


# Ephesians

God's Design for Parenting  
Ephesians 6:1-4

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



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**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?  
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**
- Review the "sidebar" (text in red) describing Roman family life quoted from Barclay's commentary. Which aspect most surprises you?

How can you use those facts to help someone you know develop an appreciation for Christianity?

- Read Ephesians 6:1-3, review the [Sermon Summary](#), and then consider these questions...

Pastor Doug noted that the Greek word rendered "children" refers to all offspring, regardless of age. How big of a surprise is that to you? What issues might it require you to rethink?

Ephesians commands children to both obey and honor their parents, and we learned that obedience is the **action** while honor is the **attitude** which energizes the action. Which is harder for you—and **why?**

Together as a group develop a list of attitudes toward your parents which could energize right action.

Which of those attitudes do you think you model to your children as they see you relating to your parents?

Pastor Doug pointed out that "disobedience to parents" finds itself in rather disreputable company (see Romans 1:28–30; 2 Timothy 3:1–2). Doesn't disobedience to parents seem, well, "**outclassed**"?

Try to arrange all the sins listed in those two passages in order of wickedness.



After discussing them, did any of your rankings change? What did you learn from this?

- Read Ephesians 6:4 and again, review relevant content from the [Sermon Summary](#). Of the four principles (**fair, tender, firm, biblical**), which were best practiced in your family growing up?

Which one do you think you currently practice best? least? To what do you attribute that change?

# Sermon Summary

We spend most of our time in one of two places...at work and at home. Think about it. If there was relational harmony in both of those environments, what a wonderful world this would be! Some of us can't wait to go to work every day, because there's so much tension in the home. For others, six o'clock can't come soon enough, because there is so much stress at work! And still others don't have peace at home or at work. Ephesians 6 teaches us how we can encourage a peaceful, harmonious environment both at home and on the job.

It begins with, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (6:1). The Greek word translated as "children" refers to all offspring, regardless of age. As long as you are dependent upon your parents and living under their roof, you are to obey them—and this is a command, not a suggestion. Children are to obey both of their parents; you cannot choose to obey one, and not the other! In obeying parents, children are obeying God himself because he gave us the command to "obey our parents." Not only does it please God, "it is the right thing to do."

It is not enough that children obey their parents. God calls them to honor them, "to hold them in the highest regard and respect". Obedience is the action; honor is the attitude which energizes the action. It is the obedience of loving sons and daughters which God desires in the home, not the slavish obedience of slaves. This commandment to honor parents lies at the heart of a civil society. Indeed, virtually all civilizations have regarded the recognition of parental authority as indispensable to a stable society. We should not be surprised, therefore, when Paul includes 'disobedient to parents' as a mark of a decadent society which God has given up to its own godlessness (Romans 1:28–30; 2 Timothy 3:1–2). Disobedience to parents is a sign of a degenerating society. It is a serious sin with far reaching societal implications. Until the internal motivation of the Holy Spirit is operational, children have external motivation: "so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (v. 3). When we respond to the authority God has placed over us, whether parents or employers or the police, things tend to go better for us. The news is replete with examples of people who defied God's ordained authority and ended up in prison or dead as a consequence. Honoring and obeying your parents is serious business!

