

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

God's Pattern for Children, Part 2

Scripture: Ephesians 6:1-3

Code: 1949

Tonight again we continue in our series on God's pattern for the family, particularly the children. Open your Bible, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 6...Ephesians chapter 6. The family, as we have been saying all through this series, is the critical center of society. The family is the seedbed of economic skills, social skills, morality, ethics, values, attitudes toward work, faith in God, you name it. When things go well in the family, life is worth living. When they don't go well in the family, life falls apart.

And clearly in our time and in our country, life is falling apart. Children are largely the devastated ones in this disintegration. Without proper love, without proper discipline we are raising-or better not raising-a generation of troubled, angry, bitter children. They have been abandoned by their career-driven fathers and their working mothers. Parents have become self-centered, busy with their own enterprises. They want only that the children not get in the way. Children are left to themselves largely, left often in the chaos of divorce, sometimes born illegitimately. All of these things tragically affect them.

Criminality is on the increase because of this unloved, angry, undisciplined generation. Young people who are self-centered, selfish, hostile, driven by unchecked lust which escalates as this generation of rebellious children grow up.

Against this trend stands the Word of God, so clear about how to raise a responsible, faithful child. And it really is not that difficult. In fact, we can understand clearly the plan, it's only a question of whether we will be faithful to implement it.

I can sum up all you need to know about raising your children, all you need to know about parenting in just a couple of sentences. One, teach them the truth about God and His law all the time. That's the first sentence. Teach them the truth about God and His law all the time.

Now that one sentence sums up all kinds of things out of Scripture, but that's the sum of it. Teach them the truth about God and His law all the time.

Second sentence, demand that they obey that law and punish them physically when they don't. Demand that they obey that law and punish them physically when they don't.

Those two sentences sum up what the Bible teaches about raising children. Teach them the truth about God and His law all the time. Demand that they obey that law and punish them physically when

they don't.

We remember what it says in Proverbs, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of reproof will drive it from him." But the rod of reproof will not drive it from him if he does not understand why he is being reproofed. And he will understand that if he understands the law which he has violated.

As we saw last time, children battle the curse inside them. They battle the world system outside them. And nowadays they battle these last days' dissolutions which come upon them. They must then not be left to themselves, but they must be assisted to develop as God-fearing people. And Ephesians chapter 6 gives us the simple pattern. In fact, it speaks, first of all, to the children. And it says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." And then to the parents, "And, fathers," and that certainly encompasses the parental responsibility of both father and mother, "do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

In other words, instruct them about the Lord and discipline them to obey that instruction, just that clear. There is the pattern. Your goal is children who are obedient and who honor their mother and father. They're the ones to whom blessing is promised.

Now we're still talking about the responsibility of children, and it is this...to obey your parents and to honor them. Really that's the sphere of all of their responsibility. They are under their parents. And they are called to submission and respect. But children must be taught to do this. They must be disciplined to do this. They must be made to obey, they must be made to respect.

Now when you have an improper or absent area in their lives in regard to teaching this, when there's a big missing element in their lives and it is this, you can give them things, you can give them toys, you can give them a happy environment, a comfortable home, but if this area of their life is missing, they will not learn self-control. And if they do not learn self-control, they're on a fast track to being reprobate and headed for damnation.

You see, children are deficient in four areas. And you can find those areas simply by reminding yourself of Luke 2:52 where it says about our Lord Jesus, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." Jesus as a little child grew. He grew in four areas. Wisdom and stature, that means he grew mentally and physically. In favor with God and man, that means He grew spiritually and socially. Those are the four categories in which children are deficient. They are mentally deficient, what that means is they have limited knowledge and limited wisdom. They are physically deficient, they have limited strength. They are socially deficient, they are selfish and proud. You know, they want what they want when they want it and they show off a lot. And they are

spiritually deficient in that they are sinful and do not know God personally.

Parents then have to create an environment and a context which demands that they develop in these areas. Mentally we want to stimulate them to know the truth of God. Physically we want to nourish them so that they can grow up. Socially we want to teach them humility and the love of others and to be servants. Spiritually we want to confront their sin and bring them to the place of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. That's what parenting is. It is teaching them about God and His law all the time and enforcing their obedience to that law by disciplining them when they disobey.

