

God's Goals for the Home: Parents and Children

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- [0 : 00] Who is the primary influencer in a child's life, especially as they are growing up? You know, it's parents.
- For the overwhelming majority of children, parents are the primary shaper and molder, especially as they grow up.
- And that's for good or bad. You know, we might think just here in the church, that's good if parents are Christians and they're really committed to being what God wants them to be for their children, and it is.
- But we've got a lot of teachers in this room and others who know that a lot of times the parent is the problem.
- It's what's made some children the problem child that they are. So it is for good or bad. But I want you to think, if you're a parent and you've still got children living at home, you are the key influencer in their lives.
- [1 : 18] And that's scary, isn't it? We need help. And God has given us help. He's really given us help in a lot of ways.
- He's put some people in our lives who can help us. Some of you have grandparents, or for your children have grandparents, aunts and uncles, some teachers and coaches.
- Hopefully, if you think about having help in raising your children, you think about some of the people here, Sunday school teachers, student pastor, pastor. You're not on your own.
- But God has given you not just people to help, but He's given you His Word. He's given you, if you're a Christian parent, His Spirit is within you and His Word is there before you.
- I want you to turn to Colossians chapter 3 and look at one passage, and it's a very brief one, where God gives us some instructions, not just to parents, but to children, in order to experience healthy Christian living in the home.
- [2 : 24] As you're turning, I want to remind you, there's an expanded version of these instructions in Ephesians chapter 5.
- God's also given us a good statement, challenge in Deuteronomy chapter 6, about teaching children as a way of life, is what it's talking about.
- Just as you go through life, teaching your children about God, about knowing Him, loving Him, His ways, His will. And in the book of Proverbs, it's just filled with instructions to fathers, specifically, but parents, about teaching your child, disciplining your child, providing the right kind of example for your child.
- In some ways, Proverbs could even be thought of as a manual for Christian parents, help them to impart wisdom to their children.
- This morning, though, we're going to look at Colossians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, God's goals for the home, parents, and children. Last week, we looked at God's goals for the home in terms of husbands and wives.
- [3 : 44] Next week, we're going to look at God's goals for us at work. Let's read Colossians chapter 3, beginning with verse 20. Children.

This is directed at all children in this room, if you're still living at home. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Now, I want to begin the same way we did last week in looking at husband-wife relationships.

Look at this. God's instructions for Christian relationships in general. That's really what we've been looking at in chapter 3, verses 5 through 17. Everything that we've looked at in these verses.

It's been talking about developing Christian character, putting away sinful habits. And the place where we begin living this way is in the home.

[4 : 53] The home is really the practice field for developing and demonstrating Christian character. David Garland does a good job of explaining that in this quote. Look at it with me.

He says, The family is where, under the Lordship of Christ, we learn to control anger, rage, abusive language, and lying, so that peace might reign.

We looked at that a few weeks ago. The family is where we first learned to work out the values of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

We've also covered those. There is no more, he says, there is no more difficult place to exercise these virtues day in and day out than in the home.

Isn't that true? Isn't that true? I can be compassionate and kind with you for a little while until I get tired of it.

[6 : 03] And then I can walk away. And you might even think he's a real compassionate and kind person. But it's another thing to be that way at home with the people that you live with every day.

Difficult, isn't it? It's true there's no more difficult place to exercise these virtues day in and day out than in the home. But it's also true that there's no more important place to develop and demonstrate Christian character than in the home.

So let's keep this in mind as we move on now and look at some of God's specific goals. One in particular for children. God's instruction is to children. Children, obey your parents in everything.

For this pleases the Lord. This is addressed every child living at home with your parents. If you are dependent upon them.

If they're providing the place you live. The clothes you wear. The food you eat. If they're paying for the house or it's in their name and paid off.

[7 : 23] It's their house. And so their house rules or what you need to live under is the idea if you're an older child.

And especially a younger child you just obey your parents. Now if you're not living with your parents. This would apply to whoever's in charge at the place where you live.

What I want us to say here is that God gives children a responsibility. The responsibility to obey your parents. The word obey literally means to listen under your parents.

It means you are to listen to your parents and obey what they tell you. Have you ever heard your parents, boys and girls, young people.

Have you ever heard your parents say, are you listening to me? Did you hear what I said? Or listen up? They know that you won't obey unless you listen.

