



April 16th through 22nd

What are you doing to enhance your relationship with your child(ren)?

Ephesians 6:1-4

Our lives are influenced by our relationships, experiences and decisions. Therefore our priority as parents should be to advance our child's relationship with God, enhance our child's relationship with us, and influence our child's relationship with those outside the home. This parenting series will encourage us to look at the relationships in our child's life and ask the following questions:

- * **What am I doing to advance my child's relationship with God?** Nothing is more important than centering them in their relationship with God which will enable them to weather the storms of life.
- * **What am I doing to enhance my relationship with my children?** It is important that we not economize on our time with them because our influence will determine the direction of their life more than any other relationship.
- * **What am I doing to influence my child's relationship with people outside our home?** We can control certain relationships in our child's life that will influence them for years to come.

As children grow up, they find they must answer to their parents. Parents make the rules, and children are expected to abide by them. Initially, their experience tells them that they are ultimately responsible to their parents.

Children quickly learn that if they can successfully hide their inappropriate actions from their parents, they are not held responsible or accountable for those actions. And often they do succeed in keeping things from us; we do not always know what they have and have not done. Thus, in their minds, they "get by" with things.

In reality, however, no one "gets by" with anything. Scripture is clear that each of us will give an

account to God for our actions (Romans 14:10-12).

Unfortunately, many parents fail to communicate this to their children. They fail to transfer their children's sense of accountability from themselves to God. As a result, their children grow up thinking that when Mom and Dad don't see what they do, and when their other earthly authorities do not see what they do, they have gotten away with something. Consequently, an attitude develops that says, "I am only wrong when I get caught." This is not an unusual attitude among individuals in detention centers and prisons across our country. I believe it starts in the home.

Helping your children transfer their feelings of responsibility from you to God is a process. As we will see, it is a process that entails some risk, some pain, and great faith. But before we get into that, you must understand that this process must begin early in the lives of children. There are two reasons for this.

First of all, *children need to make this transfer in an environment of acceptance and love*, an environment to which they feel free to return when they have been wrong. A second reason this process must begin when children are young is that *the consequences of their wrong decisions will not be as great as they may be later on*. For instance, the consequences of your children's spending all their money on candy are much less traumatic than those of their going thousands of dollars in debt for possessions they cannot afford. Also, the consequences of your children choosing the wrong friends at age ten will be less damaging than them choosing the wrong friends at age eighteen.

The biblical concept that serves as the basis of this principle is our text for the week (Ephesians 6:1-4). Let's look at the passage in detail to better develop our parenting skills and thus provide a better foundation upon which our children can prosper relationally in the future.

Observation

What do you see?

Ephesians 6:1-4

¹Children, 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"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." ⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Record your first impressions from what you read.

Interpretation

What does it mean?

Points of Interpretation

Vs 1 obey...in the Lord The child in the home is to be willingly under the authority of parents with obedient submission to them as the agents of the Lord placed over him, obeying parents as if obeying the Lord Himself. The reasoning here is simply that such is the way God has designed and required it.

Vs 2,3 Honor While verse 1 speaks of action, this term speaks of attitude, as Paul deals with the motive behind the action. When God gave His law in the Ten Commandments, the first law governing human relationships was this one (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). It is the only command of the 10 that relates to the family because that principle alone secures the family's fulfillment. Proverbs affirms this principle (1:8; 3:1; 4:1-4; 7:1-3; 10:1; 17:21; 19:13,26; 28:24).

Points of Interpretation continued ...

Vs 2 the first commandment with a promise Although submission to parents should first of all be for the Lord's sake, He has graciously added the promise of special blessing for those who obey this command. Paul quotes from Exodus 20:12.

Vs 4 fathers The word technically refers to male parents, but was also used of parents in general. Since Paul had been speaking of both parents (vv. 1-3) he probably had both in mind here. The same word is used in Hebrews 11:23 for Moses' parents.

Vs 4 do not exasperate In the pagan world of Paul's day, and even in many Jewish households, most fathers ruled their families with rigid and domineering authority. The desires and welfare of wives and children were seldom considered. The apostle makes clear that a Christian father's authority over his children does not allow for unreasonable demands and strictures that might drive his children to anger, despair, and resentment.

Vs 4 training and instruction of the Lord This call for systematic discipline and instruction, which brings children to respect the commands of the Lord as the foundation of all of life, godliness, and blessing.

Application

What do I do?

Questions of Application

1. Which of these TV families reflects your family: Cleavers? Flintstones? Bradys? Huxtables? Waltons? Simpsons?
2. What does God ask of all children, and with what promise (vv. 1-3)?
3. How can parents bring up their children "in the training and instruction of the Lord" (v. 4)?
4. Begin to allow your children to prayerfully set their own standards and restrictions in certain areas, preferably those in which the potential consequences are minimal. Think of some ways you can do this.

Correlation

How do we work this into our life?

Core Competency: Giving Away My Life

Creed: I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

Key Verse: Romans 12:1-2 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will."*

Use the Assessment Statements to help you evaluate how you are doing at applying this creed in your daily life.

- * I am living out God's purposes for my life.
- * I give up what I want to meet the needs of others.
- * I give away things I possess, when I am so led by God.
- * I serve God through my daily work.

Commentary:

One of the benefits of applying the principle discussed in this week's "Scroll" is that it helps young children understand how to find God's will. It gets children in the habit of looking to the Lord when making decisions. At an early age they are forced to wrestle with discerning God's still small voice from all the other things that crowd their minds. This principle allows children to develop a sensitivity to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. At the same time they learn about God's silence.

A close friend of mine had an interesting experience that serves as a good illustration of this principle. He and his son had been going around and around on the issue of rock music. I do not need to tell you who was on which side. When the boy turned sixteen, my friend called him in for a serious talk. He handed the boy one end of a string while he held on to the other end. He said, "Son, this string represents the issue of rock music. You know my feelings on the subject. You are sixteen now and old enough to decide this issue for yourself. As of today I am setting you free from my expectations in this area. Now it is between you and the Lord." With that, he cut the string, and they cried and hugged.

I admired my friend's courage and creativity. Not only did he give his son freedom while still at home, but he did it in a way that clearly shifted the young man's responsibility from his earthly father to his heavenly Father. We need more creative communication like this in our homes. The more we have, the greater our chances of helping our kids make the transition from our authority to the Lord's authority.