

December 1, 2019

"...so that you may know him better..."

"You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 4:22-6:1-4

Parenting is not for cowards. As a parent and grandparent I know firsthand how hard it is to parent children. I also must acknowledge that over the years I have made more than a few mistakes and I still make them. The idea, which has gained some ground recently, that parenting is a competitive sport and that the best parent wins is utterly and completely false. Parenting is hard work and sadly it is a task for which few of us ever prepared.

As is true with marriage, most of us learned everything we know about parenting from our parents. If they were very good roll models we learned a lot. If they were not good roll models we learned a lot that we will need to overcome unlearn.

In addressing the parent/child relationship the Apostle Paul writes, ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*** And then he adds, ***"Fathers, do not exasperate you children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."***

As we noted last week when we talked about Paul's command to ***"...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ..."***, obedience is something that each of us must individually and personally choose. So, wives must choose submission and husbands must choose selfless love.

In the same way the Apostle's commands to children and to fathers must be individually and personally obeyed. Paul commands children to ***"...obey your parents in the Lord..."*** So, obedience to this commandment rests with children. It is doubly important because, as the Apostle points out, obeying our parents is almost a guarantee that we will ***"...enjoy a long life on the earth..."***

The second part of Paul's commandment in today's context is addressed to fathers. This is of major importance. In our world the task of parenting often falls most heavily on mothers and fathers leave the house to 'bring home the bacon'. This is not now nor has it ever been God's design. From the beginning God has expected and commanded fathers to take the lead in parenting their children. Frankly, I believe that many of our personal and social issues are born in the failure of fathers to effectively parent.

The Apostle tells fathers, ***"...do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*** Fathers can be exasperating. They can be highly demanding and super critical or they can be nearly and/or entirely absent. Both are exasperating. Paul would teach fathers to train and instruct their children without the exasperation.

Now, how in the world do we pull that off? When Gloria and I were young parents we came to understand pretty quickly that our parents hadn't really prepared us to be effective parents.

So, we went to school. We took classes on marriage and we took classes on parenting and eventually we came to teach both.

In our classes on parenting we learned a lot of valuable tools that really help up to train and instruct our children and we are still using those tools with our grandkids. So, ust as it is essential as those who have "*...put off the old self...*" to choose the way of selfless obedience in the church and in the marriage, so to it essential for those of us who have children to learn to selflessly parent.

