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Raising Kids Who Hope In God

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Ephesians 6:1-4



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Good morning, Providence. It is truly a joy to gather with you guys today and to open God's Word. If you're visiting with us today, we wanna say a special word of welcome to you. It's really our honor that you would join us. I'm Brian. I'm one of the pastors on staff here. I get the joy of opening the book of Ephesians back up. If you've been with us for the last couple of weeks, you'll know that we spent two weeks around Easter, both Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, looking at the peace that only Jesus brings. In fact we looked at the week before Jesus' life, and after his resurrection in two places where Jesus literally spoke peace into the world in two different examples. Honestly I kinda laughed when I realized I was gonna be in this passage today. Maybe there's no better time to look at a passage on parenting then coming off of spending two weeks talking about peace.

If you're a parent, you probably will say that often times, your home and your child-parent relationship is anything but peaceful. And all of us fit in that category somewhere, right? So you might be sitting in this room today and you're not a parent. You don't have kids. You might not even be married yet. You were a child. Maybe you still are. So you fit in the context of this everywhere, and so I think that it's fitting that we come off of speaking of peace and talking about the dynamics of the parent-child relationship. If you look at all the things that are written about parenting, there's not a ton of consistence about what is most challenging about parenting. However, one thing that the experts, regardless of where they're coming from, one thing that they do agree on is that most of the time when you talk about challenges in parenting, inevitably the challenges either specifically are speaking to behavior or they're challenges that are born out of behavior.

So what we know to be true is that the challenges that exist in parenting really come in context of behavior. While there are tons of external factors that affect parent-child relationship, some of them, if we just skipped a rock across culturally what is before us, we could talk about alcoholism. We could talk about relationships among kids and teens. We could talk about social media. For me, in my own home, most of our challenges center around technology, frankly. And so if that's true, if external factors are true and that's the case, can something that was written over 2,000 years ago before some of that even existed, especially when you're talking about technology, can something that was written over 2,000 years ago actually be applicable for us today?

I say yes, absolutely. Even though it's Paul's words to a church in modern-day ... what we know as modern-day Turkey, I believe that the words Paul gives absolutely are applicable to us today. Before we read this text I wanna answer another question some of you may be sitting here thinking, because you may not have realized this is where we were gonna be in Ephesians today and you're thinking, "I got out of bed and I'm not a parent. I'm not married," or "I'm a parent that has grown children. I'm past this." I want to speak to you for a second. I absolutely believe that the word that Paul gives us is for all of us. So please don't check out in the next 30 minutes or so as we talk about parenting, and I hope you'll see why here in a minute, but I believe that what Paul says about parents and children is still a word for us. There's some direct things that this passage speaks to when it comes specifically to the unique dynamic of a parent of a child, and yet there's a ton at play here fundamentally that I think addresses all of our heart.

I wanna read from Ephesians 6. If you don't have a Bible, if you look under the chair in front of you, there's likely one either directly in front of you or to your right or left. If you don't own a Bible, then we would, in all seriousness, we would love for that to be our gift to you. When we gather every week, there's one thing that we hope you leave here knowing, and that is that we absolutely believe that Jesus Christ is our only hope for salvation and that his Word, God's Word, given to us, is of great importance. And there's nothing better that we can give you than a hope in Jesus and his Word.

If you are with us today, so if you don't have a Bible, we want you to take that as your own. We're in the book of Ephesians, which is just a letter. It's actually a letter that was written to the church. It's in the New Testament. It's towards the end of the Bible and so it's only a couple of pages long. So you can look in the front of your Bible to get there. I don't know the page number because my Bible page number is different than the one in the pew, but we're gonna be looking at Ephesians 6 and we're gonna read the first four verses, so let's do that now. This is what Paul writes: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 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. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord."

Let's pray before we dig into this passage. Father, we come before you today recognizing that, to be quite honest, our hearts are often far from you. Lord, my prayer is that we would look at this passage that may not be speaking directly to what stage of life we're in, and instead of just checking out and turning away from it, that we might hear the heart of what's going on and that we might see ourselves in this passage as it relates to you, and that we might turn our hearts toward you, recognize your deep love for us as our Heavenly Father, and respond in amazement to what you've done for us in sending your Son on our behalf. God, may we see the gospel at work here in this passage about earthly relational dynamics that exist in a home, and may we marvel at how you've made us. May we marvel at the salvation that you offer us through Jesus, and it's in his name that we pray these things. Amen.