[8 : 28] You've got to listen in order to know how to obey your parents. And so it's very important that you, if you're living at home with your parents.

That you listen to them. So that you can obey them. Now obeying your parents also includes having a good attitude.

Having a good attitude. You listen. You obey them. And you do it in a way that shows you respect them.

You don't talk back. You don't give them a hard time about your obeying them. You know, all too often, children, like a little boy who was told by his mother to sit in the corner.

As he sat there, he was thinking, I may be sitting down on the outside, but on the inside, I'm standing up. You've seen your child. Hey, let's just, most of us in this room, we're not too old to remember being defiant.

[9 : 36] We did what they said, but we didn't want to. And we let them know we didn't want to. Well, that's not obeying your parents as God says to obey your parents.

This verse also says that children are going to obey your parents in everything. God wants you, child living at home, obey your parents every time.

The first time. And in every way. Now, we need to stop here and have sort of a parenthetical statement.

Paul is writing to Christians with the assumption that Christian parents would not command their children to do something that would be wrong, sinful, or harmful.

But since we're living in a day where there is so much child abuse, You can't hardly watch even a local newscast or read local news without seeing someone doing something awful, cruel to their own child.

[10 : 45] In the home, even. So I want to make it clear, this is not blind obedience. Children should not obey a parent's command or anyone's command that they know to be morally wrong, sinful, or that would cause harm to yourself or anyone else.

Anyone in authority who would command something like that, they shouldn't be in a position of authority. That's not God-willed authority.

And they should be disobeyed. We looked at that last week. Wives are not to obey their husband. Paul specifically did not use that word.

But when it comes to submission, he was talking about a voluntary submission. But it does not apply to a husband who would lead the wife astray, away from pleasing God, into something that would be wrong, harmful, or abusive.

Children, I want you to listen. If there is something going on at your home that you know it is wrong, that it does not please God, that is causing harm to you, to your body, to your mind, or someone else in the home, you need to tell somebody.

[12 : 09] You need to tell somebody here. Tell me. Tell me. Tell Mike. Tell your Sunday school teacher. Tell your teacher at school. Tell your guidance counselor.

But don't live in an abusive situation. You don't have to. There's people who can help you. You need to understand that. If we ever face the choice between obeying God or obeying any kind of human authority, we don't even have to pray about it.

The early church leaders, as we saw last week, they set the example for us when they told those authorities in Jerusalem who told them, you cannot preach in Jesus' name, they said this.

Look at it in Acts 5.29. We must obey God rather than men. Now, what we're looking at applies to children living at home with their parents.

Let me say it here. I left it out in the first service. I had to put it in at the very end. As a child grows up, they need to be given more responsibility and freedom.

[13 : 22] You shouldn't expect your 16-year-old to look to you and respond to you the way that a 6-year-old responds. Part of our responsibility as parents is to teach our children how to be responsible and be responsible mature adults when they leave home.

Well, that doesn't happen overnight. It needs to be a gradual process of giving your child freedom until they abuse it and letting them make more decisions on their own.

And not trying to rule with an iron fist, a young adult who's been responsible, who acts mature, who's given you every reason to trust them.

So that's important here. But we are talking about looking at that which applies to children who are living at home with their parents. But when children grow up and move out on their own, this command no longer applies.

Now, that should be obvious. Normal parents do not expect their adult children to obey them. But all parents aren't normal. Now, I have not received any kind of communication from anyone in light of this.

[14 : 43] But there could be some parents in here. You just have not let go of your adult child. You're still trying to control your adult son or daughter who's out on their own.

Maybe married. That's wrong. That's not your place. They are adults.

They're responsible. And if you want to have a healthy relationship, you will acknowledge that. Be thankful for that. Let them go and support them in that. Parents can be good advisors because they have more life experience.

They're older. But in most situations, parents are not wise to offer too much unsolicited advice.

And some parents need to hear that. I am thankful. Lisa and I both. We grew up. We had good parents. We both had freedom.

[15 : 58] Learned responsibility. We got married. Benaiah was 22 and Lisa was 19. And we were mature, responsible adults. One year later, we moved to Fort Worth, Texas from this part of the country.

On our own. We were prepared. Our parents. We have asked them questions all through the years.

Sought their advice about some things. But rarely, if ever, they offer unsolicited advice.

