

**Living In Resurrection Power
(Week 11)
Ephesians 6:1-4
“Focus On The Family”**

Introduction

“...submitting to one another in the fear of The Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21

Being a Christian is so radically different from the ways of this world, that it is absolutely impossible for the child of God to feel at home here. To be transformed by The Spirit is to go from a life governed by selfishness, to a life lived in the service of others. Just this week, I observed the stark contrast between Satan's lies and God's holy truth. I was reading an article in the news about a famous celebrity who shared her opinions about having children. It seems in this country we have an unhealthy appetite for the incessant ramblings of those in the spotlight, even when they aren't very intelligent. Being a “star” doesn't necessarily mean that you're all that bright (in spite of the title). But the masses seem to crave their opinion nonetheless.

This particular celebrity stated that she is refusing to have children because the world is “not a happy place these days”. On this, we would have to agree. But, it was her followup quote that I found to be quite telling. She said: *“Why are we trained that love means putting yourself second and those you love first? If you love yourself, then what? You come first.”*

Well there you have it! This is the very essence of the flesh, the rallying cry of sin expressed in the most profound and simple language possible. The difference between a lost person and a saved person is that the former lives to glorify self and the latter lives to glorify God and others. One is a life destined for the pursuit of empty pleasures, and the other is a life that has a meaningful purpose. This is why we are commanded as believers not to be unequally yoked with non-believers (**2 Corinthians 6:14**). We simply have **nothing** in common. In answer to the young lady's question, we are trained to put ourselves second and those we love first, because God has commanded us to do so. For a life lived only in pursuit of self-gratification is a life wasted.

In Paul's day, the prevailing worldly wisdom was much the same as it is today. In fact, the Roman culture was about as selfish and brutal as you can possibly imagine. When a child was born into a Roman family, it was laid out before its father. If he picked the child up, that meant that it had been accepted and would be raised within his household. But, if for any reason the father refused to accept the child, it could be sold into slavery or prostitution, or simply left out in the elements to die of exposure. This... is exactly where our society is headed today my friends. We have little regard for humanity other than our own. We see and hear of the unimaginable suffering of others in this world, and rather than reach out to lift them up, we simply “change the channel” or turn away.

This section of Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers regarding the care of children must have seemed quite radical, when juxtaposed against the pagan culture that surrounded the small church. Children, the apostle commanded, were to be treasured and nurtured. And, their **fathers** were to not only accept them as they were, but to take a profound and active interest in their upbringing! This would have been considered “women's work” in Paul's day, but God's ways are not the ways of this sinful world. Once again proving that Christianity is a radical alternative to the evil that is so prevalent around us. The act of submitting to one another in selfless service not only applies to husbands and wives, but to children and parents as well. Children are admonished to obey and respect their parents, while parents are commanded not only to give their children love and encouragement (the opposite of “don't stir up anger”), but also to bring up their children in the “training and instruction” of The LORD. So, we see here two different types of submission; first, the submission of children to their parents, and second, the parents submission to selflessly care for the needs of their children, putting every child's needs ahead of their own.

The Submission of Children to Parents

“Children, obey your parents in The LORD, because this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land.”

Ephesians 6:1-3

I love this verse. It first commands children to be obedient to their parents, and then gives the reason, because it is **right**. Right and wrong seem to be such a foreign concept these days, but it is good to know that no matter what society says, the rules really haven't changed. I remember when I was a kid and my dad would tell me to do something, and if it was something I did not particularly want to do, I would often ask him, "Why?". His answer? "Because I said so!" As I get older, I understand that answer more and more. Why should we obey the commands of Scripture? Because God said so. That really ought to be enough now shouldn't it? Children should obey their parents, because God commands it and that makes it the right thing to do!

The word that Paul uses here for "obey" (*hypakouo* in the Greek) literally means to "pay heed to". In other words, Paul is commanding that children **listen** to the instruction of their parents. Children may not be aware of life's little realities, but there is such a thing as "life experience", and their parents possess far more of it than they do! With maturity, should come a degree of wisdom, and children ought to trust that their parents actually know a thing or two. To those of you who have teenagers, I realize that this is a totally foreign concept, but trust me, someday, even they will be able to understand it. When I finally made it into my early twenties (by the grace of God), I begin to realize just how wise my parents actually were. It took a while for the fuse to finally get to that particular powder keg of truth, but when it did, it was an explosion of revelation for me. God gives children to grownups for a reason!

