

## Sunday, April 18, 2021 | What No One Told Us About Parenting

Week 2 | Ephesians 6:1-4 | “The Parent/Child Agreement”

### Announcements

- 3 Ways to Stay Connected
  - Social media – search “Grace Pointe Life” and click on our logo.
  - Text updates – Text the phrase “GracePointe” to 43506 to sign up.
  - Quarterly Newsletter – head to GracePointeLife.com, scroll to the bottom, put in your email, first name, last name, tell us whether you're a Grace Pointe member, and hit the "Sign up" button. The newsletter will contain upcoming events, what we've accomplished so far during that quarter, and any pertinent information to the life of the church.

Last week, we started a new four-week series called ‘What No One Told Us About Parenting.’ This series seeks to answer questions about some of the most demanding areas of raising a family.

The first topic we tackled last week was a child’s nature. Parenting is striving to love and nurture a human being that has been *born broken*. Because of Adam’s disobedience, all of his descendants are exiled. For the human race to be saved from themselves, they need a new ancestor. Thus, because of Christ’s obedience, all of his descendants are exonerated. Meaning, every human being is born broken and in need of being born again. More than a child needing correction, they need transformation through the life-changing power of the Gospel. Only the Gospel can effectively address our children’s sinful natures.

Today, we'll be tackling what the role of a child is in the family and what the part of the parent is in the family. If it were a contract, it would be called the Parent/Child Agreement. This relationship is a two-way street. Just as the child has responsibilities concerning their parents, the parent has responsibilities concerning their children.

What did the first-century family unit look like?<sup>1</sup>

Being a child in the first century was not easy. For instance, many children did not survive childbirth, with only about 1 and 5 coming through unscathed. What's more, of

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<sup>1</sup> Cohick, Lynn H., *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2020), p. 376-381.

those who were born, only half made it to their tenth birthday. And most children were working in the fields by the time they were seven.

Family life was also an unusual group compared to today. While not common in the Jewish world, exposing newborns to the elements was a common way of disposing of children that parents did not want. Sadly, these would often be children of slaves, and even more sad was that more baby girls died this way than boys. Interestingly, many early church fathers encouraged their congregates to take in orphaned or discarded babies. In this way, the church literally grew via the nursery and children ministries. As little as 40% of the church's population was made up of children, many of which were slaves who had been discarded at birth. But even for kids who were not slaves and grew up in a two-parent home, most lost one or both of their parents by the time they were teenagers.

Thus, as Paul writes to Ephesus, he's speaking to kids where the majority had probably lost at least one parent, were slaves who didn't even know who their parents were, and had been working in the fields since they were seven. When Paul addresses parents, he's speaking to single-parent homes, and he's speaking to parents who are very likely not even parenting their own biological children, many of whom would've been exploited in ways that I will not mention.

The point is if Paul can say what he says in Ephesians 6 to parents and children who were living in far more difficult times than we are today, then we have no excuse but to abide by the principles he's set forth here.

**READ:** Ephesians 6:1-4 (NKJV)

<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.

Paul defines the roles of children and parents in the home.

- i. The Child's Duty
  - a. Obey their parents.

**READ:** Proverbs 1:8-9 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, <sup>9</sup> for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Despite what the world tells children today, you are not ***required*** to understand before you obey. Interestingly, part of maturing is realizing that you do not always need to understand to follow. With most things, we learn by doing. And, for a child, the path to understanding a rule begins by simple obedience.

Now, this does not mean, as parents, we shouldn't make an effort to explain the reasoning behind why we want to do something. The parent who doesn't at least make an effort to explain isn't really parenting at all. Every good parent wants their kids to know the "why" behind their rule and not simple blind obedience. However, if a parent has made every effort to explain themselves, and if the child still doesn't fully comprehend, it falls to the child to obey. The quickest way to understanding is obedience.

**b. Honor their parents.**

Paul uses the Greek word **τιμάω** (timáō). It means to revere, respect, or defer to someone. It has the idea of fixing a set value of someone and respecting who they are and what they stand for. Those who honor their parents will respect their parents. Those who dishonor their parents will disrespect their parents.

Now, so that I follow my own advice, let me give you the "why" for these commands. It is not only "right" but "well-pleasing to the Lord," and those who do so are promised long and good life. Throughout the OT, God pledged to give children a long and good life who obey and honor their parents. In fact, this promise is embedded with the fifth commandments. And it is the first commandment given to God's people with a specific, rather than general, guarantee.

**READ:** Exodus 20:12 (ESV)

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may belong in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

In fact, many believe there is a reason why "obey your parents" comes in the ten Commandments where it does. It is a transitional principle.<sup>2</sup> The first four commands deal with our relationship with God. The last five commands deal with our relationship with others. Right at this juncture, God commands that kids ought to obey. Why? Because before you can ever

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<sup>2</sup> Thielman, Franks, *Ephesians*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2010), p. 398.

appropriately interact with others, every child must first learn to interact with their parents. How a child treats other people is indicative of how they treat their parents.

As a general rule, obeying and honoring one's parents fosters self-discipline, which brings success in a person's life, resulting in longevity and stability. Conversely, disobedience and dishonor for one's parents enable an undisciplined life that brings nothing but failure, which brings overall lack of stability often results in a shortened lifespan.

