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***Flourishing Relationships***

***… because of Grace”***

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Ephesians 6:1-9New Living Translation (NLT)

**Children and Parents**

**6 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2“Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: 3If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”**

**4Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.**

**Slaves and Masters**

**5Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. 6Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. 7Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 8Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.**

**9Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don’t threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.**

This passage talks about children, fathers, slaves and masters. What if I am not one of those?

We are all children is some way and we do tend to have someone in charge of our lives – we work in some capacity for someone.

This is really talking about relationships and how to make them work – how to make them flourish.

Flourishing: God is not just wanting to save us and take us away. He wants to make your relationships be rewarding. He wants to redeem every situation.

Key words beyond child, father, slave and master is the words used for God: Lord and Master.

My New Life has a New Boss. How does that affect my relationships?

The Ephesian Question (and ours): Now that I have a new relationship with Christ, how does that affect my relationships with others?

This is revolutionary. This is not I have this private religion over here. This is what I do in my own house. This actually changes everything about how I relate to others.

The Ephesians had an idea that this would change everything but they needed some instruction as to why and how

Cultural context

Ephesian Christians would have been wondering how do they do family now? What is the relationship?

Some of these kids would have become Christians and maybe their parents were not. What do healthy relationships look like with God as my Lord and Master. I am a slave, what do I do now? What do I do now as I own slaves?

This is not just good advice stuff. This has a reason:

God is my Lord and Master.

I have the best boss in the world.

Undercover Boss. Who is the best boss in the world?

We all have something we serve. We all have a boss. It can be people, money, sex, power, pleasure. It is the thing we bow down to.

Now I find myself in this marriage – last week – who is the boss? How does this work? Who has control and Paul says “Submit to one another – love respect, honor.”

Now he is talking to children and to parents and to slaves and masters.

Flourishing relationships are possible because of Grace.

**My New Lord and Master has:**

**Given me every spiritual blessing 1:3**

**Purchased my freedom 1:7**

**Given me an inheritance 1:11**

**Flooded my heart with light and a confident hope 1:18**

**Filled my life with power 1:19**

**Raised my life from the dead 2:6**

**Saved me by His grace 2:8**

**Made me His masterpiece 2:10**

**Brought me near to Himself 2:13**

**Made me a member of His family 2:19**

**Does the bible teach slavery?**

**Answer: No. The bible teaches justice, dignity and freedom.**

Movie “12 years a Slave”

Complexities of injustice. Big topic and cannot address it all here.

The problem: Human institutions that create injustice and rob people of the dignity of providing for themselves freely through proper pay and respect for each other.

Selma showed the struggle but with respect and dignity. They showed the light in their hearts by not returning evil for evil. At one point on the bridge over the river MLK just bowed and prayed and turned back. Speech about justice.

Show speech

“The Gospel found slavery in the world; and in many regions, particularly the Roman and the Greek, it was a very bad form of slavery. The Gospel began at once to undermine it, with its mighty principles of the equality of all souls in the mystery and dignity of manhood, and of the equal work of redeeming love wrought for all souls by the supreme Master. But its plan was - not to batter, but to undermine. . . . So while the Gospel in one respect left slavery alone, it doomed it in another.” (Moule)

Dominion of Canada: The idea was that God is the Lord and Master of this country and so we are all under him and have dignity.

The Book of Negroes. Demonstrated that even if slavery as an institution is illegal, the plight of the person may not be much better. They were offered freedom to go to Canada but there was still hatred and injustice and there was provision to make yourself a slave again. It is the overall injustice of not being able to have the dignity of making a living and providing for your family. They still faced discrimination in Canada.

God’s vision of justice was for the flourishing of all people with hearts that are for each other. That was what is so moving about MLK’s speech is that he was using scripture

The arch of human history is toward justice. Agree when people are

Dhalit people in India.

Let us look at those verses and transfer them to our situation as employees and employers. Not a direct transferability but generally – you might find yourself in a difficult situation. You have the incredible privilege of having the option to resign and go and work for another boss or start your own business.

**When Jesus is Lord and Master on the Org. Chart:**

With Jesus as my lord and master…this is how I do relationships.

To say Jesus is Lord would have been so counter cultural. I have forever had many lords and gods and these gods feud with each other and I try to appease them. Now I am completely loved and freed in Christ.

Kids: “You are not the boss of me”

Illustrate: Org. Chart: GOD (huge) earthly parent or boss, me

Corporate org chart – based on self- centred power and control

Org chart for Ephesians: gods among them or above them? Little gods fighting amongst themselves. Their view of reality. Then we have Fathers – huge – lots of power. Little child with little or no rights.

Masters – Huge and powerful and now we have little slave….nothing

New Kingdom Org chart – Huge God – Lord and Master

Everyone saved by grace on level ground under God.

We are all on level ground because of grace. Jesus is my Lord and Master. The power plays are over, people are no longer demanding their rights because of grace. By grace you have been saved through faith and this not of yourselves it is a gift of God, not of works so that no one boasts.

The game is tilted your way because of grace. Your Master is in heaven. You are his favorite. So is your mom and dad, so is your kids, so is your employee, so is your boss.

\*\*\*\*We have social org charts. This person is on the very top of the heap and everyone serves him or her.

This is my role – my identity is that I am a child of God

This is the great truth:

**You can flourish in whatever place you find yourself in on the org chart because Jesus is your Lord and Master**

You don’t have to wait until you grow up if you are a kid. You don’t have to wait for just the perfect family. You are not a victim. You don’t have to wait until you have just the right work situation. Slaves said….I am free and they upended the current situation.

Paul spends so much time talking about who we are in Christ – he spends the first half of the letter talking to them about how great it is to make Jesus Lord and Master because it affects everything about our motivations, our standings, how to accept the situation I am currently in.

**How to flourish in your relationship with your parents:**

 **1. Do what they tell you 2. Honor them**

**1-3Children, do what your parents tell you. This is only right. “Honor your father and mother” is the first commandment that has a promise attached to it, namely, “so you will live well and have a long life.”**

a. Children, obey your parents: The command is simple. Children are to obey their parents. This not only means that children have the responsibility to obey, but parents have the responsibility to *teach* their children obedience - one of the most important jobs for a parent.

i. We don’t need to teach our children how to disobey, because they have each inherited an inclination to sin from Adam - but obedience must be taught.

ii. It is essential that a parent teach the child obedience, so that the child will grow up knowing how to obey God even when he doesn’t understand everything or doesn’t want to.

The answer to the question – “I will do this if they do that”

Grace: Will I do all things with an awareness of heaven. Completely disempowers that kind of mentality that ends with a stalemate/checkmate.

 Because of Grace…..I make these decisions.

Honor and being an adult child

i. What it *means* to honor our father and mother may change as we grow into adulthood, but the principle always endures. The adult child does not owe the parent obedience, but they do owe the parent *honor*.

ii. “When the bonds of family life break up, when respect for parents fails, the community becomes decadent and will not *live long*.” (Foulkes)

The first commandment with a promise: Paul reinforced this idea with a reference to [Deuteronomy 5:16](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Deuteronomy+5:16&t1=en_nas), where God promised to bless the obedient child.

i. Christians have normally divided the Ten Commandments into the first four (directed towards God) and the last six (directed towards their fellow man). But the Jews divided the commandments in two sets of five, seeing the law to honor your father and mother more as a duty towards God than a duty towards man.

**How to flourish in your relationship with your kids:**

**1. Be Kind 2. Lead them to Jesus**

**4Fathers, don’t exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.**

a. Do not provoke your children to wrath: Parents certainly have the opportunity to provoketheir children to wrath, through an unkind, over-critical attitude that torments the child instead of training them. But Christian parents should never be like that.

i. “The gospel introduced a fresh element into parental responsibility by insisting that the feelings of the child must be taken into consideration. In a society where the father’s authority (*patria potestas*) was absolute, this represented a revolutionary concept.” (Wood)

b. Provoke your children to wrath: This harsh kind of parenting Paul speaks against gives an unnecessary justification to a child’s natural rebellion.

