

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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## Ephesians 6:1-3      “How to Live a Long & Happy Life”

Intro. Would you like to live a good life? Would you like to live in such a way that things seem to go well with you? Would you like to live a long life? Parents, do you want your children to have success in life, and live a long life? All of us should answer “Yes” to those questions. So this morning I’m going to tell you how to live a long and happy life. The means for living such a life is right here in this text of Scripture.

Now my message this morning is especially for children & young people. This letter to the Ephesians was written to be read in public to the congregation. And when Paul addressed the children in v.1, I’m sure some of their ears really perked up. After all, how often is a sermon especially addressed to children? Now children & young people, if your parents are providing a home for you, and caring for you, then you have an important responsibility to them. So children & youth, listen up! And you parents need to listen also. I will have some important teaching for you as well. You need to know what you can rightly expect from your children. You need to know how you can help your children live a good and long life. I hope we all will seek to follow God’s plan for the home. If you do you can have harmony in the home instead of conflict.

So children and youth, what is your God-given responsibility to your parents? There are two basic requirements given in this text:

### I. OBEY YOUR PARENTS

Paul says in v.1, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord....” The word “obey” is a very simple, yet graphic term in the Greek. The word literally means “to hear under [authority].” So if you are going to obey your parents, then you must first make an effort to listen to what they have to say! Prov. 1:8 says, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” Prov. 13:1 says, “A wise son hears his father’s instruction...” This aspect of the command certainly applies to grown children. You ought to listen to your parents at any age. Yet I find that many children today do not listen. They have short attention spans due to exposure to modern media, and due to hyperactivity, and they are easily distracted. They are too busy paying attention to the TV, the computer, their toys, games, etc. So children & youth, you need to make an effort to listen to your parents. Set aside whatever is distracting you. Parents, you need to cut off the TV, or whatever else is distracting your kids while you are talking to them.

Now the second meaning of the word is to submit to your parents’ authority, to obey their commands & rules. When they tell you to do something, do it. When they tell you not to do something, don’t do it. Furthermore, you should obey your parents in a timely and habitual manner. Obey promptly. There is no substitute for obedience. 1 Sam. 15:22 says, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen that the fat of rams.” A Mother’s Day gift or card is no substitute for obedience.

One of the great examples of obedience to parental authority was Jesus Himself. Now get this. Even though Jesus was perfect, He obeyed His parents, who were imperfect. The Bible teaches that He was subject to Joseph and Mary (Lk. 2:51). Not only that, but Jesus was always obedience

to His Heavenly Father. He said in John 8:29, “The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” What an example Jesus was to us.

However, the society we live in today is saying that we need to liberate children and free them from parental authority. They are saying that a child must have the right to his own destiny, his own religion, his own thoughts, his own morality, or whatever else. In fact, in many homes it seems that the children run the house! And 2 Tim. 3:2 says that one of the signs of the last days is that children will exhibit “disobedience to parents.” I agree that grown children should be set free by their parents to make their own decisions, and parents should gradually loosen their grip on teenagers so that they can learn to be independent, and so that they can learn from their mistakes. But God’s command is that children must obey their parents. Obedience should not change, only the extent of parental commands & rules should change.

Now I want to examine several aspects of this matter of children obeying their parents:

A. The Importance of Learning Obedience - Obedience and respect to authority is the key to all relationships throughout society. Man must exercise obedience in every sphere of life, beginning as a child in the home, then at school, as a citizen, as an employee, and as a member of a church. If you join the military you will certainly have to learn obedience. A person who grows up with a sense of obedience and respect for authority will be somebody who can make it in life, no matter what you do. But if you do not, you will always have trouble with relationships. The same people who do not learn respect & obedience at home will have trouble with teachers, the principal, their boss, their husband, the referees, and even with the law. If there is a lack of respect in the home for the authority of parents, there will be a lack of respect in the nation for the laws of the country. And then, most of the time such people will blame the problem on somebody else. In their mind the problem is with the teacher, or the coach, or the referee, or the boss. They do not see that they themselves are a big part of the problem that is causing the conflict. Prov. 30:11-12 speaks of “a generation that curses their father, and does not bless their mother... that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.” The family is truly foundational to the health and well-being of society.

