

Date : 16 February 2025
Theme : Building a strong foundation for the family
Topic : The role of children in the family
Passage : Ephesians 6:1-3
Key Verse : *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord... Honour your father and mother... so that it may go well with you...” Ephesians 6:1-3*

Introduction

We have already explored the vital roles God has assigned to wives and husbands in His design for the family. We now turn our attention to the significance of children. The Bible emphasizes the importance of raising godly offspring (*Malachi 2:15*), and the role given to children is to obey and honour their parents (*Ephesians 6:1-3*).

The Bible places great emphasis on importance of family, and the continuation of faith from one generation to the next. Today, we explore the biblical principles surrounding God’s design for children in the family.

1. What is God’s design for children in the family

Children as Blessings and Heritage

- Children are a precious gift from God, bringing joy and purpose to parents.
- They are a reward from Him and described as “arrows in one's quiver” (*Psalms 127:3-5*), highlighting their value and importance.
 - Godly offspring fulfill God's promises (eg Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes of Israel illustrate how children are integral to the realization of divine promises and the establishment of God's chosen people).
- Children for the Continuation of Faith
 - To fulfill faith to be transmitted from generation to generation, there must be input to them. So parents must instill God's commandments in their children.
“... you shall teach them diligently to your children...” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)
- Children are to be valued
 - The Lord Jesus values children: *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them! For the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14)*
 - By valuing children, Jesus emphasizes the importance of their qualities like: humility, trust and innocence.
 - Humility: Dependence on God for our needs and for His guidance and care.
 - Trust: Trusting God for His provision, and for His goodness even when they don’t understand.
 - Innocence: Free from pride and cynicism, allowing one to approach God with humility and openness.

2. What is expected of children

As children, they are to obey and honour their parents. (*Ephesians 6:1-3*)

The spiritual principle behind this requirement is to unlock His blessings in their lives.

- The promise of "*long life on the earth*" (*Ephesians 6:3*) relates to our wellbeing, living a happy, fulfilled life in the favour of God.

a) Why children should obey their parents

- It is pleasing to the Lord (*Colossians 3:20*)
- They learn to respect authority including God's authority.
- Children must obey their parents '*in the Lord*'
- This means obedience must be within the boundaries of God's will, as revealed in the Word of God, for example:
 - What should children do when non-believing parents forbid them from following Jesus?
 - What should a child do if parents refuse to give permission to be baptised?

b) Children must be taught obedience and grow in maturity

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (*Proverbs 22:6*)

- Some goals for raising children to maturity include:
 - Spiritual maturity: Faithful followers of Christ; prayerful & worshipful; adopt biblical worldview.
 - Social maturity: Respectful – obey & honour parents; healthy relationships with family, friends and community.
 - Life skills and discipline: Do well in schoolwork; keep room tidy; put things away after use; personal care and hygiene.

c) Steps to Teach Obedience

- Modelling godly behaviour
 - Seeking guidance from God through prayer, demonstrating respect for traffic laws and community regulations; humility, integrity, etc.
 - Celebrate obedience – praise and celebrate when children demonstrate obedience.
 - Show love and affection as your lifestyle.
 - Demonstrate love and affection to help the child feel secure and motivated to obey.
 - Teach God's Word and Pray together
 - Emphasise obedience as love for God, and how it can lead to great blessings and a deeper relationship with God.
- eg: Through Bible stories that illustrate obedience, like:
- (i) Noah's Ark (*Genesis 6-9*): Noah obeyed God's instructions to build an ark, saving his family and animals from the flood;
 - (ii) Daniel and the Lion's Den (*Daniel 6*): Daniel obeyed God's command to pray, despite the king's decree forbidding prayer.

- Training: Discipline children consistently and lovingly.
"Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire." (Proverbs 29:17).
- Discipline with a purpose:
 - Setting clear boundaries and consequences,
 eg: "If you don't put away your toys, they'll be taken away for a day".
 - Emphasise 'obedience at the first instance'. Children should learn to obey their earthly parents promptly and willingly.

3. What it means to honour parents

Honouring parents demonstrates respect, gratitude, and responsibility, and is a biblical commandment that brings blessings and benefits to both children and parents.

❖ Ways to honour parents

- Value your parents highly
 - For their love, care and sacrifices.
 - For their provision in raising the family and financial support.
- Practical Care
 - Care for their needs; Take care of their health.
 - Spend quality time.
- Spiritual care
 - Pray for them.
- Financial Support
 - Provide financial support, especially in their old age.
 - As seen from *Matthew 15:1-6*, Jesus interprets the commandment, "*Honour your father and mother*" as referring to financial support.

Application

Now that we've explored the biblical principles of parenting and honouring our parents, let's put them into practice. Here are some practical steps to apply these principles in our lives:

a) For Children

1. Express gratitude to parents.
2. Seek wisdom and counsel from parents.
3. Respect parents' boundaries and authority.
4. Spend quality time with parents.
5. Pray for parents.

b) For Parents

1. Model godly behaviour.
2. Teach and train children God's Word.
3. Show love and affection to your children.
4. Pray for your children.