It is important that we take note of just how the order of things is designed. First, a believing man leaves his father and mother and takes a wife (***Ephesians 5:31***), whom he loves loves as Christ loves the church. The wife submits to his spiritual leadership as the bride of Christ to the church. Then, **and only then**, are they prepared to have and to raise children. This world would be a much better place, if we could just simply get this order right! So many children are given little or no chance to ever become what God intended, simply because the ones who bring them into this world do so in sinful disobedience. Yes, the grace of God can truly overcome such error, but life would be so much simpler, if we would just obey Him to begin with. Why? Because it is **right!** If you are listening this morning and you have gotten off on the wrong foot in this area, then repent and make it right. God will bless you for your obedience. You cannot remain where you are and go with God at the same time.

Children need to learn obedience, and they should be able to see it first in their parents. The old "Do as I say and not as I do" method is a poor excuse for parenting. And by the way, contrary to popular opinion, children are not born "innocent". Every child must be learn morality from its parents. Doing the right thing does not come natural to this fallen race. Listen to this statement issued by the Minnesota Crime Commission:

"Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it: his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmates toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty, he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children, but all children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child will grow up to be a criminal, a thief, a killer, and a rapist." End quote.

Wow! Pretty much says it all doesn't it. If I didn't know better, I would think that quote was straight out of *The Bible*. Children need to obey their parents, because it is the right thing for them to do!

Not only must a child obey its parents, but The Scriptures command that they must "honor" them as well. The Greek word for *honor*, *timao*, means to "revere and place value". God promises a long and happy life to those who treat their parents with the utmost respect. As Paul reminds us, it is a commandment that comes with a promise. To disobey it, conversely will bring a curse. *The Bible* has many stories of children who rebelled against their parents and subsequently paid the price for it. Samson and Absalom are two noteworthy examples of young men who dishonored their parents and did not live very long as a result. There is nothing more disgusting on this earth than a child who shows disrespect to his parents. Unlike many so called "psychologist" today, I firmly believe in corporal punishment. If a child has difficulty in responding to his parents with love and respect, then I suggest that he should also have a considerable degree of difficulty in sitting down (If you catch my meaning). *The Bible* makes it perfectly clear that children should be punished for disobedience.

"The one who will not use the rod hates his son, but the one who loves him disciplines him diligently." **Proverbs 13:24**

Simply put, the parent that loves his child will teach him obedience and respect. The world has more than enough savages already.

The Submission of Parents to Children

“Father’s, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of The LORD.” ***Ephesians 6:4***

Now, I know what some of you are thinking when you read this verse, “But what about the mothers?” For starters, the word that Paul uses here for “*fathers*” is (*Pateres* in the Greek) does in fact refer to fathers, but in this context, it can also be a generic term used to describe “parents” in general. I believe that Paul is actually talking to mothers and fathers here, but remember, it is the father’s responsibility to be the spiritual leader of the home, while it is incumbent upon the mother to submit to his leadership.

Another thing to keep in mind here is that Paul is addressing Christian families. And if I may interject a personal observation here; of all the Christian mothers that I have known who are truly following Christ, they need no reminding of what it means to place “family first”. Godly women are the most self-sacrificing people that I have ever met. So, the Holy Spirit, in His infinite wisdom, may have led Paul to say “fathers” here, for it is often Christian dads that need reminding of their responsibilities in the raising of children! Ladies, can I get a witness?

I mean we’ve all seen it. It’s Sunday morning, and the family is running late for church. Mom gets up early to not only get herself ready, but to fix breakfast for the family and to bathe and dress a houseful of kids. Dad wakes up at his leisure and gets himself dressed. He heads out to the car and blows the horn, wondering why on earth everything is taking so long. Fellas, you know what I’m talking about. Don’t pretend that you don’t do this. Why is it that so many men think it is their job to provide the family financing, but not their responsibility to train up the kids in the way that they should go? So yes, I think The Holy Spirit knew that we need reminding now and again.

At any rate, it is required that BOTH parents raise their children. They are to love them and put their children’s needs ahead of their own. This is the way that a Christian parent is to “submit” to his children; by serving them, in order for them to reach both physical and spiritual maturity. Dads need to remember that they are to be a picture of Christ in the home. Therefore, how you treat your children will directly reflect on how they will come to believe that God sees them! Let me say that again. How you are with your kids will be what they perceive God to be like. If you are distant and uncaring, they will feel that God is distant and uncaring. If you are harsh and cruel in your dealings, they will think that God is much the same. But, if you are loving and encouraging, showing your children that you are only concerned in what is best for them, then they will have a true picture of what God The Father is like. God only gives us commands for our own benefit. This is why obeying God is “the right thing to do”. It is always for our own good.

Fathers are commanded not to “stir” up anger in their children. This can be done in many ways. One of the ways that a father can stir up wrath in his kids is to ignore them, to be so busy caught up in his own doings, that he fails to show his children that he truly cares about them. Guys can I give you some advise? Don’t just make up a bunch of rules for your kids, and then expect that to work like you would wind up a clock, and then just leave it to its own devices. Kids aren’t clocks. They don’t just need rules to live by. They need you **in their lives!** So go to those ball games and band concerts. Drop what you’re doing and take time to listen to your kids. Act like you are truly interested in what they are interested in.

