

THE BELIEVING WIFE AND HUSBAND ARE TO WALK IN A SPIRIT OF SUBMISSION AND LOVE EPHESIANS 05:22–33

Introduction

When dealing with wives and husbands, we must always remember that God’s instructions are not grievous. In fact, they are easy and light. God instructs and guides us down the easiest and lightest path possible. As Christ said:

Mat 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

If we walk down the path God has laid for us — if we do just what He says — we experience the most loving and peaceful, the richest and fullest life imaginable. This is *doubly true* for husband and wife, for they have the companionship of each other as well of the Lord.

- I. The wife is to walk in a spirit of submission (vv. 22-24).
- II. The husband is to love his wife (vv. 25-33).

I. Ephesians 05:22–24 Walking in a Spirit of Submission

The wife is to walk in a spirit of submission. There are three reasons why the wife is to be submissive to her husband.

1. To submit is God’s will. In fact, it is a commandment of God. There is to be no equivocation, no argument, not even a question about it: “Wives, submit to your husbands.”

God is God, and as God, He has the right to demand anything of us. But note the words “as to the Lord.” When we do anything, we are to do it *as to the Lord*. Why? Because we love Him. The Lord has loved and given Himself for us, given Himself that He might save us. He loved us; therefore, we love Him. This is always the first reason we obey Him. We love Him; therefore, when He says to do something, we do it *as to Him* — to please Him.

Now, let us ask ourselves: What kind of spirit is the Christian wife to have as she obeys God?

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| => A spirit of slavery or love? | => A spirit of drudgery or love? |
| => A spirit of resentment or love? | => A spirit of reaction or love? |
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The answer is obvious: she acts out of love. She loves the Lord; therefore, to please Him she submits herself to her husband. The point is this: God instructs wives to walk in a spirit of submission with their husbands. Therefore, Christian wives do not obey the Lord out of resentment and reaction because of the commandment. They obey the Lord out of love because they love both the Lord and their husbands. Therefore, they focus and set their lives upon pleasing the Lord and their husbands. If the Lord says do it, then they do it because they love the Lord and want to please Him above all else.

2. To submit is God's order for the family (v. 2). There is to be a *partnership* and order within the family. This is basic for the family and society to exist. In fact, no organization, no matter what it is, can survive and exist without a spirit of partnership and order. Note three important facts.
 - a. The husband is the head of the wife. The word "head" in Scripture refers to authority not being. Neither man nor woman is superior to the other in being. Men and women are equal in God's eyes.
- => There is an essential partnership between men and women. Neither is independent of the other. Both are from the other, and the relationship that exists between them has come from God.

1 Cor 11:11-12 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

- => There is neither male nor female in God's eyes. He sees both men and women as one, each as significant as the other.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

When God talks about man being the head of the woman, He is not talking about ability, worth, competence, value, brilliance or advantage. God is talking about function and order within an organization. Every organization has to have a head for it to be operated in an efficient and orderly manner. There are no greater organizations than God's universe, His church and His Christian family. Within God's order of things there is a partnership, but every partnership must have a head, and God has ordained that man is the head of the partnership.

- b. The great pattern for the wife to follow is Christ and the church. Christ is the head of the church. This simply means that Christ has authority over the church. So long as the church lives by this rule, the church experiences love, joy and peace — orderliness — and it is able to carry out its function and mission on earth to the fullest. So it is with the husband; he is the head of the family, the ultimate authority in the family. The wife is to be submissive to that authority just as the church is to be submissive to Christ.

So long as she and the rest of the family live by this rule, the family experiences love, joy and peace — orderliness — and it fulfils its function and purpose on earth. This, of course, assumes that the husband is fulfilling his part in the family. As in any organization, each member must do his part for the organization to be orderly and accomplish its purpose.

- c. The husband is the saviour of the body just as Christ is the Saviour of the church. Christ is the great Protector and Comforter of the church. So the husband is to be the *protector and comforter* of the wife. By nature, that is, by the constitution and build of the body, the husband is stronger than the wife. Therefore, in God's order of things, he is to be the main protector and comforter of the wife. These two functions are two of the great benefits which the wife receives from a loving husband who is faithful to the Lord.
3. To submit is a spiritual mystery (v. 23). The wife's submission is comparable to Christ and the church. Again, Christ is the pattern for the wife:

=> as she submits to Christ, so she is to submit to her husband.

=> as she depends upon Christ for help and protection, so she is to depend upon her husband for help and protection.

=> as she depends upon Christ for companionship and comfort, so she is to depend upon her husband for companionship and comfort.

In summary, the submission that wives are to show to their husbands is an example of the submission that all believers are to show to one another (Eph. 5:21). It does not mean that women are inferior to men. It simply means that there is to be an arrangement, an order in the household. Every *body* must have such order, and every *body* must have a head. Two heads in any body or organization would be a monstrosity and make for disorder. Therefore, in God's order of things for the family, the husband is the head over the family. He arranges things in a spirit of *tenderness and love* and the wife is to submit herself in a sweet spirit of *understanding and reasonableness* (see Prov. 31:10-31).

1 Cor 7:10 *To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.*

Col 3:18 *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

1 Tim 2:11-13 *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

1 Tim 3:11 *In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

Titus 2:4 Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.

1 Pet 3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives.

Prov 31:27 She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Gen 3:16 To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

II. *Ephesians 05:25–33 Husband’s Love for his Wife*

The husband is to love his wife. Note five significant points.

1. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is the very love of God Himself (agape love). *Agape* love is a selfless and unselfish love, a giving and sacrificial love. It is the love of the mind and will as well as of the heart. It is not only a love of affection and feelings; it is a love of the *will and commitment*. It is a love that wills and commits itself to love a person. It is the love that works for the highest good of the person loved...
 - that loves even if the person *does not deserve to be loved*
 - that loves even if the person is *utterly unworthy of being loved*

Thought 1. Just imagine! What would happen in most marriages if the husband so loved his wife, loved her...

- with a selfless and unselfish love
- with a giving and sacrificial love
- with a love of the will as well as of the heart
- with a love of commitment as well as of affection

One thing that would happen in most marriages would be this: the wife would willingly accept his authority as the head of the family.

Note that the standard of the husband’s love is the love of Christ for the church. The love of Christ for the church can be described in one simple statement: Christ *gave Himself* for the church. Christ loved the church so much that He gave Himself — *sacrificed Himself totally* — gave all He was and had for it. This is the love the husband is to have for his wife. Chrysostom, a great minister in the early church, said:

If it be needful that you shouldst give your life for her, or be cut to pieces a thousand times, or endure anything whatever, refuse it not ...He brought the Church to His

feet by His great care, not by threats nor fear nor any such thing; so do you conduct thyself towards your wife. (Quoted by Barclay. The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, p. 206.)

The sacrificial love of the husband involves three things. Note that the very things said about Christ and the church are to be true of the husband and wife.

- a. The husband's love involves being *set apart and cleansed*. The word *holy* means to sanctify, to be set apart. When a young man asks a young lady to be his wife, he sets himself apart for her and for her alone. His word, his act, his promise of marriage also causes her to set herself apart. When he speaks the word and makes the promise of marriage, he and she both are thereafter set apart and cleansed for each other.

A dirty bride or groom — a dirty, defiled marriage — is unthinkable. The one thing above all else that will keep the marriage sanctified and cleansed is the husband's sacrificial love. If the husband will love his wife to the point that he gives himself sacrificially, his love will not only protect him, but it will go a long way in protecting the sanctity and purity of his wife.

- b. The husband's love involves having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish. Stains would mean the mistakes that tarnish one's life and marriage, mistakes so serious that they are very difficult to wash off one's body and out of one's mind. They would include such things as...
- mistreatment and abuse
 - loose and immoral behaviour
 - withdrawal and avoidance

Wrinkles would mean things that cause friction and rattle the nerves and that need ironed out. They would include such things as...

- temper and reaction
- broken promises and serious neglect
- severe selfishness and rejection

- c. The husband's love involves being holy and blameless. The word *holy* (*hagia*) means to be separate and untouched by evil. The husband's love — if it is a real love — will stir him to be holy and unblemished and go a long way in stirring his wife to be holy and blameless.

