

WHO AM I?

Ephesians



Life in the Home

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 6:1-4

The Duke of Windsor once quipped, “The thing that impresses me most about America is the way parents obey their children” (cited by Warren Wiersbe, *Listening to the Giants* [Moody Press], p. 253).

This remark is illustrated by a story that Pastor Ligon Duncan tells. A mother of a rather precocious 14-year-old daughter called to tell him that her daughter was giving her fits about coming to church. The father was not involved, but the mother was very concerned because the girl was going to a church that the mother did not approve of. The mom said to Pastor Duncan, “What do I do?”

He said, “Now, let me just ask a question. Let’s see. She’s 14. She’s not driving. Right? Now how is she getting to this church?”

“Well, I mean, I’m taking her.”

“OK. Well, here’s an idea about how you could get her to not do that and come to church: DON’T TAKE HER THERE!”

And the mom’s response was, “I can do that?”

The biblical answer is, “Yes, of course you can do that!” You’re the parent and the biblical order, especially in Christian homes, is not, “Parents, obey your children,” but rather, “Children, obey your parents.” It would seem as if we’ve been influenced by worldly psychology that tells us, “Parents, cater to your child’s every whim and don’t do anything to stifle his self-esteem or warp his fragile personality!” We’re afraid to say lovingly, “I’m your parent. God holds me accountable for your spiritual well being. The answer is, ‘No!’”¹

OPEN IT

1. **What was the most important instruction that your parents gave you that you obeyed, and what was one that you disobeyed?**

¹ Sermon by Steven Cole found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-51-spirit-filled-home-part-1-ephesians-61-3>

READ IT

Ephesians 6:1-4

EXPLORE IT

2. **Who are children commanded to obey?**
3. **Why should children obey?**
4. **What commandment does Paul reference?**
5. **What promise is attached to that commandment?**
6. **Who does Paul admonish regarding provoking children?**
7. **What are they to do instead of provoking?**

APPLY IT

In Ephesians 6:1-4, the apostle Paul paints a portrait of a Spirit-filled home.

As we've seen, Ephesians 5:22-6:9 is built on Ephesians' final result of being filled with the Spirit - and that we will be subject to one another in the fear of Christ (5:21). Then Paul shows how this works out in family life: wives will be subject to their husbands as to the Lord (5:22-24). Husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (5:25-33). Now, he applies it to children and parents (6:1-4). He will go on to apply it to slaves and masters (6:5-9).

In 6:1-4, the main idea is:

The Spirit-filled home is one where children obey and honor their parents and fathers nurture their children in the Lord.²

8. What does it mean to "obey your parents in the Lord"? How does this commandment apply to children who have non-Christian parents?

9. How can parents model obedience to God in their own lives and teach their children to do the same?

² Ibid

10. Christian children are also commanded to honor their parents. What's the difference between obeying one's parents and honoring them? How can we practically honor our parents even as adults?

11. How does honoring our parents relate to our relationship with God?

12. How can we help children and young people understand the importance of obedience and honor toward parents, especially in a culture that often values individualism and independence?

13. What role do churches and Christian communities play in supporting parents and children in obeying and honoring one another? How can we extend grace and support to those who struggle in this area?

Not Absentee Dads

In 6:1, Paul tells the children to obey their parents, using a word that refers to both parents. But in 6:4, he does not use that word, but rather he directly speaks to the fathers. Certainly, the command applies to mothers as well, but he addresses fathers to emphasize that they must not be passive in the rearing of children. Husbands are not to leave everything to their wives while they bring home the paycheck. Rather, as the head of the home, the father is responsible for nurturing, training, and teaching the children the things of God. Because of his responsibility to provide for the family financially, he will no doubt delegate much of this responsibility to his wife. But delegating does not equal dumping. Delegation requires oversight and close cooperation. So the father cannot entertain the mindset, "training the children is their mother's job." It is his job primarily!³

14. What are some ways that dads can provoke their children to anger? What are some ways that moms can provoke their children to anger?

15. How should a father who struggles with anger deal with his children's anger? Can he rightfully correct them?

16. How can a father who finds it difficult to relate verbally and emotionally to a child learn to overcome this?

³ Ibid

Humble Pie

Many years ago our family embarked on one of our first cross country vacation journeys. We were very ambitious - or some might say crazy... We drove from Chicagoland to Seattle-land, and what an unforgettable journey it was! I could tell you about many of the interesting and memorable sites we visited and the people that we met along the way, but I have to tell you about a situation that humbled me greatly as a husband and young father.

We had just crossed over into Montana and our Dodge Caravan was cruising along. (We lovingly referred to it as our "Loser Cruiser".) Everyone drove fast as the speed limit was 80 mph. We were no exception. My wife and I and our three young kids were flying past the place where General Custer made his last stand when I felt a big bump and then lost a little control of the van. We had popped one of our tires, so I quickly pulled over and got out to assess the situation.

The freeway was busy. It seemed that every vehicle was a giant 18 wheeler and when they went by it would shake our little minivan. We had a flat, and after some consideration, I realized that our spare tire was cabled up under the back of the van. The shoulder did not provide much room to get away from the traffic, but I did the best I could to get under the car and attempt to remove the spare.

That tire would not release so I could use it and get our family out of danger! Later on we were told that the cable and the spare had rusted into that up position and there was nothing we could have done to get it detached on our own. But I did not know that at the time, so I was working as hard as I could to quickly get our family out of this dangerous situation! I was working, sweating, praying, and after some excruciatingly frustrating minutes, swearing. Yes, swearing. This young pastor was at his wit's end, and the whole family could hear my words echoing up from the undercarriage of the van!

After a long struggle I realized that I needed help, so I got back into the van and tried to call for help. The look of disappointment on my wife's face was plain to see. My kids were young but they also looked shocked. I had lost my temper and acted in an ungodly way, and they all witnessed it. I knew what I had to do but part of me did not want to even acknowledge my sin!

In that moment I swallowed my pride, put away my anger, and confessed my sin to my family, asking them for forgiveness. Even though it was hard, I knew that in that moment I had to be an example to my kids, and do what a Christian father ought to do.

17. When a parent sins against his child, why is it crucial to ask forgiveness? Will this cause the child to disrespect the parent? Why/why not?

18. Ephesians 6:4 also instructs fathers to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. What does this mean? How can parents create a culture of discipleship and learning within the home? What role can the church and Christian community play in supporting parents in this endeavor?

19. What does it mean to call God our "heavenly Father" and how does this shape our understanding of earthly fatherhood?

20. How can we pray for and support fathers who may be struggling to fulfill their role in their families? How can we extend grace and support to those who did not have positive father figures in their lives?