i. “When you are disciplining a child, you should have first controlled yourself . . . What right have you to say to your child that he needs discipline when you obviously need it yourself?” (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

c. Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord: This does not mean merely scolding your children in the sense of admonition. It means to *train* and *admonish*. Encouragement and rebuke must be combined with training and teaching.

i. This is a responsibility for fathers. They must not neglect their responsibility to teach and be a spiritual example for their children. It is not a responsibility that should be left to the mother or the Sunday School.

ii. Training is the same word translated *chastening* in [Hebrews 12:5-11](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Hebrews+12:5-11&t1=en_nas). It has the idea of training through corrective discipline. Admonition has more of the idea of “teaching” - both are necessary, though it may be significant that training comes first.

iii. Significantly, both training and admonition are used to describe the purpose of the Scriptures ([1 Timothy 3:16](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Timothy+3:16&t1=en_nas) and [1 Corinthians 10:11](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Corinthians+10:11&t1=en_nas)). Parents are to raise their children on the word of God.

d. Bring them up: This ancient Greek word was originally used of bodily nourishment as in[Ephesians 5:29](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Ephesians+5:29&t1=en_nas). But the word came to be used for the nurture of body, mind and soul. The form here suggests “development by care and pains” or as Calvin translated, “Let them be fondly cherished.”

Spiritual Purpose

Jesus is the hero in life and he is both the goal line and your team mate. Nothing matters as much as following Jesus as your hero. He’s the best role model they can follow and the more they can get to know about his life and how he played the game – the more success they can have. He’s also their best coach…better than us as parents. If you follow his instruction about how to live…you will win. Doesn’t matter what the score looks like in dollars and cents or even in the pleasures of life categories. You just win. There will be life a rich and satisfying life.

Let them know that they have been put on this earth – not by random chance to just eat, breath, take up space, try your best to enjoy yourself and then die with nothing after this life.

Parents – take deliberate time to tell them about the hero of the game of life. Take time to help them discover their spiritual purpose in the game. The general purpose is to help as many others in this life experience a rich and satisfying life. The game isn’t really about you - it’s about the hero Jesus.

If you hope to see this happen – you will spend time praying with them…you will read the bible with them and to them. You will be talking about your hero Jesus as you just do life together.

Significant

1. Regularly affirmed

 You do that so well – you are good at that….they need help to know where their strengths lie. Kid’s have such a leg up on life when early on they are exploring and developing their gifts. As parents, we have the life experience to best discern areas of strength and weakness.

1. Have our attention

They know they are significant when they have our attention.

1. Gracefully disciplined

It is grace to tell a person about potential danger…

Illust: You didn’t just let me go…thanks.

Set up boundaries I say it here and I say it to myself – don’t just take the path of least resistence. Make them feel significant by not ignoring them when they get out of line.

When your teenagers push boundaries and step across them – they want to know that they matter enough that you get up in their face…in a graceful way.

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?

Hebrews 12:7 (NLT)

This makes the assumption that a good father will discipline – it’s easy to be a pushover or too severe and discipline out of frustration. Don’t do either. Just consistently stand at the line and say no further. There are consequences.

No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. Hebrews 12:11 (NLT)

It is painful for the child and it is painful for the parent. When a child cries because they lost a privilege or they have to take a time out or in some instances there may be a need for a calm and controlled spank on the bottom – you just don’t like doing it.

I had to do that with my youngest daughter recently…the other alternatives of time outs and lost privileges were exhausted. She cried – I didn’t like it…I hated it. Later, having an ice cream cone on a date together…She got all reflective…Daddy I wish the bible didn’t say that you must discipline me. Where did you hear that? Mommy told me when I complained to her.

She still wasn’t completely buying into the purpose of the discipline but she was understanding lines of authority. In her mind it goes like this…I must listen to Dad and Dad must listen to God in the bible. Life has significance to Emma because there are clear lines of accountability. When you understand that in the context of love – there is a significant purpose. We do things because God says them – sometimes we don’t like it but we know it is the best for us.

To have a significant purpose in life – what a gift to instill in children. We get to do that like no other person in the lives of our kids.

As a parent you’re building memories whether you want to or not. Here is the question: are they good memories or are they bad memories? When the frames of experience are all spliced together in one long narrative what will be the big picture memory about you? Was mom a nag or was mom playful? A dad who wasn’t present or a dad who was passionate? Parents who always fought or parents who were crazy about one another? Mom who was mad and moody? Or mom who laughed? What will they remember about you?

Express affection

Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me." Mark 9:36-37 (NLT)

Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions.

1 John 3:18 (NLT)

1. DEVELOP DISCIPLINE.

A person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls.

Proverbs 25:28 (NLT)

Love and discipline go hand in hand. When you see a kid that’s totally out of control – we’ve all seen these before – kids out of control. I don't know where your mind goes to. And I know there are exceptions to everything. I'm not saying this is one hundred percent of the time. But when I see a kid that’s out of control I don’t think, What an awful kid. I go, Where are his parents? What happened there? And again, there are exceptions to every rule. I’ve seen kids who are out of control who have the best parents in the world. But for the most part kids growing up without discipline, the Bible says they become a disgrace to their parents. Proverbs 29 *“But a child left to himself disgraces his mother.”* What do kids need? They need discipline.

My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights. Proverbs 3:11-12 (NLT)

If you want your kids to run from you here’s what you do. You operate in extremes. You either discipline so intensely and always being harsh and screaming, you’re just intense. Or you have no discipline at all.

Anytime you operate in extremes you will lose.

Let me tell you what discipline in anger produces. Angry kids. Discipline in anger produces angry kids. Here are the other results humiliation, embarrassment, violence, angry kids. When you’re disciplining in anger, you’re yelling and screaming, kids are not hearing what you’re saying. What they are doing is they’re hearing your spirit. When you lose control they lose respect. And ultimately they will lose control too.

You see why I had us start with everybody raising their hand saying, “We’ve blown it.” We’ve all blown it. I wish I could rewrite my parenting years. There have been times… There’s some looks on my kid’s face that I can’t shake when I’ve been too mean and too harsh and too loud. The look on their face was not a look of remorse like “I'm sorry Dad.” It was more a look of shame because I disciplined in anger. You know when you blow it. For me I go to my wife to find some comforting words and she says, “No, you pretty much blew it. Get out of the way. Let me try to pick up the pieces.”

What did you do?

Was that right or wrong?

How could you have handled this better?

Next time what do you think you could do?

Should you not, what would be a fair & natural consequence?

1. GIVE THEM ROLE MODELS.
	* Bible Stories

Well, how much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. Hebrews 11:32-34 (NLT)

And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.

Hebrews 12:1b2a (NLT)

* + Real Life Christ Followers

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 I'm not asking you to be a perfect Christian parent. As a matter of fact if you are a perfect Christian parent, you’re a fake, a phony. Because there are no Christian, perfect parents. Perfection, or the illusion of perfection in a kid’s life only produces intimidation. Kids don't need to see a perfect dad. What my kids need to see is a dad who loves God and so badly wants to live his life directed God’s ways. My kids don't need to see a perfect Mom. They need to see a mom who loves Jesus Christ and doesn’t compromise her life because of her commitment to Christ.

I talk to a lot of parents about their faith and what are you doing at home. I'm always trying to learn – here at church and coaching and all kinds of interaction with parents. There’s something parents say to me that really troubles me. Parents will say things like this. “I don’t want to impose my faith on my kids. I want them to decide on their own.” That’s when I want to slap parents. Not in a hurtful way. I don't want to hurt them. Just up side of the back of the head, just to get their attention. You know how crazy that sounds? If you’re a Christian, you’re a follower of Christ, it sounds like to me, “I don’t want to impose on my kids that cocaine and killing are wrong. I’d like them to figure that out on their own.”

