

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, Obey

Main idea: Godly children will seek to honor and obey the parents God gave them, and in doing so, glorify God.

There are a few things that we all have in common.

- We all have desires. We all have dreams. We've all laughed. We've all cried.¹
- We also all have parents.²
- We can't control the kinds of parents we've had, but we can respond to them in a godly way.³
- Godly children will seek to honor and obey the parents God gave them, and in doing so, glorify God.

Read Ephesians 6:1-4

We sometimes say that honoring your parents does not mean the same as obeying your parents.

- And that's true. If your parents teach you to sin, you shouldn't obey them.⁴
- But even then, you can still honor them.
 - You can honor them by being thankful for how they've given you life.⁵
 - You can honor them, in many cases, for how they provided for you.⁶
- But this passage actually goes beyond just honoring, and does tell us to obey our parents.
 - Honoring and obeying good, godly parents is hard enough.⁷
 - But how can we honor and obey our parents when we don't have the best parents?
 - And what does it mean to honor and obey?

The command seems to be quite simple. (v. 1)

- So children are called to obey, but notice how this is not unconditional obedience.
 - God calls children to obey "in the Lord."
 - If parents command something against God's will, children must honor but not obey.⁸
 - It's kind of like when you're driving and there's a police officer directing traffic. [photo]
 - Normally, you follow all the traffic lights and all the rules.
 - But if a police officer waves you forward, you follow him instead.
 - God's command is always the higher authority.⁹
- So even in difficult family situations, obedience "in the Lord" means always making it your aim to do what God calls you to do. [Colossians 3:23]
- And even for adult children, obedience changes form, but honoring continues through showing respect, care, and gratitude.

Because this command is actually a timeless instruction. (v. 2)

- So Paul roots the command to obey your parents in the Ten Commandments. [Exodus 20:12]
- It's not just cultural, but part of God's eternal moral law.¹⁰

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

² Exodus 20:12

³ Ephesians 6:1

⁴ Acts 5:29

⁵ Psalm 127:3

⁶ 1 Timothy 5:8

⁷ Hebrews 12:11

⁸ Acts 5:29

⁹ Ecclesiastes 12:13

¹⁰ Proverbs 23:22

- The command from the Ten Commandments is to “honor,” which seems more palatable than “obey.”
 - But in some ways, honoring your parents is an even more difficult command.
 - It involves having the resolve to say, “Even if I have imperfect parents, I’m going to live in a way that respects them.”
 - There’s a podcast online I catch bits and pieces of in which adult children talk with their parents. **[photo]**
 - In the podcast, they decided to hash out all the things they disagree about.
 - They did that so that when they weren’t doing the podcast, they’d stop arguing so much.
 - I could see how that would be a way to honor their parents even in adulthood.
 - Honor may look like refusing bitterness, being civil, and speaking truth with love and respect.¹¹
 - Honor doesn’t mean pretending parents are perfect or never questioning them, it means acknowledging the God-given role they’ve had in your life.¹²
 - And I think if we could talk with Paul about who he’s talking about in this passage, he would include more than just your biological parents.
 - It might include the people who raised you, extended family, or even your community.
 - The point is, there are people in our lives that we might not want to obey, but ought to honor and obey because God’s placed them in our lives for a reason.¹³

Because Paul actually reminds us that this command carries a promise. (v. 3)

- It’s talking about very natural blessings that we have as we live this kind of life.
- In general, respecting authority leads to stability, wisdom, and flourishing. **[graph]**
- Even when circumstances are broken, obeying God positions us to experience His blessing.¹⁴
- God sees the struggle of children with difficult parents, and He promises His own presence and reward when we honor Him in how we respond.¹⁵

Finally, in regards to children, God also gives commands to parents, specifically fathers. (v. 4)

- Parents need to not make it unnecessarily difficult to honor and obey them.
- We must not abuse our authority or crush our children’s spirits.
- Instead, we are to raise them with discipline and instruction from the Lord.
 - We’ve all heard about Martin Luther King, Jr, but you may not know about his dad. **[photo]**
 - Martin Luther King Sr. raised his son by modeling a life of faith, courage, and service.
 - He guided his son’s heart toward God, not by controlling him, but by exemplifying Christlike character.
 - Godly parenting is not about control, but about shepherding hearts toward Christ.¹⁶
- So for those who grew up with provoking or abusive parents: this verse validates your experience: that’s not how God designed it.
 - And yet, you can still honor by refusing to let bitterness define you, and by breaking unhealthy cycles in your own life.
 - We obey and honor not just because our parents are worthy, but because the Lord is worthy.
 - Even in broken families, this passage gives us a way forward: obedience when possible, honor always, and trust in God’s promises.
 - In the end, how we treat our parents says less about them and more about our trust in Jesus.¹⁷

¹¹ Ephesians 4:32

¹² Proverbs 23:22

¹³ Romans 13:1

¹⁴ Psalm 128:1

¹⁵ James 1:12

¹⁶ Proverbs 22:6

¹⁷ Romans 12:21