

How To Be Right in Our Relationships (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Amen.

And kind of set the stage for where we're going tonight. Our subject in this portion of the letter, when I say the portion of the letter, I'm talking about chapter 5, verse 22, all the way through chapter 6 and verse 9.

That's the portion of the passage that we're dealing with now. And it's a block of scripture in the book that deals with one primary or overarching subject, and that is human relationships, human relationships within the body of Christ.

Remember, within the body of Christ, we've got to think of all of Paul's teachings here in this letter in the context of the church, because that's the overall subject, the church.

And so our subject then in this section of Paul's letter is how to be right in our relationships. I'll get that right.

[1 : 58] Here in a minute. How to be right in our relationships. And the relationships that Paul deals with are the main ones, you know, that we would think of ourselves.

And that would be, first of all, the marriage relationship, husbands and wives. Then the family relationship, that would be fathers and mothers or parents and children.

And Paul has something to say to each of those. And then the third one gets us outside of the home and yet still a very important relationship for God's people and has some bearing, as we shall see, on the health, the spiritual health of the church.

And that would be the, well, as Paul calls it, the masters and slaves, relationships between masters and slaves. And yet, you know, we're compelled to contemporize that and apply that to bosses and employees.

All right? And it's very valid that we can do that. Very, very appropriate. All right. Now, since our overall theme, as I've already said, again, our overall theme of the letter is the church, because this is a church epistle.

[3 : 12] Paul's point is that the health of the church, the spiritual health, and also the effectiveness of the church today is directly related to two things.

Harmony in the Christian home, and honor and integrity among Christians in the workplace.

So the health and effectiveness of the church related to those two areas of relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, that would be harmony in the Christian home, and then relationships with, or particular instructions related to Christian bosses, as well as Christian employees, those relationships.

And they also have a bearing on the health of the church. All right. Let me remind you again of another thing, because we need to always keep this foremost in our minds all the way through to the end of the letter.

And that is, verse 18, is crucial to all of this. Verse 18, and specifically the command that is given there, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 30] As I've said now, I think a couple of weeks now, a couple of Wednesdays, that is the linchpin for everything that Paul says in these verses about relationships.

None of this, whether it's the instructions to wives and husbands, or whether it's the instructions given to parents and children or bosses, none of this will work apart from the yieldedness to the power and the control of the Holy Spirit of God.

None of this will work. Now, we might try, you know, on a very temporary basis and for a season, you know, just grit our teeth and make it work, but that's not really working.

It's all dependent upon, really, you could say our relationship with God. All other relationships are dependent upon a right relationship with God, and that specifically speaks to our yieldedness to His

mastery, His mastery in our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

All right, so we've already looked at the importance of the Holy Spirit in the household of God, the church house. That's our corporate worship, verses 19 through 20, and our submission to one another, mutual submission to one another in the fear of God.

[5 : 58] That's verse 21. So we've already looked at that, looked at that a long time ago. And now we've been looking at the importance of the Holy Spirit in your household, my household, the home.

All right, the first relationship that we talked about, or the first relationship Paul addresses, husbands and wives, chapter 5, verses 22 to 33.

We've already covered all this ground. He begins with the wives, so the ladies always go first, verses 22 to 24, basically summed up in these words, wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

Then Paul deals with the husbands in verses 25 to 33, and it could be summed up with this statement, or this command, husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church.

All right, so we've covered all that ground, and now we're ready to move to the second relationship addressed by Paul here, and that is parents and children. Parents and children, chapter 6, verses 1 through 4.

[7 : 02] Or, I guess I should reverse the order because Paul does, children and parents, kind of like he did with the husbands and wives. He starts with the ladies, then goes to the husbands, and when it comes to the home, he starts with the children, then moves to the parents.

All right, so let's get into this. Paul begins with, and here's where we're to your notes, okay? Paul begins with an expectation to the children.

Not the children's expectation, but the expectation of God to the children. This is God's expectation from children in the church, in verses 1 through 3.

And, you know, as you read through these passages, it's interesting to know that Paul is directly addressing children here. So let me just read that to you.

If you've got a Bible open, you can look with me, but just listen if you don't. So in verse 1 of chapter 6, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

[8 : 11] Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Now, let's just stop with that. In fact, that's as far as we're going to get here tonight. But let's begin with the children. He's directly addressing the children here.

Now, I say this is important to notice. And honestly, I don't think that I really thought about this or even paid any attention to this. As I've read this passage many, many times before.

