their children.

[Prayer]

## Raising Godly Children Colossians 3:20-21

### I. Introduction:

- Whether biological, adopted, or spiritual, raising Godly children is a high calling of God

Additional Scripture References: Ge 1:28; Ps 127:3; Mk 19:14, 15

### II. Colossian 3:20-21: Responsibilities & Rights Overview

Additional Scripture References: Eph 6:1-4

### III. Colossians 3:20: Responsibilities

- The importance of instruction and training on fear and love.

Additional Scripture References: Deut 6:1-9, 5:6-21; Lk 2:49, 51, 52; Ex 21:17; 1 Sa 15:22-23; Lk 15:11-32; 1 Thes 1:2-4; Heb 11:6; 1 Jn 3:22; Mt 7:13-14

### IV. Colossians 3:21: Rights

- Parental balance is needed in not provoking children to a place of discouragement.

Additional Scripture References: Eph 5:18

### V. Five Additional Parent & Child Thoughts

- Failure to parent in God's way is a "pay me later" decision.

### VI. Closing:

## **5-Day Devotional Raising Godly Children Colossians 3:20-21**

### **Day 1: The Sacred Trust of Parenting**

**Reading: Deut 6:1-9**

Devotional: God has entrusted you with one of His most sacred callings—raising children who know and love Him. The Shema reminds us that discipleship begins at home, woven into the fabric of daily life. Notice the rhythm: when you sit, walk, lie down, and rise up. Parenting is not a program but a lifestyle of intentional faith-sharing. Before teaching your children about God's character, you must first love Him with all your heart, soul, and strength. Your relationship with God becomes the curriculum.

Today, reflect on this question: What am I teaching my children about God through my daily habits, conversations, and priorities? Are they learning to fear and love the Lord by watching you?

### **Day 2: Obedience as Worship**

**Reading: Col 3:20-21; Eph 6:1-4**

Devotional: Children's obedience is ultimately an act of worship that pleases God. This elevates parenting beyond behavior management to spiritual formation. When children learn to honor authority in the home, they're being prepared to submit to God's loving authority. Parents, you represent Christ to your children—a sobering reality. Your authority should mirror His: firm yet gracious, corrective yet encouraging, consistent yet compassionate. Jesus Himself modeled perfect obedience to both earthly and heavenly parents. As you guide your children toward obedience, remember the goal is not mere compliance but heart transformation.

Are you wielding authority as Christ would—leading them toward spiritual maturity rather than simply demanding conformity? Let your parenting point them to their ultimate Father.

### **Day 3: The Danger of Discouragement    Reading: Col 3:21; Prov 22:6; Lk 15:11-32**

Devotional: "Do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." These words carry profound weight. A discouraged child is one whose spirit has been broken, whose God-given identity has been crushed under unrealistic expectations, harsh criticism, or parental hypocrisy. The prodigal son's father demonstrates the balance: he had standards and boundaries, yet when his son returned broken, he ran to embrace him. Your children need to know they are fearfully and wonderfully made, valued beyond measure, regardless of their performance.

Examine your heart: Do your children experience more correction than encouragement? Do they see authentic faith or religious performance? Today, speak life into your child.

Affirm their identity in Christ. Apologize if you've provoked them. Remember, grace doesn't eliminate standards—it provides the environment where transformation happens.

#### **Day 4: Discipleship Over Business**

**Reading: Mk 10:13-16; Mt7:13-14**

Devotional: Jesus rebuked His disciples for hindering children from coming to Him. Today, what hinders your children from encountering Jesus? Often it's not outright rebellion but the subtle tyranny of busyness. Sports, activities, entertainment, and digital distractions crowd out unhurried time with God and family. Culture is actively discipling your children through screens, peers, and institutions. The question is not whether they're being disciplined, but by whom. Jesus said we must receive the kingdom as little children—with humble dependence and trust. Are you modeling this posture? Are you creating space for your children to develop their own authentic relationship with Jesus?

