



ephesians

a church becoming

Sunday, February 2, 2025

Ephesians 6:1-4

As we step into the last and final chapter of the book of Ephesians, it's important to understand that although this is a new chapter, it really is a continuation of Paul's original thought that he started back in chapter 5:15 where he established this section by reminding the church of the importance of living lives where we are continually seeking to be filled with the Spirit. And as we are filled with the Spirit, that changes how we live and ultimately how we treat each other. Last week we saw the first practical application of this where Paul - now speaking directly to wives and husbands - encourages them to submit to each other and to view relationship with each other through the lens of Christ and the church. That the mutual love and respect that each have for each other is not about power or hierarchy, but about submission - where each endeavours to serve and honour the other as two equal partners that God has joined together to make one flesh.

Now, it's important to understand that from chapter 5:15-6:9 Paul uses this section to speak directly to the undervalued of the first century world. We learned last week that first century Judaism and Greco-Roman culture was very patriarchal - where life revolved around men. Women, children and servants were more often than not viewed as objects instead of persons. So by writing this letter, Paul would have been well-aware that it would be read aloud by the congregation in Ephesus where those present would have included, wives, husbands, children and servants. And in this section, Paul has a specific word spoken to each. After challenging the husbands and wives, Paul's next two instructions are to children and to servants, that in the family of God all are equally valuable, and there is no such thing as a lesser person because of one's role or social status.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning, I'd like to invite you to turn with me to Ephesians 6:1-4. Please stand if you are able, for the reading this morning:

Ephesians 6:1-4

'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.'

Children - obey your parents. Honour your father and mother. Parents - this is gonna be a good one :)

Now, what I'd like to do today is split this up into two parts - the first part being verse 1 to 3 that talks about children's response to parents and then we'll take a look at verse four which talks about parents response to children.

Again, just like last week, before getting into any of the nitty-gritty details, Paul underscores this whole section with one simple instruction that we are to submit to each other in the fear of God. That, even though there are different roles and responsibilities in life, we still have a responsibility to God to submit to each other. After all, this is how we as family are to treat each other.

So the first thing we notice is that when Paul calls children to obedience, he then backs it up by calling to remembrance the 5th commandment which is to honour your parents and then reminds them that this command also carries a promise - that if you do this, then it will go well for you and your life may be long.

If you turn back to the Old Testament for a moment and crack open Exodus 20 where the Ten Commandments are listed, we can see it clearly:

Exodus 20:12

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

Now, I know this command really, really well! In fact, growing up, if you were a part of the Hageman household, then you'd know this word for word. I'd like to think of myself as a fairly obedient kid - I say fairly obedient, because there were always those 'rare' moments where I would talk back to my parents or disrespect them...etc. It was more my siblings than me, but regardless, growing up in my house, we all knew these two phrases very well. And in our home it always started with, 'honour your father and mother and it will go well for you...' and if that wasn't enough to convince us, then out would come...'children obey your parents!'

And whenever my parents would use these two phrases, although we would groan and roll our

eyes....whether we realized it or not, these instructions were strategic and meant for us to see that the authority with which my parents spoke was actually God-given and used to draw the connection that when we honour our parents, we in turn honour God. And therefore the reciprocal is true too - that when we dishonour our parents, we in turn also dishonour God.

And so, as we walk through Paul's teaching today we will see that 'Honouring your Father and Mother' is as much about honouring God as it is about honouring our parents.

Interestingly, we know this to be true because of the word that Paul uses to describe the relationship between children and parents. The word honour here is the specific Hebrew word 'kabad' which means to 'respect, revere and obey.' This is significant because ultimately, this word is only ever used for God - with this instance of course being the only exception. There are other words that Paul could have chosen for honour, but by using this specific word Paul is saying that there is a direct connection to the way we treat God by how we treat our parents. And it's not the only link here either:

As we look deeper into this commandment today one of the things that I taught when we walked through the Ten Commandments a few years back was that the placement of the Ten Commandments was important and had significance. The fact that honouring parents is placed 5th is worth looking at because it's right in the middle of the pack.

