

What To Teach Children • Eph. 6:1-4 • Parenting Series #5

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Triplets*^[1]

1. A mother and father came home from the hospital with triplets.
2. They were met at the door by their four-year-old son who took one look at his new siblings and said,
3. “We better start calling folks. They’re gonna’ be a lot harder to get rid of than kittens.”
4. Children are also a lot harder to *raise* than kittens.
5. Parenting is a tough and demanding job.
6. We should have known that anything that started with something called “labor” was not going to be easy.

B. *Today*

1. We wrap up our series on parenting this morning
2. And as we do, we end by taking a look at what parents are to *teach* their child.
3. Last week we studied Ephesians 6:4 and saw that the *means* of parenting is to *train* and *admonish* our children.
4. *What* we’re to train and admonish them *to* is found in verses 1-3.

II. TEXT

A. *Ephesians 6:1-3*

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:

3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

1. Parenting is a learning experience – both for the child and for the parents
2. Here’s what many parents learn as they have one-two, then three children or more

First Baby: At the first sign of distress – a whimper, a frown- you pick up the baby and cuddle.

Second Baby: You pick up your baby when her wail threatens to wake up your firstborn.

Third Baby and Beyond: You teach your three year old how to rewind the swing.

First Baby: You pre-wash your newborn's clothes, color-coordinate them, and fold them neatly in the special little baby bureau.

Second Baby: You check to make sure the clothes are clean and discard only those with the darkest stains.

Third Baby and Beyond: Boys can wear pink, can't they?

First Baby: You take your infant to Baby Gymnastics, Baby Swim, and Baby Story Hour

Second Baby: You take your infant to a co-op play group.

Third Baby and Beyond: You take your infant to the grocery store and cleaners.

First Baby: The first time you leave your baby with a sitter, you call home 5 times.

Second Baby: Just before you walk out the door, you remember to leave a number where you can be reached.

Third Baby and Beyond: You leave instructions for the sitter to call only if she sees blood.

First Baby: You spend a good bit of every day just gazing at the baby.

Second Baby: You spend a bit of every day watching to be sure your older child isn't squeezing, poking, or pinching the baby.

Third Baby and Beyond: You spend a good part of each day *hiding* from the children.

3. Yes, parenting *is* a learning experience – and in these verses, we find what it is children are supposed to learn.
4. Of course, while these verses are *directed* at children, we know it's the parents who will be *teaching* them.

5. And as we read them we realize there are 2 things parents are instructed to teach:
6. Verse 1 shows us that children are to obey their parents while vs. 2 & 3 tell us they are to honor them.

B. Obey

1. A child's first duty is *obedience*.
2. Notice how Paul words it:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

3. As we'd expect, the Greek word "obey" has far more richness than it's English counterpart
 - a. the literal meaning is *to listen under*
 - b. it pictures someone who's paying careful attention to someone *above* them
 - c. it's the posture of the private listening to the briefing of his commanding office as he's about to enter combat.
 - d. it's the attention a novice sky-diver gives the instructor prior to her first jump
 - e. it's the way a student listens to the teacher as she gives a list of the questions that are going to be on the Final Exam.
4. That's what this word "obey" means – to pay careful attention to.
5. It speaks of far more than mere outward compliance to a command; it refers to a sincere and attentive attitude that waits with earnest expectation to hear and then heed whatever directions are given.
6. This is what's expected of children = and this is what parents are to *teach* their sons and daughters.
7. And you know why it has to be taught? Because it doesn't come naturally!
8. What comes naturally to a child is *disobedience* and rebellion.
9. As we saw earlier in our series, children are born little sinners
 - a. they come in to this world with a natural inclination, a bent, toward rebellion.
 - b. what makes it worse is that collectively, this fallen world unites to enforce a culture of rebellion
 - c. so as parents, we face two powerful forces that resist our teaching of obedience –