Thought 1. This point is striking — a real eye-opener. It shows just how dependent the marriage is upon the love of the husband — how much effect the husband's love has upon the marriage. Few wives could reject such love; few wives would refuse to walk hand in hand with their husbands if they truly loved them with the love that is unselfish and sacrificial.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

1 Pet 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

2. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is the very same love he has for his own body. This is a startling statement. Note again what it says: the husband is to love his wife just as much as he loves *his own body*.

a. This means that he is to feed and care for his wife as he does his own body.

=> The word *feed* (ektrephei) means to clothe, nurture and look after until she is mature in the marriage and then to continue nourishing her as long as she lives.

=> The word *care* (thalpei) means to hold ever so dear within the heart; to treat with warmth, tenderness, care, affection and appreciation.

Thought 1. What a difference would exist in marriage if the husband just *fed and cared for* his wife as he does his own body. Think through the meaning of the two words for just a moment and imagine the difference that could exist.

b. This means that he is to become one body with his wife. Two people could never become any closer. This is complete absorption and assimilation of each into the other — a complete union and oneness...

- of body and spirit
- of mind and thoughts
- of objective and purpose
- of behaviour and activity

The husband becomes one with his wife, and the wife becomes one with her husband. The two become one flesh. (This is dealt with more fully in the following point.)

3. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is to be the love that will stir him to leave his parents and be joined to his wife (see *United, Joined*, Eph. 5:31).

4. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is a spiritual mystery — a *spiritual love* — a love just like Christ's love for the church (see *Spiritual Union*, Eph. 5:32).

5. The conclusion is simple and straightforward: the husband is to *love his wife as himself*, and the wife is to *reverence (respect and esteem) her husband* (v. 33). ■

EPHESIANS 05: 31 UNITED, JOINED (PROSKOLLAO)

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” Ephesians 5:31

To join fast together; to glue together; to cement together; to be joined in the closest union possible; to be bound together; to be so totally united that two become one. Therefore, to join means a spiritual union. It is a union higher and stronger than the union of parent and child. It is a union that means more than living together, more than having sex and bearing offspring. Animals do this. It is a union that can be wrought by God alone (v. 11). It is a spiritual union that places man above the physical plane of animals. It is a spiritual fullness, a spiritual sharing of life together: a dedication, a consecration, a completeness, a satisfaction that makes a person the exclusive possession of God and of the spouse. As said, such a cleaving or spiritual union is wrought by God alone. Both husband and wife must be willing and submissive for God to bring about such a union in their lives. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21; Eph. 5:22-33).

There are three unions within a true marriage, that is, a marriage that *really unites* and is *really joined together* by God (Mt. 19:6).

1. There is the physical union: the sharing of each other’s body (1 Cor. 7:2-5). But note: physical sharing cannot reach its ultimate fullness unless it is experienced while conscious of God’s warm and tender mercies (Eph. 5:25-33).
2. There is the mental union: the sharing of each other’s life and dreams and hopes, and the working together to realize those dreams and hopes. It is important to note that this union still deals only with the physical and material world.
3. There is the spiritual union: the sharing, melting and moulding of each other’s spirit (see Eph. 5:25-33). This can be wrought only by God. Therefore, there has to be a sharing together with God for there to be a *nourishing* and *nurturing* of the spirit.

Now here is the point: the greatest thing in the world is to know God personally and to be perfectly assured that we shall live now and eternally — to have life abundant with all the love, significance, meaning and purpose humanly possible. But a man and a woman cannot experience abundant life of and by themselves. They can only nurture the mind and mesh themselves together mentally and physically. To be meshed together spiritually, the couple must share God and His saving grace together. When a couple shares God together day by day, God works supernaturally within their spirits, *melting* their beings and *moulding* them into what He calls *one flesh*. They actually become as *one person*. This is what is meant by “God has joined together.” The Greek word for *united* (sunzeugen)

actually means to be joined. It is God's yoking, joining and binding the couple together into such a spiritual union that causes them to become one person.

A couple who is spiritually united does two very practical things.

