

Parents and Children

(Ephesians 6:1-4)

Introduction

1. Series: "Honor Trumps Conflict."
 - a. Honoring Jesus overcomes family-destroying habits by honoring one other.
 - b. Living wisely in Christ: [Eph 5:15-21] Overcome relational conflicts by submitting to God's established structure of authority as a way of practicing obedience to Christ.
 - i. Throughout history, *rebellion against God* is at the heart of sin & brokenness in relationships.
 - ii. *Submission to God* (& His appointed authority) is the key to building healthy, godly relationships.
 - c. How is this expressed in parent-child relationships?

Children honor Jesus by obeying their parents [Eph 6:1-3]

1. [1] Children honor Jesus by obeying their parents.
 - a. Children: Literal; someone not viewed as an adult.
 - i. Jewish culture: Child until 13 years old, then official ceremony (Bar/Bat Mitzvah).
 1. Work (often for family business), chores, responsibilities; could marry, start family, provide.
 - ii. Translated into our culture: If live under parent's provision, shelter and care, never financially or emotionally independent, whether 15 or 50, considered children in God's eyes.
 - iii. Age doesn't make one an adult, wisdom and responsibility do.
 1. Many are adults in age, but children in maturity.
 - b. Obey: Different than "submit" (cf. 5:21,22); military term meaning "to rank under someone."
 - i. Submission is when two people are equals, yet one places him/herself under the other's leadership.
 - ii. Obedience is when they're not equal, one is under the other, required to listen & do what they say.
 1. E.g., a private to a general, slave to master, us to Christ.
 - iii. Obedience recognizes & responds to someone's complete authority over them.
 - c. [1b] Key: Obey "in the Lord" because that's what's right in His eyes.
 - i. Obedience isn't really about the parent, but about God.
 - ii. Like other areas of life, obedience to parents is an act of love, worship & obedience to Jesus (cf. Col 3:23; Eph 5:22,25).
2. Is obedience to parents unfair or oppressive?
 - a. In the Roman Empire's culture: *Patria potestas*, the father has absolute power over the family.
 - i. If a child is unwanted, it could be abandoned to die, sold to slavery, made to work in the field. A father could punish it any way he saw fit, including inflicting a death penalty (with no legal consequence).
 - ii. A Roman son never came of age; this extended throughout their whole life. Even if grown up or promoted to a position of power/authority, they were still under their father.
 - b. Christianity is revolutionary in its treatment of children
 - i. Jesus treats children with honor; they are not valueless, brainless or powerless to Him.
 - ii. Instead of ignoring them as property, He gives children expectations, trusts they can obey, knows they will rise to the occasion by the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. [2-3] Theological basis for obedience
 - a. [2] Paul connects it with the 10 Commandments: "Honor your father and mother."
 - i. (cf. Matt 22:36-40) The 2nd set of five commandments are about loving your neighbor; the 1st five are about loving God, including honoring the representatives of His authority in our life, our parents.
 - ii. As you become an adult, how you honor your parents changes.
 1. You make your own decisions, become your own man or woman.
 2. But you must always honor & respect your parents; you never outgrow this commandment.
 - b. [3] Motivation: God's command connects with His promise about life.

