

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	68		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Ephesians 6:1-4		
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A Pressing Duty

39. Lord's Day

Question 104. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

Answer: That I show all honour, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; (a) and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, (b) since it pleases God to govern us by their hand. (c)

(a) Eph.5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Eph. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Eph. 6:2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) Eph. 6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. Eph. 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Col. 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Col. 3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: Col. 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Col. 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. Prov. 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Prov. 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. Prov. 15:20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Prov. 20:20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness. Exod. 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. Rom. 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Rom. 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Rom. 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Rom. 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. Rom. 13:6 For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Rom. 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (b) Prov. 23:22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Gen. 9:24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. Gen. 9:25 And he said,

Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. 1 Pet. 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. (c) Eph. 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. Col. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Rom. 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Matt. 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Over the last few years America has been stunned by a series of brutal murders perpetrated by...*children*. As a society that has become accustomed to the constant threat of violence we were nonetheless deeply disturbed by the child killers, all of who were either caught or committed suicide soon after their atrocities. “Schoolyards and gymnasias, once considered safe havens, have been suddenly transformed into shooting galleries. From Paducah, Kentucky, and Jonesboro, Arkansas, to Pearl, Mississippi, Springfield, Oregon, and Littleton, Colorado, towns known for nothing other than their decent, law-abiding citizens have produced children capable of demonic deeds. Aside from the settings and multiple victims, another common feature of the these killings has been the influence on the perpetrators of films such as *Natural Born Killers* and *Basketball Diaries*, of fantasy video games, and of the nihilistic lyrics of Marilyn Manson. Some of these precocious children even claimed to have been reading Nietzsche. Whatever one makes of the causal relationship between the endemic violence of our popular culture and the behavior of those immersed in it, this much is clear: the universal availability of popular culture—through videos, television, radio, and the internet—means that no one can escape its influence.”¹ Note the importance of that word *influence*. I am convinced that the degree to which our children are *influenced* by the teaching of Scripture will be the determining factor in their character development. This has to take place under the supervision of the parents but must include the church. However if the church *neglects* to teach and nurture the family in the doctrines of the Bible and instead seeks to primarily *entertain*, children and parents will suffer proportionally. The growing trend in churches that follow the lead of the church growth formula actively *avoid* teaching doctrine. “They focus on practical matters, such as family concerns and personal growth, not doctrine, often emphasize religious experience. They seek to feel God’s love, not understand church theology—a theme that plays well with the decreasing importance of denominational doctrine among baby boomers.”² The Apostle Paul did not share this dreadful perspective. He *fully* expected the church at Ephesus to understand this epistle and that included the children that he addresses in this section. In other words, Paul, unlike so many today in our Evangelical Churches, put a tremendous emphasis on teaching practical themes from a very strong theological perspective.³

I. INSTRUCTIONS TO CHILDREN: OBEY YOUR PARENTS

It is interesting to note that the Apostle gives three grounds for the obedience of children in the Christian home; these are: (1) nature, (2) the law, and (3) the Gospel. It is, however, as a father that Paul’s injunction to parent confronts me in a very personal way. In this I am told two things: (1) not to exasperate my children, and (2) bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. What is involved in all of this?

A. The Duty of Obedience. Paul put the word obedience, HUPAKOUETE, in the present tense imperative. As stated in the introduction, three reasons are given:

1. *It is Right*—the word “right” is DIKAIOS. It is acceptable and standard behavior in practically every culture and society. In fact, Paul expressly declares

that “disobedience to parents” is an indication of a decadent and wicked society (cf. Romans 1:28-30; II Timothy 3:1-2).

2. *It is Stated in the Law*—Paul confirms this by appealing to Deuteronomy 5:16 and Exodus 20:12. Again notice that the word “honor”, TIMA, is put in the present tense imperative. The word means to value highly, to revere. In the O.T. anyone who cursed his parents (“stubborn and rebellious son”) was stoned (Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Paul, however, appeals to the “promise” inherent in the commandment. “This last promise is not a blanket assurance that every individual who honors his or her parents will live longer than every individual who does not. But it is a general promise that God’s material and physical blessing rests on those who work at being Christians in these relationships.”⁴

3. *It Accords with the Gospel* – This is implied by Paul’s words “in the Lord”. It is the Christian duty of children to obey their parents. Compare this with v. 5:22 and the duty of wives. Regarding our duties as such Thomas Manton long ago observed, “Your duty will be unpleasant to you, so far as you are worldly and carnal, so that you can never yield cheerful and ready obedience to God. Certain it is that we must serve God, and serve him with delight. His commandments should be kept, and they should not be grievous to us, 1 John 5:3. Now, what is the great impediment? Worldly lusts are not thoroughly purged out of the heart; for presently he addeth this reason, ‘For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.’ It is a hard heart maketh our work hard; and the heart is hard and unpersuadable when our affections are engaged elsewhere. The readiness of our obedience dependeth on the fervency of our love; the fervency of our love on our victory over the world; our victory over the world on the strength of our faith; the strength of our faith on the certainty we have of the principal object of our faith; the principal object of our faith is, that Jesus is the Son of God, whose counsel we must take, if we will be happy. And the evidence of that principle is the double testimony or attestation given to him from heaven, or in the heart of the believer. Once settled in that, that you can entirely trust yourselves and all your interests in the hands of Christ, and all duties will be easy.”⁵

II. OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN

That parents include both father and mother is obvious not only from the word “parents” but from the direct mention of “father” and “mother” in the O.T. citation in v. 2. It is, however, the fathers that are singled out in v. 4, since the father is the head of the home and the ultimate responsibility is his. In this regard he has a negative and a positive duty.