And we always had a good relationship. Now, believe this or not, I do not offer a whole lot of unsolicited advice to my boys and daughters-in-law.

You can ask them. They're in this service. I said, not too often. They live their lives. They're on their own.

[16 : 59] They ain't coming back. I'm not bailing them out. Seriously. There's probably very few. But there's some parents who make life difficult for their adult children.

Because they won't let them go. They won't just bless them. Let them be on their own. Let your adult children be on your own. And teach your children as they grow up to accept more and more responsibility.

And when they do become of age, they can go out and be on their own. And not be dependent upon you. Period. Now, having said all that, children never outgrow the command to honor their father and mother.

Honoring our father and mother is a lifelong responsibility. Responsibility. That's talking about not obeying them. It's talking about respecting them. Loving them. Having a relationship with them.

Helping them if they have certain needs. But Paul gives a very good reason. Let me move on here. Paul gives a very good reason why children should obey their parents.

[18 : 10] Look at this. This pleases the Lord. Boys and girls and young people living at home. Obeying your parents is not some archaic, out-of-date command.

Obedying your parents pleases the Lord. It brings a smile to God's face. Jesus smiles when you obey your parents with a good attitude. When you obey them the first time.

When you obey them in everything. If you're a child living at home. And you are a Christian. One of the most important ways you can honor God and please Jesus.

Is to obey your parents like we're talking about. Here's what I want you to understand. Boy or girl, teenager. If you are a Christian there should be within you a desire to obey God.

And in this particular, what we're looking at today. There should be a desire in you to obey God by obeying your parents. There should be something within you.

[19 : 16] The Spirit of God should be in you if you're a Christian. That you want to honor your parents. You want to please the Lord by obeying them. Here's what I want you to understand.

Boys and girls, teenagers. If you don't really care at all about honoring God and pleasing Jesus. I don't see how you could even think that you are a Christian.

Christian is someone in whom the Spirit of God dwells. And the Spirit of God gives all of us. No matter what age you are. If you're a believer. If you're in Christ. He gives us the desire and the ability to please the Lord.

Children have responsibilities in the home. But so do parents. Look at this. God's instructions to fathers or parents. Verse 21.

Fathers do not provoke your children. Lest they become discouraged. This verse is addressed to fathers. Because they have been given the God given responsibility to lead their family.

[20 : 19] Men. Husbands. Fathers. Fathers. God has given you the responsibility. It's an awesome responsibility. To be the leader of your home.

The leader of your family. I want to make that clear. But what is said here applies to mothers as well. In terms of not provoking your children.

The word translated fathers. Is translated parents. In Hebrews chapter 11. In referring to Moses' parents. Look at it. By faith. Moses.

When he was born. Was hidden for three months. By his parents. That is the same root word. That is translated fathers. In Colossians 3.

21. Now. These instructions that we're looking at. They also apply to grandparents. Guardians. Or whoever has the responsibility. For the children of the home.

[21 : 17] So. Wherever that applies. Take that this morning. Parents have the God given authority. Over their children. Boys and girls and young people.

Do you understand that? God has given your parents. The responsibility. To be an authority. Over you. Parents are to lead.

And rule. The home. Not the children. I want to say that again. Parents. I want to say it stronger.

Have the God given. Responsibility. To lead. And rule. The home. Not. The children.

But. God wants parents to exercise their authority. In the right way. The right way includes. Demonstrating the Christ like character qualities. That we've been looking at.

[22 : 15] In this study. For an example. Compassion. Kindness. Patience. And most importantly. Love. Exercise authority as a parent.

But make sure you do it with compassion. Kindness. Patience. Love. These kind of things. The right way also includes. Lovingly disciplining your children.

And did any parent ever learn this? I did. Children do not automatically obey. Any of you ever see that happen in your home? Your children just didn't.

Automatically want to be excited about. Obeying you. No. You know what the children's problems are? They're sinners. Just like we are.

They've got to be taught to obey. That requires. Discipline. Both. Both. Positive. Teaching. Training. And negative. Correcting.

[23 : 13] Punishment. Now. God provides us with the best model. Of loving discipline. And the way he disciplines us as his children. And it's described in Hebrews chapter 12.

The whole passage. Verses 5 through 11. I'll give you three examples. From three verses. Look at this. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves. And chastises every son whom he receives.

If you are left without discipline. In which all have participated. Then you are illegitimate children. And not sons. For the moment.

All discipline seems painful. Rather than pleasant. But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. To those who have been trained by it.

Discipline is good for children. Sometimes it's going to be painful for children. And that's okay. That's just a part of what discipline involves.

[24 : 14] But I want to not just dwell on that part. God's discipline and parents discipline. It does involve teaching. It does involve training. And it will involve correction and punishment.

It involves teaching and training. And the right kind of behavior. Modeling it. As well as teaching it. But it also involves correcting.

Wrong behavior. It is your job as a parent. To teach your children these things. And to correct the wrong behavior. It's your job.

Children are problems in schools. By and large. Because children have been taught. And allowed to get by. Being troublemakers at home.

I know too many teachers. There's a lot of teachers in our church. And I hear time and time again. And I read things. You do too.

[25 : 14] There's been a great breakdown. In the American home. Family. Parents don't parent. They don't discipline. They don't teach. They don't correct anymore.

And so all this is dumped into the laps of teachers. And it's an impossible task. I do believe one of the hardest jobs. In American society today.

Is the teaching profession. It's not because. Teaching is more difficult. It's what. Is expected of teachers. To deal with.

Put up with. Endure. In addition to trying to teach. Their subject. Teach the children the subject. The main point Paul makes here.

Let me back up a moment. Parents who love their children. Will not neglect. Discipline and correction. God's the model. Our Heavenly Father. He loves us.

[26 : 19] And so when we sin. When we rebel. When we ignore him. He is going to discipline us. But it's all because he loves us. He's going to bring us back to himself. Children will not grow.

Mature and gain wisdom on their own. God has appointed you as a parent. To teach them. To train them. To correct them.

Even to punish them. Now. The main point Paul makes. Verse 21. Addresses the wrong way of exercising authority. This is what we've been coming to.

It's important to discipline. It's important for parents to exercise authority. But it's important that you do it the right way. The wrong way. Look at it. Fathers. Do not provoke your children. Lest they become discouraged.

The word translated provoke. Is also translated embitter. Or exasperate. Calvin the reformer. Says parents must not irritate their children. By unreasonable severity.

[27 : 16] How do parents provoke their children. And discourage them. There's a lot of things that could be said here.

I ran across something this past week. Eric Raymond. You can read some of his writings on the Gospel Coalition website. He came up with what I think is a helpful list.

Some of the ways parents provoke their children. And discourage them. Now it's not the guy's fault. In the running the projector this morning. I had some technical issues.

And so I don't have this list on the PowerPoint. So I want you to listen. But it's important. I'm going to put it in the newsletter this coming week. But I want you to listen. Some of the ways parents provoke their children.

And discourage them. Listen. Number one. Bullying. And what he's talking about is harsh and intimidating words from parents in authority over their child can be greatly discouraging.

[28 : 18] Parents, as a general rule, bigger, stronger, and just by pure size are intimidating at times. And it's important that parents are not guilty of being so harsh and intimidating in the way that they talk to their children, treat their child.

Parents need to be careful that they are not bullying. Number two. Showing favoritism. If parents favor one child over another, discouragement is inevitable.

Jealousy is as well. Conflict is on down the road. Think of Jacob and Esau in the Old Testament in Genesis as an example.

Number three. Unclear standards. He says kids need to know and understand the standards they are being held to. What do you expect me to do?

What can I not do? He says if not, they'll be confused, surprised, and discouraged. Number four. Unexplained discipline. He's talking about discipline requires instruction.

[29 : 33] There is a need to explain what is right. And when you can, why it's right. There's a need to explain what is wrong. And when you can, why it is wrong.

Number five. Inconsistency. Parents need to be consistent with their kids. If something is wrong on Tuesday, it should also be wrong on Thursday. If you laugh at it on Tuesday, how in the world are you going to spank them on Thursday?

For doing the very same thing. Number six. Excessive or unreasonable discipline. Excessive or unreasonable discipline.

He says just as there are levels of rebellion, there should be corresponding levels of discipline. Also, parents can't discipline for every single thing that the child does that is wrong.

Otherwise, you never stop correcting. He says be careful of punishing too often or excessively. Discipline should be reasonable.

[30 : 42] Some Christian parents who take their responsibilities seriously, and they're going to be strong disciplinarians, this is a tendency to go overboard, what he's talking about.

You can't punish everything, every time, every little thing, every time that is. Major things, yes. Number seven. Discipline out of anger.

Parents who are out of control and losing their temper will hurt their children and discourage them. Think of how twisted it is to inflict harm in the name of love.

It will almost certainly damage the child and the relationship. Be careful, parents, of being out of control when you discipline.

Number eight. Humiliation. Parents are seeking to build up their kids. If they are humiliating them in public, in front of their friends, at home, in front of their siblings, or even just one-on-one, that's going to provoke them.

[31 : 47] That's going to alienate them. Number nine. Here's a way to provoke your child. Never admit you are wrong. Kids live with their parents.

They see when we mess up. If the parent never admits they're wrong, especially when the offense is against the child, children will soon see through it.

Humility is required of a parent. When you're wrong, you mistreat your child. Say, I'm wrong.

I was wrong. I'm sorry. Would you forgive me? And number ten. Listen to this. Over-protection and smothering.

Today's helicopter parent. Well-meaning over-protection can cause discouragement and resentment. Remember, kids are people who need to grow.

[32 : 45] Their wills should be shepherded, but they can't be controlled absolutely. You can't make your child what you want him or her to be.

You can teach. You can train. You can discipline. You can model. You can do a lot of things. But you cannot shield them from all harm.

And you cannot make them in your image. Parenting is hard. It's hard work. But God is gracious.

By the power of God's Spirit and His Word, we can be faithful parents. Every time we do a parent-child ceremony here, I always use this quote by Cal Thomas that emphasizes a parent being faithful, not perfect.

Look at this. He says, make sure that at the end of your life, he's talking to parents, make sure that at the end of your life, regardless of how your child turns out, that you can honestly stand before God and say, in a fallen world, being the sinner that I am, I did the best I could through the power you gave me.

[34 : 05] If you can't say that, whatever else you have accomplished doesn't matter. Christian parents are not perfect, cannot be perfect.

And God doesn't hold us to a standard of perfection in our parenting. But He does hold us to a standard of being faithful. Being faithful with the help and wisdom He gives us.

Final thoughts here. Boys and girls and young people living at home. Are you obeying your parents and everything with a good attitude? I'm sure some of you boys and girls, young people, you are seeking to be faithful to do that.

And I commend you for it. But if you're not, why aren't you? Is it that you're not willing to submit to God's authority in your home?

Could it be that you're not a Christian? Could it be that what needs to take place in your life is you need to humble yourself before the Lord? Admit your sinfulness.

[35 : 14] Call upon Jesus to save you. Commit your life to Him. To live in life His way, not your way. And a part of living life His way is to obey your parents.

Parents, are you seeking to love your children, discipline them, but not provoke and discourage them? And I have no doubt many parents in here, while you're not perfect, you are seeking to be faithful to do that.

But if you're not, why aren't you? What needs to change? I'm convinced that the longer time goes on and we've gone from the generation, the World War II, the builder generation, they tried to make things easier for their children.

That was my parents making things easier for me. Me wanting things to be easier for my kids. And I think on down through the generations, we've let too many things go.

We've become more selfish with each generation, more self-centered. And I think a lot of times, parents today, the problem is that you're more concerned about yourself, having everything your way, than you are thinking about your children being a God-given responsibility and seeking to discover their needs and meet their needs.

[36 : 42] And that takes time, that takes energy, that takes sacrifice. And maybe that's the kind of commitment that you need to make this morning. Children and parents, let's remember the key ingredient in all relationships.

It's love. Look at this. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Let's pray together. Dear God, show every child and teenager in this room living with their parents, how they should respond right now to your word, your truth.

Help them to do that. Help them to be a child that obeys in everything with the right attitude.

Father, show every parent or grandparent or whoever's in charge of children in their home how they should respond. Help them to see where there needs to be more or less loving discipline.

[37 : 53] Help them to see if they are provoking and discouraging their child. Help them to confess and turn from sinful things that are causing that.

Help them to exercise more self-control, more personal denial, more self-giving. Let's just be in an attitude of prayer and listen to the Lord and respond to Him.

It's what we all need to do now. And I'd be happy to pray with anyone if you would like for me to. Here at the front during these next few minutes. Let's pray with us.