

# No Kidding

## Ephesians 6:1-4

**Today, December 2, 2007** is the end of our three year **Generations: Fulfilling the Vision** building campaign. It has been a wonderful ride. As of now, **\$678,884.74** has been brought in. Three years ago we set a lofty goal of **\$830,591**. Of that amount received, many who fulfilled their pledge also gave an additional **\$54,060** of that \$678,884.74. Let me say something else, of that \$678,884.74, **\$197,385** was given by those who had never pledged. This was highly unusual but exciting as well. That leaves a remainder of **\$151,706.26** left to reach our pledge.

**Main focus of this series:** This series is a formulation of key teachings and understandings from the book of Ephesians. It is the textbook for Christian living, affective church growth and unity. It is also a manual for harmony in the home and an affective lifestyle in our work place in the world. Ephesians draws many lines, it is clear and very defined. Why many Christians fail to live fully in the shadow of the cross is because they have never ventured into the truths documented in Paul's writings to the Ephesians. In an effort to decipher each statement of Paul in Ephesians we believe we will learn how to successfully operate in the three positions of the believer: to **sit** (**Ephesians 1-3**), to **walk** (**Ephesians 4-6:9**) and to **stand** (**Ephesians 6:10-24**). The first half of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) tells us what a Christian is and the last three chapters define how to live that out in harmony with other believer's and separately from non-believer's.

**The importance of this message today:** We want to address the fact that the Holy Spirit has allowed us to not only become parents, but to do that effectively. There is such a challenge in our society today and so many opinions on how to raise a family, it is best that we discover the Biblical perspective so that we can stand before God one day and say, "I obeyed Your Word to the best of my ability and in the fullness of Your power. This message has much teaching that is worth studying out. Also, in my studying this message I have come across a huge study of "obedience" which is worthy of a long deep study in itself. I have provided some of those findings in this message.

**Intro:** At the beginning of Proverbs, Solomon, after stating his specific purpose for writing and laying a brief foundation, tells to whom he is writing: "*my son*" (1:8). We understand the **book is primarily addressed to all of God's household and secondarily to the children of His begotten sons and daughters**. One of his first pieces of advice is,

*"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck"*  
Proverbs 1:8-9

Life begins at home and wisdom should begin there too. The home is the primary and most vital factor in a child's development into a mature and stable member of society. Church and school play secondary roles, if only because of the amount of time spent at home and all the personal interaction that takes place there.

Proverbs is probably the most helpful book on child-raising ever written. Its whole theme is this: **A child must learn the most important lesson of all, to be an obedient child. This is much more important than simply accomplishing the immediate wish of the parent, whatever it may be. It is obedience that is the issue.**

### **Proverbs About Honoring Parents**

The book of Proverbs contains many concerns involving the obedience of this commandment. Notice the contrast in these two proverbs:

*"A wise son makes a glad father; but a foolish son is the grief of his mother."*

Proverbs 10:1

*"Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness"*

Proverbs 20:20

Parents are somehow in the habit of thinking it is their duty to make their children happy, but many proverbs urge children to bring happiness to their parents.

*"The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it."*

Proverbs 30:17

What a gruesome end for those guilty of this! In this figure of speech, an outward manifestation (a mocking eye) represents the unseen cause in the heart (scorn, disrespect). Over the short term, the inner cause produces stress-filled family disturbances. Over the long term, though, it produces even more distressing and serious consequences—even death.

- Now we have dealt with **wives submitting to their husbands**, not in response to their actions, but "...as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22)
- **Husbands you are to love your wives**, not in response to her actions toward you but:
  - As Christ loved the church
  - As you love your own body
  - As you separate yourself from your mother and father to unite with her

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother"- which is the first commandment with a promise- "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

Ephesians 6:1-3

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

Ephesians 6:4

Now, children, you are to obey your parents, in the Lord! You are to HONOR your father and mother. **There is a distinction between obedience and honor. The child owes the parent obedience. The adult owes their parents honor.**

**Obey**

**"Obey"** (Gr. "hupakouo") --- "to listen or stand under" This word carries the idea of a subordinate listening to one in authority and doing what is asked as a soldier would to his commander or a student would to his teacher. It means "to be under another's authority," and it is used in many places in the Scriptures as a **military term**. It is the same word that would apply to a **soldier in obeying his orders. It means to follow orders**. To put it very practically and plainly, it says to children, "**Do what your parents say.**" This is most important for parents to teach their children to be obedient, and to children to be responsive to that teaching and to obey their parents.

## **Honor**

The word "honor" means "**to esteem, respect**" (New Am. Her. Dict.). The Greek word *TIMAEO* from which "honor" was translated means "to prize, i.e. to fix a valuation upon" (Strong). There are many applications of children honoring their parents. One of the violations of this today is children esteeming and respecting the opinions of their peers above those of their parents. The idea that parents are out of date and therefore out of touch is devaluation of parents. Children should value the experience and wisdom of their parents more than their peers. :

Of the ten commandments, (first four are directed toward man's response to God and the last six is directed toward man's response to man), This particular commandment is number 5 is the first of the last six, the first with a promise:

- 1. That it may go well with you**
- 2. That you may enjoy long life on the earth**

## **Big Questions:**

1. How many would like your children to have not only God's favor in their life but man's favor as well?
2. How many would like your children to have the opportunity to miss the painful and confusing aspects of life and find wonderful opportunity along the road of life?
3. How many would like your children to have a blast in life, I mean they are exploding with the joy of what is happening in their life?
4. How many would like your children to get the opportunity of not only seeing their children, but their children's children and be able to tell two to three generations from now about the power and goodness of our God?

