

Home Makeover (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Hall-of-Fame football coach Vince Lombardi stood before his team after a humiliating loss. Having ordered an extra practice immediately following the game, the coach held this (pigskin) in front of the players and began his lecture: "Gentlemen, this is a football."

Sometimes we need to quit being distracted by the razzle-dazzle plays and come back to the basics. If this football stands for getting back to the basics of football, then Ephesians 6:1-4 summons us back to the basics of the family.

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 ON THE EARTH.*

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

One of the popular reality shows on TV is Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. Well, when we see how many families are struggling to preserve peace while raising children, I think we need an Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. We need a Home Makeover based upon the architectural plans God lays out so clearly in this passage.

1. Instruction to children (vs. 1-3)

Action: *Obey your parents...for this is right.*

I know this might be a shock to you, but children don't always obey their parents. I heard of a mother who was asked by her three children what she would like for her birthday. She answered, "Three obedient children." The youngest child thought about her words for a moment and said, "Great! Then there will be six of us."

Condition to obedience: *In the Lord*

Just as wives are not called to submit to their husband when their husbands ask them to do immoral or dishonest things, so children are not required to obey their parents if they are asked to lie, cheat, or steal for their parents. Of course, that "escape clause" of "in the Lord" does not apply to the vast majority of times

you children and teens are told to do something or not do something by your parents.

Another (unstated here) Condition to obedience: *While in the home*

Another unstated condition to this commandment to obey your parents has to do with age. Even when we are adults, we are still our parents “children”. Does this mean we must always obey them? I don’t think so!

(Plaque on Youth Pastor Shon’s office door: "TEENAGER, tired of being harassed by your parents? ACT NOW!! Move out, get a job and pay your own way while you still know everything.")

Even though obedience as a requirement may end when one gets married, moves out, or becomes financially independent, the next command remains viable for one’s lifetime. “Honor your father and mother.” If “obedience” is an action, “honoring” is an attitude.

(Example of couple in premarital counseling who had to put his mother in her rightful place as he moved toward marriage.)

Attitude: Honor your father and mother

Commandment #5 of the Perfect Ten: As stated in Deut. 5:16, it is clear it is the first commandment with a promise attached: "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you."

This is a promise given to Israel as a nation, that as they as a society practiced the honoring of parents, God would prolong their security in the Promised Land. But that which was a national motivation becomes a personal promise when, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul reiterates the command and promise here in Ephesians 6. Paul is not writing to the nation of Israel, but to individuals in the Bride of Christ, as he encourages obedience to the 5th Commandment because it was given with a promise.

Quality: that it may be well with you,

Quantity: that you may live long on the earth.

It is generally true our health and longevity is increased as children honor their parents. Most parents, having the well-being of their children in mind, want to steer their children in healthy paths. Turning away from their guidance brings psychological aberrations, social friendships which lead astray, and physical harvest of wild oats sown. Even without God's direct reward, the natural outcome of honoring parents leads toward health and longevity.

Honor of parents does not end with the obedience of childhood, but extends as our obligation as adult children of aging parents to provide for them their needs, as they provided for us in ours. This reciprocal exchange is expressed in this poem,

“The Role Reversal”

*When I spill some food on my clean dress,
or forget to tie my shoe,
Please be patient and reminisce
about the early years I spent with you.*

*I taught you how to use a fork,
and to learn your alphabet, too,
How to dress and wash behind your ears,
precious hours spent with you.*

*So when I forget what I was about to say,
just wait with me a minute or two.
It probably wasn't important anyway,
What's important is being with you.*

*If I tell the story one more time,
and you know the ending through and through,
Remember your first nursery rhymes
which I rehearsed a hundred times with you.*

*When my legs are shaky and it's hard to walk
the pace I once could do,
Please take my hand, and guide **me** now,
The toddler **I** helped is you.*

2. Instructions to fathers (parents):

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| What not to do: do not provoke your children to anger. |
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How do we fathers provoke our children to anger?

1. Tease them and allow siblings to call them names.
2. Be too busy to play with them, listen to them, or attend their activities.

3. Never apologize for your failures, especially your own anger.

**What to do:
bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

As James Dobson says:

1. Define the boundaries before they are enforced.

The most important step in any disciplinary procedure is to establish reasonable expectations and boundaries in advance. The child should know what is and what is not acceptable behavior before he is held responsible for those rules. This precondition will eliminate the overwhelming sense of injustice a youngster feels when he is slapped or punished for his accidents and blunders. If you haven't defined it—don't enforce it.

