

# Help for Home and Work

## LESSON 12

### Topic

Home and work relationships

### Theme

God gives instructions for family and work relationships.

### Desired Response

Learner will determine ways to honor the Lord in their relationships at home and at work.

### Materials

- Visuals 26–29.

### Scripture Focus

Ephesians 6:1–9

### Summary

Paul exhorted children, fathers, servants, and masters to honor the Lord. He reminded all groups that Christ is their ultimate authority over their home and work relationships.

### Outline

#### I. Parent-Child Relationships (Eph. 6:1–4)

- A. Exhortations to children (6:1–3)
  - 1. Obey your parents (6:1)
  - 2. Honor your parents (6:2, 3)
- B. Exhortations to parents (6:4)
  - 1. Don't provoke (6:4)
  - 2. Train and admonish (6:4)

#### II. Servant-Master Relationships (Eph. 6:5–9)

- A. Exhortations to servants (6:5–8)
  - 1. Sincerely obey (6:5–7)
  - 2. Expect reward (6:8)
- B. Exhortations to masters (6:9)
  - 1. Don't threaten (6:9)
  - 2. Remember your Master (6:9)

### Memory Verses

*"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Ephesians 6:4, 5).*

## GETTING STARTED

Use the following activities to focus learners' attention on relationships at home and at work.

### The Family under Attack

**ASK:** How is the culture attacking the family? (Q1)

**ASK:** Why is the destruction of the family a major plank of those with a radical agenda in the United States? (Q2) *If they can destroy the family, then they can increase the power of the state and increase their influence over future generations.*

God created families to help believers learn to live like Christ. Paul helps know how to do that. He gave us simple instructions that, if carried out, will strengthen and preserve the family. We must take family roles seriously.

### Workplace Atmosphere

**ASK:** What is the normal atmosphere at your place of work: hostile or friendly?

**ASK:** Who or what do you think contributes the most to developing the atmosphere of your workplace?

Paul addressed both the home and work settings. His straightforward instructions help us please God as children, parents, and employees.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. Parent-Child Relationships (Eph. 6:1–4)

#### A. Exhortations to children (6:1–3)

Paul began his discussion of parent-child relationships with two exhortations to children. His first referred to the Ten Commandments.

##### 1. Obey your parents (6:1)

Paul wrote, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (6:1). He used the present tense, “obey,” in this command because children are supposed to always obey. The words “in the Lord” qualify Paul’s statement and show he was addressing Christian families. Children are to be obedient in matters that honor God’s will. Further, their obedience should be as unto the Lord, for in obeying their parents, they obey the Lord.

**ASK:** What happens to children who fail to make a connection between their obedience to their parents and their obedience to God? (Q3) *They struggle to honor and submit to God.*

Ephesians 6:1 does not address the issue of unsaved parents telling their children to do things contrary to God’s will. If parents forbid their children from

doing something God commands, such as going to church or getting baptized, the children should honor their parents and look for other ways to be involved with the church until they are old enough to go to church on their own. The key is for them to maintain honor towards their parents.

If parents ask their children to lie or steal something, they should tell their parents that they love them and want to obey them but that they can't knowingly sin against God. In such cases, the children can refuse to obey and yet honor their parents. Of course, if the children are in an abusive or threatening situation, they need help from outside their family.

## **2. Honor your parents (6:2, 3)**

It's possible to force a child to obey without instilling in him or her a sincere desire to obey. This kind of obedience is inadequate. Paul exhorted children not only to obey their parents in the Lord but also to honor them (6:2). To honor one's parents is to hold them in high esteem and to treat them with respect, kindness, and courtesy.

**ASK:** When, if ever, are children free from the duty to honor their parents?

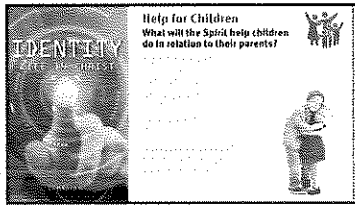
*(Q4) Children should always honor their parents even if their parents ask them to violate God's commands. Even after parents have died, their children should still talk honorably about their parents.*

The word "honor" is in the present tense, suggesting children are to obey and honor their parents continuously. Such obedience and respect are not only right and Scriptural but they also work in the children's best interest.

