

Ok, let's be honest. If you are a parent, it is likely that your child has frustrated you by their behavior. Yes, even in Christian homes. In the first century culture that Paul was addressing, children had no rights and little value. Parents could do whatever they wanted to if their child displeased them. But in the Christian context of mutual love and submission Paul admonishes fathers not even to anger their kids. Now that was countercultural!

*If you have children, are they youngsters or adults? How do you respond to their weaknesses? Based on 1 Cor 13, love is longsuffering, kind doesn't seek its own way and is not provoked. Does this describe the love you demonstrate toward your child when they are not at their best?*

The solution to provocative behavior is to counter it with Godly discipline, instruction and love. Discipline is training and correction to keep them on the right path. It is not punishment.

Just as our Heavenly Father loves us and corrects us, our motive in dealing with our children when they stray from the right path, is to love them and get them back on the road to God.

### **WRAP-UP**

Family relationships in the Christian household are all based in mutual love and submission. It isn't easy, but Jesus was our example. As we draw from the well of God's love for us, He will enable us to reflect His love in our families through honor and obedience to our parents and Godly discipline and instruction to our children.

### **MEMORY VERSE.**

*Ephesians 6:4 NLT - 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.*

**PRAYER (20 MIN)** Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

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*Challenge.- If your parents are still living, you can take time this week to show them honor in a call, a card or a text. If your parents have passed, remember them to friends or family this week.*

## **“Obey and Honor” Prison Letters- #6**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As Paul concludes his letter to the church at Ephesus, he continues instructions on the relationships between both children and parents, and servants, and masters. Finally, Paul admonishes the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord and put on the spiritual armor God has provided as we stand against our enemy Satan. Satan attacks those relationships Paul is addressing. So, in our final study we will dive into the family relationships between parents and children. Even though there is a chapter break in our bibles, there was no break in the thoughts Paul expressed. After introducing mutual love and submission, and examining love and submission in marriage, Paul instructs the children in honoring and obeying parents. Let's consider how we should view these commands to obey and honor parents in light of the mutual love and submission to be found in the body of Christ?

### **Ice Breaker**

*What is the structure of your family right now- do you have a spouse, parents, stepparents, kids, blended family, grandkids?*

### **Key Passage**

*Ephesians 6:1-4 NLT - 1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: 3 If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.*

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Greatest Joy/Deepest Wounds**

For most of us, our identity is tied inseparably to our families. We are the children of our parents, no matter how old we are. Many of us are also

parents, some are stepparents and grandparents. Our families have the potential to be the source of life for us.

*What are some things that are life-giving that most of us expect to find in a healthy family? (i.e. love, security...)*

Because we draw so much of what we need from our family relationships, there is a potential to be deeply wounded when the family fails to meet those needs. Sometimes the people we rely on fail. Sometimes the pain is not due to any one's fault, but circumstances that are not within our control.

*Have you been wounded by any of these circumstances?*

*financial insecurity, physical abuse, bullying/ verbal abuse, divorce, death, addiction*

When we read Paul's instruction to children, we first need to acknowledge that some circumstances may make it difficult to follow. Only God knows the wounds we have suffered. He suffered them with us. Only God can heal those wounds.

*If you, or members of your group, feel that you have been wounded by some of the situations on the list above or by members of your family, take time to pray together to begin the healing and restoration that only God can give. Allow God to show you how He can provide what you may have lost in the past and receive the love of your Heavenly Father.*

## 2. Honor and Obey

*Ephesians 6:1-2 NLT - 1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise:*

Children are given two directives, to honor and obey. Don't jump to the conclusion that this is addressing those under 18 or 12 years old. Paul doesn't give us an age which defines children, he is defining children by our relationship – we are the offspring of someone and so we are their child. When Paul tells us how children are to treat parents, this applies to us throughout our lives. He gives us the qualifier and motivation for obedience. Paul is addressing Christian families, where both parents and children are “in the Lord”, they are members of God's family. The parents

and children are under Jesus' authority, the children have been placed under the parent's responsibility, and so the children obey what they are told to do by their parent. All of the family are following Christ's example. The word for obey (*hypakouō*) means to hear or listen to attentively. To come under command or authority.

*In what ways did Jesus model the obedience of a son? In what way did He model love and submission as the husband of His bride (the church)?*

*Philippians 2:8 NKJV - 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross.*

*Ephesians 5:25 NLT - 25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her*

*Jesus didn't ask us to do anything He himself had not done.*

When Paul says honor your father and mother, he quotes from the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment. To honor means to love and ascribe value to. When we dishonor our parents, our relationship is broken. Many rebellious children have damaged and broken the relationship with their parents. Life does not go well when that happens, as the promise of this commandment alludes to.

*Exodus 20:12 NLT - 12 "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*

You may be blessed with Godly parents who are easy to honor, or you may have to respond to parents who are unsaved and have failed in their responsibilities as parents. But in both cases, we are called to honor them.

*Are you able to name some of the things that you honor in your parents? If your relationship is broken, is there something you can say that you learned from them, even if it was by seeing their mistakes?*

## 3. Don't Provoke your Children

*Ephesians 6:4 NLT - 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.*

*1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NKJV - 4 Love suffers long [and] is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;*