- i. (cf. Exo 20:12) So that we will live long and live well; that's the goal.
 - ii. Direct impact: How our life will go is directly tied into how we honor & obey our parents.
 - 1. There are many consequences to sin that hamper the quality and duration of life when we do not heed & obey the wisdom of parents.
- 4. When should we obey our parents?
 - a. Problem: Most children do obey their parent(s)... *when it's convenient* ("I'll obey, if I agree or if feel like it").
 - i. As we obey Jesus in everything (not pick & choose), so also children should obey in everything.
 - b. What if they lead us into sin?
 - i. Jesus' authority trumps my parent's: I cannot obey when it violates God's Word & commands, but must bow to a higher authority.
 - ii. If they are abusive, cruel or violent, does God want me to "just take it"? No; that behavior is sin.
 - 1. What is most honorable to Christ & my parent? To guide them away from sin, report them to God's appointed authority above them, and set godly boundaries.
 - c. What if it's not sin, but my parent is just wrong?
 - i. What if I don't respect/trust them, or they're not following Jesus? Do I still have to obey them?
 - ii. [Rom 13:1-2] "There is no authority except from God, & those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed... & will incur judgment."
 - 1. All of us (including adults) must submit within the structure of authority established by God (in our family and in society).
 - iii. Have respectful, reasonable, Christ-honoring conversation with them; practice speaking with maturity.
 - iv. *Illustration:* In Pastor Josh's home, the native language wasn't Chinese or English, but yelling.
 - 1. No one won the argument by yelling the loudest.
 - 2. As Jesus changed him, the fruit of the Holy Spirit grew (e.g., patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control); it changed how Josh spoke to his mom, changing her as well.
 - v. But even if a parent doesn't change their mind, it is an opportunity to practice trusting/obeying Jesus.
- 5. Application: Are you an adult or child? Do you meet the biblical qualifications? Do you want all the freedom of adulthood, but none of the responsibility? Do you want to be treated as an adult, but act like a child?
 - a. Are you resisting parents in something that's not sin? Dodging, avoiding, making excuses not to obey?
 - b. How do you need to trust, honor & obey Jesus?
 - i. If Jesus asked you to do the same, would you still say: "I'm too tired or busy; leave me alone"?
 - ii. It's ok to discuss with parents, but if they don't change their mind, ultimately we must obey.
 - c. How are you rationalizing, using God against your parents?
 - i. "They want me to worship academics." No, they want you to be a good steward of the gifts God has given you as an act of worship to Jesus.
 - ii. How are you using God to make excuses not to have to work hard or be disciplined?

Parents honor Jesus by teaching kids to obey Jesus [Eph 6:4]

- 1. [4a] Pastor Dad
 - a. These commands apply to both parents, but specifically calls out dads.
 - i. Dads, God made you pastor/leader of the home.
 - ii. Being a spiritual leader isn't just having the authority to lead, but also the responsibility.
 - iii. Moms play an equally vital role, but dads take primary responsibility.
 - b. Problem: There's a whole generation embittered against dads.
 - i. Dads associated with being physically or emotionally absent or neglectful because they are too busy with work or personal interests.
 - ii. There's no male spiritual leader, role model or disciplinarian in many kids' lives.
 - c. The two greatest problems in our society today:
 - i. People don't really know their Heavenly Father.
 - ii. People don't really know their earthly father.
- 2. [4b] Negative command for parents
 - a. We need to remove this attitude/behavior: Don't provoke/frustrate kids to anger.
 - i. Literally to come alongside and enrage by poking, prodding, stabbing.
 - b. Attitudes/behaviors that frustrate kids:
 - i. When parents are absent, uncaring, uninvolved, selfish, and don't make kids a priority
 - ii. When parents are mean or abusive to each other or toward children
 - iii. When parents yell, mock, belittle, shame
 - iv. When parents send conflicting messages about values

