

Christ-Centered Families

Eph 6:1-4

Thank you Peter for a wonderful message last week.

I love words and language and one of the things I love is how it evolves and how new words come about. And one trend that's been constant over the years is turning nouns into verbs. And my favorite one is the use of adult as a verb (exploded in 2016). As in "I don't want to adult today". And so just because you are an adult, doesn't mean you embrace adulting. Now the word family is a noun, but as I studied on the family this week and I saw how God talks about family in terms that require responsibly and effort, I began to see how we could very easily turn family into a verb. "Game night—we are familying so hard right now"

God really cares about the family. *God is not just interested in whether you have family but in how you do family.* Family isn't just something we have but something we do. There are specific actors and roles in the family. And in it's most basic form, the family unit consists of children and parents. And as it turns out the passage we're looking at today talks speaks to both children and parents about what it looks like to family for the glory of God. And so that's my goal for us over the next few minutes to walk out of here with a little better understanding of what it means to do family in a way that honors God and to leave with the encouragement and strength of God's grace that makes it possible.

So, that being said, Paul begins this passage with an application of the 5th commandment to children, and for Paul the connection is pretty straightforward. If you're a child in this room, honoring your parents means obeying them. This word here means, "to obey or follow" it has the sense of carrying out someone's orders. And notice it says, "in the Lord for this is right". Your obedience to your parents ultimately displays an obedience to God and his design for your development. As a God has not designed for you be left alone and independent and just figure everything out for yourself. He's designed you to have parents who are over and come alongside you and teach you, and train you, and instruct you. That's God's design. And one of the ways you obey God is by obeying your parents. It makes God happy when you obey your parents (Col. 3:20). "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

Now I want to be clear about something here. Paul is not asking you to agree with your parents. He's not saying that you have to obey your parents as long as yall are on the same page. Like as long as you understand what they're saying and why they're saying it, you obey. That's not it. The reality is it doesn't matter if you agree or not. Why?

You are called to obey your parents because God has hand picked them to be over you and to train and instruct you. He could have picked any parents. Maybe on your angry days you wish you had different parents. But the reality is that God looked at all the parenting talent out there and in his wisdom and love gave you your imperfect parents—and obeying them is one way you obey Jesus that why it says "in the Lord". The Bible does not ask you to obey out of a trust that your parents are always right. It asks you to trust that God is always right and that in obeying his command to obey your parents you will be blessed and rewarded.

Now this flies in the face of so much of what you see on TV and what you hear at school and what honestly characterizes the American culture and it's a culture that characterizes by this lie—it's a lie that Adam and Eve believed in the garden and it's a lie that you're going to have to fight against believing every day—"Boundaries and authority are the enemy of my joy." If only I didn't have boundaries or authority my life would be great. If only I could just do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted however much I

wanted life would be so much better. It's a lie. And one of God's designs in placing you under the authority and boundaries of your parents is to help destroy that intuition in you.

Listen where is a fish most free? In the water. A fish prospers most within certain boundaries. And this is god's design in giving you parents—your prosperity. And I mean that in two ways. Spiritually speaking, honoring and obeying your parent's rule and authority prepares you live the Christian life—where does the Christian life take place—under the rule and authority of God.

But there's more look at **vss. 2-3**. Now originally it was a promise to Jewish children about the Promised land. And Paul is applying it to all children (some say it's spiritual) and what he's saying here is that a child who has been formed by and understands the benefits of boundaries, who can submit to authority, who understands consequences and discipline—that child will have a life that is marked by peace, and stability and joy that he would not have otherwise. The kid who says “I know it all I have no boundaries, no one will tell me what to do” Proverbs says that person is stupid and their life will come to poverty and shame (Prov. 12:1 13:18). So not only does obeying your parents honor God it forms you spiritually helps to develop you into the level-headed discerning adult God has called you to be. And yet I remember how hard this was. I remember how frustrating it was obeying my parents when I didn't understand or agree. But trusting my parents when I didn't understand has prepared me to trust and follow Jesus when I don't understand what he's doing, or why he's doing it.

We said earlier that Paul is applying the 5th commandment which tells us to honor our parents. I used to think this was just for kids but it's for everyone it doesn't have an expiration date, honor look like obedience when you're a child but as you get older honoring your parents looks different. Let me give you two additional ways you can honor your parents other than obedience...

