

(Ephesians) Christian Parenting, Part 1

by Jeff Noblit

Fathers must take responsibility for their children's education and training, and must teach them to fear God and love Him with all their heart, soul, and might.

Duration: 1:02:26

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:5, Deuteronomy 6:7, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 5:22, Ephesians 6:4

Topics: "Christian Parenting"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the responsibility of fathers, including grandfathers and great-grandfathers, in teaching their children about God's glory. The speaker encourages fathers to lift their eyes to heaven and ask God for the opportunity to teach their children about His wonderfulness. The speaker refers to Deuteronomy 6-7, which instructs fathers to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might, and to diligently teach their children about God's commandments. The speaker emphasizes the importance of incorporating biblical teachings into everyday life, such as during mealtime, while walking together, and before bedtime and in the morning.

Transcript

Well, Ephesians chapter 6, our verse I will preach on today is verse 4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. And what Paul is doing here as he writes this letter to the church at Ephesus is he's giving a revolutionary new perspective on the social order. What he's actually doing is bringing the truth to bear on the social order of man.

Restoring, if you will, what was lost when Adam and Eve, in Vance Habner's words, ate us out of house and home in the garden. We lost something there. In Christianity, we gain it back and begin a pilgrimage of implementing those high divine truths that the world doesn't understand and scoffs at and mocks and ridicules.

So you get to Ephesians chapter 6 and he continues talking about the social order. But really, if you look back at Ephesians chapter 5 verse 22 and you go through chapter 6 verse 9, you have Paul talking about husbands and wives, then parents and children, rather children and parents is in that order, and then slaves and masters, or we could make the parallel today to employers and employees. So the marriage relationship, parent-child relationship, the management-labor relationship, the social order.

But everything in that section of 5.22 through 6.9 is built upon 5.21. Look at it again. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 21. And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Out of your new reverence, your new honoring of Christ, I like Piper's word, this new treasuring of Christ that's occurred in our hearts now that we're converted. Because of that, you now have both the desire and the capacity to be humble and subject yourself to God's rule and God's standard, and that is to be subject to one another. Let the other persons be more important than yourself.

This isn't something you grit your teeth and do in the flesh. It's the outflow of the new man. So everything in 5.21, be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, is built on 5.18. Look at 5.18 again.

And do not get drunk with wine. That's always a good idea. For that's dissipation.

But be filled with the Spirit. And as I preached on that, remember I told you it wasn't necessarily a... You're supposed to look for this impersonal force, this power called the Spirit that's going to come fill you. No.

It really means develop a crush on God. Continually cultivate a crush. Like a teenage crush.

A teenager, quote, falls in love like that. And you know what a teenager does when they really like someone? They cultivate it. They keep things and they have pictures and they have mementos and they exchange rings or whatever they do.

But they cultivate that crush on that person. That's what he's saying. Be full of God.

Work at making sure your heart really loves God. Now it certainly does at conversion, but you have to work on it also. And then Ephesians 5.18 is dependent upon all the glorious truths of the previous chapters.

Particularly Ephesians chapter 1 and 2 where he talked about how we are saved by grace through faith. And that not of ourselves is the gift of God not as a result of works lest any man should boast. So building on all of that, he comes to this new revolutionary perspective on the social order.

And I say revolutionary because the Greco-Roman world of this day was really out of balance as far as how truth is concerned on the social order. And so Paul is saying to Christians, you can get things back right. Back the way they're supposed to be in God's eyes.

Now one of the things that is so true is that Christianity was the great liberator. It liberated people from oppression under abusive and oppressive people in authority. Whether it was government or the marriage relationship or the parent-child relationship.

But the beautiful thing is Christianity does not liberate one from God's law because it is God's law. It is God's truth that the husband is the head of the wife. It is God's law, God's truth that parents are to have children that obey them.

It is God's truth, it is God's law that the employee should work for the employer like working under the Lord. So though he radically liberated people from oppression, he did not throw out the God-ordained structures. He just showed how they ought to work.

Jeremiah 31, 33 says this, But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them. Now notice that the law is not just external.

Once you're converted in this new covenant, the law is in you. God gives you a new heart to embrace, love and cherish his truth. I will put my law within them and on their heart I will write it and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

So this new revolutionary perspective that God is giving, let me just outline it this way, is that submission to God-ordained authority is still right. Paul makes that very clear because some Christians got out of balance when they were liberated in Christ and thought, well, wives don't have to honor the authority of their husbands and children. Well, they're free now.

They don't have to live under the oppression of these parents and employees. They have a new lease on life. They don't have to be so beaten down and oppressed.

Well, Paul does address that, but he says, no, no, no. The structures of authority remain. That's God's truth.

We just got to get them functioning right. So authority is still right. Submission to God-ordained authority is expected and required.