And by the way, it is impossible to impose your faith on your kids. There is something called free will. Nobody can take that away. My question is parents, if you’re a Christian, why would God be an option in your home? It’s your home. You’re paying the bills. You’re putting food on the table. You’re making rules. I probably understand better than anybody in this church that kids don’t want to go to church. I understand that. I'm a pastor and there are times I don’t want to go to church. But, there is a lot better chance of a kid making a connection with God while he or she is being forced to go to church than staying at home and sleeping in.

* + Mom & Dad

 You are being watched by your kids. Last week I said the number one influence-er in a kid’s life is a parent because they’re watching their parent’s values, beliefs and actions. Kids are watching how you talk to one another, how you treat people, what you do with your finances, how much alcohol you drink, how you resolve conflict, how you treat strangers. Basically think about it like this. Your life is being bugged. You’re being wired. You’re under surveillance 24/7. You are under great risk of identity theft. The goal is that they would steal the best part of your identity not the worst. And by the way, you’re just going to have a very difficult time getting kids to possess these five Cs – Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, Confidence if they don’t see it in your life.

You can teach those all day long but you can only reproduce who you are. So they see it in you. Under this banner of role models there’s several things. Let me give you two things to write down that I think a lot of parents have stopped thinking about or it’s fallen off their radar.

The first is this. What do you model, parents? You must model integrity.

Why is it that all studies show that in schools today the cheating is going way up? Why are kids cheating more and more? Is it because education is getting more difficult? I don’t think so. I think it’s because kids have been tutored during their growing years on how to lie and cheat at home. They’ve seen thousands of examples from mom and dad of how to stretch the truth and flat out lie and compromise their integrity when the truth becomes uncomfortable.

I know, my God, that you examine our hearts and rejoice when you find integrity there.

1 Chronicles 29:17a (NLT)

* + Build a Place of Refuge

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

Psalm 46:1 (NLT)

I read a study this week, a guy from Harvard did a ten-year study and said this. The number one contributing factor to rage, anger and hostility – what would you think. My mind would go to abused, poorly disciplined from the parents. Parents didn’t give him a credit card when he was thirteen, something like that. No, the number one contributing factor to anger, rage and hostility is the perceived inaccessibility of one or both parents. The perceived inaccessibility. That’s powerful.

What you will find out in this series, I’m going to go intensely practical with you. I’m not just going to go theory. I’m going to dig into my tool chest and bring some of them to the table and I’ll see if any of them are helpful. I want to do this with presence as well.

Let’s go practical here. Let me give you some things to write down that I think you have to at least think about.

First, you have to consider your personal sacrifices.

What’s something you’re currently doing that is taking time away from your kids? What might you need to sacrifice so that your kids aren’t sacrificed?

When you see it, say it in a positive way. Really what I'm asking you to do is catch kids doing things right. If you were to listen to all of the words that are said in a kid’s home or in their life they’re typically negative words. “Why didn’t you put your back pack away?… Who left their cleats on the pool table? … How many times do I have to tell you to put the toilet seat down?”

What if you instead of seeing it and saying it in a negative way what if you were to turn things around? What if you were to see it and then say it positive? You walk in and the toilet seat’s down, “All right! The toilet seat’s down! This is awesome. Let’s throw a party. Here’s a cupcake. Light the candles. Let’s go!” See it and say it in positive way.

Some of you, you need to picture your kids with a tattoo on their forehead. For some of you that’s not all that difficult to picture, is it? But the tattoo says, Encourage me. Every time you see them you see that descriptive, that screaming out, Encourage me. If you’re not encouraging at all start with small encouragement. It doesn’t have to be intense. “Hey! You’re breathing! That is great!” … “You’re dressed. I love it! Your nose ring matches your belt.” Whatever it is.

Parents, here’s the key. Don’t expect encouragement back. I talk to a lot of parents and say, “Why aren’t you encouraging to your kid?” This is what parents tell me. “They never say anything nice to me.” You’re the parent! You be the parent and let them be the kid.

Here’s the deal. If you don’t expect encouragement back, you will never be disappointed. The truth is most kids don’t have what I would call the emotional vocabulary to know what to say and how to say it. They just don’t say things right. That’s why they comprise short little statements like, “I hate you!” They don't really *hate* you. They just don’t have the emotional vocabulary to know what to say. What they’re really saying is, “I don’t know what to say. I'm going to choose to act like a four year old because I know I really don’t hate because if I had to live out in the world by myself I know I couldn’t survive. Therefore I do really love you. I just don't know how to say it so I'm going to say I hate you but I really love you.” That’s really kind of what they’re saying.

What I’m saying here is you say it but you say it beyond performance. Here’s what I’ve observed. Most language directed at kids falls into two categories – shame oriented or performance oriented.

For some of you I see the heads nodding. You don’t even need me to explain this because you grew up in a home where if you did something bad you got the look or the word of shame and if you did something good you got the pat on the head of approval. What do these little quick fixes of shame or praise do to people? It makes them dependent on other people for how they feel about themselves. That’s why this church right now is filled with all of these adults who are approval addicts. Because they grew up in an environment that was either shame on you/proud of you/shame on you/proud of you. We all try to perform so that we would all get the Proud-of-you. We’ve grown up to be these approval addicts.

Let’s face it. When it comes to kids they’re going to fail. They’re going to mess up. They’re going to mess up a lot. Now, if that’s the only language we have in the home, let’s think about it. If they fail, they’re always going to get, “Shame on you!” Because if they do something good then they get, “I’m proud of you.” But you don’t say, “I'm proud of you,” for failing. That doesn’t make sense. So we’ve got to figure out what to do and how to do it. That’s why I said put a star by this because this is going to take a little bit of thinking. We’ve got to figure out how do we say encouragement that is beyond their performance so that we don’t create more approval addicts like ourselves. And we ultimately break the cycle.

Another one is focus, face them and give feed back.

I’ll go on record saying mostly because my daughter’s here at the service, I’m the worst at this. This is the worst. I know I’m going to get good at it because I’m working hard at it. When I get good at it I’ll probably be wearing a bib eating off the senior’s menu. But I’m going to do it. Focus. I’ve had my kids actually grab my face before, “Dad! Look at us! Step away from the computer with your hands up!” No, I can hear you, I can hear you… No. Focus and face them. Let them see the eye contact. I have a friend whose daughter has a nose ring. He said, when I want to look her in the eyes I just grab the nose ring! Focus. Think about them not your To Do list. Shut off your own internal dialogue.

Then offer feedback.

This is reflective listening. Restate what they’re telling you. “What you’re saying is... Am I hearing this correctly…” Kids need your presence, they need your interest in their world even if they give you the impression that they don’t want it. They need it. It’s essential for their development. They won’t tell you that they want it. Presence matters.

With the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within us…2 Timothy 1:14a (NLT)

Each kid is different. Those of you in here who don’t have children, may not understand this but those of us that do – kids from the same mom and same dad and there’s more than one kid but your kids are totally different. That’s God’s sense of humor. For those of you who don’t have kids you don’t fully get it but it’s something like this – one kid comes out with a smile on her face and a rose in her mouth and totally compliant – “Yes, dad, whatever you want. I'm happy to.” Then the other kid comes out with a smirk on her face and a cigarrette in her mouth and a look in her eyes that says, “The next seven years are going to be tough. Go ahead. I'm going to push you every day! Try to discipline. Go ahead. *Make my day!* I’ll eat those five questions for lunch. Try it!”

The truth is every child has a heart and a personality that is uniquely shaped by God. That’s why there’s not one cookie cutter approach to parenting in the Bible. Every child responds differently because they were made that way by God. How great would it be as parents if we said, What we’re going to do is we’re going to discern the differences and then we’re going to affirm and celebrate them. Imagine what it would be like if the kid grew up in an environment where a parent or significant adult would look in that kid’s face and say, “God created you just the way you are because He wanted somebody just like you on planet earth. God loves your uniqueness.”

In the context of Ephesus, Paul is addressing the relationships between slaves and masters. The principles here can be transferred to employers and employees.