So Ephesians 6. I wanna remind you as we look at the Scripture, most of you know this, but sometimes I forget as I read the Bible. The verses and the chapters were not there when Paul wrote this book. It was a letter. The verses and the chapters were given for our sake later on so that we could actually reference things in the Bible and find our way. So instead of reading Ephesians 6:1-4 as a standalone passage, we absolutely have to approach this passage in light of everything else that Paul has said to this point in the letter to the church at Ephesus. If we don't, we're gonna find ourselves in trouble. When Paul addresses parents and children, he does so with something much more fundamental in mind. And so to understand his word, I think we need to realize three things in particular foundationally about obedience and authority that I think are at play in this passage.

And so I'm gonna give you guys three points if you will that center around obedience and authority, and then I wanna spend the remainder of our time looking at application from these foundational truths about obedience and authority that play out in this particular passage in the context of the home. That's where we're going and what we're gonna look like. So just out of the shoot, I want you to know that I think that the gospel teaches us, what I think is at play in the book of Ephesians, the gospel teaches us that obedience and authority start with the heart. And this comes not just from Ephesians 6:1-4, but I actually think we gotta back up to Ephesians 5:21, and we'll get there in a second. But if you've been with us as we walked through Ephesians and you've heard Brian preach the preceding passage, he actually backed up to 5:21 to set the stage for talking about husbands and wives as well. And frankly I think that's the starting point for us as we look at parents and children.

Hear me say this. If we don't get this right, if we don't get that obedience and authority is an issue of the heart, it starts in our heart, if we don't get this then everything that follows, whatever side of obedience and authority that we fall on, whether we're the ones in authority or we're the ones that want to obey, it will remain broken. And it will remain misused and abused. So if we don't fundamentally come to a place where we understand that obedience and authority are matters of the heart, then we're gonna have problems following.

So legal experts and scholars suggested there's two reasons why people obey, and those two primary reasons people obey laws in particular, are this. First of all that they would avoid the consequences or the sanctions of disobedience. So we obey because we don't like what might happen if we disobey. And then the second one is that the law possesses some legitimate authority in their eyes. In other words, that they see the law is valuable and authoritative over them. So people either obey because they want to avoid the punishment that comes with disobedience, or because they see authority, the authority or the law, as valuable. And that's from a secular perspective just as we think about law in our culture. I think there's actually three things that play that probably work their way into these two when we start talking about the heart and obedience, and I think there are three primary reasons, what we see over and over again and what God teaches us. There's three primary reasons why we obey.

The first is love. Love, we obey, follow me for just a second. We obey what or who we love. Notice I didn't say just who, and here's a reason why. I'm gonna pick on Goffers for a minute. If you love Goff, then you obey the love of Goff. So you rearrange your life to make it a priority. You just do it. Whatever it is, it doesn't matter what it is. So I know that we obey whatever it is that we value and we love. And Jesus really gets to the heart of this in Matthew 6 when he said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." I think our love dictates our obedience. So when we love something, we naturally will obey it or follow it. Or when we love someone, I think a natural outworking of that love is that we tend to listen and to obey. When ... it's a funny dynamic too, though, because sometimes if we think about a kid, my children were here in the last hour and I picked on them a little bit. There are times when they will obey because they don't like ... it's what the legal experts say. They wanna avoid the consequence too.

Think about this. What's really at play? If you want to avoid the consequence of whatever disobedience would bring you, what is it actually saying? It's actually saying that you love something else more, maybe yourself. Often it is. If my children don't want discipline, what they're really saying is "I love myself more than I want to receive this punishment. And so to avoid the punishment and to protect myself, I'm gonna operate out of obedience." It's still an issue of love. In every case it comes back to what we love. And what the gospel teaches us is that that's really at the heart of obedience. So love is certainly there.

The second thing, which I don't think we can divorce from love, is trust. We will obey if we believe that the one in authority over us has our best interest at heart. If we really believe that the person who's giving us directive has our best interest at heart or knows what's best, we will trust them and obedience will follow, or at a minimum we will obey if we believe that the one in authority is not purposefully bent on our destruction. They're not just out to get us. So maybe it's not that they have our best interest at heart, but we know that they have good intentions and that they're not for our destruction. But the reality is that trust is tied to love. Most of the time we don't trust someone that we don't in some way have affection or affinity toward. And so we can't separate the two.

