

GOD

God wants us to Live Long and Prosper (Ephesians 6 verse 3)

Who wants to live a long life? Who wants to live life with prosperity?

God wants us to “live long and prosper”. Not only does He desire this for us, but He lovingly provides guidelines on how we can bring up children in the household so they can develop habit patterns that will help them to live a long, prosperous life. We can see these in the Book of Ephesians in a section that considers the major relationships among members of the household of believers to which we belong.

We’ll first consider the overall context, and then we’ll focus on how, by bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, we can start them on the path to a long and prosperous life. We’ll also see how these principles can be applied by believers who are already grown adults.

We’ll begin in Chapter 5, verse 21.

Ephesians

5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear (respect; love *in some texts*) of God (of Christ *in all but one critical Greek manuscripts*).

This verse says that as members of the household we are to submit ourselves to each other. The word “submit”, translated from the Greek word *hupotasso*, can be rendered literally according to usage to mean “loving obedience by proper arrangement and deliberate decision”. This means more than simply to “obey”, in that we submit to each other out of love, making the free-will decision to do so, decently and in order.

The next several verses then expand on three major relationships in which believers are to submit themselves one to another: the marriage relationship between husband and wife; the relationship between children and parents; and interactions between servants and masters.

The marriage relationship is the topic of verses 22 through 33. We see that as wives submit themselves to their husbands and husbands love their wives, they can become joined together in the “one flesh” relationship with the husband as the spiritual head. Verse 32 makes the analogy between this marriage relationship and the Great Mystery, in which Christ Jesus is the head of the one Body (called “the Church” in this verse).

The parent/child relationship is handled in Chapter 6, verses 1 through 4, the section that we will focus on. Then verses 5 through 9 cover the relationship servants and their masters, which is analogous to members of the Body serving God, doing His will from the heart.

Now, let’s read the first four verses of Ephesians Chapter 6 to learn what God has to say about the relationship between children and their parents.

Ephesians

- 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
6:2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise:
6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.
6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The word “children” in verse 1 is translated from the Greek word *teknon*, the word used for dear, or beloved, children as opposed to just offspring. These children are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord. Even though this section on relationships began with the use of the word “submit” (*hupotasso*), in the case of children, the word used is “obey”, translated from a related Greek word, *hupakuō*, which can be understood as “to hearken submissively”.

Sometimes it may be difficult for a child to make the deliberate decision to lovingly obey (Proverbs 22:15 says “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child”). So, the word used for children is obey, rather than submit. Children must be taught to obey.

Children are to obey their parents “in the Lord”. In other words, for the children to benefit the most from obeying their parents, the parents need to be “in the Lord”, standing in the household. Then the parents represent the authority of God, at least until the children have grown and can read and understand God’s Word and direct revelation from God on their own.

Verse 1 continues: “for this is right”. It is right for children to obey their parents in the Lord. The word “right” here is from the Greek word *dikaios*, usually translated “righteous” or just”. It’s the same Greek word used in Acts 4:19 and 20 where Peter and John said to those who were confronting them: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Children are not only to obey their parents in the Lord, but they are entreated to honor them, as it says in verse 2:

- 6:2 Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise.

The word “honour”, from the Greek word *timaō*, means “to value as precious or worthy of attention”. It’s one thing for a child to grudgingly obey someone “because they have to”, but God desires that they value the parents they are obeying, because then they will get the maximum benefits as they carry out what they are to do.

Honoring one’s parents was one of the commandments given in Old Testament times:

Luke

- 18:20 Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Ephesians 6 verse 2 refers to children honoring their father and mother as “the first commandment with promise”. This is more correctly “the first, or foremost, commandment with

a promise”. If children honor their parents, they get to claim a promise from God. What’s the promise? We need to look at the next verse:

6:3 That it might be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

The first part of this verse says as children honor and obey their parents in the Lord, they can be well-off, or prosperous, benefiting in the immediate present. But the benefits aren’t only for the present, but will extend into the future, as we see in the remainder of the verse, which says “and thou mayest live long on the earth (on the land *in the text*).”

The words “live long” are translated from one Greek word, *makrochronios*, which is used only here in the Bible. It’s from *makro* (or *macro*: the opposite of *micro*), meaning large, and *chronios*, referring to time. God wants us to have a long time here, and this verse tells us that one of the things that can make this happen is for children to honor and obey their parents in the Lord. We’ll look more closely at how honoring and obeying parents can help promote a long life, and why we might want a long life, but first we need to look at verse 4:

6:4 And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The first part of this verse more accurately reads: “And fathers, do not provoke your children” (the words “to wrath” are not in the text). The word “provoke” could be better understood as “exasperate” or “irritate beyond measure” to the point that the children become resentful. This could happen in parents are too demanding in obedience in too many things that are not important in the context of these verses. The rest of this verse explains what to focus on: “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

In the text, the words “bring up” would be more accurately translated “nurture”. The words “in the nurture” are from the Greek word *paideia* meaning “with discipline or instruction” – it’s the same word that is used in II Timothy 3:16 where it says “instruction in righteousness”. The word “admonition” means a warning, to put something back into mind, letting them know when they are off the mark so they can get back to living the Word. So, this verse says that parents are to nurture their children in the instruction and admonition of the Lord. They should expect obedience from their children in matters that will help them to grow up to become powerful, successful believing members of the household.

Now let’s consider how teaching children to honor and obey their parents can contribute to their having a long and prosperous life. We’ll first consider a record in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2. In this record, Joseph and Mary had taken Jesus to Jerusalem and were on the way home to Nazareth when they realized that he was not with them. When they returned, they finally found Jesus in the Temple, where he asked them (according to the text): “Wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?” We’ll pick up the record in verse 51:

Luke

2:51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

The word “subject” used in this verse is from the Greek word *hupotasso*: Jesus lovingly made the deliberate decision to obey Joseph and Mary. Since Jesus wasn’t God, he still needed parental care and guidance. We see the result of this obedience in the next verse:

2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor (grace) with God and man.

There’s a similar record in I Samuel, Chapter 2 (which Jesus himself would have read) that talks about how as a child the future prophet Samuel submitted himself to obey the man of God at that time, and as a result verse 26 says: “And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord (Jehovah, God) and also with men.”

If you read the record in Samuel you find that Samuel was surrounded with people who were, to put it mildly, not standing on God’s Word, but because he chose to obey God’s representative, he was successful. What’s your surrounding environment like? No matter what the circumstances, you can succeed.

Proverbs

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

What are we to “train up” our children to do? The answer can be found in Deuteronomy, Chapter 11:

Deuteronomy

11:19 And ye shall teach them (God’s words) your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Parents are to teach their children God’s Word, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The word “teach” here carries the connotation of “rubbing in by repetition”. And, the parents are to teach their children diligently, at every appropriate opportunity. For the benefits of this, look at the next verse:

11:20 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

Here’s a verse in Deuteronomy that links honoring your parents to having a long life:

5:16 Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

This is basically the same promise that we’ve been focusing on in Ephesians 6:3.

By being taught God’s Word from an early age, children will have a greater opportunity to enjoy a long life filled with God’s blessings.

Proverbs

- 3:1 My son, forget not my law (God's Word), but let thine heart keep my commandments:
3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Obviously, to have a long life, a child needs to eventually grow up and become an adult. How can the truths of Ephesians Chapter 6, verses 1 through 4 apply to us believers who are already grown? Whom do we obey so we can enjoy, or keep enjoying, a long life filled with God's blessings?

When we confessed Jesus as Lord and believed in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, as it says in Romans 10:9, we were saved. This means that we not only got born again but that we became children of God: God is our Father.

I John

- 3:1a Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God... (*note: the word "sons" is from the Greek word tekna, meaning beloved children*).
3:2a Behold, now are we the sons (*tekna*) of God...

Romans

- 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit (*via speaking in tongues*), that we are the children of God.

So, as born-again believers, we are now children of God. Therefore, the one we are to obey is God, our heavenly Father. When we do this, we will get the same benefits mentioned in Ephesians Chapter 6 regarding children obeying their parents in the Lord.

Let's consider a few verses dealing with how we are to obey God so we get the benefits:

I John

- 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep (observe attentively, obey) his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous (overbearing, burdensome).
5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith (believing).

Philippians

- 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation (*study God's Word*) with fear and trembling (reverence and obedience).
2:13 For it is God which worketh (energizes) in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

Even Jesus Christ himself, God's only begotten Son, obeyed his Father:

Hebrews

5:8 Though he (Jesus Christ) were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (God).

We saw that as children honor and obey their parents and as adults obey their heavenly Father (by learning and doing His Word), one of the benefits is that we may have a long life. But what kind of life would we have? What's the quality of this long life that we can expect? Let's consider a few more verses:

John

10:10b ...I (Jesus Christ) am come that they might have live (*zoē – life in all of its fullness*), and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

III John

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

II Peter

1:3 According as his (*to God's*) divine power (he) hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life (*zoē – life in all of its fullness*) and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.

Romans

8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who

8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

So, we see that God not only desires that we have a long life, but that this life we have is packed with benefits and His blessings: He wants us to prosper. And we get this by obeying: children are to honor and obey their parents in the Lord, and adults are to obey their heavenly Father, including His Word.

Even so, unless Christ returns first, this life we have, no matter how long, will have an end, and then we won't be able to do all these things:

Ecclesiastes

9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

While we're living, we are to make the most of the life we have. But even though this life we now enjoy is finite, there's more. One of the things we obeyed is the truth on how to get saved (confessing Romans 10:9), and as a result of this we have the hope of Christ's return and eternal life to follow.

John

3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Here we see the great analogy of this part of the relationships described in Ephesians: obey God's Word and look forward to everlasting life. That's definitely the ultimate in *makrochronios*, or long life.

So, we not only can "live long and prosper" in the life we have now, but we can anticipate an even greater, eternal life in the future.

- Dr. Rick Batt