

# A Spirit-Filled Family

## Ephesians 6:1-4

After watching a television program about rebellious youth, a husband said to his wife, "What a mess! Where did our generation go wrong?" The wife calmly answered, "We had children."

Warren Wiersbe writes, **"It seems no matter where we look in modern society, we see antagonism, division, and rebellion. Husbands and wives are divorcing each other; children are rebelling against their parents, and employers and employees are seeking for new ways to avoid strikes and keep the machinery of industry running productively.**

**We have tried education, legislation, and every other approach, but nothing seems to work. Paul's solution to antagonisms in the home and in society was REGENERATION, a new heart from God and a new submission to Christ and to one another. God's great program is to 'gather together in one all things in Christ.'** Paul indicated that this spiritual harmony begins in the lives of Christians who are submitted to the Lordship of Christ" (*Be Wise*, p.149).

Christian families are to be different, "set apart" from the world. What unbelievers want to know is **"Does Christianity work?"** If our faith won't work at home it won't work anywhere. Parents, you may not be able to do anything about our national dilemmas, but you can do something about your family, your children.

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 5:18, showing the results of being filled with the Spirit. The final result of being filled with the Spirit is that we are **"submitting to one another in the fear of God."** (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)

Whether you are a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent you need this message. Whether you are a child of 6 or 66 you need to know God's truth for a Spirit-filled home.

## Ephesians 6:1-4

- 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."**
- 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**

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

## I. Instructions for Spirit-Filled Children (vv. 1-3).

### A. Children are to Obey Their Parents (v. 1).

I find it interesting that the word of God speaks directly to "**children.**" Paul doesn't say, "**Parents, teach your children to obey you** [although that is implied]," rather he addresses, "**Children, obey.**" Kids, this is God's Word to you. Listen up!

"**Obey**" comes from a compound Greek word that means "to hear" and "under." Thus "to hear under" is an ACTION. It means to listen with attentiveness.

Ever notice how just like us, children develop selective hearing? How many of you have stood in the kitchen and said to your child in a loud voice something like, "**I need you to please come take the trash out.**" They can't seem to hear you. However, you could say in a softer voice, "**Who wants some ice cream?**" They'll respond so quick it will make your head spin! Biblical obedience is listening to your parents and doing what they say. Next we see the first of two reasons why children are to "**obey.**"

1. *First, children are to obey their parents because in doing so they are obeying the Lord.* Children are to obey "**in the Lord.**"

For a child to obey his parents is equivalent to obeying God. Youth, listen to me, you can't be in rebellion against your parents and be right with the Lord. **5:21** says we are to submit to one another. That certainly means submitting to your parents.

2. *Second, children are to obey their parents because it is the right thing to do.* Paul says, "**For this is right.**" We might think of this as the NATURAL LAW.

When Paul says to obey your parents "for this is right," he is pointing out the obvious order that God has ordained. Parents are always older and more experienced than children are. "**Right**" means "*natural, normal or appropriate.*" Obedience is "**right**" or natural in all cultures. Every culture or society from ancient times until today teaches children to obey. This is a universal principle. It is taught all over the world, whether you live in the Orient, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, or the Americas. We even see it in the animal kingdom.

Disobedience to parents is one of the chief signs of rebellion, anarchy and societal decay that will be present in the last days. 2 Tim 3:1-2, "**But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come; for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy ...**"

Obedience to parents is "**right**" not just because of history and society. It is right because God says it is right!

Someone might ask, "**Pastor, is there any case in which a child should not obey his parents?**" Sure, when the parent commands the child to do something immoral or in direct contrast to God's Word.

Not only are children to obey their parents by their actions, but Paul goes on to deal with their attitudes in verses 2-3.

## **B. Children are to Honor Their Parents (vv. 2-3).**

Not only are children to "**obey**" their parents, they are to "**honor**" them as well.

"**Honor**" is a more inclusive term than "**obey**." Obedience is the action and "**honor**" is the attitude behind the action. Because we "**honor**" our parents we

naturally "**obey**" them. "**Honor**" means to value them highly and hold them in great respect.

To honor our parents is to have an attitude of respect for them that stems from the fact that we greatly value them and the contribution they've made to our lives. To honor our parents is to assign a high place of value to them. This attitude of respect will result in loving, courteous behavior towards them.