And even more so now that we are changed from within by grace so that we have this spark of love for God. Jonathan Edwards would call it a new affection for God that only true regeneration can produce. When you're counseling with someone and you wonder if they've really come to Christ, don't just look for a concern to miss hell.

The flesh has that. Look for something, at least a spark of affection for God, a desire for God, a love for the things of God. And since we have that, there should be even a greater zeal in us to honor his law concerning submission to authority.

But also that God requires in the Christian structures of authority that those in authority love and never lord over those under them and never be oppressive. We are to lead those under us, whether you're a husband or a parent or an employer, for the glory of God and the good of those under you. So here's the beautiful balance that is the revolutionary new perspective that God gives to the social order in life.

Now let's go to the particular one we're looking at today, and I call this Christian parenting. And we may not get through with it this morning, and if so, we'll leave the practical parts to next time. But he says here, beginning in verse four, and this will be our first major point, Roman numeral one.

Fathers are the ones responsible for their children. When I mean for their children, the education, the rearing, the development of their children. Fathers, and that's why he begins the verse in verse four, fathers do not provoke your children to anger.

Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Now I understand the Greek word here can sometimes refer to both parents, and certainly both are included. But you look at it over and over again, this verse is, this word's almost always just translated fathers.

And I believe there's a point that Paul is making here, and that is that the responsibility lands on dad. Dad has the chief responsibility. Fathers are the pastor of the home.

I'd like to sink in for a moment. Think of it in those terms. He's responsible to oversee and chiefly lead in the education of the children.

Now, he may not be as hands-on as mom is, because mom may have just more time with the children, but he's the one who is responsible. And I want to say to this, he is the one who will give an account at the judgment bar of God for that home. You know what that means, guys? We're under pressure.

It's awesome, the task we're called to. Because I know I need the God-ordained truth of His Word to help me be the father I'm called to be, because He's holding me responsible to be that. I know I need it.

So he says, fathers, you do all these things in the discipline and instruction. Then he has a little phrase, I'm going to hit on it many times, of the Lord. Don't provoke them to anger.

Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. What it means is, is that all education and child-rearing is to be centered on and founded on the Lord. It's not Dr. Spock and the Lord.

It's the Lord. And if Spock don't fit the Lord, Spock gets left out. It's of the Lord.

And by the way, Spock or Skinner or Freud or any of the rest of these psychologists that don't fit our Lord, our Lord is not intimidated by them and we don't need their godless insights. We need God's truth in our homes. That's what we need.

It's of the Lord. Now, I'm not saying that psychology hasn't come up with some good ways to describe and understand some things, but they don't have the solution to things because they don't know who man is. Man's made in the image of God with a spiritual nature and they deny that man even has a spiritual nature.

My goodness, you're going to work on a car, you need to know what it is. Well, today in our culture, we certainly do not have a God-centered view of education. We have an overwhelmingly... Now, when I say education, I don't just mean the school, I mean all of the instruction of our children.

Church, school, home, etc. If you just take the whole thing, it's very man-centered. This deeply grieves me and it deeply troubles me and a lot of people don't get it, but I'm going to say it till I die.

We used to have a culture that even though many were pagan and non-Christian, they were basically God-centered. They viewed God the Creator as the center of all things and everything is of Him and from Him and connected to Him. Read some of the old books of 150-200 years ago.

Not Christian books, just books. And you'll see just expression after expression after expression that everybody had something of a God-centered perspective. Today, brothers and sisters, even in the church, we're very weak on being God-centered.

It's all about man and it's all about man's needs and it's all about man's wants and it's all about man's desire. Listen, brothers and sisters, fallen man is blinded to his real need and he's warped in all of his desires. We're to give man God's truth and watch the Holy Spirit of God turn man's heart and give him a hunger for God and truth, not trust our creativity and ingenuity to somehow bushwhack or corral him into getting interested in God.

God is not interested in being made into an idol so that fallen, weakened man might appreciate Him. We must proclaim God as who He is with love and compassion and boldness and trust the Holy Spirit of God to bring the appetite of men toward the true God. And that's Jesus building His church.

Now, getting back to education, chasing a rabbit there, but it's a good rabbit to chase. Education of our children, the whole education of our children is so man-centered. You know, the first elementary school textbook for the youngest children in America was built on the catechism of the Protestant catechism.

As they taught children the ABCs, they taught them the great doctrines of the faith. Why? It was God-centered. It was God-centered.

Today we are tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil to segment our lives like a pie. I mean, one part, one slice would be, well, we need the public school, our schools in general to educate our children in those types of things, the basics of learning. And then we need the church to, that's another piece of the pie, to educate our children on spiritual things.

And then in the home, we'll try to take care of social education. And then if you have all the pieces of the pie, then you've got something going and you're doing pretty good. Friends, this is not God's plan.

It's not God's plan. It's all to be God-centered. All training comes within the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Now, I'm not saying it's not God's plan to go to church so your children can be trained or send them to school. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying the philosophy behind it.