A. *Negative*. “Do not exasperate your children.” The word translated “exasperate” is PARORGIZETE, literally the word means to bring one along to a deep seated anger. The idea is that of onward motion. The tense is present and it is an imperative. Any time the negative is used with the present imperative it is used to prevent an habitual action. *NOTE*: How do you “exasperate” children? The parallel text in Colossians 3:21 reads, “otherwise they will become discouraged.” The word there is ATHUMŌSIN, to be without courage, to lose heart, i.e., “to go about their task in a listless, moody, sullen frame of mind.”⁶ Children can detect attitudes as well as actions. When children are placed in a situation from which they are unable to escape, they resign themselves, like prisoners, to a situation they grow to resent. Children likewise must be dealt with according to their age and maturity. It is every bit as wrong to treat a 10 year old as if he were five (over protection) as it is to treat a five year old as if he were ten.

B. Positively. Three things are involved in this positive admonition, and each deserves closer attention:

1. “*bring them up*”, EKTREPHETE, a present imperative, lit. to nourish, to provide with tender-loving care, same word as in 5:29. The words of Martin Lloyd-Jones are to the point, “If parents but gave as much thought to the rearing of their children as they do to the rearing of animals and flowers, the situation would be very different.”⁷
2. “*training*”, PAIDEIA, literally child training or education. The word has in mind discipline to a goal. Correction has a purpose and is done to accomplish an objective.
3. “*instruction*”, NOUTHESIA, literally admonition. The word involves two concepts, one is instruction and the other reproof. The idea is of verbal correction with positive instruction.

CONCLUSION: Discipline in the home should be judicial. If the only time our children respond in obedience is when the parent finally erupts in frustration and anger then the child will actually *learn* not to obey until the parent reaches the boiling point. Children must be taught to honor *and* obey. They will not come by this naturally. Just as children will not learn math or English grammar or any other discipline unless they are methodically instructed, so likewise the important doctrinal truths must be taught them. We cannot afford to use church as a means of entertaining them—or simply tell them delightful little Bible stories divorced from the theological framework in which those narratives are found. Parents have to realize that children are a stewardship from God. We will, one way or another, shape their lives. What objectives do we have in mind? Are we simply concerned about how they reflect upon us as their parents. Are we only concerned with their being ‘good, moral people’ when they grow up? Are we not also responsible to develop them mentally and spiritually? Are we more concerned with how they fare in terms of success by the world’s standards than whether or not they grow up strong and established in the Word of God and righteousness? In this regard two women stand out and are commended in Scripture. They are Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy respectively. Note how warmly the Apostle Paul remembers these two dear women in II Timothy 1:5 and how their labors on behalf of young Timothy are stated, “and how from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures” (II Timothy 3:15). They must have been not only regular and persistent teachers but role models as well, for when Paul came to Lystra he found that all the Christians at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy (cf. Acts 16:1-3). Could anything greater be said of a parent’s child?

¹ Thomas Hibbs, *Shows About Nothing: Nihilism In Popular Culture From the Exorist to Seinfeld* (Spence, 1999), p. 4.

² R. Cimino and D. Lattin, *Shopping For Faith: American Religion in the New Millennium*, (Fossey-Bass, 1998), p. 57.

³ Even *Christianity Today*, which has been in the forefront in promoting the church-growth agenda, recognizes that a serious problem exists. In the Aug. 9, 1999 issue they included an article by Gary M. Burge entitled “The Greatest Story Never Read: Recovering Biblical Literacy in the Church,” Burge documents the loss of doctrinal knowledge in many evangelical churches and remarks, “What is changing is the loss of our conviction that the church has a content-rich educational mission. Despite their limited successes, flannelgraphs and workbooks from 35 years ago tried to relay the basic elements of the Biblical story. Today we seem to want to teach timeless Christian themes that spring from those stories, while leaving the stories themselves behind. I have had friends tell me that a working knowledge of the Bible does not matter. The Christian faith, they argue, is a matter of faith and the Spirit—not reason, not theology. Christianity is not about the recitation of facts about the Jesus of history; it is about knowing the living Christ, the Jesus of the Church who indwells his people today. Scripture becomes Scripture when God speaks through it to our hearts (they argue). The facts of the Bible are the stuff of academic exercise, reserved for the doctors and leaders of the church.” p. 46.

⁴ J.M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Baker, 1997), p. 214.

⁵ *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton II* (rpt. Maranatha, 1974), p. 134.

⁶ J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (rpt. Zondervan, 1959), p. 227.

⁷ M. Lloyd-Jones, *Life In the Spirit: in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9* (Baker, 1973), p. 291.