(Example of reviewing anticipated behavior game in the car on the way to social events.)

2. When defiantly challenged, respond with confident decisiveness.

Once a child understands what is expected, he should then be held accountable for behaving accordingly. That sounds easy, but most children will assault the authority of their elders and challenge their right to lead. In a moment of rebellion a little child will consider his parents' wishes and defiantly choose to disobey. Like a military general before a battle, he will calculate the potential risk, marshal his forces and attack the enemy with guns blazing. When that nose-to-nose confrontation occurs between generations, it is extremely important for the adult to win decisively and confidently. The child has made it clear that he's looking for a fight, and his parents would be wise not to disappoint him!

(Example of Robert, naked in the dentist's office quoted from Dr. James Dobson's Straight Talk to Men" page 38: "In the absence of parental leadership, some children become extremely obnoxious and defiant, especially in public places. Perhaps the best example was a ten-year-old boy named Robert who was a patient of my good friend Dr. William Slonecker. Dr. Slonecker said his pediatric staff dreaded the days when Robert was scheduled for an office visit. He literally attacked the clinic, grabbing instruments and files and telephones. His passive mother could do little more than shake her head in bewilderment.

During on physical examination, Dr. Slonecker observed severe cavities in Robert's teeth and knew that the boy must be referred to a local dentist. But who would be given the honor? A referral like Robert could mean the end of a professional friendship. Dr. Slonecker eventually decided to send him to an older dentist who reportedly understood children. The confrontation that followed now stands as one of the classic moments in the history of human conflict.

Robert arrived in the dental office, prepared for battle. “Get in the chair, young man,” said the doctor. “No chance!” replied the boy. “Son, I told you to climb onto the chair, and that’s what I intend for you to do.” Robert stared at his opponent for a moment and then replied, “If you make me get in that chair, I will take off all my clothes.” The dentist calmly said, “Son take ‘em off.” The boy forthwith removed his shirt, undershirt, shoes, and socks, and then looked up in defiance. “All right, son,” said the dentist. “Not get on the chair.” “You didn’t hear me,” sputtered Robert. “I said if you made me get on that chair, I will take off all my clothes.” “Son, take ‘em off,” replied the man. Robert proceeded to remove his pants and shorts, finally standing totally naked before the dentist and his assistant. “Now, son, get in the chair,” said the doctor. Robert did as he was told, and sat cooperatively through the entire procedure. When the cavities were drilled and filled, he was instructed to step down from the chair. “Give me my clothes now,” said the boy. “I’m sorry,” replied the dentist. “Tell you mother that we’re going to keep your clothes tonight. She can pick them up tomorrow.”

Can you comprehend the shock Robert’s mother received when the door to the waiting room opened, and there stood her pink son, as naked as the day he was born? The next day Robert’s mother returned to retrieve his clothes, and asked to have a word with the dentist. However, she did not come to protest. These were her sentiments: “You don’t know how much I appreciate what happened here yesterday. You see, Robert has been blackmailing me about his clothes for years. Whenever we are in a public place, such as a grocery store, he makes unreasonable demands of me. If I don’t buy him what he wants, he threatens to take off all his clothes. You are the first person who has called his bluff. And the impact on Robert has been incredible.”

3. Distinguish between willful defiance and childish irresponsibility.

A child should not be disciplined for behavior that is not willfully defiant. When he forgets to feed the dog or put away the dishes or leaves his bike outside in the rain, remember that these behaviors are typical of childhood. Be gentle as you teach him to do better. Often natural consequences stemming from the irresponsibility are enough to nurture the child toward maturity.

(Example of Charity leaving her brand new Nike’s behind in the Crossroads Christian gym. She suffered the natural consequence of having to wear her worn-out Reebok’s for the rest of the season. No further discipline was needed.)

4. Reassure and teach after the confrontation is over.

After a time of conflict during which the parent has demonstrated his right to lead, the youngster may want and will benefit from expressing your love and reassurance of restored relationship. By all means, open your arms and let him come. Hold him/her close and tell her of your love. Rock her gently and let her know again why she was punished and how she can avoid the trouble next time. It

is extremely important to pray with the child at that time, admitting to God that we all have sinned, and no one is perfect. Divine forgiveness is a marvelous experience, even for a very young child.

Those then are the basics. “This is a football.” Children: Obey your parents. All of us: Honor your father and mother. Fathers: Provoke not your children to anger. Parents: Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.