This is the wonderful promise that God is offering every child.

When it comes to raising kids, here are some T-shirts that I think describe what it's like:

- **Just when I find the key to success, someone goes and changes all the locks.**
- **Don't Worry. We're Not Laughing WITH you.**
- **Are These People Really My Relatives?**

## **Jesus' Example**

In Luke 2:42-51, Jesus gives us a good example of what it means to be obedient. When He was twelve years old, He stayed behind in Jerusalem when His parents left

so that He could talk to the elders of the Jews. Three days later His parents found Him and mildly scolded Him for not going with them. He replied that He had to be about His Father's business. Here, Jesus was Mary and Joseph's Creator. Surely, if any child ever had the right to disobey his parents, it was Jesus. He was totally and completely in His Father's will. Yet, verse 51 says **Jesus made Himself subject unto them and obeyed.**

Being a parent changes everything. But being a parent also changes with each baby. Here are some of the ways having a second and third child is different from having your first.

- **Worries**

1st baby: At the first sign of distress - a whimper, a frown-you pick up the baby.

2nd baby: You pick the baby up when her wails threaten to wake your firstborn.

3rd baby: You teach your 3-year-old how to rewind the mechanical swing.

- **Pacifier**

1st baby: If the pacifier falls on the floor, you put it away until you can go home and wash and boil it.

2nd baby: When the pacifier falls on the floor, you squirt it off with some juice from the baby's bottle.

3rd baby: You wipe it off on your shirt and pop it back in.

- **Diapering**

1st baby: You change your baby's diapers every hour, whether they need it or not.

2nd baby: You change their diaper every 2 to 3 hours, if needed.

3rd baby: You try to change their diaper before others start to complain about the smell or you see it sagging to their knees.

- **Swallowing Coins**

1st child: when first child swallows a coin, you rush the child to the hospital and demand x-rays.

2nd child: when 2nd child swallows a coin, you carefully watch for coin to pass.

3rd child: when 3rd child swallows a coin you deduct it from his allowance!!

- **Going Out**

1st baby: The first time you leave your baby with a sitter, you call home 5 times.

2nd baby: Just before you walk out the door, you remember to leave a number where you can be reached.

3rd baby: You leave instructions for the sitter to call only if she sees blood.

### **What are the requirement for promise to occur?**

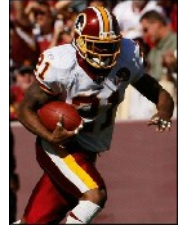
**Obedience-** Obedience is much like faith, you cannot learn it until you are facing an event that requires it. Faith is great to have until you have to use it. Faith is overcoming obstacles by trusting in God's power through His Word in your life.

**Obedience** is much the same thing, **you cannot learn it until you are facing an event that requires it.**

*"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek."*

## Hebrews 5:8-10

**Sean Taylor:** A shocking event occurred this past Tuesday, November 27 when four young men, Eric Rivera, **17**; Charles Wardlow, **18**; Jason Mitchell, **19**; and Venjah Hunte, **20**, murdered Washington Redskins football star Sean Taylor, the 24-year-old Pro Bowl safety, died Tuesday, one day after being shot at his home in an affluent Miami suburb.



### Facts Concerning Obedience

1. **Obedience Is Not a Respector of Persons:** Even though Jesus was God's own son, there are not exception to the rules, we all obey. In our secular experience, the closer you are to the boss, the owner, the dad, the more favored you are. Not so with God. Even though Jesus was God's *own* Son, His dearest connection between this earth and heaven, the responsibility to obey did not fall on a lesser man, it applies to us all.

Too often we cannot distinguish between a **good kid** and an **obedient kid**. **I love good kids**. I love how they are accommodating and caring, but somehow a "good" kid can somehow get under the radar of becoming an obedient kid.

This point needs to be made perfectly clear, and here are a few:

- A good kid doesn't make waves,
  - A good kid doesn't get in the way,
  - A good kid doesn't make you mad,
  - A good kid is just that, they are a good kid...
- **But are they really obedient?**
  - **Do you actually give them less to do because they satisfy you?**
  - **According to this scripture, obedience is an equal opportunity responsibility. Good is not equivalent to obedient.**

**If Jesus, the sinless one, suffered to learn obedience, are we any different? It must be considered here that good behavior does not excuse difficult expectations. In my observation, we lessen the load of an obedient child, but we are not actually doing them a favor. We are actually teaching them how to avoid obedience.**

2. **Obedience Is A Learned Behavior:** "Why won't you behave?" One mother asks her child, and the child's response was, "I don't know, you're the Mommy." This may sound sarcastic but it is absolutely radiant with truth. Why doesn't the child behave? Because they have not learned how to. It is optional. They have the right to behave. When you feel like you have lost control you still haven't lost authority, at least for a few more years. That is the next thing that parents are about to experience as a breakdown in our society. **Obedience cannot be enticed, bribed, bought or manipulated, it must be taught.** When an individual is taught to obey properly they have a healthy understanding of conflict resolution, reward and punishment. When an individual has not been taught to obey properly they will spend many years of their life looking for a similar method or pattern that reflects the environment they grew up in, because that is normal to them. Eventually they will end up confused, disappointed and

hopeless because they are being rejected, abandoned or avoided because of these behaviors.

