



## eLesson 010

**Text: Colossians 3:20-21**

**Subject: Parents and Children**

### Colossians - Part 8

**Family relationships.** Paul and Timothy wrote just two verses in Colossians specifically about parents and children. As mentioned in the previous lesson, their brief comments about relationships need to be kept in full Biblical context. However, they did say a lot in those two verses. *“Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.”*

**“Children, be obedient to your parents in all things”** Colossians 3:20. That pleases the Lord. Paul wrote, *“... for this is right,”* Ephesians 6:1. Solomon wrote, *“My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you.”* Proverbs 6:20-22. Son or daughter, are you doing that? Father and mother, are you giving that kind of high quality leadership and teaching to your children? Parents ... teach, guide, love, and lead your children. Children ... listen to, follow, honor, and obey your parents.

**Should children always honor their parents?** Yes! Children should always honor their parents. There is a clear and very challenging Biblical example. After the flood, Noah drank too much wine and slept in his tent ... drunk and exposed (naked). Ham found his father in that condition and dishonored him. Ham was judged for dishonoring his drunk, sinful father, Genesis 9:20-24. God does not require a child to approve of, or be victimized by, the sinful behavior of a parent. However, God does require a child to honor that parent. Children ... honor your parents, Matthew 19:19, Deuteronomy 27:16. You can dishonor your parents by disobeying them ... by speaking disrespectfully to them or of them ... or by living an unholy life. You honor your parents by obeying them ... by speaking respectfully to them or of them ... and by living a holy life. Honoring your parents offers the blessing of a good and long life on earth, Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:2-3. A God-honoring life is a parent-honoring life ... even if the parents disapprove of their child's faith in Christ. Jesus said that families would be divided by the Gospel, Luke 12:51-53, Matthew 10:21. Son or daughter, it is very important that you honor your parents even if the Gospel has divided your family. It is very important to understand that honoring and obeying are different. Children, you should honor and obey your parents. However, if your parents force you to choose between honoring them and obeying them ... always choose honoring them.

**Should children always obey their parents?** Yes ... if they have sinless parents. Since no parents are perfect, the same exception applies here as in a wife not submitting to her husband's sinful request as explained in the previous lesson. This is complicated in the parent-child relationship. The Lordship of Christ over a child's life must take precedence over a parent's sinful demand. However, a child's recognition of sin is based on age and development ... that complicates the issue. At what age or point of development can a child decide that a parent's request is sinful? There is no simple, all-inclusive answer to that complex question. Remember that the exception here is sin ... it is not personal preference. Children should obey their parents. However, selective disobedience may be necessary because of a parent's sin.

**Parents, teach your children to grow and go.** Teach them to make their own decisions. Prepare them to live their own lives. You cannot do that by always making their decisions for them ... or by controlling their every moment. Moral discernment progressively develops in a child. At the beginning of a child's life, parents must make all decisions for their child. Then parents should progressively exercise less and less control as the child develops. That progression is difficult and requires wisdom and patience from parents and from children. Children, be very careful in using the freedom that your parents give to you. With freedom to choose comes the freedom to make wrong choices. You may exercise your freedom to choose by jumping out of a tenth floor window ... but by jumping, you lose all your freedom to make other choices. Wrong choices can produce destructive consequences. You may choose to not study diligently in school ... but that limits your future choices and resources for life. You may choose to be sexually active before marriage (a Biblically wrong choice) ... but loss of purity and virginity, pregnancy, AIDS, and a poor reputation can limit your choices. Exercising your freedom to choose by choosing the sin of the world can cost you your freedom to choose. If you let the world squeeze you into its mold ... you lose. I have known many people who have regretted and paid a high price for choosing sin. However, I have never met a person who regretted consistently obeying God.

**Children are a gift entrusted to parents.** *"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward."* Psalm 127:3. Parents are accountable to God for their stewardship of the children He has given to them. Some parents are wonderful stewards of their children. However, some are poor or bad stewards ... physically, emotionally, or sexually abusing their children. That is the parent's sin. It is never the child's fault ... nor is it a brother or sister's fault (unless they also inflict the abuse). A parent's abuse is *not* God's judgment on the child ... and God does not require a child to accept abuse. How can an intimidated and confused child resist an abusive parent? There is no easy answer. However, in the Biblical example of Israel, it was their spiritual and legal community's responsibility to deal with incest, Leviticus 18 and 20. Therefore, it is fair today to assume that there is a place for the church or government to come to the aid of an abused child. Parents, how are you treating that precious gift that God has given to you? Child and parent, remember the words of 2 Corinthians 5:10, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

**"Fathers, do not exasperate your children"** Colossians 3:21. Do not over-discipline them in reproof and correction. You are trying to make them ... not break them. Encourage them ... do not discourage them. Discipline rather than punish. Discipline helps and sometimes hurts ... punishment hurts and seldom helps. Discipline is child-centered ... punishment is parent-centered. The Bible instructs us about discipline. True discipline is from love, Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:6-11. Parents who do not discipline their children do not love their children, Proverbs 13:24. Discipline is necessary, Proverbs 22:15. Properly disciplined children bring comfort and joy to their parents, Proverbs 29:17. *"But a child who gets his own way brings*

*shame to his mother.*" Proverbs 29:15. Remember that discipline is much more than reproof and correction ... it includes teaching and training.

**Fathers, teach and train your children.** Father, that responsibility is yours. God has never taken that responsibility away from you and reassigned it to your wife, your church, Sunday school, or youth leader. Father, what are you giving to your child? What real investment are you making in his or her life? Time is short. Your child will grow and go sooner than you may think. Are you spending all of your time working to provide temporary housing for your children? It is your house ... not theirs. Are you gaining your money but losing your children? What are you doing exclusively for them? What are you giving to them that they will take with them when they have grown and gone? The words of Deuteronomy 6:6-7 are certainly applicable, *"And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."* Exhort, encourage, and implore your children to walk worthy of their God. Fathers, demonstrate your words with your works. Fathering is show and tell time. Give the lesson ... and live the lesson. Be able to say what Paul wrote, *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."* 1 Corinthians 11:1. Jesus said, *"A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."* Luke 6:40. Give your child a Christ-like example to follow. Love them ... and therefore discipline them. Teach and train them. Reprove and correct ... but be careful. Do not go too far ... do not exasperate your child.

**Understand the balance** of responsibility between parent and child. Parents, you are responsible to invest in your child's life. That is an awesome responsibility. However, you are not responsible for your child's long-term stewardship of that investment. Child, you are responsible for what you do with their investment in you. Your life is ultimately your own responsibility no matter what your parents have or have not given to you. Good parents give a great start in life. However, bad or absent parents do not give you an excuse to live an unholy life. Walk worthy of the God who has called you. No matter what your family circumstance has been, *"... know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28. Children and parents, in *"whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."* Colossians 3:17.



## Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. What are the two commandments given in Colossians 3:20-21?
2. What is added to Colossians 3:20 in Ephesians 6:1?

3. What is the first specific commandment in the Bible that has a specific promise attached to it? What is the promised blessing? Hint: Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:1-3.
  
4. What is the difference between honoring and obeying a parent?
  
5. Which is more important in a child's life ... the authority of Christ or the authority of the parent? Give an example.
  
6. What special gifts and rewards does God give to parents?
  
7. What does it mean to "exasperate" children?
  
8. What does a disobedient child bring upon his or her mother?
  
9. Whose responsibility is it to train a child in the things of God? Whose responsibility is it not?
  
10. How does Colossians 3:17 apply to both commands in verses 20 and 21?



### Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. What are some examples of when a child should disobey a parent?
  
2. What are some examples of when a child might disagree with a parent ... but should obey?

3. How would you have reacted in Ham's sandals? (Genesis 9:20-24) Moreover, what have you learned from that example?
4. How have you seen or experienced Luke 12:51-53?
5. At what point of development can a child honorably choose to disobey?
6. What bad choices can a child make that limits his or her freedom to make choices?
7. When and how can a church help and protect an abused child? When and how can you?
8. According to Psalm 127:3, where do babies come from?
9. Paraphrase the following:
  - Proverbs 3:12
  - Proverbs 13:24
  - Proverbs 22:15
  - Proverbs 29:15-17
10. In light of those Proverbs, how can a father discipline but not exasperate his children?
11. What is the line between discipline that helps and discipline that hurts a child?
12. How can a father live Deuteronomy 6:6-7?
13. Fathers, can you say to your children, *Imitate me as I imitate Christ?*
14. Fathers, you have the Biblical responsibility to teach your children ... and Jesus said, *"A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained,*

*will be like his teacher.*” Luke 6:40. Will God be pleased if your children become like you?

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## Answers to Study Questions

1. What are the two commandments given in Colossians 3:20-21? **Children obey your parents in all things ... and Fathers, do not exasperate your children.**
2. What is added to Colossians 3:20 in Ephesians 6:1? **Two phrases are added ... “in the Lord” and “for this is right.”**
3. What is the first specific commandment in the Bible that has a specific promise attached to it? What is the promised blessing? Hint: Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:1-3. **Honor your father and mother ... that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land that the Lord gives you.**
4. What is the difference between honoring and obeying a parent? **Both can be (and should be) the same. However, sometimes a child might have to disobey a parent to honor (show respect to) that parent.**
5. Which is more important in a child’s life ... the authority of Christ or the authority of the parent? Give an example. **The authority of Christ takes precedence over the authority of the parent. A parent, out of personal desire or fear, might forbid a grown child to go to the mission field even though it is God’s will to go. In that case, the child should honor the parents and Christ by going to the mission field.**
6. What special gifts and rewards does God give to parents? **Their children.**
7. What does it mean to “exasperate” children? **Discipline in such a way as to frustrate, discourage, embitter, distress, or demoralize ... to tear down rather than buildup ... to break rather than make them.**
8. What does a disobedient child bring upon his or her mother? **Shame.**
9. Whose responsibility is it to train a child in the things of God? Whose responsibility is it not? **It is the father’s responsibility ... not the responsibility of the mother, church, Sunday school, Christian youth worker, or youth ministry (although all can participate effectively).**
10. How does Colossians 3:17 apply to both commands in verses 20 and 21? **Children are to obey their parents in the name of Jesus ... giving thanks to God for their parenting. Fathers are not to exasperate their children ... but should build them up in the name of Jesus. Fathers should thank God for the gift of their children.**

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