

**Introduction:**

- A. Today, for the first part of this sermon, I want to talk especially to the kids who are here. Mrs. Eclov tells me that you all know the verse of Scripture I'm going to start with today, but let's just check. Fill in the blank: "*Children, \_\_\_\_\_ your parents.*" So how's that working for you?

Illus.: I read about a little 3-year-old girl named Beverly who was playing with her toys. Her mother, who was folding laundry across the room, noticed Beverly's shirt was dirty and needed to be changed. After calling two times with no response, her mother gave her the full three-name call: "*Beverly Elizabeth Provost, did you hear me?*" Beverly answered, "*Yes, Mama. **My ears did, but my legs didn't.***" Has that ever happened to you!? Your ears hear your parents, but your legs don't?

- B. Open your Bibles to **Eph 6:1-4**. Did your mom ever tell you to do something and you said, "*But why?*" and she said, "*Because I said so!*"? And sometimes that is all the reason you are going to get! But here, when God says, "*Children, obey your parents,*" you can say, "*But why?*" Because here the Bible gives us the reasons why obeying parents is so important.

**I. THE LORD JESUS COMMANDS CHILDREN TO OBEY YOUR PARENTS AND HE TELLS YOU WHY**

- A. We adults have been learning from this book of the Bible about how wonderful it is to be part of the church. This church is our other family. Did you know that—that you have *two* families? We're your other family. We're all brothers and sisters. And in this family, when you become a Christian, you're not only our kids, **you are our younger brothers and sisters, too**. What we have been learning from this part of the Bible is that in this church family we must put others first because we love them. The Bible has taught us to *submit* to one another—to put other people first, to let them tell us what to do; to let them get first choice. One reason to obey your parents is that that is how Christians love each other. When your parents tell you to do something and *you do it* that is even better than a big hug, and telling them that you love them. Obedience is how you show your parents that you love them. In fact, obeying your parents is how you show *Jesus* that you love *him*!
- B. Look at this verse again. "*Children, obey your parents... in the Lord for this is right.*" What do you think that means? What does 'Lord' mean? The person in charge; like 'master.' So "*in the Lord*" means we do it because we want to please Jesus, our Master; he's in charge of our lives. Imagine that when your dad or mom is asking you to do something—maybe something you're not very excited about doing—but what if you could see Jesus just behind your mom or dad; what if you could hear him whisper to you, "*obey them for me. I know you don't want to do this, but do it for me, because you love me.*" **We obey our parents because we love them. But since we are Christians we also obey one another because we love Jesus even more.**
- C. Then in the v.2, the Bible reminds us of one of the Ten Commandments. You remember the story of the Ten Commandments, don't you? Moses and all God's people were out in a wilderness—a desert—at Mt. Sinai, and God came down to that mountain. They couldn't see him, but it got very dark, and the mountain shook and there was thunder and lightning, and the people were scared to pieces! Then Moses went up on the mountain and God gave him all the rules for living the right way. The first ten rules God carved with his finger into stone, and those are called the Ten Commandments. Now in our passage, we are reminded of the fifth commandment. Let's all read it together: "*Honor your father and your mother.*" It's Mother's Day today and I bet most of you have figured out something to honor your mother. Maybe you've made her something special, or you're having a special meal for her. And you'll probably do something like that for your dad on Father's Day, because that is one way to *honor* our parents. But God says here that the most important way we honor our parents is by obeying them. When you obey your mom and dad, you honor them by showing that you trust what they tell you, and that you know what they tell you to do is because they love you. When you disobey, you *dishonor* them, because you say that you don't think they are important or loving enough to obey.

- D. Look what else it says in v.2 about that commandment: “*which is the first commandment with a promise.*” So if you obey your parents God promises something to you. His promise is in **v.3**, “*that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.*” That means your whole life will be better and longer if you learn to obey your parents. What are some ways your life is better if you obey your parents?
1. You avoid getting into trouble and being punished.
  2. Think of some of the commands parents give us: *Eat your supper, brush your teeth, do your homework, don't lie, write a thank-you to your grandma, pray before you go to sleep.* Those are ways parents are helping you be a better person, so that “*it may go well with you.*” When you're obedient you learn to do things that will help you be healthy and safe, well-prepared and good.
  3. Learning to obey cures us of being stubborn and selfish. You know how the Bible describes stubborn people—people who won't obey orders? *Stiff-necked*. Imagine I was going to try to push you in one direction and you don't want to go. Can you imagine how stiff your back and neck would get in resisting me. That's the idea. Well, people who don't learn how to be obedient when they are young at home have trouble the rest of their lives. They become stubborn and stiff-necked all their lives and things don't work very well for people like that. They're not good friends to others, they're not good students; and they certainly aren't good Christians.
- E. Illus.: I don't know if you've ever seen this, but sometimes at parties people rent this tall glass box. The way it works is that there are dollar bills in the box. A person gets in it, and they turn on this wind machine so the dollars are blowing all over the place and you have maybe a minute to grab all the dollar bills you can grab. But it is a lot harder than it looks because the dollar bills are flitting and flying all over the place. Now what would make it a lot easier to get those dollar bills? What if you could wear a sticky suit and sticky gloves, so that when a dollar touched you it would just stick! God doesn't promise to give us all the dollar bills we want, but I think what this verse is saying is that **when kids learn to please Jesus by obeying their parents, they go through life sticky for good things God wants to bring into their lives. Good friends, good opportunities, good ideas.** That's what it means when it says, “*that it may go well with you.*”
- F. One more thing. What happens when you aren't obedient to your parents? Well, of course, you may be punished so that you learn to do the right thing next time. But there is something very important to know. When you have been disobedient to your parents and to the Lord, both your parents and the Lord Jesus love to forgive you when you are sorry. Sometimes there will still be consequences, but when you say you're sorry and you mean it, that makes both your parents and Jesus very happy, and they are happy to forgive you and give you a fresh start.

Now the Bible turns to parents. **V.4** says “Fathers” because in that day fathers were the absolute authority over the home. Today, moms and dads are much more likely to share that authority in raising the kids. We've just seen that parents are to be obeyed and honored. Period. But as every parent knows, **it takes some careful calibration to use our authority wisely and effectively with our children.** The point here is...

## II. CHRISTIAN PARENTS MUST EXERCISE OUR AUTHORITY OVER OUR CHILDREN SO THAT THEY ARE WELL-ORIENTED TO CHRIST

- A. We read that first line, “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children,*” and most of us think, “*Me!?? Me exasperate them?*” Illus.: A number of years ago the Police League of Indiana sponsored a Best Speeding Alibi Contest. One award went to a father who was stopped with a load of fighting, squalling kids in his backseat. He told the officer, “*I was trying to get away from all the noise behind me.*”
- “**Fathers, do not exasperate your children.**” Another way of putting it is, “*do not goad your children to resentment*” [NEB]. This letter warned us earlier against anger as deadly to Christians. So here he is telling us as parents that we must be careful in exercising our authority that we not stir up frustrated anger in our kids. They are not mature enough to know how to handle anger wisely, and Satan exploits it to terribly destructive ends, especially when it is deep-set in childhood.

Parents, we've all seen how our frustration with our children is sometimes a reflection of our own weaknesses, insecurities or personalities, rather than wise parenting. When we demand of our kids what they cannot do or be we are planting seeds of lifelong hurt, insecurity, or resentment. Some of you are carrying those very things yourself because of your parents' exasperating methods when you were a kid. So be careful and prayerful about the ways we mold our kids; the ways we exercise our authority.

- B. The alternative is spelled out in three words here. The phrase, "*bring them up,*" has a tenderness about it in Greek. Calvin translated it, "*Let them be fondly cherished..., deal gently with them.*" Oh, I know well that this is the spirit of most, if not all, dads and moms here today. It is the first key to not exasperating our kids.

The verse goes on, "*bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*" The first word, '*training,*' implies the disciplines of life, while the second word, '*instruction,*' is about the words we say. It is our responsibility to build discipline into the lives of our kids. How many times do you think you've said, "*Brush your teeth*"? How many times, "*Say you're sorry*"? How many practices have you supervised? How long has it taken to build habits? That is part of our job, **always with an eye to the Lord Jesus.** Are we building the disciplines into our kids' lives that are most pleasing to the Lord? Loving and respectful speech, love for the church, prayer, responsibility.

The word '*instruction*' is about what we teach our kids. The Bible stories and our own stories of God's faithfulness to our family, to our parents and grandparents; how we came to know Christ, and what he's done for us. We help them see how the Bible speaks to all the ordinary stresses of life. Remember what Moses wrote in Deut. about God's commands: "*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*" Deut 6:7

And in all this we must teach them not only the demands of God, but also his grace. Without rules and discipline, our children will be ruined and wild. But without grace, they will live in resentment, fear or constant guilt. It is a difficult and sensitive calibration, I know, to find the right balance of law and grace with our kids. We must demonstrate godly grace in the way we approach discipline and forgiveness. A family which knows only rules, no matter how good, and knows nothing of grace has not brought up children in the training and instruction of the Lord. Never underestimate how powerful grace is, how much it can accomplish in our homes.

Illus.: The famous author, Earnest Hemingway, grew up in a very stern Christian family in Oak Park, with parents who showed precious little grace, and he walked away from Christ. But he wrote a story set in Spain entitled, "The Capital of the World."

That short story has a short, short story within it about a Spanish father and his teenage son who had the very common name of Paco. The father and his teenaged son had had a very violent quarrel, and Paco had run away from home.

Two years passed and the father began a search for his son, which led him to Madrid, the capital of Spain. There he took out this ad in the El Liberal newspaper: "PACO MEET ME AT HOTEL MONTANA NOON TUESDAY. ALL IS FORGIVEN. PAPA." The next day, in front of the Hotel Montana, 800 Pacos showed up.

Make sure your Paco knows grace.