Here are some unhealthy patterns that are learned:

- Without learning healthy patterns of obedience, it may take years, but eventually this child will grow into a man and have to face financial, relational and possible years of **consequences** for their lack of restraint or healthy behavior.
- Without learning healthy patterns of obedience this little child can grow up believing he or she can always get what they want if they hold out long enough or throw a big enough fit.
- Without learning healthy patterns of obedience, the child grows into a manipulating woman, getting everyone to do something for them or dictating everyone's feelings or responses.
- Without learning healthy patterns of obedience the child grows into a man who is beat down without knowing how to stand up for himself, how to make difficult and necessary decisions and how to lead his family.
- Without learning healthy patterns of obedience the child will have to face a vicious world that will either take advantage of them or they will be let loose to bring pain and sorrow on unsuspecting others.

3. **Obedience Is A Painful Experience-** As a parent, our goal is to keep our children from experiencing any more pain than necessary. No matter how you look at it, **suffering is not a joy**. We do everything possible to avoid pain. We run from it, we numb it, we pay to hide it, we secretly lie to keep from it. Pain, when avoidable, seems the best thing to discard. But pain and suffering, is the tool of shaping. **Studies have found that a lack of proper discipline, more than anything else, will create insecurity in a child. The child without discipline feels unwanted and terribly unhappy.**

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face **trials of many kinds**, because you know that the **testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything.”***

James 1:2-4

- **Finish/Mature** 5046: *teleios*- brought to its end, finished, perfect
- **Complete** 3648: *holoklēros*- complete in all its parts, in no part wanting or unsound, complete, entire, whole, of a body without blemish or defect, whether of a priest or of a victim

We can watch the Nanny on T.V. (which has some of the best lessons on parenting I have ever seen.), but in all episodes there is a demand on the parent to take charge. I was watching PBS and a commercial for the “Dog Whisperer” came on and in the simple short clip, the spotlighted person said something like this, “I really don't do that much with the dogs, I help people realize that they are responding to their dogs out of the unhealthy parts of their hurts and past.” Here's how I interpreted that, “I really don't do that much with dogs, I am helping people realize they are human.” We have had painful past and of course we want more than anything to avoid those we love the most to have to avoid the

same pain. But saying “No!” is not the same as getting beat and shoved in a closet for hours.

Paul is addressing the Ephesians who had totally lost control of any moral compass. Their families had suffered unmentionable abuse and shameless pain at the hands of their parents. And here Paul says, “Obey your parents.”

I was taught this as a young child, actually, my pastor preached this often from the podium with vim and vengeance. I on the other hand was at the mercy of my dad's response to these messages because he took every word my pastor said as the gospel. By the way, I believed it was the gospel too. I knew, I had learned, that I had no excuse, no matter what my mom or dad did, I was to obey them. I do remember distinctly one Sunday when my pastor said, “Even if you have to get a two-by-four up the side of their head, get their attention! Make them obey!” If you have ever seen a lump still protruding outside the side of my head...no not really. Ha! But he did say those words and I was sure to make all the two-by-fours disappear around our house.

**Obedience is always painful, not in the sense that you get spanked, but that you have to submit, you have to obey.** I have heard so many parents say,

“I know you don't want to do this, but I promise you that we will get some ice cream is you will do it.”

**Here is the interpretation:**

“I have to bribe you right now because I didn't train you well enough and I'm not prepared to handle your wild behavior and angry response to my request, so I'll bribe you and distract you from what you want to do so we can get on with our day.” Sound familiar?

**Modern doctors and psychologists today agree that a bitter and resentful heart produces acne, causes ulcers and loss of appetite, upsets digestion, impairs the use of the mind, causes allergic reactions such as asthma or fainting spells, makes the skin break out in hives and blisters, and causes many other kinds of serious physical disturbances.** This is all because the child has not learned to obey, but continues to believe that somehow they have an equal right to struggle for power and control and not pursue the promised blessing. The Word of God promises that those who honor their father and mother will actually lengthen the time of life on this earth and will certainly have a life much more enjoyable than anyone else. This is the source of a very real problem in our society. We can believe that much of teenage emotional disturbances and physical problems come from an attitude of rebellion toward a parent refusing to obey.

#### **4. Obedience Is The True Standard For Excellence**

***“Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”***

## Hebrews 5:8-10

**Perfect** 5048 *teleioō*- being made complete, to make perfect, complete, to **carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end**

We have to consider what obedience leads to. See, our obsession with immediate gratification causes us to exchange things for now that would lead to incredible blessing later on in life.