We're not to be segmented like a pie. We're to be more like a wagon wheel. And the hub of the wagon wheel is God.

And the spokes are all the things that come out of that. The school and the church and the home, it needs to be God-centered. And for God's glory.

And based on God's wisdom. My point is this. Fathers, we must lead our families to see that this is the case.

We're responsible that our children are raised, are instructed, are disciplined, are educated with God as the center and the purpose of education being God and His glory. The importance of instructing in the home and in everyday life cannot be overemphasized. Let me just emphasize this for a moment.

Would you turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 6 right quick? Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, then Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy chapter 6, God is instructing Moses on how the children of Israel are to instruct their families and how they are to lead their families. In Deuteronomy 6, beginning in verse 1, He says, Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments, which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you're going to possess.

I'm giving you a special land. You will be my special people in that special land. And you fathers must make sure your household knows my truth.

Verse 2, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you all the days of your life, that your days may be prolonged. Can I add this in here? He didn't say the children's program would do this. He didn't say the student ministry would do this.

Those are wonderful and good. He's saying, fathers, you must so teach your children that they fear God. Brother Jeff, I don't know that I'm doing very good there.

I don't know if any of us are doing very good, but I tell you what you can do in grace. You can keep striving. You can keep growing.

You can keep understanding. You can keep changing. And we can all keep doing better.

And one day as a church family, maybe we can help the younger couples. One day as a church family, if we keep striving, and if we keep growing, and if we keep changing to be more biblical, one day we might get to normal Christianity. I don't mean that ugly spirited.

Just where it's normal that the men of the church take responsibility to teach their children to fear the Lord. I'm not saying you don't, and I'm not saying I don't, but I'm just saying we all probably need to grow. A big part of that is bringing your children to a solid church.

That's a big part of that. Of course, there's other parts also. Let's go further.

Verse 3. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in the land flowing with milk and honey. Verse 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Oh, here's the verse.

You shall love the Lord your God. All dads, all dads, all dads. Dads, listen to me.

Do you love Him? All dads, if you don't love Him, everything you do is going to be hollow and legalistic and brow-beating. Because, listen, if you love Him, you know what it means? It means you have been changed by His grace. And as you firmly teach those children, you know what you're going to do? You're going to teach them with that humble heart that says, I'm a wicked sinner too, child, and my Lord loves me by grace.

And though I have firm rules for you, son, I want you to know, daddy is a sinner that needed God's grace. Oh, that's the key. We've got to love Him.

Has God been doing anything in your heart like that? He's been doing that in my heart. He's been saying, Jeff, you know, all the stuff really doesn't matter. Do you love me? And I want to tell you, I love my Lord more today than I did a few months ago and than I did a few years ago.

And that makes me a better pastor. But even more important, God didn't just call me to be a pastor, God called me to be a dad. It makes me a better father.

And I've still got a long way to go. But I'm heading that way. You want to go with me? I'm heading that way.

For God's glory, let's keep going. Well, you should love the Lord your God, verse 5, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. These words which I'm commanding you today shall be on your heart.

And that's basically the scriptures or the Bible, you could say. Verse 7, you shall teach them diligently to your sons. Now, when he says diligently, he doesn't mean a two-hour formal classroom.

Matter of fact, in the home, I would discourage a lot of real formal sit-down study because it needs to be incarnational. It needs to be in the body. It needs to be in the lifestyle.

If it's real, it'll just come out all along through the day. That's what makes it real. That'll help your children to know and love him and live for him.

Because that's what he says here, verse 7. You shall teach them diligently to your sons. When? You should talk of them when you sit in your house. Maybe sitting around at mealtime.

Or sit around and turn that one-eyed monster off and talk a little bit. Talk about how this biblical truth applies to this situation and that biblical truth applies to this situation. When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you're just going somewhere together, when you lie down in the evening as you're getting ready to retire, when you rise up in the morning, when they get up in the morning.

Now moms, we're not leaving you out. You are so fundamentally important. But dads must lead that principle in the home.

Certainly it's a team effort though. So homes need the father to take the responsibility for the education, the whole training of the child, including if they go to school or if you homeschool or if you choose public education. And that may be a good choice for you.

But you need to know what you're doing. Or if you choose private school or whatever you choose, fathers are responsible. Fathers are responsible in that household to know the scriptures, sit under sound preaching and teaching so you can be matured.

The greatest student ministry in the world is a sound pulpit that equips fathers who will love God and teach God's truth in their everyday life. Fathers who are weak or homes where the fathers are absent are proven to be prone to failure. Paul Meyer of the Mendroth Meyer Clinic said, a vast majority of neurotics have grown up in homes where there was no father or where the home was dominated by the mother.

