



**OASIS: TRUE FAMILY
DONE IN SYNC WITH
THE “TRUE” SERMON JOURNEY**
The Passage – Ephesians 6:1-4

Preface: *These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading and not to be distributed to the entire group (it limits conversation). Please also note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night. It's best to consider this a head-start and customize these studies to best fit your LC.*

Introduction:

Tonight we are talking about the sensitive subject of family. Throughout history, the family unit has lent itself to complication and hurt. It has been among the greatest “places” many of us have experienced unconditional love, and has helped us with the shaping of our identity and the discovery of our personalities, gifts, talents, and of course, life-long bonds to our parents, siblings, children, and relatives. Experiencing moments of “true family” can be beautiful.

A few starter questions:

Describe your favorite family memory. Any childhood memories come to mind?
Why is the nature of the family unit so complicated?
Why do you think the family unit is so important in God’s plan for the world?

Here in Ephesians 6, Paul is focusing his attention toward instruction on practical Christian living. Prior to this context, he has addressed Christian marriage and in the next section he will address slaves and masters, but here, he is calling our attention to the family unit. Regardless of what type of family unit we have come from or are currently in, there is great wisdom found here.

Study’s BIG Idea: Paul is teaching the counter-cultural values of the Christian family unit in contrast with Roman culture. The family has always been an essential piece of God’s plan for the world.

Ephesians 6:1-4

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”— which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

O – Paul’s letter would have been read aloud in church gatherings and in verse 1 he addresses children specifically. Modern readers would assume that Paul is writing to those “18 and under” but in Jewish culture, the father (think Jewish patriarch) was seen with great reverence and easily maintained authority in the family until his 60’s and sometimes up until death. This is similar to Roman culture (in which the eldest male was called the “*pater familias*”). How does this context shape your understanding of these four verses?

(By enlarging the audience, we now include middle-aged working men in their 30’s & 40’s. Also keep in mind the shorter longevity in ancient cultures and the fact that they married and started their families significantly earlier than we do in modern Western cultures. The Western idea of “being your own man” is very different. Further, this would be a blessing to any elderly individual in the early church. Even though the gathering is new, their wisdom and presence would be revered.)

I – Paul is not instructing children to obey their Christian parents but to obey their parents in the Lord. What is the difference and what is then the implication of that instruction?
(That obeying and honoring your parents is part of worship.)

A – Does this mean that parents are always right and that true Christians must always obey their parents regardless of what is instructed?
(Of course not. Throughout the context, Paul is writing in a big-picture theological perspective that is contrasting with a growing Roman society’s assumption that a young to middle aged man no longer needs to revere his parents because they are old and have lost their might. Paul includes the line “for this is right,” which could better be translated literally as “the proper way” to help us in the big picture sense.)

O – What strikes as you as interesting in verses 2-3?

I – Paul is referencing the second giving of the 10 commandments: “Honor your father and mother.” (First giving is in Ex. 20, and here Paul is quoting Deut. 5:16.) Why would Paul promise long life in an age of persecution and martyrdom?
(Many scholars have taught that the promise of a long and good life had to do more with life in the land of Israel with your family/tribe which God has given his people. Honoring parents was an essential foundation for God’s covenant (noted again in Lev. 19:3). Here, Paul does not focus on Israel and so the statement becomes more general and proverbial.)

O – What strikes you as counter-cultural about verse 4?

(Instruction for fathers not to exasperate, use of children means to include girls in Christian training and even education—these two are not only culturally ahead of their time but are consistent with Paul’s virtues of kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, etc. for Christian living.)

I – The phrase “bring them up” is a crude translation. A better one would be “feed” as it better conveys Paul’s idea of nurturing children in the way of the Lord. Not only are fathers not to exasperate their children; they are to nurture them. What does this imply to you regarding gender roles and what Paul has just instructed regarding marriage?
(In understanding Greek culture and carefully examining the Biblical text, we see a lot of sacrifice, nurture, and partnership language. This is not modern revision, this is us observing how Paul’s vision of Christian households was way ahead of its time.)

A – Christian families today are not seen as culturally ahead of their time. In fact, we’re seen as the exact opposite. Why do you think that is?
Secondly, what counter-cultural convictions and practices can society benefit from in understanding Paul’s biblical vision of the Christian family?
Lastly, what practical applications can we gain from Paul’s words as they relate to our own families?

Key: O – Observation. I – Interpretation. A – Application

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.