

when parents are serious.

- Our authority must be clearly and consistently established. Use only the necessary words, and teach your children to develop eye contact and listening skills. Show, by example, that you listen to them as you expect them to listen.
- Remember to make rewards and disciplinary consequences, not only age appropriate, but also task appropriate. Don't over-punish minor misbehaviors.
- Teach your child that all actions bring consequences. Encourage them when they make good choices. They need to know the benefits of obeying and making good choices, as well as the negative consequences for disobedience.
- State directives/results and follow through; don't issue idle threats. Give predictable consequences, such as, "If you behave in *this* way, *this* will happen."

Teach them good and moral behaviors by displaying your own good and moral behaviors. Go to church as a family. Plan healthy family activities that promote good morals and "together" time. You will soon see your child mirror your values and morals. Child discipline and training does not occur in a vacuum. Their behaviors are formed within the context of what they witness in their primary teachers.

Parents please understand your children will not like discipline. The writer of Hebrews specifically states, "No discipline is pleasant at the time it is occurring." Yet, the day will come when discipline within the loving Christian family will be received with respect and the results will show up later in life.

Finally, lead your children. Be parents of honor by loving your children and by limiting your children. Let them see your example of how you follow Christ, how you love others, how you react in hardship, how you act in moments of joy and success. Set the example so they can follow.

In the book of 1 Samuel, Hannah who was barren had prayed for a child and God blessed her with the birth of Samuel. We find Hannah back in the temple in the place where she had prayed for a child presenting Samuel back to the Lord and she utters this prayer:

As surely as you live, my Lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD."

Will you make this your prayer as a parent? Will you recognize that ultimately your children belong to God and not to you? Will you choose to love them, limit them and lead them, so they will grow to be adults who love and fear the Lord? Will you release them into God's grace and care? If you and I can find the grace to do this we can become parents who are worthy of honor.

¹Gretchen Malik, Suite 101.com

²Elizabeth G. Junod, "When words will not suffice," Sermon, The Scarsdale Congregational Church, May 23, 1999.



The Trinity Pulpit

Being Worthy of Honor Ephesians 6:1-4 Dr. Jeff Roberts May 23, 2010

The structure of this sermon was borrowed from Dr. Adrian Rogers' book, "Ten Secrets for a Successful Family."

Some years ago there was a Prodigal Son cartoon in which a father was going down the road to meet his son. The caption read, "I'll be glad when this boy grows up; this is the sixth fatted calf." When does one become responsible? I think this cartoon describes the frustrating and sometimes painful struggle that we call parenting. As parents we are torn between teaching them a lesson and loving them unconditionally. We are faced with how to show our children how much we love them, and at the same time helping them to become grown and independent adults. As parents, we struggle with the thoughts of when will they be on their own and what will we do when they are no longer in our home. These are the emotions and challenges of being a parent.

In Ephesians 6:1-4, Paul turns his attention to the parent and child relationship within the Christian home. It is important for us to understand that Paul's instructions are for Christian families. This instruction is how we are to relate as husbands and wives and as parents and children within a home where Christ is served. The assumption in Ephesians is that we all want to please God. That is why our instructions to submit to each other, to love each other and to act certain ways toward one another is about being pleasing to Christ. As children we obey our parents not because they are perfect, but because they love the Lord and we are under their authority. As children we honor our father and mother. That is we think of them in the highest way not because they are perfect, but because they are Christian parents who are seeking to do what is right. So out of love for Christ we honor our father and mother.

Before we go to the parents this morning let's look at the first part of Paul's instructions. As children we are to obey and honor our parents. Paul quotes the Ten Commandments that say we should obey our parents, for when we do we get a promise of a long life. It is the only commandment, as Paul writes, that comes with a promise. If we are blessed to be in a Christian home where parents love the Lord, they are seeking to do what is right, then as children we are to obey them and show them honor. Now again that does not mean they are perfect parents, but it does mean that we know what they ask us to do is for our best interest. Even when we do not agree or understand the Christian child, out of submission to Christ they should obey his or her parents. They also should honor them. That has something to do with attitude. It is one thing to obey them. Yet, sometimes we obey them with disgust toward them. Honoring our parents is to have a proper attitude toward them. The truth is, even in homes where the parent is not a Christian we can honor them with respect.

As parents we like this verse because we want to say to our children, "I told you so." The Bible says you must obey me and you must honor me. But that is not the end of the instructions. We are told that we are not to exasperate our children, but we are to train and raise them by the instructions of the Lord. We have a great responsibility to our children. We are instructed to raise them in a way they will know the Lord and they will respond with obedience and honor.

The question comes to us as parents, how can we be parents that are worthy of honor? Let me share three ideas with you about how we can be parents worthy of honor.

First, we can be parents that love our children. We might think that loving our children is something that is just assumed, but our children only know of our love by our actions. What does it mean to love

our children? Here are a few ideas.

Primarily, we love our children by showing them affection. A gentle touch and hug is one of the first ways we show our children our love, and it is something that we can continue to practice their whole lives. When our children are born, one of the first steps that physicians take is to place the new born on the mother's chest or into the father's arms. Why do they do that? Because this is your child and those early moments of touch and physical connection is so important for our children.