The opposite of honoring your parents would be to show contempt for them, to despise them in your heart, or to be rude and ungrateful towards them. It's your heart attitude that matters. If you're resisting obeying and honoring your parents, you have a deeper heart problem of rebellion towards God. If you're grateful to God for His salvation, then you can honor those whom He has placed over you for your blessing and protection.

In vv. 2-3, Paul combines two OT scriptures, Ex.20:12 and Deut.5:16. Exodus 20 and Deut. 5 are the two places in the OT where you can find the Ten Commandments that were given to Moses to give to the people of Israel. Children are to obey because "**this is right**"...that's NATURAL LAW. Children are to honor their parents because God said so... that's DIVINE LAW.

Though as NT Christians we are not "**under the law**" the righteousness of the Mosaic Law is still a revelation of the holiness of God and this principle carries over today.

When God first introduced His written law in the 10 Commandments, this was the "**first commandment**" relating to human relationships. In fact the law went even further. Ex.21:15 says, "**And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.**" V. 17 says, "**And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.**" Lev. 20:9 says, "**For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.**"

Why was honoring or respecting parents so important to God and His covenant people Israel? Because the respect of parents is the bedrock of society.

When a child grows up obeying, honoring and respecting his parents, he will also learn to obey, honor and respect other authorities such as teachers, employers, the law, the government, and the ultimate authority of God Himself. Conversely, when a child is not taught to honor and obey his parents in the home, he will have great difficulty having respect for any other authority.

Why does the Bible have to emphasize that children obey and honor their parents? Because children will not "**honor**" or "**obey**" their parents by nature, they have to be taught! More about that in a moment.

Paul says this commandment is "**the first commandment with promise.**" It promises two things: If you "**honor**" your parents "**it may be well with you**" and "**you may live long on the earth.**"

"**That it may be well with you**" refers to quality of life. Though this originally applied to Israel and involved tangible, physical blessings, Paul makes clear that it still applies today. Children who "**honor**" and "**obey**" their parents will have blessings their peers will never enjoy.

**"That you may live long on the earth."** This doesn't mean that those who die young did not honor their parents. Bill Cosby told his kids, **"I brought you into this world, and I can take you out!"** The concept here is practical. If you listen to your parents, you will keep yourself from danger.

One other thought needs to be added here. When we reach adulthood we move beyond the concept of obeying our parents. However, we never move beyond honoring them.

## **II. Instructions for Spirit-Filled Parents (v. 4).**

### **A. Parents are not to Frustrate their Children (v. 4a).**

Next, Paul points his inspired pen at **"fathers."** We understand that fathers are **"head"** of the household. However, this applies to mothers too. **"Fathers"** represents parents.

Parents are not to **"provoke"** exasperate or frustrate their children to the point of **"wrath"** anger or resentment. We are not to misuse our God-given authority. Col.3:21 says, **"Do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."**

We have a right and a responsibility to discipline our children. Pro.13:24 says, **"He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly."** 19:18 says, **"Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction."** 22:15 says, **"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him."** 29:15 says, **"The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."** 29:17 says, **"Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul."**

However, there is a major difference between disciplining a child and provoking or frustrating him.

### **Seven Ways We Frustrate our Children.**

*1. First, we frustrate our children by UNREASONABLENESS.*

We sometimes fail to see what our children are capable of and load them down with burdens they cannot bear.

*2. Second, we frustrate our children by FAULT-FINDING.* I don't mean we should never point out what is wrong, but we should always take care to point out what is right. We all respond much better to criticism for faults when we are encouraged for what we do well. Martin Luther said, **"Spare the rod and spoil the child -- that is true; but beside the rod keep an apple, to give him when he has done well."**

*3. Third, we frustrate our children by INCONSISTENCY.* It is unfair to constantly change the rules without telling the child. One day they get away with something that is wrong the next day. This is why moms and dads need to work together.

*4. Fourth, we frustrate our children by NON-DISCIPLINE.*

Sometimes we think if we give into their demands they will be happy instead of angry. However, we reinforce this behavior when we give in. They learn that if

they want something all they must do is throw a fit. Anger produces what they want.

5. *Fifth, we frustrate our children by OVERPROTECTION.* As a child grows he must be trusted to make responsible decisions on his own. A lack of such trust breeds resentment.