The final thing that I think we see, which I think secularly it's at play too, is that fear is a reason that we obey. Fear is strictly born out of physical or positional power that somebody in authority has. Now the unique thing about fear, if you obey strictly out fear, guess what? The obedience is only as good as the power of the one who holds authority. So at any moment that that power is questioned, you won't obey anymore. You see this all the time in culture, where there's change of power. We obey until someone more powerful comes along that we would agree with or that is just more powerful. But in that context, obedience only lasts as long as the power is held. But in each instance, in every case, love, trust, or fear, in every case we might physically obey, the action of obedience, but it doesn't automatically convey that our heart is bent toward that. If you're a parent or if you're a kid, you know this is true.

How many times have I told my son whatever he did toward one of his sisters or vice versa, because it works both ways, "Asher, you need to apologize for what you did to your sister." "I'm sorry." Did he do what I told him to do? Yeah, he did. Did he mean it? No. Absolutely not. His heart wasn't there. So we can physically obey without the idea of conveying honor, which I think Paul turns a corner in this passage when he talks about honor. Honor is genuine respect for someone, and obedience is a form of honor, but in both cases they may not be coming from the right heart. And that's just the reality. So in chapter six, Paul is appealing to children who are part of the church at Ephesus to obey their parents, and he says because it's right, and to honor their parents because this is what has been written by God in Exodus 20.

When God handed down the Old Testament law in the form of the Ten Commandments, one of those commandments was to honor your father and your mother. But all of this, I think with all of that background, Paul really says though, this command to obey and honor flows out of Ephesians 5:21. And in Ephesians 5:21 Paul says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. And then in all of Ephesians he's leading up to this point, and then once he says that, then he shows us what this looks like, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Recognition for his love for us and love in return for him. He tells us, "This is what this looks like in the form of our marriage relationship, and this is what this looks like when we apply it to a parent-child relationship." And then next week we're actually gonna look at another relationship where this plays out.

But the idea of reverence for Christ is primarily quiet obedience and likewise authority start in the heart. Paul spends the whole of his letter laying the foundation for the love of God that is expressed to us through the gospel of Jesus. And in doing so, he reminds us in the very first chapter, God is the Father. God is our Father, and we are his children. We've been made his children by no work of our own, but by himself. That's what he says. We're adopted sons and daughters because of what God has done in Jesus Christ on our behalf, and he makes us part of his household. We did not become children of God. We didn't. Any of us sitting in this room who proclaim Christ as our Lord and Savior, we did not become children of God because we obeyed. Guys understand that? We did not become children of God because we obeyed. We became children of God because Christ obeyed for us.

And he graciously applied his word to us, and now he calls us to live our lives out of that identity as children of God that we have been given, by imploring us to imitate him in obedience and reminding us in various ways how Jesus demonstrates the character and the action that we should emulate. So God's love ought to compel us to love him. This is what John said in his letter, in 1 John 4, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us and he sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." So God's love ought to compel us both to love him and to obey him. We obey not so that God will love us. We obey because he loves us.

This is what Jesus says when he says in John 14 to his disciples, "If you love me," what? "You will obey my commandments." If you love me, if you recognize the love that I have for you and you love me in return, guess what? You'll obey. It's not the other way around, and it matters. Obedience is the result of love, not the means to it. So I don't wanna move past this point without mentioning authority. Authority is tied to obedience, so authority has at its root issue a matter of the heart. If we obey and honor what we love, then when we're in a position of authority, we will make decisions based on what we love as well. If we believe our authority rests strictly in our own power, we will work out of that. The gospel teaches us something different, so we can't separate the two. This is foundational, and I believe this then leads to understanding what Paul says as he applies it directly to parents and children.

Here's the reality. Life without authority is chaos. No one really wants no authority. We may say that we don't want authority. My children don't want my rules, but guess what? They don't want a house with no rules. They wanna be the rule maker. Isn't that the reality for all of us? None of us really want no authority. We wanna be the authority. And that's the challenge in our own hearts. And so when we talk about obedience and authority, we need to understand there is authority, and no one can live in a world without it, but it needs to come from the right place and be used in the right way, and we need to respond accordingly. So fundamentally, authority and obedience are hard issues. So how does this gospel then speak to the parent-children relationship in the context of this passage? What do I think it teaches about obedience and authority? Two things. So this is point number two and point number three.