Gretchen Malik wrote in Suite 101.com:

Touching can make your immune system stronger and your mood lighter. The more touches you give or receive, the better you feel. Touching is a necessity for a healthy life. When we touch, be it a gentle pat, hug or massage, we receive various benefits. A half-hour massage can boost your immune system and lessen stress making you feel calmer and happier. Touching is an easy way to add comfort to your life. And all women appreciate touches because our skin is more sensitive than a man's. Since we experience a higher level of stress and lower levels of the chemicals that combat stress, our benefit of physical touch is very appreciated. The effects of touch are less obvious, but very powerful and necessary. Our need for human contact is necessary. Babies who are not touched fail to grow normally. Children, who are not lovingly touched often, grow up to be more physically violent. And that's a shame because our society is starting to become a "hands to ourselves" environment.¹

It is true we live in a time of sexual harassment, sexual abuse and horrible things happening to children. The result is that we have become a hand's off culture. We are afraid to hug, shake hands, or pat one another on the back. How different in the early church where they met with a "holy kiss." I am not suggesting we all start kissing hello when we meet, but I am suggesting that we all crave affection and that is especially true for our children. So, hug them often and hug them long. Hug them even when they are too big to hug. Keep hugging them. Hug them when they pull away you are still bigger, so hold them and hug them. I have noticed with my children that they long for the hugs.

Love them with blessing. The Bible is full of the power of the blessing. The blessing and the curse had power in the Bible. The spoken word was an entity all of its own. When it was spoken it could not just be taken back and retracted. There was

power in the spoken word. There still is. We have the power to bless our children with our words.

Have you ever wondered where the term "God Bless You" after someone sneezed originated? In the early Roman times the response to a sneeze was "evil spirit be gone." In the early 7th century the Pope changed the response. It seemed that there was an unidentified plague that was rampant in Italy. Symptoms of this plague were that people infected would sneeze a lot right before death. Therefore, the Pope asked everyone to respond to any sneeze with a blessing of God Bless You. The thought was that a blessing could bring healing.

That part is right. A blessing can bring a healing. The child who is broken by words at school can be healed by words at home. The child that has failed can be encouraged by a blessing at home. When we bless our children we do bring healing to their souls. Love your children by blessing them.

Love your children by listening to them. The truth is we reveal what is important by how we listen. If there is something we are very interested in we listen carefully. However, if we really do not care we do not listen. We struggle with this in our culture because we are so use to doing so many things at once and not concentrating on anything.

It used to be that only doctors had pagers and the only person who carried a telephone around with him was the president of the United States to be used only in case of emergency. Now we can all be found anywhere, anytime, by anyone who needs us.

The Internet, email, mass media, fax, a well-organized postal system, not to mention the good old-fashioned telephone, and the ever-popular voice mail message system.

We are a highly communicated, stay-in-touch culture.

And yet, the proliferation of the very public cell phone has given us a window into the way many of us actually attend to each other. People are eating in fine restaurants, playing cards on the train, shopping, working on the computer, cooking, reading the paper, biking, hiking, driving and Lord knows what else all while talking on the phone.

Although our ability to correspond is prolific, it has become rather preoccupied ... and that can make us hard of hearing! ...² Jesus constantly after teaching would say, "He who has ears let him hear." Jesus was reminding us that

there is more to listening than just the sounds reverberating in our ears. Listening takes attention, reflection and concentration. A grown woman told me the other day at her mother's funeral that her greatest gift was she listened. She did not always try to fix everything she just listened. She commented to me, "do you know how few people really listen."

Love them by praying for them. The one thing we can do for our children no matter how old they are is pray for them. Richard Foster tells the story of how every night when his children were infants, he would go in and place his hand on them while they slept and pray over them. We can do that when they are infants. But we don't have to stop when they are young. We can pray for them as they grow. We can pray for them in the times of choices as teens. We can pray for them as they try to find their way as young adults. We can pray for them as they enter work, when they move away and are grown and parents and grandparents themselves. One thing we know is that no matter how old we get our children are still our children. We can always pray for them.

Secondly, we are parents of honor when we love our children, but also when we limit our children. Loving our children and limiting our children are not opposites, but an integral part of the whole of Christian parenting. A child who is not disciplined is not loved. Discipline is essential to loving our children.

In the book of Hebrews the writer is writing about how to face hardships, and in his argument he makes some assumptions about the discipline of earthly parents. In Hebrews 12:7 and following we find the instruction to receive hardship as discipline from God. Then the writer makes these assumptions:

Our earthly fathers disciplined us and we respected them for it. No discipline is pleasant at the time of discipline, but it will bring about a harvest of righteousness and peace.

Discipline in the home where there is love is another form of love. The Bible is filled with such instructions to us.

Proverbs 13:24

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Proverbs 15:5

A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

Proverbs 19:18

Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not

be a willing party to his death.

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.

I am not here today to tell you exactly how to discipline your child, for the truth is every child responds to different types of discipline. I just want you to know that when you discipline your child you are showing love toward your child.

Child discipline is one of the most important elements of successful parenting, yet more and more parents just don't know what to do. Discipline (or training) might simply be defined as *a process to help children learn appropriate behaviors and make good choices*. In addition, loving, effective discipline aids a child in exercising self-control, accountability, and mutual respect.

Through proper discipline, children learn how to function in a family and society that is full of boundaries, rules, and laws by which we all must abide. With it, children gain a sense of security, protection, and often feel accomplishment. Without proper discipline, children are at risk for a variety of behavioral and emotional problems.

How do we effectively implement child discipline? The Bible says parents have a God-given responsibility to train their child in the way he should go. That challenge often requires that we first learn to discipline *ourselves* in the matters of child rearing. Whether parenting skills come naturally or we learn them through trial and error, they are accomplished by consistency, encouragement, and example. The importance of these tools cannot be expressed enough.

Here are some effective child discipline techniques using instruction:

- State boundaries and commands clearly and concisely. As parents, we cannot flip-flop when children try to bargain or negotiate - and they will. Children will test us to see if we will give in to their persuasive pleas (no matter their age).
- We must deliver our instructions calmly, yet steadfastly, not as a quivering request. It is more effective to say, "Do not go into the street. Stay in our yard," instead of "Mommy doesn't want you to leave the yard, ok?" Children must know