Historically, the ten commandments are broken up into two groupings. The first 4 (no other gods but God, no idols, don't take the Lord's name in vain, keep the sabbath) focus on how we should act towards God whereas the last 6 (Honour your parents, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, don't covet) focus on how we should act towards each other.

Now, because how we honour parents is a reflection on how we honour God, we can see that this 5th commandment not only fits into the last grouping which focuses on how we should act towards each other, but it also fits beautifully into the first four which focus on how we should act towards God - which makes this commandment incredibly unique in the sense that it can now act as a link or hinge between the two.

It's almost as if God is saying in this command, that how you submit to parental authority will be a good indication of what submitting to the authority of God and the authority of man will look like for you. Everything in life stems from that relationship.

So let's dig into this a little bit and before I go any further here let me tell you that psychologists and therapists all agree that there is a reason that the early childhood years are referred to as 'formative years', because that's where children actually learn many of the building blocks of life. And if their parents aren't teaching them these things, then they learn it from someone or something else: peers, teachers, YouTube, social media...etc

Because, the reality is that children don't just wake up one morning deciding to honour their parents - it has to be taught. For those of us here that have children we all know the long journey of teaching our kids right from wrong. It's incredibly interesting that for all three of my kids I did not have to teach them the word 'no.' But I did have to teach them the word 'yes.' Don't kid yourself, those of you that have young babies all cute and cuddly in their cribs. You look at these precious little babies and think they could do no wrong, BUT you're wrong. Because soon enough you will learn that these babies have a will of their own and that will is tied to the sinful state of this world that they were born into and that will needs to be broken through submission to Jesus Christ.

Children need to honour their father and mother because that is the first example of Godly authority in their lives.

Growing up in a Godly home, the way that children learn about God is naturally through their parents. Parents are the first human interaction that children have and their very first authority figure. Through the parents, children learn what it means to love and to be loved and they learn what it is to nurture and to be nurtured. They also learn the difference between yes and no / right and wrong. They learn what it means to have wrong behaviour corrected through discipline as well as the blessing of obedience. And so, parents should have in mind from the beginning that the way they hold their child, discipline them, affirm them, and demand things from them should be telling them, showing them, and giving them a feel for who God is, both in His sweet and tender side and also in His powerful, just, and disciplinary side.

The role of mother and father is to teach and train healthy authority SO THAT when God establishes authority in our children's lives, they will embrace it and not run from it. If it is not being established at that stage, then these kids will have a hard time discipline from God later on in life. You see, this is where you first learn the difference between right and wrong. If we don't learn it here then we will never learn to embrace discipline from God as corrective and not punitive.

And this is actually for our benefit - it's for our good - and this is the second part of the commandment.

It's the old If/Then clause. IF you honour your parents THEN you will enjoy long life. The principal of this clause is this: IF we are faithful to what God has commanded us to do, THEN blessing will follow. The point being that:

Through obedience comes blessing.

So, for those that obey this command there is blessing but for those that choose to disobey this command then the reciprocal would be true too - that IF we are unfaithful to do what God has commanded us to do, THEN there will be no blessing.

The very next chapter says...

Exodus 21:17

"And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

This isn't the first time that something like this is mentioned either. The writer of Exodus here is simply quoting from Leviticus:

Leviticus 20:9 says:

'For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.'

Seems harsh, right?

We learned earlier that honour means to respect, revere and obey but the Hebrew word used for 'curse' here is QALAL and means a complete disregard, to treat as worthless and despicable. So, we're not talking about a misunderstanding or blow-up of frustration where words were said that weren't meant. This is much much much deeper than that.

In first century culture, there were no retirement savings plans or stocks and bonds or anything like that. Your future was tied to your work and when you grew old and were unable to work then it was the responsibility of your children to take care of you. These two verses take that responsibility very, very seriously and so if someone were to completely disregard and treat their parents as worthless, then yeah, not only would there be no blessing, but the consequences of those actions would indeed be severe because in abandoning their parents like that, it would have been viewed as a direct slap in the face of God. This is why Jesus was up in arms with the Pharisees in Matthew 15, because He

found out that the Pharisees were choosing not to support their elderly parents by using the excuse that: 'What I owed to you, I've already given to God.' So you can imagine how this blatant disregard not only broke societal norms but also deeply violated the heart of God.

