

Deuteronomy 6:1–9, Ephesians 6:1–4, Colossians 3:20–21 and Parenting

Prayer

Introductory Questions

- What factors threaten the relationships between parents and their children?
- What do you most appreciate about the way your parents raised you?
- What are the characteristics and actions of an ideal Christian parent?

Introduction

This lesson focuses on three of the most prominent passages in the Bible about the responsibilities of parents and their children in relation to one another: Deuteronomy 6:1–9, Ephesians 6:1–4, and Colossians 3:20–21.

The following truths provide a context for our lesson:

1. **Children are a gift from God, and we are stewards of that gift.** “Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD, offspring, a reward” (Ps. 127:3; cf. James 1:17). God is the Creator and ultimate owner of everything in the universe. He has entrusted us with the responsibility of managing his possessions wisely. Ultimately, children belong to God, and therefore we must strive to love and lead them well during our time with them.
2. **Parents have a profound influence on their children.** Perhaps more than anyone else, parents have the ability to influence their children positively and negatively. Either parents make it *easier* for their children to know, love, and obey God—or parents make it *more difficult* for their children to know, love, and obey God. More specifically, parents’ beliefs, character, words, and actions either point their children to God or away from God (Matt. 14:8; 2 Tim. 1:5).
3. **Raising children well is a church-wide responsibility.** God designed children to be raised in the context of a God-centered, Word-centered church. Our children need pastors, other Christian parents, and godly peers to help them know God and follow Jesus.
4. **All parents and all children have fallen short of God’s standards and need his grace.** When we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus, each of us is forgiven, and each of us can grow in our responsibilities before God by the power of the Spirit (Eph. 1:7; Phil. 4:13).

We organize our lesson into three sections: (1) God-centered, Word-centered Living (Deut. 6:1–9), (2) Instructions for Children (Eph. 6:1–3; Col. 3:20), and (3) Instructions for Fathers (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). We conclude this lesson by summarizing characteristics of God-centered parenting.

1. God-centered, Word-centered Living

- “1 This is the command—the statutes and ordinances—the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you may follow them in the land you are about to enter and possess. 2 Do this so that you may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life by keeping all his statutes and commands I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life. 3 Listen, Israel, and be careful to follow them, so that you may prosper and multiply greatly, because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Deut. 6:1–3)
- “4 Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.” (Deut. 6:4–9)

These verses focus on the importance of loving and obeying God as outlined in his Word, including commitments and practices that we must pass on to the next generation:

The one God demands a complete love that unites all the facets of the personality [heart, soul, strength], inculcating [instilling, implanting] the next generation with this vision of life through teaching (v. 7), action (vv. 8–9), memory (v. 12), worship (v. 13), ritual (v. 20), and story (vv. 21–23). (*NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 298)

Moses instructed the Jews concerning the commands God had given him, so they would follow God’s commands when they entered the promised land (v. 1). God’s people should not be afraid of him (1 John 4:18), but we should fear/revere him, which we express by obeying the commands he gives to multiple generations (note the language of “you,” “your son,” “your grandson” in v. 2). God promised that such obedience would lead to long lives, prosperity, and multiplication for the Jews in the land (vv. 2–3).

Deuteronomy 6:4 is the great Jewish confession known as *the Shema* (in Hebrew: “hear”): “Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” The Lord is the one and only God (Isa. 44:6,8). We must love God with every part of our being—with (or from) all our heart, soul, and strength (v. 5; cf. Mark 12:29–30). Love for God means, at least in part, directing our highest affection and commitment to him above all others. In this passage, we express our love for him by taking his Word to heart (v. 6)—and by centering our lives (including centering our families!) on God and his Word in concrete ways (vv. 7–9).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are different ways we can express our love for God? • What are examples of a Word-centered family? |
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2. Instructions for Children

- “1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise, 3 “so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land.”” (Eph. 6:1–3)
- “20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” (Col. 3:20)

Here Paul directs his words to children who are old enough to understand God’s Word and living under their parents’ direct authority. Children must obey their parents as they would the Lord, because this is right (Eph. 6:1). While *adult children* do not need to obey their parents in everything (cf. Eph. 6:4, which is directed to kids and adolescents), *all children* must honor their parents (v. 2). Paul cites the fifth commandment, which is the first commandment that contains a promise (vv. 2–3; cf. Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Moses taught that honoring parents leads to the well-being of the children and the nation. The same is true as we live under the new covenant: honoring parents is good for children, good for parents, and good for our nation. Paul taught that children should obey their parents “in everything” (as long as their parents do not ask them to disobey God) in order to please the Lord (Col. 3:20).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes it difficult to honor and obey our parents? • How can we honor our parents? What are the benefits of doing so? |
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3. Instructions for Fathers

- “4 Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph. 6:4)
- “21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they won’t become discouraged.” (Col. 3:21)

In these verses, Paul addresses fathers in particular, for they are the heads of their households, but these commands apply to both fathers and mothers (Prov. 31; Eph. 5:22–24). Fathers should not stir up anger in their children, but instead they should raise them “in the training and instruction of the Lord”—as outlined in his Word (Eph. 6:4). Furthermore, they should not exasperate (irritate, embitter) their children, which leads to discouragement (Col. 3:21).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can parents stir up anger within their children? • How can parents overcome those obstacles? |
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Sound Doctrine: God-centered Parenting

Below are seven acts of obedience that are particularly relevant *as we parent our own children AND as we nurture one another's children*. Why should we obey God? **First and foremost**, we obey to glorify God, regardless of how our actions affect others. Loving and obeying God is the right thing to do, because he is worthy. **Second**, our obedience benefits our children. It provides them an example of godliness, which hopefully they will desire for themselves. And our obedience contributes to a stable, loving, joyful home, which is in everyone's best interests.

1. **Love God above all.** “29 Jesus answered, “The most important is “Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” 31 The second is, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other command greater than these”” (Mark 12:29–31).
2. **Cherish, study, memorize, meditate on, and obey God's Word.** “1 How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! 2 Instead, his delight is in the LORD's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night” (Ps. 1:1–2).
3. **“Put away” ungodly characteristics and “put on” godly characteristics.** “8 But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. 12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Col. 3:8–10, 12).
4. **Love, encourage, and serve your spouse.** “25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25–26; cf. vv. 22–24, 27–33).
5. **Teach, discuss, memorize, and pray about the Word with your children.** “7 Repeat them [God's commands] to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7).
6. **Discipline [redemptively redirect] your child with love—avoiding anger/abuse and passivity/neglect, and teaching them to obey you the first time you make a request (not the third or fourth time).** “Discipline your child, and it will bring you peace of mind and give you delight” (Prov. 29:17; cf. Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13).
7. **Show love and kindness and compassion to your children, for they need those things as much as you do.** “32 And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ” (Eph. 4:32).

- What comments and questions do you have about this lesson?
- What is one thing you can do in response to this lesson?

Prayer