

Children, Obey Your Parents...But for How Long?

Scripture: Ephesians 6

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Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

(Colossians 3:20)

The parallel text in Ephesians is almost identical: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). Paul now turns to the second relationship in the ancient home, that of parents and children. This relationship category cannot be right unless the relationship between husband and wife is right. *Tekna* (**children**) is a general term for children and is not limited to a specific age group. It refers to any child still living in the home and under parental guidance. The present tense of the imperative *hupakouete* (**be obedient**) demands a continuous obedience.

That children are to honor and obey their parents is taught repeatedly in Scripture. It appears in the Ten Commandments: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Ex. 20:12). Striking or cursing one's parents was punishable by death in the Old Testament (Ex. 21:15–17; Lev. 20:9), as was continued disobedience (Deut. 21:18–21). Children are to listen to their parents' instruction and obey it (Prov. 1:8; 6:20). The consequences of disrespect for parents are graphically portrayed in Proverbs 30:17: "The eye that mocks a father, and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it" (cf. Matt. 15:4–5; Mark 7:10–13).

Disobedience to parents marks the ungodly: "Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy" (2 Tim. 3:2; cf. Rom. 1:30).

Children are to obey their **parents in all things**. The only limit placed on a child's obedience is when a parent demands something contrary to God's law. Jesus knew that some children would have to defy their parents to come to faith in Him. In Luke 12:51–53 our Lord says, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Later in Luke 14:26 He says, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." Salvation can bring a breach in the family so that children may have to reject their parents' commands if they are contrary to Scripture.

The motive for obedience is that it **is well-pleasing to the Lord**, commendable before God Himself. As He was well-pleased with His own Son (Matt. 3:17), so He deserves to be with other children. Many young people struggle with knowing God's will for their lives. Obeying their parents is the right place to start.

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