1. The couple "submits to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). They submit, yield, surrender, sacrifice and give themselves up to the other as they live day by day in the fear (trust) of God. Day by day they deliberately set out to nourish and cherish the other, even as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the church (Eph. 5:29). They work to become part of each other — so deliberately that they seek to become part of each other's body, each other's flesh and each other's bones (Eph. 5:30). They seek to be joined "as one flesh," no matter the surrender and sacrifice required. The meshing together is done by God. God takes such deliberate purpose and behaviour, such a melting of one's being, and moulds it into the flesh of the other — so much so the two actually become as one, not only physically and mentally, but spiritually as well.
2. The couple shares the presence of God and His saving grace together. As a result God gives them a spiritual assurance and strength which they share together throughout life. They share the knowledge and confidence...
 - that God will care for and look after them now and forever
 - that God will carry them through the devastating trials of life that confront every human being every so often
 - that God will bless them with all that is necessary as they walk through life together.
 - that God will give them an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ — forever and ever.

Again, the point is this: God takes such deliberate sharing of spiritual things and melts and moulds the man and woman into *one flesh* spiritually — so much so that they actually become one. A man and a woman being spiritually united by God as one person means that they cleave to one another and hold one another ever near and dear. Being united to one another in God's Spirit is true marriage — the glorious gift of God.

Thought 1. No more beautiful picture of marriage could be painted, yet two serious problems exist in far too many marriages.

- 1) The problem of one or both of the spouses being unwilling to be bound together by the Spirit of God.
- 2) The problem of one or both of the spouses being unwilling to break away from dependency upon the parents. □

EPHESIANS 05: 32 SPIRITUAL UNION, MARRIAGE

*This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church.
Ephesians 5:32*

Marriage is a spiritual union that can be wrought by God and by God alone (see Mt. 19:10-11). It is much more than two people merely agreeing to live together and to be loyal to one another. It is much more than natural affection or infatuation. It is much more than a mere piece of paper, more than a legal contract, more than bearing offspring. After all, animals do the same. Marriage, when it is brought together and honestly committed to God, is a totally unique union that is unlike any other relationship in life. When consummated by God and placed into the hands of God day by day, it is a *spiritual union* lifted ever so high and full of splendour and warmth and tenderness. It is the real experience of love and warmth and tenderness — the full preciousness and richness of sharing all with one another. In reality, a true marriage is indescribable. For a true marriage is a *spiritual experience* that is beyond anything known in the physical world. It is a spiritual union mutually experienced only by the couples who truly know the love of Christ for His church.

A true marriage is love (v. 25). It is sacrificial love (v. 25); a love for another person that is just as great as one's love for oneself (v. 28, 33). It is a love that cherishes (v. 29).

A true marriage is a union (v. 30). It is a union so completely and spiritually wrought that two persons become as one body and as one flesh (vv. 30-31).

A true marriage is a mystery (v. 32). It is a spiritual fact that has to be revealed by God if it is to be experienced by couples (v. 32). It is a spiritual mystery that can be illustrated only by the great love Christ has for His church (vv. 23-33).

Christ and His love are the symbolic example for the husband. The church and its love for Christ are the symbolic example for the wife. This picture says several practical things.

1. The Christian home is to be lived in the very presence and atmosphere of the Lord.
2. The Christian home is to be governed by the Lord. Its decisions are to be made in light of the Lord and His will.
3. The Christian home is not to have two partners, but three — husband, wife and Christ. □

BELIEVING CHILDREN AND PARENTS ARE TO TO WALK UNDER GOD'S AUTHORITY

EPHESIANS 06:01-04

Introduction

This is an important passage, not only for the day of Paul, but for every generation. It is particularly crucial for our day and time. Our generation is a generation of *problem children and problem parents*, and one of the major causes of the tension is the failure to heed the instructions of God's Word. Children and parents are to walk together under God's authority.

- I. Believing children are to obey (vv. 1-3).
- II. Believing parents are not to exasperate their children, but to train them in the Lord (v. 4).