Today, identify one area of busyness to eliminate, replacing it with intentional spiritual formation. Choose the narrow gate that leads to life.

#### **Day 5: Spirit-Filled Parenting**

**Reading: Eph 5:18; Ps 127:1-5; 1 Thes 2:4**

Devotional: Godly parenting is impossible in human strength. You need the Holy Spirit's wisdom, patience, discernment, and fruit daily. Apart from being filled with the Spirit, you'll parent from frustration, pride, or fear rather than love. Remember: children are a heritage from the Lord, a gift, not a burden or a project to perfect. Your ultimate goal is not raising successful, well-behaved children, but disciples of Christ who walk in their own vibrant faith. This requires surrendering your agenda, dying to your desire for control, and trusting God with outcomes. Unless the Lord builds the house, you labor in vain.

Today, confess your inadequacy and invite the Holy Spirit to lead your parenting. Ask God to help you please Him rather than impressing others. Your faithfulness matters more than perfection.

## Small Group Study Guide

### Raising Godly Children

#### Colossians 3:20-21

**Opening Prayer:** Lord, help us to understand your ways and strengthen us to live them out and teach them to others.

**Icebreaker Questions:** What is one valuable lesson (positive or challenging) you learned from your parents or guardians growing up? How has it shaped who you are today?

**Key Scripture Passages:** Primary: Colossians 3:20-21. Supporting: Ephesians 6:1-4; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Luke 2:49-52; Matthew 7:13-14

**Sermon Summary:** This sermon explores God's design for raising children who follow Christ. Paul addresses both children's responsibilities (obedience in all things) and parents' responsibilities (training without provoking). The central theme is that parenting is discipleship—preparing children to become disciples of Christ through intentional teaching, godly example, and Spirit-led authority.

#### **Key Takeaways**

1. **Children are a heritage from God** - Parenting is a high calling and divine privilege.
2. **Obedience pleases the Lord** - Children's obedience to parents trains them for obedience to God.
3. **Parents are God's ambassadors** - We represent Christ's character in our parenting.
4. **The goal is discipleship, not compliance** - We're raising Christ-followers, not just obedient children
5. **Balance is essential** - Too little discipline creates entitlement; too much creates discouragement

#### **Discussion Questions**

##### **Section 1: Children's Responsibilities (20 minutes)**

1. Read Colossians 3:20 together. Why do you think Paul emphasizes that children should obey "in all things"? What are appropriate boundaries to this command?

2. The sermon mentions that obedience trains children to recognize and respect godly authority. How does childhood obedience prepare someone for their adult relationship with God?
3. For parents in the group: What challenges do you face in teaching obedience while also fostering your child's personal relationship with Christ?
4. For those without children: How can you apply the principle of obedience to God in your own life? Where might God be calling you to greater obedience?

### **Section 2: Parents' Responsibilities (20 minutes)**

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What does it mean to teach children to both "fear" and "love" the Lord? How are these two things connected?
2. The sermon lists many things we teach children (brushing teeth, sports, devices) versus spiritual truths. What does this reveal about our priorities? How can we recalibrate?
3. Discuss the balance: How can parents exercise authority without becoming dictators? Share examples of healthy versus unhealthy parental authority you've witnessed.
4. Review the list of ways parents can discourage children (page 3-4 of sermon). Which of these resonates most with your experience—either as a parent or as someone who was parented? Why?

### **Section 3: The Heart of Godly Parenting (15 minutes)**

1. The sermon states: "Someone is discipling your kids." What cultural influences are currently discipling children in our community? How can parents counteract ungodly influences?
2. Read Ephesians 5:18. Why is being "filled with the Spirit" essential for godly parenting? What does this look like practically?
3. The sermon emphasizes that parental love is NOT contingent on a child's obedience. Why is this distinction so important? How does it reflect God's love for us?

