



LEADER'S GUIDE 11

EPHESIANS 6:1-9

Christian Relationships: Parent/Child, Employee/Employer

As you start this study, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

DAY 1

Read Ephesians 6:1-9 three times.

1. In verse 1, what are children commanded to do? To obey their parents

In whom? IN the Lord

Why? It is right

"obey" literally means listen – the child is to be willing to listen to the words of their parents and shape their actions by it.

"in the Lord" means because they(the child) belong to the Lord and act in accordance with the will of the Lord.

Obedience to parents is part of a child's obligation to the Lord. (see Luke 2:51 and Hebrews 5:8). (from NIV footnote) Children are to obey while under their parent's care. (NLT footnote) Parents have authority over their children, but not without limit, as we shall see.

"for this is right" – it is not confined to Christians ethics. It is standard behavior in any society. Pagan moralists, Greek and Roman, taught it. Stoic philosophers saw a child's obedience as self-prudent, plainly required by reason and part of the "nature of things". (Coleman and Peace) It accords with the law of God, as we shall see in the next verse. This duty has been recognized in all ages, lands and among all people.

2. In verse 2 what else is commanded? Honor your father and mother

Using a dictionary, describe the difference between "obey" and "honor".

"obey" means to comply with or fulfill the commands or instructions of your parents.

"honor" means to show respect, to revere, and involves personal affection and commitment over a lifetime.

To obey refers to doing what you are told, honor is the attitude and way you treat the person. Honor involves respect for their wisdom, defer to their authority, pay attention to their comfort and happiness. "It is the inner attitude of the child toward his parents. It implies to love, to regard highly, to show the spirit of respect and consideration. This is to be shown to both parents, for as far as the child is concerned they are equal in authority." (Hendrickson)

Paul here quotes the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) in support of the command in verse one, to obey their parents. Note that children are addressed directly by Paul in this passage. It indicates that children were in attendance with their families when the letter was read. He also uses the phrase "the first commandment with promise". This actually

is the second commandment with promise – see Exodus 20:6. The precise idea Paul has in using this wording is not evident. It could be related to the act that the first 4 commandments address people's relationship to God and the last 6 commandments address people's relationship with each other. This command, then, would be the first commandment in the second set with a specific promise attached to it. What is clear is that this divine command is coupled with a divine blessing to all who obey it. (some comments from Coleman and Peace, Walvoord and Zuck and C. Erdman) Verses 1 and 2 apply even if the parents are demanding and unfair. (NLT footnote).

3. According to verse 3, what are the benefits or rewards of "honoring your parents"?

It will go well with you and that you may enjoy a long life on the earth.

Obedience to parents results in the prospect of a successful and long life. The original promise was to Israel in regards to living in the promised land. They were promised a prosperous and long life in the land. Paul's use here indicates that children who obey their parents learn self-discipline, self-respect, habits of industry, faithfulness and kindness which bring stability and longevity. These children can normally expect temporal blessings and long life on this earth. (from Walvoord and Zuck and C. Erdman) When a child matures his/her relationship to his parents changes (Ephesians 5:31) but not his/her responsibility to provide for them. (1 Timothy 5:4). (from NASB footnotes

TO DIG DEEPER: Read Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. Where did Paul draw his command from? Now read Matthew 15:3-9. How had the tradition of the elders distorted this command? What did Jesus say about that?

Paul is quoting from the fifth commandment of the ten commandments. The elders used their tradition to get out of taking care of their parents. Jesus criticized them for nullifying the word of God with their own rules. They failed to affirm that obeying the fifth commandment was not just an outward gesture or token of obedience, but came from their heart attitude. Isaiah 29:13 notes that we should honor the Lord with our hearts and minds rather than just what we say or eat. Jesus expands Isaiah's admonitions in Matthew's Gospel. After accusing the Pharisees of being "blind guides" in Matthew 15:13, Jesus continues in Matthew 15:18 to say that his mission is not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, rather "to fulfill them".

Note: verses 1-3 and Matthew 15 show that God's moral law was not set aside or nullified by Christ or Paul. Rather, Jesus actually expanded it's meaning as most thoroughly presented throughout the book of Matthew.

