

“Honey, I’m home.” The ideal picture set by television shows of the 1950s and 60s showed the husband coming home in the front door being greeted by his two children and wife. The kids were smiling and of course had all their homework done. The wife was dressed in her apron and was welcoming the whole family to sit down at the table for a wonderful meal that she had worked at all day. After the meal the whole family might go outside to play some catch or sit down for board games. This was the way family was portrayed in those days because for many this was likely close to the way it actually was for families in those days.

Today we almost laugh at those television programs because we don’t recognize that way of doing things anymore. Husbands in some households aren’t going off to work. Wives in some homes don’t primarily stay home to raise the children. And the children are involved in so many sports and after school activities. With this kind of makeup no one in the family can sit down for a meal together at home. Homework gets pushed off till late night. Rather than play outside the family jumps into separate cars, one spouse going one way with some kids and the other spouse going the opposite way with the other kids. Or one spouse works from home at all hours of the day. Or there’s only one parent in the house taking on all the roles. Fathers, mothers, husbands, and wives, they might have good intentions. But in so many ways today the fabric of the family is falling apart.

In this sermon series we’re breaking the huddle to see how the Bible calls Christians together to encourage offense, to go out and use the strength of Christ to fight against our opponent Satan and win spiritual victories. It’s about breaking the huddle and getting out there in the spiritual game. In no place is that more important and possibly lacking than in the family. So Paul builds off the lessons we read today and writes to the Ephesians about the roles children and parents are to have in the family. Ephesians 6:1-4. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”--which is the first commandment with a promise-- “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”**

If there was one universal among us all it would be that we all were born from our parents. There is of course another universal; we all disobeyed our parents a time or two growing up. It’s easy to see children not obeying their parents or not honoring them. Children who after mom or dad says they aren’t getting anything at the store start wailing and throwing a fit. Children who as they sit down for supper at the table defiantly say they don’t like what’s served and push the plate away. Children who repeatedly need to be asked to clean their room or help with the chores. These are disobedient children. Because the parents are God’s representatives on earth to these children, they are also disobeying and sinning against God.

Children, of all ages, you have one responsibility to your role in the family. God gives it to you in the form of a commandment. **“Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”** Honor does not mean talk back to. Honor does not mean you get a vote and that all things should be fair. Honor means respect. Honor means you will always be inferior to your parents. That’s just the truth. Deal with it. They birthed you, God put them over you. Honoring your parents means you’ll be doing things more likely to lead to good decisions and in turn may lead to longer, safer, healthier life.

For parents your opportunity to sin against God takes on a few more forms than those adults without children. In fact it might be the children that you’re sinning against while you sin against God. Speaking to fathers specifically but not letting the mother have a pass, Paul says, **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”** Fathers have a special responsibility that quite frankly in general they’ve been dropping the ball on. To be fair, I understand there are some gender roles that have been flipped on end lately in society. Men aren’t sure if they’re still supposed to bring in the salary that pays the bills. Men aren’t sure if they’re supposed to hold doors, pull out chairs, or volunteer for the dirty and dangerous jobs. There’s a lot of confusion. But don’t be confused men, fathers. You are still responsible for your family. God holds you accountable. God wants you taking the lead, stepping forward, being the man he called you to be. Train your children, don’t abandon them. Offer instruction, don’t wimp out and let the woman lead because it seems easier. God designed fathers to break the huddle for their family.

Now men and women find plenty of ways to disobey God and sin. The skyrocketing rate of out of wedlock babies born in this country is disturbing. People are enjoying the benefits of sexual intimacy without the protections and commitment of marriage. This is eroding and endangering countless children who grow up with only one parent. Fathers and mothers who discipline in anger often take out anger and aggression on the child. Discipline often is inconsistent or unreasonable. In this case the child might get exasperated, provoked to anger against their parents because of the treatment. Fathers and mothers more often want to be friends with their child. They want their child to see them as a buddy, not as the parent who must discipline and hold accountable for wrong behavior. This robs the child of the **“training and instruction of the Lord”** Paul spoke of.

For many the things Paul says here are impossible to do. Not for you. Paul is speaking to Christian children and Christian parents just like you. These are things you can do. Children can obey. Parents can discipline and train properly. He says how twice. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord...fathers, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”** Parents and children who are of the and in the Lord can do this. How does one get to be in the and of the Lord? Earlier in chapter five Paul introduced this section on roles and responsibilities by saying, **“Submit to one another, out of reverence for Christ.”** No matter who you are, when you become a Christian you were brought under Christ. You can and do submit to each other. That’s husbands and wives, parents and children. All that submission is done when everyone is under Christ by faith.

Only in Christ can we do these things. We are people who have heard the gospel message and believe that Jesus did come and die for our sins. We know that as children when we disobey our parents Christ forgives that because he never disobeyed his heavenly Father once. Parents know that when we go too far on discipline or not far enough that we are forgiven by the Savior who was punished just the right amount for you and me. Christ Jesus and God the Father are the perfect example of a father child relationship. It is beyond our ability to imitate though. It is the relationship that saves us. That's grace. God sent his son for us. His Son Jesus was obedient even to death on the cross. He sacrificed himself for you and for me. God showed his love for us by sending us a Savior.

With God's grace poured out on us in Christ, parents and children have directives from the Father in heaven as to how to live. We respond to the grace of God with obedience and honor. Motivated by a Savior that gave everything for us children respect and honor their parents because God expects it and parents have a right to it. Motivated by a Savior who loved us like little children who were helpless to do anything ourselves parents train and discipline children and teach them to know the Savior. Fathers will take the lead on spiritual training as well as be involved in every aspect of their children's lives. Children will be disciplined fairly and consistently as they need.

While the picture we have seen of families on television and movies has changed and the reality of the world has changed along with it, the roles God gave to families has not changed. He gave those roles because that's the way he wants the family structured. In love he knows if families operate with one father and one mother living out their God given roles and children following the family will operate best. Don't look to reinvent what God has established. For all our past failures they are forgiven in Christ. Now we can go out and break the huddle for your family.