## **Practical Applications**

### **FOR PARENTS**

#### 1. This Week:

- A. Audit your teaching: Make a list of what you're actively teaching your children. How much is temporal versus spiritual? Choose one spiritual truth to intentionally teach this week.
- B. Check your heart: Before disciplining this week, pause and ask: "Am I acting from love and instruction, or from frustration and self-focus?"
- C. Deuteronomy 6 Challenge: Choose one daily activity (mealtime, bedtime, car rides) to intentionally weave in conversation about God's character and ways.

#### 2. This Month:

- A. Have an age-appropriate conversation with your children about why obedience matters—connecting it to their relationship with God, not just your authority.
- B. Identify one area where you may be provoking your child to discouragement. Seek God's wisdom and perhaps apologize if needed.

### **FOR EVERYONE**

#### 1. This Week:

- A. Reflect on your own obedience to God:\*\* Where is He calling you to obey that you've been resisting? What's holding you back?
- B. Pray for parents: Commit to praying daily for parents in your group, church, or family who are navigating the challenges of godly parenting.
- C. Examine influences: What is "discipling" you? (TV shows, social media, podcasts, etc.) Does it align with God's truth?

#### 2. This Month:

- A. *Mentor or support:* If you're not a parent, consider how you can support parents in your church or community (encouragement, practical help, prayer).



- B. *Personal discipleship*: Identify one spiritual discipline you want to grow in and find someone to help disciple you in it.

**Reflection Question for Journaling**

1. How was I parented, and how has that shaped my view of God's authority?
2. If I'm a parent: What kind of spiritual legacy am I leaving for my children?
3. Where do I need God's grace and the Holy Spirit's leading in my relationships with children (my own or others)?
4. What does it mean for me personally to "obey in all things" as it pleases the Lord?

**Closing Activity** (10 minutes)

1. Prayer Partnerships: Break into groups of 2-3. Share one specific area where you need God's help:
  - A. Parents: A specific parenting challenge or a child's need
  - B. Non-parents: An area of obedience to God or a parent you want to support
2. Pray for each other, asking for the Holy Spirit's wisdom, patience, and love.

**Discussion Questions**  
**Raising Godly Children**  
**Colossians 3:20-21**

1. How does the command for children to obey their parents in all things challenge modern cultural values of individualism and self-determination, and what boundaries might exist to this obedience?
2. In what ways might parents unintentionally provoke or discourage their children while still maintaining necessary discipline and authority in the home?
3. Reflecting on Deuteronomy 6:1-9, how effectively are we training our children to fear and love God compared to teaching them practical life skills or cultural values?
4. What does it mean for parents to be ambassadors of Christ rather than bosses or dictators, and how does this distinction change the parent-child dynamic?
5. How can parents discern whether their discipline is motivated by Godly love and instruction versus personal frustration, disappointment, or self-righteousness?
6. Considering that someone is always discipling our children, what influences beyond parental teaching are shaping your children's worldview, and how can you address this reality?
7. How does Jesus's submission to His earthly parents in Luke 2, despite knowing His divine identity and mission, inform our understanding of authority and obedience?
8. What is the difference between raising children who are merely compliant versus raising children who are growing in spiritual maturity in Christ?
9. In what ways might busyness, entertainment, technology, and extracurricular activities be hindering rather than helping our efforts to raise godly children?
10. How can parents balance setting high expectations that encourage growth while avoiding the discouragement that comes from unrealistic or legalistic standards?

**Dinner Conversation Starters**  
**Raising Godly Children**  
**Colossians 3:20-21**

1. **Understanding Obedience:** What does it mean to obey in a way that pleases God, and how can we practice this kind of obedience in our daily lives, both as parents and as children?
2. **Balancing Authority and Encouragement:** Parents, how do you think we can balance guiding children with authority while also encouraging and building them up? Kids, what kind of encouragement makes you feel most supported?
3. **Fear and Love of God:** How can we as a family cultivate both fear (respect) and love for God in our daily routines? What are some practical ways we can incorporate this into our week?
4. **Understanding the Role of Discipline:** How do we view discipline in our family? How does it help us grow closer to God and to one another? What are some ways discipline can be administered with love and understanding?
5. **Navigating Cultural Messages:** Our culture often sends messages that contradict God's teachings. How can we identify and discuss these messages together as a family, and how can we stand firm in our faith amidst these influences?

**Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens**  
**Raising Godly Children**  
**Colossians 3:20-21**

**AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS**

**1. Application Points**

- A. Learning Obedience: Practice obeying parents and teachers promptly and with a joyful heart.
- B. Identifying Good Friends: Talk about what makes a good friend who will help you honor God.
- C. Respecting Authority in Digital Spaces: Understand time limits for screen use as a form of loving boundaries set by parents.

**2. Discussion Questions**

- A. What are some things you do every day that show you are listening and obeying quickly?
- B. How can you tell if a friend is a good influence, and what can we do if someone is not being nice?
- C. Why do you think we have rules for how and when we use our screens?

**AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS**

**1. Application Points**

- A. Understanding Discernment: Learn to recognize and choose godly influences in friendships and media.
- B. Role of Prayer and Quiet Time: Establish a daily quiet time with God to grow in love and reverence.
- C. Digital Responsibility: Discuss the importance of respecting others online and choosing content wisely.

**3. Discussion Questions**

- A. What does it mean to have discernment when choosing who to listen to or follow, and how can we practice this at school or online?

- B. How can setting aside time to pray and read the Bible each day help us in our friendships and decisions?
- C. What are some ways we can show kindness and respect to people when we are online?

## **AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS**

### **1. Application Points**

- A. Balancing Freedom and Responsibility: Explore how maturity means more freedom paired with wise decision-making.
- B. Godly Standards in Friendships and Dating: Discuss maintaining godly boundaries in friendships and early romantic interests.
- C. Authenticity in Digital Spaces: Encourage being true to one's values rather than conforming to popular trends.

### **2. Discussion Questions**

- A. How does having more freedom also mean we have more responsibility in our choices and actions?
- B. What are some ways to ensure that our friendships and relationships reflect our faith and values?
- C. How can we be true to ourselves online and in-person, even when we feel pressure to conform?

## **Tips for Parents**

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

## **Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z**

### **Raising Godly Children**

### **Colossians 3:20-21**

#### **1. Application Point: Christ-like Leadership**

- A. Principle: Gen Z can exercise godly influence in their peer groups by modeling Christ-like behavior and leadership, as seen in 1 Timothy 4:12, which encourages believers to set an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.
- B. Scenario Application: Whether in school clubs or team activities, step up by leading with integrity and kindness. Volunteer for roles that allow you to encourage others and set a positive tone.
- C. Discussion Question: How can I be a leader in my group that reflects Jesus' love and kindness?

#### **2. Relationships: Maintaining Godly Boundaries**

- A. Principle: Use Ephesians 5:1-2 as a guide to live in love and uphold boundaries that honor God within friendships and dating relationships.
- B. Scenario Application: In romantic relationships, prioritize mutual respect and purity. In friendships, encourage uplifting conversations and support each other's spiritual growth.
- C. Discussion Question: What are some boundaries I can set that will help my relationships honor my faith?

#### **3. Digital Spaces: Authentic and Positive Presence**

- A. Principle: Reflecting Colossians 3:17, strive to do everything, including online interactions, in a way that honors God, giving thanks through Jesus.
- B. Scenario Application: Share content that is encouraging and reflective of your values. Be mindful about comments and direct messages, ensuring they spread positivity rather than negativity.
- C. Discussion Question: Am I using my digital presence to glorify God and encourage others, or do I need to make changes in how I interact online?

#### **4. Authentic Identity: Embracing God-Given Identity**

- A. Principle: Recognize and embrace your identity as “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) and reflect this in how you present yourself in all spaces.
- B. Scenario Application: Stay true to yourself by aligning your digital persona with your values. Resist pressures to conform for the sake of likes or followers.
- C. Discussion Question: In what ways can I ensure that my identity in Christ shines through in all my interactions, both offline and online?