Thank them regularly. A large portion of the things you enjoy your parents aren't commanded by God to give you. It's their generosity and grace. They're called to protect you and train you up in the Lord—everything else is pure generosity. Video games? TV? Name brand clothes? Sports? Cell phone? Car when you're 16? Your parents do not owe you anything beyond what God commands in the Bible. And so thank them regularly for giving you far more than they have to and far more than many children around the world receive...I could go on don't manipulate your parents, don't speak poorly of your parents but let end with one truth that is specifically spelled out for us in 1 Tim. 5:4 and this goes for everyone in here who has living parents...

Care for them when they're old. “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.” 1 Tim. 5:4 You can see here how as you grow honoring your parents looks different. What's the principle here, it pleases God for you to care for the people who changed your diaper, and fed you, and got thrown up on 100 times. God has given us parents, and called us to honor them, let us be faithful.

vss 4-5.

In youth ministry I learned very quickly that there are few things that will make someone upset like suggesting the way someone is parenting isn't the best way. Like you could call them ugly names—not big deal. Criticize their parenting and they explode. So I think there's two things we need to discuss that will really help us take some heat out of this discussion. **(1) We need to have an open hand about what the Bible DOESN'T say about parenting.** Offers very little specifics. The Bible gives us big categories like discipline and being wise and gracious with our words. It talks about training up our children in the Lord not provoking them to anger they should be involved in the church. But it says nothing about the 1000

other details that we tend to get so upset about and judge other parents for doing or not doing...like we need to relax.

The Bible says nothing about whether they should sleep on their back or stomach, whether they need to be vaccinated or not, what age they can have a cell phone, how much TV they can watch. And this may bother us we need to accept that the Bible's word on parenting is sufficient. It's enough. There's nothing you need to know that's not in there. If it's not in the Bible, it's not essential. The reality is there are godly men and women who were breast fed and formula fed, homeschool some who public schooled, some who played video games and some who played chess, some who ate sugary cereal for breakfast and some who ate an apple. The Bible doesn't address these things and we the risk of syphoning energy and effort away from our main job assignment as parents when we obsess over 1000 ancillary details that the bible doesn't mention. "I worry that many young parents are a) too adamant about the particulars of their parenting or b) too sure that every decision will set their kids on an unalterable trajectory to heaven or hell. It's like my secretary at the church once told me: "Most moms and dads think they are either the best or the worst parents in the world, and both are wrong." Could it be we've made parenting too complicated? Isn't the most important thing not what we do but who we are as parents? They will see our character before they remember our exact rules regarding television and twinkies."

(2) You cannot change your children's hearts. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. I hope this sets some of you free this morning. There are so many parents laboring day in and day out teaching their children the word, making sure there a part of the local church and they don't see any results and they think they're failures as parents—you're not. You can't change their heart, and you're not called to. And I want to say, if you're making every effort teach your kids about Christ, model his character, and make sure you children are involved in the life of the local church, God is honored by your parenting. According to God's word, when it comes to parenting, there are only a few things that you have to get it right. And I hurt for the parents who are in difficult seasons who are having to parent by faith and not by sight, but I want to encourage you and remind you that you will stand before God and be rewarded not for the whether their child responded but for whether they were faithful to do what they were called to do. Parents do same thing and raise different kids. They will be rewarded for whether they were faithful...

We need to maintain a relentless focus what the Bible *does* specifically say about parenting. And here in this text is one of the most straightforward commands to parents in the bible. **Read vss. 4-5.** Now Paul specifically mentions Fathers and that's because they've been designed by God to take the initiative in the spiritual formation of their children. If discipleship isn't happening in the home, and Jesus knocks on the door, he's going to ask to speak with the Father first, but it's not *just* the Father. Mothers train and instruct too, if they didn't Paul wouldn't have told children to obey them in vs 1. The proverbs 31 woman opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

Train up your children in the Lord. This is your mission statement as a parents. And this may seem straightforward but we live in culture that exalts a different kind of parenting. In our culture good parenting is making sure your kids lives are constantly filled with magical experiences, wonderful social lives and good grades, and in the pursuit of trying to give our children an incredible life, it is dangerously possible to miss the very purpose they were given to us in the first place. Our children are on loan to us from the Lord and our job, isn't primarily to make sure they're lives are constantly marked with magical experiences, and stimulating activities and that the cupcakes for their birthday party could make the

pinterest hall of fame. Our job sharpen as arrows for 18 years and then send them out to the world to make an impact for Christ. Like they are specifically designed to leave. To be sent out into a spiritual fight for Christ's sake. And if we don't train them up in the instruction of the Lord, we're sending them into battle with cardboard swords and paper shields.