Now, frankly, this pattern yields marvelous results, wonderful results and you don't have to be an educated Ph.D. to figure this out. You only have to be a Ph.D. to figure out how to control children who aren't trained this way. And that's what we have today. We have a whole world of psychologists and sociologists and psychiatrists trying to figure out how to get control of a generation of children who are out of control because they have not been raised according to the principles of Scripture. We have a whole generation of disobedient children in our nation who are proud, self-centered, and indulgent to their own drives and lusts.

Parents who have been programmed not to spank them because that's been reclassified as child abuse, parents who really don't know what moral system to teach them, parents who are too busy to bother largely are now trying to deal with these children who are angry because they're not given the love and affection and attention that they need, who are uncontrolled because they have not been taught self-control. Parents are now trying to deal with these children in the most frightening ways.

Last week I picked up "Newsweek Magazine." And the main article was an article on Ritalin, which is a medication being given to children today. And I want to give you some of what this article says because I want to show you what lengths parents go to to try to get control of their children when they will not do it God's way.

Here's how the article begins. "It is another medication morning at Winnebago Elementary School in the middle-class Chicago suburb of Bloomingdale. Three pings sound precisely over the intercom at 11:45 a.m. Principal Mark Waggoner opens a locked file cabinet and withdraws a giant Tupperware container filled with plastic prescription vials. Nearly a dozen students scramble to the office for their Ritalin, a drug that calms the agitated by stimulating the brain. These children, all ages, mostly boys, have been diagnosed with ADHD which is Attention Deficit Hyper-activity Disorder, a complex of neurological impairment that takes the brakes off brains and derails concentration.

"A decade ago, Waggoner, the principal remembers only two Winnebago students lined up for Ritalin. He's uncertain how many more take their medicine at home or on their own. There are no X-rays, no blood tests, no CT scans to determine who needs this medicine. And diagnosing Attention Deficit remains as much art as science. There are no definitive long-term studies to reassure parents that

this stimulant isn't causing some hidden havoc to their child.

"It takes time for parents and teachers to sit down and talk to kids,' says Dr. Sharon Collins, a pediatrician in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where reportedly eight percent of the children are on Ritalin. `It takes less time to get a child a pill.'" I think she sees the reality of it, it's...it takes a lot of time to train a child, a lot less time to give him a pill. But turning your disobedient child, your child that lacks self-control, maybe your angry child because that child is not cared for properly, turning that child into a drug addict, is that a solution?

"Some students take their time-released pills before school. Others take their doses at off hours. One boy's jogging watch is timed to beep for Ritalin at 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. Like many administrators, Waggoner's not sure to make of it. Are doctors just catching this disabling affliction more often?" In other words, why now and not a few years back? "Has our culture gone so hybod(?) haywire that we've lost patience with the demanding quirks of training our children? ADHD has become...and this is interesting...American's number one childhood psychiatric disorder. Experts believe that more than two million children have the disorder. According to an estimate by the National Institute of Mental Health, about one student in every classroom is believed to experience it. Since 1990 Dr. Daniel Safer(?) of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine calculates the number of kids taking Ritalin has grown two and a half times. Among today's 38 million children at the ages of five to fourteen he reports 1.3 million take it regularly. Sales of the drug last year topped \$350 million.

"This is beyond question an American phenomenon. The rate of Ritalin use in the United States is at least five times higher than in the rest of the world. It is so common in some upscale precincts that a mini-black market has emerged in a handful of playgrounds and campuses and vitamin R, as it is called, sells for three to fifteen dollars per pill. Some kids are now using it to crush and snort for a cheap and relatively modest buzz."

Now Ritalin, by the way, is the brand name of the drug known as methelphenadate(?). Technically it is a stimulant that appears to increase the level of dopamine in the frontal lobe of the brain where it regulates attention and impulsivity.