Scripture speaks to both sides of the authority-submission equation, giving parents **four principles** to apply (v. 4). **[1] Be fair.** Dads, don't provoke your children to anger; don't exasperate them, lest they get discouraged and lose heart (Colossians 3:21). Men, here are some common ways we provoke our children to anger: broken promises; showing favoritism to one child over another; comparison; pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds; overprotection; withholding praise, encouragement, acceptance, blessing; disproportionate punishment; neglect; physical or verbal abuse; and withholding forgiveness/failing to ask for forgiveness. **[2] Be tender.** The phrase, "bring them up" means "to nourish, to provide for with tender care." Masculine men also are tender men. Tenderness involves sensitivity, listening and understanding. Dads need to listen before they discipline. They need to understand before they reprimand. Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:19). Too often we do just the opposite: we are slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to anger. Learn to listen better. How often have our children been talking to us and we are only half listening? Give them your undivided attention; make eye contact. Let them finish before you begin to talk. Listen for both content and emotion. Ask clarifying questions. Give appropriate feedback indicating that you are listening intently. Admit when you are wrong, and ask for forgiveness. Be "high touch" and dispense lots of encouragement to your children. Listen to your wife's input about each child. **[3] Be firm.** As we bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, be systematic in the training of children, correcting wrongdoing (Proverbs 13:24). Children need fathers who love them enough to set boundaries. In far too many homes the kids are in control and this always leads to chaos. Our goal is to produce righteous, godly children who will grow up to pass along biblical truth to the next generation, and discipline is an indispensable tool in that process (Hebrews 12:11). Dads—step up and enforce the boundaries that you and your wife have set. But before we discipline our children, we first must instruct children about God's holiness and hatred of sin, about our guilt before God, about his great love

in sending his Son Jesus, and the purpose and meaning of the cross. (John Piper's excellent book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die*, is available as a free PDF download.) Teach your children to live wisely. **Proverbs instructs us to teach our children [1] to fear God (1:7); [2] to guard their hearts (4:23); [3] to obey their parents (1:8); [4] to carefully select their companions (13:20); [5] to control their lusts (7:1-27); [6] to love their spouses (5:15-18); [7] to watch their words (4:24); [8] to pursue their work (6:6-8); [9] to manage their money (3:9-10); and [10] to love their neighbors (3:27-29).** As we instruct our children, we need to balance firmness and tenderness; most of us tend to err on one side or the other. Men, usually we are too tough. Your goal should be to find a proper balance. **[4] Be biblical.** Now, discipline and instruction that qualifies as "of the Lord" never is abusive. But many parents have gone to an opposite, equally unbiblical extreme in their parenting: non-directive parenting, where children have few boundaries and very little spiritual instruction. The Bible does not permit this (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).



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If ever you are asked, ***"What good has Christianity done for the world?"***, you need only point to the change brought about in the status of women and of children:

- A Roman father had absolute power over his family. He could sell them as slaves; he could make them work in his fields even in chains; he could punish as he liked and could even inflict the death penalty.
- The power of the Roman father extended over a child's entire life, for as long as the father lived. A Roman son never came of age. Even when he was a grown man, even if he were a magistrate of the city, even if the state had crowned him with well-deserved honors, he remained within his father's absolute power.
- When a child was born, it was placed at its father's feet; and, if the father stooped and lifted the child, that meant that he acknowledged it and wanted to keep it. If he turned and walked away, it meant that he refused to acknowledge it, and the child would quite literally be thrown out.
- Unwanted children were left in the Roman forum. There they became the property of anyone who cared to pick them up. They were collected at night by people who looked after them in order to sell them as slaves or to stock the brothels of Rome.
- Ancient civilization was merciless to the sickly or deformed child. Seneca wrote: ***"We slaughter a fierce ox; we strangle a mad dog; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown."*** Children who were weak or imperfectly formed had little hope of survival.

—from Barclay's Commentary on Ephesians

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study"** (see page below) is a simple way to study any topic.  
Let's use it to learn about avoiding mistakes in parenting...

**Monday**— Read 1 Samuel 2:12, 22-25; 3:11-13. What could Eli have done better?

**Tuesday**— Read 2 Samuel 13:1-21 & 1 Kings 1:1-6. What could David have done better?

**Wednesday**— Read Genesis 19:1-8 & 29-38. What could Lot have done better?

**Thursday**— Read Genesis 25:27-28 & 27:1-14. What could Isaac and Rebecca have done better?

**Friday**— Read Genesis 37:1-11 & 42:33-38. What could Jacob have done better?

**Saturday**— Read Genesis 2:4—3:6 & Isaiah 5:1-4. What could God have done better?

### Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]