

Ephesians 6:1-3 Answers Children Obey Your Parents

Review: This section of Ephesians began back in 4:17 (read aloud) and runs all way to 6:9. In it Paul urges believes to no longer live like the pagan Gentiles live. Instead, we are to walk in love and light. Like an old coat, we are to take off the old man and put on the new man. This new section is thus about being transformed in Christ. It runs from 4:17 all the way to 6:9. Paul first gave general renewal admonitions to everyone (4:17-5:21), followed by renewal admonitions to specific groups (husbands, wives, fathers, children, slaves, masters).

The Bible's teachings on family life are simple: husbands love, wives submit, children obey.

******1. Why should children obey their parents (6:1-3)?** (*Ask a minor to read it*). The main reason children are to obey their parents because it is right to do so! Paul then reinforced/proved the importance for obedience by quoting God's command from Sinai that children honor their parents (one of the Ten Commandments).

ESV Proverbs 1:8-9 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

ESV Proverbs 6:20 . . . keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.

ESV Proverbs 23:22 Listen to your father who gave you life . . .

Steve Green Song: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right".

2. Kids: What does it mean to obey someone (6:1)? See *Proverbs 6:20, 23:22*. Obey is from *hupakouo* which literally means to hear under. Thus it means to listen to, to harken to a command, to be obedient to, to submit to.

Obedience Defined: "Obedience is doing what I'm told to do, when I'm told to do it, without complaining." This definition is a good one for children to memorize and parents to post on the refrigerator. Idea: Lead all those under 18 years of age in repeating this definition aloud several times.

3. Parents: From a purely practically perspective (no theology), why is it important to train your children to be obedient?

1) Parents can expect a life of frustration from a disobedient child.

ESV Proverbs 29:15 . . . a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

2) The child's life could eventually depend on it. Were it not for their parent's direction and protection, a child would soon perish.

ESV **Proverbs 30:17** The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.

3) It is good practice for later since throughout our lives we will need to obey someone else in authority over us (a teacher, a boss, a policeman, a general, the government, the church, etc.).

4. **Why is it important to train your child for *first time* obedience?** A parent who gives a command to a child, only to be ignored, and who then begins a threatening count, “1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . .” has effectively trained the child not to obey until the last number is called. This serves neither the child nor the parent well. The same is true for tone of voice; if the child only responds to a shrill command, rather than a calm command, it is the parent who has trained him not to obey until the shrill tone comes out (after repeated calm tones). If you kids bug you, it is your own fault! “Obedience is doing what I’m told to do, when I’m told to do it.”

5. **What does the phrase “in the Lord” mean (6:1)? (If a child’s parents are not in the Lord, is the child free to disobey?).** See *Leviticus 19:3, Colossians 3:20*. All parents are to be obeyed, regardless if they are in the Lord or not. However, it is all the more incumbent upon those children who are themselves “in the Lord” (i.e. believers) to obey their parents. If a child is walking with the Lord, a spirit of obedience is the invariable result. As with a wife’s submission to her husband or a husband’s love for his wife, so also a child’s obedience depends not with the worthiness of the parents, but because it pleases the Lord. It is a divine duty.

ESV **Colossians 3:20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

6. **Why is it right for a child to obey his parents (6:1)?** It is right simply because the Lord has commanded it here.

7. **What in Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2 shows that disobedience to parents is no small sin?** In describing a society that God had given over to homosexuality, Paul listed other rampant sins that would run parallel and one of them is “disobedient to parents” (Ro 1:30). When cataloging the difficulties of the last days, disobedience to parents made the list (2Ti 3:2).

ESV **Romans 1:26-31** . . . since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

ESV **2 Timothy 3:1-5** But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Training our children to be obedient is so important that a major qualification for elders is that their children be well behaved:

ESV 1 Timothy 3:4-5 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

8. In 6:2, why did Paul quote God's commandment that children honor their parents (6:2)? How does it relate to Paul's command that children obey their parents (6:1)? The Sinai command that children honor their parents (one of the Ten Commandments), is offered by Paul as further proof of the importance of obedience.

9. What is the difference between obedience (6:1) and honor (6:2)? To honor is a much broader concept than to obey. Honor (6:2) is from *timao* (basis for the name Timothy); literally it means to price something (to fix its value). Then it came to mean to revere, to venerate. In our society it means to hold in high respect. Obedience is just one form of honor. A child who obeys his parents with a bad attitude is not honoring his parents. A child who is disrespectful to his parents is not honoring his parents. "Obedience is doing what I'm told to do, when I'm told to do it, without complaining."

ESV Leviticus 19:3 Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father . . . I am the LORD your God.

ESV Deuteronomy 27:16 Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.

10. How does Matthew 15:3-7 help us understand what it means for adult children to honor their parents (6:2)? See 1 Timothy 5:4. This applies to us as grown-ups as well. The corrupt Jewish leaders of Jesus' day would dedicate their possessions to God as an excuse to evade spending money on their aged parents. Jesus obviously interpreted honor to include material sustenance. Being helped by our grown children in old age is Scriptural Social Security!

NIV 1 Timothy 5:4 . . . if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

"The child who is brought up to obey and honor his parents will always be sensitive to their wisdom, counsel, and welfare" (John McArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 311).

11. Why did Paul make the point that this is the first commandment with a promise (6:2)? Paul pointed this out to show its importance: it had a promise for obedience!

12. What was the original context of this promise (6:2)? See *Exodus 19-20, 24*. This commandment and promise were originally a part of the 600 laws that comprise the Sinai (or Mosaic) covenant between God and the ancient nation of Israel (not modern Israel). This conditional covenant (if/then) offered for obedience **possession** of the Promised Land, **prosperity** in the Promised Land, **protection** from their enemies and a **prolific posterity** in the Land. Disobedience brought the reverse in every area.

ESV **Proverbs 4:3-4** When I was a son with my father . . . he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live."

13. Why is it wrong to conclude that children who die young had dishonored their parents (6:2)? The promise of 6:2 is a general truth, not an iron clad promise. It is even possible that Paul's purpose is quoting the bit about the promise was to show the importance of the command, not to suggest that the long life promised is still in effect.

14. What new covenant application does 6:2 hold? The Sinai covenant became obsolete with the start of the new covenant. Thus it has already expired when Paul wrote this to the church in Ephesus. This promise has nothing what so ever to do with believing children in the city of Ephesus (in modern Turkey) moving to the Promised Land and living long there. Rather, Paul took a timeless truth from the Law and applied it for new covenant children: obey your parents.

It obviously still has application today: under the new covenant: children are to obey their parents. It is one of God's moral laws. What was ethical in the Old Testament is ethical under the New Testament.

15. New Covenant Theology: Even though ours is the new covenant and not the old, what we can learn from Paul's example as to the proper use of the Old Testament? We are not under the Law of Moses. Yet the principle remains that honoring one's parents is important to God and will result in a better life on this earth. The Law of Moses reflects God's wisdom.

Children's Church vs. Children in Church: Parents, notice that Paul is here writing directly to the children of the church. It was normal in the early church for the children to be in worship with their parents. Paul expected that they could and would benefit from being present. Whereas it is understandable to have a special place for parents to take children who are crying or who need to be disciplined, the idea of a children's church, apart from the parents, is a departure from the New Testament norm. For more information on this idea, see the National Center for Family-Integrated Churches (ncfic.org).

So What?

Summary: The Bible's teachings on family life are easy to summarize but harder to live out: husbands love, wives submit, children obey.

16. How does God want children to relate to parents, first as youths and after reaching adulthood?

Close by singing Steve Green's song: Children Obey Your Parents In The Lord.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

Teacher's note: These lessons are based on the ESV and are designed for 45 minute sessions. If you can hand out or email out each lesson's questions a week in advance it will encourage people to think about the passage during the week. Coving each question in class will give importance to the questions and give incentive for the class to spend time preparing for the discussion.

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