



EPHESIANS 6:1-9 | Christians at Home and at Work

1. Introduction.

- a. Need.
 - (1) The world has its own view of what family and work life. It's easy to slip into the world's ways in these important areas. But as Christians, we have a higher calling.
 - (2) We spend most of our time at home and at work, not at church or in Bible studies. How we treat people at home and at work is a true reflection of our spirituality.
- b. Subject.
 - (1) As believers, what does our Lord Jesus expect from us at home and at work? What is our Christian code of behaviour?
 - (2) By what power do we fulfill Jesus' code of behaviour at home and at work?
- c. Outline: Children, Parents, Employees, Employers.
- d. Read Ephesians 6:1-9.
- e. Pray.

2. Review.

3. Introduction (Ephesians 5:15-6:9).

- a. These verses are one complete thought within Ephesians. The big idea is that, as believers, we are to walk wisely (Eph 5:15), making the best use of our time (Eph 5:16) to understand and carry out the desire of our Lord Jesus (Eph 5:17). We are able to do this only through the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). The result of the filling of the Spirit is, among other things, submission to one another out of reverence for Jesus (Eph 5:21). This submission is to be carried out in the local church community (Eph 5:21), in our marriages (Eph 5:22-33), in our families (Eph 6:1-4), and in the workplace (Eph 6:5-9). The armour of God segment is a new segment, beginning in Eph 6:10.
- b. So, the instructions to children, parents, employees, and employers is how we walk wisely, please Jesus, and submit to one another.
- c. It is only through the filling of the Spirit (Eph 5:18) we are able to fulfil the Christian code as wives, husbands, children, parents, employees, and employers.
- d. Notice how often Jesus is mentioned. In Eph 5:15-6:9, Jesus is specifically mentioned 22 times. When it comes to human relationships, our hearts and minds are to be occupied with Jesus. For us, Jesus is to be a constant presence in our marriages, in our homes, and at work.
- e. At home and at work, we are to be noticeably different from non-Christians. We live by a totally *new paradigm* and operate by a totally *new power*.
 - (1) Christianity introduced a new paradigm to Greco-Roman society. The Church was to live according to the precepts of Jesus rather than the customs of Greco-Roman society. The same expectation applies today.

4. Children and Parents (Eph 6:1-4).



a. Eph 6:1-2 1 Children, obey (ὁπακούω, pres.) your parents in the Lord [Jesus], for this is right/just (δίκαιος). 2 Honour (τιμάω, pres.) your father and mother...

(1) Note.

(a) The fact Paul addresses children shows they are a real part of the Christian community.

(2) Reality.

(a) In *Genesis*, God established the divine institutions, the traditional family, and the principle of respect for authority for human flourishing.

1) The divine institutions are personal freedom and responsibility, marriage, family, church, and state.

2) The traditional family/whanau consists of a father and mother, married for life, with their biological children, and extended family nearby.

3) Each divine institution functions on the principle of respect for authority.

4) Each divine institution is to respect the *sphere sovereignty* of the other institutions.

(b) Obedience to parents is foundational to a healthy society. It is training for the rest of our lives. In the home we learn obedience, respect, and submission to God-established authority.

1) It's part of "natural justice." Virtually all civilisations have regarded parental authority as indispensable to a stable society, both in the West and the East.

2) It's also the fifth of the Ten Commandments.

(c) Reverence for parents is an integral part of reverence for God.

1) **Lk 2:51** 51 And [Jesus] went down with [his parents] and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.

2) **Col 3:20** 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

(d) Under the Mosaic law, the penalty for cursing or persistently rebelling against one's parents was the death penalty. These provisions do not apply today, but they do show the seriousness, in God's sight, of rebellion against parents.

1) **Le 20:9** 9 ...Anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be **put to death**. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood is on him.

2) **Dt 21:1-21** 18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, 20 and they shall say to the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard. 21 Then all the men of the city shall **stone him to death** with stones. So you shall **purge the evil** from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

(3) Problem.

