

引言 INTRODUCTION

“It’s hard to be a dad!” I said that to my dad when my older son was born. Before I knew enough about parenting, God blessed my wife and I with another son. There is a Chinese saying: bring up your first baby according to the books, but raise your next kid like a pig. Many first-time parents read all the instructions they can find, and they consult other parents. They follow every detailed advice. After gaining some experience, they take it easy when the second baby arrives. In my case, I nurture my first son like a lab-rat. I tried different things on him. Based on what I learned, I treat my second son like a human. I made a ton of mistakes along the way. I often ask my sons for forgiveness. By God’s grace, they become decent young men today. Contrary to what some people think, children are not accidents or burdens. According to the Bible, they are God’s blessings. We must cherish them as God’s gifts. Family is a training ground to prepare children for adulthood. Home is a place for love and grace, patience and sacrifice, and understanding and acceptance. It is where memories are formed, values are embraced and traditions are passed down. Unfortunately, family faces serious attacks from the secular world. We are bombarded by unbiblical views. Several decades ago, people saw kids as their retirement plan. To ensure that someone will provide for your future, it is safer to have multiple children. Nowadays, some parents hope that their kids will complete their unfulfilled dreams. Kids are their source of pride. Is there a better alternative? Of course! The Creator of our lives has a sure-win formula for family. Rather than chasing after the world, Christian families must go back to God’s Word. After finished talking about marriage, Paul switches his focus to parenting. The general principle remains unchanged. Parents and children must conduct a life filled by the Holy Spirit out of submission to the Lord.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 尊敬你的父母 Respect Your Parents

Just like Paul’s teaching to husbands and wives, this section is divided into instructions for the children and for the parents, respectively. The particular Greek word for “children” here does not specify the ages. Paul’s emphasis is more on the relationship. In practice, we treat younger kids who are still at home and older children who have left home differently.

A. 透過聽話來尊敬 Respect by Obeying

Younger children should respect their parents by obeying them. They have to do so in the Lord. They should submit as long as their parents’ demands are not in conflict with the Bible. Proverbs tells us the same principle. For example, 3:1-2 of the book states: **1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, 2 for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.** In the Biblical world, Jewish fathers taught children language, skills and Biblical truths from home. Kids learned how to farm and raise animals. Girls learned how to cook and sew. Besides developing life skills, kids also learned how to build a relationship with God. Children would chase after the world if they did not choose God. Parents face a huge

challenge today. The world is changing rapidly. For Christian families, home should be the nursery for spiritual growth. Schools convey knowledge, but only a home can shape a kid's mind. Needless to say, modern people are always busy. Both parents may have full-time jobs. Very often kids are packed with classes for math, Chinese, music, sports, drawing, dancing, etc. on the evenings and weekends. McDonald's thus becomes their dinner table, and iPhone helps babysit toddlers. We see tiger moms hauling hamster kids in their minivans. Parents are agitated and burned out; their children are unhappy and stressed out. You are too busy if your family cannot eat dinner at home comfortably on most evenings. You must cut back and reprioritize your life if you cannot find the time, interest or energy to talk about God. Your kids will put God first only if they see you put Him first. My parents are not believers. Like most young men did, I did some wild things without my parents' knowledge. I could have ended up in a very different situation if not because of God's grace. He saved me in my teen years. My sons are more blessed for growing up in a Christian home. They were in the church since babies. At home, I instill Biblical values to them. I encourage parents to do the same things. You must bring them to the church before they can drive. Make church the only plan for the whole family Friday evening and the whole Sunday morning. However, their Bible teachers cannot replace your role at home. You are a living Bible to your kids. Show them that God lives in you and truths are relevant to your life. They will not pray to God and read the Bible if you do not do so with them. Lead them to Christ when the opportunity comes up. Pray that they will follow Him the rest of their lives.

B. 透過孝順來尊敬 Respect by Honoring

Younger kids should obey their parents. Then Paul reminds older children to honor their fathers and mothers. He quotes one of the Ten Commandments. That was God's Law to the Jews. Now Paul expanded the same requirements to Gentile believers. This commandment comes with a promise. Verse 3 says: "That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." In the original passage, the "land" refers to Canaan. Paul generalized it and applied the promise to wherever we may live. God will bless us if we are obedient to Him. A promise is not an absolute guarantee. Being faithful to God does not mean that we will not face any difficulty in life. But it does mean that God will be with us regardless. In the Biblical world, honoring one's father and mother was a social norm. People lived close to one another in clans. Since there was no social security or retirement system, sons would provide for their elderly parents. Nowadays, people live a more independent life. Retirees are more financially stable too. Though our mode of life has changed, our honor toward parents should remain the same. We should maintain a close relationship with them. You should visit your parents often, whether they live in another city or they are overseas. With the convenience of technology, you can make video calls to them at any time. Though they may live in a different era, they have a wealth of wisdom and experience we can seek advice from. I remember a conversation with my older son before he left for college. I told him: "From now on daddy will treat you like an adult. Feel free to ask me anything about life. I'll give you my advice. But it's up to you whether or not to do accordingly." So far we keep that communication quite well. He knows that I have his best interests in mind. Once in a while he will consult me about car, finance, health, etc. He informs me when he travels. He respects me as his dad. He understands my expectations on him to study well and to walk closely with the Lord. We need to make adjustments in our relationship with parents as both of us age. But they are always our parents.

2. 教導你的小孩 Instruct Your Children

After telling children to respect their parents, Paul then reminds the parents to instruct their children. Paul's focus are kids still living at home. Look at verse 4: **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** Paul speaks particularly to the fathers because they were the main educator at home in those days.

A. 不讓他們喪氣 Do Not Frustrate Them

First, Paul brings up the negative aspect. He cautions the fathers not to frustrate their children. In the Roman world, fathers were given an absolute authority over their children. Strict control and extreme punishments hurt children's hearts and bodies. Kids would live in fear instead of love. Fathers should control their temper so as not to provoke their children to anger. Paul teaches us about anger in chapter 4 when he says "be angry and do not sin." Unresolved anger may lead to conflicts, harmful words and bitterness. One Bible commentary gives some situations where children may feel frustrated: "excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands and condemnation, and humiliation." I was often punished by my dad when I was little. Sometimes, he lashed it out when he was mad. The blow might be heavier than what I deserved. Besides, he loved to talk about us kids in front of our relatives. He would say something like: "My kids are no better than yours. They only scored 80 in the exams." My father had a strange theory that such embarrassment could somehow motivate us to study harder. We siblings just laughed about it and ignored those remarks. I still love my dad although he did not teach us in a Biblical way. Fellow fathers: remember that your kids have face, feelings and emotions like you do. We have to set appropriate expectations based on their ages. Once my older son said at the dining table: "I just want to be a normal kid. Not an Asian kid." We all know what that means! There are times for correction. But do not forget to praise and encourage them too. Appreciate their effort, even though they may not get a favorable result. My two boys played piano when they were small. Their teacher asked them to participate in competitions. My only requirement for them was to do the best they could. I would usually ask them the same question after every performance: "Have you tried your best?" They would say "yes." Then I would take them out to eat and celebrate. I planted in their minds that there is a time to work hard, then they should reward themselves. Put in your children's mind that your love for them is not in proportion to their performance.

B. 促進他們成長 Do Cultivate Them

Rather than not frustrating our children, Paul encourages us to cultivate them. He says we must "**bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**" Again, the scope of such training is in the Lord. Any means we use must be consistent with God's truths. The two words discipline and instruction have some overlapping meanings. "Discipline" has the sense of using chastisement to address mistakes. But a broader meaning is about training. For example, craftsmen, musicians and athletes have to maintain strict discipline in developing their techniques. The only way to achieve excellence is to spend time in practice. The word "instruction" refers to verbal correction. We teach kids by showing them how to cook an egg or how to use washing machine. Then we let them try it out themselves. Where necessary, parents will give further directions to help kids fine-tune their skills. You must invest time and effort in your children in order to do that. Someone said that children spell love as "time." I savor the

moments I played with the boys in the basement of our old house. Be a cheerleader at their music recitals, dance competition, sports game, etc. Seize every opportunity when your kids ask you to spend time with them. Last summer, a new Indiana Jones movie was released. My older son knows that I am a big fan of Indiana Jones. He suggested us go to the theater as a family. My mind started thinking about the prices for tickets, popcorn and dinner. But I said yes immediately without hesitation. I must cherish the occasion when it is available. Another key lesson I learned when raising my sons is to let go. A good example is driving. Honestly, I was quite scared when my older son got on the road. I worried about injuries, property damage and insurance claims. However, I also knew that the only way to master driving skill is to gain more experience. Therefore, I have to let him drive my car. I told him to avoid highways. But he said: "One time I drove all the way to almost the downtown area." No wonder he uses so much gas! The fact is that parents cannot watch their children every minute. They do not want us to follow them either! Ultimately, we must put them in the hand of God. We pray for their safety and pray that they will make sound decisions. Hopefully, they will apply what they learn at home and in the church in their decision-making. I always tell my older son: "Have fun but be wise."

結論 CONCLUSION

Parents and children must conduct a life filled by the Holy Spirit out of submission to the Lord. We want our kids to obey us. At a Christian conference, one famous Bible teacher asked the audience: "Why should your kids listen to you?" We can be self-centered and we often make mistakes. Then she corrected the notion by saying that: "Both kids and their parents must listen to the Lord." She is right! We are happy when our children take our advice. But there should be a bigger joy when they follow the Lord. Without exception, all parents love their children. We try to provide the best for them. They eat well, dress well and use well. We send them to their dream colleges and we buy them the best cars we can afford. The question is: do you love them the way God loves them? Do you give them the biggest blessing anyone can receive in this life? One day we will see the Lord in glory. He may not ask you how much salary you make, how big your house is and what you have accomplished in life. I am sure that the Lord will ask parents: where are your kids? Bringing our kids to the Lord is our biggest responsibility. We tell them that there is a perfect Father in heaven who loves them completely.

引言 INTRODUCTION

當我的大兒子出生時，我和我的父親說：「做人老爸甚艱難！」。在我還沒有學會如何養育孩子之前，神再祝福我和太太另一個兒子。俗語說：老大照書養，老二照豬養。許多第一次做父母的人會看很多資料，並請教其他家長。他們按照所有建議去做。有了經驗之後，到老二出生時他們就比較隨意。就我而言，我對待老大就像白老鼠。我對他嘗試了不同的方法。得到一些心得之後，我像人一樣照顧我的小兒子。在孩子的成長中我犯了很多錯誤。我常常請求兒子們的原諒。靠著神的恩典，他們今天成為像樣的年輕人。有些人認為孩子是意外或是負擔。但是根據聖經，孩子是神的祝福。我們必須珍惜他們，並將他們視為神的禮物。家庭是孩子為成年做好準備的訓練場。家是一個充滿愛和恩典、忍耐和犧牲、理解和接納的地方。家也是編織回憶、樹立價值觀和傳遞傳統的地方。很可惜，家庭面對世俗的攻擊。我們受到不符合聖經的觀點所影響。幾十年前，人們把孩子看為退休計劃。為了保障你的未來，多生幾個孩子會比較安全。如今，有些父母希望孩子能夠完成自己沒有達成的夢想。孩子變成父母誇耀的原因。有更好的選擇嗎？當然有！創造生命的主為家庭制定了一個必勝的模式。基督徒家庭不應該追逐世界，而必須回到神的話語中。保羅講完婚姻之後，他將注意力轉向教養孩子。但是大原則維持不變。父母和孩子必須順服主，過著被聖靈充滿的生活。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 尊敬你的父母 Respect Your Parents

正如保羅對丈夫和妻子的教導一樣，他分別對孩子和父母有不同的指示。這裡的希臘文「兒女」這個字不是指某一個年齡層。保羅強調的是家長和兒女的關係。實際來說，我們會以不同的方式對待仍在家中的小孩和成年的孩子。

A. 透過聽話來尊敬 Respect by Obeying

年幼的孩子應該透過聽話來尊敬父母。保羅強調他們必在主裡聽從父母。只要父母的要求與聖經沒有抵觸，他們就應該順服。箴言告訴我們同樣的原則。例如，箴言 3:1-2 說：**1 我兒，不要忘記我的法則；你心要謹守我的誠命；2 因為他必將長久的日子，生命的年數與平安，加給你。**在聖經的年代，猶太人的父

親在家裡教導孩子語言、技能和聖經真理。孩子們學習如何耕種和飼養動物。女孩子學習做菜和縫衣服。除了訓練生活技能，孩子們還學習如何與神建立關係。如果孩子不選擇跟隨神，他們就會追求世界。今天，父母面對重大的挑戰。世界急速在變化。對於基督徒家庭來說，家應該是靈命成長的搖籃。學校負責傳遞知識，但唯有家才能塑造孩子的心思。我們都明白現代人總是很忙。父母雙方可能都要上班。在晚上和週末，小孩被數學、中文、音樂、運動、繪畫、跳舞等課程擠滿。麥當勞變成他們的餐桌，手機幫忙託兒。我們看到虎媽媽載著小老鼠到處趕場。父母心裡煩躁、精疲力盡；孩子不開心，壓力沉重。如果一家人常常無法舒舒服服地一起吃晚餐，那麼也許你就太忙了。如果你找不到時間、興趣或心力來談論神，你必須調整生活的優先順序。孩子必須看到你將神放在首位，他們才會照樣做。我的父母不是信徒。像大多數年輕人一樣，我做了一些爸媽不知道的事情。如果不是神的恩典，今天我可能會在不同的地方。神在我青少年的時候就拯救了我。我的兒子們實在很幸福，因為他們在基督徒家庭長大。他們從嬰孩時期就去教會。在家裡，我向他們灌輸聖經價值觀。我鼓勵所有父母也做同樣的事情。除非你的小孩會開車，否則你必須把他們送到教會。讓來聚會成為週五晚上和整個週日早上全家人唯一的安排。然而，聖經老師無法取代你在家裡的角色。對孩子來說，你就是一本活的聖經。透過行動向他們證明神住在你裡面，真理與你的生活息息相關。從小和他們一起禱告和讀聖經，幫助他們養成好習慣。趁機會帶領他們信主。祈求他們一生跟隨耶穌。

B. 透過孝順來尊敬 Respect by Honoring

年幼的小孩應該聽服父母。然後保羅提醒年長的孩子要孝順父母。他引用了十誡的其中一條誡命。那是神給猶太人的律法。現在保羅將同樣的要求擴展到外邦信徒。這條誡命帶著應許。第3節說：「...使你得福，在世長壽。」在原文中，「世」指的是迦南地。保羅將應許延伸到我們居住的任何地方。如果我們順服神，祂就會祝福我們。聖經的應許並不是絕對的保證。順服神並不等於我們在生活中不會遇到困難。但無論在任何情況下，神都會與我們同在。在聖經世界中，孝順父母是社會風俗。大家族的成員一般都住在附近。由於沒有社會保障計劃或退休金，兒子們需要奉養年邁的父母。如今，人們習慣獨立生活。退休人士的經濟狀況也比較穩定。儘管我們現在的生活型態不一樣，但我們對父母的孝順維持不變。我們應該與爸媽保持緊密的關係。你經常探望父母，無論他們住在另一個城市還是在海外。科技給我們很多方便，你可以隨時與他們作視訊通話。儘管他們生活在不同的時代，但他們擁有豐富智慧和經驗，值得我們學習。記得我的大兒子去上大學的時候我告訴他：「從現在開始，爸爸會把你看作大人。你有什麼生活上的問題都可以問我。我會給你一些建議，你自己

來決定是否照樣做。」到目前為止，我們保持著良好的溝通。他知道我總是為他的利益著想。他偶爾會向我問我關於車子、金錢和健康等方面的問題。他尊敬我，因為我是他的老爸。他知道我對他的期望。他要用功讀書，並與主緊密同行。隨著年齡的增長，我們與父母的關係需要調整，但他們永遠都是我們的父母。

2. 教導你的小孩 Instruct Your Children

在告訴孩子們要尊重父母之後，保羅接著提醒父母要教導他們的孩子。保羅的重點是仍然住在家裡的孩子。請看第 4 節：**你們作父親的，不要惹兒女的氣，只要照著主的教訓和警戒養育他們。**保羅特別對父親們說話，因為他們是當時主要負責教導小孩的人。

A. 不讓他們喪氣 Do Not Frustrate Them

首先，保羅提出消極的一面。他告誡父親們不要讓孩子喪氣。在羅馬世界，父親對孩子有絕對的權力。嚴格的控制和過度的懲罰會傷害孩子的心靈和身體。小孩會活在恐懼而不是愛之中。父親應該控制自己的脾氣，不要激怒孩子。保羅在第 4 章提到有關怒氣的教導，他說「生氣卻不要犯罪」。未平息的憤怒可能會導致衝突、傷害的言語和內心的苦毒。有一本解經書提到一些可能會使孩子喪氣的情況：「太嚴厲的管教、不合理的要求、過份的責備，以及羞辱。」我小時候常常被爸爸處罰。有時候，他生氣的時候就會打我們，甚至出手很重。另外，他喜歡在親戚面前談到我們。他也許會說：「我的孩子比不上你的孩子。他們只考到 80 分。」我父親有一個奇怪的理論，認為這樣比較可以激勵我們更用功讀書。我們只是覺得很好笑，然後便置之不理。我很愛我的父親，雖然他不是照聖經的原則教導我們。父親們請記住，你的孩子和你一樣有面子、感受和情緒。我們必須根據他們的年齡設定期望。有一次我的大兒子在吃飯時說：「我只想做一個正常的孩子，不是亞洲人的孩子。」我們都明白他的意思！我們需要糾正小孩的錯誤，但不要忘記讚賞和鼓勵他們。常常表揚他們的努力，雖然他們不一定得到滿意的成果。我的兩個兒子小時候彈鋼琴。他們的老師經常要求他們參加比賽。我對他們唯一的要求就是盡力而為。每次比賽後我都會問他們同樣的問題：「你們盡力了嗎？」他們總是說「是的」。然後我會帶他們出去吃飯並慶祝。我希望他們有一個正確的觀念：努力工作，然後給自己一點獎勵。讓你的孩子明白，你對他們的愛與他們的表現並不是成正比的。

B. 促進他們成長 Do Cultivate Them

保羅說我們不要讓小孩喪氣，我們乃是要促進他們成長。他說我們必須「**照著主的教訓和警戒養育他們**」。他再次強調，這種教導的方式必須按照主的心意。我們所使用的方式都必須符合神的真理。教訓和警戒兩個字有一些重疊的含義。「教訓」的意思是用懲罰來糾正錯誤。但更廣泛的含義是關於技巧的訓練。例如，工匠、音樂家和運動員都必須保持嚴格的紀律。達到更好成果的唯一方法就是花時間練習。「警戒」是指口頭的指示。例如我們向孩子示範如何煎雞蛋或使用洗衣機。然後他們必須試著做。必要時，家長會給予進一步指導，幫助孩子做得更好。你必須在孩子身上投入時間和心力。有人說，孩子認為父母花時間陪伴他們就是愛他們。我很珍惜在孩子們小時候和他們在以前房子地下室玩耍的時光。你可以在小孩的演奏會、跳舞比賽、運動競賽做啦啦隊。去年夏天，新的印第安納瓊斯 (Indiana Jones) 電影上映。我的大兒子知道我是印第安納瓊斯的忠實粉絲。他建議我們全家去電影院看。我的腦子開始盤算門票、爆米花和晚餐大概要花多少錢。但我立刻毫不猶豫地答應了。我必須珍惜這樣的機會。我在教導兒子時學到的另一個重要教訓就是放手。一個很好的例子就是開車。老實說，當我的大兒子上路時，我很害怕。我擔心他會受傷、財物損失和保險賠償。然而，我也知道掌握駕駛技術的唯一方法就是更多的經驗。於是，我必須讓他開我的車。我告訴他要避免開高速公路。他回答說：「有一次我真的幾乎開到市中心。」難怪汽油用得那麼快！事實上，父母不可能 24 小時都釘著兒女。他們也不希望我們一直跟著他們！最終，我們必須把他們交在神的手中。我們為他們的安全禱告，並期望他們做明智的決定。希望他們能把在家裡和教會學到的知識應用出來。我總是告訴我的大兒子：「要玩得開心，但要有智慧。」

結論 CONCLUSION

父母和孩子都必須順服主，過被聖靈充滿的生活。我們希望孩子聽話。在一次講座上，一位有名的聖經老師問聽眾：「為什麼你的孩子要聽你的話？」我們都可能自我中心，並且經常犯錯。然後她糾正了這個觀念，說：「孩子和父母都必須聽從主的話。」她是對的！當孩子接受我們的建議時，我們會感到高興。但當他們跟隨主之時，我們應該有更大的喜樂。毫無疑問，所有的父母都愛自己的兒女。我們盡力為他們提供最好的。他們吃得好，穿得好，用得好。我們將他們送到他們夢想的大學，並為他們買我們所能負擔最好的汽車。問題是：你像神愛他們一樣愛他們嗎？你有沒有給他們人生中最大的祝福？有一天我們會在榮耀中看見主。祂也許不會問你的薪水是多少，你的房子有多大，你有什麼成就。我相信主會問父母：你的孩子在哪裡？把我們的孩子帶到主面前是我們最大的責任。我們告訴他們，天上有一位完美的父親，祂全心全意地愛他們。