I. *Ephesians 06:01-03 Children – Obedience*

Children are to obey their parents. The word *obey* (hupakouo) means to submit to; to comply with; to hearken; to heed; to follow the directions or guidance of some instruction. When a parent guides and directs a child, the child is to obey the parent. But what about the problems that are so repulsively evident in society: the problems of parental abuse — the problems of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and mental abuse? Is a child to obey a parent when the parent is so devilishly wrong? No! A thousand times no!

1. First, to obey means to obey *in the Lord*. Note the command again: “Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*.” The phrase “in the Lord” means at least two things.
 - a. There is a limit to the child's obedience. When a parent is not acting in the Lord, he is not to be obeyed. The Lord has nothing whatsoever to do with the filth of unrighteousness and abuse of precious children. If a child can break away and free himself from such parental corruption, he has every right to be freed from his parent. The Lord came to set men free from the abuse and the filth of sin, not to enslave men to it, and especially not to enslave children to it.

One of the most severe warnings in all of history was issued by the Lord Jesus to adults who abuse children:

Mark 9:42-43, 45, 47-48 “*And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin [by abusing a child], cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin [by lusting after a child], cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the*

kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

The abusing parent had better heed, for one of the things that God will not tolerate — absolutely not tolerate — is the abuse of a child. We must proclaim the Word of God: children are to obey their parents, but they are to obey only if the parents' desire and instructions are *in the Lord*. If a parent is beating a child black and blue or sexually abusing a child, the child should go to some other adult he feels close to and ask for his help. And we as ministers of the Lord — ministers who are called to proclaim Christ and to do what we can to bring His righteousness to earth — must teach the truth from the pulpits of the world.

- b. The phrase “in the Lord” also tells why the child is to obey his parents. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” — obeying your parents is right; it is of the Lord; it pleases the Lord; therefore, obey them. When they guide and instruct you, follow them (see Col. 3:20).

Lehman Strauss points out that obedience is the first law of the universe — that the law of obedience regulates everything in the world: the stars, the planets, the seasons. Even man himself tries to govern the world by the law of obedience. He wants obedience in the state, at work, at play and at home. (*Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 212.) The point is simply this: the law of obedience is the very nature of things, at the very core of the universe and of man's life and behaviour upon earth. Therefore, it is to be expected that God would command children to obey their parents. Children are to obey — obey because it pleases the Lord and it is the right thing to do.

Note the emphasis here; it is striking. Children are not told to obey parents because it pleases the parent, but because it pleases the Lord. Pleasing one's parents is, of course, a reason for obeying them. But the *first* reason for obeying parents is that it pleases the Lord. The child is to know the Lord to such a degree that he is continually thinking about the Lord and about pleasing Him. The child is to walk so closely to the Lord that his mind is constantly upon the Lord — upon what he can do to please the Lord. When the child so knows the Lord, then obeying his parents will become an automatic response.

Mark 7:10 *For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’*

Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

Prov 1:8 *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

Prov 6:20 My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Prov 7:1 My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.

Prov 10:1 A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.

Prov 20:11 Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.

Prov 23:22 Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Eccl 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."

2. Second, to obey parents means to honour one's father and mother. The word *honour* (*timao*) means to "esteem and value as precious" (The Amplified New Testament); to show respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy and obedience (Wuest. *Ephesians and Colossians*, Vol. 1, p. 136). Scripture is not speaking to any certain age child. It is speaking to all of us who are children with parents still living. We are to honour our fathers and mothers: *to esteem and value them as precious* — to respect and reverence them. Tragically, this is a rarity today. Too often a child's response to his parent is that of...

- talking back
- grumbling
- speaking disrespectfully
- calling the parent a cute, *but* disrespectful *name*
- putting off the instruction
- cutting the parent
- disregarding the instruction
- not listening
- acting like a "know it all"

In addition to these, there is the dishonour of delinquency, crime, drugs, alcohol and the abuse of property; and the list could go on and on. And when it comes to adult children with aged parents, there is the dishonour of neglect, the ignoring of their needs and the shuffling of them to the side and failing to adequately care for them. Too many adult children forget how much their parents have done for them — bringing them into the world and taking care of them for years. Too many children forget the rich experience and knowledge that their parents have gained through the years and that could be put to great use in meeting community and world needs. And even if the parents failed to be and to do all they should have, we as Christian children are instructed to honour them as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

1 Tim 5:4, 8 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. If anyone does not provide

for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Prov 20:20 *If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.*

Prov 30:17 *“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.*

Exo 20:12 *“Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*

Lev 19:3 *“Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.”*

Lev 19:32 *“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.”*

Deu 27:16 *“Cursed is the man who dishonours his father or his mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”*

Note the two promises made to children who honour their parents.

