

Pleasing the Lord

Eph. 6:1-9

Series “Ephesians”

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We recently took our team here at the church through a personality and productivity tool called, *Working Genius*. It’s like a lot of personality profiles that you probably have taken where you can see what your strengths and weaknesses are...it helps you see where you need help and can grow, what kind of person you need to look to hire for certain positions. It also shares insights into where you are most efficient and where you potentially could become the most frustrated.

It's a great resource and it's been helpful to talk through as a team. Now, I've taken these assessments for years and as I've gotten older and seen and dealt with a myriad of issues...as I've matured (some may debate that I've matured!), but as I've matured, I've grown in areas and of course still have a long way to go.

Part of my personality that is highlighted in these assessments and it's been something that I've tried to improve on and grow in is my desire to please people.

On the surface, having a desire to please people can be a good thing. You want to jump in and help and serve others. There is a desire to not let people down and to lift others up – it's part of the way God wired many of us.

However, if we're not careful, being a people-pleaser can lead to burnout because:

- you have a hard time saying, “no” ...
- you don't set up healthy boundaries ...
- you take on more than you can handle ...

And what CAN happen is you can extend yourself beyond your capacity which again, leads to burnout and stress and frustration, and for me, I've really had to work on this through the years...and scripture memory has been HUGE for me in this.

I have to say this to myself often: **Gal. 1:10 – “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”**

Col 3:23 – “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.”

I want to be a God-pleaser...NOT a man pleaser! **Prov. 29:25 – “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.”**

I have been thinking about this all week because of the text that we are looking at today. The BIG idea behind what we will be studying is this title that I have chosen for this sermon.

I'm calling it: **Pleasing the Lord**

At its root, this is what (Eph. 6:1-9) is all about. Let's look at it together:

Eph. 6:1-9 – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),³ “that it may go 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. ⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.”

Now, this is the second to the last message that we will cover in our Ephesians series. We will be closing it out next week as we talk about putting on the “full armor of God”.

As we have studied this letter this Spring, we have unpacked it to the best of our ability, and if you have been with us for any amount of time, you know we are in the practical part of this letter.

Starting in (Eph. 4), Paul emphasizes and encourages that we walk out our faith. We are to:

- (4:1) – walk in a manner worthy of our calling...
- (4:24) – put on the new self...
- (5:1) – we are to imitate God...
- (5:9-15) – we are to walk in light, and love and in wisdom...

And part of walking in light and love and in wisdom is to be Spirit-filled (5:18) ...and when we are, we saw last few weeks that will positively affect our words, our attitude, and perhaps most importantly, our relationships.

We looked last week at what a Spirit-filled marriage looks like, this week, we’re going to see how we should engage with our children AND those that we work alongside in a way that pleases the Lord.

THIS what we’re after! We live to please God. What does this look like in the realm of the parental/child relationship.

First, we see that children are to: **Obey and Honor**

And all the parents and grandparents in the room said, “Amen”! Of course! Ha!

Now, let me just say this because I know in this room, we have a lot of people who are OUT of the parenting game...at least what I would call active parenting!

I know in reality, it’s once a parent, always a parent – and I’ve found this saying to be true, that as parents we will only be as happy as our saddest child! I don’t think that stops even when your children are grown and have children of their own!

We have many here who your children have children, and the thought could be, “I’m just going to nap through this part of the sermon because it does not apply to me!”

In the words of Coach Lee Corso on ESPN Gameday, “Not so fast, my friend!” You can’t check out on me here because the fact is, the principles we are going to talk about here are VERY relevant for EVERY person in the room because...

WATCH THIS: it doesn’t matter how old you are, you are still a child of God!

And any command God gives to a specific group of people (like parents) ...we can zoom out and by the power and illumination of the Holy Spirit see how it applies to us all as children of God.

So, let's do that. We see obedience and honor is the commandment and it's what's expected of children in their relationship with their parents.

Let's first talk about what obedience and honor is, and then we'll come back and discuss a little bit deeper issue that's at play here.

First, when Paul uses this word, "obedience", he combines two words here: One meaning to "under" ...it's the same word used in the word "submit" from last week, and the other word is the word "acuo", where we get our English word, "acoustic" from.

Put them together and this idea of "obedience" is to "hear under" or "listen under".

What Paul is teaching children (and the fact that he addresses them personally was HUGE!). This was a patriarchal society. Women and children had very little rights...weren't considered powerful...certainly not equal to men.

And Paul here in addressing children and wives and servants is turning these "household codes" upside down! In this time in history, what Paul is writing would have been considered VERY counter-cultural.

- He's speaking directly to children, wives and servants showing them dignity and value...
- He's issuing reciprocal responsibilities (this idea of mutual submission within the hierarchy of home and work of that day) ...
- He puts (specifically in this section of scripture) limits on power and authority...

For children, obedience means to get under your parent's instruction...it's not just hearing with your ears what they say, but paying attention to – it's an active listening with the intent to DO what is said. The emphasis is on the action!

And notice what Paul tags on to this command...look at the phrase there in **Eph. 6:1 - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."**

****8:00 service****: I know we don't have many children in here, but what Paul is doing is making the link that to obey parents is to obey God. It's one in the same here!

I remember when I was child, my parents would tell me to do something, and for the most part I'd do it. But as I got older, I would think, "Do they really know what's best?" I mean, they don't know what I'm going through...if they really knew my situation OR my friends OR if they just knew what I did they'd probably think different!

It reminds me of that **Mark Twain** quote: **"When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."**

Listen...if you are a child, in the room listen to your mom and dad. You might not think it, but they have some knowledge and experience from their years on earth that you just don't have!

They've got street cred that only comes with age. And MOST of all – and I KNOW this is hard to believe sometimes, but as parents we know what is BEST and want what is BEST!

And I just say to all the children in the room, “Come under mom and dad and be obedient to them.” I’m telling you, it’s for your good...it’s right as Paul says here at the end of (v. 1) – some people translate the word as “proper”. In Colossians, Paul says this and is “pleasing to the Lord.”

Colossians 3:20 – “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

Again, this is what we’re after. We want to please the Lord...but listen, pleasing the Lord is NOT just the act of obedience, it’s the posture of our heart...it’s the attitude that comes with obedience – this is what honor is!

Eph. 6:2-3 – “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

See, you can obey in action, but your heart be far from it! Is that real obedience?

Illus. Joke - It’s like that little kid whose dad told him to sit down...the kid wouldn’t obey and then finally after being told 2-3x, his dad came over and with a stern voice said, “sit down”. The kid sat down, and said I may be sitting down on the outside, but I’m standing up on the inside!”

See obedience and honor should go hand in hand. To honor is to “respect...to hold in high esteem...to value.” And where did Paul get this command?

Remember, he’s single! He didn’t have any kids, so where does he get this authority? How does he become an expert in parenting?

Illus. Conference several months ago – A pastor came in and was talking with us about parenting. He said he started to write a book on parenting:

- As a 28-year-old pastor with no kids, the working title was: *10 Rules For Raising Godly Kids*
- As a 32-year-old pastor with a strong-willed 2 year-old, he changed the working title to: *7 Principles For Raising Good Kids*
- Not long after their second child, the title was edited to be: *5 Guidelines for Raising Kids*
- And then a few years after their third child, they finally got the book written and published. The final title was: *3 Suggestions for Surviving Parenting*

Ha! Sounds about right! Well, where did Paul get this idea of honor? He just takes us back to the Ten Commandments!

Now, for those that have studied the 10 Commandments you know they are divided into two sections.

The first four commandments have to do with our vertical relationship with God. The second six commandments have to do with our horizontal relationships to one another...and which one is right in the middle?

Commandment #5: Exodus 20:12 – “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

Now, it's interesting. As Moses and the people of Israel begin their journey to the Promise Land, Moses simply repeats the Law of God to the people just as it was given to him!

But, in Deuteronomy 5, he elaborates on this 5th commandment. He adds some commentary to it! Look at what he adds in what we would call one of his "farewell sermons" before he dies and passes the baton of leadership to Joshua:

Deut. 5:16 – **"Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it *may go well with you* in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."**

Notice, Paul puts Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 together here in Ephesians 6 to communicate a blessing that is attached to doing what God commands – it's quality AND quantity of life!