- (a) Western culture, including New Zealand, is rejecting the doctrine of of divine institutions, the traditional family, and respect for authority, with dire consequences.
- 1) Examples are Cultural Marxism, Defund the Police, New Zealand’s anti-smacking law, children calling adults by their first name, and child-centered education.
 - 2) It is typical for Christian parents to “lose” their children when they go to university. Professors routinely ridicule or dismiss the beliefs of students’ parents and churches.
- (b) Disobedience to parents is an indication of a decadent society and the end times.
- 1) **Ro 1:28-30** 28 And because they *did not see fit to acknowledge God*, God gave them up to a *debased mind* to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, *disobedient to parents*....
 - 2) **2 Ti 3:1-2** 1 But understand this, that in the *last days* there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, *disobedient to their parents*, ungrateful, unholy....
- (4) Solution.
- (a) See *Children*.
 - (b) Children must develop the habit of obedience to parents from an early age.
 - (c) Children ask two questions: Do you love me? and Can I do whatever I want? Our answers to them must be a clear yes and a clear no.
 - (d) Children are not required to do absolutely everything their parents tell them to do. They are to obey their parents “in the Lord” (v. 1). Obedience to parents should be the norm and disobedience the rare exception.¹
 - (e) When do children cease to be such? Law and custom in every society recognises a measure of independence for youth, either when manhood or womanhood is reached, when they attain a certain age, or when they leave home or marry. Christians should follow the accepted custom of their own culture in this matter.²
 - (f) Even when we are no longer under obligation to obey our parents, we must still continue to honour them. We must not neglect or forget them. If they must enter an assisted living home, we must ensure they are safe and cared for.
- b. Eph 6:2-3** 2 **...(this is the first commandment with a promise (ἐπαγγελία) [of reward]),** 3 **that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.**
- (1) Respect for parental authority leads to a life of blessing.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 241-42.

² John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 243.

- (2) This promise is true for both believers and unbelievers. If unbelievers abide by the divine institutions, they experience temporal blessing, though not eternal blessing.
- c. Eph 6:4 4 Fathers, do not provoke (παροργίζω, pres.) your children to anger, but bring them up [from childhood] in the discipline (παιδεία) and instruction (νουθεσία) of the Lord [Jesus].**
- (1) Note.
- (a) The Greek phrase οἱ πατέρες can be used for fathers and mothers.
- (2) Reality.
- (a) The Bible emphasis the importance of parenthood, and especially fatherhood.
- (b) Social science confirms fathers have a bigger impact on the direction of children than mothers. Fatherhood is a vital issue in every society.
- (3) Problem.
- (a) In the West, including New Zealand, fatherhood is in crisis.
- 1) The problem in the African-American community is not white police officers but fatherless homes.
- (b) There is something in men, call it toxic masculinity, that causes them to throw their weight around in sinful ways. I personally struggle sometimes with anger toward my children, especially if they are getting in the way of a goal I want to accomplish or if they break something I don't feel like fixing.
- (c) Many fathers abuse, provoke, ridicule, or tease their children, almost by habit. They may have received such treatment from their father.
- (d) Many fathers are self-focused, emotionally distant, immature, lazy, and at work for long hours.
- (4) Solution.
- (a) Fathers, we must realise the leadership style we use is crucially important.
- 1) Paul pictures fathers as self-controlled, gentle, patient educators of their children, which starkly contrasts to the norm of his day. The Roman *pater familias* had a full right of disposal over his children, absolute power over his family. Completely different was the Christian father.³
- (b) Paul focuses on one not-to-do item for fathers. Don't provoke your children to anger! It's an interacting choice. In Colossians, Paul tells us why. We will discourage them.
- 1) **Col 3:21** 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.
- 2) See Plato, Leg. 7, 823cd on effective nurture through praise rather than threats.
- 3) "Parents can easily misuse their authority either by making irritating or unreasonable demands which make no allowances for the inexperience and immaturity of children, or by harshness and cruelty at one extreme or by favouritism and over-indulgence at the other, or by humiliating or suppressing them, or by those two vindictive weapons sarcasm and

³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 245.



ridicule. These are some of the parental attitudes which provoke resentment and anger in children. How many ‘angry young men,’ hostile to society at large, have learned their hostility as children in an unsympathetic home?”⁴

- (c) We are to bring up our children in the discipline (παιδεία) and instruction (νουθεσία) of the Lord Jesus.
 - 1) Discipline (παιδεία): “[T]he act of providing guidance for responsible living, *upbringing, training, instruction*, in our lit. chiefly as it is attained by *discipline, correction*” (BDAG, 748).
 - 2) Instruction (νουθεσία): “[C]ounsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct, *admonition, instruction* (BDAG, 679).
- (5) Application.
- (a) Parents, what changes do you need to make by the Spirit?
 - (b) Fathers, be more involved, more present, more watchful? No one can replace you.
 - (c) Are you anger your children or exasperating them? Do you feel resentment boiling up inside any of your children? Look out! Course correct.
 - (d) Have your adult children abandoned the Christian faith? Don’t live in guilt. Confess any known personal sins, then move on. Redeem the time. Begin pray fervently for your adult children. See what God does.

5. Servants and Masters (Eph 6:5-9).

a. Introduction.

- (1) The translation of the Greek word *doulos* into English is difficult.
 - (a) “...[A] particular difficulty is presented when words in biblical Hebrew and Greek refer to ancient practices and institutions that do not correspond directly to those in the modern world. Such is the case in the translation of ‘*ebed*’ (Hebrew) and *doulos* (Greek), terms which are often rendered ‘slave.’ These terms, however, actually cover a range of relationships that requires a range of renderings—“slave,” “bondservant,” or “servant”—depending on the context. Further, the word ‘slave’ currently carries associations with the often brutal and dehumanizing institution of slavery particularly in nineteenth-century America. ...In Old Testament times, one might enter slavery either voluntarily (e.g., to escape poverty or to pay off a debt) or involuntarily (e.g., by birth, by being captured in battle, or by judicial sentence). Protection for all in servitude in ancient Israel was provided by the Mosaic Law, including specific provisions for release from slavery. In New Testament times, a *doulos* is often best described as a “bondservant”—that is, someone in the Roman Empire officially bound under contract to serve his master for seven years.... When the contract expired, the person was freed, given his wage that had been saved by the master, and officially declared a freedman. The ESV usage thus seeks to express the most fitting nuance of meaning in each context. Where absolute

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 245.



ownership by a master is envisaged (as in Romans 6), 'slave' is used; where a more limited form of servitude is in view, 'bondservant' is used (as in 1 Corinthians 7:21-24); where the context indicates a wide range of freedom (as in John 4:51), "servant" is preferred."⁵

- (2) In Christianity, servanthood his honourable. Jesus himself was a servant.
 - (a) **Mk 10:43-45** 43 ... Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
 - (3) In other letters, Paul stresses the unity of masters and bondservants in Jesus.
 - (a) **Ga 3:28** 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Messiah Jesus.
 - (b) **Col 3:11** 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Messiah is all, and in all.
 - (c) This unity stands out especially in Paul's letter to Philemon
 - (4) We don't have masters and bondservants in New Zealand. The application for us today lies in the area of work and employment.
- b. The command to Christian servants (vv. 5-8).
- (1) The command to obey (v. 5).
 - (a) **Eph 6:5** 5 **Servants (δοῦλος), obey (ὑπακούω, pres.) your earthly masters (κυρίοις)....**
 - (b) Paul doesn't advocate for or defend the Greco-Roman master-servant system, nor does he suggest servants should rise up and destroy that system in a sort of Marxist-Leninist or Maoist revolution.
 - (c) Rather, he focuses on Christlike character and treatment between masters and bondservants within the system that in fact exists.
 - (d) Significantly, servants who believed in Jesus were accepted as full members of the early church and were responsible for their own thoughts, words, and actions to the Lord Jesus.⁶ This was a huge paradigm shift.
 - (e) See Rodney Stark.
 - (2) The manner of obedience (vv. 5-7).
 - (a) **Eph 6:5-7** 5 ... **With fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Messiah, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants (δοῦλος) of Messiah, doing the desire of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good attitude (εὐνοία) as to the Lord [Jesus] and not to man....**
 - (b) The standard of attitude and behaviour for Christian servants is impossibly high. It definitely requires the the filling of the Spirit (Eph 5:18).
 - 1) With fear and trembling.
 - 2) With a sincere heart.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

⁶ William W. Klein, *EBC*, 12:158.

- a) ἀπλότης: “personal integrity expressed in word or action (... ‘what you see is what you get’) *simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, frankness* (BDAG, 104).
- 3) As you would Jesus.
- a) This is regardless whether the master is a believer or unbeliever.
- 4) Not by way of eye-service (ὄφθαλμοδοουλία), as people-pleasers (ἄνθρωπάρεσκος).
- a) ὄφθαλμοδοουλία: “service that is performed only to make an impression in the owner’s presence, *eye-service*” (BDAG, 744)
- b) ἄνθρωπάρεσκος: “one who tries to make an impression on others, *fawner, timeserver* of slaves who practice obsequious obedience when their owner is watching” (BDAG, 80).
- 5) As servants of Jesus.
- a) We are to treat our earthly boss in the same way we treat our heavenly boss, Jesus.
- 6) Doing the desire of God from the heart.
- a) We often ask, “God, what is your will for my life?” Here we get a big part of the answer—to stay right where we are and render service with a good attitude.
- b) Service to our early masters is a special form of our service to God.⁷
- 7) Rendering service with a good attitude (εὐνοία: “complete earnest commitment: free from all reserve or hesitation”) as to Jesus (repeated three times!) and not to man.
- a) Jesus is watching all the time and is never deceived by shoddy work.⁸
- (c) Paul gives a similar command to the Colossians:
- 1) **Col 3:22-25** 22 Servants, obey ***in everything*** those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord [Jesus]. 23 Whatever you do, ***work from the soul (ἐκ ψυχῆς)***, as for the Lord [Jesus] and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord [Jesus] you will receive ***the inheritance as your reward***. You are serving the Lord Messiah. 25 For the wrongdoer will be ***paid back*** for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.
- a) We are to obey our earthly masters in everything, except when it violates Scripture or conscience.
- b) We are to work from our soul, giving our full effort and attention.
- c) Jesus will pay us back at his judgment seat. The pay back will be completely fair and just. We believe this in faith. The presupposition of Marxism is that there is no afterlife. But we know better.
- (d) FAQs.
- 1) What if our employer, boss, or customer is cruel or unreasonable?

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 123.

⁸ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 253.

- a) Our employment situation will never be as bad as slavery in the Roman empire.
- b) Peter advises on this:
 - 1) **1 Pe 2:18-23** 18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle *but also to the unjust*. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued *entrusting himself* to him who judges justly.
- (e) Application.
 - 1) As Christians, we are to have a servant attitude toward our employers, bosses, and customers—really toward anyone we interact with at work or in the marketplace.
 - 2) We are to provide outstanding customer service and display an exemplary work ethic.
 - 3) We are to treat everyone we meet in the marketplace as Jesus himself. We are to bring Jesus with us to work.
 - a) Our great in need in contemporary work and employment is the clear-sightedness to see Jesus and to set him before us. When we're at work, we are serving our Lord Jesus.⁹
 - 4) Questions:
 - a) Are we sincere in all our work pursuits?
 - b) Do we do anything for show? Do we take short cuts on the job site or with a patient or customer?
 - c) Are we relying on the filling of the Spirit at work, so that we are supernaturally empowered to do our best work and treat everyone like Jesus?
- (3) The reward of obedience (v. 8).
 - (a) **Eph 6:8** 8 ...**Knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord [Jesus], whether he is a servant or is free.**
 - (b) This refers to future rewards at the judgment seat of Messiah.
 - 1) **2 Co 5:10** 10 For we [believers] must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
 - 2) **Re 22:12** 12 Behold, I [Jesus] am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

⁹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 252.

- c. The command to masters (v. 9).
- (1) The command to do good to one's bondservants (v. 9).
 - (a) **Eph 6:9 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening....**
 - (b) How shocking Paul's instruction would have been to first-century masters!
 - (c) Today, this command applies to business owners, employers, and supervisors.
 - (2) The reason for doing good to one's servants (v. 9).
 - (a) **Eph 6:9 9 ...Knowing that he who is both their Master (κύριος) and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.**
 - (b) Job, the first book of the Bible written, includes this principle!
 - 1) **Job 31:13-15** 13 If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, 14 what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? 15 Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?
 - (c) Paul's command to masters in Colossians is similar:
 - 1) **Col 4:1** 1 Masters, treat your servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.
 - (d) In *Philemon*, Paul appeals to Onesimus, a master, on behalf of Philemon, a runaway slave who has come to Rome and become a Christian. He treats both Philemon and Onesimus as very important people, God's image-bearers (v. 10). Onesimus means the world to Paul though he is a slave (v. 12). In Jesus, masters and slaves are brothers (v. 16).
 - (e) Earthly masters have a heavenly Master who is not impressed by human power and status.¹⁰
 - (f) Like Christian bondservants, Christian masters will appear before the judgment seat of Jesus.
- d. Summary.
- (1) As Christians, we are in a class of our own. We are under a higher government—a theocracy where the God-man Jesus reigns and where our obedience to him is supreme.
 - (2) The precepts and values we live by are supernatural and require the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) These are the new values we live by and stand for in love and without compromise.

6. Conclusion.

1. For unbelievers, the only issue today is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. To be saved, we must believe in the person and work of Jesus on our behalf.
2. As believers, we have a code to live by at home and at work. It is an impossible code if we attempt to abide by it in our own strength. It is only through the filling of the

¹⁰ William W. Klein, *EBC*, 12:160.



Spirit we are able to do it. Commit to the code through the filling of the Spirit. In this way, you will hear “well done” when you meet Jesus at his judgment seat.