

MBC - 2/11/2018 - Pastor Doug Thompson  
"Biblical Parenting"  
Ephesians 6:2-4

- Ephesians 6:1-4 <sup>1</sup>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>"that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Possibly the wisest man who ever lived, aside from the Lord Jesus, was Solomon, and long before Paul wrote these words, Solomon pleaded with his own son to "obey his parents in the Lord." Listen to his passion and urgency—

- Proverbs 1:8-9 <sup>8</sup>Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; <sup>9</sup>Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.
- Proverbs 3:1-6 <sup>1</sup>My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, <sup>2</sup>for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. <sup>3</sup>Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. <sup>4</sup>So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. <sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
- Proverbs 4:1-4 <sup>1</sup>Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, <sup>2</sup>for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. <sup>3</sup>When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, <sup>4</sup>he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.
- Proverbs 7:1-3 <sup>1</sup>My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; <sup>2</sup>keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; <sup>3</sup>bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

And there is no expiration date on these commands—

- Proverbs 23:22 <sup>22</sup>Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Continue to listen and learn from your parent's wisdom, even into adulthood. Isn't it amazing how your parents become wiser the older you get? And parents, Solomon pleads with you not to lose heart in your parenting. The sowing you do now in your children's lives might reap a harvest in years to come even when you don't see much fruit right now—

- Proverbs 22:6 <sup>6</sup>Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Parents - could you ask anymore from God than this? I texted this passage to one of my kids this week. It's a passage they've heard many, many times—

- 3 John 4 <sup>4</sup>I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

And God's Word tells us how to do as much as we can do, to see our children walking in the truth. This morning we're going to squeeze more wisdom out of this passage, and I'm going to stop along the way and give some practical advice.

### I. Training in obedience.

Last week we said that training your children to obey you is job #1 for parents because a child who rebels against his or her parents will likely rebel against every other authority in their lives, including God. It's not cute when a little kid tells his mommy, "No!" His soul is at stake! Remember the passages we looked at—

- Proverbs 19:18 <sup>18</sup>Discipline your son, for there is hope (or, "while there is hope"); do not set your heart on putting him to death.
- Proverbs 13:24 <sup>24</sup>Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. (And that reminds us of what the writer of Hebrews says about our heavenly Father)—
- Hebrews 12:6-7 <sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one he *loves*, and chastises every *son* whom he receives." <sup>7</sup>It 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?

And we need to train our children to obey the way God expects His children to obey: 1. Immediately, 2. Completely, and 3. Cheerfully. And not one of us comes from the womb wired to do that! The Scriptures say that we are *bent* in the opposite direction and loving parents will patiently *twist* their children in the direction of biblical obedience. It's been well said that the challenge of parenting is to shape your child's will without crushing your child's spirit.

#### A. Submission vs. Obedience.

Let me you a bit of cultural background behind what Paul says here: In that Greco-Roman culture, "household codes" were a common thing in their philosophical and moral writings. These household codes defined the roles of husbands, wives, children and slaves. The basic premise of all of these ancient codes was the absolute authority of the male head of the house. He was the *pater familias*, and ultimately, he had the power of life and death over everyone under his roof.

- Roman society was very suspicious of "Eastern religions" such as Judaism, Egyptian religions, and that Johnny-come-lately sect: Christianity. They were concerned that these religions with their new gods would weaken the moral and social order they had established. Paul knows this, and he wants to show that followers of Jesus Christ have a moral and social order as well. I.e., Christianity is not a threat to an orderly society or to orderly families.

So as Paul writes, he follows the same basic formula of the household codes, but he gives God's household code for His people. Yes, there is order and structure in the family, but there are some radical differences: First of all, every relationship is transformed by our relationship to Jesus Christ: Wives submit to their husbands as a way of expressing their submission to Christ. Husbands love their wives the way Christ loves His church. Children obey their parents *in the Lord*. Slaves obey their masters as they would obey Christ. Every relationship is changed because of our union with Christ, *and* our equality as persons in Christ.

I mean, can you *imagine* how Paul's words in Gal.3:28 must have struck the ears of a Roman citizen??—

- Galatians 3:28 <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- And it was this teaching that eventually undermined and overthrew the institution of slavery in England through the efforts of William Wilburforce, and then later in this country.

