

Learning to Live Under God - Ephesians 6:1-3

Let's read our passage this morning. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother—this is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Paul is writing about children and parents—but deeper down, it's about how we learn to live under God's authority. This command is simple to understand, but impossible to obey apart from Christ.

Before Resurrection weekend we were working through the Ephesians section about spirit-filled relationships in the home. Up to this point we have seen the way a marriage reveals the relationship between Jesus and The Church. We dove deep into the role, responsibilities, and reward of husbands and wives who obey Jesus in their marriages.

Now we see God's design for the relationship between children and parents. Here's the big idea of the passage: **God teaches us to live under Him through the way we obey and honor our parents, and that is the path to a life that goes well.** So, let's jump into the text together.

1. What does God Command? Obedience and Honor.

A. Obedience - Paul begins very clearly and directly. "Children, obey your parents..."

I. Obey - The word "obey" means to listen and immediately respond by doing what you were asked or told to do. Obedience means: Right away, all the way, every time.

- This is written to children who are still living under their parents' authority—kids, teenagers, those children who are still in the home. And the command is simple—obey.
- Let's say your mom says, "Go clean your room." You say, "Okay"... but you don't go right away. You wait. You get distracted. Did you obey? No. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Or you go clean your room—but only part of it. That's not obedience either.

II. Obedience is training – In learning to listen, respond, and obey your parents—you are being trained to follow and obey God.

- But if you resist your parents—if you argue, delay, push back—you are training your heart to resist God's good authority. You are building up a practice that becomes a habit and habits form hearts. Through obedience to your parents, God is teaching you what it means to live under His authority. The home (relationship with your parents) is the first place you learn authority. And that lesson doesn't stay at home, it travels. It shows up in how you respond to: Teachers, Leaders, Government, and ultimately—God Himself.

III. "In the Lord" - That means you are living under Christ first—and you are obeying your parents as an act of obedience to Him.

- "in the Lord"- It never means obeying something sinful or wrong. Your parents' authority is real—but it is not absolute. God's authority is. Just as a wife does not submit to her husband's sinful leadership, a child does not obey a parent who asks them or commands them to sin.
- It also doesn't mean you only obey if your parents are Christians. It means your obedience is done as an act of obedience to Christ. In Colossians 3 Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord." This is something that actually brings joy to God.

IV. "For this is right" – No matter what a culture says, God has said that children obeying their parents is right. This certainly has massive implications for a society. The enemy wants to attack the home first, because the home is the backbone of the society/culture. If the home fails, the culture fails. This is how God designed life to work in every culture and home, and at all times.

Transition to Point 2 - But obedience alone is not the whole picture. Because it's possible to obey... and still not honor. And that's where Paul takes us next.

B. Honor - Now notice what Paul does here. in verse 2, he goes even deeper—he shows us that the command is connected to our hearts, not just our actions. “Honor your father and mother.” And the command to “honor” doesn't stop when you grow up. Obedience is for a season; Honor is for a lifetime.

I. Honoring Your Parents as a Child - Kids—this is for you.

- To honor means to treat your parents as weighty—as important, not light, not dismissible. This is not just how you feel—it shows up in how you speak, how you act, how you respond.
- Honor means: Respect in your tone. A willingness in your response. A heart that sees your parents as important. God is not just shaping your behavior—He is shaping your heart.
- Have you ever done what your parents said—but you sighed, rolled your eyes, slammed something, or mumbled under your breath? You obeyed... but did you honor?
- When you treat your parents as weighty—as important—you are learning how to treat God as weighty. But when you dismiss them, talk back, or act like what they say doesn't matter—you are training your heart to dishonor the good authority God has placed over you throughout your life, and ultimately, God himself.

II. Honoring Your Parents as an Adult – For those of us over 18—we are no longer under our parents' authority. We don't obey them like we did when we were a child. But God still calls us to honor them. What should that look like?

- The Bible is very clear that honoring our parents means more than just speaking well of them. At some point it includes tangible care for them.
 - In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul says that if someone does not provide for their relatives, especially their own household, they have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever. Honoring our parents at times will include real, tangible care.
 - Jesus rebukes people in Mark 7 who used religious excuses to avoid caring for their parents. Saying, they were giving to God instead of meeting the needs of the aging parents. So, we don't get to spiritualize our way out of this. God takes honor seriously.
- Some of you have difficult relationships with your parents. Honoring doesn't mean pretending sin is okay. It doesn't mean agreeing with everything they say. But it does mean refusing bitterness and choosing a posture of respect before God. Sometimes honor looks like closeness. Sometimes it looks like appropriate God honoring distance with respect instead of closeness with resentment. Honor is not measured by how close you are to your parents, but by whether you are treating them as weighty before God. Honor doesn't end when obedience ends. It continues in a different form. It often means gratitude instead of entitlement, respect instead of dismissal, and care instead of neglect.
- **Care Framework** – consider this as a way to help you honor your parents as an adult.
 - **Gratitude instead of entitlement** – As adults, your parents don't owe you ongoing provision or entitlement. Honor begins with gratitude for what they have given, not feelings of entitlement for what they you think you deserve. It can be easy for young adults to look at their parents' lives, especially financially and materially, while trying to lay a foundation for their own and think their parents need to help. If they can help and want to, what a blessing, but they do not owe that to you.
 - **Respect instead of dismissal** – There is a growing movement, often coming from well-meaning psychological language, that encourages adults to completely cut off their parents—to essentially divorce themselves from them. I understand that for some

this comes from real hurt and difficulty. But as a general posture, this is not what God calls us to. We don't dismiss our parents. We may need to establish healthy boundaries, but we disobey God when we treat our parents as disposable. Honor means giving our parents the respect they deserve as our parents.

o Practically, that looks like answering the phone more often than not when they call, picking up the phone and calling them, and seeking to have them in your life to the extent that it is wise and possible. Every relationship is different, but outside of extreme circumstances, such as abuse or ongoing harm, honoring your parents means maintaining a real, respectful relationship.

▪ **Care instead of neglect** – This one is especially important in our culture. As people live longer, many find themselves in what sociologists call the “sandwich generation.” That term describes adults who are caring for their children while also caring for aging parents. And this is where life can get complicated. Many in our individualistic culture say, “Do the least you can.” On the other hand, some people feel such a strong sense of responsibility that they end up neglecting their spouse, their children, and their own financial, emotional, and physical health out of guilt for caring for their parents. So how do we do honor God by caring well for aging parents?

- **First, we must stop thinking in extremes** - recognize that honor does not mean unlimited access, unlimited agreement, or unlimited sacrifice. Honor also does not mean neglect.
- **Second, we must remember God's order** - God has already given us an order of responsibility, not in value, but in order. If you are married, your first human responsibility is your spouse. Then your children. And then you care for your parents within that order—not instead of it. That means you cannot neglect your parents, but it also means you cannot sacrifice your marriage or your children in the name of caring for your parents. So, if you are in that “sandwich” season, you need to be intentional. You and your spouse need to get on the same page, God's page. You need to ask: Are we on God's page about order of priority? This is not about value, but priority. We need to ask: What do our aging parents truly need, not just want? Ask: What does Honoring God and His order given to bless us look like in this season?
- **Third - We must think in seasons, not forever.** The command to obey and honor lasts forever, but what it looks like changes in every season.
- **Fourth – Consider thinking about this in three layers.** (Heart, Presence, Provision)
 - o **First, the heart**—am I treating my parents as weighty before God, or have I become resentful and dismissive?
 - o **Second, presence**—am I meaningfully engaged in their lives, staying connected, initiating contact, and remaining relationally available in a God honoring way to them and my household?
 - o **And third, provision**—are their real needs being met in a way that is wise and sustainable? This will look different in every family. For some, it may involve financial help. For others, it may involve coordination of care, or difficult decisions about housing or medical needs. It might include bringing them into your household. Do this as slowly and wisely as

possible. But in every case, the call is the same: we do not neglect our parents, and we do not step outside of God's good order or priority to care for them. We honor them.

Transition - So whether you are a child or an adult—this command to honor your parents is for you. God is not just concerned with what you do—but why and how you do it.

2. The Path of Blessing? - “That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

A. General Promise -

I. Paul reminds us that this the first commandment with a promise (5th commandment in the 10).

This is not a new command that should come and go with culture shifts and ideological paradigms. This is and has always been God's way to establish a blessing of order in a home and society.

II. General Promise - This is a general promise—not a guarantee that every individual life will be easy or long if we obey and honor—but a principle that God's blessing rests on those who walk in His design.

B. Two Pathways -

I. Path to Blessing: One person listens to their parents. Takes correction. Learns to receive instruction. Obeys and honors. This is the path to wisdom. This is why all through Proverbs you hear, “Listen to your father. Hear your mother.” Because this is the path of wisdom and therefore, blessing.

II. Path to Destruction – One person resists their parents' authority. Pushes back. Rejects correction. As an adult, does not honor, this is the path to destruction. The other becomes hardened, defensive, unwilling to listen.

3. The Gospel and New Hearts -

A. Our Hearts Resist Authority - The bible teaches us that our sin nature causes us to naturally resist the good authority God has placed in our lives. Nobody has to teach a child to say “no” to their parents or push back. None of us have obeyed or honored our parents perfectly. We have all resisted God's authority, and the authority God has placed over us.

B. We Need New Hearts - In fact, the OT prophets continually spoke about our need for new hearts. We cannot obey the command to obey and honor our parents without a change of heart. **Ezekiel 36:26–27** - “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone... and give you a heart of flesh.”

C. Jesus Obeyed in Our Place - There is good news for us today! Jesus obeyed His parents and God perfectly. He honored His parents and God perfectly. He submitted to His parents and the Father completely.

D. Jesus Died in Our Place - Jesus received the wages of our sin (Death) - And He went to the cross—not for His disobedience—but for ours. Jesus went to the cross to pay the penalty for every time we disobeyed and dishonored our parents. On the cross, He received the wages for our disobedience and dishonor.

E. Jesus Gives Us New Hearts - Jesus not only paid the penalty for our sin, saving us from the just wrath of God, and purchasing our forgiveness, but he also gives us a new heart. If you are in Christ today, ask Jesus to soften your heart toward God's authority and toward your parents. Ask Him to help you obey and honor (children) and honor (adults).

Closing: God's design is not meant to crush you—it is meant to lead you into a life that truly flourishes.

Come to Him today, receive a new heart, and begin to live under Him!

Outline:

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Ephesians 6:1–3

1. Obey and Honor

- **Obey Your Parents** - Right away, all the way, every time
 - This is training the heart
 - “In the Lord”
 - “This is right”
- **Honor Your Parents**
 - Child: Respect & Honor
 - Adult: Gratitude • Respect • Care
 - **Care Framework:**
 - Avoid Extremes
 - God’s Order of Priority not Value
 - Think in Seasons
 - **Three Layers:**
 - Heart
 - Presence
 - Provision

2. The Path of Blessing

- General Promise
- Two Pathways

3. The Gospel and New Hearts

- Our Hearts Resist Authority
- We Need New Hearts
- Jesus Obeyed in Our Place
- Jesus Died in Our Place
- Jesus Gives Us New Hearts