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We are in the last couple of teachings in what I think has been an amazing study in Ephesians. I have learned so much and I am so thankful for all that the Lord has revealed to us about whom He is, who we are in Him, and what all of that actually means in terms of living as sons of God.

The pinnacle of this letter was found in **5:18** where we are commanded to let the Holy Spirit continually fill us as being filled with the Spirit is the secret to experiencing the life that God promised to us. We must understand that our obedience to all the Biblical commands is fulfilled by Jesus in and through our lives when we are filled with the Spirit. This is why Jesus wants access to every part of your life; and, if you grant Him access to every room within the corridors of your soul, He will work out His Father's will in and through your life.

And, as we know, that work is always meted out in our closest relationships—with our brothers and sisters in the Lord, in our marriages, with our parents, with our children, and in our places of employment. Two weeks ago we covered the issue of marriage and tonight we are going to continue with this study and address how being filled with the Spirit will practically play itself out in our relationships with our parents, our children and places of employment.

### ***Ephesians 6:1-3***

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."

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This first phrase “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” is definitely directed at young children as the Greek word “tekna” usually signifies those who are under the care of their parents or who are not yet of age. This command to obey is pretty straight forward. In the Lord, a child is to obey their parents for this is right—and it is right for some very common sense reasons.

First, like we studied with the issue of marriage, I think it is an issue of Biblical typology. The family would be in chaos if there were child anarchy and the family is to be a picture to the world of our ordered lives under the care and authority of God. It is to be a picture of how we are never safer, more secure and loved than when we submit our lives to God’s care and protection.

Second, a child that is flat out disobedient to his or her parents is going to have a very hard time being obedient to God as they mature. So it is also a matter of spiritual training—tempering the dark potential of a child’s *old sinful nature*.

Third, I think it is for the health and welfare of children as they are obviously not in a position to care for themselves nor have their cognitive and decision making skills matured enough to reason their way through life. So in this way the command is not about power and control but about safety and protection.

Now the phrase “in the Lord” is in some manuscripts and not in others, but either way it is an implied qualification. Obviously, if parents ask a child to do things that are a violation of the things of God, a child is not compelled to obey. I am sure we could come up with many scenarios where disobedience is the right decision; for example, in situations that involve abuse or violence. But with that said, children still need to know what God wants them to do and they cannot make these decisions rashly. They need to seek the Lord and discern His will.

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For example, in ***Daniel 3*** when the boys Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-negro, who were under the authority of King Nebuchadnezzar, refused to obey the King because the King commanded them to bow before an idol, disobedience was the will of God. Even though under normal conditions they were to be submitted to the King's authority, God's rule always has a higher authority.

Now the next line which references ***Exodus 20:12***, "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" is not tied only to little children but is more of an over arching command for all of us. I am going to deal first with this notion of "honor" and then the "promise" about living in the land for this reference is directly on point with what we have been learning about the doors, being filled with the Spirit, and living from the ***new creation***.

Now the word honor does not mean "to obey;" rather, it carries with it the idea of prizing or treasuring your parents. Thus, when we are of age, we are not required to obey, but we are required to honor. There are many ways of honoring our parents and there are plenty of ways of dishonoring them so I am not going to try and define some rigid application of this verse since every situation and every family dynamic is different. But once again if you allow yourself to be filled with the Spirit you will know the will of God and therefore you will know what it means to honor your father and mother within your unique situation.

But I think it would be helpful to discuss how we can honor our father and mother as we go through this process of dealing with our wounds and the truth about the damage that we have incurred as a result of our parents' own

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insecurities and brokenness. I know many of us have been confused as to how we can honor them while at the same time being so angry at them.

To explain this, let me walk you through a typical scenario. For those of you who have not been with us through this whole study in Ephesians, I encourage you to go to the website and listen to all the teachings as they establish the framework for understanding the process I am going to discuss.

Jane comes to church and starts learning about the fact that she must be filled with the Spirit in order to experience the relationship with God that she has always desired—a relationship where she experiences, on a sustained basis, God’s agape love, peace, joy, and a yoke that is light and a burden that is easy. Jane learns that being filled with the Spirit is not some amorphous concept or something that happens automatically if she says just the right prayer and it is not about exhibiting certain kinds of gifts. Rather, she learns that it is very literal process as Jesus wants to take possession and have authority in every room within the corridor of her soul.