- => Things will go well for the child. Does this mean that the child will never have problems or have to suffer? No! This is not what the Scripture means. God means that He will be with the child, strengthen and take care of him so that he can *walk through* the trials of life victoriously. The child will be strengthened and made strong *where it counts — in the inner man*. He will be enabled to conquer and be victorious over whatever confronts him as he journeys through life.
- => The child is assured that he will live a long life on earth. Frankly, there is little question but that Paul meant this and that we should take it for what it says. If a child honestly obeys and honours his parents faithfully — really obeys and honours from the depths of his heart — God will give him a long life on earth.

Is there ever an exception to this? And what about small babies and children who are taken on to heaven? Does this violate the promise? No! If a child was really obedient, then all we can say is that God knows what is best, and for some reason, God wanted the precious little life with Him now. God just could not wait for the fellowship and joy which the precious little life would bring Him.

II. Ephesians 06:04 Parents – Children

Parents are not to exasperate their children. Parents are bound to upset and irritate their children sometimes; we all upset and irritate people sometimes. Discipline, correction, and reproof are seldom enjoyable experiences. Their very nature is that of disturbance and

irritation. This is not what this instruction means. The word *exasperate* (*parorgizo*) means to arouse to wrath or anger, to provoke to the point of utter exasperation and resentment. Note two significant discussions.

1. Four things will exasperate a child.
 - a. Failing to accept the fact that things do change. Time and generations do change. This does not mean that a child should participate nor be allowed to do everything that his generation does. But it does mean that parents need to be alert to the changes between generations and allow the child to be a part of his own generation instead of trying to conform the child to the parent's childhood generation. The parent's childhood generation does not exist nor will it ever exist again.

What changes should and should not be allowed by a Christian parent? Three words provide a good guideline: *rebellion*, *immorality*, and *injustice*. Open defiance or resistance to authority and immorality and injustice are contrary to God's Word. Any change that involves rebellion, immorality or injustice needs to be dealt with and controlled by the parent. We are probably safe to say that any change not involving one of these areas should be allowed. Whether true or not, these three areas provide a good practical guideline.

The point is this: a parent must not resist normal and natural change that takes place between generations. If he resists and forbids his child to grow up in his own generation, the parent is asking for trouble. Most likely the child will be exasperated — to react.

- b. Over controlling a child will also exasperate a child. Over control ranges all the way from stern restriction and discipline to child abuse (dealt with above in footnote two, point one). Disciplining and restricting a child *too much* will either stifle the growth of a child or stir him to react and rebel, causing the child to flee from the parent. What is too much discipline? How much should a child be restricted? Should he be allowed to do everything he wants? No! There is a limit, and the limit must be placed upon the child and discipline must be exercised when the limit is crossed over. What Christian parents need to remember is this:

=> *Some parents allow their children* to participate in every function and activity offered to the child. They are usually the ones without *proper parental* guidance.

The point is this: there must be a balance between family life and the child's community life. The child should be allowed to do his own thing sometime, and should be required to share with the family at other times. As he grows older, he should, of course, be allowed to break away from the family more and more in order to prepare him for the day when he will step out into the world on his own. A child needs free time away from the parent and family as well as some family time in order to grow into a healthy person.

