

# Candlelight Christian Fellowship

## Worksheet Ephesians 6 (NKJV)

Ephesians 6:1-4 (NKJV) (On Children and Parents)

*“1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: 3 ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

### **Family Leadership**

In Paul’s continuing instruction of the family he introduces the subject of parental responsibility and the instruction of children. He has laid down the role of the husband and the role of the wife. Now he addresses the role of children.

We should recall that Paul did not instruct the men to tell their wives that they must be submissive. He also did not instruct the women to tell their husbands how to lead. The same framework relates to the way he speaks to the children. His address is given directly to them. However, the children addressed must be old enough to read, comprehend, and learn on their own. Until that time, the responsibility rests on the parents.

A man as head of the home is to pastor his family. He is to model the Lord and teach his wife the truths of Scripture. Together the husband and wife are to teach and guide their children.

### **Teaching and Training**

In the Scriptures we are told to, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6 NKJV). This proverb is a principle—like many others found in Scripture. The principle is not a guarantee that all children when instructed *“in the way”* they *“should go”* will end up where directed. However, the principle stands on its own. Those who are taught in the Lord are far more likely to embrace and believe those things they have been trained to believe than those who are otherwise neglected.

Training is more than teaching. Teaching involves the communication of truth. Training is the discipline associated with that which is taught. For this reason the Lord instructs a parent to provide both. Teaching involves information. Training is the act of modeling by example and shaping through discipline. One may tell his or her son or daughter what to do or believe, but training is the *“taking of the child by the hand”* and leading them into *“the way”* they should go.

### **The Problem of Free Will**

Every child has a will of their own and will either receive or reject the things taught them. This fact is illustrated hundreds of times in Scripture—beginning as early as with our earliest parents: Adam and Eve. Even though they were instructed directly by the Lord, they intentionally disregarded the instructions given them. Parents with wayward adult children will find comfort in this fact.

There is responsibility given to parents for the rearing of their children, but even those who have served their children to their best ability may see them head off in a direction they would never have condoned. On the other hand, many parents see their adult children make poor life choices and later see them return to those things provided in the foundations of their lives.

In the Psalms we read, *“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate”* (Psalm 127:1–5 NKJV).

A careful look at this passage allows us to see that children are a blessing from the Lord and that procreation is His will. We also learn that it is the Lord who *“builds the house”* and that parents who *“rise up early”* or *“sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows”* are doing so in vain. God desires that we trust Him with our children—*“for so He gives His beloved sleep.”* We are to trust the Lord with our children and allow Him to be God to them. Sleeplessness and worry is unfruitful. God loves our children more than we do—or can. It is the Lord who will fulfill all His good pleasure in our lives and in the lives of our children.

### **Don’t Provoke or Discourage**

When Paul instructed the fathers He said, *“fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (vs. 4). In Colossians he said, *“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged”* (Colossians 3:20–21 NKJV).

Provoking a child will always end in anger or discouragement. Provoking a child can be illustrated several ways:

First, I might suggest that a child is provoked when the child’s mother or father is living a standard below that which they require of the child or, simply stated, holding to a different standard than they require of the child. For example: If a parent desires to see their child in church, they cannot drop them off at the door; they must take them. If a parent wants their child to keep a clean room, they must keep a clean house. A parent who desires to see their children live for the Lord and walk in His truth must lead by example.

Secondly, a child may be provoked to wrath or become discouraged when they are required to do that which is not possible. A child who is asked to live beyond failure or shortcoming will feel that they are *“not good enough”* and end up *“throwing in the towel.”* Fathers who desire to see their children succeed not only equip them to that end, but patiently instruct them as they learn. Mothers and fathers who have learned from the Lord will model the same patience with their children they have received from the Lord. Every believing adult knows the patience of the Lord! Furthermore, every believer understands that God does not ask from a believer that which is impossible. We all fall short! God patiently walks us through our failures as we grow. We as parents are called to do the same.

Thirdly, a child will become frustrated, angry, or discouraged if the parent has ever-changing rules. Consistency is critical in child rearing. If a child has been taught that bed time is 9:00pm and later

the parent who has become tired seeks to have the child go to bed earlier, that child will be confused and frustrated. Consistency is key! Before a parent chooses to set a standard, they should carefully consider the rule. Children are more secure if they know what is expected of them. Children feel a sense of security by living to the standards and expectations of the parent. We are all benefitted by consistency. If an employer asks an employee to show up for work at 9:00am and they are chastised for being late when arriving at the set time, he or she will become frustrated and will grow to disdain the employer. In the same way, a child needs the stability and consistency of rule.

Finally, parents and children are benefitted when reason for standards are given. Parents who are unwilling to explain the reasoning behind certain instructions may provoke anger or discouragement. For example: If a parent desires to see a child wash their hands or brush their teeth, it is helpful to explain the health advantages of personal hygiene. Simply saying "Because I said so!" to a child's request for reason provokes frustration. God has given abundant examples of why He demands obedience of His children. We should learn to parent as He does.

### **Love**

Paul taught Titus *"that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed"* (Titus 2:2–5 NKJV). Listed in the text is that older women are to instruct younger women to love their children. Although this may seem obvious and natural, it is not always the case. Many mothers (and fathers) do not love their children as God has commanded. Children who are unloved will be neglected, left to themselves (see Proverbs 29:15), untrained, and therefore unwilling or unable to grasp the need and benefit of instruction, correction, and discipline. A child who does not understand the love of a parent will be hard pressed to grow in grace and truth under the tutelage of the parent.

### **Obey in the Lord**

Children are to obey their parents *"in the Lord."* Therefore, should a parent ask their child to disobey the Lord, the child is required to place the command of God above the command of the parent. For this reason a parent must model the Christian life in order to be the encourager every child needs. Sadly, far too many parents expect their children to grow into responsible Godly adults, although they themselves have not done so. For example: a parent who breaks the law should expect their child to learn by their example. A parent who is negligent in spiritual life should expect the child to follow that lead. It is a rare child who can see the errors of a parent and nonetheless follow the principles of the Lord. Children who are so inclined should be praised by their parents. Those parents should see the error of their ways and adjust themselves to the truth.

### **Live Long and the Law**

When Paul tells the Ephesians, *"Honor your father and mother,"* which is the first commandment with promise: *"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth"* (vss. 2–3), he is referencing the Law. This passage is found in the book of Exodus. It reads, *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you"* (Exodus 20:12 NKJV). In Deuteronomy the same law is repeated: *"Honor your father and your mother,*

*as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Deuteronomy 5:16 NKJV).*

This law was given to Israel.

In addition to the “promise,” there was a command that children who cursed or persistently rebelled against their parents were to be stoned to death. In Leviticus we read, *“Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the LORD who sanctifies you. ‘For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him’ ”* (Leviticus 20:7–9 NKJV). In Deuteronomy we read, *“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 who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear”* (Deuteronomy 21:18–21 NKJV). Jesus recognized and quoted from the law in reference to this commandment when He said, *“For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death’ ”* (Matthew 15:4 NKJV).

Apparently Paul had these passages in mind when saying, *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth”* (vs. 3). Paul was quite aware of the fact that the Law had been abolished (see Ephesians 2:15 and Hebrews 8:13) but harkens back to these standards in order to show the value of obedience. He was not suggesting parents should have their disobedient children executed today.

### **Consequences of Sin**

Parents are to teach their children that sin has consequences and therefore are to use discipline as an act of training and love. In the Proverbs we read, *“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly”* (Proverbs 13:24 NKJV). Children who learn from Godly parents will spare themselves many self-inflicted challenges and consequences. Parents who love their children will patiently work with and train their children—for the benefit of all.

As parents train their children, it is important to allow the adolescent child to make choices and fail. At times parents will so control a growing child’s behavior that the young person is not allowed to fail and therefore see or suffer the natural consequences of sin and disobedience. This kind of training requires wisdom. A parent must be able to measure the child’s readiness for the potential consequences he or she may suffer. If the parent can see that the consequences may be life-threatening or may involve a lifetime of suffering, it may be best to do all that’s possible to disallow the failure. On the other hand, overcontrol and the disallowance of choice and consequence can be problematic for the new adult son or daughter.

God has given manifold examples of teaching, training, and consequence throughout the entirety of Scripture. The most complete example is how He handles Israel. God has for centuries given Israel instruction and promises of blessing for obedience or consequences for disobedience. Many times He gave warning but nonetheless allowed Israel to disobey knowing they would suffer the consequences of their rebellion. Even so, parents must allow a growing child to learn these valuable lessons. As parents we desire to teach and train our children by passing on experience and wisdom, but most developing children must learn as most of us did—by experience.

Children who refuse instruction often grow into adulthood and suffer consequences outside the control of the parents. A child does well to learn from his or her parents while young and living at home. Once a child has grown up, the parental training process is over. From that point forward, all a parent can offer is counsel. This disconnect is a difficult transition for many. At this stage of life, a parent hopes that the teaching and training they have done, coupled together with the life experiences from which the adolescent child has learned, will take them into adulthood without the need to suffer greater life lessons.

### **Honor Your Father and Mother**

A child is called upon to honor their father and mother. Paul said, “ *Honor your father and mother,*’ which is the first commandment with promise.” This rule applies to a growing child and to the adult son or daughter throughout adulthood. An adult child may no longer be under the tutelage of the parent and may have chosen to develop a different set of standards for their own adult lives. However, even in these circumstances the child is to honor their father and mother.

To honor is to place worth upon and to show respect. A child should do all they can to avoid tearing down or defaming his or her parents. A child should never “bad mouth” his or her parents. Children are to be respectful, speak kindly, and treat reverently their parents—even as they would the Lord. A child is to place value on their parents as much as is possible.

For some adult children this is difficult. Children who were neglected or abused will be challenged to show respect and honor; but, nonetheless, God commands that all children regardless of circumstance honor their father and mother.

### **Praise and Encouragement**

Paul told the Romans, “*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same*” (Romans 13:1–3 NKJV).

Although this does not directly apply to child rearing, the application is fitting. In the context Paul is referring to governmental authority. However, in the same way government has delegated authority, parents are called to govern their children. Of interest is that Paul includes the subject of praise for the obedient. Therefore, we understand that good parenting will include praise and encouragement for obedience and submission. Reinforcement of good is one of the best ways to encourage a child to walk in truth.

### **Keys in Training:**

Love (Agape)

Teaching, Training

Discipline and Consequence

Example, Testimony

Consistency

Praise

## Questions

- 1) True or False: Children are instructed to obey their parents.
- 2) True or False: Teaching and training is the same thing.
- 3) True or False: Good parenting does not guarantee good children.
- 4) True or False: We are not to provoke or discourage our children.
- 5) True or False: A child who knows the love of a parent will be more likely to submit to good teaching.
- 6) True or False: Children are to obey their parents even if the parent tells them to disobey the Lord.
- 7) True or False: There are consequences to sin and disobedience.
- 8) True or False: If your children disobey you, you should kill them.
- 9) True or False: Young and adult children are called to honor their parents.
- 10) True or False: Praise and encouragement are good teaching tools.

Notes: