

# Christ-Centered Parenting

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## SPEAKERS

Kevin Schwamb

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15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 6Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Alistair Begg is a fairly well known evangelical pastor, author, speaker. If you listen to the Christian radio station, you've probably heard his program, truth for life. And I had the privilege of meeting him a couple years back at the banner conference as a Scottish accent, so he's really nice to listen to. He's a little guy. He's only about like five to, but but I'll never forget a story he told about he tends to be an impatient driver. Some of you can probably relate to this. So he was going somewhere and he had his young boys in the back of the car. And he was trying to get somewhere and and there was someone in front of him that was going much too slow according to his perspective. And so he found that he was grumbling about the driver. He was making comments like Don't you know what you're doing? You should really turn you know what's going on. And he said, finally the car moved and he went on and he heard a voice from the backseat. One of his kids said, and there's another friendly word from your neighborhood pastor. And he suddenly realized, you know that what he said, was was heard and picked up on, which is why when we get to a fusions, Paul talks about

relationships, because our faith is displayed positively sometimes natively in our relationships. And so if you turn with me to Ephesians chapter five, so far we've been looking at from verse 22. To the end of the chapter, Paul's talked about the relationship of husbands and wives. Now he's going to move in chapter six, the first four verses to relationships between parents and children. And then next week, we'll see where he concludes this part of his discussion in verses six through nine, where he's going to talk about slaves. And masters. And what you see Paul doing is something that follows what a lot of philosophers and his day did. They issue these household codes. In other words, they presented guidelines for how you should behave, not just in society, but but even within the household. But the difference is Paul is speaking God's word here, on relationships, and in particular on relationships that are household and very important relationships. So what we're simply going to do this morning is look at instructions to children, instructions to parents, and then a reminder to every believer, so instructions to children, instructions to parents, and then a reminder for every believer. There's a pattern that each of these expectations follows. So whether you're thinking of husband and wives, children and parents plays the masters. Here's the pattern Paul follows. He always starts with this sub subordinate party first. So in other words, the one who is under someone else, he starts with that group. And then he'll give an imperative he'll give a command. This is what you need to do instruction. And then we'll follow that instruction with motivation, a reason why you should put this instruction into us. And I think that's a reminder to us, we need those three fold pieces. We didn't think about how this fits in relationship to God's design. We need to hear the instruction clearly. And then we need to know kind of why. So let's take a closer look at instructions to children. And let me read verse one Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right. Immediately we have the identification of who Paul's referring to Children, children's a very broad term. So you can find it in the Bible referring to very young children who are under the household of another parent relative, whatever, you can find it you sometimes by Paul as an indication of immaturity, so you're acting like children, and that might not be a good thing. He's picking out a maturity. You can also find it used as a term of great affection. So when the apostle John is writing his epistles He will speak of beloved are children, my children, using a very affectionate way, a way that expresses love. It's very evident when you come to a vision six one, Paul's using it in the sense of those who are right now under the household or in the household of parents or relatives. And so he's speaking here not do a sense as to your immaturity, but Young children. I want to think about how children were viewed in antiquity. So in other words, what how do people look at children in the Roman culture, Hellenistic world? Well, there was a certain value placed on children, but it might be true the axiom, children are to be seen, but not heard would be a pretty accurate description. Certainly females were not viewed as positively as males. male children in particular were seen as being extremely valuable. You can probably guess, because it's through them, the line of the family would be continued. They would serve as soldiers and other things. So