I've preached from this passage. I've used this passage in family counseling and so forth. But it never really occurred to me that Paul is not just giving a kind of general principle about children obeying their parents.

He's speaking directly to children. The verbs here are second person plural. Plural. And so it's second person plural.

[9 : 24] That means literally it could be read this way. You children. You children. Obey your parents. So it's as if Paul is speaking directly to the children in the church.

You children. Listen to me. Obey your parents. And then in verse 2. You children. It's a second person plural. You children. Honor your father and mother.

So he's clearly addressing the children. And it reveals really an important reality. And that is that children were present during the corporate worship of the church.

They were there. You know, I've been to Ukraine a number of times. And I'm half tempted to send a little email to some of the pastors that I know there.

Because the children aren't in the church. A lot of times they're at home. Or they have Sunday school just for children.

[10 : 31] But then the worship service is for adults only. But in the New Testament, it's apparent from how Paul writes this that children are present there.

They're present. John R. W. Stott. I really, really do like Dr. Stott. And I put a quote in here. I think I put it in your notes. I think it really kind of explains the importance, the significance of this kind of little tidbit of reality.

He said this. Since Paul addresses the children in this paragraph as well as their parents, he evidently expects whole families to come together for public worship, not only to praise God but also to listen to His Word.

They would hear the Old Testament Scriptures and the Apostles' letters read aloud and expounded. By the way, it got me to thank you. You know, when we gather for worship and it's my time to preach, I open up the Bible and I've got the Old Testament.

But I've also got the New Testament. When they met for worship, all they had was the Old Testament and they had Paul's letter. And, you know, it was only then that a letter could be read in church and it'd be Scripture.

[11:50] You know, today somebody might send me a letter. I might, I could send a letter, you know, from China and have it read. But everybody knows that that's not inspired, that's not the inspired Word of God.

But they read Paul's letter and it was gospel. It was the truth. And so the children are there, whole families are there. And so that's the picture that we need to get from all of that.

All right, now, looking at these three verses, Paul issues two commands to the children in the church. Two commands.

And the first one is obedience. Obedience to your parents. And that's in a form, in the form of a command. Children, obey your parents in the Lord.

You children, listen up. Listen up, I'm talking to you. Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. All right, so that's the first command, isn't it?

[12:52] Pretty easy to see. Obey your parents. Now, a couple of things about this. First of all, the reason for obedience. Paul gives a reason for it.

You know, not that he has to. You know, children need to obey whether you give them a reason or not. Yeah, I'm kind of amused sometimes by young parents who go to great lengths to give the reason why their child needs to do such and such a thing.

Now, that's all right to give reasons, but you don't always have to. You just have to obey because I'm the authority. That's why I said so, and you do it. And Paul didn't have to give a reason, but he gave a reason, and it's a good one, obviously.

He said, children, obey your parents in the Lord. That's the reason. That's the reason to obey your parents. In the Lord. Now, in the Greek text, the command to obey comes from a compound word. I've given it to you kind of how it would be spelled in English. Hupakuo. Hupakuo. And it's a compound word. It has a preposition and also a verb in there.

[14:05] Hoop. Hoop is a preposition. It's really from the preposition upah. And it means under. And then, akuo. Akuo means here.

By the way, I was remembering back to my seminary days, and when I was taking Greek and having to learn vocabulary, and my, I mentioned this before, but my method was to use some association.

And some of my association, just really weird. It kind of was whatever popped into my head at the time. And akuo, akuo, reminded me of a little baby cooing, you know.

And so my mind said, you hear that little baby cooing? Akuo means here. It means here. All right.

So, crazy. All right. You think that's really silly, but I will never forget the meaning of the word akuo.

And maybe now you won't either. I say, when you hear akuo, you know it means to hear or to listen.

And so it's hoop, under, the preposition under, and akuo, to hear.

[15:19] So, to hear under. And there's an example, because really when you, you know, I give you that meaning of the word, it's difficult to see the connection between to hear under and obedience.

I mean, how do you get obedience out of that, to hear under? Well, it's interesting. There's an example, and I didn't put this in your notes, I don't think. Acts chapter 12, verse 13.

Do I have that in there? Well, you can jot down the reference. But as soon as I kind of set it up, you'll remember this particular story. Peter had been put in prison by Herod.

Herod was real proud of himself. He had James, the brother of Jesus, half-brother of Jesus, martyred. And so, you know, got kudos for that, apparently.

And so he thought he'd go further with it. And he had Peter arrested and put in jail. But, you know, Peter didn't stay there very long because he was miraculously delivered from prison.

[16:25] And just kind of walked out. You know, just walked out of there. And where did he go? So he went to the house of Mary, who was the mother of James, John, rather, John Mark, who wrote the book, the Gospel of Mark.

So he went to that house because, you know, the apostles had gathered there and so forth. And they were all in there praying for Peter and didn't even know that he'd been miraculously released. I'm just telling the story because it's a neat story.

And so he goes and he knocks on the door. Remember the story? And a little servant girl comes, named Rhoda, comes to the door. And so then Acts, that's Acts 12, 13.

And it says, and as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. And the old King James says, hearken, to hearken, to answer.

Now, it's odd. It may seem odd, but there's the word. Hupakuo. To answer or to hearken. Same word that Paul used here in Ephesians 6, 1.

[17:36] All right. So now you, are you making a connection? No, maybe not yet. Well, Rhoda, see, did not just listen. I mean, she heard the knock.

She could have heard it and just stood there and listened to it. But she hearkened to it. I mean, what's the knock all about? The knock is, let me in. And Rhoda obeyed.

She hearkened. She listened under. And really, literally, she put herself under what she listened to, what she heard. She obeyed. So Peter, she obeyed Peter.

She listened under. She put herself under what she heard. She opened the door and let Peter in. All right. Now, it may seem a strange way to illustrate the meaning of the word and how that word, to listen under, could ever be construed or have the meaning of obedience.

Because more than just listening, it is putting yourself under what you hear. Now, that is submitting to what you hear. And so children are to listen to their parents.

[18:46] Right? And obey what they hear, what they have listened to. So it's not just children should, you know, just listen to them. All right. I hear you. I'm just not going to do it.

But I'm hearing you. That's more than listening. It's submitting to what you hear. Putting yourself under what you hear. So this, I think, gets us closer to the reason for obedience.

All right. That's where we're moving here, to where we're moving. To obey in the Lord identifies this obedience, kind of this context or sphere of obedience.

And so here's the idea. Children are to obey their parents because to do so is to obey the Lord. It's to obey the Lord. And someone will say, well, what if they don't know the Lord?

Well, they are still obeying the Lord as they are obeying their parents. And that, so it is the, there's an important issue here because parental training and discipline is suggested here.

[19:58] I mean, it's implied here. That's involved in this. For children to obey their parents in the Lord implies that there must be some parental instruction here for this to happen.

Children must be trained to obey in the Lord. And they are trained to obey in the Lord even before they know the Lord.

Even before they know the Lord personally and savingly. By the way, that's the idea behind Proverbs 22, 6. Train up a child in the way he should go or she go.

And when he or she is old, he will not depart from it. That's the idea. Obedience, the obedience to God and to parents does not come naturally for children.

I don't know why some parents think, well, you know, they'll get it one of these days. You know, they'll come around eventually. Just have to go through this stage. But, you know, after they get past this, then, well, no, not so.

[21:06] They have to be trained and disciplined. Instructed and disciplined in obedience. And also, and we're talking, remember, in the context of a Christian home, must be taught that their obedience to mom and dad is the same as obedience to the Lord.

They need very early to have that connection made in their young minds so that they never forget that. You know, because it's easy to forget that.

That, you know, oh, yeah, I'll obey the Lord, but I just don't want to obey you, mom or dad. But you can't separate because the command is to obey your parents in the Lord, in the context of a relationship with the Lord God.

So it's not born into them. It must be taught. It must be taught. But it is something that they can obey because it's a command, a command that can be obeyed.

Second, not only the reason for obedience, but the rightness of obedience. So grateful for Paul helping me with my alliteration because the word is right there.

[22 : 20] Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. It's right. All right. But now we need to look a little deeper there. The word right is from a Greek word meaning righteous.

It means righteous. It's dekaos is the word. Dekasune is the word for righteousness. So it's not just simply right.

It's not only moral correct conduct. Did I put that in your notes? I may not have put this list here. Children obey their parents.

Obedying their parents is not just merely moral correct conduct. That could be termed as right. It's not just that. It is righteous behavior as defined by the word of God.

It's righteous in God's sight. So it's much more than just moral conduct. It's not just only pleasing conduct.

[23 : 29] You know, a kid can be a pleaser. Have you ever had a child like that who was a pleaser? Like, you know, every family that has at least two or more is always going to have a pleaser in the bunch.