Which is interesting because the Pharisees were clearly adults at this point which for us, establishes that this command does not have an age restriction or limitation. That it doesn't matter how young you are or how old you are, this command still applies. However, as much as this is true, the reality is that how we honoured our mother and father when we were 10 years old looks very different than how we honoured our mother and father when we were 20 years old 40 years old and so on and so forth. Each stage of life brings increased maturity and with that maturity also brings a greater level of independence. But make no mistake, the heart behind honoring our parents does not diminish with time or age.

One of the ways I honour my parents is by using the blessing that they used to pray over me before bedtime, now with my own kids. I've even embraced this for our church - because it's based on the foundation of the Bible.

Numbers 6:24-26

"The Lord bless you and keep you;

25 The Lord make His face shine upon you,

And be gracious to you;

26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,

And give you peace."

As much as this command is instructed towards children, it's not just a call to kids. Parents don't get to run amok either. The Bible is very clear on the role of Mother and Father and that we are to represent Christ in our parenting - not to provoke our children to wrath, as Paul now says. That we are not to take the easy way out but embrace sacrifice and discipline in raising our children. And in doing so we are treasuring the gift that God has given us:

Proverbs 29:17

'Correct your son, and he will give you rest;

Yes, he will give delight to your soul.'

Proverbs 22:6

'Train up a child in the way he should go,

And when he is old he will not depart from it.'

At the end of the day though, at its simplest of forms, this is a call to respect and honour authority. Honouring and respecting our parents parallels honouring and respecting the various authorities that God has placed over us:

Employees and employers:

Colossians 3:22-24

'Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.'

Civil and governmental authorities:

Romans 13:1

'Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.'

Titus 3:1-2

'Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.'

Church authorities:

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

'And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.'

In fact, the Bible teaches us that all people deserve honour, not because of their status or role but simply because everyone is created in the image of God.

Romans 12:10

'Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another...'

1 Peter 2:17

'Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.'

Writing this message was interesting for me: Share story of lying to my vice principal when I was a kid and not submitting to her authority. I got away with it, but it never left me. Recently, God brought it back to memory and challenged me to track her down and confess.

Points to consider:

Learning to submit to authority ultimately starts as children in how we react to the first authority figures in our lives - and for many of us our parents help shape that. As adults now how we respond to authority shapes how our kids will then respond to authority. If you want your kids to submit to God's authority in their lives then you must be a healthy example of what the looks like for them. John Piper says this: 'The seeds of who we become are sown and nurtured in the parent-child relationship. That's why so much counseling of adults focuses on our "family of origin" — in other words, on our relationship with our parents. But it's important to realize here that no parent is perfect. Realizing the deep and inescapable influence of our parents on us can breed at least one of two reactions: fatalistic victimhood or faith-filled determination. Will we go on blaming our parents for whatever is wrong in us, or will we receive our weaknesses as opportunities to boast in the power of God? Will we crumble into resigned self-pity that our parents weren't someone different, or will we receive what God has done as a unique and personal invitation to trust, follow, and honour Him? Honour will look different in different relationships, and honour may not always feel like honour to some parents, especially with parents who have wounded or abandoned us. Part of becoming truly human, though, is learning how to embrace and steward (and sometimes endure) all the providences of God, including the very personal providences of parents.'

No parent/child relationship is perfect though and no matter who you are, we all carry some baggage in some way, shape or form. If you are sitting here and you did not have a godly upbringing than God's grace is here for you. If you are sitting here and you did not offer a godly upbringing God's grace is here for you too. God's love is an overwhelming love and meant to overcome all of those obstacles in our lives as we turn and submit to Him. The Bible teaches us that God is our father and He is perfect and He is full of love and full of grace and everything you need to know about what a good father or parental figure looks like is in His word.

Ephesians 3:20-21

'Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.'

Blessing

Josh Hageman

Lead Pastor

Kingsview Community Church

Stoney Creek, ON

www.kingsviewchurch.com

<https://www.facebook.com/KingsviewCommunityChurch/>