More importantly, through Jesus' example, we learn that we are on this earth to **obey two primary tasks, an ordained task and a prophetic task.**

### Jesus Completed His Ordained Task

Jesus gives us a prayer of confidence to God by saying:

*"I have brought you glory on earth by **completing (teleioo), the work you gave me to do.**"*  
John 17:4

Jesus had a purpose on this earth that only He could do, there is no need for another Jesus, He perfected his ordained call.

### Jesus Completed The Prophetic Task

When raising your child to be obedient, It is not for the purpose of being "someone" or "make it big," it is about finishing the race that you were meant to live either by divine ordination or prophetic expectation. In John 19, Jesus was hanging on the cross and His mother and John are standing at His feet and then it says:

*"Later, knowing that all was now **completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."***  
John 19:28

We not only have a personal divine ordination of God upon our lives, we have a prophetic, Biblical call that we all share and that is to obey the Word of God and the mandate Jesus gives us in fulfilling His plan on this earth.

### Paul was committed to finishing his race:

*"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may **finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.**"*  
Acts 20:24

See, Jesus' last act of obedience was not a huge act of obvious victory but it was again, a painful response to obedience. He was obedient to His death. Look what it says...

*"A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. **When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished."** With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."*  
John 19:29-30

Can you see what happened, Jesus' last act of obedience on this earth was to drink the bitter cup, fulfilling self proclaimed prophecy.

### It's All About Finishing The Race

***“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”***

Philippians 3:12

### Three Things That Can Never Replace Obedience

#### 1. Obedience can never be replaced by accomplishment.

*“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

Matthew 7:21-23

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”*

Matthew 7:24

#### 2. Obedience can never be replaced by sincerity.

“But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves <sup>[b]</sup> and lambs—**everything that was good**. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed...”But I did obey the LORD,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. 21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

I Samuel 15:9 & 20

#### 3. Obedience Can Never Be Replaced By Excellence.

Excellence in areas that are not applicable to the success of those around you, especially your family, are not excellence but **rivalry**. When excellence competes with the purpose you are in conflict.

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to "*honor thy father and thy mother*," she asked "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?" Without missing a beat one little boy answered, "*Thou shall not kill*."

#### 5. Obedience Empowers You To Resource Others

***“Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”***

## Hebrews 5:8-10

Obedience, obviously, is your greatest means of becoming the the “perfect” source for others to benefit from. But what is not so obvious is that your obedience does not necessarily have to be in the direction of where you will be a source. For instance, it makes logical since to obey God in strategic warfare to overcome a certain attack of the enemy and win the victory. But this is not the case when it comes to obedience, your action may be totally unrelated to the victory you will win. Our constant and most wonderful example is that of Jesus Christ who learned obedience through what He suffered, and in doing so, He became the source of eternal salvation. Simply said, obey God and He will do the rest. He is not in need of your actions toward the victory that needs to be won, He is in need of your obedience so He can release the victory that needs to be won!

**Obedience-** This sounds obvious, but what would you say you would use to be a measuring device for obedience? If I had a tape measure, **it's purpose is to measure things for several purposes:**

- **Growth-** a measuring tape can determine the growth in a persons body just like obedience can measure a persons maturity. If there is not obedience, there is no maturity. If there is not maturity there is no promise. Growth is measured by obedience. Many parents fail at this because they look at the child's potential to obey, but not the actual follow through of obeying. Listen to this example:

“Here Johnny, I know you want to make your Mommy happy, be a good boy and clean your room.”

### **Two statements that need attention:**

1. It is not about being obedient, it is about making Mommy happy. Mom's and Dad's, it's not about your kids making you happy, it's about making them obedient. Perhaps you are able to make your kids obey because they want to make you happy, and that is a wonderful blessing. But what happens when they grow up and are in a marriage with their own kids and things are not going the way they expected? Parenting then turns on the fact that I'm not happy, not what is right. So the demands on all the kids is not based upon obedience at all, but about us being happy.
  - What do you think it would be like if all of our experience with God was about making Him happy? Maybe that is exactly what you deal with in your relationship with God, you don't feel like He is ever happy with you.
  - Let me ask you another question, are you obedient to God? Yes, Most of the time, Sometimes, No or I'm not really sure. Do you know what it means to be obedient to God? See God is so loving and incredible that He is clear about what He expects of us and thus we can live in confidence and the excitement of this walk.

*“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is*

*a liar, and the truth is not in him.”*

I John 2:3-4

- **The evidence of knowing God is your obedience to His Word.**  
The evidence of you being your child's parent is your child's obedience to you.