## ii. The Parent's Duty

### a. Do not provoke their children.

Paul says that the parent shouldn't provoke anger from their children. In fact, he repeats this in a letter he wrote to the Colossians and adds a pivotal reason to abstain from doing so

**READ:** Colossians 3:21 (ESV)

*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

Dads, moms, do not make it a habit of angering your children. To do so, will only lead to a discouraged child.

But, how exactly can parents provoke their children? What does that look like so we can avoid doing it?

Let's be frank. Kids can be angry for several reasons. Paul's point is that of the countless reason why a child can be angry, let it not be because of poor parenting. Not every instance of anger in a child is correct, but neither is every instance of anger in a child wrong. Sometimes, their rage is warranted because we, as parents, have failed them (i.e., inconsistent in rules "do as I say, not as I do," commands without reason, talking without listening, never admitting when you've made a mistake, never saying sorry, etc.).

### b. Train their children.

The Greek word Paul uses here is **παιδεία** (paideia). It refers to all the aspects of education. Hence, the KJV's translation of the word as "nurture" seems closer to the mark. Not unlike how a flower is nurtured till it blooms, a child ought to be nurtured until he/she grows into a full-fledged adult. Like a flower, a child needs a safe and secure home to put down their roots. Their home, not unlike soil, ought to be filled with everything a body and mind needs to grow happy and healthy. And like a flower in a greenhouse, a child ought to be protected from the harsh elements which would seek to harm them.

### c. Admonish their children.

"Admonition" is an old word that means discipline, correction, or rebuke. And, I don't have to tell you that one of the most awkward but necessary aspects of parenting is in the area of disciplining children. It's an uncomfortable topic to talk about because society has its way of discipline, and the bible has its way. And while the two have some overlap, the goals are very different. Biblically informed discipline admonishes a child to walk in step with Christ, to help them be more conformed to the image of Christ. Socially informed discipline admonishes a child to walk in step with social norms to help them be more conformed to the image of the society.

But why is discipline so important? An individual who is not adequately disciplined as a child will find it challenging to practice self-discipline as an adult. And before an adult ever became undisciplined, they were first an undisciplined child.

So, what kind of discipline is right? Notice that Paul says to discipline or admonish your child; he doesn't specify how to do so. He only says do it. Thus, whether one spansks or chooses another form, the point is that one of the primary responsibilities of a parent is to discipline. Meaning that, no, spanking is not wrong. In fact, most of the passages in Scripture that speak about discipline have a physical element to them (cf. Deut. 8:5; 2 Sam 7:14; Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15, 17). However, I am quick to add, there is a canyon-sized difference between beating a child and spanking a child. Spanking done in anger which leaves a bruise, isn't admonition at all, but abuse.

Interestingly, the source of the English word *discipline* is from the Latin *discipulus*, which means "instruction, knowledge, a learner, to learn." It is closely related to "disciple." Meaning, Christian discipline, then, should be defined as discipleship—i.e., following Christ, which in turn leads to a particular lifestyle, one of self-discipline. When you discipline a child, your motivation is to instruct them in proper conduct, becoming a follower of God. You do not, and should not, break down a child, but your intention should always be to build up a child. And while the Greek word for "discipline" does involve our idea of punishment, how the first-century church would've understood it to mean would've also carried the connotation of education and training.<sup>3</sup> This is why, in the Greek translation of Proverbs, the word for "admonition" here is more often translated as "instruction" rather than "discipline or punishment." In other words, the parent who both punishes and educates is truly parenting, while the parent who only does one and not the other isn't really parenting at all.

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<sup>3</sup> Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2002), p. 797.

Now, while the Book of Proverbs is just that, a book of proverbs and not promises, it nevertheless has clear teachings and incentives when it addresses some of life's biggest issues.

**READ:** Proverbs 29:17 (ESV)

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Delight for a parent later in life is secured when the parent admonishes their children early in life (cf. Pro. 29:17). Now, while there are no guarantees in parenting and more discipline does not automatically equate to a successful child, I can say with some certainty that a lack of discipline will equate to a child who'll be more prone to failure than success. Just as God disciplines us to make us more like him, we ought to discipline our children to make them more mature. A lack of God's discipline would prove a lack of love. But the very fact that God punishes us is proof of God's love for us (cf. Hebrews 12:6-7). Likewise, a parent who does not discipline their child does not really love their child. As parents, we should love our children so much that we are willing to do the hard things, like discipline.

**SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?**

The parent and child ought to serve one another as if they were serving Christ.

**READ:** Ephesians 6:1-4 (NKJV)

<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.

In the Lord, children are to obey, and of the Lord, parents are to parent. Daughter/son, you are not really obeying your parents when you follow your parents. First and foremost, you are obeying the Lord. Mom/dad, you are not really parenting your children the way you think you should parent them. First and foremost, you ought to parent the way that the Lord wants you to parent.

As parents, we must view our children as gifts from the Lord (cf. Psalm 127:3). They are not really ours. If anything, they are on loan from God. As such, we ought to remember that our parenting will be judged, not according to how we were parented growing up, but how God parented us all. We ought to love our children the way that God loved us. We ought to provide

for our children the way that God provides for us. We ought to teach our children the way that God teaches us. And we ought to discipline our children the way that God disciplines us.

As children, they must view their parents as God's representatives. Your real father is the one who sits on the throne of heaven. He loves you so much that he made you exactly the way you are. He even died for you. So, even if you do not understand or have a less-than-stellar parent, you must obey and honor. In doing so, you will be obeying and honoring God, Himself.

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## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: