

Bible Study on The Christian Home – Handout 8

Developing a Christian Home Environment

Grace Bible Chapel

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What is the responsibility of children?

● **Children and their primary responsibility before God:**

- Our society has largely condoned a manner in children expecting very little regarding character. Children are no longer expected to act obediently and respectably. Children are instead expected to act selfish, boisterous, and rebellious in normal activity as if that is simply what it means to be a child. In many if not most homes the children rule the home by their demeanor and unquenchable constant selfish demands and rebellious activity. This breakdown in true communication between family members results in a home life of misery characterized by quarrels sometimes leading even to violence. With the breakdown in authority and discipline comes the price of frustrated regretful and sometimes even resentful parents. The parents caught in this trap attempt to channel the child's energy in the best directions possible, hoping somehow things will work out, and succumb to the circumstances as though the children's actions of open rebellion and disrespect are simply the standard. The parents will attempt to keep the children happy with sports, extra curricular activities, the latest fads and interests of the young doing all they can to accommodate their wishes and keep up all the "in" things going on with other children and youth. As they grow into teenage years the expectation of real character is even less, with the hope that somehow the children will get through that period of their life without hurting themselves – such is the general concept of child development and character in this dark time. However, the Bible is quite different in its expectation and demands.
- Parents are commanded to rear their children for the glory of God, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and so that they will ultimately be placed in redemptive light, but also to be productive useful members of society. The parents are rearing their children so that the children will know God, and the parents are no longer needed. As the children then become adults, they should be capable of having their own children and following the same pattern as their parents. The Bible also makes it clear that the rearing of children is not wholly one-sided on the parents. That balance is seen in clear admonitions in the same context to both parents and children. The parents must have the cooperation of the children. It is important to note that in **Ephesians 6:1-4** where the relationship between parents and children is stated that the first side addressed is the children side. The Bible not only makes it clear that children are responsible in their relationship to God and their parents, but also holds the children accountable.
 - **Eph 6:1 – “obey your parents”** – this is a direct command from God. It addresses the absolute necessity of obedience under the order God Himself has instituted with the family. Paul goes on to say **“for this is right.”** Right means righteous – it is the only thing appropriate. Disobedience and rebellion must be understood to be sin against God. Disobedience is the opposite of obedience (obey) and by definition is at the least willful neglect, and at its worse refusal to obey. In either it is a violation of God's direct command. For a child, the Scripture shows it as not just the standard of the day, but the greatest of sin to be disobedient to parents.
 - **Eph 6:2** – Paul not only commands obedience, he quotes the 5th commandment. Here is brought into God's will and design not only obedience, but honor. Honor brings in the idea of attitude. It is one thing to adhere to something disgustingly and resentfully, and quite another to do so with a good attitude. The latter is honor. Honor is a word describing respect, either because of status (being the parent God has ordained for the child), or in dignity required as a result of appreciation for those caring, and providing for the child, and functioning in the child's best interest. The idea is to highly value parents. This does not mean that parents will be perfect, but it does mean that regardless they are to be obeyed and honored. This is God's clear command and as the Scripture says it is right and thereby reasonable.
 - Jesus is our example of obedience and honor (**Luke 2:51-52**). The word **“subjection”** means to be subordinated to, literally “put under” with the idea of being fully obedient. The

result of this was that Jesus increased “**in favor with God and man.**” Jesus is the God / man. His growth, development, and youth all reflect His man side. Just as it is God’s command to be obedient, He was always obedient to God (“**this is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased**”). He never one time disappointed His Heavenly Father, nor did He ever disappoint His earthly Father. So, the Scripture says He was also in favor with man. That is He was always obedient to His parents, and was a blessing thereby to all He came in contact.

- Some may say that - well after all He was also God. Christ is not the only example in Scripture, and we have with the example of Samuel something else very important for us to understand. In **1 Sam 2:26** we read something of Samuel that is very similar to the NT account of Jesus. Samuel was a boy with a sin nature like any other boy. Not only that – look at **1 Sam 3:7**. Samuel was not yet regenerated. He was still in his sinful condition back in **1st Sam 2:26**, but even in that condition he was serving in obedience rather than rebellion so much so that it was pleasing to the people and to God. This removes all excuses – all can act obediently, and doing so puts the person in the sphere where God’s grace through further revelation and even transformation (**John 8:30-32**) can be found. It is truly the place of blessing.
 - **Prov 1:7** – the idea of an unregenerate child honoring (respecting) the parent in obedience to God’s command matches this proverb regarding reverence (the fear of the Lord) for God. What follows is a plea from a father to a son to listen to the father’s instruction, pursue wisdom, and in **Prov 2:4-10** it promises understanding (a true relationship with God).
 - In **Prov 3:1-2; 4:10** the promise is made which is also similar to that made in **Eph 6:1-3**. Here we see again the importance of obedience to the words of the parent and with it the consistent promises of blessings for the obedient. **Prov 3:5-6** sums up all that Solomon provides relative to obedience. It must be understood that to obey parents, as it is commanded by God, is not only in harmony with God but must be considered the same as obeying and trusting God.
- In **Jeremiah 35:1-6; 13-14; 19** – God used the obedience of the Rechabites (**1 Sam 15:6**) to instruct Israel regarding the magnitude of their horrid disobedience. These Rechabites took the word of their father completely, and were highly commended by God and used of Him as a positive illustration, and as a result they were richly blessed. Even these which were pagans were used as a rebuke to those who had many more privileges (Israel). God desires obedience (**Hosea 6:6**) rather than religious show. Obedience is the true way to show belief.
- God’s command carries with it an important principle of blessing. **Eph 6:2-3** – This command is so important to God that He attached to it a promise of blessing to those who believed Him, and kept His command.
 - The original promise being quoted was to Israel and the promised blessings were no doubt of a tangible and physical nature as was much of the promises under the theocracy of God. As Paul quotes it, we see it extended to the New Testament church as a principle of rich blessings even to us today. A family living in love, respect, and honor are promised blessings that other families living in the chaos of an undisciplined life will never know. The idea of “**long on the earth**” means that God will be with that person in full measure the length of their days – what can be better?
 - There is obviously in Scripture something very special in God’s mind about the family. The promise of well-being as a result of the children’s response to the parents is exhibit A. Does this promise guarantee life to an old / old age? Not absolutely because there may be other overriding factors. These factors may override or usurp this promise of a ripe old age. I take it to mean that in the context of the one practicing the obedience of faith - they will live the best most blessed life possible for them. This is a blessed life, a full life under the caring eye of the almighty sovereign God. Keeping this commandment of obedience to parents is an act of faith, believing God and recognizing that all of our times and well-being are entirely in His hands.
 - Obedience to parents is not only commanded. It is one of those matters clearly stated as pleasing to God. The fact that a person born into sin can please God in anything is

especially encouraging. For a child to know that what he does in obedience to the parent is pleasing to God, is a glorious reinforcement of its importance and value (**Col 1:20**).

- The fact that parents make mistakes, even sin, or that they are not as upstanding as some other parents does not justify rebellion or disobedience. The Bible makes no exclusion for children to be rebellious, disobedient, or otherwise despise their parents based on their status.
- The only possible reason for a son or daughter not to obey a parent is in the unlikely event the parent is telling the child to do something that is clearly sinful (**Acts 5:29**). Parents have the supreme obligation “**not to provoke their children to wrath.**” That is they must be careful to not command their children to be doing things that are unreasonable. By commanding things that are unreasonable, the parent is putting the child in a position of disobedience and compromising God’s command.
- **The issue of children and accountability:** There have been many discussions regarding the age of accountability, and whether children are totally innocent up-to a certain age. The Scripture does not explicitly state such an age by number. In other words, Scripture nowhere says, for example, “Each person is only responsible after the age of 12.” The age of 12 or 13 (Jewish sources are not unanimous) is the age at which the Jews identified a child as being “an adult.” The consensus of opinion is that at this age a boy became *bar mitzvah* (son of the Law), that is, he was mature enough and responsible to keep all of God’s Laws. It is, in fact, in keeping with that tradition we find the Lord Jesus in the Temple at the age of 12 (**Lk. 2:42**). However, this was a general age ceremonially used to mark a youth moving into the higher responsibilities leading to adulthood. Obviously, each child matures differently, and to attempt to mark an age whereby a child begins to be accountable before God, especially as it relates to parental obedience, stretches the purpose of this tradition. It does mean that children are expected to be more responsible as they are moving into or near adulthood. Throughout the Scriptures children are accountable for those things pertaining specifically to them. This is primarily obedience and honor to parents. All children know, from a very young age the simplicity of what “**no**” means. They know and are responsible from these instructional beginnings for their actions – otherwise there would be no commands to discipline. The fact of God’s commands for active discipline show the accountability of children, and their responsibility for obedience as part of the growth process.
 - The accountability of children in relation to their parents is profoundly clear from the Word of God, and is shown with the most extreme importance, and ramifications.
 - **Ex 20:15** – Moses commanded that children who curses or abuses father or mother shall be put to death. This shows the magnitude of the offense such disobedience is before God.
 - **Deut 21:18-21** - Addresses a continuously rebellious son should be brought before the elders of the city, judged and if found guilty, is put to death for his rebellion. This was a very real command in Israel, obviously serving as a deterrent. and it shows the sincerity and commitment of God against disobedient children.
 - **2 Kings 2:24** Tells the story of cocky profane children who ridiculed the man of God, and as a result God sent bears from the woods to strike them, and 42 boys were killed. This serves as a sober reminder, that God considers the sins of children and does act according to righteous judgment.
 - These episodes are intended to remind children that they are accountable before God for their actions. **Prov 20:11** states that “**it is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself.**” The King James renders it “**Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right.**” This again lets all know that children are capable of obedience, and that their obedience marks them before God as to their true character.
- **Other primary responsibilities of children:**
 - We have already addressed the responsibility of parents to teach their children diligently in the name of God, from His Word, and to use the right prescribed proportions of discipline with instruction to form their character and keep them in the light praying that God would be pleased to save them. This is the parent’s awesome responsibility before God. We have also discussed the role of children honoring and obeying parents. This is the primary and single most important thing that all Scripture consistently requires of children – obedience to parents. What are other key Biblical responsibilities for children given in God’s Word? There are two others that I will briefly mention:

- There is a great emphasis placed on seeking wisdom. This is the predominate theme of Proverbs (especially **Proverbs 1:20-5:23**). All of the Proverbs are written to provide instruction for youth, even the words of Agur in **Proverbs 30**, and King Lemuel in **Proverbs 31**. Children have the responsibility to do what is continually commanded “to listen.” This is also seen in other passages and especially notable is **Deut 6**. Children then are responsible to listen to and seek wisdom.
- A second emphasis for children as a responsibility has to do with their companions. **Prov 1:10** – right at the beginning of Solomon’s wise counsel he deals with companionship. Parents must allow children to have friends socially, and often the parents cannot or do not know the character of those who could be their children’s companions. The child must act in wisdom to identify those who should be companions, and especially as maturity takes place and with it more freedom.
 - **Psalm 119:63** – this should be the attitude of the wise child.
 - **Prov 13:20** – instead of the length of days and blessing promised by obedience to parents, here the one who attaches to someone they should not suffers harm.
 - **1 Cor 15:33** – every parent and child should recognize that who they become companions with will greatly influence their attitude and actions. No one can become a companion with evil and survive unscathed. Children especially are so strongly influenced by peers that once the influence toward evil begins, it is extremely difficult to break.
- **The responsibility to honor parents extends into adulthood.**
 - Parents should be rearing their children so that the parent is no longer needed. I would also say that parents should do all they can to position themselves not to be a burden to their children. The Scripture is clear that the child forms another household upon marriage, and this household is a new and completely independent household from the parents. This independence does not mean no association or obligation, it does mean the new household is to make their own independent decisions. However, for the children’s new household the connectivity of respect, honor, and accountability for parents still remains (**1 Tim 5:8**).
 - **Prov 16:31** – the idea is the grey head comes as a reward for many who walk in the way of righteousness, and should not be looked down upon but appreciated.
 - **Prov 23:22; 24:25; 30:17** – the responsibility to honor parents has no age or cutoff limit.
 - The example of Christ that even during His incredible ordeal of the cross, He had care and compassion on His mother (**John 19:25-27**), and made sure she was properly cared.
 - **1 Sam 22:1-4** – David provided for special care of his parents even when he was in great distress and danger running from King Saul and in hiding. This kind of action rules out those who may express that they simply do not have the time, or there is too much going on in their life to care for their elderly parents. There is a responsibility before God that always exists in the connectivity of children to parent. Just as the parent was responsible for caring for the children in their helpless youth, so the children are called on to care for their parents should they become invalids.
 - **Mark 7:11-13** - A son need only declare that what he had intended to give his father and mother be considered "Corban," i.e., a gift devoted to God, and it would no longer be necessary to provide this money for his parents. By supposedly devoting the gift to God, a son was not necessarily promising it to the temple nor did he prevent its use for himself. What he did do was to legally exclude his parents from benefiting from it. In today's terms we would say that the Pharisees had come up with a 'legal loophole' that could be used to circumvent laws intended to protect elderly parents by making sure they were cared for by their children. So here was a legal way, devised and approved by the Pharisees, to shirk God’s directed responsibility to provide for their parents!
- **Conclusion:** Parents should be diligent to teach these primary and simple responsibilities to their children. These summarize the commands of God for children. The basics are simple: obedience & honor to parents, listening to parents, seeking wisdom, and acting wisely about selecting companions. These things should become a part of their very willful constitution, and character. Children must know they are accountable and responsible before God, even at the earliest of ages, and that by following these Biblical commands they are being obedient to, and honoring God.