### Road Blocks To Obedience

- **People can confuse the way:**

*“You foolish Galatians! **Who has bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...**”*

Galatians 3:1

**Bewitched:** 940 *baskainō* to speak ill of one, to slander, to bring evil on one by feigning praise or an evil eye, to charm, to bewitch

- **People can block the way:**

*“You were running a good race. **Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?**”*

Galatians 5:7

**Cut In** 348-*anakoptō*- to beat back, check (as in the course of a ship)

- **Sin can control the way:**

*“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you **obey its evil desires**. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For **sin shall not be your master**, because you are not under law, but under **grace**.”*

Romans 6:12-14

**You do not need to be mastered by sin to keep from obedience.**

**Here, grace is not an excuse for your sin, grace is the reason that you do not have to sin!**

The law, in this context, is to be under the bondage of sin not under the burden of works for Christ. We have this so totally contorted that we believe we are free from works. NO! Works cannot save you, but your obedience of a believer is an act of God's grace. Actually God wants to do exactly with you what sin did with you, but in a righteous way. According to this scripture, all your “actions” prior to Christ, in your life, was a participation in sin and wickedness. But now God wants the full operation of your life. He didn't just set you free. He didn't just pay the purchasing price and move on, He repossessed you. You are not just redeemed and bought with a price, you are an instrument that can be used for righteousness just like you were an instrument for sin and wickedness. Christ did not redeem you to get the devil off your back, He did it to get you connected into the family and Kingdom of God.

- **Obedience Is The Way**

Many people are deceived. And I am much at fault, because repentance has been spotlighted so much without obedience being equally urged or focused on. Charles Finney wrote an incredible book called, *Crystal Christianity*, with the subtitle, *A Vital Guide To Personal Revival*. Chapter 4 is titled, True Submission: A Matter of Choice. Here is one of his statements,

The law of God absolutely requires that you make your own happiness subordinate to the glory of God and the good of the universe. Until you do this, you are the enemy of God and the universe.

The gospel requires the same as the law. Many maintain that it is right for a man to aim directly at his own salvation and make his own happiness his goal. But God's law requires everyone to prize God's interest supremely.

*“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”*

Matthew 16:25

I must share one more insight from the book,

There was a father who had a stubborn and rebellious son, and he tried to subdue him by chastisement. He loved his son and longed to have him virtuous and obedient. But the child seemed to harden his heart against his repeated efforts. Finally, the poor father was discouraged and burst into a flood of tears. “My son! What can I do? Can I save you? I have done all that I can to save you! What more can I do?”

The son had never yielded to the rod. But when he saw the tears rolling down his father's cheeks and heard his sobs, he, too, burst into tears. He cried out, “Whip me, Father! But don't cry!” The father had found the way to subdue that stubborn heart. Instead of holding the iron hand of law over him, he poured out his soul before him. And what was the effect? To crush him into hypocritical submission? No, the rod did that. The gushing tears of his father's love broke him down at once to true submission to his father's will.

The sinner braves the wrath of Almighty God and hardens himself to receive the heaviest bolt of thunder. Then he sees the love of his Heavenly Father's heart. When he sees God manifested in the flesh, stooping to take human nature, hanging on the cross, and pouring out his soul in tears, bloody sweat, and death, his heart melts. He cries out, “Do anything else, and I can bear it; but the love of the blessed Jesus overwhelms me.”

Paul gives a sobering statement:

*“Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you **obey**- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?”*

Romans 6:16

### **God Gives Freedom To The Obedient**

*“But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, **you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.** You have been **set free from sin** and have become **slaves to righteousness.**”*

Romans 6:17-18

### **God Give Obedience To The Obedient**

- **Jesus' obedience to God granted the obedience of others following Him. It is said that you can only have as much authority as you are under.**
  - **Matthew 8:23-27-** The winds and waves **obeyed** Him
  - **Mark 1:21-28-** The **unclean spirits obeyed** Him
- Jesus said that our faith activates the supernatural and releases the impossible:

*“If you have the faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and **it will obey you.**”*

Luke 17:6

- In Acts 5:17-42, the Apostles were experiencing an incredible amount of power of God and everyone, it says in verse 16, that was brought to them, sick or having an evil spirit in them were completely healed. In fear, the High Priest and Sadducees were watching their power dissipate and grabbed the apostles and threw them in jail. An angel of the Lord released and led them from the prison and instructed them to continue preaching in the temple. So the next morning, they were obedient and began preaching again, exactly what got them in trouble in the first place.

When word had got around that the men had escaped, and not only that but they were preaching again the High Priest again rounded them up and brought them to their council. The apostles were reminded that they should stay silent about this Jesus. But Peter zings a one liner that is still our battle cry today:

*“We must **obey God** rather than men.”*

Acts 5:29

### **God Gives The Holy Spirit To The Obedient**

Something else that Peter says in response to this council that day, Peter says:

*“We are witnesses of these things, and so is **the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.**”*

## Acts 5:32

God's love is given in response to my obedience and the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey him.

### **God Gives Glory, Honor and Immortality To The Obedient**

*“To those who by persistence in **doing good** seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil...but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good...”*

Romans 2:7-10

### **God Gives Wrath and Anger To The Disobedient**

*“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's **wrath**, when his righteous **judgment** will be revealed. God “will give to each person according to **what he has done.**”*

Romans 2:5-6

*“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”*

II Thessalonians 1:6-8

Do you understand this? Many people have a difficulty with God's Word because it doesn't fit their theology. If you ask people if they are a Christian they are the first to say yes, but they could not tell you why. Here, Paul is telling the Thessalonians that God will comfort those who are being troubled by antagonistic individuals who want to continue to stir up strife and division. He says that what they give you will be given back to them, trouble for trouble. But he says that the pay day is not most likely now, it will happen on a particular day when Christ splits the heavens as a blazing fire will His mighty angels and He will bring punishment on two kinds of people:

#### **1. He will punish those who do not know God**

- That is such a hard thing for us to accept today because we have been taught that God is love, which He is, but the refusal of God will be punishment and again... **“God is just!”**
- **Today, it is more important to be non-judgmental than it is to be right.** This may be a simple statement but it is huge in relationship to our society. We have lost the ability to make proper judgments because we have elevated *not* judging more important than having the *right* judgment. The solution is that we need to make **“truth”** the main focus again, but of course this always has the tendency to fall back into the trap of judgmentalism. Truth is necessary for a society to make judgments, weather good or bad.

