

We're in a little sub-series that I've given the title "Living in Submission". And chapter 5 (or I guess really all of what's come so far in the letter to the Ephesians), sets the scene for why we actually should **be** a people who live in submission. It sets the scene for why we submit to one-another in love.

Standard operating procedure for the world, is to shun submission – the way of the world is to stand up for your rights – to get as much as you can for yourself – stand on a few heads and a few fingers as you climb the ladder...

But as Christians, we are not **like** the rest of the world. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we live by a **different** ethic – we live by a higher standard – we do things **very** differently. And the way we behave, should actually be an expression of our reverence for Christ... And so the way I behave, should not be about me – and the way you behave, should not be about you... The way we live, is something we do, out of reverence for Christ.

Disciples of Jesus Christ, are as different from the world, as light is from darkness.

5:⁸ **for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.** (and this change in our status, has ramifications for our behaviour): **Walk as children of light** (alright, you once were like this, but because of the sacrifice of Christ, and His lordship over us, we are not like this – so live like you are – not as you were) ⁹ **(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),** ¹⁰ **and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord....**

And that's what we're focussing on again, today – living as children of the light. And the fruit in our lives, should be what is good, and right, and true... And when we start living by the Holy Spirit, and begin to do what is good and right and true, well the Lord is very pleased with that.

The last few weeks, we've been looking at what "submission" looks like in marriage. **Today**, we're looking at what this "submitting to one another" looks like, in the parent / child relationship...

And I'm going to tell you now, Kids, the way Jesus wants you to relate to your parents, will look nothing like what you see portrayed on the television teenage soap-operas, and it probably looks nothing like the way your school mates treat **their** parents.

And Parents, the way Jesus wants you to raise your children, probably looks like nothing you see on TV – and it's probably very different to what you'll read in the most popular of parenting books – and it's probably very different to how the parents who live next door do it.

I am not a psychologist. I am not a child behavioural expert. What I am, is a parent, a preacher and a bible teacher. And today I'm not going to be telling you anything at all about the latest, new fangled fashion in parenting and child-rearing.... Today I'm going to be talking about submission, and I'm going to use a few old-fashioned words like "honour" "respect" "obedience".... Because these are the sorts of words that we find in the Bible.

And I'm not going to apologise for that... in fact, I would hope you would expect me, to tell you plain and simple, what the Bible says about parenting, and what the bible says to children about living as a Christian child... OK????

And I'm going to continue on here, as the Apostle Paul did... He began by talking to the children.

Put your hand up if you are a child....
Not a child??? Where on earth did you come from???

The first thing we need to understand is, in this context, all of the scholars who wrote all of the different commentaries that I read, all seem agree, that the relationship that's being discussed here (the parent / child relationship) , is not something that ends with age... If you were once a child, you will always be a child – you will always have a parent (well, until your parents die, of course)....

As you become an adult, your relationship with your parents, will change... As time goes by, your parents will give you less and less directions for you to obey, until there comes a time when they're not giving you directions any more... And so when you become an adult, you're not obeying your parents any more, simply because they're not directing you any more. ... And if you're a parent who has a 40-year-old son or daughter, who you're still giving directions, and expecting them to obey you, well you've got a problem with control. You have no business giving your adult children directions...

Nevertheless, our parents will always be our parents, and so we should continue to honour and respect them.... And it

pleases God when we do this. And we'll come back to that a little bit in a moment.

Children are given the commandment, to **obey** their parents **in the Lord** – now what does that mean? Well, there's nothing tricky about the word “obey” – it means what it means – listen to what you're told, and **do** what you're told... But when it says to obey your parents in the Lord, what does that bit mean? Does it mean if my parents are Christians, then I should obey them, and if they're not Christians, then I can do what I like??? No, that's not it.... What it means is “We don't just obey our parents because they're bigger than us and they'll give us a flogging if we don't. We don't just obey our parents because they have a greater authority” (even though they do) – we obey our parents because that is part of our Christian discipleship...

Part of being a child of God – part of following Jesus as His disciple, is obedience to our parents.

I want you to consider for a moment: “When do you stop being a child, and begin to be an adult?” We used to recognise 21 as the time we came of age, and so the 21st birthday is a big do. More recently, the 18th birthday seems to have become the adulthood birthday...

But did you know, that when Jesus grew up, a Jewish boy came of age, at 13 (*there actually was a bit of a dispute on this - the older commentariesⁱ I read said “12” but the more recent onesⁱⁱ say that at age 12 they begin to get some intensive training in the Scriptures, but at age 13, a Jewish*

boy becomes responsible before God) 13... And there's probably a fair bit of wisdom in that. By the time you're 13, you should know the difference between right and wrong. By the time you're 13, you're old enough to bear the consequences for your own actions. And by the time you're 13, you should've stopped living on your parent's faith, and have begun to live on your own faith.

By the time you're 13, you should be old enough and mature enough to make the decision, "I want to give **my** life to Jesus." "I've seen the way my parents have lived their faith in Christ. I've heard Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth and the life – no one can come to The Father except through me, and I want to be with God, so I'm choosing for myself, to follow Jesus, no matter what anybody else says."

If you're 13 years old , or older, you are plenty old enough to make that decision (many have made it younger)... And if you have not made the decision to follow Jesus, well that's something you need to consider very carefully. Because the decisions you make – even though you're still young – have eternal consequences.

During the week, I rang my brother to have a yarn with him (I haven't talked with him for a fair while)... but during the conversation, he actually gave his testimony. He reminded me of the day that he gave his life to Jesus... He went along to what was supposed to be a Christian concert – but it ended up just being an old fogie, singing old (like really old songs) – songs that your grandparents would probably enjoy...

Anyway, he sat through it, and hated it... But when the night was ending, the speaker asked everyone a question: "If you died tonight, would you go to heaven or hell" And my

brother assumed that he'd go to heaven, but then he realised, that he didn't really know...

And by the time you get to around about 12 or 13 years of age, you need to consider that question, because it's time for you to decide for yourself, whether you're going to follow Jesus or not.

And when Jesus was 12, his parents took him to the temple (presumably for some of this final instruction), in readiness for being an adult, and when He went home, it says: **Luke 2:51** **And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.**

Jesus obeyed His parents, and we should too, because that pleases God.

I want you to get an amazing thing here: I hope you realise and understand, that church (and what we learn about here in church), is not just for the adults – it's for all the children of God, of all ages – Adults and children.

This letter was written, in an age where children were considered as nobodies... In the Greco-roman world, the child had no status at all... But when Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, in this letter, he addresses the children directly – he's talking to the kids... He's been showing this church – this gathering of disciples of Christ – how their discipleship – how their following of Jesus – should be expressed in practical ways.... And the children are not excluded.

To God, children are **not** nobodies – you’re not just here because your parents drag you along – Children can be disciples of Jesus too, just as the parents are... and the children have just as much opportunity, to live out their faith, for the glory of God... This letter, was revolutionary – in its status that it gives to children.

And discipleship for children means, they are to obey their parents..... Whyyyyyyyy????

Don’t you just love them enough to throttle them, when children get to a certain age, where everything you say, is met with the question, “Why????” “Because I said so.” “Why????” Because!!! Why???

Well, there’s one reason why children should obey their parents – Because it’s right.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is **right**. That’s all he had to say about it, and we don’t need any other reason.

Back in 5:8, it says “**Walk as children of light** ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)”

If you’re a follower of Jesus, you are light – you don’t belong to the darkness... And fruit of light, is to do what is right – what is right? – To obey your parents...

When we disobey our parents, that’s the fruit of darkness. And there’s a lot of disobedient children about, but because you’re following Jesus and because you want to honour God

and do what's right, don't be like them – you obey your parents...

But then v2 takes it way beyond obedience, and into the realm honour. You can grudgingly obey someone, if they're standing over you with a big stick – but that's not honour... And God tells us to **honour** our parents.. ² "Honour your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

That promise, actually goes back to the 10 commandments. When the people of Israel were on their way to the promised land, God gave them the 10 commandments. Basically He was saying "If you're going to be my people, this is the way you should live." Don't live like those other people in the land – I'm kicking them out because of it. And if you start living like them, I'll kick you out too...

And the 5th commandment was Exodus 20:¹² "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that YHWH your God is giving you.

And then, when they were just about to cross the River Jordan, to enter **into** the promised land, Moses reminded the people again, what the 10 commandments said: Deuteronomy 5:¹⁶ " 'Honour your father and your mother, as YHWH your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that YHWH your God is giving you.

Alright, so in their context, they were just about to enter into the promised land, and what he was saying was, “If you as a people” – “If you as a nation, are a people who honour their parents, you’ll be able to stay in this land that I’m giving you...” But if you discard this commandment, along with the others, you’ll get rooted out.

Today, a lot of people read this promise, and they conclude, “If I honour my parents, I’ll live a really long time – I’ll get really old before I die...” I don’t think that’s what it means. It was actually originally a promise to Israel... but it was probably also a warning.

We’ve all come across a family who has an uncontrollable child, hey??? It seems that no matter what threats are made – no matter what punishment is dished out – no matter how much discipline is exercised, the child is uncontrollable... And parents come to their witts end, and have no idea what to do.

God actually told Israel how to deal with that: It’s not something I’ve ever heard preached on:

Deuteronomy 21:¹⁸ “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, ¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, ²⁰ and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton

and a drunkard.' ²¹ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Ohhhhh, that sounds a bit harsh, doesn't it???? ... *and at first glance, if we were to apply this law today, our little town would probably need a road train load of rocks to be delivered to the outskirts of town so the elders and men of the town could enact this law on all the stubborn and rebellious children of the town....* But you know what??? I could not find a single instance of this punishment actually being carried out in the Bible. ...

I'm going to look at Deuteronomy 21 next week as part of the message to the adults on discipline, but I just wanted to bring it up now, because well maybe that's got a fair bit to do with living a long life...

In Israel, if you didn't honour your parents, you weren't going to last long...

What that law in the Old Testament tells us, is "How important it is to God, that we honour our parents." ... It was a crime against God – it was the responsibility of the community, to guard against the extreme of disobedience and dishonour.... I'm going to come back to it again next week, but it's more a lesson for the parents, than for the kids.

But you know what??? If you honour your parents, and heed what they say, generally you're gunna live longer, and you'll have a better life.. Why??? Because they have your best interests at heart, and your parents want you to grow into

young men and women of God... And they can save you from making a lot of bitter mistakes, if only you honoured them and listened to them.

But what does it mean for us today, to honour our parents?

Well, for the kids, I think what it means, is to respect them – to know that they have authority over us, and we submit to that authority, because it pleases God when we do that... And it's largely reflected in obedience. It means we don't back-chat them. It means we don't bad-mouth them. It means we do love them, and obey them... Unless they instruct us to go against God's laws..

What does it mean for adult children to honour their parents?

Well, I think it means, for a start, we don't argue with them... Even if they bait you – don't argue with them...

Remember, your parents are adults, just the same as you are... And your parents don't have to obey you... You are not responsible for controlling your parents, or for managing their affairs... - that's their decision... If they are open to hearing your opinion, by all means, give it, but if after you've stated your case, they choose to go against what you advised – to honour them means you accept their decision – no matter how wrong you feel it might be...

So, don't argue with them.

A wife said to her husband, "Donald, when was the last time we received a letter from our son?"

“Just a second dear, I’ll look in the cheque book.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The second point, is to honour them, is to treat them as important... What do I mean by that??? It means you’ll give them time... If they live a long way away, you’ll ring them up on the phone and talk to them (don’t just assume that because you’ve put it on facebook, your parents are going to know about it). They might be like me, and not hooked up to facebook.

It means if they live nearby, go and visit them – and do it often. Treat them as important – let them know that you value them, and that you want your relationship with them to be something that brings them joy.

Thirdly, it means you’ll tell them stuff, and that you’ll seek their wisdom when you’re making major decisions...

It means that you’ll care for them in their old age... If they don’t want to go into an old folks home – don’t force them. Yeah, they might die sooner if they’re not getting fully, supervised care,,, but they might rather that... If they haven’t lost their marbles, let them decide... Even if it’s not what you consider the best decision. And maybe to honour them means that you’re going to care for them in your own home...

And in their old age, don’t treat them like kids... They’re not kids – they’re your parents and you should honour them.

We honour them because it is right, and we honour – we submit to them – out of reverence for Christ.

Yep, sometimes your parents might ‘press your buttons’, and get you angry and annoyed, and so we’ll be addressing parents

on that very topic next week... But as children – even as adult children – even if our parents ‘press our buttons’, submit, and honour them, out of reverence for Christ.

Questions???

ⁱ William Barclay, Luke The Daily Study Bible

ⁱⁱ Bock Darrell L. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament – Luke. P.264

ⁱⁱⁱ Readers Digest, Laughter , the best medicine. Readers Digest Association: Westmount, Quebec. 1998. Die Weltwoche p.29