**How to flourish in your relationship with your boss:**

**1. Be Respectful 2. Work hard because Jesus is in the room**

**5-8Servants, respectfully obey your earthly masters but always with an eye to obeying the *real* master, Christ. Don’t just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ’s servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you’re really serving God. Good work will get you good pay from the Master, regardless of whether you are slave or free.**

The answer to the question – “I will do this if they do that” Completely disempowers that kind of mentality that ends with a stalemate/checkmate.

Grace: Will I do all things with an awareness of heaven.

 Because of Grace…..I make these decisions.

As to the Lord means that all our work is really done unto the Lord, not unto man. “Grace makes us the servants of God while still we are the servants of men: it enables us to do the business of heaven while we are attending to the business of earth: it sanctifies the common duties of life by showing us how to perform them in the light of heaven.” (Spurgeon)

c. Doing the will of God: In Greek culture, manual work was despised and the goal of being successful was getting to the point where you never had to do any work. This isn’t how it is in God’s kingdom, where hard work and manual labor are honorable.

i. It should be said of every Christian that they are a hard worker and give their boss a full day’s work for their pay; to do anything less is to steal from your boss.

e. He will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free: Paul relates a final reason for working hard for the Lord. God will return to us in the measure that we have worked hard for others; God will not allow our hard work to go without reward.

i. This connects to an interesting principle. When people are born again, their life changes and they become harder workers and less wasteful, and they are blessed thereby and become prosperous. But after becoming prosperous, we often allow our hearts to grow far from God, then god disciplines us with hard times, and then we repent - and then the cycle starts again. This is not a *necessary* cycle, but it is a common one.

Some people can just throw out work…not really important. I am in a new kingdom. I die and go to heaven and so it really doesn’t relate.

“MY BOSS IS A Jewish Carpenter”

Your work is not primarily toward your boss or company but for Jesus Christ in the world.

You have a boss who is completely for you! You are blessed, you are loved, you have been given everything. Your boss believes in you and has created you with dreams for his purpose. He has a plan for you and it is good.

I must do everything as if Christ Himself were standing right there in the flesh, watching me. If I am balancing the checkbook, I must have the attitude that this is the checkbook of Christ, and I should do a very good job. If I am ironing clothes or washing the dishes, I must do it “as unto the Lord,” as if the Lord Himself were going to wear those clothes or eat from those plates.

There are some dysfunctional bosses our thereYou can respect the position and have strong boundaries and work within the system.

APP: It’s true we may struggle with respecting a person, but we can be faithful employees by respecting the position.

… we’re told, obey, respect, sincerely.

• You have opportunity to bless your boss, bless your co-workers beginning tomorrow…

• By following the rules, doing a good job, respectfully & sincerely.

Paul relates obedience to our attitudes. He asks believers to show respect to their masters by fearing them as a recognized authority. They weren't to obey them grudgingly, but willingly. Singleness or simplicity of heart refers to someone who is genuine. Servants should respect their masters as they would reverence the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because their earthly service is really being done for Him. Their masters in the flesh were themselves under Christ's authority. When servants respect their masters they are really respecting the Lord. When they don't honor their masters they are dishonoring Christ. Christian servants should be respectful and honest.

 Because God is your boss and he is actually in you, you work like he does which is always honestly.

Human masters cannot watch us all the time, but God sees us every moment of the day. He knows when we are trying to deceive our bosses. God looks at our heart.

Lifted it right from the text – “work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

Someone coined the phrase: MONDAY MOANING.

If you feel that your work is not very important then consider again whom you are really serving.

Often at the bottom of his music sheets, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote the Latin letters INDNJC. This was an abbreviation for, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He dedicated his work to Christ.

People who inspire are people with enthusiasm. There are some people who bring air and energy into a room and some who just suck the air out of it.

God is at work with enthusiasm…envision him standing there cheering you on.

The best way to be a witness on the job is to do a good day’s work. The Christian worker will avoid “eye service”—working only when the boss is watching, or working extra hard when he is watching to give the impression he is doing a very good job.

Christianity knows nothing of sacred and secular. A Christian can perform any good work as a ministry to Christ, to the glory of God. For this reason, the worker must do his job “from the heart,” since he is serving Christ and doing the will of God. There were tasks assigned to these slaves that they detested, but they were to perform them just the same, so long as they were not disobeying the will of God. “Singleness of heart” and “doing the will of God from the heart” both indicate the importance of a right heart attitude on the job

 You actually cannot read the outcome of your compensation on your pay stub or when you write it all up at income tax time. You are not looking at your full reward there. In fact, Jesus would say – your reward here is a fraction of the reward you will receive in heaven. Keep your focus on that day….at the end of your life or when God comes and he says “Well done …

**How to flourish in your relationships with your employees:**

 **1. Be Kind 2. Be a Servant**

**9Masters, it’s the same with you. No abuse, please, and no threats. You and your servants are both under the same Master in heaven. He makes no distinction between you and them.**

“So the Gospel leaves its message of absolutely *equal obligation*, in Jesus Christ, upon the slave and upon the slave owner. The principle will do its work. There is no word of Revolution.” (Moule)

b. Giving up threatening: Employers are also to give up threatening and other forms of harsh treatment. They do this knowing that they are employees of their Master in heaven - and He judges without regard to wealth or position.

God’s plan for great relationships at work is for there to be a new master at the job.

For Employers: “Remember”

 You are not the Boss

 -God is!

It is so easy to forget this. We get successful and the perks come and people are giving accolades or the money is rolling in … “I am the master of my destiny” Actually God is the one who brings honor and wealth and he is the one who lifts up.

You might be the boss who it is not going well for…if it is really up to God, then you may not be responsible for the lack of success…You may be doing it right…lighten up…the boss upstairs just isn’t rolling out the immediate rewards.

Jesus said the way to be a ruler is first to be a servant (Matt. 25:21). The person who is not under authority has no right to exercise authority. This explains why many of the great men of the Bible were first servants before God made them rulers: Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Nehemiah are just a few examples. Even after a man becomes a leader, he must still lead by serving.

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:27).

Make your employees as much your favorite as God does

 -treat them with dignity

You are not deserving of any more respect or a “free pass” because you happen to be the one in charge.

Paul's first application has to do with threats. In Roman times masters threatened their slaves to impel them to work. Many slaves didn't very work hard in the Roman empire. Therefore their masters threatened them and beat them to improve their performance. Paul said that they were to give up this practice. Christians don't threaten people and beat them, rather they appeal to them out of love.

Boaz is a good example of how masters should care for their servants. He was generous and sought their well being. He didn't threaten his workers but greeted them.Ruth 2:4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” And they answered him, “The Lord bless you!” He treated his servants well and they responded with respect and faithful service.

Illust: Talking with a friend years ago who runs a business that is seasonal and he has to lay off employees in the fall. He was really messed up about it - feeling completely bad about why he should keep receiving benefits from his job…they work hard…sometimes they grunt it out harder than I do…and they don’t get work. Gave me insight into how much dignity this boss gave to his employees. Giving dignity to them and the work that they do…”Why am I in this position and they are in theirs” Wow. Twenty years later I have seen that boss ‘s business flourish and he and his employees are reaping a lot of rewards.

If the employer expects the workers to do their best for him, he must do his best for them. The master must serve the Lord from his heart if he expects his servants to do the same. He must not exploit them.

So the wider application of this verse is that even if I am not a slave owner or an employer of other people, I still have to acknowledge that there is no favoritism with God, that I am no better than anyone else, that God does not look at me and see me as being superior to anyone else.

Even if I was the CEO of a major corporation, I am no better than the guy who vacuums the rugs in the office. I may have a more responsible position, and I may have more authority, but my worth before God is no greater than his. So according to Scripture, I cannot use my authority and position to threaten someone else. I cannot throw my weight around and be obedient to Scripture. As Jesus told Pilate, we would have no authority were it not given to us from above. When I understand that, when the truth of it sinks in, I come to the realization that my behavior and attitudes towards others has to change. It has to reflect what I say I believe.

Be a blessing -release their best potential

Conclusion:

Here is the key for Christians to succeed in marriage, in parenting and at work…come under the leadership of Jesus and let the Holy Spirit empower your life.