

LESSON 8 Duties of Children

When we consider the importance the Word of God gives to obedience, it is not strange that the one commandment to children found in the Bible is “Children, obey your parents” (Ephesians 6:1). One of the most valuable lessons a child can learn is respect for authority. And the lesson begins at home.

Jesus, through His obedience to the heavenly Father, made salvation available to all humankind. The Son of God always did what pleased the Father (John 8:29), and He *first* learned obedience from His earthly parents (Luke 2:51).

A little maid of Israel, who was taken captive to Syria, gave a testimony to the power of God, which resulted in a Syrian captain being healed of leprosy. Undoubtedly, this young girl learned obedience to her parents, and in turn to their God, in her home back in Israel.

In this lesson we will consider reasons children need to learn obedience. We will also recognize some far-reaching effects in the lives of those who learn respect for authority and those who do not.

The Plan

- A. To Respect and Obey Their Parents
- B. To Help Their Parents
- C. To Love, Honor, and Obey God

The Goals

- 1. Give the scriptural basis for the responsibilities of children to their parents.
- 2. Show from Scripture who is responsible when children disobey their parents.
- 3. Explain how the attitude of children toward authority has far-reaching effects outside the home.

A. TO RESPECT AND OBEY THEIR PARENTS

Goal 1. Give the scriptural basis for the responsibilities of children to their parents.

Because God Commands It

The fifth of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 was to children, and it was the only one with a promise. Jesus repeated it (Matthew 15:4), and the apostle Paul also quoted it in his teaching:

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.” (Ephesians 6:1–3)

Children show their respect for their parents by obeying them. Every time a child speaks disrespectfully to a parent, refuses to do what he is told, ignores his parent when spoken to, or fights back when disciplined, he is breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

In Old Testament, disobedience to parents was considered to be such a serious offense that it could be punished by death. The government, by resorting to such severe punishment,

discouraged the spread of a lawless, disobedient spirit that would be a threat to society.

If all children respected and obeyed their parents, very few would ever become lawbreakers and criminals. Wise sons and daughters will choose to obey their parents, for “a wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother” (Proverbs 10:1).

Those who do not respect the authority of their parents are not likely to respect that of anyone else. Until children reach the legal age of adulthood, God’s laws and those of the land give parents authority over them. But even when a person is of age and begins to manage his own life and make his own decisions, directly under God’s authority rather than that of his parents, he should always respect his parents.

Application

- 1** Memorize Ephesians 6:1–3.
 - 2** How do we know that the commandment to children is very important? Use your notebook for your answer.
 - 3** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
 - a)** People who become criminals are most likely those who, as children, had little respect for authority.
 - b)** When a person reaches adulthood it is no longer possible for him to break the fifth commandment.
 - c)** God is greatly displeased with children who do not respect and obey their parents.
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Because of Their Love and Care

Goal 2. Show from Scripture who is responsible when children disobey their parents.

When God blesses a home with children, He expects the parents to give them loving care. A woman suffers a great deal of discomfort when she brings a child into the world. Many parents go without something they need to be able to take care of the needs of their children.

God expects parents to guide and train their children to the best of their ability. So, in cooperating with their parents, children are cooperating with God. The Lord said of Abraham,

“I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:19).

What do children owe their parents? How can they ever repay them for the gift of life, their work to provide them with food, clothing, shelter, and teaching? Love, respect, and obedience are the best ways for children to say thank you to their parents for their love and care.

Parents have already passed through many of the experiences their children have yet to face. They sometimes understand a child's problems better than the child realizes, and they can often give valuable help and advice. Children need to know that there is someone stronger and wiser in the family than they are.

Some young people may fail to show respect because their parents are poor and uneducated. Perhaps their parents do not dress as fashionably as some, and they may be unable to discuss world problems with great intellectual skills. But it could be that these parents have wanted so much for their children to have a good life that they have kept little for themselves. They have earnestly and without complaint given of their time, money, and strength, and deserve the love and respect of their children. Children who treat their parents unkindly, for whatever reason, not only hurt them but they hurt themselves. Proverbs 11:17 states, “A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.”

In his book *Making the Home Happy*, R.T. Cross writes:

There are two reasons why we should love God: first, because of the position which He holds in the universe; secondly, because of His loving and lovable character.

There are two reasons for honoring our rulers: first, because of the position they hold; secondly, because of their characters, if their characters are good.

There are two reasons for honoring our parents: first, because of the position which they hold as our natural protectors and rulers and providers; and secondly, because

of their love for us, whatever is good in them, and whatever good they do us.

Love includes all the responsibilities, which we owe to our parents. We cannot honor our parents without loving them, or love them without honoring them.

Application

4 Read 1 Timothy 3:4. What responsibility of a father is mentioned here?

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5 Who is hurt when children fail to obey their parents?

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Because of Love for Parents

Children who love their parents will want to please them. Sometimes we find it difficult to obey God in some things, but we must learn to trust Him to know best. Children must also learn to trust their parents to know what is best for them because God places parents in this position of authority over their children. Jesus is the perfect example for, although He is the Son of God, He obeyed His earthly parents.

Then he [Jesus] went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. (Luke 2:51)

Read again the excerpt from *Making the Home Happy*, found in the previous section.

Application

- 6** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** It is not always easy to obey God, but if we love Him we want to please Him.
 - b)** Jesus did not need to obey His earthly parents because He was the Son of God.
 - c)** Children can honor or respect their parents without loving them.
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B. TO HELP THEIR PARENTS

Help in the Home

While parents are expected to provide for their children, children can share in the work of the home. This is one of the most important aspects of a child's training—the opportunity for work tasks of which he or she is capable. At times a parent would far rather do a task himself than to go through the tedious, and sometimes painful process, of teaching a child to do it. But very often children who have grown up rebelling against authority are those who have had too much free time and were not taught in the home to take responsibility. A young child requires more play time, but an increasing proportion of his time should be given to work as he grows older and moves into adulthood.

It will be far easier for a person to assume responsibilities as an adult, if he has learned to do so as a member of a family. Young people who have jobs outside the home to earn extra money can also help their parents by sharing some of the expenses. Some young people are able to buy their own clothes and school supplies, helping in this way to relieve the financial burden of their parents.

Application

- 7** Circle the letter in front of the one best statement about children's work in the home.
- a)** If parents do not train their children to help in the home, it simply means they have to do more work themselves.
 - b)** Children who grow up learning to work as well as play are learning to use free time wisely, and will better know how to assume responsibility in an adult world.
 - c)** So as not to show more love for one child than another, parents must allow all of their children to have the same amount of playtime and work time.
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Care for Aged Parents

When, because of their age or serious illness, parents are no longer able to care for themselves, children are responsible to see that they receive proper care. Whether they are able to take their parents into their own home, or it is necessary to make other provision for them, they can show love and appreciation for their parents by assuming this responsibility.

Jesus, even in His suffering when He was dying on the cross, remembered His mother. He entrusted her into the care of John, one of His disciples:

When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. (John 19:26–27)

Application

- 8** What did you learn from Jesus' example in the way He treated His mother? Write your answer in your notebook.
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C. To LOVE, HONOR, AND OBEY GOD

Goal 3. Explain how the attitude of children toward authority has far-reaching effects outside the home.

Accept Jesus as Savior

Children should learn to love, honor, and obey God at a very early age. They need not wait until they are adults to repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Savior, as the following verses affirm.

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”
(Mark 10:14)

When a child is old enough to understand that he has sinned, he is old enough to be saved. If older children show definite evidence of repentance, they should be baptized. The earlier in life a person makes a decision for Christ, the better; it becomes increasingly difficult for a person to turn from his or her past and accept Christ as he or she grows older.

Application

9 When is the best time for a person to accept Jesus as Savior?

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Worship God

Worship means “the expression of one’s love for God.” People express their love for God by telling Him they love Him, by praising Him in song, by thanking Him for His blessings, and by talking with Him in prayer. Going to God’s house, learning together from God’s Word, being sensitive to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to the heart, are all acts of worship. Worship also includes giving one’s money, time, and effort that others may come to know Christ also.

God wants children to have a part in worshipping Him in family worship in the home and in God's house with their parents and brothers and sisters. Several of the outstanding men of the Bible learned to worship and serve God when they were children. Among them were Moses, Daniel, Samuel, and Timothy. Children were expected to accompany their parents to God's house.

All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord. (2 Chronicles 20:13)

The religious leaders became angry when they heard children in the temple shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:15). So they asked Jesus if He had heard what the children were saying. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'" (Matthew 21:16)

Application

10 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a) The expression of our love for God through worship takes place in God's house alone.
- b) We worship in various ways; such as, in praise, in song, in giving, in studying God's Word.
- c) Worship is simply praising and thanking God—expressing in words—what He has done for us.



Put God First

God expects to have first place in the lives of His children for whom He has given everything. The Bible teaches us:

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)

There comes a time in the life of every Christian when putting God first causes a struggle with other loyalties. Difficulties arise in some homes because a child is a Christian and the parents are not. Yet children are commanded to obey their parents. God has given parents authority over their children,

and has charged parents with the responsibility of teaching, disciplining, and loving them.

Whatever opposition may arise when parents are not Christians, their child must manifest true Christian spirit, continuing to respect and honor the parents. As in other relationships in which a Christian finds his or her convictions at variance with an authority, the answer must be found by earnestly seeking God in prayer. God can resolve problems satisfactorily even when no human solution seems possible.

Following are two of the many wonderful promises of God to direct a child in every circumstance of life, if he or she will trust and obey God.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5–6)

Application

11 What is a problem that confronts every Christian at some time in his or her life?

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12 What must he or she do to resolve the problem?

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13 Memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13.



Check Your Answers

7 b) Children who grow up learning . . .

1 After committing Ephesians 6:1–3 to memory, repeat it to another person.

8 Your answer. If Jesus, when He was dying, felt such love and concern for His mother that she be cared for properly, we are never relieved of this responsibility to our parents.

2 Your answer may be similar to this one. It is a commandment from God; it is referred to at least three times in the Bible; it is the only commandment accompanied by a promise; disobedience to parents was severely punished in the Old Testament.

9 Early in life

3 Statements **a)** and **c)** are true.

10 Statement **b)** is true.

4 He must manage his family and train his children to respect and obey him.

11 The Christian's convictions are at variance with someone in authority over him or her.

5 Your answer. It grieves or hurts God who loves them; it hurts their parents who love them; and children hurt themselves.

12 Seek God earnestly in prayer for His guidance

6 Statement **a)** is true.

13 Recite the verse you have memorized to another person.