And a second radical change in God's household code for His people is that wives are *not* told to *obey* their husbands, but to *submit* to them. It's a different word with a different meaning. Husbands are called to sacrificially love and serve their wives the way Christ loves and serves His Bride, the church - to the point that He laid down His life for her. And wives are to lovingly submit to their husband's headship with encouragement and support. Remember that when Paul sums up the roles of husbands and wives in 5:33 he puts it this way—

- Ephesians 5:33 Let each one of you *love* his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she *respects* her husband.

The Scriptures nowhere command wives to *obey* their husbands. You say, "Wait a minute preacher, I know I've heard 'love, honor, and obey' in weddings." Yes, but it's not in the Bible. It's from the Book of Common Prayer - 1662. Now I've done weddings where I have included this line in the vows - after receiving a large tip beforehand from the groom. . . but it's not in the Bible.

- And yes, 1 Peter 3.5 says that Sarah *obeyed* Abraham as an expression of her godly submission to him, but that's an illustration of her submissiveness, not a command. The *command* Peter gives is the same as Paul's: "Wives be subject to your own husbands," same Gk. word that Paul uses, *hupotasso*—.

You can listen to the three previous sermons to hear what I had to say on what submission and headship should look like in marriage, the point I want to bring out here is that the parent-child relationship is different than the husband and wife relationship—

- Parents, you are *raising* your children, and training them to obey you so that they will obey God! But husbands, you aren't *raising* and *training* your their wives! Big difference.

### ***B. Reasons for obedience.***

And Paul gives two reasons that children should obey their parents. And parents need to also teach their children these *two reasons!*—

1.) First, he says ***because it is right***. He means that this is something God has written on all human hearts. Theologians call this "natural law," i.e., it's not just a Christian thing. Every culture in the world recognizes that children are immature and incomplete and need to obey their parents for their own protection and in order to grow up into mature adults. Disobedience to parents is the mark of a culture in chaos. Paul said that "disobedient to parents" is one of the signs of the last days in 1 Tim3.2.

\*Parents, you need to teach your children that they must obey you because it is *right*. And put a period at the end of that sentence! You've all seen the shirt that says, "I'm the mom, that's

why!” And of course, that’s meant to be the answer to the favorite question of children when you tell them what to do: “But WHY?” And let me tell you, “*I’m the mom, or I’m the dad, that’s why,*” is a biblical answer!

- Your children must learn to obey whether or not they understand “why.” Remember the illustration I gave last Sunday of Ashlee Trenerly at the Grand Canyon! There was no time for an explanation. “But Dad, whyyyyyyyyy?” That command for her to stop running toward the edge required first time obedience, no explanation.

Does God always explain “why” in Scripture? No! “Abraham, you need to take your son Isaac, and go sacrifice him on Mt. Moriah.” No explanation. Wow. And does God always explain to you why He is doing what He is doing in your life? No. His ways are higher than our ways. We still obey Him.

Now I don’t want you to misunderstand me here: you train and shape your children’s moral reasoning skills when you sit them down and instruct them in the wisdom behind your commands. You explain the “why’s”! That should be a huge part of your parenting. But you should never give them the impression that they don’t have to obey *until* they understand the wisdom and the ‘why’s’ behind your commands!

- If you do that, you will train your child that they have the right to *challenge* and *question* authority - and unless they get an answer they like, they don’t have to obey. That’s a disaster waiting to happen. And even worse, you are training them that those in authority are accountable to them, not the other way around. After awhile they will believe that *God* is accountable to them. They have a right to understand all His reasons and ways before they obey His commands. That can damn their souls.

Oh parents, you should not *persuade* your child to obey you by giving acceptable reasons! That’s exhausting, isn’t it? Your child is to submit to your authority and obey you - first time, because it’s *right*. And let me tell you, they don’t have the teachable heart to learn the “why’s” until they obey you without knowing the “why’s.”

- I remember, even as a rebellious, unbelieving teenager, times when my mom would say to me, “I don’t need to give you a reason, I’m your mom and I just don’t want you to go, so you’re not!” And something inside of me said, “That’s right.”

So children should obey their parents because it’s right, but also ***because it is written*** - it is #5 of the 10 commandments. And the way the Jews saw it, this commandment went along with the first 4 commandments which deal with our duty to God. I.e., They saw honoring and obeying one’s parents as a duty owed to God! “Children obey your parents *in the Lord*.” That doesn’t mean that the parents have to be Christians! God commands it, that’s why. During childhood, parents stand in the place of God, representing His love and protection and authority over the children. So obedience to them is obedience to God and we used to tell our kids: “Obey us and you are obeying God - disobey us, and you are disobeying God!” That’s true.

- \*And this puts the issue of obedience on a spiritual level: “Johnny, go brush your teeth.” Johnny runs the water for a few seconds and leaves the bathroom. Mom is standing there: “Johnny you didn’t just disobey me, you disobeyed God. This is a sin issue.” And it is. As kids get older you want them to learn that their behavior isn’t just between them and their parents, it’s between them and God. It will have eternal consequences.

And this might sound shocking, but to flagrantly, defiantly break this 5<sup>th</sup> commandment, was a capital offense under the Law of Moses. An incorrigible child was to be put to *death*. Listen or turn with me to read it with your own eyes—

- Deuteronomy 21:18-21 <sup>18</sup>“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, <sup>19</sup>then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, <sup>20</sup>and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ <sup>21</sup>Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.
- In Dt.13, false prophets are to be put to death to “*purge the evil from your midst.*” I.e, a rebellious child is as dangerous to God’s people as a false prophet.

Now according to Jewish tradition, this punishment was never carried out! But imagine the kids seeing this passage taped on the refrigerator door!

This is why I said last week that teaching your children to obey you is job #1 for parents. It’s not just their own souls that are at stake, but when disobedient children become disobedient adults, you have *anarchy* - no rule, no law - **Antifa**.

Now let me back up and explain what we mean by “discipline.”

## II. Discipline - *paideia* = training.

The Gk. word for discipline in v.4 is *paideia*, which means to train a child. And it’s everything involved in the training of children, positively and negatively. It’s teaching your children, warning them of danger and error; correcting them and modeling for them the right way to speak and act.

*Paideia* is not just spiritual training, but mental, and physical training. Remember that precious passage in Luke’s Gospel that says “*Jesus increased in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man*” (Lk.2:52). - that’s a perfect description of what biblical parental training involves:

- 1.) *wisdom* = that’s intellectual development.
- 2.) *stature* = that’s physical development - in this techie age, this is really important for your kids!
- 3.) *in favor with God* = their spiritual development. Teach them God’s Word, go over and over and over the Gospel with them, and teach them how they can have a personal walk with God.
- 4.) *in favor with man* = their social development - how to relate to people outside their own family. When Jesus was just 12 years old He amazed the adults in the Temple with His wisdom and understanding. If your kids are going to be obedient followers of Christ, they need to learn to engage in intelligent and respectful interaction and conversation with others their own age, and adults as well. Your goal isn’t to isolate your children from the world, but to prepare them to go out into the world and be good advertisement for the Gospel

**\*Train your kids by giving them the script.**

One way parents should train their kids is to rehearse with them the right words to say in different situations: Not just 'please' and 'thank you,' (How are you doing with that?), but 'I'm sorry, will you forgive me?' And 'Yes, I forgive you.' You do that, *every time* one kids pops his brother or sister - "Now what do you say your brother?" And make sure they repeat their lines. After awhile, they will do it without you having to tell them. And they will be so perplexed when other kids don't say the lines they have been taught!

- Teach your kids what to say and how to react when they receive a gift - practice it with them, and then go over it before their birthday party: "Thank you so much for the new clothes Auntie - I have plenty of toys already." Teach them that when they are ready to get down from the table, they are to ask you for permission: 'May I please be excused?' If they don't do it, they have to come back, sit in their chair, and asked to be excused.
- Teach your children how to meet and greet people when you introduce them. It should happen that you bring your child up and say, "Sally, say hello to Pastor Doug!" and Sally hides behind you and refuses to speak. That is disobedience, and if she does that, she needs to be disciplined. Now Sally might be really shy - don't ask her to recite the Nicene Creed for me! But she can at least obey you and say "Hi Pastor Doug." But you need to rehearse this ahead of time.
- Some of you remember meeting our 8 year old grandson, William when he was here for Rachel and Evan's wedding: "Hi, my name's William Wallace, pleased to me you! What's your name?" And then he might have handed you one of his business cards. But it's because he has been trained in what to say. And even in how to have a respectful conversation with an adult. And it makes quite an impression on adults.
- I've heard parents say, "Oh my kids would never do that!" Oh they absolutely will do whatever you diligently train them to do - which places quite a responsibility on you as parents to train them *rightly*. Because they will also mimic your bad words and bad behavior.

No illustrations on that point . . . let's move along. . .

- So biblical discipline is training. It's holistic. Sometimes it refers to chastisement - *spanking* - but not always, and not even mostly. (Next week during our Sunday School hour I will talk about what the Bible says about spanking. Some important stuff - make sure the kids don't let air out of your tires.)

And even when the training is punishment, it's still done out of love, with gentleness and patience. In v.4, Paul commands dads not to *provoke* their children to anger - your translation might say, "*exasperate*." Harshness in discipline is the quickest way to exasperate and anger your child - never discipline out of anger! On the back of your outline I've given you 25 more ways that you can exasperate your children. I encourage you to look that over and pray that you don't make these mistakes.

The last thing I want to say about discipline is—

### ***Parent a lot.***

Doesn't God parent His children A LOT? Yeah, like, all the time. He's always on it. He never settles back in His heavenly Barcalounger and says, "Go play, I'll see you at dinner." He is constantly training His children.

\*When I was a kid, parents didn't really think much about "parenting." There were hardly any parenting books available except Dr. Spock's book - which was awful. My mom and dad just did the best they could and used their common sense. Since the 70's, thousands of books on parenting have been written. Now parents are drowning in resources, but seem to have very little common sense. But at least they are more aware of their parenting and that's a very good thing because if we want to parent our kids the way God parents His, we need to parent intentionally and we need to parent a lot.

When I say 'parent a lot,' I mean—

**1.) Be lavish and constant in your affection, affirmation, encouragement, and support.** Do it verbally, and do it physically. You can't hug your kids or tell them you love them too much.

**2.) Be lavish and constant in your instruction, and explanation** - always be teaching them, what is right/wrong, acceptable, unacceptable, what pleases Jesus/what doesn't. Remember what God commanded Jewish parents—

- Deuteronomy 6:6-9 <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup>You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

At home, when you are driving - you are going over their memory verses or catechism questions. When you come home from church, you de-brief on what you all heard and learned. You hear something on the news, you go over it with your kids: "What does God think about this? What does the Bible say about this?" All the time. And as you are constantly teaching, remember, you need to also constantly model what you are teaching. Godly character is more caught than taught.

**3.) Be lavish and constant in your warning, and correcting.**

It's really simple: constantly reinforce and praise good behavior; and correct, instruct, and if need be, punish, bad behavior. If you let it go - you are training them in unrighteousness. Do it patiently, gently, and lovingly, but do it for the sake of their souls. What did Jesus say about our heavenly Father?—

- John 15:1-2. . . and every branch that *does bear fruit* He prunes - cuts - that it may bear more fruit.

Oh we need the Holy Spirit, don't we?! Now I want to talk about training your kids in honor and respect.

## II. Training in honor and respect.

In v.2, children are commanded: "*honor your father and mother.*" Obedience is the action, but honor is the attitude, and kids have to be trained and taught honor and respect. In both Hebrew and Greek, the word for honor has the idea of weight, substance, value, dignity. All people have value and dignity because we all bear the image of God - that's why Scripture says, "*honor all men,*" but people differ in the honor due them because of their age and their office--

- We are to respect police officers because of the position they hold. We respect our govt. leaders - even if they aren't worthy of it because of their character, because they are in a God-instituted position of authority. In this *household code* passage, wives respect their husbands, children honor parents, slaves respect their masters. And kids need to learn that they are *not* on the same level of respect and honor as adults! Their time is coming, but they need to respect those ahead of them—

Paul reminded young Timothy about how to relate to those in his church with appropriate respect - his name, *timao*, was the Gk. word for honor!

- 1 Timothy 5:1-3 <sup>1</sup>Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup>older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. <sup>3</sup>Honor widows . . . he went on to talk about the honor due to the church elders.

