



EPHESIANS 6:1-9

IN HIM
I AM

EPHESIANS

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Know: Read Ephesians 6:1-9

Note: Read slowly, carefully marking keywords- continue to mark the words from previous lessons—Mark keywords with a different color or with a symbol to differentiate them.

- Children
- Parents
- Obey
- Slaves/ Masters

Observation: Study notes below for context. Journal your thoughts or questions.

What: What does it mean to “obey”? What are you obeying?

“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 be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.”

When asked to do chores, my children had a funny way of pretending I didn’t exist. There were certain things that each child was asked to do for the home to run smoothly.

I homeschooled my children, so our home was well-used. If I did all the work, I would become exhausted and irritable, and they would become lazier and lazier. (I learned that children will not see what all parents have on their to-do lists and chip in to help ease the burden.)

In the morning, I would wake up before everyone to have time to read my Bible and journal. I would then prepare for the day, exercise, shower, and make breakfast. A load of laundry would get thrown in the wash and a pile folded.

As the kids got up, they were required to get dressed, brush their teeth, and make their bed, cleaning up any toys that had been left out the night before.

After breakfast, they had to tuck in their chair, scrape off any leftovers into the trash, and put their rinsed dishes in the sink. Each child would have a chore to do: trash, dishes, and sweeping. Extra chores were scattered throughout the day as needed.

Easy enough, right?

Because Dad worked, I was responsible for training the kids to do these very simple chores. At the beginning of the year, it was fun. They had stickers to add to their chore chart to show their progress. As the year progressed, the fun turned into not-so-fun, as they stopped doing their chores willingly, and I became the taskmaster. Eventually, our days turned into a showdown.

This was the moment that intentional parenting had to kick in.

When frustrations arise, the temptation is to yell, play the victim, or be defeatist.

The fifth command in the Covenant of Law was that children must obey their parents. Obedience to the law had either blessings or curses attached to it.

If a child disobeyed, this was the consequence: *“For anyone who curses his father or **his mother shall surely be put to death**; he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him. (Proverbs 30:17)*

*“If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them. Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city **shall stone him with stones, that he die**: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)*

Paul quoted a commandment of the law to show that obeying (listening to) parents is a good and right thing for kids.

Under the New Covenant of Grace, the curse was put on Jesus. The blessings continued, so Paul told the children that they would be blessed and live a long life if they obeyed. Paul did not mention the curse for disobedience- only the blessing. The law was no longer what would result in early death- it might be from their own stubborn stupidity.

If children are continually catered to and never taught to have self-control or trained to help, they are being set up for failure as adults. Much of our problems as adults arise because good habits were not formed while we were young.

Patterns of gluttony, excessive lifestyles, adult fits, and destructive sin are byproducts of not having learned self-control, waiting, and discipline while children.

Often, I have seen parents indulge children out of either guilt or pampering. This is not loving because the patterns children are forming will cause them to have difficult lessons to learn in life. If study habits are not formed while children grow up, they may struggle in college and work. If we buy every toy our child throws a fit over, they are learning that if they throw a fit, they will get what they want- imagine the strain that will put on a marriage when an adult throws thier grown-up fit for something they want. If a child is the one ruling the home and parents indulge it, imagine that child growing up to rule thier spouse and kids. If a child does not learn self-control, they indulge in toxic habits as adults.

Intentional parenting is important, Paul says.

One of the ways that I trained my kids was to teach them the habit of obeying the first time.

As parents, we get angry and yell or just give up because we ask our kids to do something that gets ignored, and before we know it, we are yelling. We yell because we have repeatedly asked, and our children have trained us to lose our tempers. (Enter toxic relationship.)

Habits are like railroad tracks. At first, it takes work to develop the rails, but after repeating, it becomes natural and no longer a chore. Once one good habit is formed, a new one can be focused on. Forming good habits is much easier than breaking old bad habits.

When we chose what habit we would focus on, such as obeying the first time, we talked about what that looked like and what was expected before the actual work began. For example, I would explain that it needed to be done immediately when I asked them to do something reasonable. This habit would form healthy pathways that would benefit them as adults. After all, if they never learn to listen to a parent the first time, how would they learn to recognize God's voice the first time?

If they did not obey, I would immediately go to them and ask them to look me in the eye. I would ask them to repeat what I asked them to do and make sure they actually did it. The reward at first was affirmation, and after a while, no affirmation was needed- it was simply part of their daily life.