- 1) our child's *inner* bent toward disobedience
 - 2) and the outward influence of the *world's* bend toward rebellion.
10. Anyone whose had a child knows that you don't have to *teach* a child to disobey – it comes quite naturally.
 - a. children don't have to be taught to lie
 - b. they don't have to be *shown* how to be selfish – they are by nature.
 - c. what they *need* to be taught is to obey.
 11. What makes teaching obedience doubly difficult in our age is that our whole society has come to the place where it *values* rebellion.
 - a. rebellion has been enshrined in the popular media
 - b. many of the icons of our age are rebels
 - c. James Dean, the consummate rebel of the 50's is a hero for many
 - d. rock 'n roll has it's roots firmly in an attitude of rebellion
 - e. rock's grandson – rap – is the epitome of rebellion
 - f. just 20 years ago, tattoos and body piercing were seen by the vast majority as a sign of really far out rebellion but now are fashion statements sported by athletes and super models.
 12. All of this and more are signs that rebellion has become chic – accepted, even valued!
 13. That's interesting because the Apostle Paul says that when rebellion becomes accommodated in a culture, it's a sign that society has reached it's nadir of decadence.
 14. In 2 Timothy 3 he says that widespread disobedience to parents will be one of the signs of the end times.
 15. As we look at the programming that's aimed at young people today we realize that a large portion of it presents authority figures, at best as inept and at worst as corrupt.
 - a. the hero is some young person who dares to be bold and buck the system
 - b. he or she *rebels* against the establishment and makes his or her own way.
 16. This kind of programming all too often sets kids at odds with their parents
 - a. it pumps a steady stream of misinformation in to kids heads that

- authority is corrupt and to be resisted.
- b. it drives a wedge between parents and children and helps foster an attitude of distrust and rebellion.
17. According to recent studies, the average high school senior will have watched 20,000 hours of TV by the time they graduate.
- a. that's 20,000 hours of programming that typically *vilifies* authorities and *glamorizes* sin
 - b. now wonder some 10 million young people have a sexually transmitted disease, with nearly another 5,000 contracting one every day!
 - c. 1 in 5 teens use drugs regularly
 - d. between 7 and 14 million youth under the legal drinking age are already alcoholics!
18. Because of both the inner and outward bend toward disobedience, parents have the solemn and sober responsibility to resist the influences of the world and teach their child to obey.
19. Notice what Paul says . . .

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

20. The word “right” means *proper, fit, that which is correct*.
- a. it speaks of that which is in *harmony* with the circumstances.
 - b. Paul doesn't have to explain because he reckons that obedience to parents is a self-evident truth
 - c. every culture, throughout the history of the world, has understood the *rightness* of a child's obedience to his or her parents.
 - d. natural law and divine law *both* affirm this – as Paul goes on to say in vs. 2 & 3 when he quotes the 5th Commandment.
21. We agree with the rightness of obedience to parents whenever we see a child who is being disobedient and we say to ourselves – “That's not right!”
22. I'll never forget a scene I witnessed some years ago at a mall bookstore
- a. there was a woman ahead of me in line at the register with an 8 or 9 year old boy
 - b. he wandered over to some kids' books and started thumbing through them
 - c. done with one, he'd drop it carelessly on the ground – she said

- nothing
- d. when he found one he wanted, he loudly demanded she buy it
 - e. she shook her head – but that was like pulling a trigger on a gun – he went OFF!
 - f. he started yelling at her; the yells turned to insults as he called her names
 - g. finally, to quiet him, she consented and he walked over to her with a smug look of triumph
 - h. she looked around at the handful of people who'd stopped to witness this terrible tirade with a weak and apologetic smile – as if to say, "I'm okay."
 - i. so badly, I wanted to follow them out of the store and have a little chat with both mom and son.
 - j. I probably should have, but didn't.
 - k. I'll never forget the shock and disgust that was on the faces of the other people in the store as they watched and listened to this little rebel in such flagrant disobedience –
 - l. and the shameful way his mother gave in.
 - m. there wasn't a person there who didn't know that that mother had been doing something terribly wrong in the raising of that child; SOMEONE had done something terribly wrong!
23. Children are to obey because it's *right*.
- a. God has placed mothers and fathers in children's lives to be their authority.
 - b. the obligation He puts on a child is to be submitted to and obey them.
 - c. not just in *outward* behavior, but from the heart, with readiness and cheer.
24. The so-called parenting experts of today tell us that parents ought to strive to be their child's *friend* more than authority figure.
- a. equating authority with power and power with force, they claim the exercise of authority actually stunts and harms a child's sense of self.
 - b. so they urge parents to *mentor* their children – to come alongside them and be their friend.
25. But here's what God says – "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."
- a. God has **MADE** parents the authorities in a child's life.

- b. it's not up to a mother or father to try to take some other role
 - c. they're NOT merely a mentor or a friend; they're a parent, they're an authority!
 - d. the only issue is whether or not they are going to faithfully raise their children.
26. You see, children MUST learn to obey their parents because obedience does not come naturally, and if they don't learn it as children, then the rebellion that comes naturally to them will grow and become more dangerous and lead to a ruined life.
 27. God intends parents to be an expression of *His* authority so that as children grow, they can learn to submit to visible authorities and when they arrive at adulthood, their hearts will be framed to submit to Him.
 28. So the process of teaching obedience carries on right up through the teens years
 29. I think it's tragic that many people today *expect* their teenage son or daughter to rebel.
 30. I even remember hearing a well-known and respected Christian parenting expert say on a video series once about preparing for adolescence that the best advice he had for parents of teens was to "Just get them through it."
 31. That comment reinforces the idea that it's inevitable that teenagers are going to wig out.
 32. Wild music, hair and clothing styles and a continual testing of the boundaries are seen as "normal" fare for teenagers.
 33. But I don't think it needs to be this way – in fact, I'd say that in light of what this passage teaches us, we ought NOT think these things are normal.
 34. They're evidence that we need to refocus our efforts on raising our children as the Lord directs.
 35. If we've been diligent in a child's early years to teach them to obey, then I think we have every reason to expect them to continue in obedience throughout their youth.
 36. Sure there'll be bumps in the road as an emerging adult struggles to assert their own individual self –
 37. But if we've done our homework – the work of the Christian home – then we'll have laid a moral foundation of character that will make sure those bumps don't wreck the car.

38. They'll be more like speed-bumps that merely correct the course our child is taking.
39. And this is why it's so critical that we understand the teaching of obedience aims at more than just *compliance*.
 - a. remember – the word *obey* means to pay careful attention to hear and heed
 - b. obedience isn't the little boy who was told by his teacher to sit in the corner for acting poorly in class
 - c. as he stomped over to the chair and had a seat he mumbled . . .
 - d. "I may be sitting down on the outside, but inside, I'm standing up!"
40. That's not biblical *obedience* – that's mere *compliance*.
41. Since the heart is the issue, we must focus on the issue of the heart.
42. And this brings us back to the means of parenting we looked at last week: training and admonition.
43. In teaching obedience, the first step is *admonition* – which is *verbal instruction*.
 - a. first we need to make sure we're being clear with our child about what it is we expect.
 - b. far too often, parents *expect* their children to know what to do w/o telling them.
 - c. remember – they're born with a natural inclination to sin.
 - d. take nothing for granted – talk with your child and tell him or her precisely what it is that you require.
 - e. and let them know what's REALLY important is their attitude!
 - f. tell them it isn't enough to be outwardly compliant but that true obedience is when they obey from the heart and accept your right as a parent to require them to do whatever it is you're asking.
 - g. a child is only truly obedient when they obey *promptly* and *cheerfully*.
 - h. everything else is stained by a taint of rebellion.
 - i. so, first – admonish, that is tell your child what it is that's expected, and make sure you focus on the heart's participation.
44. The second step in teaching obedience is *training* – which refers to *example* and *discipline*.
 - a. children learn by *example* long before they learn by word

- 1) young children do not possess the ability to communicate verbally, but they're excellent mimics.
 - 2) they carry this ability over with them into the rest of life
 - 3) a mother or father who *tells* their child to do one thing, but then practices something else is going to provide an example of nothing but hypocrisy.
 - 4) along with verbal instruction there must be the *example*
 - 5) if we expect prompt, cheerful obedience from our children, we have to ask if we're modeling it ourselves.
 - a) am I a good employee at work and demonstrate loyalty to my boss when I'm home?
 - b) or do I come home and talk about those stupid idiots in management?
 - c) do I brag about the way I skirted or ducked work?
 - d) does my child observe me bending the truth?
 - e) do I make light of the laws and use the streets rudely?
 - f) if my wife asks me to help her with something – do I shine her on, or do I cheerfully assist her?
 - 6) how about this one? When talking with your husband or wife, do you *pay attention* – or do you model *inattention* to your children?
 - 7) remember – obedience *begins* with a child being in the place of being *ready* to hear; they're to be attentive, in the posture of *waiting* on the parent's direction.
 - 8) one of the most effective ways to teach this is to model it in our attention to each other and our children.
 - b. and along with *example* as we train goes *discipline*.
 - 1) when our child disobeys, as we saw last week, we apply whatever level of correction is appropriate
 - 2) verbal rebuke, loss of privilege, the rod of correction, all of these have their place in the task of discipline and correction
45. There's one important qualification to obedience that Paul identifies here. He says . . .