Different people are due different honor. Your children need to learn this. Listen to—

- Lev 19:32 "You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

See what this is saying to us: The honor we show to older men and fathers reflects the honor we show our heavenly Father. In many other cultures, the elderly are granted honor simply because they are older: in an Asian church, younger men bow down before their elders. Some of you have seen emails from Vanensio in Uganda. He calls our friend Tom Johnson in Napa, "dad." He emailed to say that he was praying for Janice, and called her "our mother!" When I was teaching in India, the younger Christians called me "Uncle Doug," out of honor and respect. From about 4,000 years ago, we read this in Job—

- Job 32:4 <sup>4</sup>Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he.
- Job 32:6 <sup>6</sup>And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said: "I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you.

That was respectful deference to an elder. That's good and right. But when society dishonors its elders, it's a curse on that society:

- Lamentations 4:16 <sup>16</sup>The Lord himself has scattered them; he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders.

### ***How do we train our children in honor and respect?***

Well, we need to model it, don't we? This is convicting! Our kids are watching us: do we show them how we honor those in authority over us: other family members, police, our govt. leaders? Honor and respect is taught, but it's also caught. Moms - do your kids hear you speak respectfully about dad? And husbands, do your kids learn that women are to be respected by the way you treat their mom?

Parents, you must *require* that your children treat you and other adults with respect. They are not allowed to be rude to you - or other adults. They should not be allowed to be too familiar with you - i.e., acting as though they are your social equals—



So it's inappropriate for a 13 year old kid to talk to an adult like they are just another 14 year old: "Hey dude, whazzup? Whazz happenin' with the wife and kiddos?" If you allow that, you aren't helping that child to learn respect for his or her elders.

- The flip side of this is that adults shouldn't act like 13 year-olds, but I won't go there . . .

And we need to teach our kids to defer to older people out of honor - not the other way around. I'll give you a simple application that I've mentioned before: When we have church pot-lucks, instruct your kids to let the older folks go through the line first, and then they should stay with their parents.

Let me give you just a couple more—

### **1.) Teach them to call adults Mr., Mrs., or Miss.**

This is a simple way to reinforce honor and respect with our kids: Don't let kids call you, as an adult, by your first name. It's Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Uncle or Auntie. This helps them to know their place in the family. And kids will do this if they are taught - down South, some of you know, kids say, "Yes sir," and Yes Ma'am!" That is so good for *them*. I've found that it's adults who have the problem with this. I remember one gal who used to tell our kids, "Oh you don't have to call me Mrs. so-and-so, just call me \_\_\_\_\_ ." We told our kids, "Oh no you don't, it's Mrs. so-and so." Maybe you don't care, maybe you think you don't need the respect - *but they need to give it!* So do it for their sakes, not for yours.

\*And you might remind little Sally or Johnny that it's "Pastor Doug," and that they shall incur an unhappy pastor's face if they call me, "Doug." It's for their sake, not mine.

### **2.) Never let kids interrupt adults.**

This always amazes me: two adults are talking, and little Johnny comes up and interrupts with some blather and the parent cuts off the other adult to bend down and listen to their kid while the other adult has to stand there and wait! What are they reinforcing to that child? He is the center of the universe—no one is more important than him and the lizard he found! That's a good way to create a self-centered adult. Unless it's an *emergency*, they need to wait on the adults and then ask for permission to speak.

- One of the best rules you can teach your kids is what we call "the interrupt rule:" If they have some *important* reason for interrupting your conversation, they must discreetly put their little hand on your hip and wait patiently until you are finished speaking. Then, when you are good and ready, you turn to them and say, "Now what do you need - and it had better be important?" Other adults are so impressed when they see kids doing this! It's really cool. But do you see that they are not only learning respect for adults, they are learning patience!

There is so much more we can say - we'll take our SS hour next week to talk about some more practical applications. But I want to encourage you parents not to lose heart in your parenting! God is for you and He is with you in this task. You have His Word and His Holy Spirit as your allies, and you have so many good examples in the families in this church. Let me close with this blessing from—

Psalm 128:1-4 <sup>1</sup>Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!  
<sup>2</sup>You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;

you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

<sup>3</sup>Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

<sup>4</sup>Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.