Well, I guess maybe not always. But we have one in our family. Still have one. I won't name him. It's not Chris. You know, he might listen to this.

I'm going to have to put a note here to have that deleted. But, you know. He already knows it. Well, yeah, he does because I've told him. He's rather proud of it, actually.

Anyway, I better stop. But to say that this is right is more than just means more than just kind of a pleasing son or daughter.

It's righteous. Righteous. That's the idea here. I can go further. It's not only, you know, a kind of behavior that is attractive to kind of the society, the mores of the society.

[24 : 45] You know, it's not defined by what is right in the eyes of the culture, society. Because that's always changing, isn't it?

It's not right in that regard. It's right according to God's eternal perspective. It's righteous. It's not just suitable behavior or befitting behavior, you know.

But it's keeping and keeping with God's holy requirements. Righteous. And again, how are they going to know that? They have to be taught.

They have to be taught. They have to be taught early. Very early. And there's no end to that teaching. You know, it's ongoing. All right.

So we're talking about an expectation to the children. So number one, obedience to parents. That's the first of the two commands. And then second, number two, the second command is reverence.

[25 : 45] Reverence for your parents. Reverence. Children, honor. Honor your father and mother. Verse two. All right. So a couple of things about this as well.

First of all, reverence for parents is commanded. All right. This is a command. The word honor comes, and I'm always talking about coming from a Greek word, but it's important because it helps us understand the meaning, Paul's meaning here.

It comes from a Greek word that means to place value, to fix a value, a worth to a person.

It means to venerate, to revere, to revere parents. So children are to place a high value on their parents, and they are to act accordingly.

That is, their obedience is attached to this honor. They're not two different things. It's not one without the other. They're connected together.

[26 : 56] So this also then corresponds to honoring. The command to honor also corresponds to the command to obey, doesn't it? A child, you see, can obey without honoring his or her parents, right?

I mean, have you ever seen obedience, you know, from a child who had written all over his face, I'm going to do it, but I don't want to.

And I want you to know, I'm doing this under protest, you know. Well, that's not honor, is it? I heard that, Tom.

We're talking about children, apparently. He's been caught. Purely incidental.

Anyway, now, where was I? Our children can obey without honoring, right? You agree with that?

But they cannot honor without obeying.

[28 : 00] There's no way to be honoring, respectful, without obeying. And so a right definition of obedience includes honor or respect, reverence for a parent.

So I gave this little definition here. It's one of my favorites. I learned it from someone else. There's a little song that goes along with it, but I don't remember it. I'm not going to sing it. I wouldn't sing it if I did remember it.

Obedience is doing. All right, so obedience is an active thing. It's something you do. All right.

Obedience is doing exactly, exactly what I'm told.

Obedience is doing. It's an active thing. And doing exactly. Not more, not less. Not something different. Something similar. It's doing exactly what I'm told.

When I'm told to do it. Now, see, this is just a perfect definition of obedience. Obedience is doing exactly what I'm told.

[29 : 09] When I'm told to do it. And with the right heart attitude. There's where honor comes into play here. With the right heart attitude.

Now, that definition applies not just to the, you know, parent-child relationship. But it applies to adult and God relationships.

We do exactly, it's doing exactly what we're told to do. When we're told to do it. And with the right heart attitude. That's obedience. Second, reverence for parents is compensated.

I'm not real pleased with that alliteration. But anyway. Honor your father and mother. Which is the first commandment with promise. So reverence.

Honoring your parent. Has a reward attached to it. All right. Now, what's Paul quoting here? He's quoting the fifth commandment, right?

[30 : 12] You go back to Exodus 20 and verse 12. See that commandment. And, but actually his quote is more clearly connected with Deuteronomy 5.16.

Which is still a listing of the Ten Commandments. But both things that Paul says about the promise connected with his commandment are in Deuteronomy 5.16.

All right. So then the blessing of obedience or honorable obedience to parents is twofold. Quality of life.

And, or, or, excuse me, that, or so that it may be well with you.

All right. There, there's a blessing. Quality of life. I've put in a couple of quotes here that I like. John MacArthur. Though its blessings may not always be tangible.

[31 : 16] A family where children and parents live in mutual love and submission will have rich, God-given harmony and satisfaction that other families can never know.

So, see, and I think MacArthur's right. You know, what Paul is, is addressing concerning the children is really still an address to the whole family.

We're still, his focus is still the whole family. So, obedience of a child to a parent is crucial to the overall harmony of a, of a home.