1. "We worship & follow Jesus... when it's convenient."
 - v. When parents don't give kids opportunities to take risks, make choices, become an adult, in ways appropriate to their age.
 - vi. When parents don't listen, or give kids the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings & opinions.
 1. When parents don't explain reasons why (e.g., "because I said so").
 2. Instead, parents can help kids to practice communicating maturely.
 - vii. When discipline isn't a corrective measure, but a punitive one.
 1. When it's not to redirect them toward life & Jesus, only to express our frustration/retribution.
 2. It becomes discipline without love or purpose.
 - c. Don't punish children by taking away church or fellowship, just because they like it. It sends the wrong message about the value of Jesus & His church.
3. [4c] Positive command for parents
- a. Parents honor Jesus by teaching kids to obey Jesus.
 - i. Instead of frustrating them, raise them with the training & instruction of Jesus & His Word.
 - ii. Scripture assumes it's not primarily the job of a school or church; it's yours. Don't abdicate your role.
 - b. *Illustration*: Mark Driscoll teaches son biblical decision-making regarding man with a sign: "Money for beer?"
 - i. Explains: Reasons why people need money; how to determine if someone genuinely needs help.
 - ii. How does the dad in Proverbs teach godly wisdom to his own kids? See how he talks about the fool.
 - iii. For foolish choices, we want our sons/daughters to know that's not an option, goal, Christ-honoring.
4. The primary way we influence kids is by passing on our own pattern as an example.
- a. More is caught than taught.
 - i. *Illustration*: Messy son with nagging, clean mom, becomes hyper-clean adult.
 - ii. We & our kids are shaped by the words, attitudes, behaviors of our family of origin.
 1. Even when we swear we will not repeat their mistakes.
 2. Because that's all we were exposed to & taught, we don't know another way.
 3. We tend to fall back on & repeat those same patterns/habits, both good & bad.
 4. We pass on the same baggage & sins to our own kids.
 - b. We counter learned dysfunctional patterns (from imperfect parents) by looking to our perfect Heavenly Father.
 - i. He is never evil, impatient, cruel, unjust, unkind or unfaithful.
 - ii. He can be a better model, redeemer, re-parenter; He's a perfect Dad.
 - c. If you want to teach your kids to obey you, model obedience by obeying Jesus.
 - i. Value Jesus' instruction; obey His Word & authority as God.
 - ii. *Illustration*: Parents take kids out of children's program, concerned about other kids as bad influence.
 1. What if we're the bad influence by teaching kids not to follow Jesus when it's hard?
 2. Teach kids to love/follow Jesus & love/embrace others, vs. choosing our own comfort & security above Jesus.
5. *Application*: Do you teach kids to love Jesus & His Word because you love Jesus & His Word?
- a. Do you read, study, and live out the Bible? Do you read it with your kids?
 - b. Do you pray for & with your kids regularly (cf. Job 1:5)?
 - i. Teach integration of Christ into their daily life as normative.
 - c. When they mess up, work through a process of repentance & reconciliation.
 - i. Once forgiven, don't bring it up again. Let them know forgiveness is the conclusion.
 - ii. It frustrates kids if you keep bringing up sin that's already, supposedly forgiven.
 - iii. Instead, teach them how Jesus' forgiveness is complete.
 - d. Dads: It's important for you to follow God's commands & get involved:
 - i. Otherwise, boys see only mom following Jesus, and see faith as feminine.
 1. Boys learn by example; men need to lead them by example.
 - ii. Girls should grow up wanting to marry someone like dad:
 1. Dad loves me, loves Jesus, knows the Bible, prays; when dad sins, he repents.
 - e. If no kids yet, but want some in the future: How are you getting ready to train your kids to love Jesus, His church, His Word, prayer, repentance?
 - i. Train yourself by practicing these things *now* in your own life.

Conclusion

1. Ideally they go together.
 - a. It's easy to obey parents who don't frustrate you but love Jesus & point you toward Him.
 - b. It's easy to stop provoking kids & focus on their Christ-like training when they're obedient.

- c. However, God's command for you is not dependent on whether or not the other person complies.
 - i. We are responsible to honor & obey Jesus regardless of what the other person does or doesn't do.
- 2. Scriptures teach: Honor trumps conflict
 - a. Hold Jesus in high esteem; hold husbands/wives in high esteem; hold parents/children in high esteem.
 - b. If we love & worship Jesus, we need to honor & obey Him by honoring other family members with these timeless principles.
 - c. Prayer response:
 - i. As someone's child (whether 15 or 50), repent of the ways we dishonored our parent(s).
 - ii. As a parent (or before we become one), repent of how we've frustrated those who are younger.
 - 1. Repent of not being an example of loving & following Jesus' Word.
 - iii. Also pray for your parents or kids, no matter how imperfect they may be.