even though the Roman culture did see children in some way as important, we also know they were guilty of infanticide where they would kill children they didn't want. If you had too many daughters, you would kill the newborn. Girl because that was going to be a financial drain on the family. So for Paul to write a letter to a church, and then address part of the letter to children, is very significant. It's sort of reminding us as you go through the Scriptures, you see that in the Old Testament, the children of Israel, were not just God's people that he called. But even at times with the reading of the law, the children were to be present, that they were not merely shuffled off or seen as an inconvenience. They were a part of the family of God. So it tells us something about the perspective that God puts on children. And maybe we've seen as we continue that in the New Testament, this would speak certainly to the blessing that children are that they also have teaching given to them by God. It's assumed that they can have a relationship with God. are responsible to obey Him. But it also reminds us that in the midst of that sense that they are a blessing. And they are a treasure, as proverb speaks of, that the scriptures also give us a very honest appraisal of children. In other words, children are not completely innocent. They're not sinless. They're sinners. And yet noticed today how we almost have the overemphasis that the children are so valued and surprised that we forget that they are sinners. I remember a trend while a long time ago when I worked at Canaan Elementary School. All of a sudden it was a trend in education that what kids need, you just need to tell them how to act. You know, if you just tell them they should share, they'll go do it. And I think we're most of us who have some Maybe better, more accurate understanding of the human nature from Scripture. We realize, yeah, they need to be taught. But it's not enough. If you just tell them what they should do, do they do that? I don't know. How does that work for you if I just tell you what the Bible says we all prone to immediately go follow it. Now, because our heart is deceptive. It is sec, as Jeremiah says, full of sin. And so the scriptures give us an honest look at children. Yes, they are part of the community of God. They are a gift from God, they're a blessing, but they need a savior, just as much as an adult as a savior. But notice when it goes on to say here, the imperative given to them Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Now, give me an idea of the context here. We can assume Paul is referring To a household where the parents are believers in this case, but notice what he says he says obey. If you look down further in chapter six, verse five, the same word is used when he says, slaves obey your earthly masters with respect and fear. In other words, the word obey is a very strong word. It means really to give absolute obedience to. Now again, we're qualifying that within the guidelines of Scripture, not not illegal activity, immoral activity, but within the context of being in a Christian household, a Christ centered setting that they are to obey. Absolutely. Now we've just heightened the sense of a sinful nature. So how is that going to work? Even as Christians will notice he he gives us a little bit further instruction Here are imperative because the tense is continuous. Not that you can do this just once, and you've done it. But but this is going to be a continuous daily challenge to obey your parents in the Lord. But it's a second part in the

Lord that tells us, we're going deeper now, Paul's not just saying to this community of believers, outwardly, just do what your parents tell you. But if he's saying do it in the Lord, now he's moved to the attitude that's behind the action. Because we all know we have been guilty of doing something in the wrong attitude that we've accomplished a certain task we've been given. We've been told to do something we've done it at work at home, but we haven't wanted to do it. We've done it in a hardened attitude. So Paul is not saying here as he always does, the issue of obedience is not just outward conformity to a request. It's an inward love for God. That is the motivating factor. And other words, think of it maybe this way, the goal should be the instruction we give children. And I would include in this grandchildren, if you have some kind of job where you're working with children, I think this would also relate to that. That other words, we should see obedience to those over you. As a market discipleship. Like this, this is really a form of you following Christ. What a way to sort of elevate the position of children here to say, you know what, you don't have to wait till you're an adult to follow God. You don't have to wait till you're an adult to discern what is God's will for you. As a young child growing up, we should be teaching children grandchildren. This is God's will for you right now. Here's your assignment. Children obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right. And to teach again, the the motivation has to be a right heart. Every day when I'm working with students at school, occasionally I will remind them of my task because sometimes I think they forget why I'm there. And I have to say to them, you know what, it's very easy to get anyone to conform to Christian behavior. That can work if you have threatening punishment consequences. The challenge is not to just get you to outwardly conform, but inwardly desire Christ, that your reason for obeying is because you love Christ. Notice Paul says nothing here obey your parents, because this is easy. Or obey your parents because it says, fun. says no do this as actually an act of spiritual obedience. What an instruction to give. And then he continues that in verse two, by quoting the fifth commandment, the commandment that deals now with relationships, and in particular, Honor your father and your mother. Notice I said that when Paul in verse four speaks to fathers, in one sense, you can say he is speaking directly to fathers, but I think you can easily apply what he's saying to both parents. In other words, because the commandment he quotes notice is that both parents are to be honored. scriptures not setting one parent gets more greater honor, you know or obedience from one in their household than another. They may have different roles that God has designed, but they each are to receive honor and the word honor their speaks of proper appraisal, or recognition. I think most of us realize that there is something that happens to most of you as you get into your 30s your 40s you start to realize your parents are a lot smarter than you thought that there was a lot more they said that you wish maybe you would listen to a little better. In other words, you start to appraise them or honor them to a greater degree. And I think that is a part of aging. But at the same time, this is something that Paul is saying, children need to learn to learn there is value In those who are older than them, not always that you have complete agreement with them, but

still to honor, appraise them correctly, from a biblical perspective. And so as you think of these instructions won't be the motivation for this, because this is a difficult task. This is as relevant today as when Paul said it in the first century. Go to the food store and watch for few minutes, sometimes children shopping with their mother with their father. You see all kinds of behavior, all kinds of actions. And we're recognizing even Christian children are not perfect. But I think we see our world has fallen flat on this issue of what does it mean, to teach them to honor their father and their mother, not not to live in fear of them, like terrified of them as they will hurt them. But but in a godly sense, this this absolute trusting obedience, as a live are Christ before you. Well, you have two motivating factors in verse three one that it may go well with you. And this is not merely just setting a temporary thing like well, you won't get grounded, you won't get discipline. But this thought that you would be blessed as you apply what God has said, to your station in life. In other words, this is a blessing for children to learn what it means to honor and obey their parents. And we almost might look at the second part of this is comical, but it's not meant to be that you may live long life on the earth. You want to be a teenager we better listen to your parents now. No, it's not saying we are cut your life short. But this is a principle It's very important. We see this as a principle, not a guaranteed recognition. Because there are children who don't live into adulthood, who may have honored their parents and listen to them. But you have this biblical connection between isn't obedience always tied to God's blessing and favor. This hand being upon us not that your life will just be easy and circumstances will always go your way. But where have you ever seen in scripture where God will punish you for obeying him? No place. He always responds with a greater sense of His love, a deeper awareness of who he is. What a legacy, to leave your children, to teach them who God is and how that will bless them later in life. I think we're All very much aware that Paul's not saying here you do this, and it's guaranteed they're going to be following Christ from their older know that there will come a point where they will have to respond in faith to Christ, they will have to embrace the truth of Christianity and act upon that. But it is a responsibility as will say, to set that stage and to be faithful in what you're calling might be. Now, let's assume here that as I said, these are young children, children that are in a household. But I want you to turn to First Timothy chapter five. For Paul's teaching to Timothy, where he reminds them that the part of honoring your parents does not end because in First Timothy 5:3, down two verses three and four, Paul talks about what it means to Your parents when you're long gone from the home, when you become an adult. And so you notice in verses three and four, he writes, give proper recognition to those who are widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, the should first they should learn, first of all, to put their religion into practice, by caring for their own family. And so we're paying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. And then go down to verse eight. He says if anyone does not provide for his relatives, especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Paul carries over that fifth

commandment and says it doesn't stop once you turn 18. The dynamics of obedience to that may change and how its applied. glide, but it never stops. And so we see a very complete picture here of instruction to children. But now you go on to Ephesians six, verse four, and you have instructions to fathers. And again, I think this is applicable as well to parents. Notice one of the trends we are seeing today in our world is that more and more grandparents are playing a very active role in the raising of their grandchildren. And sometimes because their own children may be dysfunctional and in sinful patterns, and they're actually becoming the parents of that grandchild. So whatever part you are in life as an adult, I think we can learn from this passage what is expected as we come alongside those who are children. And so notice and Verse four, he says, fathers do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. So once again, identified clearly who's Paul talking to now, so I can parents, he's talking to fathers. And you want to think for a moment prior to this, and the letter has Paul at all referred to the concept of father or fatherhood. And so look at chapter three of Ephesians, verses 14, and 15. There Paul has said, For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. So he's talking about the fatherhood of God, the kind of God we have and how he is the perfect father. Then notice in chapter four, verse six, Paul says There, there's one God and Father of all, who is overall and through all and in all, could it be that as Paul turns now to speak to father's, we should be thinking of, he's going to compare this are connected to the kind of father we have in God. And that's going to be the basis for the exhortation to earthly fathers and in particular to Christian fathers or Christian parents. And so, he gives instructions here it gives imperatives, very clear there to one stated negatively, one is stated positively. So know the first one negatively do not exasperate your children. Now he does not say do not discipline them. I was listening to a broadcast not that long ago about a book that Christian couple had written and and I know the point of what they were saying was good but the title I found a little troubling was something like Don't say no to your kids. Other times I believe we have to say no to them. But we must do so in a way that does not violate what Paul's talking about here. The word exasperate literally means to irritate, to provoke, to continually frustrate. In other words, if we're expecting something of them, that is not at all what they can possibly do, or we're comparing them to other siblings and we're holding them to a certain kind of personality or grades. That may be for other reasons. Academically, they just cannot meet that that sets the stage for frustrating. In other words for having them become angry and bitter. And Paul warns fathers and warns parents because this is very easy to happen. Especially perhaps if you have a type A personality, you know that nothing less than perfect is expected. Well, you know, sometimes I'm sure you are aware those people who have type A personalities, get kids that are not type a people. And what do you do? They're creating God's image, God has a perfect will for them and plan. But if you try to crush them and squeeze them into a mold, that is not the mold that God has for that. Then you are going to exasperate three wise

counsel that Paul gives here from God. But notice that he states positively and you want to be thinking well, why? Because behind this is how does your heavenly Father respond to you? Does your heavenly Father frustrate you? That does your heavenly Father expect that you as a Christian will be exactly like this other Christian. Agreed all realize No, God doesn't deal with us like that. And so Paul says positively what you need to do is bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. sound simple. But again, the 10th is continuous that this is going to be an every day task before God. So just as children were told your everyday mark of discipleship is obedience and honoring your parents. Here Paul saying to fathers, and parents, your task of discipleship is bringing them up and the training and instruction of God The word bringing up bringing them up, may sound a little cumbersome. But if you look at chapter five and verse 29, when Paul was talking about husbands and wives, in verse 29, he says, after all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it. The word care there we said is the word to nourish. That is exactly the same word for instruction, and six, four. So in other words, you could read that bring them up in the training and nurture of the Lord. So in other words, your your motivation is also one of love, love for God that comes into your intent and your love for your child. What is your goal not just that they be self sufficient financially, when they're An adult, not just that they don't fall prey to addictions or other things like that in their life, but isn't your ultimate goal that they would know Christ and grow in maturity in Christ? That's what you're talking about you say training and instruction, their spiritual care. Now, we know that physical care emotional care is very important. You can certainly have legal ramifications if you're not physically caring for your children, providing for them. But the sad reality is that sometimes even many times in Christian homes, there's not the spiritual care and training that should be there. And for those who already had children who've grown up and are adults, this doesn't mean you know, you've reached a point where now you can't do anything. No, you can still be a positive influence. You can still demonstrate godliness. And in fact, there may be times remind you to say, you know what, when, when, when you were younger, I wasn't as spiritually training you as I should have been. And I want to see God, do that work first in me and continue in you now as an adult. So Paul's words here stress, the influence that Christian parents, Christian educators, Christians in their churches have upon children and grandchildren. In other words, it really is and the words he uses training and instruction. He also uses that same phrase with Timothy uses it and Colossians and use it in a sense as a pastor, so in other words, he's saying parents and is your job to shepherd your children spiritual That is God's instruction for you. That is how you respond in worship and discipleship. And the motivation is interesting because verse four really doesn't give you a motivation doesn't say that you may live long as you say, Live long and prosper, but as that's probably the wrong phrase here, but what is the motivation? Well, I want to connect the motivation back to Ephesians four verse one, as a prisoner for the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you ever received. This is your calling. As a parent, as a grandparent, as an adult in the

church, when when there are children and grandchildren, young children around you, this is part of your calling, living a life worthy of what God has called Due to in Christ. So in the midst of these two simple instructions and imperatives, I think there's a reminder here for every believer, and that's why I had us read Ephesians 5:15 through 18. Because if it was as simple as just stay the instructions, give me a reason why I have to do it. If it was as simple as that, we wouldn't need the reminder in Ephesians 5:15 through 18 you cannot do this on your own. You are dependent upon the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in you. And other words, I hope you never leave a service where after the message you're thinking, well, Pastor just wants me to try harder this week. Because that's saying it's all on you. And Paul reminds us in this very sensitive area of household codes and rules. As a Christian, you cannot do this, apart from the grace and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Alice, your bag proves that. I think each of us proved that over and over again. And so we need to be reminded of that. depend upon God's grace, feed on his word. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead you and every way this week in accordance with the Scriptures, Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that by these words, we would be undone that we might be redone by your grace and your mercy. whatever challenges we might face this week, I asked that we would be reminded That we must rely upon the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and upon the working of your Holy Spirit in us. It is only through that, that we will carry out the imperatives, the commands that you have given us. We pray in Jesus name Amen