Talked with a family that hasn't been coming...football didn't bleed...why would you bend over backwards...Give them Jesus. As a youth pastor, my biggest fear is not that you're going to raise bad kids. My biggest fear is that you'll be content to raise moral, excellent, successful children who don't really love Jesus or his church. We can't miss this. This is our one assignment and if we give them everything else, but don't do this, we missed it.

And again that sounds straightforward but it's extremely difficult. These words discipline and instruction are more or less synonymous but they give the idea of development and training in the Lord. And one of the reasons this is so difficult is because it's so constant. Remember this is not a command to your child's youth pastor or two me. God has placed primary responsibility for discipling your children on you, not a Christian professional. Which means this is much more labor intensive than dropping them off on Wednesday night at 6 and picking them up at 8. Look at the picture in Deut. 8. "Hear, O Israel: dThe LORD our God, the LORD is one.2 5 You eshall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And fthese words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 gYou shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 hYou shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 iYou shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

And it's not until you understand this that your picture of what amazing varsity-level parenting looks like begins to change. **GOLF!** Top notch Christian parenting isn't seen in parents who are constantly catalyzing huge breakthrough conversations and mountaintop moments. It's seen in a million ordinary unimpressive moments of faithfulness. George Robinson.

It's seen in the exhausted mom who makes time to pray with her children before bed and remind them of Christ's love. It's the dad who comes home after a long frustrating day, the house isn't the temperature he wants, there's no dinner and he gathers the family the opens the bible and reads a few verses like he's does day in and day out. It's parents who bring their kids to church when it was a long Saturday and the kids don't want to come and when they get there they complain they're bored. It parents who over and over again are faithful to steward ordinary boring moments of life for God's glory. I can't emphasize this enough...like dinner time Dad read a verse, there are tons of cool ideas (slip of paper). This is what it looks like, training up our children...

And as we do Paul reminds us not to provoke them to anger. Now it took me a while to get my head around this like are there parents who are picking fights? It's not saying don't make them mad. It's saying two things...discipline...consequences...but then they won't like me! You are not primarily called to be your child's best friend. We discipline so that they learn...Discipline is not revenge. Therapeutic spanking.

We can provoke them to anger by improper discipline, but also by crushing them with our need to feel valuable. We put incredible pressure on our children when our sense of value and worth in life depends on how much they excel in school, sports, and social activities. Never more true for dads in sports.

And we provoke them to anger and idolize them when we find our identity in their success and achievements. "These assumptions pave the way for our identity to get wrapped up in our children. We

begin to need them to be what they should be so that we can feel a sense of achievement and success. We begin to look at our children as our trophies rather than God's creatures. We secretly want to display them on the mantels of our lives as visible testimonies to a job well done. When they fail to live up to our expectations, we find ourselves not grieving for them and fighting for them, but angry at them, fighting against them, and, in fact, grieving for ourselves and our loss. We are angry because they have taken something valuable away from us, something we have come to treasure, something that has come to rule our hearts: a reputation for success." Tripp

And when we do this, we're saddling them with a burden that they can never bear and they feel it and they pushback in frustration and anger. And this is where the Gospel changes parenting. We all want to feel valuable. Like we count. The Gospel says that you are valuable not because of what you do but what Christ has done on your behalf. Your worth isn't based on your achievements but on Christ's achievements for you. Phil 3:4-11: **If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, ⁷blameless. ⁸But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁹Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ¹⁰and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹¹that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹²that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.** You deserved wrath. Sinful. God chose you. Sacrificed his son for you. Your deepest sense of worth and value can't come from whether your child makes the A honor roll it has to come from the reality that Christ was pleased to give up his honor for you. Bruised for you bled for you. Waiting to spend eternity with you. And when your identity lost in the love of God then it frees you from having to find it in your children.

This is the beauty of the Gospel. And if we're not embracing it ourselves, it's going to be impossible to give it to our kids. And that's what they need. They don't just need the ten Commandments and spanking them when they don't do it—they never saved anyone! It's showing them how Christ's love and accomplishments for them changes the way they deal with failure. It's showing them how God's grace and mercy changes the way they respond to someone who's wronged them.

Recap.