Jane learns that Jesus does not want there to remain one area in her life where she relies upon her own wisdom and rule over her life; but He wants all of her trust. He wants Jane to exchange her rule for His reign in all things; however, Jane has also learned that this will not happen until she knows why she can trust herself to Jesus and how to trust herself to Jesus in the deepest darkest places of her soul.

Before long, the Holy Spirit starts to point His spotlight of truth on all the closed doors within Jane’s soul that have prevented Jesus from living in and through her life. Everything suddenly becomes very uncomfortable for Jane and even a bit

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frightening as her own self-rule is at stake; but Jane knows that she has to walk through this process in order to experience Jesus in the ways that He has said is possible. At this point Jane starts to realize that even though she has tried so very hard to self-protect and be her own god in all these areas of her life, she has done a lousy job of it.

One of the first doors that the Spirit focuses on shields a room where Jane has stuffed all the wounds created by her parents; wounds which have never adequately been dealt with as her relationship with her parents has not been open to dealing with such things. And unbeknownst to Jane, behind this door are blistering wounds which have been festering and oozing with infection for years and years and years.

Jane has largely tried to ignore these wounds and pretend they do not exist. She as she has had to survive and just get through life the best she can; besides, if she focused on her wounds the pain would be too great and would literally immobilize her with depression and anxiety. As such, she has convinced herself that what happened to her was not really that bad; after all, her parents had their own insecurities and un-dealt with wounds from their parents so it was not really their fault that they hurt her. In some twisted delusion, Jane also feels like the treatment she received must have actually been her fault since she believes her parents would never purpose to hurt her.

To outsiders it is obvious how Jane has compensated for these wounds and how her choice to self-protect has led to all sorts of dysfunctional behaviors which impacts every relationship she has; but Jane lives in a personal delusion where

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she has convinced herself that she is fine, that what her parents did to her was fine, and that she just needs to move forward with her life the best she can.

The Spirit's spotlight of truth, however, is very effective. As Jesus incessantly knocks on this door Jane finally cracks it open to talk to God about these wounds. But as soon as she cracks open this door what she feared most begins to happen. The pain starts to pour out, her emotions become all out of control, and she stands seemingly unprotected in the reality of her infectious wounds.

Although Jane is a bit scared, she begins to finally get in touch with all the anger that has been stored up throughout the years; and, instead of this anger pouring out on others, she starts to connect her anger to her parents. For the first time in her life, Jane actually starts to get mad at her parents and the manner in which she was treated; this is something she has never allowed herself to do. She remembers the abusive and disrespectful ways she was handled, the ways she made to feel worthless, and how, in so many ways, her parents (in effect) loved themselves more than they loved her since they chose to deal with her out of their own insecurities and wounds instead of getting help. Coming to terms with these truths hurt Jane so badly; after all, no one likes to think bad things of their parents regardless of how horrible reality really might have been.

But Jesus insists that Jane live in the truth—as He seeks those who will worship Him in Spirit and truth. Truth is always a requirement for a relationship with God; so Jesus keeps confronting Jane with reality. Interestingly, Jane starts to see the truth and see it everywhere and she is surprised at the amount of darkness and deception in which she has lived. Accordingly, God pushes Jane to admit the truth, to admit what her parents have done to her. But instantly the enemy

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attacks and makes her feel guilty and ashamed for thinking such things or saying such things about her parents. After all, Jane muses, “how can that be love or how can that honor her parents. Wouldn’t it be better to just forgive and forget?”

Succumbing to the temptation to bury the truth under some religious idea of forgiveness (which is far easier than dealing with the truth), Jane returns to her delusion and once again insists that things are not really that bad. Does this sound familiar? Fortunately for Jane, God is not going to let her stay in this place for long but He has her marked and He is going to continue to do whatever is necessary until she gets to live in the land that rightfully belongs to her; the land the Lord has given her.

So with this as our background story let’s go back to some of the passages we have studied in Ephesians. We know that we are to always speak the truth *in love* (4:15). We are to lay aside falsehood (all our delusion and self-deception) and speak truth to one another for we are members of one another (4:25). We are to walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true (5:9). And finally, as the truth is in Jesus, we are to put off our old self, which belongs to our former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in righteousness, holiness and truth (4:21-24).