DAY 2

1. In verse 4, what are fathers not to do? They are not to exasperate their children.
Instead, what are they to do? Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord
"Fathers are addressed because they represent the governmental head of the family on whom rests the responsibility of child discipline." (Walvoord and Zuck) Fathers here probably represent both parents. Also, the model for a Christian father is God, the "Father of all". (see Ephesians 4:6). Human fathers are to exercise the same kind of love and pull the family into a loving community. This is" in sharp contrast to the harsh Roman father who had The power of life and death over his children". (Coleman and Peace) Note

that the duty of parents is expressed both negatively and positively. The negative phrase is dealt with in the next question. The positive phrase as follows: "bring them up" is a verb that means to nourish or feed them. The Greek word is ektrephete = provide for physical and spiritual needs. It includes education by means of discipline and instruction by means of correction. There are natural faults in the nature of a child that need verbal reproof and counsel to warn of future temptations. (from C. Erdman)

2. The word "exasperate" or "provoke to anger" is used only here and in Romans 10:19. It is the Greek word parorgizete = provoke to anger. See also Colossians 3:21. What does Colossians say such actions cause in children? Discouragement and embitterment

What are some ways parents provoke their children to anger? Some ways include being overly strict, unreasonable in demands, harsh words and punishment, not taking time to discuss, teach or show how, do the opposite of what tell the child to do, showing favoritism. Parents may also provoke children by having unrealistic expectations and goals for their children, by failing to praise or thank them or by ignoring their requests or participation.

The advice from the Victorian era was that "Children should be seen, but not heard," and is a good example of what not to do in raising your children. Parents are to limit the exercise of their authority – not nag or be unfair or unreasonable in their requirements and demands, not causing irritation or exasperation nor harsh or oppressive behavior. "By humiliating children, being cruel to them, overindulging them, or being unreasonable, parents squash children rather than encourage them." (Coleman and Peace) "What the exhortation does forbid is such unfair treatment, such cruel demands, such a selfish insistence upon authority, as to awaken in the heart of a child a rankling sense of injustice." (C. Erdman) Divorce in a family may leave the children with the incorrect feeling that they have done something wrong and that they are without value or worth. Christ's life and sacrificial death for each of us affirms our value and worth in our Heavenly Father's eyes. WE all have insecurities when it comes to raising children, but the parent who is rigidly authoritarian and controlling may need to seek some counselling for underlying insecurity leading to the need to control others.

3. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Describe what training and instructing children in the Lord involves. The parent is to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and strength. God's word is in the parent's heart, so it shows in their life. The parents are to talk about God's commands as part of daily conversation and in daily life situations. What you believe should be clearly visible to your children and others.

Deuteronomy states that the parent is to impress on your children the substance and affirmation of God's Word: at home, along the road, when lie down and when get up. The Israelites were to pace this on their hands, foreheads, door frames and gates. This means that the worship of God should be a constant expression in our lives and instruction to our children.

Fathers must surrender any right they may feel to act unreasonably toward their children. (from NIV footnote). The purpose of discipline is to help children grow – it takes patience. (from NLT footnote). "Be a good parent by being a good child of the Lord". (F. Sells) Let your kids see the reality of Christ. Parents are to act in love as Jesus treats the people he loves. This is vital to their development and to their understanding of what Christ is like. (from NLT footnotes) "The way to be a true child or a true parent is to be submissive unto the Lord." F. Sells "Verses 1-4 will happen if parents and children submit to one another – put the other's interests above their own." NLT footnotes

DAY 3

1. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament regulations for societal situations such as slavery and divorce were given. These regulations do not encourage or condone such situations but are given as practical ways of dealing with the reality of the day. In Matthew 19:8 Jesus states why these situations existed. What do they stem from?

They stem from the people's hearts are hard.

The hardening of the heart is related to our sinful natures which stems from our "fall" in Genesis 3. The origin of slavery is not specifically addressed in the Bible, but it is a centuries old practice among all the peoples in the world. At its heart, however, is a disregard for another person. When asked by the Pharisees and the Sadducees which is the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus replied in Matthew 22:37-40: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Christ makes a connection between loving God and loving your neighbor. "That Paul should even address slaves is amazing. In the first century, they were often considered more akin to farm animals than human beings, the only difference being that they could talk. Slaves were 'living tools' according to Aristotle. Yet Paul speaks to them as people able to choose and to decide – quite revolutionary for his era. . . . Women, children, and slaves were all apparently, participants in Christian worship. This is an example of what Paul was speaking about in the first half of this letter when he points to the new body – the Church – into which Christ was gathering all peoples." Coleman and Peace

2. Verses 5-8 command slaves to obey earthly masters. In verse 5, with what three attitudes are they to do this?

With respect, fear and sincerity of heart.