But point number two, the gospel teaches us in this context and this passage that obedience is a blessing. Now I want you all to understand, I did not say obedience leads to blessing. I believe it does, but that's not what I said. And here's how I wanna see if I can get to this with you guys. There's a picture that's up on the screen, and it's a picture of a gate that is locked. So track with me for a second and see if this makes sense. Oftentimes we parent this way. We say, on the other side of a locked fence is our love, our acceptance, and our approval. There's a chain around getting to that, and there's a lock, and there's only one way to get to what's on the other side of the fence, and that's if you have the key. And the key to my love, my acceptance, and my approval is obedience. Obedience is the key.

Guess what, guys? The gospel doesn't teach this. Do you understand, when we look at the gospel, what the gospel says, if God's love is on the other side of the fence, his love and his approval and his acceptance, that the key to unlock the door, the lock? Guess what? It's Jesus. Not obedience. And if that's true, then, if Jesus is our way into love and acceptance from the Father, then obedience actually has to be part of the blessing that's on the other side of the fence. Do you get that? To obey is a blessing. It's not a means to the blessing, but obedience is in and of itself part of the blessing that God gives us.

This is what ... and it comes all through Jesus. This is what Paul is saying over and over again. He starts his letter this way. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ," that we were invited into the family through the key of Jesus. "To the praise of his glorious grace, with which he's blessed us in the beloved." He goes on to say in chapter two, we were dead in our trespasses, and what Paul's really saying here is remarkable. Not only were we in opposition to God, we were enemies of God and slaves to sin. We obey, but guess what we obeyed? Sin. We obeyed sin, not God. We couldn't obey God. So how in the world then did we move to a state of being where we could obey God? Jesus made that way possible. So part of the blessing is that obedience is the result of the work that Christ has done. It's not a punishment.

If you're a kid in this room, you need to know obeying is not punishment. It's a blessing. Obedience is for our good. If you're an adult in this room, you need to know the gospel says that obedience is not punishment. It's a blessing. You did not earn your salvation through obedience. You earned it through grace, and obedience came as a result of it. So obeying becomes a part of our worship to God. This is at the heart of what Samuel says to Saul in 1 Samuel. I'll spare you the expense of the story of why we came to this point in the Scriptures, but Saul has made a sacrifice that he wasn't supposed to make because he kept something that he wasn't supposed to keep after battle. Samuel comes in and says to him, "As the Lord is great, a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; to listen better than the fat of rams. Because you've rejected the Word of the Lord you've disobeyed, the Lord has rejected you as king." You know the story. Ultimately David was raised up in his place.

There's a reason why, all through the Old Testament, there's a reason why the whole of the Bible teaches that blessing comes from obedience, because obedience is God's way, and God's way is right. If you obey, there's a reason why it seems that good comes out of obedience, because that's how God put the world into motion. The reason disobedience leads to heartache is the same. Disobedience is against how God says the world is supposed to work. There are consequences to living a life that is contrary to what's best. So while Paul is applying this idea of obedience to an earthly parent-child relationship, I think he's written his entire letter with one other parent-child relationship in mind, and that is the heavenly Father relationship that we have with him as children.

So this truth applies to all of us whether we're parents or not. But maybe more importantly, this is exactly how Jesus lived. This was his example. He says in John, several times, "I only say what the Father tells me to say. I only do what I see the Father doing." Jesus, God the Son, was obedient to God the Father. In fact, he was obedient to the point of death that we might have salvation. So when Paul says "Obey; this is right," what does he mean? This isn't just his opinion. Parents would love. "Kids, obey, because this is right." This isn't just Paul's opinion on the matter. He lays this, he validates his statement when he presses in to the issue of why honor is right, because it was what was given to us in the law.

God's Word says do this, and God's Word is right and best. This is how life works best, when honor and obedience are present, when they're absent, when they're not in existence, this is where hardship flows. Obedience and honor both can be cheapened when they're simply external actions. The whole idea of saying "I'm sorry" through gritted teeth. They're cheapened. But they reveal our heart. This was God's indictment against the Israelites when he voiced it to Isaiah and he said, "These people, they draw near to me with their mouth and they honor me with their lips while their hearts are far from me. And their fear of me is simply a command that's taught by men." It's not in their heart. And so the gospel teaches us that obedience is a blessing. And then the gospel teaches us that God's authority, then, should determine and direct ours.

