

# “HARMONY IN THE HOME”

[Children and Fathers]

COLOSSIANS 3:20-21

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

## INTRODUCTION

In II Tim. 3:1-5 Paul gives us a vivid description of the horrific moral and social conditions that will exist in the “last days.” However one might “get lost in the shuffle”—“**disobedient to their parents**” (v. 2).

Rebellion against parental authority leads to all sorts of rebellion and disrespect to authority in general, and profuse social unrest and chaos. Those who disrespect/disobey parents cannot properly respect and obey God.

But, Paul does not leave fathers “off the hook” in his family instructions. The sad reality is that the majority of fathers in our culture have abdicated their responsibility before God. Now Scripture has made clear that church leaders—pastors and deacons—have a solemn responsibility before God with respect to their family:

- 1) Pastors must “rule well/manage his own house/family” and must keep his children in subjection with dignity.
- 2) Deacons must “rule/be good managers of their children” (I Tim. 3:4, 12).

I submit to you that God expects the same of all fathers in all homes; these leaders are but examples. Unfortunately, many fathers have failed their children in their leadership and have provoked them to anger/exasperated them, causing them to be discouraged/lose heart.

**CHILDREN, YOU MUST OBEY YOUR PARENTS; FATHERS, YOU MUST LOVINGLY AND CAREFULLY GOVERN YOUR HOME.**

### I. CHILDREN OBEY YOUR PARENTS (20).

#### A. The meaning of “Obedience”—“To hear under”, someone is “over” you and you must **submit**/obey.

- The tense of the verb is present—continuous obedience.
- The age of “children” is left wide open here; the household of that day could include unmarried adult children, or even some married children. But, the comparable context in Eph. 6:4 seems to be speaking of younger children; after Paul had encouraged children to obey their parents, Paul then follows by exhorting fathers to nurture and train them.
- Perhaps the general nature of the command here should be applied to any “child” who still lives in the house and is an integral part of the family unit dependent upon the parents for provision and guidance; they as such are still under the authority of the parents.

#### B. The extent of obedience—“in all things”; cf. v. 22 for slaves.

- The exceptions are so few that they may be disregarded.
- Obviously, one must never disobey God.
- Far too often human children look for excuses and reasons not to obey; Paul means what he says here.
- Robertson laments that “waves of lawlessness sweep over the world because the child was not taught to obey.”
- Moo would make an exception in the case of “abusive parents”; however, that term is broadly applied in today’s culture for much more than physical or sexual abuse. There is hardly a child anywhere who could not claim some kind of parental abuse in order to justify exemption from this command. If either real physical abuse or sexual abuse takes place, the child or some other adult can contact legal authorities for help—but the child still must manifest a submissive and obedient spirit toward his parents.

#### C. The motivation for obedience

##### 1. Well-pleasing—your desire must be to please God.

- This motivation is likely the highest and best, since based on a relationship with the Lord—well pleasing **in the Lord**. The young person aware of this relationship with a Lord who knows him, his thoughts and his feelings, will have a higher motivation to obey his parents

and do what is right than merely from knowing he has a sense of obligation to obey the rules. There are other motivations:

- It is “right” (Eph. 6:1).
- God promises blessings upon obedience (Eph. 6:1-2).
- God threatens curses upon those who don’t obey (Dt. 27:16; Prov. 20:20; 30:17).
- God must be pleased with such obedience since He is the One who commanded it in Ex. 20:12 and Dt. 5:16; in fact, He is pleased with obedience to all of His commands.

2. To the Lord—Christ Himself, who was obedient:

1. To His parents—Lk. 2:51; honored His mother—Jn. 19:26-27.
2. To His Father—John 15:10: “I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

## II. FATHER’S, LOVINGLY LEAD YOUR CHILDREN (21).

Now here Paul only includes the negative instruction to fathers that is parallel with the “provoke not your children to anger” in Eph. 6:4. But, Eph. 6:4 goes on to give positive instructions: “**Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**”

- *Nurture* is “upbringing, training, instruction, discipline.
- *Admonition* is “admonition, instruction, warning.
- These few words cover a great deal of ground and responsibility!

A. Do not provoke/irritate/embitter your children: *to cause someone to react in a way that suggests acceptance of a challenge.*

Paul does mean “fathers” here, not “parents”, though surely these principles apply to both parents. In Paul’s culture the man was head of the household [as he should be in ours also] and had the main responsibility for ordering children.

1. This is **most often** done by being too harsh and demanding.
2. This may also be done by being too lenient.
3. This may also be done through **inconsistency**—a huge problem in most homes.
4. We may find the “translation” of the Amplified version enlightening here:
  - “With demands that are trivial, or unreasonable, or humiliating, or abusive.”
  - “Nor by favoritism or indifference.”
  - “Treat them tenderly and with lovingkindness.”
5. Fathers must not allow their discipline to degenerate into fault-finding and nagging.

B. Do not lead your children to discouragement/becoming disheartened.

**“If children, let them do what they can, never please their father, if they are teased and irritated by perpetual censure, if they are kept apart by uniform sternness, if other children around them are continually held up as immeasurably their superiors, if their best efforts can only moderate the parental frown, but never are greeted with the parental smile, then their spirit is broken, and they are discouraged....To act thus, the apostle declares, would be so far from advancing the religious improvement of children, that it would discourage them. It would not only deaden their affections towards their parents, but would dispirit their exertions, and check their desires after holiness”** (Eadie, pp. 256-57). “A child frequently irritated by over-severity or injustice to which, nevertheless it must submit, acquires a spirit of sullen resignation leading to despair” (Rogers, p. 468).

Eadie notes that when dealing with children, “the twig is to be bent with caution, not broken in the efforts of a rude and hasty zeal” (p. 262). Hendriksen reminds fathers that they must spend time with children, teach them, entertain them, encourage them, and especially point them to Christ by both word and personal example (172).

## CONCLUSION

As goes the home, so goes the community; as goes the community, so goes the region; as goes the region, so goes the state; as goes the state, so goes the nation; as goes the nation, so goes the world!

Don’t ever get the idea that what happens in your home does not matter! Look at the influence of Abraham’s family!

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