You just can't improve on God's design. I remember reading some time ago the statistic that men who became involved in the sin of homosexuality were much more likely to become involved in that if the father was absent or if the mother was dominant in the home. Certainly not always, but that's what the researchers said they found out.

Fathers must take responsibility in the home. Now, boy, there's nothing in me that wants to leave you feeling discouraged. There's nothing in me that wants to leave you feeling down because I want to say something.

I know a lot of you dads, and you're doing a lot of stuff right. I sense the reality of your Christianity, and it doesn't just get turned on when you're here. It's something that's real in you.

And I just want to affirm you, and I want to encourage you, and I want to exhort you to stay the course. Because there are a lot of voices out there today that are saying things like this. Just go to a big hot shot church, and just get your kids in a good program, and then we dads can kind of be lazy, and we can kind of be indifferent, and we can kind of be uninvolved, and I want to tell you that is a lie from the enemy.

Sure, we have a strong children's program and a strong student program. We're going to always have one, and that would be a great blessing and asset to our training as fathers. But fathers, we must keep growing and keep maturing.

And what about sharing stuff together? What about sharing your ideas, and how you do things, and how you talk about the things of the Lord, and mostly how you give advice and counsel on how biblical truths apply, and the everyday things of life, like Deuteronomy 6-7 said, when you walk by the way, when you sit in your house, when you lay down at night, and when you rise up in the morning. Why don't we dads... And by the way, this goes for granddads and great-granddaddies. You don't retire and get through and just get to spoil your grandkids.

Now, I understand the preciousness of grandkids. No, I don't understand the preciousness of grandkids, but I've seen a lot of you act foolish about your grandkids, so I understand it must be a wonderful thing, and isn't God good? But oh, take that grandchild or that great-grandchild in your arms, and lift your eyes to heaven and say, God, would you let me teach them of your glory? Would you let me show them how wonderful you are? Would you let me show them the great wisdom of your word? And yes, play ball, and yes, go fishing, and yes, get ice cream cones, but God, help me to train my children, and my children's children, and my children's children's children to fear the Lord. Now, let's go to our second major point, and that is the thing fathers must not do.

The thing a father must not do. Paul makes it very clear here. Verse 4 of Ephesians 6. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.

The word anger here has the idea of a continual exasperation, a continual behavior or activities, words on the part of the father, this includes mom too, the father's just the one responsible, that would embitter that child's heart, that would build a resentment within that child's heart that will eventually splash over into angry outbursts and frustration. Now, I like that description because all of us fathers provoke at times. I mean, the best we can do, we're going to blow it at times and sort of provoke our children to anger, but we can avoid lifestyle patterns in our child rearing that will eventually establish such a churning hot resentment in that child's heart that they're going to overflow in anger, resentment, and rebellion.

So, we must not do that. The word provoke here literally means to push them to anger, to drive them to extremes. Charles Hodge said it this way, do not excite the bad passions of your children.

Your children are fallen sinners. I know they're precious and wonderful when they're in that little crib and you bring them home from the hospital, but you keep them six or eight months and you'll see that sin nature. They're selfish.

Anger comes naturally to them. Lying becomes natural to them. Deception is natural to them.

We fathers must make sure that we don't do things that will excite and stir up their fallen passions, which include anger. Make sure, Hodge says, your conduct does not nurture evil in the heart of your child. They've got enough evil in their heart already without us nurturing it.

Now, again, this is a revolutionary concept to the families of this day. John MacArthur states in his commentary that the families of this day were in shambles. He said it was such a state that loving fathers would have been a concept almost unheard of in this day.

For example, a father could sell his child as a slave or he could have his child killed at will. A letter written in 1 BC that historians have a copy of, a man writing to his wife said this. Heartiest greetings.

Note that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if when all others return, I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech you to take good care of the little child and as soon as we receive wages, I will send

them to you.

If, good luck to you, you have another child, if it's a boy, let it live. If it's a girl, expose it. That was common in the Roman culture.

Seneca, a renowned statesman in Rome, living at the same time that Paul wrote the letter to the church at Ephesus, said this, and I quote, We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge a knife into a sick cow, children born weak or deformed, we drown. Oppression, abuse of authority, prominent in this culture. They said the custom was that a newborn child was laid at the father's feet.

If the father picked the child up, it remained in the family, remained in the household. If he allowed it to lay at his feet, then it would be discarded. Typically, they would be set out somewhere.

These babies would be gathered up and taken to a forum in the center of town where they would be bought and sold and bartered to be slaves and or prostitutes. Bizarre, barbaric practices. About like what we have in America today when we kill about 1.5 million unborn babies every year in this country.

Well, this is the context that Paul was writing to. Deeply abusive culture, and in that culture, Paul says this revolutionary, contradictory statement. Fathers, don't provoke your children to anger.

That would have been wild, weird, strange for a father in the Roman culture to hear. So again, once again, Paul is also pointing out the beautiful biblical balance. Children still must obey their fathers, but fathers should not provoke them to rebellion.