What God is saying...what Moses adds to it...what Paul echoes is that when we obey our parents, we will experience a quantity and quality of life that is favorable to us – this is the blessing of God.

In other words, when we truly desire to please God...typically...TYPICALLY it's going to go well for us and lead to a better and more satisfying life!

What Paul is writing here is, "If we HONOR our parents, God will honor us!" There's a blessing attached to obedience and honor!

Bottom line...it's worth it to obey and honor our parents – and again, there's A LOT of adults in the room – who is the ultimate parent? It's God!

We will always be his child, and the applicational principle for us in this is that we are to obey and honor God just as our children are to obey and honor us. We obey AND honor:

- NOT just when we feel like it...
- NOT just when what he directs is agreeable with us...
- NOT just when we can get something out of it...
- NOT just when it fits our timetable...

NO! We come under the Lord and listen with the intent to obey him...and when we do this, will be honorable parents.

We can talk about our children honoring us, but are we living honorable lives as parents?! And grandparents, don't forget the generational admonition (Ps. 78) to pass the deeds of the Lord on to your children's children.

I know we have many grandparents that in some cases are playing the role of mom and dad, and we honor you today. You have such a unique place in your grandchildren's lives!

Illus. My grandparents – wisdom of Pawpaw – mint in mouth, wear out or rust out, you're out, you're out! I'm a product of my mawmaw's prayers – they were consistent and stable!

Look, this command Paul gives to children here is about so much more than obedience and honor. Peel back the layers, and it's about authority.

Don't forget the context of Eph. 5 and 6! We're to be filled with the Spirit (5:18) and when we are...one of the supreme evidences of being filled with the Spirit is NOT "speaking in tongues", it's (Eph. 5:21) "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ!"

As part of the order of God – and remember, that's what his idea of submission is all about, we are given authority.

- In the home (via the marriage and children) ...
- In the workplace (we'll talk about that in just a moment) ...
- In society (the Bible speaks MUCH about obeying the governmental authority we have been placed under) ...
- In the church there is order in authority (Paul mentioned some of this in Eph. 4:11-12) ...

Obedience and honor is about being under God-ordained authority...authority is good for us! God has built it into his created order and someone who is Spirit-filled won't run from being under authority, but embrace it and will be blessed because of it!

Think about it! Go back to the Garden...the first sin is getting out from under the authority of God...and as a result, part of our sin nature is we don't like being told what to do. As red-blooded Americans, we revolt against authority.

In God's economy being under authority, even bad authority is good for us! It's shaping and sharpening our character AND also when we are under it (especially bad authority) it will reveal our character – see David and Saul's relationship!

All this to say, children, it's worth it to obey...it's worth it to honor our parents EVEN if they haven't been very honorable – that's what the Bible commands.

THIS is the command to children. And Paul adds a word to the fathers here in (v. 4) – it's of course an extension to the mothers as well, but the weight of the responsibility falls on dads as the head of the home – they are not to provoke children to anger, but instead bring them up (train them) in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Dads...this idea of being under the authority of God...where do children get their idea of who God is from? For better or for worse many get their idea of who God is from their earthly father.

And the command here is to not cause irritation or annoyance...don't exasperate your children. It's the exact opposite of what we should be doing which is encouragement and building our children up!

Paul puts it like this in: **Col. 3:21 – "Fathers, do not provoke your children. Lest they become discouraged."**

Dads...if we want children who are obedient and honorable (under authority) – living a life that is pleasing to the Lord, then let's be an authority in their lives that is under the authority of God seeking to live a life that is pleasing to him.

Illus. Dad with Llama – showed me law which made me appreciate grace and mercy

John MacArthur – Ways Parents Provoke (article)

1. Well-meaning overprotection
2. Favoritism
3. Pushing achievement beyond reasonable grounds
4. Discouragement
5. Failing to sacrifice for their children and make them feel unwanted
6. Failing to let children be children
7. Using love as a tool of reward or punishment
8. Verbal or physical abuse

Dads, you are showing your child a picture of God and teaching about authority whether you realize it or not.