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

- a. the realm of obedience for all people, regardless of age, is faithfulness to the Lord.
- b. no one, including children ever ought to comply with demands

- that are a clear violation of God's Word
- c. what if a Christian teenager is told by his unbelieving father that he has to renounce his faith?
 - d. he's not to do it! Jesus said that He came to divide the members of a family over this issue of faith in Him. [2]
 - e. when the apostles were pressured to renounce Christ, they said that they had to obey God rather than man. [3]
 - f. what if an unbelieving father tells his Christian daughter she can't go to church one Sunday?
 - g. simple – she ought not go; she doesn't disobey God by missing a church service for this reason.
 - h. her cheerful obedience to her father's wish may actually move him to consider the *basis* of her faith.

C. Honor

1. The Second thing parents are to teach their children is *Honor!*
- 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:**
- 3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”**
2. The word “honor” is “timao” and means *to prize; to fix value on.*
3. Paul quotes the 5th commandment here.
4. We're told that the 10 Commandments were engraved on two tablets.
 - a. the first tablet contained the first 4 commands – all dealing with the vertical relation of man and God
 - b. the second tablet contained the last 6 and dealt with the horizontal relationship of one person to another
 - c. the 5th commandment is the *hinge* between these two sets of commands
 - d. God wants us to understand that we have to have the vertical relationship with Him right if we're to be right in our relationships with other people
 - e. and the place we learn to bring over our relationship to Him to our relationships with other human beings is in the home, with our parents.

- f. so God commands that children show honor to their parents.
- 5. Honor is the *foundation* of ALL healthy relationships.
- 6. I must first prize God and realize His worth and worthiness.
- 7. But then I must prize other human beings who bear the image of God and are the objects of His eternal affection.
- 8. If I prize God, then I *will* hold valuable what He esteems – and what He esteems, is people.
- 9. The first place we learn to fix value on others is at home with our parents.
- 10. And in this verse, God is calling children to fix value on them.
- 11. Note that friends – it's important
 - a. we talk a lot about *earning* respect by being honorable.
 - b. we say that a person needs to be *worthy* of respect
 - c. while that's true, Scripture doesn't call for honor where it is *earned*
 - d. honor ISN'T earned, - it's owed!
 - e. God has placed a debt of honor on us; we must be diligent to make payments on it in each and every relationship, but especially at home!
- 12. The task of parents is to teach their children to *show* honor
- 13. And again – we do this through admonition and training
 - a. we remind our children that as their parents they're to show us deference and honor by being *attentive* to us –
 - b. paying attention to us and being diligent to follow through on what we say.
- 14. There are some wonderful ways that we can teach honor to our children;
 - a. I'll just briefly mention them now,
 - b. but please be aware that we'll be developing these further in the follow up parenting classes.
- 15. For now, let me just mention some of the ways parents can teach honor to their children.
 - a. require your children to address you in a respectful manner, and when they don't, correct them
 - 1) insist they address adults with Mr., Mrs. or Miss.
 - 2) getting food
 - 3) teach them common courtesy – like table manners
 - b. never criticize your child's other parent to the child – rather,