You know, if you just throw out the concept of authority because the culture has gotten so out of balance with the use of God-ordained authority, then that in itself becomes an abuse. If a child is raised without loving, nurturing, discipline, instructions, and corrections, then that child does not know how to respond to God or know God or act respectably in the culture. That in itself is abuse.

It's not one or the other. The liberals see abuse and they go way over here and remove parental authority. Aren't you glad we've got the Word of God to give us the perfect balance? Folks, we need to live that balance and be a light to the world that God's wisdom is greater than man's wisdom.

Well, God's Word beautifully brings back to a solid balance parental authority, but parents must be the kind of parents who care, love, and nurture their children and do not provoke them to rebellion. Roman numeral 3. We talked about the thing a father must not do. That's provoke his child to anger.

Thirdly, the thing a father must do. The thing a father must do. Three points here.

First of all, from our text, he says, but bring them up. Don't provoke them to anger, but bring them up. The scholars tell us that that word bring them up means to nurture, to care for.

You bring them up. Maybe it's close to what someone would say when I was reared, you know, here in the South. I was reared down in Alabama.

Well, I'm sorry. But anyway, I was reared. So that might be a concept, but nurture is a beautiful word I like to use here.

And what he's saying, fathers, instead of provoking them to anger, nurture your children with genuine love. And see, in the Roman culture, the only father that would have that kind of loving, nurturing spirit would be

a father who has been regenerated under the preaching of the gospel. And his heart's been changed.

Jesus lives in him, and he could receive that. So the scripture says we're to nurture and nourish them, not beat them into submission. Fathers, we must not have a heavy-handed army sergeant spirit toward our children.

We're to be bringing them up, nurturing them in love. There's a place for firm discipline. Don't misunderstand me.

But we should not be marked by firm discipline, but by nurturing in love of our children. We must have love, sympathy, and compassion. And I don't know any other way to do this than to make sure we have the time and the interest in them that they need.

Boy, that's a battle in this day and age. Maybe because it will encourage some of you, I have had to really repent of that in my own life. And I have made some real changes in that.

The first 10 or 12 years of my pastorate, I gave myself to the ministry. 60, 70 hours a week was nothing. Totally gave myself to it.

And finally, God got through to my thick head one day, partly because of the gracious promptings of my wife. And God said, I didn't just call you to be a pastor, I called you also to be a father. Some of you men out there maybe are very driven like I'm driven, and very focused like I can get focused, and very committed like I can be committed.

And that's good, and that's a virtue, but there's a balance. If we're going to bring up our children in the nurture, that love and compassion and care of the Lord, we're going to have to make sure we have time and the involvement in their interest. You see, that little child comes to us helpless.

That little child comes to us in a little package, and we've got this little package in our hands. And it's like a ball of mold. You can fashion it into whatever you're going to fashion it into.

It's like a plate of silver. You can engrave rather on it what you're going to engrave on it. There must be care, and there must be control.

The first thing Paul says here, a radical statement to people of this day, but bring them up, which I paraphrase, amplify as nurture them in love. Now, number two, something that must be here is in the discipline of the Lord. So I call this correct and discipline wrong attitudes and wrong behavior.

Correct and discipline wrong attitudes and behavior. That must be there. The word discipline that Paul uses here is the word I think that King James translates chastening.

That means correction for wrongdoing, wrong attitudes, or wrong behaviors. It's the same word God uses in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 7, where in Hebrews 12, 7, he says, It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? This is God disciplines us just like earthly fathers discipline us.

Now, the key phrase in this is in the Lord. Now, see, that turned everything upside down. That turned everything on its head, or I guess probably say it turned everything back around on its feet.

That means we are people who fully trust the sufficiency of God's word in the way we discipline or correct our children. Amen? If Dr. Spock says anything that contradicts God's word, we leave off Dr. Spock. Or anybody else.

In the Lord, he says. You see, once we're saved, we're not our own. Once we're saved, he is our Lord.

And under his Lordship, we correct and we discipline the way he says to discipline for the things he says to discipline in the spirit he would do the disciplining. So it's in the Lord according to the superior wisdom of God as revealed in his word. Some time ago, there was a student that went to school and this student had an article of clothing on that's closely associated with rebellion or maybe even gangs.

And the principal of this school told the child that they, this was an older child, student, that they could not wear that at the school. It was against policy. Do you know what that child's father did? In arrogant, unchristian foolishness, he put the same article of clothing on himself and went to lunch one day daring the principal to address him about it.

That father ought to be taken out behind a barn and beaten somewhere. He ought to set his child down and said, Son, even if the rule is unreasonable in this household, we respect authority. And I love you.

I'll defend you if you're right. But son, we won't wear that in the school any longer. And furthermore, I may call the principal and thank him for enforcing good standards in this school.