Have you ever met someone who is so obsessed with being a “perfectionist” at everything that they are miserable all the time? I have. Do you know what causes that? It is the Parents who never seem to notice when that child accomplishes anything. No matter what they do, the child feels that his parents aren’t impressed. This creates a person who will strive harder and harder to get the best grades, make the most money, scale the highest peaks, and yet still be unsatisfied. Why? Because they are forever trying to win the approval of their own parents. Don’t wait until you’re on your deathbed to tell your grown children that you are “proud of them”. Tell them when it matters, when they are young and need the encouragement!

Don’t be harsh. Be fair. Be firm, and above all, be their biggest cheerleader. You have no idea how much they need your approval. Just as the child of God longs to hear above all things “Well done good and faithful servant” from Christ Himself (**Matthew 25:23**), your kids long for an “atta’ boy” from

mom and dad. **It doesn't cost anything to be a source of encouragement.** So be one for your kids. Otherwise, you are stirring up anger and resentment in your children.

Another way that you can stir up anger and resentment in your kids is to show favoritism. If you would like a Biblical example, just read the story of Joseph and see how his brothers felt about him being "Daddy's favorite". Their anger reached the point of murderous treachery. It wasn't Joseph who caused this, but his father Jacob. If you have more than one child, you must come to grips with the fact that although they may be very different, they are to be cherished equally for who they are. These are just two examples of how we can stir up wrath in our kids; absenteeism and favoritism. Trust me, there are a lot more "ism's" that I don't have time to mention. Remember, always ask yourself this question, when dealing with your kids: "What does **love** require?"

It is also the parents responsibility to not only love their kids, but to raise them to be Godly adults. You see, your children are not really yours to begin with, they are God's, and you have only been entrusted to raise them for Him. This is a great honor, and every Christian parent should recognize it as such. Mom and Dad, God has loaned you His children to raise in such a way as to bring glory and honor to Him. He has commanded them to honor you the same way that they are to honor Him. Have you ever wondered why, in the succession of the Ten Commandments, the command to honor our parents comes right after the first four we are given to honor God? Because to God, this is exactly how He sees it. The parents are to live in His image, and therefore, the children honor them, as they honor God Himself. This is why Paul says, **"Children, obey your parents IN THE LORD." (vs.1)**

So you see, to obey and honor our parents is to obey and honor God. For this reason parents are commanded to raise their children **"in the training and instruction (nurture and admonition KJV) of The LORD."** It is our job as parents to see to it that our children not only know The LORD, but also know what He requires of us! The words that Paul uses for "training and instruction" both carry the meaning of proper discipline. We are commanded to discipline our children to become faithful followers of Christ. We teach them the Word of God and how to pray to our heavenly Father. We show them obedience to God by our own example.

And while we are on the subject of discipline, please allow me to offer now a bit of free parenting advice learned from that wondrous teacher called "life experience". God has called husbands and wives to become "one flesh". This means that they are a team. Have you ever wondered when the doctor gives us bad news why we naturally want to get a second opinion? I believe that we learn this behavior when we are very young. It all begins when our dad says something we don't want to hear, and we run to mom for a second opinion, hoping that she will give us an answer that is more to our liking. Dad says, I can't spend the night at a friends house, but mom will let me. Do not ever fall for this. Be a team, and never, not EVER, contradict one another.

Your children need to see three consistent things in their parents: first, an undying love for Christ; second, an undying love for each other; and third, a spirit of complete unity. Otherwise, your own children, those sweet innocent little darlings, will devour you much like a great White shark does a baby seal. Word to the wise... stay strong! Your priority is to teach your children submission and reverence for God, and it begins with how they are submissive and reverent to you. Moms support your husbands. Let your kids see that you always have his back. Don't expect your children to take these things seriously when you do not.

And Dads, strive to be real men of God. Practice what you preach and live out your faith in front of your kids. Did you know that the child most likely to drop out of church when it comes of age is the one who did not see his father living out his faith in the home? God has required fathers to be the spiritual heads of our households. The father, who neglects this important spiritual requirement for raising his children to become Christ followers, will give an account for it at the judgment seat of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). The father who truly loves his children will submit himself to follow Christ, as well as, submit to serving his kids. In Christianity, the needs of others *always* come first.

And there you have it. Children, submit to your parents, giving them your obedience and respect. Parents submit to your children, putting their physical and spiritual needs ahead of your own, for one day, you must present them to God and give an account for how you have brought them up. About the only thing left in this old world that is worth fighting for is the family. Make sure that you are fighting for it according to God's perfect plan. Do this, and you will be blessed.

And let the Spirit-filled mom's and dad's all say... TRUTH!!!