6. *Sixth, we frustrate our children by FAVORITISM.* Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob. The world is still suffering from the poor parenting skills of that ancient couple!

7. *Seventh, we frustrate our children by SELFISHNESS.*

Ps.127:3 says, "**Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.**" We love our kids, but we must be careful to never cause them to feel that they are bothersome to us.

Dorothy Law Nolte once wrote down these thoughts...

If a child lives with criticism, He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, He learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, He learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, He learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance, He learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, He learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, He learns justice.

If a child lives with security, He learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, He learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,

He learns to find love in the world.

## **B. Parents are to Nourish Their Children (v. 4b).**

"**Bring them up**" means literally "to nourish or feed" just as 5:29 says a man "**nourishes and cherishes**" his body. It conveys the idea of gently or tenderly "**bringing up**" our children.

Gordon MacDonald tells the story of a man in medieval times who asked three stone masons on a construction project what they were doing. The first replied that he was laying bricks.

The second described his work as that of building a wall. It was the third laborer who demonstrated genuine esteem for his work when he said, "**I am raising a great cathedral.**"

MacDonald writes, "**Pose that same question to any two fathers concerning their role in the family, and you are liable to get the same kind of contrast. The first may say, 'I am supporting a family.' But the second may see things differently and say, 'I am raising children.'** The former looks at his

**job as putting bread on the table. But the latter sees things in God's perspective: he is participating in the shaping of lives."**

1. *First, we nourish them "in the training... of the Lord."*

**"Training"** here means "discipline, even by punishment. Pilate used this word when he said of Jesus, **"I will therefore chastise Him and release Him"** (Lk.23:16). Heb.12:11 says, **"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness."**

2. Second, we are to nourish them **"in the admonition of the Lord."**

**"Admonition"** literally means, "to place before the mind." It means to confront.

The OT priest Eli allowed his sons to run rampant and become terrible failures. Eventually God killed them. God said in 1 Sam.3:13, **"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them."** The Greek word for **"restrain"** in the Septuagint is the same root word as **"admonition"** here. Parents, we are to carefully discipline and restrain our children.

CONCLUSION: Remember, this is all about reflecting God's glory in Jesus Christ to a lost world. Children, by obeying and honoring your parents, you are following the example of Jesus Himself, who although He was God in human flesh, "continued in subjection" to His earthly parents (Luke 2:51). Parents, by not frustrating our children, but training and restraining them, we are loving them like our heavenly Father loves us.

What's awesome is that we have the PERFECT example.

- We have a Father that is selfless & sacrificial.
- He gave His very best so that we can be our very best.
- He nurtures us, instructs us, teaches and disciplines us.
- He never gives up on us and is always encouraging us to higher levels of love and grace.
- He is faithful, reliable, dependable, and consistent.

Do you know Him?

## A Father's Poem

I gave you life, but I cannot live it for you.  
I can teach you things but I cannot make you learn.  
I can give you directions but I cannot always be there to lead you.  
I can allow you freedom but I cannot account for it.  
I can take you to church but I cannot make you believe.  
I can teach you right from wrong but I can't always decide for you.  
I can buy you beautiful clothes but I cannot make you lovely inside.  
I can offer you advice but I cannot accept it for you.  
I can give you love but I cannot force it upon you.  
I can teach you to be a friend but I cannot make you one.  
I can teach you to share but I cannot make you unselfish.  
I can teach you respect but I can't force you to show honor.  
I can grieve about your report card but I cannot doubt your teachers.  
I can advise you about friends but I cannot choose them for you.  
I can teach you about sex but I cannot keep you pure.  
I can tell you the facts of life but I can't build your reputation.  
I can tell you about drinking but I can't say NO for you.  
I can warn you about drugs but I can't prevent you from using them.  
I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can't achieve them for you.  
I can teach you kindness, but I can't force you to be gracious.  
I can warn you about sins but I cannot make your morals  
I can love you as a daughter or son but I cannot place you in God's Family.  
I can pray for you but I cannot make you walk with God.  
I can teach you about Jesus but I cannot make HIM your Savior.  
I can teach you to OBEY but I cannot make Jesus Your Lord.  
I can tell you how to live but I cannot give you Eternal Life.