In the garden, man was given stewardship over God's creation. It was not his authority. It was God's authority that was granted to him. When God said, "Have dominion," he said, "Rule in my place. Be my representative in the world that I made to you." Likewise, then, parents have been given ambassadorial authority by God through Jesus over your kids. It's not your authority. The ultimate authority rests in God, and every parent, every parent, will give an account before God of their stewardship of the authority that they have. Every parent will give an account before God. Parents, remember, your children are a gift from God. They're his possession, and you have been given responsibility and stewardship on his behalf.

Jesus clearly demonstrates his love for children, and he reflects the heart of the heavenly Father, and we should likewise reflect the heart of the Father. When it comes to our kids, God's plan, his word, his will, and his glory need to instruct and guide us. This is why we operate ... when we rightly operate from authority, we do it because it's his authority and it points toward him. God is in the business of heart change. As parents, we have to be aware of the reality that we're often confronted with the personal inconvenience of parenting. These moments ... and when it's inconvenient, because it often feels inconvenient, we need to be willing to realize that in those moments, what's really at play here is that we really have an opportunity to decide if we will pursue God's agenda or our own.

And the moments it seems like inconvenience, what's really at play is this tension of whether we're going to see this as an opportunity to see God's agenda or our own. He is not inconvenienced with our kids. He's just not. His heart, our heart and their hearts are always at the center of his heart. He's pursuing. And so if he's not inconvenienced with our kids, we shouldn't be as well. You see, children, when we begin to see our children in terms of their relationship with God, then we lead out of that. So I ask you, how do you see your kids? If you're a parent, how do you see your kids? Do you see them in relationship to their relationship with God, or their relationship with you? It matters in how you parent. Our children aren't given to us to bring us glory. They're given to us to bring God glory. And it's our joy to help them to see that and fulfill it.

And so, last few minutes that I have with you, I wanna look at what Paul says, all of this about obedience and authority, now applied to the parents and children. So what's the takeaway in all this? If this is true, if obedience and authority are heart issues, that we all live in that dynamic, that we will obey what we love, then what does Paul say in response to what Jesus has done for us in the gospel? Right out of the chute in verse one, "Children," guess what, "obey your parents." Obey your parents. It's not rocket science. This is the takeaway from this whole idea in the context of parents and children. Primarily because, why do you obey? Primarily because obedience reflects the character of Jesus, and this certainly pleases God.

It pleases God when we live like Jesus. But also it's right. That's what Paul says. It's right. In other words, God has said that obeying and honoring parents is the right thing to do. Because it's the right thing to do, generally speaking, it's also really good for us. When you obey, blessing happens. Life is easier when we obey. Generally speaking. But this assumes something specific. This assumes that the authority of the parent is firmly rooted also in the reflection of Jesus. And let's be honest, we live in a fallen world. So I wanna be fair and I wanna say that just like submission in marriage that Brian talked about several weeks ago, just like there are conditions for submission, I believe there are conditions for obedience as well. We don't have a ton of time to unpack this, but let me just say that God does not expect you to obey when you're being asked to do something that is obviously illegal or in opposition to God's Word. And so I wanna put it out there, but generally speaking, obedience to parents is good and right.

And so that leads to number two. If I'm gonna talk to children, I gotta talk to parents. Application number two, parents, raise your kids to know and love Jesus. There are tons of great things that you can pass on to your children. Strong work ethic, a lifestyle of honesty and integrity, a servant heart or compassion. How to back a trailer. How to hook or fade a golf shot. These are really important things, how to boil an egg or tie a tie or how to braid hair. Of all of the things that you can leave with your children, please hear me out. Of all of the things that you can leave with your children, there is nothing more important that you will do than to put Jesus on display before them.

Guys, if you don't do anything other than put Jesus on display before them, you will have done well. Please don't assume someone else will do this for you. Don't assume your parents, their grandparents, will do this for you. Don't assume a Christian school will do this for you. Don't assume a church will do this for you. In joy, do what God has given you the responsibility to do, and point your children toward Jesus. Give them the best opportunity possible to know him as their savior and to respond to his gift of grace. If obedience flows ... because of that, if obedience flows from love, then shouldn't we be spending more time on the love of Jesus than we are on these other things? Shouldn't we root the efforts behind getting them to see the grace and the love of a God who would do the unthinkable and would come and give his own life on their behalf that they might be reconciled to him? Knowing, then, if obedience flows from love, that if they catch a picture of that love, then the natural following will be that they begin to obey, not the other way around. Doesn't mean we don't have rules, it just means let's make what's most important most important.

Next, as I land, I wanna talk to you fathers in the room. I'm not doing this because I'm trying to negate the importance of moms and their role, but Paul shifts his attention in Ephesians 6 after he says, "Look, kids, obey your parents and honor your father and mother. This is right, because it's the first commandment with a promise." Now, Paul's not saying it's the first of the Ten Commandments. What Paul is saying is this is the first commandment that came with a promise. It's the first commandment given that had a promise of blessing that came with it.

And so Paul says, “Honor your father and mother,” and then his language changes and he talks directly to dads. “Fathers, do not provoke your children in anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” I want you to understand what I think is at play here. It’s primarily this. Check your heart before you address theirs. If you are a dad, you have been given unique responsibility by God to lead your children, and listen, men are men. We’re generally extremists. So this is how we lead, either completely absent, like we’re passive, or we’re authoritative, like ramrodding through. We have a hard time living in the in-between.

And so what I want to call you to, and what Paul is calling you to, is to check your heart before you address theirs, and make sure your heart is in the right place in relation to your heavenly Father before you address their heart, because then and only then will you do it in a right way, and ultimately what this means is that you will love them. You will lead your children with grace, humility, and compassion. And that’s my charge to you. This is all that Paul has been saying leading up to it. In Ephesians 4 he says, “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, letting all bitterness and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with malice. Being kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.”

All of this went before his directive to parents, why? Because it’s the foundation in which we need to live in all of these other contexts. Have that mind in you. Check your heart before you address theirs. Please don’t expect the law, please don’t expect rules to do what only grace can accomplish in the life of your child. Your salvation did not work that way, and neither will your child’s. If you’ve led differently as a father, then hear me out. There is grace at the foot of the cross. Repent to God, and ask for forgiveness from your kids, and lead differently. God’s grace is more than sufficient to accomplish these things.

And then finally I want to speak to the church as a whole. I want you guys to remember that a partnership of discipleship is a gift from God. Remember, this is a letter to the church, and we’ve all been called to participate in this. While parents have been called to be the primary disciplers of their children, none of us were made to live in isolation. In fact, all of Ephesians was written about the death of relationship that exists among the family of God, so much of what Paul addresses is how we act toward one another, and the privilege that we have as brothers and sisters in Christ is that we share in the responsibility that he’s given us. And so we get to hold one another accountable, and guess what? For some of you, you may not have kids, but some of you men, you will be a spiritual father to a child who does not have a physical one. God in his grace, he will do that. In the context of his body, and it’s true for women as well, know that God has called us all to speak the truth of God’s grace into the lives of one another, including children, and serve with kids, and put Jesus on display before them.

Because in the end, this directive toward parents is no different than the great commission. Jesus says, “Where does the authority rest? All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth, and so this is what I call you to do: go and make disciples,” and do what? “Teach them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you, and I will be with you to the end.” The same thing that he calls the church to is what he calls us to as parents. It’s the same discipleship directive. And so may we, may we live out our relationship with the one who made us in the context of being called his children in a way that our identity overflows and we joyfully follow our heavenly Father to that end, and let us then lead in our own homes that way. Let’s pray.

Father, would you in grace give us the wisdom to see that you’re speaking to our hearts? You’re certainly speaking directly to parents here. But you have not glossed over that we can’t get here unless we understand our relationship to you as well. And so, Lord, would you help us to see that you are the good Father, that your word and your rule are best, that lives work best when we listen to you and we love you and we follow you, and may we obey you not in order to gain your pleasure, but because you’ve just lavished it on us through Jesus. May we obey that way, and may we lead our lives that way, and would you use us living that out before children for them to catch a glimpse of the greatness of who you are, that they might respond to your love in obedience to you and ultimately that is where the great gift resides. Lord, we’ll give you the glory for what you accomplish. We pray these things now as we even enter into giving of our tithes and our offering not because you require it, but because you love us and everything that we have is a gift from you. May we even give with the same relationship at the corner. Lord, we love you and we pray these things in Christ’s name.



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