And since a church is made up of homes, then it is directly connected with the unity and well-being of the, of the church, of the church itself.

The larger family of God. John R. W. Stott. Probably we should interpret this in general rather than individual terms. What is promised is not so much long life to each child who obeys his parents, but rather social stability to any community in which children honor their parents.

[32 : 27] Quality of life. The second blessing is quantity of life or longevity. That you may live long on the earth.

And the idea here is to live as long as God intended, you know, desires for you to live.

Kind of to live the full measure that God intends rather than cutting it short as a result of incurring God's judgment or God's chastisement for disobedience.

Some can leave this world prematurely because of their disobedient, rebellious behavior.

And so I think that's the idea here. All right. Then, as to parents, Paul writes concerning an exhortation to the parents.

[33 : 31] So that's the second part of this. This is verse four. An exhortation to the parents. Verse four. All right.

And you fathers do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. All right. So this is addressed to what appears to be addressed to fathers. But we'll talk about that here in just a minute. And in fact, I'll talk about it right now. Paul is not excluding mothers in his instructions.

All right. Ladies, you're not off the hook on this, moms. Of course, you knew that already, didn't you? And yet, at first glance, it certainly appears that Paul is just strictly addressing fathers.

And as far as we can see, that's how we would understand it. But we need to kind of have an understanding about the Greek language.

[34 : 38] It's different than English. And how words are used and used to convey ideas grammatically and so forth, a little different than in the English.

So the word for fathers is pateris. That's the word out of this particular sentence. Pateris. It's the plural of pater. Pater is the word for father. We've got a word patriarch. Now, it's difficult to see pater and patriarch, but that's the root of it, the origin of it.

But in the Greek usage, it can refer to fathers and mothers. Sometimes they can use pater or pateris, pateris, the plural, and actually mean fathers and mothers.

So the Greek can use certain specific nouns to convey an idea of inclusion, to be inclusive rather than exclusive or specific.

[35 : 48] And so the idea from both the term that is used here, pateris, and the overall context, the idea here is parents rather than just fathers.

Okay? I mean, he is addressing the issue of parents. When he talks about children, he's talking about in relation to parents. And so now when he turns to the fathers, he's still, he's actually addressing the parents and not just the fathers exclusively.

All right. So Paul first emphasizes parental restraint. And this is interesting. That he would begin there.

You know, we would have a tendency to emphasize the parental duty. You know, to exercise your parental duties. We would emphasize that first. But Paul rather emphasizes the need for restraint. A certain amount of restraint in parenthood. He says, And you fathers, or parents in general, do not, do not do a certain thing.

[36 : 56] All right. So Paul gives to parents a twofold instruction. First, a negative prohibition. That's number one. That's the first thing he says.

A negative, it gives a negative prohibition. Do not provoke your children to wrath or anger. Verse four. The word provoke literally means to exasperate.

To exasperate. And a parent can do this in a number of ways. And I've just kind of named a few that just kind of come off the top of the head there.

But first of all, unreasonable authoritarianism. Just being unreasonable. You know, a parent can misuse his or her authority by making irritating or unreasonable demands that really make no allowance for childish immaturity.

You know, it's not recognizing that that child has not reached a certain age of maturity or an age of knowledge. And so making unreasonable demands upon a child who's not ready for that.

[38 : 09] Not ready emotionally. Not ready in a sense of maturity. Not ready in a sense of knowledge and wisdom and experience. Humiliation can exasperate a child.

Second, harshness. Just being harsh. Cruel. I mean, you know, there's no mixture of love or compassion in our commands to our children.

Third, humiliation. Humiliation. You know, humiliating a child. Fourth, being sarcastic and ridiculing children.

And the last one there, favoritism. I mean, you can actually exasperate a child by overindulgence. And all of those have negative results.

They're negative. And then, finally, we'll be wrapped up for tonight. Wrap it up tonight. A positive exhortation. But bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

[39 : 21] And just, just very simple, very straightforward. Training is, the idea there is discipline. Bring them up with discipline. I talk about spankings all the time.

I'm talking about, actually the word discipline means to narrow their way. To bring, direct them in the straight way, the right way.

And it involves all kinds of things we have to do. To correct, to protect them, to guide them, to direct them. So, discipline. And then admonition, the idea there is instruction.

Teaching them. And so, that's a very positive exhortation of the parents. All right. Well, next time we'll talk about Christian bosses and Christian employees.

And that's a very important subject. Very important subject. Thank you.