

Christ-Centred Family and Parenting

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The Reason for God

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THE
MEANING
OF
MARRIAGE

FACING THE COMPLEXITIES OF
MARRIAGE WITH THE WISDOM OF GOD

Introduction

- An old Chinese proverb says, “one generation plants the trees, and another gets the shade”
- You and I are still benefiting from the shade provided by trees planted by our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents
- We are shaded, to some degree, by their moral standards and spiritual commitment
- The question I would ask is, “what kind of trees are we planting to shade our future generations?”

Introduction

- Are we planting anything? Are we leaving them exposed to the ways of the world?
- Scripture is clear on the parents' responsibilities to our children and vice-versa
- Children, if brought up properly, ought to be a blessing, a joy to us
- How is it that some children can become a heartache to their parents?

Eph 5:21-33

- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. **Wives**, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. **Husbands**, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” **This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.** However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Christian Marriage and Family

- In *The Meaning of Marriage*, Tim Keller explains that a Christian marriage is not just a tool for personal happiness
- It is a spiritual partnership designed to reflect Jesus and the church, helping two imperfect people serve each other, change their character, and grow closer to God

Christian Marriage and Family

- The premise of Christian marriage is that two people are walking with God and are committed to serving one another
- Husbands and wives love and should submit to each other out of reverence for Christ
- Wives are to grant husbands leadership in the marriage
- Husbands are to use that leadership not for their own selfish desires but to sacrificially serve their wives
- The purpose of Christian marriage is not for individual self-fulfillment, but to work for the growth and sanctification of the spouse
- Lastly, Christian marriage is not an end in itself, but a pointer to Jesus Christ, the ultimate spouse who will never let us down

The Ten Commandments

- ³ You shall have no other gods before me.
- ⁴ You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything.
- ⁷ You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God...
- ⁸ Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
- ¹² Honor your father and your mother...
- ¹³ You shall not murder.
- ¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.
- ¹⁵ You shall not steal.
- ¹⁶ You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- ¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, or his things...

The Ten Commandments

- This command is second only to honor God
- Parents lay the first foundation in Christian life
- Notice what the command doesn't say
- It doesn't say we must obey, love or trust our parents
- **Honor** is a moral choice—a decision to treat our parents with dignity, courtesy, and to provide long-term loyalty to their best interest
- How is biblical “honor” different from Confucian “filial piety”?

Eph 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 a promise—³ so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth
- ⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”

Eph 6:1-4

- Here, Paul is talking about teenage children
- According to Paul, what ties you to your parents?
- Is it blood line?
- The Bible declares that God receives believers as his “adopted” children
- Paul says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right”
- It aligns with God’s moral order for the home, going back to the Fifth Commandment—to honor father and mother, which carries a promise that life will go well on the earth

Eph 6:1-4

- The **essence** of being a parent is taking the responsibility of a teacher, instructing our children of what is right and wrong
- The **purpose** of parenting is to bring them up to transfer them from under your authority, so they are under God's authority
- Our parenting **style** must be of servant authority, just like the Lord Jesus Christ
- The parents who abdicate their responsibility risk destroying their children
- We must not raise our children, just to keep them dependent on the parents' authority

Eph 6:1-4

- How should children honor their parents?
- You have to do this in culturally appropriate ways
- You have to figure out how to do this without blind obedience, especially if the parents are wrong or abusive
- You can respect and honor your parents
- You can forgive your parents
- Christian family love is always unconditional, just as our heavenly Father forgives his children unconditionally

Children's Responsibility

- Before Paul instructs the parents, he gives the children a few commands (read vv. 1-3)
- God calls children to be obedient and respectful
- You notice Paul says, obey your parents as “in the Lord”
- Children are to obey because of their relationship to Christ. There is a spiritual reason behind it
- (read vv. 2-3) Obedience is the act; honor is the attitude behind the action

Children's Responsibility

- The point here is God's promise (5th commandment in Ex. 20) is based on the assumption that obedience to parents leads to order and stability
- In Lu. 2:52, it says that Jesus grew in four areas: (1) wisdom (mentally), stature (physically), favor with God (spiritually), and favor with mankind (socially)
- The key is for them to love the Lord and learn to walk with him
- It's the parents' responsibility to train children to obey the Lord (Prov. 3:11-12; 19:18)

Parents' Responsibility

- Overprotection: Just fence in your children, don't trust them, and give them any opportunity to develop independence
- When you prevent your children from taking any risks, you'll create in them an angry mood. Children need to learn to face life on their own. Give them some room, and they'll learn from trial and error

Parents' Responsibility

- **Favoritism**: Don't compare your children with each other. Each is unique. Each is a gift from God
- When you compare, the less-talented or less-popular child will be devastated. He/she will be discouraged, and feel the need to compete

Parents' Responsibility

- Overemphasizing achievement: If parents continually push their children to excel and still aren't satisfied, their children won't have a sense of having accomplished anything
- Nothing ever seems good enough

Parents' Responsibility

- Overindulgence: Give them everything they want. But the one time you don't, they'll have a fit
- That attitude will carry on into adulthood

Parents' Responsibility

- **Discouragement**: Tell your children all the time that they'll never amount to anything—they're just useless
- Don't give approval and affirmation. Eventually, you'll either destroy their initiative or drive them to seek approval elsewhere

Parents' Responsibility

- Physical and verbal abuse: These can leave lasting scars on the lives of young people

Conclusion

- We've touch on the negative aspect of Eph. 6:4. Here is the positive command: “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”
- “Bring them up” implies care and nurturing
- “Training” involves giving healthy guidelines and patterns reinforced by rewards and penalties
- “Instruction” literally means “putting in mind” right attitudes and principles of behavior, like those in Proverbs

Conclusion

- This entire process is one of nurture rather than mere teaching
- The key to all this is its being “of the Lord.” Everything parents do for their children is to be of God—according to the teaching of His Word, and by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18)
- The question we have to ask, as parents, is whether we are spirit-filled in working with young children—whether we are walking with the Lord

Practical considerations

- Create a context of love, grace, support, respect, and encouragement
- Attend to the material and emotional needs of children
- Teach, warn, hold accountable, and discipline children
- Provide experiences in working and caring for others
- Refuse to put down and demean them
- Reject jealousy and contempt
- Give flexibility with legitimate boundaries
- Avoid unhealthy pressures and expectations
- Refuse to live through your children