They are to do this as if they were obeying whom? Christ

Paul reminds the slaves that these earthly masters are temporary, and that they ultimately belong to Christ.

"respect and fear" – other translations say "with fear and trembling" – with respect for the rightful authority of the master and keen anxiety to leave no duty undone. And as if they are serving the Lord – in integrity with the same wholehearted devotion they would give the Lord. (from Coleman and Peace and C. Erdman

3. In verse 6, how are slaves not to obey their masters? Not just to win their favor

But like what? Like slaves of Christ doing the will of God.

"In other words, don't just pretend to be serving wholeheartedly when, in fact, you only work when you are watched and then, simply to gain favor with the master." (Coleman and Peace) Another way to say this is "servants who work well when being watched, but who are idle or careless when the master is absent." (C. Erdman) This is in contrast with servants of Christ who do the will of God from their heart by doing good willing service. "The task of the humblest slave may be ennobled by being rendered in such a way as to please Christ..." (C. Erdman)

DAY 4

1. Verse 7 says to serve _____, as if you were serving _____.
Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord.
The New American Standard Version states this: With good will render service. The word for wholeheartedly in the Greek is eunoias which means with good will or a peaceable spirit. "When work is done for the Lord as part of obedience to him it takes on a whole new character." Coleman and Peace.
2. Verse 8 tells the slaves if they obey their masters as stated in verses 6-7, what do they know will result?
They know the Lord will reward everyone for the good they do.
This verse is also stated "Knowing that whatever good thing each one does this he will receive back or again from the Lord". The life of many slaves was hard and bleak with little hope of change. The hope of future reward was of central importance. The question then will not be what social position one held, but whether he was faithful in his task. "Even a slave in the corrupt conditions of the first century could so live as to receive at last from his Master (Christ) the glad words of "Well done, good and faithful servant". C. Erdman By using the word "everyone" Paul is reminding slaves that before God, they stand as on equal footing with their masters. (Coleman and Peace)
3. Read Colossians 3:22-25. What is said that helps you further understand these verses in Ephesians?
Colossians 3:22-25 says to obey earthly masters in everything, to obey out of reverence for the Lord and to do their work with all their heart – see it as working for the Lord.
In other words, you are serving Christ, so always do your best!

DAY 5

1. What does verse 9 tell Masters to do? Treat slaves in the same way
Not to do? Do not threaten them
Why? God – who is their Master as well as the slaves Master – sees what you do. God's example is to show no favoritism.
"in the same way" – that is to please the Lord in their dealings with their slaves. Paul actually is applying the golden rule to slave owners: "to get service and respect, give it to the slaves!" This was a revolutionary concept. This was the way of mutual submission for slave and master: mutual respect. Ephesians 5:21. (from Coleman and Peace) Paul stresses reciprocal attitudes. The same Christian principles apply to both Masters and slaves: to show consideration and good will. (from C. Erdman)
"Do not threaten" – masters are not to browbeat or threaten with punishment (the usual way of controlling slaves). The master was usually in the position of privilege, power and advantage. "If it is the duty of servants to be faithful and loyal, so it is the duty of masters to be kindly and considerate, seeking the highest welfare of those by whom they are served." C. Erdman Slaves were considered little better than beasts. So to keep them in their place they were handled by the fear of punishment, by threats of torture and death. "Threatening implies coercion and compulsion by those in a position to exercise tyranny.: C. Erdman
"no favoritism" – Paul is pointing out the equality of slave and master in the sight of God – the seeds of emancipation. Masters are to remember that

Christ is in the place of supreme power and he shows no partiality or favoritism- thus the master will show his servants the same unfailing justice and mercy he expects to receive from Christ – his Lord and Master. (from Coleman and Peace and C. Erdman)

So, Masters are to treat their slaves fairly, without favoritism and provide their servants the things they need to do their jobs. There are consequences for misbehavior, but masters should not threaten their slaves to gain compliance. Christ is the model for the master's behavior. He taught a lack of favoritism – and so did New Testament writers in Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9 and James 2:1. This is consistently mentioned in the Old Testament as well: Exodus 23:3 and Leviticus 19:15.