"It is a powerful drug and one that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has classified as a schedule 2 controlled substance, in the same category as cocaine. Parent groups are now lobbying to ease the restrictions on Ritalin to avoid monthly doctor's visits to get a new prescription. The DEA is opposing them, going so far last month as to enlist the help of the International Narcotics Control Board."

What we're talking about here is turning children to drug addicts so the parents can get on with their lives.

"Doctors, if they believe they have found a treatment, do not pretend to fully comprehend the disorder. For now, scientists now ADHD is not the result of brain damage, it is not the result of wrong diet...listen to this...and they're sure it's not the result of bad parenting." You know what bad parenting is? Spanking your child.

"Dr. James Swanson, a psychologist at the University of California Irvine, believes it may be the result of something gone array." Now there's a real scientific diagnosis. "It may be the result of something gone array. In pregnancy, anything from fetal distress to alcohol, exposure to lead in utero." By the way, all of those things could be measured. "Dr. Lawrence Greenburg(?) of Minnesota, ADHD specialist, estimates that as many as a quarter of surviving premature infants may have ADHD." Again, an oblique generalization.

"Other researchers blame heredity. They say you get it from your parents." They're getting close. "ADHD researcher, Dr. Russell Barclay of the University of Massachusetts reports that nearly half the ADHD children have a parent and more than one third have a sibling with the disorder." You know what that says? If you come from an out-of-control family, you're likely to be out of control. If your parents have no self-control, it's likely that you won't either. Turning undisciplined children into drug addicts, frightening.

"Kids usually take five to ten milligrams three times a day for prime time school work. They often take drug holidays on the weekends and every few months."

Where does this lead? Here's an illustration. Peter Brigger(?), a little boy age 7. "Peter has spun through several different drugs and as many different classrooms settings in the past six months. Ritalin didn't work. Silert(?), another drug, was no better. Now Emapromine(?), an anti-depressant may be causing breathing problems. It doesn't seem to calm him. Without special attention from teachers, he has yet to demonstrate much focus." How revealing is that? Without special attention he has trouble focusing. What does he do with special attention?

"Peter spends half his day in Manhattan's PS 191 in a class of more than twenty second graders. On a typical day recently he sat on top of his desk, headed for the drinking fountain, banged his head with a three-letter binder, three-ring binder. His notebooks were filled with scribbles decorated intermittently with half-written assignments." Boy, that sounds like every notebook I ever had.

I remember one time I was standing on the top of the desk in the middle of the second grade in Rockledge, Pennsylvania when the teacher came in the room. I thought she was going to be out longer.

"He's lost so much time,' says Millie Morales...listen to this...the aunt who has cared for Peter since his mom died and his dad went to prison." What's wrong with Peter? He doesn't have a mother and he doesn't have a father and nobody pays any attention to him and he can't stay focused unless he has some attention paid to him. That's not a disease.

The article concludes by saying, "To researchers it's a classic 'pay now or pay more later' situation. Studies indicate...listen to this...that those with untreated ADHD are more likely to become alcoholics, smokers and drug abusers than the general population." Sure, undisciplined people with no self-control are more likely to behave like that. "More than one third drop out of school." Of course. "And about one tenth of ADHD adults attempt suicide."

What you have is a dysfunctional, anti-social, unloved, angry, upset, undisciplined, lacking self-control child who becomes that kind of an adult. Formula for disaster.

Now in case you want to look at the diagnostic list, I'll give you a checklist. "Professionals base their diagnosis of ADHD on the following guidelines." And they give a whole bunch of them, there might be twenty of them and they say if any six of these applies to you, you've got it. You can pick your six.

"First, pays little attention to details, makes careless mistakes. Has a short attention span. Doesn't listen when spoken to. Doesn't follow instructions. Fails to finish tasks. Has difficulty getting organized. Avoids tasks that require sustained effort. Loses things. Is easily distracted. Forgets things during the day. Fidgets. Squirms in seat. Leaves seat when remaining seated is expected. Runs about. Climbs excessively. Has difficulty playing quietly. Acts as if driven by a motor. Talks a lot. And blurts out answers before the question is complete."

You know who they're describing? All of our children. Don't kid me, that's all of my children. That's all of my grandchildren. That's me. I don't have a disease. Every kid is like that if he's not taught self-control. Every report card I got the first few years, and I'm telling you the deep secrets, folks, every report card I got as a little kid in my early years of school said the same thing, "Johnny doesn't pay attention. Johnny talks too much. Johnny won't stay in his seat. Johnny fiddles and makes noises with his pencil. Johnny lacks self-control. Johnny doesn't do his best." And every time I took home a note like that, I got spanked. I had a lot going on in my head and I couldn't concentrate on just one thing because I was busy with a whole lot of things. God made me a certain way, wired me to be able to deal with a lot of stuff. And that's my life now. I'm glad my parents didn't turn me into a drug addict. I didn't have a disease or a disorder, that was just me. My parents had a tremendous challenge, teaching me self-control, because I had so much mental energy and so much physical energy. I still have a lot of energy, even now. And you can only imagine what I was like before I was twelve. I was a rocket going in every direction. My parents worked very hard to harness me. I'm so glad they took the effort to do that so that God could use the abilities that He gave me. They loved me and they spanked me. They taught me God's truth all the time by instruction and example. And when I didn't abide by it,

they disciplined me. And I learned self-control.

It's a sad, sad situation in our society. All these psychologists and psychiatrists running around trying to solve a problem that can only be solved in a home where the Word of God reigns supreme. There's no other way. And we are called, parents, to teach our children to obey us. And not just because we have this own independent agenda, but because we represent to them the truth of God. And our morals and our ethics and our values and our truths are God's and we're passing them on. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

"Obey your parents in the Lord," what does that mean? For the Lord's sake because your parents are teaching you the things that are precious to the Lord. Children, you should obey your parents willingly. You should obey your parents unconditionally. You should obey your parents gladly and joyfully because they are teaching you the truth of God. And all these efforts that go on in our culture, all these efforts that go on to liberate children from parental authority and liberate children from physical punishment are disastrous and violate God's law.

Last year, I guess now a few years ago, I read those statistics, they were from a few years ago, the latest statistics to me, eight million children a year assault their parents. An article in the Journal of Education, I quote, "A disgruntled school teacher handed in her resignation with the following comment. `In our public schools today the teachers are afraid of the principals, the principals are afraid of the superintendents, the superintendents are afraid of the board members, the board members are afraid of the parents, the parents are afraid of the children and the children are afraid of nobody.'"

One foreigner to our country said the thing that impressed him most about America was the way parents obeyed their children. How tragic.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord. And why? What does it say? This is right. This is right! Who says? Where's the psychological evidence? God says it's right.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

And you're going to know it's right by looking around at the disaster of this culture when children don't do it. God said do it, God said it's right and He wrote the book on right.

By the way, some form of that word "right," dikaios, appears 185 times in the New Testament alone. God has established what is right. And, of course, that's a major component in the problem today that parents have, is they don't know what is right. There is no moral standard. And as we've been

learning, when these parents come through university education, they're basically taught there is no right. And then how can you teach your child what is right if there is no right. All you can try to do is keep your kid from irritating you. And for many people, the simplest way to do that is drug them.

God has established what is right. And apart from God, you can't know what is right. Nehemiah 9:13 says, "God gave right ordinances, true laws and good commandments." Psalm 19:8 says, "The statutes of the Lord are right." Psalm 119:75 says, "The judgments of the Lord are right." Verse 128, "I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right." And Hosea 14:9 says, "The ways of the Lord are right." Romans 7, "The law of the Lord is perfect," Paul adds, "Holy, right and good." And the only way you can raise your children right is to raise them according to the Word of God.

So we teach our children what is right. We call them to obedience as if they were obeying the Lord because we are passing His Word, His will to them. We not only do it by verbal instruction, we not only do it by reading to them, we do it by modeling it in our own obedience to God. And, of course, if you try to teach it and don't live it, the confusion is devastating.