So kids, if you want to have a good life, you need to learn obedience at home while you are young. That will carry over to all other aspects of life.

B. The Role of Parents in Obedience - It’s the parents’ responsibility to teach their children to be obedient. Why? Frankly, because they’re not normally so. James Dobson said that only 2% of children are naturally compliant. Let me ask the parents here today. Did your children come into the world obedient? No. You didn’t have to teach them to disobey. They naturally disobey because we are all born with a rebellious sin nature. In Rom. 1:30 Paul lists one of the manifestations of the sin nature as being “disobedient to parents.” In Eph. 2:2 Paul says that Christians were at one time “sons of disobedience” (cf. Titus 3:3). Some children are very strong-willed. When your will contradicts their will, they will strongly resist. So children will obey only if you teach obedience, insist upon obedience, & discipline them if they don’t obey. Prov. 29:15 says, “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” It’s not enough to try to reason with them, and beg them to obey. When my children were younger Cheryl & I had a wooden spoon called “the spanking stick.” I can assure you they understood that better than our words alone! So don’t tolerate disobedience. The well-being of your kids depends upon it. Don’t take the easy way out and give in to your kids. If you do, you are setting them up for failure and trouble later in life. And they may even suffer more immediate & tragic consequences.

Henry Blackaby, the author of *Experiencing God*, tells the story of how he once visited in the home of a couple that had a 3-year-old child. When the parents said, “Come here,” the little girl would run the opposite way. The parents and grandparents would just say, “Isn’t that cute.” One day the little girl was playing in the front yard. The gate was open, and she ran out between two parked cars. The mother, seeing a car coming down the street, shouted to the little girl, “Come here!” The little girl laughed and walked straight out in front of the oncoming car and was killed. That was the very first funeral he ever had to conduct.

If your children disobey you, do you correct them and punish them? If you love them, you do. Hebrews 12:6 describes God’s discipline as love. Correction, discipline, and punishment can be expressions of perfect love.<sup>1</sup>

C. The Realm of Obedience – Notice that children are to obey “in the Lord.” If that phrase goes with “parents,” then Paul is saying you are to obey those parents who are “in the Lord,” that is, Christian parents (cf. 1 Cor. 7:39). But I do not believe that children are to obey their parents only if they are Christians. I believe that phrase is to be construed with “obey.” Paul is saying here that obedience to your parents puts you in the sphere of pleasing & honoring the Lord. In other words, when you obey your parents, you are obeying the Lord. It is similar to Col. 3:18 which says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> So you should obey first out of love for the Lord and in obedience to the Lord. Children, you must obey your parents because the Lord bids you to do so. You children and youth who profess to be Christians, listen up! Your obedience should arise out of the conviction that such submission is the will of God. In fact, Col. 3:20 says you should obey your parents, “for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” We parents are not perfect; we make mistakes. But unless we command you to do something clearly contrary to God’s will, then you should obey.

D. The Reasons for Obedience to the Command – I want to give you two reasons why you should obey your parents. The first reason is right in the next, “for this is right.” It is simply the right thing to do. It is right, not because Oprah says so, or Dr. Phil says so, but because *God* says so. He is the One who sets the standards of right and wrong. And He says obedience is right, and disobedience to parents is wrong. We have already discussed the fact that obedience to parents pleases God. Even human reason should endorse the rightness of obedience to parents. It is only right to obey parents who have brought you into the world, who have loved you and sacrificed for you.

Let me give you another reason to obey your parents. Most of the time your parents give you commands to keep you out of trouble, or to keep you from getting hurt, or to help you succeed in life. In other words, they give you rules and commands for your own good. You see, you parents have more knowledge than you. They have more wisdom than you. There is no substitute for the wisdom gained through experience. They’ve already traveled the road of life, and they know the dangers and the pitfalls along the way. They’ve already make their mistakes and learned from them. They have your best interest at heart. So obey them!