It does not take a Biblical expert to conclude that refusing to deal with the raw truth of what happened in our lives as a result of our upbringing is not in alignment with scripture. This is why the notion of “forgive” and “forget” is from our *old religious self* who is corrupt through and through and is not a Biblical

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concept. Therefore, despite what it might feel like, and despite the practical consequences, it is love to deal in truth and it is what God desires of us.

In fact, we dishonor our parents when we don't deal in truth and allow denial or fear to dominate our relationships. It is not love to turn a blind eye and allow the enemy to keep everything hidden in darkness. Our parents deserve the opportunity to have everything brought into the light. It is an opportunity for freedom and, if they are willing, for them to begin to deal with their own brokenness.

Now, with that said, speaking the truth must be done in love (with a desire for healing); otherwise, the truth will just be an instrument of bludgeoning and revenge, and that is not of God. And I know that when this process starts it is hard to differentiate what is or is not love since the emotion and the raw pain is so real it can flow from your life in ugly ways—and it needs to flow. As a result, some of the things you say may not be laced with grace and mercy. But that is ok; even if you don't do it "right," and believe me you will probably make many mistakes, God's grace covers you. Remember, it is a process whose goal is love but that does not mean that every step will be done perfectly.

Now I want you to understand that you cannot navigate this process by emotion or by reacting to the response of your parents which the truth provokes. Honestly, don't expect it to be pretty. Most people have lived their life with their doors closed and they do not want anyone challenging them or bringing the light of truth to bear on the darkness in their soul. So with the rare exception where the parents desire to be set free, want to have a healthy relationship, or want to



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find life in Jesus, you can pretty much expect a harsh reaction and complete invalidation of everything you have felt or experienced both now and in the past.

Of course, a lot of their reaction will depend upon your approach and a lot will depend upon the humility within the heart of your parents and their desire to be in relationship with you. But either way, you have to speak the truth *in love* because that is what God desires and you must trust the outcomes to Him. He is responsible to manage the outcomes, you are not. You are responsible to live in your *new self*, who always lives in truth; and you must trust that God will work all things (the outcomes) according to the kind intention of His will, whatever that may be (**1:11**). So honoring your parents in this process may result in a deeper and healthier relationship and then again it may not; but that is God's issue—you are just responsible to live in truth.

I said before that the goal of this process is love even though some parts of the journey might get ugly. You see expressing the pain and anger from your body is necessary if you want to be healed; it is the puss from the infection of the wound and all of it needs to be purged in order for the wound to heal. So getting angry is part of the process and is in alignment with **4:26** which commands us to be angry but not to sin. So don't be afraid of the process; let it happen.

Once the anger and pain has been purged, God will start the process of healing your wounds with the truth. He will show you why the wounds you incurred were from His hands and were absolutely necessary. The result will be that you will no longer be dominated by the pain of your wounds and you will be able to deal with your parents (and others) on the basis of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness which He has shown to you. And you will, in the Spirit, be able to honor your

father and mother for there will no longer remain a reason for anger; the wound will be healed.

Now for some of you this might seem like a problem since maybe your parents have no interest in dealing with this stuff and still others have parents who are no longer alive leaving you no opportunity to deal with your wounds. Regardless, as we discussed in Chapter 4, the real cause behind all our wounds was God. In His sovereignty over your life He determined that each and every wound was necessary and He used it to bring you out of the darkness into light. In fact, without your wounds, you would have never been convinced of your need for God. Let's look at this passage in Jeremiah 30 which speaks to this truth.

***Jeremiah 30:12-15, 17***

This is what the Lord says: "Your injury is incurable—a terrible wound. There is no one to help you or to bind up your injury. No medicine can heal you. All your lovers—your allies—have left you and do not care about you anymore. **I have wounded you cruelly, as though I were your enemy.** For your sins are many, and your guilt is great. Why do you protest your punishment—this wound that has no cure? I have had to punish you because your sins are many and your guilt is great...**I will give you back your health and heal your wounds,**" says the **Lord.**

So whether your parents are or are not a part of this process the buck stops with God and He is ultimately the one with whom you have to deal. He will help

you see why those wounds were not a punishment for sin, but they were necessary to break through the pride of sin (the pride which we all have) and realize our need for God. He just used the weakness, insecurity, and brokenness of our parents to accomplish His purpose of drawing us to Him knowing full well that He would heal the wounds that He caused.

There is a strange story in **Genesis 9:21-25** about Noah that can help us see how we can deal with our parents' brokenness and still honor them. One day Noah got wicked drunk, passed out, and was lying naked in his tent. One of Noah's sons, Ham, saw that he was naked and instead of dealing with it in honor he just went out and told his brothers. In contrast, His brothers took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backwards into the tent and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. When Noah sobered up he heard what Ham had done and he cursed him and his descendents.

Noah had an issue that was not to be ignored and had to be dealt with in truth. Ham, however, did not handle this situation honorably. He not only looked upon his dad's nakedness but decided to tell the others without doing anything to redeem his father. Ham's brothers then had a choice to make. They could have ignored what happened and just let his dad lie there or they could deal with the problem. And even in dealing with the problem they had a choice. They could have walked in and embarrassed their dad or they could have handled things in an honorable manner. They made the better choice.

I think this gives us a small picture of the fact that we are not to ignore the issues in our family; we are to deal with them in truth. But we are also to deal

with them in a respectful way. As such, the goal of addressing our wounds with our parents is not to humiliate or embarrass them, or to rub their brokenness in their face, but to bring the proper covering to the problem—the covering of love which does not deny the truth but still brings honor.

As such, it is entirely appropriate to deal with the hard, embarrassing, and humiliating truth; but we can do it in such a way that our parents still feel respected and covered by love. For example, one way we can do this is to consider, despite their brokenness and despite how horrible they may have wounded us, the ways in which they have loved us—no matter how small that expression of love might have been in your life (and I know for some of you it was quite small). I believe that if you ask, Jesus will help you discover how you were loved. And you can thank them for this expression and let them know that you appreciate what they were able to do. In so doing love will begin to cover a multitude of sins (**1 Peter 4:8**).

And who knows maybe your parents' hearts will soften and they might be open to working on the relationship and dealing with the truth; but then again, maybe not. Remember, there are no guarantees in this process. God is in charge of the outcomes we just need to deal in truth and live in truth, yet still honor our parents as we deal with their nakedness.

With that said, if your parents have no interest in dealing with their own issues, you will in love need to create healthy boundaries in your relationship so that new wounds are not created in your soul. This is an aspect of living in truth and realizing that unless they let Jesus into the rooms of their soul they are capable of causing the same kind of wounds which you incurred as a child and that will cause

serious relational disruption. Therefore, boundaries are a part of honoring your parents in order to limit the opportunities for damage.

I hope this has helped you understand 1) how necessary it is to open these doors regardless of how painful, disruptive, and explosive the experience might be and 2) how you cannot really honor your parents unless you live in truth. Remember, there is no short cut to being filled with the Spirit—it is learning to trust Jesus one room at a time all the way down the long corridor of your soul.

In addition, if you want to experience the promise—a long life in the land which God has given to you—then you have to walk down this road for it is the pathway to healing and experiencing life in the **new creation**. As we studied last week, the reference to the land is a Biblical type for life in the **new creation** and the peace that God promises we will experience when we purge from our soul all that does not belong to God. This is a promise that assures us that it is possible to sustain a walk in the Spirit of God through our **new creation**—it's not just a myth.

#### ***Ephesians 6:4***

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Parents, the best way to avoid creating so many wounds in the lives of your children and leaving them with so many issues to deal with throughout their life is to be filled with the Spirit so you can raise them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord—which I hope you understand is completely different from

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the discipline and instruction that comes from your own wisdom. Your own wisdom will provoke them to anger and it will damage your relationship—it is guaranteed. We simply do not have access on our own to the wisdom that we need to navigate this life without causing damage. Absent being filled with the Spirit we react in all sorts of fleshy ways which cause severe damage in the souls of our children. And by the way, it does not matter if you did not “intend” to cause the damage; what matters is that damage has occurred.

In contrast, consider the fact that the wisdom that comes from God is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy (**James 3:17**). This kind of wisdom not only produces life but it will give our children a clear picture of the true character and nature of their heavenly Father. Therefore, fathers (and mothers), simply put, you need the wisdom of God. **Proverbs 1-3** discusses how we can receive this wisdom.

In addition, it is your responsibility to teach them how to be filled with the Spirit. For example, you must discipline them with the purpose of restraining their *old sinful nature* and teaching them why they need God, teaching them how they can trust themselves to God, and how to walk in the **new creation**. This is the job of parents. The idea is that your children are to be nourished with appropriate discipline and instruction in the Lord in the way a body is nourished with food.

Parents, we can save our kids a lot of pain and a lot of confusion in this life if we would do the hard work of letting Jesus into the rooms within our soul where we have been wounded—where our fear, insecurity, and pain are hidden—so He can bring healing into our lives. In so doing we can be filled with the Spirit and provide our kids an example for them to follow of both the love of God and the

truth that it is possible to live as sons of God who have been created in His image righteous, holy, and true.

***Ephesians 6:5-9***

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Did you notice the mutuality in this verse as both parties have responsibilities to one another? It follows the prior instruction in **5:21** which says that we will be mutually submitted to each other when we are filled with the Spirit. Once again we see that there are functional differences in our relationships but not value differences; thus, we cannot let the various role disparities in life (whether by gifting or by function) create disparity in the way we honor each other and treat each other.

Employees are to serve their employers as they would Christ. After all, this makes perfect sense if you consider that God has sent you to your place of employment to fulfill His will. As a son of God you are on assignment until God

leads you to a new assignment; and He has good works prepared that He wants to fulfill through you (**2:10**). And, as we have learned, we must be filled with the Spirit in order to know and understand the will of the Lord.

As we have discussed throughout this study, too many of us still live as physical beings trying to survive in a physical world and we think that our jobs are just about making money, stroking our self-image, a source of validation, our attempt to change the world, or whatever. But we fail to understand that we are sons of God and we are on assignment. Sure, God may have chosen to give us a job as a way to provide for our needs, and that is great and all, but do not miss out on the “goodness” that God wants to do through you.

Your job is really about God bringing light into darkness so that those who belong to Him, but who are presently asleep, might be woken up so Christ can give them light (**5:14**). This is why we are here on this earth and we must not lose sight of this truth. Thus, we are to do our work knowing that we are doing it unto the Lord expecting God to reward us for serving Him.

I want you to take note of the phrase “whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord.” This is peculiar to me since **Mark 10:18** tells us that only God is good. Thus, only God can produce that which is truly good; we simply cannot. This just emphasizes the fact that you must be filled with the Spirit and let God work out His will in and through your life even in your place of employment. For if you try and be a good employee out of your own strength (out of your *old self*) you will fail (at least in terms of fulfilling God’s purposes) and you will just follow the way of those who do not have the Holy Spirit and it will not be good;



you will just be a people pleaser. You may have worldly success but it is of no eternal worth or value—to God it's worthless.

Remember, goodness is not defined by the action but by the source. In other words, just because you are a good employee does not make your actions good. If an action derives from God in your *new creation* it is good (by definition) and you will be rewarded for letting God express Himself through you. If, however, it derives from your *old self* it can never be good; and all of your worldly achievements, well, they will just burn.

In the same way, those of you who are employers are also to be filled with the Spirit and deal with those under your care with the same attitude of humility and gentleness that Jesus has shown to you. He has impartially imparted grace and mercy into your life and you are to impartially impart grace and mercy into the lives of your employees.

Employers are to approach the workplace with the same attitude as their employees. Both parties must see their respective roles as serving the Lord and bringing light into darkness. As such, I seriously doubt an employer who takes this seriously will deal in coercive ways with their employees; for example, with the threat that at any moment they might lose their jobs. That just does not honor God and does not reflect the way in which He has handled you.

Who knows, maybe God has chosen some of your employees to belong to Him and right now they are just sleeping. Maybe it is your light that shines in the darkness that will convince them that God is good and that they are not. Who knows? Your job is to abide in Christ and if you do He will work His will in and through your life; and the lives of your employees will be impacted for eternity

and you will be rewarded. I love it, our true compensation always comes from the Lord and only His compensation will follow us through all of eternity.

Next week, as we finalize the book of Ephesians, the Spirit is going to put the exclamation point on the truth that we are spiritual beings and the spiritual world is our true reality and this physical world is merely the temporary field upon which the spiritual drama is played out. It is an intense look at our real lives and how the real battle that we fight is not against flesh and blood but against the dark forces of evil in the heavenly realms. I hope to see you next week.

Let's Pray