So we teach them to obey. We teach them to obey because it's right. And, you see, we have an unusual relationship to our children. Listen to these thoughts. The child's relationship, and we had a graphic illustration, these little precious lives here tonight, the child's relationship with God is mediated through the parents. That's how God designed it. The child will eventually grow away from the parents and come to a direct relationship with God through Christ. But while that little child is small, their relationship to God comes through us. When a child disobeys his parents, he is, for all intents and purposes, disobeying God. When a young person repudiates his parents, he's repudiating God. This is tremendously serious. That is why the Old Testament says, "When a child does that, put him to death."

By the same token, a child who fights against his natural rebellious tendencies and submits to his parents, is submitting to God. And this brings wonderful blessing. Tell your children that. Tell them that. Don't just say, "I want you to obey me because I told you to and I'm tired of telling you." Tell them, "I want you to obey me because in obeying me you're obeying God and obeying God means you're going to be blessed." And tell them, "Obey me because if you don't obey me, it is disrespect shown to God whose will I'm instructing you in and if you disobey God, you will bring upon yourself serious judgment, chastening."

It's a tremendous concept. Children need to understand it that how they respond to you is how they respond to God Himself. They need to understand the implications of their disobedience because their relationship with God which is a special relationship, defined at least in one passage which we read tonight in Mark 10 by Jesus who lifted those little ones up and touched them and blessed them. They are special to God. But His relationship to them is mediated through you, his parents. They need to understand that. They need to know that their greater accountability is to God, but they

manifest that through their obedience to you.

It also from your viewpoint is apparent, it takes out the arbitrariness, doesn't it? You just can't be firing off all kinds of commands to your children, unless they substantiate some biblical principle.

I think of the story of Absalom in 2 Samuel 13 to 18, the story of a rebellious son. His father, David, of course, was hardly a perfect father. He had failed to discipline his son. He had failed to discipline Absalom, so what did he get? He got a rebellious son. Neither his mother or father taught him self-control. Absalom's half brother, Amnon, followed his father David's evil example, I'm talking about David's sin with Bathsheba, David did that so Amnon his son followed his father's example and raped Absalom's sister Tamar, 2 Samuel 11 and 13. And David did nothing about it, David did nothing about it.

Absalom wasn't happy that his half-brother had raped his sister. So he killed Amnon. But he learned that from his father who killed Uriah, the Hittite.

Well David finally acted out of fear of Absalom, not out of fatherly concern but rather out of fear and exiled Absalom and still refused to deal with the situation until he was forced to do so. David was a weak, ineffectual father and Absalom had reasons to be hostile and out of control and angry. But in spite of what reasons he had, Absalom should have submitted to David. He should have done what was right. He didn't so in spite of a failing father, God killed Absalom, just as God had said he would do to rebellious children. We're talking about a very serious issue, teaching your children obedience.

Also look at verse 2, the responsibility to teach your children respect..."Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth."

You're not only dealing with action here in the regard of obedience, but you're dealing with attitude here in the respect here of honoring. Exodus 20:12, "Honor thy father and mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God gives thee." Clear back to the commandments, honor your father and mother. Not only obedience on the outside, but obedience from the inside, obedience based on respect and reverence and honor, not a selfish obedience, not a bitter obedience, not an unwilling resentful or fearful obedience, but a loving, respectful obedience.

The word "honor" there from the verb timao, means to value at a high price...to value. Value your father and mother, put a high price on them. In other words, realize how valuable they are to you. Children, understand how great a treasure they are.

This is the first commandment with a promise. It is the fifth of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20. But it is the first commandment dealing with human relationships. The first four deal with one's

relationship to God and there is promise there. But this is the first of the commandments that deal with human relationships and among those commandments, the first one with a promise. And the promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.

You want a happy life? You want a full life? Obey your parents. Your children need to know that. Your children need to be taught that. You don't hold that back. You say, "Well it might...it might frighten them." That's fine. If it's balanced off with the security and affirmation and love that you give to them in the name of the Lord, they will understand. It is absolutely essential, however, that they know that God promises blessing and long life to those who obey Him. And that that obedience is mediated through their parents.