I recently read the story of a boy's father who kept telling his son, “Know what you're going to do with the ball before you get it.” One night, late in a championship play-off game, his junior

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> See also 1 Th. 5:12, “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you *in the Lord* and admonish you.” There “in the Lord” modifies “over you,” meaning God has placed them in authority over you.

high school team was locked in a scoreless tie. The crowd went into a frenzy when the opponent's speedy lead-off batter ripped a triple in the bottom of the 9th inning. The boy paced nervously around his position at first base. As the pitcher tried to regain his composure, the boy at first glanced at his father in the stands. The father immediately began pointing at the side of his head. He realized that his father was saying, "Think about every possible thing that could happen on the next play." He began to think. "If a ground ball comes to me, what should I do? I could tag first & get the out, but the runner would score & they would win the game. I could hold the runner at third & allow the runner to be safe at first. No, we desperately need that first out." He kept thinking what his best option would be. Then he came up with his plan: "I will sprint down the first base line, tag the runner, & keep the runner at third from scoring." It took exactly 1 pitch for the boy to realize that his father was a genius. The batter took a big swing, and hit a slow roller to first. The fielder reacted without any further thought. He scooped up the ball, ran down the line to tag out the runner, and looked the runner back to third base. As he flipped the ball back to the pitcher, he glanced again at his father in the stands. His huge grin told him that he knew his message had been received loud and clear.<sup>3</sup>

Kids & young people, listen to your parents. Obey them. You really will be much better off in life if you do.

Now a second primary responsibility of children is this:

## II. HONOR YOUR PARENTS

In v.2 Paul quotes from one of the 10 Commandments, "Honor your father and mother...." Honor is the attitude behind the act. The act is obedience, and honor is the attitude. Remember that an outward act without the proper attitude is hypocrisy. If you are obedient to your parents, but you hate it, and you gripe and bellyache, and you're unwilling and nasty about it — you are not honoring your parents! If you do what your parents tell you to do but you're bitter, reluctant, and selfish — that's not the right spirit. God is more concerned about your attitude than your act, because if the attitude is right, the act will follow. A child could obey his parents out of fear. But God says that the child is to obey the father and the mother out of respect and honor. So let's look more closely at the underlying principle that will foster the right kind of obedience.

A. The Precept – In v.2 he says, "Honor your father and mother...." The word translated "honor" in the Greek literally means, "to highly value." Do you realize how valuable your parents are to you? Where would you be without them? You wouldn't even exist? How would you survive without them? Then it means to *show* how much you value your parents. Thus it means "to show respect, to give honor." The opposite is found in Deuteronomy 27:16, where God says, "Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt."

B. The Primacy – Now think with me how important this command is. To give honor to our parents stands at the top of the list of social duties. The 10 commandments can be divided into two sections. The first section deals with our relationship to God. The second sections deals with our relationship with one another. What do you think heads the list? It is this commandment in vv.2-3. That shows its importance. And its primacy is also seen in the fact that it is the only one of the 10 which God adds a promise to, as Paul notes in v.2. Why? Because it's the key to all human

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<sup>3</sup> Jay Ratliff, "Bases Loaded," *Readers' Digest*, May '06, p.29-30.

relationships and the passing on of a righteous heritage. So boys and girls, young people, please understand how important this command is!

So how can you honor your mother and your father? In light of a proper understanding of the term, let me suggest some ways you should honor your parents.

1. By Your Words - You should speak words of love to them. You ought to speak favorably of your parents to others. Express appreciation to your parents. Always speak with respect to your parents. There was a time in our country when most children showed respect and honor for their parents. They would say, "Yes, sir" or "Yes mam." On the other hand, you should avoid words of ridicule, or disrespect. Let me tell you how serious God is about this. Ex. 21:17 says, "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." You may not have cursed your parents, but you may have spoken to them in a disrespectful way. When I was a young person, it was common for some of my friends to refer to their mother as "my old lady." I was never comfortable talking like that. That is not giving your mother the honor she should have. I don't want to know what terms kids are using today in reference to their parents! Furthermore, don't raise your voice at your mother. Eph. 4:31 says that we are to put away "shouting."

2. By Your Life - We are to seek to bring honor to them by the way we live. The book of Proverbs indicates that an obedient, industrious son brings honor to his parents, while a disobedient, lazy son brings shame. Prov. 19:26 says, "He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach." If you want to truly honor your mother, resolve this day to live an industrious, good life. Do the best you can in school, in your extra-curricular activities, and at work. Live by God's commandments. Live by the rules of the home, of school, and society. Become a success at whatever you do. Then, you will bring honor to your mother, not shame.

