

Love Letters

Lesson 10: Ephesians 6

Reciprocal Respect

Paul continues his teaching begun in chapter 5 regarding mutual submission in the lives of Christians. This time he address parents and children, slaves and masters, ending with the recognition that all of life is a spiritual war, requiring us to wear the full armor of God in order to stand firm against the devil's devices.

Read Ephesians 6:1–24.

Day One: Parents and Children

The deterioration of today's family as well as the lack of love and respect missing in raising up our children have led to devastating effects, which we are only beginning to realize. Our only hope is that Christian parents will rise up and accept their God-given responsibilities and begin modeling what the Bible teaches: righteousness begins at the household of God!

1. What is Paul's instruction and reasoning to children in the following:
 - a. Verse 1

 - b. Verses 2–3

The command to obey parents does not just refer to parents who are Christians. In the broader sense, it means that children who obey their parents are also obeying the Lord. The only exception would be if a child is asked to do something that is contrary to Scripture: something illegal, immoral, or would put them or another person in harm's way. In these specific instances, the parental command to obey would be superseded by the greater command to "obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

2. In verses 2–3, Paul reiterates the fifth commandment, the first one with promise. (Write out the entire command from Deuteronomy 5:16, highlighting the promise attached to it.)

3. What are fathers commanded . . .
 - a. *Not to do?* (Explain what this means.)
 - b. *To do?* (Explain what this means.)

4. In his letter to the Colossians, we see Paul making the same statement but qualifying it with a reason; what is it (Colossians 3:2)?

5. List some of the aftereffects and potential long-term consequences of continual criticism for a child.

Discipline is necessary but it must be administered in the context of *reciprocal respect* in order for it to be healthy and beneficial to a child. Character, communication, compassion, and caring all must be cultivated and nurtured in a loving environment so that a child is encouraged to thrive and reach their full potential. This is the responsibility of every parent who has been blessed to wear the title of father or mother.

Memory verse: Ephesians 6:10 NLT

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

Selah ~

Take a moment to carefully consider the Old Testament instruction for raising children found in Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Then ask yourself: what kind of environment am I fostering in our home? What kinds of TV shows do I allow? What books and magazines? What kind of friendships do I model for my kids? If you think your daily choices don't influence your family members, then think again—they do! Whatever God has pointed out that needs changing, note it here and get to work. He will honor your obedience to create a loving godly atmosphere in which to raise your child. Please share your thoughts.

Day Two:

Bondservants and Masters

Reread Ephesians 6:5–9.

It has been estimated that as much as one-third of the Roman population consisted of slaves of all races, many of which could expect to be emancipated by the age of 30. Their work was not limited to hard labor; often they worked in different occupations, many owning their own land. Due to the widespread poverty of Paul's day, some free laborers chose to sell themselves into slavery purely for economic reasons. But in the full context of Paul's letter, he states that slaves are full members of the body of Christ, sharing equally with their masters in the spiritual blessings as heirs of Christ.

1. From our text we can deduce several principles for all Christians in the workplace. What do you see in verses 5–9 that could pertain to your personal behavior on the job? Put these points in your own words.
2. What is to be your heart-motive for serving (in any capacity) as unto the Lord?
3. What do you glean from these verses that would help you to develop a good work ethic?
4. What is the Christian's reward for a good job done on earth?
5. What reminder does Paul emphasize to all employers in verse 9?

Selah ~

Paul's words to servants here must be heard in the same context as his exhortation to wives, husbands, and children. There is one common thread woven throughout all: that our behavior in every relationship should be influenced by our expectation of the return of Christ at any moment. This truth should motivate our heart-attitude as well as our conduct in every circumstance of life.

Personal: Whether you're an employee, an employer, or the keeper of your family and home, what takeaway truth can you apply to your particular circumstances today?

Day Three:

Our Spiritual Warfare

Reread Ephesians 6:10–24.

Believers are engaged in a life-and-death struggle for souls! Our enemy seeks to thwart our efforts by any means possible. Since Satan deceives in order to destroy, and since we do not face a physical enemy but a spiritual one, our weapons must also be spiritual. Our hope of victory is to put on the whole armor of God that Paul describes here in full detail.

1. Paul's exhortation now is to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (verse 10). Verses 11 and 13 give us the how-to, along with the result. What does he say here?
2. Against whom is the Christian's battle being waged (verse 12)?

Paul uses the illustration of spiritual armor as a metaphor to help us practically apply these verses.

3. Carefully consider the value and purpose of each piece of armor in verses 14–17.
 - a. *Belt of truth* (verse 14):
 - b. *Breastplate of righteousness* (verse 14):
 - c. *Shoes of the gospel* (verse 15):
 - d. *Shield of faith* (verse 16):
 - e. *Helmet of salvation* (verse 17):
 - f. *Sword of the Spirit* (verse 17):
4. When preparing to engage in warfare, how and about what are you to be watchful (verse 18)?
5. Acknowledging the priority of prayer, what is Paul's request in verses 19–20?
6. Who was on Paul's heart in these closing verses of chapter 6, and what provision does he make (verses 21–24).
7. Personal: Do *you* have others praying for you as to be victorious as Paul did? Take a step of faith today . . . what will you ask others to pray for on your behalf?

Day Four:

This Present Darkness

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
—Ephesians 6:12

Paul would have believers to know that our *real enemy* is constantly lurking in the shadows of the unseen world, battling in an arena that is far beyond that which is visible to our naked eyes, yet posing a very real and present danger. In verse 12, Paul lists four categories of satanic beings against whom we may wrestle: *principalities, powers, rulers of this world's darkness, and wicked spirits in high places*. As far as Satan's wiles—or schemes—are concerned, we cannot possibly know them all, guard against them in every situation, or overcome them in our own strength . . . but God can! Since we are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), as we learn to trust God, become armed in His battle array, and stand in His strength, we will realize our victory in Christ.

We wrestle against principalities: In order of rank, at the head of Satan's realm are principalities or princes who share the power that Satan wields over evil spirits—the fallen angels in this world. The word used is *arche*, which means magistrate or chief ruler. The story in the book of Daniel 10:1–13 is a good example of the spiritual warfare taking place as we pray. Note below how the heavenly messenger describes Daniel, the action of Daniel that precipitated the messenger, and who attempted to thwart his mission.

We wrestle against powers: Since Satan is not capable of replicating God's attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, he compensates by organizing evil beings who work with him in the spirit world. Give an example that comes to mind of evil power at work in today's world.

We wrestle against the rulers of this world's darkness: Why are people continuing to turn to idolatry and various forms of ideology and false religions that appear appealing? Behind every attempt at spiritual blindness is one or more of Satan's rulers who are busy hindering individuals from hearing and receiving the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since Satan is not fearful of mankind but only of the Lord, why is it so important for you to fight in the power of *His might*?

We wrestle against wicked spirits in high places: Since he can only be in one place at a time, Satan has countless legions of demons at his disposal to do his bidding. His deeds can be overruled by God. Look at the example found in Mark 5:1–20, focusing your attention on verses 15–20. Note the response of the people and that of the healed man. Do you think you would've responded more like the crowd or the healed man? Why?

Selah ~

Personal: Is there a part of your spiritual armor that you've neglected? What attention can you give it to help you fight in the Lord's power?

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: Take the next step of obedience and record the difference it makes in your life.

Prayer Requests ~