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Col 3:21 *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

c. Under controlling a child can exasperate a child. It should be noted that this is the most prevalent problem in an industrialized society. There is a tendency for those with plenty or with wealth to pamper, indulge and give a child everything imaginable — well beyond what a child needs and what is really best for him. Parents pamper and indulge children for five reasons.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to the child — in order to escape responsibility for the child: to keep a child from interrupting the parents' time or schedule or desires; to get a child out from under the parents feet. The parent, of course, needs some free time; but too many parents live selfishly, wanting nothing interfering with their own desires and needs. Too many parents push their children out and away and allow their children to run around too much. Too few sacrifice their own time and desires to look after their children as much as they should.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — in order to gain social standing or to relive his own childhood. The parent did not have and was not allowed to do what he wanted as a child; therefore, he sees to it that his child has everything and does everything that everyone else does. He is determined that his child will have everything no matter what it costs.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because he has a false understanding or philosophy of child-rearing. He gives in to ill behaviour, whining, pouting, sulkiness and temper tantrums just to secure peace and quiet.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because of misguided devotion and love: to keep from losing the loyalty, quietness, cooperativeness and affection of the child.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because of insecurity and lack of purpose. For example, some pamper and cling to a child because they (the parents) are insecure in the world. Others cling and pamper because they lack any other purpose. The child fills the need for security and purpose. *Playing house* is lived to the limit: the parent plays house with his child, clinging and pampering to the limit.

Prov 13:24 *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*

Prov 19:18 *Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.*

Prov 22:15 *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.*

Prov 23:13 *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.*

Prov 29:15 *The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

1 Sam 3:13 *For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.*

- d. Living an inconsistent life before a child can exasperate a child. A parent who tells a child one thing and then turns around and does the opposite thing himself is full of hypocrisy and false profession. Yet, how common! How many children are doing things because their parents do them:

=> drinking alcohol

=> taking drugs

=> watching sexual scenes on television or movies

=> reading immoral stories

=> looking at magazines exposing the human body

=> eating too much

=> wasting time

=> dressing or exposing the body to attract attention

=> attending socials or parties that are loose on decency, morality, marital faithfulness, and on and on

Seeing an inconsistent life in a parent can exasperate children.

1 Kng 22:52 *He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.*

2 Chr 22:3 *He too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong.*

Jer 9:14 *Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them."*

Mat 14:8 *Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."*

2. A parent is to bring up a child in the ways of the Lord, in the training and instruction of the Lord.

=> The word *training* (paideia) means “the whole training and education of children which [involves]... the cultivation of mind and morals... commands and admonitions...reproof and punishment...correcting mistakes and curbing the passions...the increase of virtue” (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon).

=> The word *instruction* (nouthesia) means counsel, exhortation, correction.

Note that the parent is not to rear the child after his own ideas and notions of what is best for the child, but after the training and instruction *of the Lord*. The Lord's Word is to be the guide for Christian parents in rearing their child. The benefits in bringing up a child in the Lord are innumerable. Just a few are as follows:

- a. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning love: that he is loved by God and by all who trust God. He grows no matter how evil some may act, knowing that he is to love even those who do wrong.
- b. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning power and triumph: that God will help His followers through all; that there is a supernatural power available to help, a power to help when mother and dad and loved ones have done all they can.
- c. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning hope and faith: that no matter what happens, no matter how' great a trial, we can still trust God and hope in Him. He has provided a very special strength to carry us through the trials of this life (no matter how painful); that He has provided a very special place called heaven where He will carry us and our loved ones when we face death.
- d. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning the truth of life and endurance (service): that God has given us the privilege of life and of living in a beautiful earth and universe; that the evil and bad which exists in the world is caused by evil and bad people; that despite such evil, we are to serve in appreciation for life and the beautiful earth upon which God has placed us. We are to work and work diligently, making the greatest contribution *we* can.
- e. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning trust and endurance: that life is full of temptations and pitfalls which can easily rob us of joy and destroy our lives and the fulfilment of our purposes; that the way to escape the temptations and pitfalls is to follow Christ and endure in our work and purpose.
- f. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning peace: that there is an inner peace despite the turbulent waters of this world; that peace is knowing and trusting Christ.

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

1 Tim 3:4 *He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.*

1 Tim 3:12 *A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

Titus 2:4 *Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.*

Deu 4:9 *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

Deu 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Isa 28:9 *“Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast?”*

Isa 38:19 *The living, the living — they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness.*

Lam 2:19 *Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. ■*