2. See Colossians 3:25-4:1. How do these verses help you understand Ephesians 6:9?

The Colossians verses also include providing what is right and fair and adds that their master is the one in heaven who is also their example.

3. Read again Ephesians 6:5-9. Explain how these verses apply in an employee/employer situation. Employees are to treat their employer with respect, do the best job they can, obey the rules and treat their job as they are serving Christ in it. Employers are to treat employees with respect, do what is right and fair, like they are treating Christ – remember Christ is their master!. The quality of an employee's work should be the standard for reward or promotion. Employers should not frustrate their employees by having unrealistic expectations or impossible goals. Nor should they threaten employees with lower wages or loss of job. These guidelines are similar to the role parents play in raising their children. Employers do have authority over their employees but it is not to be misused.

In all our relationships, the one you ultimately should want to please is Christ. "The way to be a true servant or a true master is to be submissive to the Lord." F. Sells. This is also true for a true employee or true employer, child or parent, wife or husband.

TO DIG DEEPER: In our study of Ephesians, often the verses cross –reference to verses in Colossians. Both books were written during the same imprisonment of Paul in Rome, probably pretty close together. Read the Book of Colossians (4 chapters). Now reread Ephesians. Note the verses or thoughts or topics that are similar. (If your Bible has a cross-reference column, this will help you note verse for verse.

There are at least 49 verses in Ephesians that cross-reference to verses in Colossians. These two books definitely help interpret each other. This is another principle in Inductive Bible Study.

DAY 6

APPLICATION 1

Children are to obey their parents while under their parents care. When a child matures, his/her relationship to parents changes – as stated in Ephesians 5:31. But, a child's responsibility to love and respect and even provide for the parents lasts for life.

Thinks about your relationship to your parents: How do you honor your parents? Are you a model to your children in this?

If you are raising children, what would you like to do to improve training and instructing them in the Lord? (reread Deuteronomy 6:4-9). What do you do that you need to change so you don't provoke them to anger or discourage them?

APPLICATION 2

If you are employed, working a job, how do you do your job? Do you do your best all the time? Do you do your job wholeheartedly? With enthusiasm? As if you are serving the Lord? What one thing will you change this week?

How do you treat your employer, boss or supervisor? Do you treat them with respect, honor their authority, with sincerity? What will you change this week in this area?

Employers, bosses, supervisors: How do you treat your employees or those you manage? Do you treat them with respect? Value their work? Not threaten them or show favoritism? What will you change this week?

The commands to respect parents and employers do not come with qualifiers such as "If they are . . ." This is very hard to do in some situations. But, with God all things are possible. ;With the Holy Spirit living in us, He can bring this about in our lives.

Spend time in prayer today. Confess your failure in these areas, ask God to help you serve Him in your relationships in your family and at work.

A HISTORICAL IMPACT: Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, as well as his personal letter to Philemon, deal with the owner/slave relationship through the lens of brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. Colosse was the home of Philemon. Onesimus was a runaway slave from Philemon's household and the subject of the letter which asks Philemon to accept and forgive Onesimus on his return. Slavery was common in Paul's day, but Paul's letter joins owner and slave as both brothers in Christ. These Biblical truths were revolutionary for that time and a driving, moral force almost 2000 years later in the Abolitionist Movement, led by Christians in the United States. The Quakers in Pennsylvania in the 1680s objected to slavery based on the Biblical texts. Slavery was the elephant in the room at the writing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, which declared that all men are created equal by the Creator. During the first half of the 19th century the Abolitionist Movement grew in the United States. Many Abolitionists participated in the underground railroad which helped slaves in the southern States escape from their masters. After forming separate political parties, most Abolitionists joined the Republican party in the 1854 elections. Following Abraham Lincoln's election, the southern states favoring slavery seceded from the union and the American Civil War started in 1861. Lincoln declared all slaves freed on the first of January 1863 in the Emancipation Proclamation. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in 1865. Historically, however, the Biblical roots of the American Civil War should not be lost and were at the heart of the moral imperatives driving the movement to stop slavery in the United States.