

## The Proper Relation Between Parents and Children

Text: Eph 6:1-4

1) Instructions To The Parents

Suggested Hymns:

2) Instructions To The Children

592, 126, 454, 171R&S, 608

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 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,” 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.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Two weeks ago we learned from the Holy Scriptures how a Christian home is to be founded. *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*<sup>1</sup> Last Sunday we were instructed with regard to the relationship that must be fostered between husband and wife if the home life is to thrive and its happiness to continue.

But one important factor in the building of happiness in the home has not yet been mentioned — the children. They will bring either additional joy, or indescribable grief and misery.

At present numerous bright and promising homes are being turned into houses of mourning by wayward and rebellious children. This is a distressing experience. It cannot be denied that children are one of the greatest and most vexing problems of the home.

Many worldly solutions are offered for this problem, but the only real solution is given in our text. Let us consider, *The Proper Relation Between Parents and Children*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. The Proper Relation Between Parents And Children Instructions To The Parents

***You, fathers.*** St. Paul addresses the fathers because they are the heads of the households. The mothers are to assist them in carrying out these instructions.

Recall that in the beginning of this chapter the apostle called on children to obey their “parents” — not just their fathers. We may therefore understand this section of the table of duties to be addressed to both parents.

As a general rule, the relationship existing between parents and children may be traced back to the early attitude of the parents. They create the home atmosphere. By precept and example they mould the character of the children.

Frequently the selfish, uncompromising, reckless spirit of the children is due to mistakes or negligence on the part of the parents. “*As the sapling was bent, so the tree has grown.*” But not always; for at times “*more springs in the garden than the gardener ever sowed.*”

What should the attitude of parents be toward their children? This may be learned from our heavenly Father’s dealings with His children. We read in 1 John 4:8, ***He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.***

And in John 16:27, ***for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*** And in 1 John 3:1, ***Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!***

Parental love is an affection which resides in every normal parent’s heart. But in the heart of the Christian this love is purified and lifted to a higher plane. Christian parents love their children not merely because they are flesh of their flesh, but also because they regard them as precious gifts of God.

We read in Psalm 127:3–5, ***Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed.***

Contrast this attitude with the attitude of those parents who for selfish reasons prefer to remain without children.

Luther wrote, “*Children are lovelier and more magnificent creations of God than the fruits of all our trees. In them we behold the omnipotence, wisdom, and art of God.*”<sup>2</sup>

Since he is addressing Christian parents, St. Paul takes for granted that they are making an effort to “bring up” their children in the fear of the Lord. They must be instructed, trained, and led in the paths of righteousness by precept and example. Nothing is more important in the life of a child than a Christian home-training.

Luther said that *“The father is to be the bishop and pastor of his household.”*<sup>3</sup> One of the most alarming symptoms in the Church of today is the superficiality, or even total absence, of Christian training in the average Christian home. Question: What is the situation in our own homes?

The directives to parents take two forms, a negative followed by a positive. Christian parents, especially if they are earnest in the training of their children, often make a serious mistake. Against this the apostle warns ***“do not provoke your children to wrath.”***

By undue severity, undue harshness, temperamental outbursts, whimsical commands, interference merely for the sake of asserting authority, unwarranted reproof, and constant fault-finding causes the child to be angered and filled with resentment, and this may do major harm to tender souls.

Thus the child becomes *“indisposed to dutiful honour and obedience.”* Moreover, the child may become “discouraged,” broken in spirit, crushed, melancholy, and listless. Hence we read in Colossians 3:21, <sup>21</sup> ***Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*** Thus the well-intended efforts of the parents are frustrated, and the child suffers inestimable harm.

The apostle also shows how parents may avoid this mistake. It is with a positive instruction, ***“but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*** ***“Training,”*** also means nurture and education. In the New Testament it is noted with special reference to chastening or discipline. ***“Admonition,”*** means training by word, especially by word of reproof and correction.

Children must be urged to honour and obey their parents and to conduct themselves as Christians. Frequently this necessitates chastening and reproof. We read in Proverbs 13:24, <sup>24</sup> ***He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.***

But when parents are forced to punish and reprove their children, they should exercise great care and self-control. Instead of yielding to their passions, they should follow the Lord's method of chastening and reproof.

We read in Revelation 3:19, <sup>19</sup> *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.* This is the force of the words "*of the Lord.*" In short, parental love and care must be shown.

## **2. The Proper Relation Between Parents And Children**

### **Instructions To The Children**

The proper attitude of the children toward their parents is determined by the words obey and honour.

The fourth commandment says, **Honour your father and your mother.** *What does this mean for us?* We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and others in authority, but respect, obey, love, and serve them.

Our text begins, <sup>1</sup> *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* The apostle instructs the children to obey "*in the Lord.*" The obedience and honour which they render to their parents should not be the products of coercion or fear, but the fruits of true filial love and devotion, which grow and ripen in their youthful hearts as a result of their faith in Christ.

We have Jesus' example in Luke 2:51, <sup>51</sup> *Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.*

And in Philippians 2:8, <sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

"*This is right.*" It is right because the Lord says so. He has given children life, a home, and parents. But children are not merely to "obey" their parents, perhaps unwillingly and grudgingly. More is asked of Christian children. They are to "honour" their parents. Thus a proper attitude is required, one that involves both heart and mind.

Children owe this to their parents according to the law of nature and according to the Fourth Commandment, <sup>2</sup> "*Honor your father and mother,*" *which is the first commandment with promise.*

Moreover, consider what your parents have done for you. The toils, sacrifices, and anxieties of parenthood. Surely your parents have a right to expect love, honour, and obedience from you, dear children.

But what is the situation today? On every hand, even in Christian congregations, we see disobedient children, who despise and mock their parents and wilfully go their own ways.

How many happy homes have been wrecked by wayward sons and daughters! How many fathers and mothers have died prematurely of a broken heart! Surely we are living in an age when the Fourth Commandment has fallen into contempt.

Hence it is necessary to stress the Fourth Commandment in public and in private. Let us emphasise with St. Paul that it is one of the foremost commandments, a commandment of first rank, <sup>2</sup> ***“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise.***

God promises special blessings to all who keep it, <sup>3</sup> ***“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth,”*** while unusual punishments are to be meted out to those who flagrantly transgress it.

There is a warning in Proverbs 30:17, <sup>17</sup> ***The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.***

In fact, disobedience of children is classed as one of the heinous sins of heathendom. We read in Romans 1:28, 30 <sup>28</sup> ***And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ... <sup>30</sup> backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents.***

Disobedience is an outstanding evil of the last times as we read in 2 Timothy 3:2, <sup>2</sup> ***For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.*** Let us war against this vicious sin for the sake of our children, our homes, our country, our Church, and our God!

This, then, is the proper relationship between parents and children, that they are to be united in the Lord by the bonds of true Christian love, the parents

caring for the children in every way, but especially bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And the children, on the other hand, obeying and honouring their parents. Where this relationship is maintained, there the home will be full of joy and sweet companionship.

Since the family is the basis of society and thus also of the nation, woe to the people and the land that disregard this fundamental relationship between parents and children. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:17

<sup>2</sup> (22,148.)

<sup>3</sup> (3, 194.)