



Living For the Glory of God, Part 4: A Home That Brings Glory to God

Series: *Philippians – To Live Is Christ*

Ephesians 6:1-4

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JR Miller wrote in 1882, these words that seem to be impossible to achieve and yet ought to be our goal and desires as the people of God. Listen to what he wrote: **An ideal Christian home ought to be a place where love rules. It ought to be beautiful, bright, joyous, full of tenderness and affection, a place in which all are growing happier and holier each day. There should never be any discord, any wrangling, any angry words or bitter feelings. The home-life should be a harmonious song without one marring note, day after day. The home, no matter how humble it is, how plain, how small – should be the dearest spot on the earth to each member of the family. It should be made so happy a place, and so full of life, that no matter where one may wander in after years, in any of the ends of the earth – his home should still hold its invisible cords of influence about him, and should ever draw resistless upon his heart. It ought to be the one spot in all the earth, to which he would turn first, when in trouble or in danger. It should be his refuge, in every trial and grief.**

Does that seem impossible? It may. I'll grant that it seems like a grandiose and ambitious statement for sure, especially in the culture in which we live. There is no denying that in our culture, the value and the beauty of a godly family is much maligned and mocked. The contemporary portrayals of the family accentuate the supposed worthlessness of marriage, the ineptitude and general foolishness of the father, a mother who is either trapped by her family or exasperated by her family, and children who are rebellious and far smarter than the parents with which they are encumbered. The hard and sobering truth is that we live in a country that is hell-bent on destroying the concept of the biblical family. The clear direction of our government and society is to redefine the family, not for the sake of tolerance and freedom, but for the purpose of destroying the biblical concept of family and to replace it with collectivism where government institutions are ultimate and define what is good and right for the family, how children should be raised, what they should think, what they should believe, how they should act, and what they should think. This is reality in our country today. And yet, all of this does not in any way invalidate or undermine the power of the

gospel to transform and to equip, strengthen and solidify our families as we seek to honor the calling that God has given to us to live according to His divine plan and commands and fleshing out in our homes the application of Philippians 4:20, where Paul writes: **“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Philippians 4:20, ESV)**

I don't think that it is a stretch to say that the most important calling that faces us as parents in a culture that is rampantly godless and under the sway of satanic philosophies is to establish thoroughly Christ-centered, Christ-honoring homes. It is a high and difficult calling to be sure, one that all of us need to be continually pursuing, in spite of the myriad of challenges that faces us today. That is what we are going to look at today and then after looking specifically at how we should be raising our children according to God's Word, we are consider how we create and cultivate a God-honoring atmosphere our homes from Scripture. Just as I did last week, I want to begin by laying a foundation for the Christian home and for the message this week.

Some Foundational Statements

1. The primary goal of the Christian family is to bring glory to God by creating disciples of Jesus Christ. The goal of marriage and family, the goal of our homes, is not to produce more people to populate the world – not primarily – it is to populate the world with worshippers and lovers of Christ, who are **“imitators of God, as beloved children. And (who) walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph 5:1-2)** The goal of our homes is to create and strengthen disciples of Jesus Christ. Our homes are to be disciple factories.

2. To that end, we must realize that God is a God who uses means and one of His chief means for producing disciples is the Christian family. In stating the goal of the family to be “creating disciples of Jesus Christ,” I know that some of you are thinking that ultimately the salvation of our children is the work of God and that would be true. However, God is a God of means. For instance, we know that it is God who saves human souls, but the means that He uses is the preaching of the Word of God. Similarly, God is the one who makes disciples of our children, but one of the proximate means that He uses are faithful disciplers – fathers and mothers who take seriously the command of God to **bring (their children) up in the**

discipline and instruction of the Lord and to create a home in which Christ is honored and worshipped. We must be obedient to the commands of God regarding our children and trust in His grace for the results.

3. Children are valuable -- they are to be loved and disciplined. Children are valuable. They are a blessing from God. ***“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth.”*** (Psalm 127:3–4, ESV) Children are valuable. They should be seen as a gift from God and they should be cherished and nurtured and disciplined and invested in.

4. Techniques are not the key to establishing a Christian home; real godliness and the wisdom of God are. What is necessary are not techniques and special training but rather the reality of personal devotion to God and the true holiness that is the result and the application of God’s Word to the way in which you relate to your children as you apply the Word of God to their lives and in your home as a whole.

5. This instruction is timeless, but especially needful for the day in which we live. In light of everything that I have said about the attack upon the biblical concept of family, I believe that Christian parents and children, Christian families, have a unique opportunity of witnessing to the world of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ through simple obedience to the words that we are looking at today.

6. Paul is directing this text to Christian parents and their children in a covenant home. As we saw last week with marriage, Paul’s message regarding the Christian home assumes that both parents are believers and that they are desiring to have a home that honors Christ and that produces disciples of Christ and so my intent is to preach this text as if the desire of everyone in this room is to have this kind of home, knowing that there are some single moms and dads here, knowing too that there are some parents here who are unequally yoked, and some who are facing some great difficulties with your children. I also understand that there may be children or students here who are not in a covenant home and who need to understand how to live in a manner that pleases Christ in that context. I want to encourage you in two ways – one, seek counsel with a pastor or an elder regarding

questions that this sermon might raise regarding your specific situation and two, that God is faithful and he will honor the principles that are in this text, regardless of your particular situation.

7. This text is of vital importance for parents and non-parents in the family of God. The importance of this text for parents is obvious. What may not be so obvious is its value to those who are not parents or who no longer have kids at home. For those that are not yet parents but who one day hope to be, learn these principles well so that you can avoid some of the pitfalls that many of us have fallen into. If you no longer have children at home, learn these principles so that you can counsel your children who have children, so that you can counsel the families in the body in a manner that is beneficial and God-honoring or so that you might pursue your children in repentance for ways that you have failed them in the past. These principles as well must drive the way that we pray for our families and our moms and dads and the way that we engage in ministry to our children in the church – teaching them to obey their parents in the Lord and teaching our parents to rightly train their children. So let's examine this text and open our hearts to the teaching of the Word of God and we will begin with Paul's words to children and that message is:

Children, obey and honor your parents. (v.1-3) Paul writes: ***“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.””*** (Ephesians 6:1–3, ESV) The first thing that I want us to see as significant here is that Paul specifically addresses the children in this letter that was to be read to the congregation at Ephesus. In the past several years, there has been a great movement to segregate children from the rest of the church as though they cannot learn or be involved in corporate worship. That idea was not a part of the early church. Children joined parents in worship. This is why as soon as our children are able; we have them in the corporate worship of our church, sitting under the Word of God with us.

Paul's command here is simple. **Children, obey your parents in the Lord.** Very simply, Paul is saying: Children are to listen to and to be obedient to their parents and to do what they say. God's expectation of you as children in a covenant home is to obey your parents unless their commands or instruction is in direct conflict with God's Word. Moreover, this obedience to your parents is to be more than simply doing what your parents require. Sullen, begrudging, downcast, surly fulfillment of duty is not acceptable. Paul says we are to honor our parents

– that is ascribe worth to them, to give them weight in our lives, to fix value upon them. Therefore, real obedience is not merely grudging duty but instead, God expects children to obey their parents joyfully, thankfully, lovingly and with humility.

Well, how do we define “children?” If you live at home, or are in any way subsidized by your parents, if they are paying for your schooling, for instance, or if they are responsible for you, for the purposes of this text, you are a child. Age is not the issue.

Why does he command children to be obedient to their parents? First of all, he tells children to be obedient to their parents because it is the right thing to do, **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** Now some people will say that this is never a good motivation for obedience, that obedience should always be motivated by something higher and greater and I understand the sentiment behind that, but Paul has no problem saying – obedience is the right thing to do. What Paul is getting at is that the obedience of children to their parents is naturally right; it is a built-in law of God’s creation. Think about it, God made Adam from the dust of the ground and had rights over him as Creator to expect his obedience to his commands. That just makes sense. It is the natural order of things. That is Paul’s point here. In a lesser way, parents are the “creators” of their children and so the rightful expectation is that children would submit to their parents’ authority and be obedient to them. The obedience of children to their parents is the right and proper way of things.

But more than that, not only is the obedience of children to their parents naturally right, it is scripturally right. Paul recalls the OT commandments of God and says: **"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first (the primary) commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."** Children and students, honoring and obeying your parents is a commandment of God. Your parents have been given the responsibility of shepherding your soul by God. God has appointed them authority over you and so to disobey and rebel against your parents is to disobey and rebel against God. In other words, disobedience to parents is at its heart a spiritual rebellion. It is rebellion against God. You are to obey your parents and honor them and respect them because it is part of your obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God graciously attaches a promise to this commandment. Be obedient so **that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land**. This promise when it was originally given to the children of Israel meant basically this: If you want to go on living in the land of promise to which I am leading you, and go on living there under my blessing observe my commandments and especially this one. What does Paul mean when he quotes it for us since we are not Israel going into the Promised Land? In general terms, Paul is saying: children who obey their parents put themselves in the way of God's blessing. Parental authority is a covering for you and a place of blessing and favor with God. God will bless your obedience.

This is so practical and so spiritual at the same time. Children and students, you bring some of your greatest problems upon yourself because you will not obey or honor your parents. It is a foolish notion to think that because you refuse to submit to your parents that somehow you are demonstrating freedom or independence. It simply isn't true. To refuse to obey your parents is to make yourself a slave of sin. **“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”** (Romans 6:16, ESV) In fact, Geoff Thomas makes an insightful statement in this regard: **“Ultimately, your destiny is determined by whether you listen to the voice of Satan or the voice of God – just as it was in Eden. In God's design, listening to your parents is a training ground for listening to the Lord himself. If you won't listen to parents who know what's best and want what's best for you, how can you listen to the Lord who knows what's best and wants what's best for you?”** So who will it be – the ones who love you and care for your soul and long for your well-being and desire your blessing and that you would know and love Christ or the one who is targeting your soul. In God's design, listening to your parents is a training ground for listening to the Lord himself. To the parents, God says:

3) We must raise our children in a way that pleases the Lord. (v.4) Paul writes: **“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”** (Ephesians 6:4, ESV) Let me just say a couple of things here as we begin this section. First we need to understand that it is our responsibility, parents, to raise our children. We are to be the chief caregivers – not the school, not the grandparents, not someone else's parents, not the government, not the church, not anyone else, but us. That requires of us involvement, investment and intentionality. Second, we need to see: **Fathers are commanded to take the lead in bringing up their children**. Paul started this section by saying that children are to obey their parents, but then as he turns to the responsibility of

the parents before the Lord, he addresses the fathers and the reason he does that is because the fathers have the responsibility of leading in the raising of our children. He is the head of the wife and the head of the family. Now this does not mean that the father has sole responsibility, but the leading responsibility. Fathers and mothers are called to this responsibility together— **“My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.” (Proverbs 6:20–22, ESV)** It is vital for a husband and wife to be united in this responsibility of bringing up our children, but as fathers we need to see that we must take the lead in this. Here is the inescapable truth, fathers. Just as you are to serve as living picture of Christ to your wife and to this world in your marriage, so you serve as the first and primary picture of Father God to your children. How you father your children them will impact, for better or worse, their view of Father God toward His children.

This is serious business. What is the picture of the Fatherhood of God that they see in us? A father who loves his children and is committed to them and spends time with them shows them a picture of God the Father who loves and delights and cares for His children, but a father who is aloof and unapproachable sends a message of a God who is uncaring and unloving. A father who takes the path of least resistance, who does not stand for righteousness and truth sends a message that God is weak and passive, but a father who stands for the truth and will not be moved, who fights the good fight sends the message that God is a holy warrior and mighty in power. A father who listens to his children, who sacrifices for their well-being, who keeps his promises sends the message that God hears prayer, that God is committed to our good and that God keeps his word. A father who is faithful to his wife and family and protective of his children sends the message that God is faithful to his people and a refuge for his children. A father that is weak and expects nothing from his children and does not discipline them sends the message that God is weak and unconcerned. But a father who expects obedience and disciplines disobedience sends the message that God the Father leads and disciplines those that he loves. A father who holds a grudge and who refuses to forgive his children sends the message that God is harsh and cruel to his children. But a father who is gracious and forgiving yet instructs his children firmly and faithfully sends the message that God the Father is gracious and compassionate and that He values the truth and wants His children to live by it. If you are a father, you are the first picture of God that they will ever get. What picture do they see in you? I know we are not sinless brothers, and we never can be, but we must strive to model God the Father in the way that we father our children. If our goal and the hope of our parenting is that we

would raise disciples and worshippers of Christ, what will that require? First Paul gives us the negative. He says:

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Now Paul doesn't mean that if we are raising our kids right that they will never be angry. It is certain that our children will get angry at times with us – that is the sinful inclination of the human heart whenever it meets with authority. The idea is this – to provoke to anger describes a pattern of action or parenting that gradually builds up into anger and frustration and resentment. Paul says it in the companion passage in Colossians like this: **“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged (or disheartened).” (Colossians 3:21, ESV)** Paul is concerned that in the raising of our children that we do not give them a legitimate reason to be angry and take the heart out of their obedience. What is it that we need to avoid?

How do parents provoke their children to anger?

Overregulation/Overprotection: Micromanaging their lives, overly restricting where they go and what they do; never trusting them to do anything on their own, smothering them to the point of fencing them in and never letting them risk anything will exasperate and frustrate our children.

Permissiveness/Overindulgence: Giving them everything they want, let them do whatever they want to do, being ruled by their mood and fit throwing. No boundaries = no love. Permissiveness and overindulgence never establishes your role as the authority and so leaves your child feeling uncovered.

Shifting Standards: When there is no set standard of right and wrong; when one day something is okay and next it is met with harsh punishment; when the person administering discipline is unpredictable; who is overindulgent one moment and flies into a rage the next. To avoid inconsistency, first, think before you speak, and second, when they do speak, stick to your decision unwaveringly.

Favoritism: Preferring one child over another, constant comparisons to the perfect kid.

Neglect: Treating the children like a nuisance or a bother, unwillingness to sacrifice or care for them spiritually, emotionally or physically.

Unreasonable or No Expectations: Pressuring them to achieve or to perform to affirm our own worth or to secure our reputation. Some parents crush their kids by pressuring them to perform in areas where they may not have an aptitude and make them to feel worthless if they don't perform well. The flipside is true however – no expectations – expecting less of them than they are capable of doing or giving.

Idle Threats: threatening to punish and never following through on those threats.

Disparagement and Discouragement: Continual criticism... never amount to anything, worthless, useless... Martin Luther, repeating the old adage, "spare the rod, spoil the child," added the another important component: "Keep an apple to give him when he has done well."

Manipulation: Using love and affection as tool of reward or punishment.

Allowing a failure in one area to color the entirety of the child's character.

Refusing to see any evidences of grace

Unreasonableness and unwillingness to listen

Hypocrisy: If we don't practice what we preach, our preaching will disgust our children – the whole do as I say, not as I do thing. Hypocrisy fuels resentment in kids and makes God's Word weightless – if it's not important to you, why should it be important to them?

All of these things will exasperate and discourage our kids, but Paul gives to us a more excellent way.

A More Excellent Way

That more excellent way is this: **Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** Paul is telling us that we are to bring them up (to cherish them and train them) in the discipline (that is in the correction and training for proper living) and in the instruction (verbal instruction and teaching) of the Lord. The idea that Paul getting at is this: we must train our children and instruct our children for their growth in maturity in the atmosphere of the Lordship of Christ. We need to have a vision for our children that is bigger than the world. It is not merely a matter of having kids that don't embarrass you in public, or who are high achievers in school, or are great athletes, or are popular with their peers, or who are "well-adjusted" members of society. We must raise our kids with a view to them being mature men and women who submit to Christ as Lord and live and flourish under His Lordship.

Now, no doubt, our children need to be trained in life skills: an education, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and shopping, proper hygiene, how to care for themselves physically, how to drive a car, care of and respect the possessions and property God has given to them, how to manage finances, how to manage their time, how to have a good work ethic.

But they also need to learn self-control and submission to authority and obedience, godliness, and integrity. We need to train our kids in how to handle life – trial, conflict, how to handle relationships, disappointments, success and more -- in atmosphere of Christ's Lordship. In other words, as we are training our kids in all of these areas, in the forefront of our minds must ever be the chief thought and the motivation that our children are to be brought up in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This is the specific,

overarching task to which Christian parents alone are called. It is not only our supreme task; it is the focus that everything that we teach our kids should serve. Our greatest desire and ambition should be that our children would come to know Christ as their Savior and their Lord.

So how do we do that? In fact, how do we create an atmosphere that encourages growth as a disciple of Christ for everyone in the home? How do we create and cultivate a God-honoring atmosphere in our homes?

Creating and Cultivating a God-Honoring Atmosphere in our Homes

Abide in Christ ourselves, first. *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:4–5, ESV) In order to have a God-honoring atmosphere in our homes, we must ourselves be abiding in Christ. Parents, take inventory in your own hearts. Do you thirst for God as the deer pants after the water? Or is your own life sending your children a message of hypocrisy and spiritual indifference? Is our own commitment to Christ what you hope to see in your children’s lives? Is your obedience to His Word the same kind of submission you long to see from your own kids? These are crucial questions each parent must face if we really want to be successful parents and have a family that honors God.

Make our homes God-saturated. Moses wrote in Deut 6:4-7, *““Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”* (Deuteronomy 6:4–7, ESV) We must be totally committed to making spiritual truth a priority in our homes. Spiritual instruction, a regard for God’s Word, should infiltrate all of life. The Christian family worships together. It is always inspiring to see families sitting together in public worship. It is heartwarming to see father, mother, and children – singing and praying together. Christian families read the Scriptures and discuss spiritual truths at home. Nothing

is more natural than a Christian family spending time together in study and prayer together. We are to teach our children when we sit down at a meal, when we travel in the car, and before we go to bed at night. There can be no “church life” and home life” split. The presence of Christ in our homes, the regard for his Lordship must be at the forefront of the way that we live. Our homes need to be steeped in Scripture must be the basis for everything that we do. Family worship and priority of worship must be evident in our lives. And that leads to the next thing. Creating and cultivating a God-honoring atmosphere in our homes requires that we...

Establish clear expectations for our families that are shaped by the Word of God. We need to set a biblical vision for our families as to how they are to function, what we are pursuing and how we are going to get there. In our homes we need to establish certain responsibilities and expectations for the way we live. Sort of a – “In this family, this is how we do things. In this family we are: kind, patient, and longsuffering... we bear with one another...we pursue humility... we give, share, and sacrifice for others... we seek to be hospitable... admit sin, confess sin, forsake sin... we forgive and we ask forgiveness... we go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, and pray for our enemies... we avoid gossip, slander, tale-bearing... we encourage one another, build up one another, pray for one another... we work hard and cooperate with and serve one another... we keep our commitments and do things right, to the very best of our ability... we model our faith, we share your faith, we exercise our faith, and we grow in faith... we serve Christ and His church. Regardless of what any other family looks like, in light of Christ’s Lordship, this is how we do things.” We need to create and cultivate clear expectations for our family. Do this will help to do the next thing which is to

Cultivate an environment of love and forgiveness, righteousness, peace and joy. We need to cultivate an atmosphere of real love. **“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” (Romans 12:9–10, ESV)** We cultivate an atmosphere of love when we serve one another gladly, when we express commitment to one another, when we take time for one another, when we work through things together, when we are affectionate to one another – hugging and kissing each other, speaking words of affirmation and encouragement to one another. You ought to be telling everyone in your family that you love them as frequently as possible. Rarely do we end a conversation on the phone, or someone leaves the house that we are not telling one another “I love you.” I want my wife and children to be secure in my

love, to know for certain, “Dad is for me and he’s committed to me. He loves me and wants the best for me.”

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32, ESV) We cultivate an atmosphere of forgiveness when we freely confess our sins to one another when we have sinned against them, when we tell our spouse or child that you have asked God to forgive you and then ask for their forgiveness. It demonstrates them that you are dealing with your sins as God instructs us to do. It points them to the perfect sufficiency of the Savior. It shows them the gospel is real. Our homes need to be filled with a sense of love and forgiveness.

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17, ESV) We cultivate righteousness when our homes are filled with the pursuit of what pleases Christ, of practical and real holiness, governed by the Word of God – especially humility.

And we cultivate peace, wholeness, as we rightly apply the commands of God’s Word. We cultivate joy as we fellowship with one another, as we seek to enjoy each other’s company and spend time together... talking, throwing a football, playing a game – whatever. Laughter is music to a home. And one other thing – clear communication is so important in this. We need to work on communicating with one another well. I am sure that there is much more that I could say, but ultimately, we create a God-honoring atmosphere in our homes when we realize that we

Live for something greater together as a family. We create this atmosphere when we live realizing that life is about more than personal glory and about more than our family name. We need lift our children’s faces and their eyes from this life alone so that they may see that their greatest joy will be found in living the doxology of Romans 11:36: **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:36)** Encourage them to commit to living a lifestyle of purity, including honoring God with their bodies, renewing their minds for good, turning their eyes and ears away from what’s worthless, and guarding their hearts above all else. We must lift their eyes to see that true life is found in living for

the praise of Christ as Lord, the rightful king over the universe; the conqueror of Satan, sin, death and hell; the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Our homes must be a picture of the gospel. We are new creatures in Christ, by His grace. He has exchanged our hearts of stone for hearts of flesh and put His Spirit within us and has written His law upon our hearts. We have beheld the saving power of Christ and trusted Him as our Redeemer and Lord. We are no longer slaves of sin but slaves of righteousness and worshippers of the Living God and that must define our homes. We must live and display and cultivate faith in the gospel in our homes as we raise our children to the glory of God. May God grant us grace to do it.

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