All punishment and reward are determined by the core belief of what is right and wrong! When we dissolve or dilute the core belief of truth, you not only minimize the ability to make adequate forms of judgment but you erase the lines of reward and punishment. No wonder our society is so stuck and unmotivated, there are no clear wins or clear consequences.

## 2. He will punish those who will not obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ

### Set The Example

- Paul tells Titus to teach his church to obey the leaders of the community and country. (Titus 3:1)
- The author of Hebrews teaches the church to obey the leaders of the church because they are ultimately to God for your souls. (Hebrews 13:17)
- 3541 nothos { noth'-os} bastard 1; 1
  1. illegitimate, bastard
  2. one born, not in lawful wedlock, but of a concubine or female slave
- Under the Old Testament definition, Timothy was a bastard according to the Jews because Timothy's mother was a Jewess, and his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). By the time of Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy's mother had also become a Christian. His mother and grandmother had instructed him in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul's influence in his life made the difference.

### Paul Addresses The Fathers

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*  
Ephesians 6:4

"To provoke ... to anger suggests a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over to outward hostility. Such treatment is usually not intended to provoke ... anger. Often it is thought to be for the child's good. But there are some areas that this occurs in kids:

1. **Well-meaning overprotection is a common cause of resentment in children. Parents who smother their children, overly restrict where they can go and what they can do, never trust them to do things on their own, and continually question their judgment build a barrier between themselves and their children**— usually under the delusion that they are building a closer relationship. Children need careful guidance and certain restrictions, but they are individual human beings in their own right and must learn to make decisions on their own, commensurate with their age and maturity. Their wills can be guided but they cannot be controlled.

2. Another common cause of provoking children to anger is **favoritism**. ... For parents to compare their children with each other, especially in their children's presence, can be devastating to the child who is less talented or favored.
3. A third way parents provoke their children is by **pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds**. A child can be so pressured to achieve that he is virtually destroyed."

At times, all children resist their parents and what they represent and teach. How parents overcome it is Paul's concern. Parents do all kinds of things to get their children's to obey in a healthy manner. The wrong way provokes embittered, fretful, defensive, listless, resentful, moody, angry, or sullen children. Paul is not telling us to confront the child's resistance with an uncontrollable and unreasonable display of power and authority. Correction is a mandate, but a parent must administer it in the right spirit. An old statement is true here, **a twig should be bent with caution**.

The child can easily feel like "I can't do anything right" or "I can never please them." This leads to discouragement and an attitude that drives the child in the other direction.

The phrase "*provoketo*," "wrath" came from one Greek word, *PARORGIZO*. It literally means "**to anger alongside**, i.e. **Enrage**." It was translated in the following ways:

- "Do not exasperate your children" (NIV),
- "Never drive your children to resentment" (JB),
- "Do not provoke your children to anger" (RSV),
- "Don't keep on scolding and nagging your children" (LB),
- "Don't over-correct your children or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment" (Phi).

***"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."***  
**Ephesians 6:4**

The verb **exasperate** or also translated to "**provoke to anger**" is one word. It comes from two Greek words. One of the words is *para*, which means alongside. The other word is *orgizo*, which is the stage of getting more angry and more angry and more angry. **Orge** is the word for anger. **Orgizo** is more the process of getting that way. In other words, **anger can build. Anger can get worse and worse**.

So what Paul is saying is the lifestyle a father lives in front of his child on a consistent basis has the potential of provoking that child to anger. That anger is a deep-seated thing inside of a child. I imagine there are some adults who are still dealing with anger that they were provoked into while they were being raised by fathers who did not follow the design God has for fathers. Studies have found that this anger is something that perverts a child's thinking and reasoning perspective. Not only that, it also prevents him from emotionally, maturely relating to other people. It is an anger that sometimes he doesn't even know he has. It is an anger that perhaps has not been seen.

The Greek word translated "**bring them up**" at first meant merely **providing bodily nourishment**. Through time its usage extended to include education in its entirety since bringing up children obviously is more than just feeding a child food.

There are two things that are necessary for a father to do in child rearing, **discipline** and **instruction**. **As the child grows older, physical discipline is to be replaced by exhortation, by understanding** -- helping a child to see what lies behind the restrictions, and always showing concern and love. It does not mean a total relaxing of limits, but it means a different way of enforcing them.