God knew if a child is not obedient and honoring to a mom and dad they see with their physical eyes and interact with every single day, chances are they will never be under the authority of a God they have never seen with their physical eyes.

That's a tall order...that's a HUGE responsibility...and just let me say here, and I should have said this last week. If you feel like you've failed in this, "Welcome to the club!"

Let's confess where we've messed up and move forward by God's grace...the only perfect parent is God!

We're talking about pleasing God today...you know what would please God for many today? To accept his forgiveness and move forward. Forgive yourself and be set free from the guilt of the past – that's pleasing to the Lord.

We want to please God in the home and in the workplace. And that's what (v. 5-9) are all about, and I remind you neither will happen without (v. 18) being filled with the Holy Spirit of God!

Paul uses the word "bondservant". The NIV translates this as the word, "slave". Important to note that this slavery in the Bible is very much different than the slavery we're familiar with from our nation's past.

Bondservants in the time of the Bible wasn't defined by race. Someone could make themselves a slave voluntarily. In many cases a bondservant or slave may or may not have been serving against their will.

At the time Ephesians is being written some scholars estimate that there were over 60 million slaves in and throughout the Roman Empire.

Paul is certainly NOT condoning slavery; he's simply addressing it as a fact of life. It was a reality in the times in which he lived.

There has been so much ink spilled on these verses and most theologians agree that a proper application of this text can be made in the context of an employee/employer relationship.

Now, if the words for children was obey and honor, the words for the employee is: **Serve and Sincere**. Notice there's an action (serve) and heart posture (sincere) just like "obey and honor" for children.

I highlight and underscore once again that this is a “being filled with the Spirit” issue. We’re after pleasing the Lord. How do we please the Lord in our workplace?

- It’s NOT about eye-service...
- We’re not people pleasers...

Instead, when we work for man, it should be as we work for God. Just as when children obey their parents is linked up with obeying the Lord. When we work for others, it’s linked up with working for the Lord.

Look at **Eph. 6:5-7** – **“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man...”**

Christian’s ought to be the best employees a company has. Paul is appealing to a higher calling here, and we should view our boss like Jesus.

Now, that boss may be mean, uncaring, harsh, difficult to get along with...but we are called to serve them...and we’re to serve them well – doesn’t matter what kind of authority they are to us!

That idea of “rendering service with a good will” is translated in other versions as “serve wholeheartedly” – this is with sincerity as if you are serving the Lord, not man”.

Col. 3:23-24 – **“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”**

I like how Eugene Peterson puts it in, *The Message*: **“Servants, respectfully obey your earthly masters but always with an eye to obeying the real master, Christ. Don’t just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ’s servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you’re really serving God.”**

If we do our part, God will do his! We’ll (v. 8) “receive back from the Lord”. I don’t know what that means, but just like my Maw-maw used to say, “You can’t outdo the Lord!”

Look...we want to please the Lord!

We talk about living on mission – the greatest mission field today is the workplace – what kind of missionary are you? For those of you that are retired...maybe no longer clocking in, what kind of volunteer are you?

Paul’s words to the church in Ephesus apply to you today. You are to be a reflection of Christ wherever you go...and it all goes back IMO to (v. 18) – being filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

It’s the only way we will consistently serve with a heart posture of sincerity.

Illus. Jesus – greatest servant leader to ever live – totally under the authority of his Father...favorite term he used to describe himself – “servant” (talk through)

We’re never more like Christ than when we are serving others from a place of sincerity.

And btw, if you’re an employer, treat those in your care with respect...he calls for mutual submission – and the heart behind it all is to please the Lord!

Jesus said, “we are not to lord our authority over others – that’s what the world does” (Matt. 20:25, 1 Peter 5:3). Instead as those in authority, we are to serve – it’s counter-cultural, but it’s exactly what the Bible calls for!

So, how bout it?

In the home, are you pleasing the Lord? At the workplace, are you pleasing the Lord?

NOTHING matters more.

Will you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.