The habit of first-time obedience is possible if a parent doesn't overwhelm a child with a list or threaten all sorts of punishment forecasting disobedience.

Parenting to develop good habits is intentional and patient work on both ends, but the results are invaluable.

“4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Paul is speaking to the fathers of the early church, but this is for both mothers and fathers. Because I homeschooled, I had the task of daily, patient parenting. Dad stepped in at home, gathering them to read scripture, pray, do adventurous and fun things, and deal with the more stubborn children.

If one of my kids went rogue and refused to budge, thier Dad was important in helping them get back into alignment.

The only times that this did not work well was when I was frustrated and “ratted” the child out to their father and, as a result, was harsh with them because of his own frustration. If I was having a hard day with a child and then the moment my husband walked in, I dumped on him, he would groan. He just wanted to come home and enjoy some family time, but the evenings turned into a battle of the wills.

It only worked when I had first ironed out the hiccups and bumps of new habit-growing pains. If a child simply would not cooperate, I would give him the history and the pattern I saw that was causing problems. He would gently take that child and ask them some very simple questions. “Audrey, Mom has asked you to make your bed. Why aren’t you doing it?” They would have a little conversation, a hug, and a tickle, and then the child would get in line.

It was completely unfair, but it worked, which was what we all wanted.

We often come with a history of how we were parented. Some of us had a my-way-or-highway, suck-it-up buttercup style of parenting. Others were pampered or neglected. Very few of us had parents who intentionally parented.

Adopting a parenting style that “worked” for your parents without any thought or neglecting to parent altogether is not wise. We have been gifted with the task of raising our kids.

Our children are precious gifts from God.

A child’s heart is like soil. We can sow the good seed of God’s word into this soil or let the devil plant weeds. Jesus said make a tree good or make a tree bad. We make our children good by teaching them the ways of the Lord and by leading them to One who clothes us with his righteousness. And we make our children bad by sending them unprepared into a corrupt world full of lies and deception.

In the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The word for discipline means training. Train your children. See your children as the Lord sees them. Understand that God shaped your children, who are fearfully and wonderfully made.

“5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

In the first century church, slavery was a term used like our word employee. Nowhere in the Bible did God condone slavery like we know slavery to be. In fact, Jesus came to set the captives (slaves) free. God rescued his people from slavery to the Egyptians. God’s desire is that none are in bondage to anyone or anything.

God gave us a will to choose life or to choose death. He never invades our will, so if a people invaded another, it was done independently of God’s will.

In the ancient world, slavery was a common practice among different people groups. If a people came in and defeated a land, they would take the women and children and any living men to be their slaves. However, slavery, as we understand it to be (based on our Western historical experience), was different for the Jews.

Under the Old Covenant, if someone found themselves in financial hardship and owed money they could not repay, they could become the debtor's “slaves” until the loan was paid off. Often, children were given as “slaves” to pay off the debt. Every seven years, anybody with a debt could start over. They could do so for the next seven years if they willingly desired to return to the debtor.

If a person desired to stay with their master for life, they would become bondservants. They had their ears pierced with an awl to ratify the agreement.

Exodus 21:1-6 *“When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing... But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to*

the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever."

The piercing demonstrated that they were bondservants, their master, like their father, whom they were given over to for life.

In the Roman days, if someone became indebted to a Master as a servant, they still received compensation for living; it was always voluntary.

This is who Paul was speaking to when he addressed the "slaves." Today, this can be addressed to employees.

Paul instructs those who work for someone to obey (listen to) them respectfully and honor them.

If you are in a bad work environment, your flesh will want to kick into gear, and you might be tempted to complain and speak badly about them. When you live by the spirit, even in a toxic work environment, you will do your work unto the Lord. This means you are ultimately working under His leadership, not your boss.

You can be a light in the work environment because "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." You are an atmosphere shifter when you live from the spirit because the Holy Spirit can be evident in your life as you live by His voice. When you choose to love and to live by the Spirit, you will begin to impart the life of God in the darkness of your work environment.

Paul also addressed the employer. If you are in a leadership role, lead with the spirit guiding you so that you don't become a taskmaster and burden your employee's work.

(For more reading on slavery, read this [response to Paul Taylor's article "A Leader for Biblical Equality".](#))