“Harvard University sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck developed a test (that proved to be 90 percent accurate) to determine whether or not five- and six-year-olds would become delinquent. They discovered that the **four primary factors necessary to prevent delinquency** are:

1. A **father’s firm, fair, and consistent discipline**;
2. A **mother’s supervision and companionship during the day**,
3. The **parent’s demonstrated affection for each other and for the children**;
4. The **family’s spending time together in activities where all participated** (**Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950], pp. 257-71).**”

**Training/Nurture- PAIDEIA**, and it denotes **disciplinary correction**. This same word was translated "**chastening**" in Hebrews 12:5, 7, 11 and "**chastisement**" in Hebrews 12:8. The Greek word implies "to train or **discipline by repeated and narrow exercises in a matter**." It implies action more than intellectual thought and corresponds to the word "train" in Proverbs 22:6, which means "to hedge" or "narrow in." Thus God expects parents to train their children to walk the straight and narrow way rather than allowing them to wander aimlessly about on the broad way.

So this word often refers to **the painful part of training**:

*“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons”*

Hebrews 12:7-8

Growing up with a Christian father’s help involves being shown how to do the things that a Christ-exalting life requires and being held accountable to do them as well as you can.

Some time ago, the **Saturday Evening Post** had a story of a stepfather who was trying to win the acceptance and approval of his new stepson by indulging him, buying him everything he wanted. But he was getting nowhere. Finally, they went out on a hike together and came to a place where a waterfall came down over a cliff and spread out in a big pool at its foot. Suddenly the father noticed the son's blue cap floating in the middle of the pool. Without hesitation he dived in and tried to find the boy. He made several dives, and at last, unavailing, he flung himself exhausted on the bank. Just then he heard a noise and there was the boy standing behind a tree. He said to him, "Did you throw your cap in the pool?" The boy said, "Yes, I did." The father said, "What did you do that for?" The boy answered, "I wanted to see what would happen." The stepfather said, "Well, you're going to find out right now," and he spanked him as few boys have ever been spanked. On the way home in the car, he suddenly found hot little fingers gripping his hand, and choked voice saying, "I'm sorry, I'm awful sorry, but I

didn't know whether you really liked me, because you never spanked me like the other children's fathers do."

**Instruction/Admonition- NOUTHESIA**, which refers to a **mild rebuke or warning**. Notice that **Paul specified "the nurture and admonition OF THE LORD."** There is a godly way to administer discipline and rebukes, and therefore there must be an ungodly way to do it.

**Daily I've got to realize that if I don't walk filled with the Spirit of God, I can produce anger in my children over the years.** I can produce something in them that would cause them not to even be able to relate to God or their friends or anybody else. As a matter of fact, it would put them in a state to where they are ready to explode or put them in a state where their spirit is so broken that they are lethargic and can't even produce a reaction of any kind.

Being filled with the Spirit of God not only is a command, it is a very important part of the Christian life. As a matter of fact, it is the very ingredient of the Christian life. I've got to be under the control of God. He has the only design for my family. Until I am under His control, I am going to risk pushing my child into a state of emotional anger that may never be repaired on this earth.

Thom S. Rainer is dean of the Billy Graham School at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He is the president of the Rainer Group and Church Central Associates. According to research, teenagers today are the most unreached people for Christ in the nation. **Less than 10 percent of America's youths have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.** A research team has interviewed hundreds of young people. In the course of these interviews they came to understand and appreciate them even more. Among the many areas that was learned in this particular research, perhaps the most revealing was hearing about their fears.

**Here are two basic reasons churches today do not reach youth.**

1. The first is that they simply do not try to reach young people with the gospel. **There is no intentionality.**
2. The second is that **many leaders and laypersons do not understand youth.**

**In the research, here are the 10 greatest fears of our young people.**

**Fear # 10: "I will never have a happy marriage and family."**

A majority of youths do not believe they will have an intact and "good" family when they reach adulthood. One of the greatest desires for their future is a good home life. Among the youths we surveyed, **73 percent believe that children of divorced parents have more problems than children of non-divorced parents.**

- Their top #1 desire is to have one marriage partner for life was near the top. And most of the youths we surveyed expressed a deep need to have a spouse and children within a few years. But they fear that the trends of culture mean that very few of them will see these desires fulfilled.

**Fear # 9: "Someone I know or love will die of AIDS (maybe me!)."**

For the teens of today, AIDS is not some distant problem known only through the evening news. To the contrary, the disease is ever-present in the minds of these young people. And though a superficial discussion may not uncover this fear, our interviews confirmed their numerous concerns about the disease.

The American Board of Family Practice discovered this fear when asking youths to cite their greatest concerns for the future. Among the top five concerns was the fear of AIDS, specifically someone close to them getting AIDS.

**Fear # 8: "I feel like I have to have sex to be accepted."**

This fear was particularly prevalent among the female teenagers, where two-thirds of the adolescent girls feared the pressure to have sex. The pressure came from different sources, but the most commonly mentioned source was boyfriends or dates. But other sources of pressure were almost as great.

