

LSB Ephesians 6:1 - 9

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

The world knows how to guide and raise children. Just ask them. And yet we keep having these pesky headlines about child and teenage suicide and rising alarm over the latest crisis. Loneliness. We can fix it all with more Doctors and more hospitals and more drugs from the pharmaceutical companies.

I was listening to a certain politician the other day, he's my age, and he said when he was growing up the only time a kid saw the inside of a hospital was when he was playing so hard he managed to break a bone.

When I was about 3 1/2 years old I got sent home from Mrs. Mumford's kindergarden class with a note pinned onto me that said, Please don't send Jimmy back to school until such time as he learns how to behave.

In those primitive times, we hadn't yet invented the disease, ADHD. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Nor had we invented the trillion dollar industry of Psychotropic drugs that could turn little Jimmy into a well behaved little vegetable.

Just a little side bar that you can fact check. What percentage of school shootings was done where the shooter had previously used psychotropic drugs. Answer, all of them.

Back to little Jimmy and his problem. In those primitive times, the kindergarten teacher was in her 60's and at Prairie Bible Institute in Alberta Canada it wasn't a hard problem to solve at all. Send the kid home until parental discipline teaches him how to behave socially for a few hours

before you send him back to school. 3 1/2 was too soon for me.

My mother taught me some valuable life lessons. A couple come to mind. She was big on authority and submission. Authority and submission. She said for most of your life you will find yourself somewhere in the middle where you will be under someone else's ultimate authority to which you must submit. And likewise, beginning with perhaps pets and younger siblings, you will have some authority over the welfare of others in which they will have to be submissive to you.

She also taught me, the policeman has a gun and he has authority from God to use it. Do not disobey policemen. He will kill you. If you think perhaps they're wrong, you still obey them anyways and sort it out later. Not worth getting killed over.

Funny how well those simple lessons backed up by discipline I could feel on my backside has stood me. I've had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder my entire life, and still do to this day, but somehow with the simplest of instruction, I've gotten along pretty well. The policeman WILL kill you, and the boss WILL fire you if you don't learn some self control.

You begin at a very very young age to teach children that non submission to authority results in pain. Self control is rooted in pain avoidance. The penalty for bad behaviour has to be great enough to actually result in good behaviour. Duh. 70 years later I go pay my county taxes because it will be painful to not have a roof over my head on cold nights.

WOW! How utterly simplistic! When I was in the 4rth grade at Olive View Christian Day school the school principle was having a spelling bee marathon. Hours on end of boring spelling spelling spelling and of course I was bored out of my little mind. You stood in line until it was your turn to spell the word and if you mis spelled it you had to go sit down.

My word was *of*. A two letter word and I wanted to be sitting with the losers who seemed to be having a better time than the winners. Of; uv.

We still had corporal punishment in those days. And my own dad had supplied the school with paddles with the words of Proverbs 22:15 inscribed upon them;

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the ROD of correction will drive it far from him. Prov. 22:15 Miss Lyons was in her 60's also by that time and my reward for mis spelling such an easy word (she knew very well my mis spelling was rooted in rebellion) was a whack with the paddle. She still had a pretty good arm.

But I had pre-calculated the possible costs of getting out of that line and was willing to pay that consequence. Then of course I stirred up trouble with the kids sitting on the benches, giggling and talking and having fun, and got another one.

That's our introduction, for better or worse. Did I become Charlie Manson as a result of all of that violence against my bum. No, actually I did just fine, and with some years of wisdom I am totally thankful and grateful for every spanking I ever received. Too bad I didn't get a few more. I might have had the self discipline to get a college degree. Maybe not. My ADHD is such that if I'm not moving, I pretty quickly go to sleep.

So what is it that God instituted for childhood development. In verses 1 - 4 there are about 60 words. Pretty succinct. Compared to the trillions of words that google can provide on the subject of guiding children into adulthood.

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Two weeks ago we spoke at some length on the subject of the fierce anger God has towards anyone who harms little children. We said there is a

hierarchy of natural vulnerability. Tiny image bearers of God cannot survive on their own.

And so God lovingly designed the womb as the most safely protective place possible for unborn image bearers. So vulnerable they would be dead in minutes without that protection.

Then after they are born they have parents who are charged with that protection until the day they leave father and mother and cleave to a spouse of the opposite gender and the whole process repeats itself.

By God's design it is the parents job to teach little ones basic truths. There is a sense in which infants and toddlers experience on a tiny scale the larger truth of a God who will require judgement of every act of every person. On a very small scale we learn to obey what is good and right, and we learn by pain that disobedience requires a penalty.

Thus parents and toddlers is a microcosm of the greater responsibility of submission to all governing authorities and ultimately, the final authority over all creation, the Lord Jesus who is God.

Jesus final words on this earth before He ascended back up to His Father in heaven were these in Matthew 28:18 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.*

Every knee will bow to King Jesus. Parents, your job is the first little baby steps in teaching your children that submission to authority is rewarded and rebellion brings pain. That wide spot in the middle of your child is not an accident. A loving God knew ahead of time that we would all need a handy sized target for pain to be inflicted on us to teach us submission to authority.

As tiny image bearers we begin to learn the most basic lesson. Obedience and self control bring wellness and disobedience and rebellion bring distinct pain. And Oh by the way, we're all different. Some headstrong

rebellers need more pain than others. It has to be enough to effectively cause the child to choose right over wrong because of the reward verses penalty.

Those early lessons prepare children to be productive adults who can function in a civilized social order ruled by authority and submission on multiple levels. And ultimately, we understand a God who punishes evil and requires obedience.

God has built unseen rules into His universe that automatically bring thriving to those who obey His moral commandments and death to those who rebel against His commands. It begins in homes with moms and dads when we are very small. We are trained in righteousness. Disobedience equals pain. Obedience equals joy. We begin those lessons before the 3rd year.

In fact in our house we began those lessons in the first year. You sleep at normal times every time. You eat at normal times, every time. Mom and Dad set the schedule and baby learns to live within it. Babies respond to a steady unchanging schedule.

Paul didn't invent anything new. His words are but a reminder of God's revelation through Moses and the prophets about what God requires of parents and children.

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This is a repeat of the 5th of the 10 commandments in Exodus 20. Ex. 20:12

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which Yahweh your God gives you.

We keep talking about thriving. This verse gives a direct connection to that

very thing. Do this, and thriving will result.

Honor your father and your mother. Obey their commands. And the result will be a long life of thriving. The flip side or negative of the positive is disobeying parents can lead to death.

What greater apologetic for belief in God and His book, His revelation that brings thriving, than to observe first hand what Satan does to break down order at the most basic building block level. We can see it with our eyes.

Destroy this first level of authority and submission between children and parents at the family level, and social order breaks down. California is waking up to the reality that there is no business model that can function if there is no penalty for theft. Social order is breaking down. If no profit is possible from labor, service providers have no choice but to leave. The governor cannot force free enterprise to operate at a loss.

We're watching the breakdown of these fundamental truths right before our eyes. If there are no moms and dads to teach tiny humans what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, what exactly do we expect.

Let's do a case study. I'm reading from an unknown quote. "The child was born on November 12, 1934. Born to 16-year-old Kathleen Maddox. He was entered into the ledgers as No-name Maddox. He was a classic abused child, left by his mother for days during the first years of his life. In 1939 his mother was arrested for armed robbery and sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. When she returned, No-name was 8 years old. His life became a long line of run-down hotels, and brutal uncles who came to live with his mother and drank heavily.

"When he was 12, his mother tried to place him in a foster home. But since one wasn't available, he was sent to the Gibault Home for Boys in Indiana. It was the first in a long line of progressively more restrictive institutions. After ten months at Gibault, he ran away but his mother rejected him. He then

drifted into a life of crime. At 13, he was caught for armed robbery and sentenced to an institution from which he escaped. At 16, he had a long series of crimes under his belt.

“Finally in federal prison he was homosexually attacked and raped. At 17, he pressed a razor blade against a fellow inmate’s throat and sodomized him. He was transferred again and again and classified as dangerous with a long record of violent activity. Finally at the age of 33, he was released from Terminal Island Prison in California against his wishes. He had become obsessed with the satanic. He told his jailers that prison was his only home. No-name Maddox is better known as Charles Manson,”

I don't have the source for that long quote but the point is this. All of the harm that resulted in a Charles Manson was outside of accepted norms in the time frame of 1934 - 1969. Most of what I just read is normative in our degraded society that has rejected God. How many Charlie Mansons are walking around in our current culture? Why are we so surprised when school shootings happen?

God's design is for moms and dads who love each other and children with moms and dads that teach them right and wrong in a loving environment of authority and submission with correction against rebellion and reward for obedience.

We grow up in that environment and enter social structures understanding our roles under different authorities that we must submit to and obey. God designed governments to reward good behaviour and punish bad. That's all breaking down before our eyes.

Satan attacks the family. He isn't stupid. If you want the building to collapse, you pull out the foundation stones. Last week we discovered that Satan is at war against marriage. He's winning in our nation. And obtw, without marriages, there can be no parental order providing the foundation of authority and submission for children. It all breaks down.

In the news most immediately is the threat of government restricting the rights of parents. The very real possibility looms of parents who restrict a child's wish to become a different gender will lose their child and perhaps go to prison. That's frightening. School districts are gaining the power to exclude parents from choosing what a child may or may not be taught.

Satan isn't very invisible in his war these days. It's a direct frontal attack.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Within those words, unseen without a bit of sleuthing around in the original language and tenses is the delegation from God of parental rights of authority over their children.

I often questioned why the words, in the Lord, are present here. Isn't that obvious? Is there some redundancy. No. The way that is written, parents in the Lord, is delegatory for the parents. God delegates to parents the authority to rule over their children. That's why it's there.

Pam has to remind me from time to time that I'm an idiot. That's kinder than the terminology she might use. Not often. But no surprise to me. I'm painfully aware. When I was around 9 or 10 and my dad was still at home with us, we had a neighbor across the street who was what Pam might say, *special grace required*. Not particularly easy to get along with. A character.

He went to the same church as us in San Fernando. And my dad used to say, Oh we love him in the Lord. And I knew that was church speak for, he's a pain in the neck but he goes to our church, so we tolerate him. Oh, we love so and so in the Lord.

Well being a smart aleck too smart for my own good, I told my dad, I'm going to obey you *in the Lord*, like you love so and so, *in the Lord*. Poor fellow. He didn't quite know what to do with that. I didn't really mean dis

respect, I only meant to let him know, I'm on to the whole double standard thing.

Your kids are on to you. But it doesn't matter. Parents have a delegation from God to be the authority in the home that demands obedience. That verse tells us so. And within that verse Paul gives the reason for that delegated authority. *1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

For this is right. Since Covid, the church has had to wake up to re-defining the definitions of proper authority that we as Christians must submit to. We all went into Covid half asleep, and when the government got out of its lane and crowded the authority of the churches by restricting attendance, that was a wake up call.

We are to obey governmental authority in their God given lane. When they get out of their lane and try to rule in matters of the church we have to obey God rather than men. Covid was a good reminder of that principle. Government is out of their jurisdiction if they tell us when and how many can meet. We worked through that during Covid.

This verse we're studying this morning is similar. If the government gets out of its lane and crowds parental authority over the children that God has given to the parents, this verse tells us, parents have authority over children, God gives that authority to them, and God declares that delegated authority, in this verse, as right.

Therefore, if the government gets out of their lane and begins to restrict parental authority over any matter, at all, we must disobey the government and continue to have authority over our children who are in our homes. This battle is warming up and we're seeing little spot fires flaring up all over the place.

In April 2023, Governor Tim Walz made Minnesota a trans refuge state. The law has provisions for emergency custody over minor children seeking

so-called gender affirming procedures.

In effect it means a child can leave parents and state that prohibits sex reassignment and find refuge against state laws in other states and parents who want custody over the decisions their minor children are making.

That's a real time example of government getting out of their lane and crowding the rights God has given to parents to make important decisions about what their children can and cannot do.

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Parents in the Lord, in that verse, is a God given delegation of authority of parents over their children. Children in the home must obey their parents. Until such time as stated clear back in Genesis where you leave father and mother.

Adult children leave mom and pop and then fall under the direct authority of the King of Kings. In a properly ordered world there should be little change happening from childhood obedience to parents to adult obedience to the Lord Himself. It shouldn't look any different. In a perfect world.

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 in the land.

Kind of what we just said. Children who are trained in righteousness make that transition to adulthood easily and continue in those righteous paths that bring thriving over the long haul.

Proverbs 22:6 states an axiomatic truth we are all familiar with;
6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

What does it mean to train a child. Paul looks at that next;

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the

discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Within those 20 words lies the key to contentment and thriving for a lifetime. Google has a trillion words and doesn't arrive at the desired goal. What a contrast! The world's solutions. VSS God's solution.

The world says, first of all, abandon the sky god and all of his rules. Get rid of that. We know that's just wrong. Once God is gone, that divorce is finalized, then you can get on with every possible avenue of pleasure. Maybe large sums of money will work. Try out every possible combination of sex in large quantities. Do all these different things and when you get tired of all of the dead ends, medicate. Alcohol, drugs, whatever combination of all of the above.

At least one of our political parties considers children a limiting factor on happiness. So we have childless cat ladies, to coin a phrase that's getting one of our VP wannabe's in a lot of trouble. Avoid children. Abort them if possible. You have a better chance at happiness without the encumbrances.

Children happen, so figure out ways for the state to raise them. There's actually a whole contingent on the far left that says, actually, more humans are necessary, so we'll let the red states do the child thing and feed them until they're 18 and then when we get them in college, we simply convert them.

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

These 20 words are God's design for parents and children to actually thrive. Within those few simple words lives a balance of instruction and discipline that will result in a lifetime of wellness and thriving not available to the secular godless world.

Instruction is commanded of parents. It's part of the authority delegated to parents by God. You have God given authority over the little ones but you

have a God ordered command to instruct your children in God's laws.
Listen to the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:19-

“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments, which Yahweh your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do it in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear Yahweh your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I am commanding you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 O Israel, you shall listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 “Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one! 5 You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as phylacteries between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

This is the instruction required of parents by God. We are to teach our children God's moral laws. There's nothing wrong with children memorizing and reciting the 10 commandments.

When my children were toddlers, very small, 4, 5, 6 years old, we had a little ritual when it was bed time. We had an alphabet soup we would say. And the kids actually loved doing it because it prolonged bedtime a bit.

A, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
B, be you kind one unto another

C, come unto me, all ye, and I will give you rest
D, do unto others as you would have them do unto you
E, enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
F, for God so loved the world, He gave His only Son
and so on and so on all the way to something we dreamed up for x and z

I wish I could remember them all.

It isn't the Sunday School teachers job to teach your children, although in our culture, that may be the only little life saver they ever get thrown to them. God ordained parents with authority over their children and the responsibility to teach their children His ways.

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

There are three parts to the balance here that raises up a generation of godly children to replace the parents and then be parents to the next generation.

We talked about instruction. Next is discipline. Obey God's rules, and within the delegated authority, children must obey their parents commands and directives.

We were sticklers in our house. If mom or dad gave a clear command and the child chose to disobey, there was no question, no discussion, discipline was immediate and always the same.

We had a spanking stick. About 3/8 thick by 2 inches wide and perhaps 20 inches long. If you chose to disobey mom or dad, you knew ahead of time that you would be bent over a bed and get a whack with that thing. Every time. Without fail.

Does that sound harsh? It's commanded in this verse. Disobedience results in immediate pain. Of course there's a balance. Our children never once equated discipline with mom or dad no longer loving them. Quite the

opposite. There was always hugs and reassurance after discipline. Your butt may hurt but it doesn't mean mom or dad doesn't love you. Actually, quite the opposite is true;

24 He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. Prov. 13:24

Balance. Teach. Discipline. Limit.

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

Paul calls for limits. There is a balance here of teaching and disciplining but never exhausting the poor kid so that he actually becomes angry. My heart aches for children who are abused who have actually become angry with their parents.

It's sort of like the rules for hermeneutics. It doesn't work right without the Holy Spirit helping parents find the proper balance. And that's rare, which is why the world points at so called Christians who abuse parental rights and claims this formula doesn't work.

Of course it's easy to find excesses to point at and claim God's method of child development doesn't work. It does work with spirit filled Christians working at a balance with God's help. Moms are too soft. Dads are too hard. God provided moms and dads to help each other find a balance that stops short of angry children.

The writer of Hebrews speaks of how this parental discipline trains us for obedience and discipline directly from our loving heavenly Father when we are older.

9 Furthermore, we have all had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Should we not much more submit to the Father of our spirits and live? 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a short time as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in

His holiness.... Hebrews 12:9,10

It's an easy transition for children who grew up with discipline and instruction to come under God's direct rule and obey Him with no surprise when He disciplines us for disobedience.

In a perfect situation, being in God's house shouldn't be so different from being in dad's house. Obedience equals thriving. Disobedience equals the penalty box. Or worse.

Homes like I have outlined that parallel these words in Ephesians 6 are the salt that seasons all of culture. But salt has gotten pretty thin on the ground these days, and the effect is a rotting culture.

Satan's no dummy. Pull out the foundation stones and the building collapses. Many of us are looking around nervously at this house of cards we know is going to collapse around us almost any day.