You say, "Well why is this commandment the commandment with a promise? Of all the commandments regarding human relationships, why is this so important?" Because, beloved, this is the heart of all relationships. This is at the core of the family. This is at the core of the family, therefore it is at the core of the church, therefore it is at the core of the society...both of which are made up of families. A generation of undisciplined, disrespectful, rebellious, disobedient children will destroy families, churches, nations.

And when you have a disobedient, disrespectful child, it is a tragedy in many ways, in a terrible grief. Listen to what it says in Proverbs. "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother, bitterness to her that bore him." Some of you women know that and you know it well. Not only a grief to the mother but listen to what it says regarding the father, "He that begets a fool does it to his sorrow." The father of a fool has no joy. Proverbs 19 says, "He is a calamity to his own father." "He who assaults his father, who chases away his mother is a shameful and disgraceful son." He is a grief to mother, a grief to father, a disgrace to parents, a humiliation to the whole family, a distress to the church and a burden to society.

It all starts, all the wholeness of relationships start right there. And I take you back to Deuteronomy 21:18 to 21, "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him will not listen to them, then shall his father and his mother lay hold of him, bring him out unto the elders of his city unto the gates of his place and they shall say unto the elders of his city...This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice, he is a glutton and drunkard." By now you can tell he's at least a teenager. "And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die."

Take his life. Why? Because the infection of this in the nation is devastating, an infection we experience even at this time.

So, says Deuteronomy 21:21, "You shall put away evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear." You see, God knew the preservation of that nation was bound up in the parenting process in

the obedience of children.

I think I have the time to mention this to you tonight. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and let me digress because there's an issue there that you may come across and wonder about. Somebody says, "Well children are to obey their parents," and then they come to this passage and maybe get confused. Let me read verses 36 to 38 and make a comment or two.

First Corinthians 7:36, "If any man thinks that he's acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she should be of full age and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin. Let her marry. But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint but has authority over his own will and has decided this in his own heart to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well. So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better."

Now what you appear to see here is a conflict. A father who wants to keep his virgin daughter single, and a virgin daughter who wants to be married, and verse 36 tells the father, "Let her be married." So the question comes up...Well wait a minute, is she free to countermand her father's will and do what she wants to do?

And in this situation, let me explain the scenario. In Jewish culture parents, and particularly fathers, were in the unique and dominant role of deciding who their children would marry. It was a father's decision, as it always should be. The same general...I say that tongue and cheek, as you understand...the same general custom prevailed in many other societies and certainly included that of Rome. In fact, some historians, if you've read any of the history of Rome, some historians credit Rome's decline in part to the weakening of the family and they say the family began to be weakened when the parents stopped arranging marriages. In New Testament times the arranged marriage was the norm.

Now in light of this teaching about the advantages of singleness, which is what the 1 Corinthians 7 section is talking about, they have learned that being single could be an advantage. You could serve the Lord and honor the Lord and you weren't distracted by marriage and a family and it was a wonderful thing to be single for the Lord. And so some well-meaning fathers who had come to Christ and were all excited about the prospect of serving the Lord had dedicated their young daughters to the Lord to be single, sort of dedicated them as permanent virgins. But when the daughters reached marriageable age, they had a different idea. Some of them wanted to be married and their fathers were sort of in a quandary about it. Should they break the vow they made for their daughter? It is likely that many of the girls did not have the gift of singleness and were struggling with their natural desire for a man, they wanted to get married. Their desire was to get married but they also desired to please their father and to please the Lord. And the problem then was brought up to Paul in the Corinthian letter.

Paul simply says this...if the daughter wants to get married, let her get married. If it must be so, verse 36, you're free to let her marry. That's all right, you had good intentions when you made the promise, but if she needs to be married, let her marry. But verse 37 and 38 discuss the girl who doesn't really need to be married and you as a father can stand firm, there's no constraint on you, you're not under constraint, verse 37, that means you don't have your daughter pulling on your pant leg saying, "Please, daddy, release me from this thing, I want to get married."

So in either case whatever is the desire of your daughter's heart with regard to marriage is acceptable to God. So I only want to mention that passage because I know some people have brought it up and said...Well yes, I know we're supposed to obey and honor our parents, but there may come a time when we are needing something and it might be against the will of our parents, we feel it's right for us, what do we do? And there's the perfect illustration. When you reach that age, if it needs to be so, let it be so. And you may bend to the wish of your child at that point, and certainly that's illustrative of other points. I don't think parents for the rest of a child's life have some kind of demagoguery, some kind of autocratic authority and control over them. When they express their needs within the framework of God's purposes, we're free to let them follow those needs and heart's desires.

Well, let's go back then to Ephesians and wrap up our talk tonight. You remember I used that word last week, I hope you picked up on it. Verse 3, "That it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." This is tremendous. Two things it says. There will be a quality of life and a quantity of life. That it may be well with thee, that's the quality of life...full, rich, joyous, happy, peaceful, rewarding life, a general qualitative blessedness. I really believe that, folks. I am convinced that this is exactly what Scripture is saying. I look at my life and my life is blessed, blessed and blessed abundantly and I look at Patricia's life and the life of our children and I believe that in great measure, of course, that is related to obedience. That is the fulfillment of the promise of God.

Not only quality but quantity of life. Life, it says here, will be long on the earth. What does that mean? Well I think you could interpret it three wonderful ways. First, physically. I think you'll live a full life. I don't think your life will be cut short as lives are cut short by sin, disobedience. You'll live the full life God planned. Secondly, you'll live a millennial life if you follow your parents to the faith in Jesus Christ, you'll come back for a thousand years on the earth and even ultimately live in the eternal new heaven and new earth.

The plan is clear. Children obey, children honor. And God will bless you and God will let you live a full, rich life. The alternative, tragic. I close with this. "The child was born on November 12, 1934. Born to sixteen-year-old Kathleen Maddox. He was entered into the ledgers as No-name Maddox. He was a classic abused child, left by his mother for days during the first years of his life. In 1939 his mother was arrested for armed robbery and sentenced to five years in the penitentiary. When she returned, No-name was eight years old. His life became a long line of run-down hotels, and brutal uncles who

came to live with his mother and drank heavily.

"When he was twelve his mother tried to place him in a foster home. But since one wasn't available, he was sent to the Gabalt(?) Home for Boys in Indiana. It was the first in a long line of progressively more restrictive institutions. After ten months at Gabalt, he ran away but his mother rejected him. He then drifted into a life of crime. At thirteen he was caught for armed robbery and sentenced to an institution from which he escaped. At sixteen he had a long series of crimes under his belt. Finally in federal prison he was homosexually attacked and raped. At seventeen he pressed a razor blade against a fellow inmate's throat and sodomized him. He was transferred again and again and classified as dangerous with a long record of violent activity. Finally at the age of thirty- three he was released from Terminal Island Prison in California against his wishes. He had become obsessed with the satanic, he told his jailers that prison was his only home. No-name Maddox is better known as Charles Manson."

Somebody's tender baby who became a monster. The worse case scenario. The best case scenario is given to us in the truths of Scripture. "Teach your child about God and His law all the time. Make him conform to that law and when he doesn't, punish him physically." Do all of that in an environment of the sweetness of the love of Christ and your children will be your joy.

Father, thank You for the instruction which You give to us, so practical, touching every aspect of life. Lord, thank You again for wonderful parents, godly parents, precious children, grandchildren. Lord, thank You for enriching our lives, for making our family such havens of joy and sweetness. Thank You, O Lord, thank You in saving us, for teaching us these things so our homes could be such happy places, such wonderful places. Lord, this church is filled with strong families, happy families, fulfilled families because they have followed Your truth. Lord, may we continue to be faithful. May our children be faithful that we might raise up a godly generation and enjoy the blessing, enjoy the quality and quantity, long years of loving relationships that bring us such fulfillment. Bless our children, bless all these precious little ones we dedicated tonight, and all the rest in all our lives, all the precious children. And may we all be faithful to bring them to You that You might bless them truly with the grace of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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