Sexual pressure is not limited to young females. **Over one-half of the male teenagers cited sexual pressure as one of their greatest fears. Repeatedly in focus groups, I heard both boys and girls cry out for boundaries from the adult world. But most of the teens reported a dearth of such guidelines and discipline in their homes, schools, and even their churches.**

The facts about young people and sex seem to confirm the fears of teens. **The average age for first-time intercourse for girls is 15; the boys' average is 14. Three-fourths of them will have sex by their senior year of high school. Forty percent of 14-year-old girls today will become pregnant at least once before they turn twenty years old.**

**Youths further fear sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Just 20 years ago there were only four known types of STDs. Today there are over 30. Most young people today know a friend or acquaintance who has had an STD.**

**Fear # 7: "I cannot find time to do everything."**

**The youths of today may be the busiest generation in America's history.** Life is getting exceedingly complicated for them. They are busier than ever with extracurricular activities, community involvement, work, and responsibilities at home, especially if both parents work.

**One of the key reasons teens are so busy is that they have so many choices. They have more choices in sports, more choices in recreation, more choices in school, and even more choices in church. But these teens have shown little discernment in making choices. Often they refuse to say "no" to any option; the result is frustration and sometimes burnout.**

**Fear # 6: "I can't tell right from wrong."**

One of the distinguishing features of youths today is their inability to tell right from wrong. And many of them know they do not know. **Fifty-six percent of female teens and 61 percent of male teens think their generation has a serious problem because they have no sense of right and wrong.**

**Fear # 5: "Peer pressure scares me."**

Peer pressure is nothing new. Every generation faces challenges and pressures from people whom they loosely identify as friends. Paul is a 14-year-old from Tennessee. His peers see him as a likeable and friendly person. Most of them do not see Paul as one who would yield to peer pressure for wrongful acts.

"I guess I have kept my nose clean," Paul responds. "Other than some minor things, I've never really been in trouble." One of the girls in the focus group asks Paul if it is easy to say "no" to his friends when they try to get him to do something he knows is wrong.

"Easy? Hardly. I don't like being made fun of. I don't like being called a wimp. But you know what really bothers me? I'm afraid that one day I won't say no. The pressure is just so incredible."

#### **Fear # 4: "I (or someone I know) will be a victim of violence or crime."**

**The youths of today are the most violent generation in America's history.** They are the victims or criminals in a growing trend of violence. **In 1950 the rate of 14- to 17-year-old who been arrested for a felony was four per 1,000. Today it has increased over 30 times to 118 per 1,000.**

Many youths live in fear. **Among boys, one in three carries a weapon with the intention of using it if necessary. Each year over a million secondary school teachers are threatened with physical violence and over 5,000 are actually physically assaulted.**

The violence portrayed in the media seems to have a paradoxical effect on young people. The ever-present scenes of violent acts and gory incidents lower the level of sensitivity to violence in the real world. Meanwhile, the deluge of violence on television and in the movies engenders a fear among teens that "it might happen to me."

#### **Fear # 3: "I will not be able to make it financially."**

Middle-class children who were rarely deprived of any material goods are concerned they will not have enough to make it. Like one kid put it, "there are no guarantees out in the world. A college degree does not mean that you'll get a good job. And if you get a good job, you may not get to keep it."

Teenagers are clearly worried about their economic future. Even those in financially comfortable homes today are concerned that they will be able to have such a lifestyle when they reach adulthood. This younger generation may live in a material world, but they doubt their own ability to continue in that world in the near future.

#### **Fear # 2: "I can't get a good education."**

Researchers speak with unanimity about teenagers' view of the value of education. **Three-fourths of the youths of today fear that they will not get a good education.** Many fear that they cannot get into college and, if they can, they worry about how they will finance their education. And over half of the young people today worry about taking the ACT or SAT exam.

Why are teens worried about a good education? This fear ties directly to the previous fear. A good education, the youths believe, will lead to a good job which will provide a good income. In other words, the fear is primarily financial.

The youths of today are realists about the economic value of a college degree. They believe the degree is the ticket out of poverty or financial mediocrity. **Over 80 percent of the teens say that they intend to go to college to get a better job and to make more money.** They do not want to be a part of the economic have-nots. It seems that in this world of moral and family uncertainty, the youth think their only path to happiness may be found in the material world.

### **Fear # 1: "Something bad may happen to my family."**

**Teenagers are growing up in the midst of the highest rates of divorce ever.** More children are living in single parent homes than ever before. It should be no surprise then that teens fear something bad happening to their families.

Amy is a 14-year-old from Florida. Her parents have been married seventeen years, but she fears that the marriage will not last.

"You should hear my parents fighting," she laments. "Sometimes I feel like they love each other, but they scream and threaten to divorce. One of these days they'll probably go through with it."

How does Amy feel about this possibility?

"It scares me to death," she responds softly. "Where would I live? Would we have enough money? Would I see both Mom and Dad? Would I have to spend time in two homes? What about my friends? Yeah, it scares me to death." Teens fear the breakup of their families. Their fears are well founded.

To present this information on the youth of America is not to offer depressing information, but to help Christians understand the fears of these young people. And by better understanding them, we can be better equipped to reach out to them in the name and love of Christ, their only hope.

We have got to take up the mantel and step in parents! We have got to take the God given responsibility instead of naming everything else as the problem for our kids. It starts with us and the only reason that your child will end up in the honor and glory of God is because you are a committed parent to serve God by raising your children. This scripture is to the kids, but they need us to enforce it. We are called to raise our children so that they can reach their ordained call in life!