You raise your children in the discipline of the Lord, not in the discipline of your small human fleshly fallen reasoning. Whatever else you teach your children, you teach your children to honor God ordained authority or you will wreck and ruin their lives. In the Lord, we say God's word is superior, not my feelings, not my attitude, not my silly little... And some of you men, can I say this lovingly, but I want to say it strongly, some of you men got the emotions of a silly little girl.

You little emotions get over here and you get over here, little emotions get over here, little emotions... Be a man of God, stand like a rock, get a backbone, look at the word of God, lovingly lead your family, but firmly lead your family on the word of God. In the Lord, he says. Is that too strong preaching? In the Lord.

Well, you know what that means? That means we're going to have to study the Bible. But I can help you a whole lot if you just come hear me preach. And that's why God calls preachers, to help fathers lead their families.

And preachers will answer for the fathers, did they really preach them the truth or tickle their ears? And then fathers will answer for their children and their wives, did I put my family in a church that really preached the truth and helped me to lead them in the Lord? And I can tell you, that's not just something I'm interested in. I am bull dogmatic committed to teach you the things of the Lord in this church. Because I want to tell you something, it's fun, it's liberating, it's joyous.

The greatest pleasure is knowing Him and His truth. It's not this burdened down drudgery. It's joy, God's word liberates.

It's a blessing. The psalmist said, it's sweeter than honey and it's more desirable than gold. I love God's truth.

Well, in the Lord, don't be like Eli. Remember Eli, 1 Samuel 3.13 says this. For I have told him that I'm about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.

His sons needed correction according to the word of God and Eli did not and so God brought a curse on the whole family and the family line. So Paul says, nurture them in love, balance with, correct them and discipline them according to God's truth. Folks, we're Christians.

The one thing we hold to is our final authority, it's God's truth. And so let's strive to discipline and correct our children according to the word of God. Of course, we could do a lot there practically, but we're not going to.

Thirdly, the thing a father must do, he says, is instruct with words. That's what it means when he says in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Instruct with words.

That instruction means just to appeal with words. That means we use the verbal communication and talking time to teach the things of the Lord. Folks, listen, listen, listen.

We have got to become God-centered in the totality of our lives. We are not people who say, well, we've got this Christian area over here and this social area over here and family life over here and school education over here and something. No, it's all like a wheel and God in Christ Jesus is the hub of the wheel and everything connects to him.

Everything we are and everything we do as husbands, wives, children, parents, employer, employee, etc. is in the Lord now. It's all about him.

You know what the world's waiting to see? A church that will model this and show the truth. That's what the world's waiting for. We instruct them based on the truths of the word of God.

As we go through everyday life, we slowly learn as fathers how biblical truths and biblical principles and biblical insights apply to all these different aspects of everyday life and we instruct in those. Not in a brow-beating, not in an arrogant know-it-all fashion, but in a humble sense that we're of the Lord and this is what our Lord teaches and says. Are you ever going to arrive, fathers? No.

Can we all keep striving and growing together? Yes. Listen to Deuteronomy 6, 6 and 7 again. And these words, that was the commandments, the Ten Commandments specifically, which I'm commanding you today shall be on your heart.

That means fathers, first get them on your heart. Then you shall teach them diligently to your sons. You should talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up in everyday life.

You teach these things. Proverbs 22, 6 is train up a child in the way he should go. And even when he's old, he will not depart from it.

We were coming home from the mountains this past week and had one of my daughters in the car with me and we were listening to some Christian music and a doctrinal truth came up. So we spent about 20 minutes talking about how conversion and true salvation includes justification but also sanctification. It's just a time to instruct with words.

I'm not saying it's always that theologically heavy. And guys, that's not very heavy. I've taught those truths over and over and over again.

These are the kind of times and the kind of things that your children need to hear fathers verbalizing. And when we instruct them right, they will repay us with rich blessings of insights and truths that will be an encouragement to us that we work through the fears and the insecurities and instructed our children in the things of the Lord. And let me say this fathers as we're giving them instructions, verbal communication about God's truth.

It's not so much the collection of facts and information, but the right attitudes and principles behind the facts and the information. About two years ago, we looked at our Sunday school literature for our children. We found it seemed to be just too heavy on learning Bible stories, learning Bible stories.

Now that's not bad, but we've switched literature so that you don't just learn the story, you learn the truth of God that's behind the story. The applicable principles concerning the Christian life behind the story. I don't want my kid just to know the facts and figures of the Bible.

I want them to know the truths behind the facts and the figures of the Bible. And this new literature does a great job to do that. Well, Roman numeral four, Paul tells us here, the father must function as a parent under God.

As a parent under God. He says there, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, emphasizes that, and here's the major point, I want to repeat this several times, that we as fathers and as parents do not present ourselves to our children that we are the final authority. We must be humble, transparent, and honest that we are men under God's authority.

And we fail and we struggle and we're going to teach them and guide them because we are men who answer to one greater than us. So we parent under God's authority. So it's of the Lord as the Lord approves and has his spirit dictates.

We want to communicate as we raise our children that we are teaching them, correcting them, nurturing them in love for the Lord's glory by the Lord's word and through the Lord's power. I don't know how many times I've said to my girls, honey, you've got to love God from your heart. It's got to be in your heart to know him and to love him.

It can't just be a collection of facts in your head. It's got to penetrate your heart. And if you love him from your heart, you'll start connecting to and receiving and wanting these teachings.

And it'll become a part of your life and God will be pleased and glorified. So Paul said in earlier verses here, he said, children, you obey in the Lord. You obey because you're under a higher authority.

Your Lord said obey your parents. And then parents are to discipline and instruct their children in the Lord because you answer to a higher authority. And we must keep telling them, but it doesn't stop with daddy.

We answer to God. We're Christians. He's our higher authority.

He's the reason, he's the center, and he's the source of the training of our children. And some years ago, I don't think it's so prominent now, but some years ago, the liberals got out this concept that you don't want to prejudice a child. You just want to be neutral and let them make their own choices.

That is ridiculous. It's awful. I want to tell you something that's like saying I'm going to plant a flower bed, but I'm not going to deal with the weeds.

I don't want to prejudice the flower bed in favor of the weeds or the flowers. If you don't do it, somebody else will. If you remain neutral, nobody else is going to remain neutral.

If you fathers are just sort of neutral and think somebody else is going to instill in your child the truths of God, it's not really going to happen. I mean, their friends are not going to be neutral. They're going to have friends come around that teach them error and sin and rebellion and ungodly things.

The infidels that some of your children will sit under at the university are not going to be neutral. They're going to pour into your children everything they can that's not of God. The drug pusher, the immoral, the bookie, the prostitute, whatever else is out there, they're not going to be neutral.

And we certainly shouldn't be neutral. Dr. Criswell said in his commentary, the streets of the city offer no diploma and no degree, but they educate with terrible precision. Don't be neutral.

Be aggressive. Be purposeful. Be diligent in instructing them in the Lord.

I found this little poem that says, You ask me why I go to church. I give my mind a careful search, because I need to breathe the air where there's an atmosphere of prayer. I need... Now notice the word need in this poem.

It's not I feel, I need. I need the hymns that churches sing. They set my faith and hope on wing.

They keep old truths and memory green, reveal the work of things unseen, because my boy is watching me to know whatever he can see that tells him what his father thinks and with his eager soul he drinks. The things I do in daily walks, the things I say in daily talks, if I with him the church will share, my son will make his friendship there. A key part, fathers, to instructing your children is making sure they're in a solid Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, and here's the key, Bible-practicing church.

That's a great asset to your work in instructing your children. Since God is God and Christ his Son is Lord, then the only possible means of profitable education is in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Do any of y'all remember old Lester Roloff, the old independent Baptist preacher? I love to listen to Lester Roloff.

They said he was legalistic, but I liked him. I just, I gotta be careful I tell you some Lester Roloff stories, but... Lester Roloff used to say that education without regeneration is an abomination. That's what Paul's saying.

For it to have really any quality, it needs to be in the Lord, of the Lord, by his truths. I'm not saying that you're in rebellion if your children go to a non-Christian school because some of the Christian schools are non-Christian in a lot of ways, but I'm saying that you have the responsibility to offset and make sure the teaching they're receiving is of the Lord and to make sure they learn to take a pitchfork and a rake to their classes. And rake some in and pitch some back out.

Because a lot that they get in those classes is not of the Lord. So the point is the parent must not, the father must not present himself as the ultimate end. We must not present ourselves as the source and possessor of authority to determine truth and duty.

We don't know truth and we don't know what's proper duty. Our God shows us from his Word. And so fathers, carry that air of humility that you are a man, now listen to this, who looks to your God in one sense with great security in the love of Jesus Christ, but let's bring back that old biblical balance of also with the holy fear and trembling of the wisdom and the awesomeness and the wonder and the glory of our God.

And parent, letting our children know we're under that authority. And we're going to instruct you and train you the best we can according to what he says. It's the greatest folly to assume to be wiser than God or to attempt to accomplish an end by means other than those which he has appointed.

Now I'm aware of our time. Can I quickly run through some conclusions for practical application on how to provoke your children to anger? These are things that if you do these, you are likely to provoke your children to anger. I'll just run through them.

Number one, overprotection. Overprotection, smothering them, never trusting them. And I know there are age-appropriate things, but you have to start trusting them, being overly restrictive, always questioning their judgment, always thinking they're up to some evil.

Watch that, fathers. Work on that in your own hearts. You can guide their wills, but you can't control their wills.

Read, talk to other fathers, look at some godly literature. We have some that will help you and make sure you're not overprotective. Secondly, favoritism.

I'll fight any small semblance or appearance of favoritism in raising your children. This leads to discouragement, resentment, withdrawal, bitterness. Remember, Jacob favored Esau, but Rebecca favored Jacob.

And they became embittered, they became rivals, and we have conflict, repercussions in our culture today from this favoritism in this family. Number three, pushing achievement beyond bounds is very likely to provoke your child to anger. It's when nothing seems to be sufficient.

No sooner does your child accomplish one goal, you're pushing another one on them. Achieve, achieve, achieve, achieve. Man, make sure your children know you love them unconditionally.

I try to pattern this behavior when I see a report card and we've seen a lot of all-A report cards. I try, man, that's great. Honey, I want you to know something.

If you made some C's and D's and that's what you could do, Daddy would love you just the same. Do the best you can. That's something that, nothing profound here, but I came up with when my girls were little.

I don't know if it'll help you. It might be an encouragement to you, but I'd be talking to them and I'd say, Honey, I want to ask you something. Does Jesus love you when you're good? Yes.

Does Jesus love you when you're bad? Yes. Does Daddy love you when you're good? Yes. Does Daddy still love you when you're bad? Yes.

But Jesus and Daddy want you to be good. Just letting them know you're not pushing some accomplishment thing in order to get your approval. Be careful that there's a balance in all of this.

MacArthur said, Parents who fantasize their achievement through the lives of their children prostitute their responsibility as parents. They don't have to be that athlete that you never were. They don't have to be that whatever that you never were.

Be careful there. Just be careful pushing achievement beyond bounds. Number four, discouraging words and actions.

We are always telling them what's wrong and you're not complimenting them. Just discipline yourself to look for those things that you can compliment every day. I had this little statement written down in my notes that probably one good pat on the back is worth 100 whacks on the behind.

Now there's a time for behind whacks. But make sure you're not discouraging. Number five, failure to sacrifice for them and make them feel unwanted.

This one really spoke to my heart. When you are busy with important things and man when you pastor church you just, oh this is so important. Make sure they don't feel like they're an intrusion.

That they're in the way of you and your wife's projects or plans or plans for your life. Making them feel like they're interfering. Something that I've tried to do through the years is when I'm in my study and some of you know me well enough to know and know preachers well enough to know that when I'm studying, when my mind's on it, I'm a total zombie.

I mean, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said one day on the way to this pulpit, he introduced himself to his wife. I can understand that. It just gets in you.

But that's no excuse. And I've tried to make a practice that when one of my girls walks in my study, no matter how ingrained, I will stop and give them some attention and make them feel welcome. You're not an intrusion.

You're my daughter. Wish I could say I've been perfect at that. But I've been a lot better than I would have had I not made that commitment.

Number six, using love as a tool of reward or punishment. Folks, as Christians, we just love. We never use love as a tool.

We just love. Amen. For example, in Hebrews 12, 6, the Bible says, for those whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

Those whom the Lord loves. So it's all love, and then you discipline sometimes in love. It's all love, and you compliment and encourage and bless and console in love.

It's always love, but you never use love. Oh, what a cruel thing. You are so unlike Christ.

If your child feels like, I'm not loved if I don't behave certain ways. I want my children to know no matter what you do, you will be loved. I may have to discipline or correct, but you'll be loved.

Number seven, our last one. You can provoke your children to anger if you withhold appropriate discipline. Someone said one time that a child without discipline in his life is like going over a bridge without any side rails.

I don't know how many hundreds of times I've crossed O'Neill Bridge. And I've never one time bounced my car off the rail in order to stay on the bridge. But if you told me this afternoon they're removing all the guard rails from O'Neill Bridge, I'm never going over it again.

It's just something about needing that security. You need to know there's lines and there's parameters. And a child interprets those parameters and that proper discipline as security and love.

And when you're real wishy-washy or if you make up the rules as you go along where they don't know where the rails are, it's insecurity. They need to know from the word of God you've established things and this is how our family functions and this is how we're going to work. One of my girls was talking to a friend one day and there was an activity that they were all going to do.

And one of my girls said, well, you know, I'm not going to be able to do that. My parents are not going to allow me to do that. And one of her friends looked at her and said, you know what? I wish my parents would tell me I couldn't do some things.

They let me do anything I want to do. She felt unloved because she didn't have proper disciplines and boundaries in her life. And one day a child will resent you for that if you don't do that.

Isn't God's word good? The preceding message comes from the Expository Preaching Ministry of Senior Pastor Teacher Dr. Jeff Knoblett. For more information or other materials that are available, contact Anchored in Truth Ministries at www.anchoredintruth.org or call us toll free at 1-800-565-PRAY.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18969.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jeff-noblit/ephesians-christian-parenting-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net