- praise them and encourage a positive and healthy attitude on your child's part to the other parent
- 1) if disrespect for your mate is common in your home think about what you are teaching your child!
 - 2) if verbal or physical violence is a part of your relationship with your mate – think about what you are teaching your child!
- c. show active honor and praise around your home – stomp on negative and critical attitudes!
- d. mom and dad – help each other and make it an expectation that the children help with chores around the house
- 1) why leave cleaning and upkeep to one person?
 - 2) mom's not a maid!
 - 3) as soon as a child is old enough, he or she ought to show active honoring of mom & dad by taking care of their own stuff in the dirty clothes, the bathroom and the dishes in the kitchen!
- e. model honor by being respectful to others in public
- 1) don't hurl invectives at the people who cut us off or run the light
 - 2) don't dishonor public officials
 - 3) open the door for others
 - 4) push the shopping cart back to the cart well and when you're going in to the store, grab one someone left in the lane and take it with you.
 - 5) treat service people warmly!
- f. take special care to honor the elderly by assisting them with bags and doors and such
- 1) perhaps you've heard the tale of the little old man who lived with his son and daughter in law
 - 2) he became somewhat feeble and prone to spilling his food
 - 3) when the daughter in law grew disgusted, she demanded that he sit in the corner away from the table
 - 4) but when he dropped his bowl and it broke on the floor, she said that if he was going to act like a pig and make a mess, he could eat like a pig, and fashioned a wooden trough to eat out of.
 - 5) a few nights later, the man and his wife noticed that their 4

- year old son was working with little pieces of wood
- 6) they asked what he was doing and he said he was making a tough to feed them out of when *he grew up!*
 - 7) the next night, grandpa was back at the table with a china plate and crystal goblet.
- g. demonstrate respect for property and nature
 - 1) what I mean is – don't litter or pollute
 - 2) and when you deal with stuff, especially other people's stuff, exercise care so that it isn't lost or broken
 - h. finally – constantly challenge your child to think about what kind of work their actions are causing others.
16. Look at what Paul says here

2 ***“Honor your father and mother,”*** which is the first commandment with promise:

3 ***“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”***

- a. Paul identifies the promise that God attaches to the 5th Commandment
 - b. if honor becomes the norm for a culture – if people honor God and demonstrate that honor by honoring one another –
 - c. the result is a civilization that will prosper and grow
 - d. crime and poverty will decline, the standard of living will go up and people will live longer.
17. But now tell me – where does it all begin? At home – with parents teaching their children.
18. Today, we've dispensed with God – so, men and woman have been reduced down to mere cosmic accidents.
- a. honor as a social principle has become hollow
 - b. it's now everyone for themselves – even in families
 - c. again – Paul says this is a sign of the last days – when people would be without natural affection – and the word he uses means the love of family members for one another.
 - d. rudeness and crudeness have become commonplace
 - e. is it any wonder we see a decline in our standard of living
 - f. the murder rate is up, and life-expectancy is slowly shrinking

III. CONCLUSION

A. Heroes

1. Over the last few years several popular songs have decried the lack of heroes.
2. Because the real heroes are absent, Hollywood has to make them up – and so we have the Superman movies, The Phantom, Indiana Jones, Luke Skywalker, and soon – Spiderman!
3. I contend there are many heroes today – they just don't get much press.
4. The heroic are those mothers and fathers who bravely embrace God's directions as parents, resist the parental dumbing down that's become fashionable, and instead, unapologetically seek to raise their children through the training and admonition of the Lord to be obedient and honorable.
5. A teacher asked her 4th grade class to write a paper about whoever their hero was
 - a. one young boy did it on his father
 - b. when he took the paper home his father was so proud he nearly wept.
 - c. regaining his composure he asked the lad – “Why did you pick me?”
 - d. the little boy replied, “Cause I couldn't spell Arnold Schwarzenegger.”
6. Most dads probably wouldn't mind coming in 2nd to Arnold – but I suggest they are heroes – if they faithfully follow the Lord in the raising of their children.
7. The only hope for our culture is a generation of godly young people.
8. It's our duty to raise them!

B. The End

1. This ends our series on parenting.
2. But the end of the series is only the beginning of the task.
3. Now we have to implement these things.
4. Like the marriage covenant itself – what's required surpasses human ability.
5. God wants us to look to Him for the wisdom and strength we need to love and serve our mate and our children.
6. He wants to partner with us in the great adventure of raising our

kids.

7. And as we do – He wants us to see how He’s bringing *us* up to become mature spiritual sons and daughters.

[1] Thanks to Sandy Adams and his booklet *Kid Gloves* – pg. 57

[2] Matthew 10:34

[3] Acts 5:39