**ASK:** When has honoring your parents proved beneficial to you? (Q5)

Paul added that the command to obey parents is "the first commandment with promise." Some Bible teachers believe he meant it was the first commandment especially for children. Some think he was referring to the first commandment of the second table of the law. Others believe he meant it was the first commandment accompanied by a specific promise of blessing. Still others reason that the words "first commandment" imply that that commandment was the most important.

The words "that it may be well with thee" come from Deuteronomy 5:16, which introduces the Ten Commandments in a slightly different format from what we find in Exodus 20. The Exodus passage promises only length of days. The Deuteronomy passage promises both well-being and long life. Since this commandment was originally part of the Mosaic Law, we need to interpret it in that context. At Mount Sinai, God promised to bless Israel, including Israelite children, for obeying His commands. Those blessings don't directly translate to believers living in the current Church Age. So why did Paul include the promise attached to the command? Perhaps Paul included the promise to alert children then and now to the truth that how you respond to your parents will affect your whole life. That is certainly the case today. Children who rebel against their parents usually have a hard life. Some of them even have a shortened life because of their rebellious choices.



**DISPLAY:** Visual 26—Help for Children. **ASK:** What will the Spirit help children do in relation to their parents? (Q6) *To obey when they don't want to obey; to obey right away; to rejoice in obeying; to obey when it's unpopular; to love their family; to value their parents.*

## B. Exhortations to parents (6:4)

Parenting isn't easy. Becoming a happy family with strong family ties does not just happen. It takes effort on the part of all the family members. Children are to be respectful and obedient. Parents, too, have responsibilities, which Paul addressed in Ephesians 6:4.

### 1. Don't provoke (6:4)

Writing directly to fathers (however, mothers can also draw applications from this verse), Paul charged, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." To "provoke" is to rouse to anger, to exasperate. Parents must not purposely exasperate their children. They should not make unreasonable demands or be unduly harsh. Parents who exasperate their children make it difficult for them to obey willingly and respectfully.

**ASK:** What are some unreasonable demands that might provoke a child to wrath? (Q7) *Expecting a child to be mature beyond his or her years, to be perfect, to not make mistakes in carrying out daily tasks [e.g., spilling milk], to never forget anything, or to do a task without giving him or her the means to carry it out.*

Biting criticism, unreasonable demands, and severity shouldn't be a part of parenting. All contribute to provoking a child. A provoked child is at risk of turning away from his or her parents. Once this happens, that child's relationship with God suffers too.

**ASK:** What might a child learn about God from watching and listening to his or her parents? (Q8) *From godly parents, a child might learn God's grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness.*

### 2. Train and admonish (6:4)

How should parents rear their children? Paul instructed parents to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (6:4). Biblical parenting involves tenderly rearing children through proper nurture and admonition. To nurture is to train children by corrective acts, or discipline.

Children need discipline. They need molding to learn proper behavior, respect for authority, and getting along with others. They need to learn to behave at home, in school, in church, and in society. Discipline makes children better fit for life itself.

Parents must correct their children when they misbehave; however, they should never discipline with hateful anger as the motivator. Love should be their reason for disciplining their child. And the discipline should always correlate with the offense. Spanking is only one way to discipline and is not appropriate for some offenses. For example, leaving his or her bike in the yard overnight, forgetting to

make his or her bed, or digging up part of the yard while looking for worms are not willful disobedience nor acts of defiance.

**ASK:** What types of discipline would help a child remember to be more responsible? (Q9) *Taking away privileges; doing extra chores.*

To admonish is to train by corrective word, instruction, and encouragement. Admonition must accompany nurture. Without admonition, the child will have no moral basis of right and wrong and won't know what constitutes obedience. Admonition might take place, in part, during family devotions. Certainly families should take time to read the Bible together. Small children can learn Bible stories and Biblical principles from children's Bible story books as parents read to them. This is formal admonition.

**READ:** Deuteronomy 6:4–9. **ASK:** Besides formal instruction, how else could parents teach their child? (Q10) *By using the experiences of everyday life.*

Being a godly parent isn't easy. God expects parents to do it, but He doesn't expect them to do it on their own. The Holy Spirit helps parents fulfill their God-given roles.

**DISPLAY:** Visual 27—Help for Parents. **ASK:** What will the Spirit help a parent do? (Q11) *Respond wisely; remain consistent; admit wrongs; enjoy parenting; find peace in all circumstances; parent sacrificially.*

## II. Servant-Master Relationships (Eph. 6:5–9)

Paul addressed another relationship within the household, that of servants and masters. In New Testament times servants were often considered part of the household.

### A. Exhortations to servants (6:5–8)

Paul instructed Christian servants about living with the restrictions their masters imposed on them. Today we can apply the principles in these exhortations to employee-employer relationships.

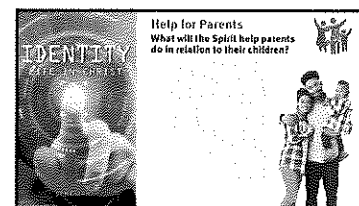
#### 1. Sincerely obey (6:5–7)

Paul wrote, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh" (Eph. 6:5). The phrase "according to the flesh" reminded servants that their slavery involved only their social status. In Christ, they were spiritually free. Christ was their ultimate master. Paul gave Christ's instructions for servants to follow.

**ASK:** Christ is your ultimate master too. How aware are you of Christ's interest in how you respond to the leadership in your workplace? (Q12)

Paul used four phrases to describe the attitude and spirit with which Christian servants were to obey their masters. The first phrase advised servants to serve "with fear and trembling" (6:5). Servants weren't supposed to shake with fear every time their masters spoke; rather, they were to be serious about fulfilling their duties and respecting their masters.

Second, servants were to serve with "sincerity of heart." God expects employ-



The New Testament writers did not specifically make slavery an issue. However, the whole tenor of New Testament teaching about the sanctity of human life and freedom to do God's will opposes slavery. History bears testimony to the vigorous efforts of Christian reformers to end slavery.

ees to render obedient service with honest, sincere hearts. We should work hard from our hearts, not just going through the motions.

Third, the slaves were to serve “as unto Christ” (6:5). By putting in an honest day’s work for their masters, they were working for the Lord.

Fourth, they were to work hard even when their masters couldn’t see them. Their consistent diligence showed they primarily served Christ (6:6, 7). Christ is always around. He sees both what we do and why we do it.

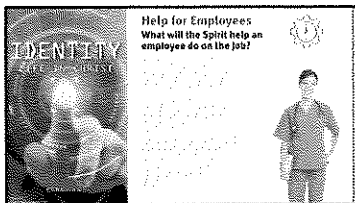
**READ:** Ephesians 6:6. **ASK:** How should seeing Christ as a believer’s ultimate boss change his or her work habits? (Q13) *The believer should do his or her best to please Christ. Doing just enough to please the boss or to get by should no longer be a part of the worker’s habits.*

**READ:** Ephesians 5:8, 9. **ASK:** How should the instructions in these verses inform an employee’s approach to work? (Q14) *A Christian employee should strive to be a light of God’s love and grace through his or her responses at work.*

## 2. Expect reward (6:8)

Along with exhorting slaves to work well, Paul told them they would receive a reward for whatever they did as unto the Lord (6:8). This promise should encourage us and give us great incentive for each day on the job.

How we work shapes our testimony before a watching world. God in turn uses our testimony, along with our faithful witness, to draw sinners to Himself. That’s why God cares so much about our workplace decorum. He will reward us for presenting a strong testimony that opens the door to sharing and supporting the gospel. What a blessing to know we can serve the Lord in our vocation and earn heavenly rewards along with our regular paycheck.



**DISPLAY:** Visual 28—Help for Employees. **ASK:** What will the Spirit help an employee do on the job? (Q15) *Be a good testimony and witness; serve well; endure hardship for the sake of Christ; rejoice to do the job; submit to difficult leaders.*

## B. Exhortations to masters (6:9)

### 1. Don’t threaten (6:9)

Turning to Christian masters, Paul gave them exhortations also. In counseling, “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them” (6:9), Paul appealed to masters to treat servants with the same consideration servants were to show to their masters. Masters were to be fair, kind, and honest.

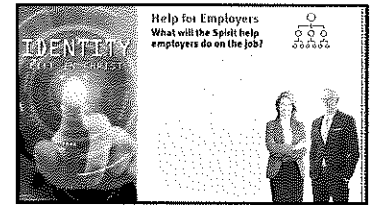
Paul added that masters were not to threaten their servants. This doesn’t prohibit an employer from reprimanding a delinquent employee. It means employers shouldn’t bully their employees, using threats of pay cuts, demotions, or layoffs to get their employees to meet unreasonable demands.

### 2. Remember your Master (6:9)

Employers should recognize they have an impartial Master in Heaven to whom every believer will give an account. God’s judgment will be fair and honest.

**DISPLAY:** Visual 29—Help for Employees. **ASK:** What will the Spirit help an employer do on the job? (Q16) *Be a good testimony and witness; lead with wisdom; handle conflict well; be fair to employees; be always joyful.*

We could summarize this whole section of Ephesians in two words: “Do right.” If everyone heeded Paul’s instructions in these verses, life would be far more enjoyable and less confrontational. God’s Spirit makes it all possible for believers (5:18).



## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Make Progress

**ASK:** In your roles in the home and workplace, what will the Spirit help you do that you aren’t currently doing? (Q17)

**ASK:** What needs to change for you to see the Spirit’s help in your life? (Q18)

Encourage your learners to desire to grow in their relationships and not be content with any progress they’ve made so far.

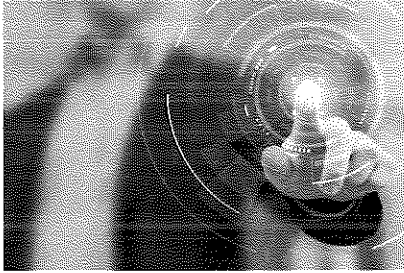
### Home and Away

Distribute a sheet of paper and a pencil to each learner. Ask the learners to write the name of one person in their family (preferably a child) down the left side of the paper and the name of a boss or an employee down the left side of the back of the paper. Give learners a few minutes to use the names as acrostics, filling in ways they should treat that family member and boss or employee. Allow learners to share their answers in small groups.

### Memory Verses

Encourage your learners to memorize Ephesians 6:4 and 5. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.

# Stand and Fight!



## Topic

Spiritual warfare

## Theme

The Lord enables the believer to withstand Satan's assaults and live victoriously.

## Desired Response

The learner will withstand Satan's assaults by putting on the whole armor of God and by using the Word of God as his or her sword.

## Materials

- Visuals 30, 31.

## Scripture Focus

Ephesians 6:10–24

## Summary

Paul lists the pieces of the armor of God and related them to God's provision for our protection in spiritual warfare. God expects us to understand and don each piece. We can triumph over Satan and his forces by putting on the whole armor of God.

## Outline

### I. Be Strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10)

### II. Put on the Armor of God (Eph. 6:11–17)

- A. Purpose for the armor (6:11–13)
- B. Pieces of the armor (6:14–17)
  1. Belt of truth (6:14)
  2. Breastplate of righteousness (6:14)
  3. Sandals of peace (6:15)
  4. Shield of faith (6:16)
  5. Helmet of salvation (6:17)

### III. Join the Battle (Eph. 6:17–24)

- A. Pick up your sword (6:17)
- B. Support your fellow soldiers (6:18–24)

## Memory Verse

*"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).*