3. By You Help - In Matt. 15:1-6 Jesus interprets the commandment, "Honor thy father and mother," as referring to financial support. He uses the word "honor" the way it's used in 1 Tim. 5:17, where it's used to speak about money. So as a child you honor your parents with obedience, attitude, and words. Then as a younger adult you honor them with your attitude & words, and then when your parents are old and if they are in need, you should honor your parents with financial support and care. That is fair and right. Your parents provided for you for over 17 years, and it is not unreasonable for you to have to support them for a number of years in their old age. And if you set a good example, your children will likely do the same for you when you get to be elderly.

Many of you have witnessed an excellent example of this kind of honor. For several years Frank Wallace took care of his elderly mother. He was very faithful to meet her needs. And she went home to be with the Lord just this past week. She was blessed indeed!

C. The Promise - God adds a promise to this command. I do not believe that the promise is intended to be absolute. I'm sure someone can come up with an example of a person who honored his parents, but died young. But I do believe that God is stating a principle that generally holds true. So if you honor and obey your parents, notice the two-fold blessing that you can rightly anticipate:

1. A Good Quality of Life - God says that it will be "well with you." This refers to a full, rich life. Obedient children, as a general rule, are more prosperous and happy. They do better in school and at work than their counterparts. They have better and more lasting relationships.

2. A Longer Quantity of Life - This refers to a long life. And the reason that you will live a longer life if you honor & obey your parents is pretty obvious. When children honor &

obey their parents in the Lord, they will escape a good deal of sin and danger and thus avoid the things that could shorten their lives. In contrast, disobedience to parents indicates an undisciplined life. It leads to vice and dissipation, and such a life is shortened by such a destructive lifestyle. For example, your parents tell you not to smoke. But if you do not honor them with obedience and get hooked on cigarettes, you will probably cut short your life by 10 years or more. Your parents tell you not to drink alcohol, and if you disobey them, you could die before you're 20. It has happened too many times! Even if you don't die of an overdose, you could cut off years of your life from liver disease, or a car accident. They tell you "Don't do drugs." Yet if you listen to your so-called friends instead of your parents, you could die from an overdose, or die younger than you would have. Undisciplined children spell ruin for the nation, the church, and society! The promise of God to reward obedience still holds.

Samson and Absalom are two examples in Scripture of boys who did not follow this commandment, and their lives were short. Samson, a judge, died when he was a young man. Absalom rebelled against his father David, and he was killed when he was a young man.

Conclusion: So children & young people, are you habitually living in obedience to your parents? If not, I want to challenge you to make a commitment to repent of that disobedience, and begin now to live a life of obedience. And all of us here today need to make sure we are giving honor to our parents. Don't you want to live a good and long life? Then make a commitment to honor them today, and each day. Perhaps you should tell them of your commitment, either during this invitation, or right after the service. Or you can come and kneel at this altar, and ask God to help you carry out that commitment, and forgive you for any disobedience, and any failure to give honor to your parents.

But you know, it is not easy to carry out the commands of this Scripture passage, especially in a society that has become so disrespectful of parents. It's hard when so many of your peers are living in rebellion against their parents. You need God's help. First, you need to make sure you have been born again by repentance of sin, and faith in Jesus Christ. God wants to be your Heavenly Father. He will give you a new nature, an obedient nature. He will give you the Holy Spirit to help you as well. If you have not yet trusted in Christ as Savior, I ask you to do so today. That is the best thing you can do for yourself, and for your parents. So it today!

Then, you need to surround yourself with other children and young people who are obedient and respectful. That will really help you. We have some good children and young people here. You may need to join one of our S.S. classes for your age group. If you're a Christian & need a church home, you can join our church. And so from this day forward, resolve to honor your parents, and obey your parents, and you will live a good and long life. Your home will be "Home, sweet home" as God intended.

Sources: W.A. Criswell, *Ephesians: an Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967); John MacArthur, Jr., *Family Feuding, How to End It: Study Notes on Ephesians 5:21-6:4* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1981); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Lehman Strauss, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957); Curtis Vaughan, *A Study Guide Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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