

Fathers, Bring Up Your Children Aright

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of parents, particularly fathers, in bringing up children in the ways of God. It highlights the biblical examples of Eli's failure to discipline his sons, the impact of a mother's godly upbringing on Timothy, and the responsibility fathers have in instructing their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The sermon stresses the significance of respecting authority, teaching children to honor parents, and training them from a young age to follow God's ways, with a strong emphasis on fathers fulfilling their role in this crucial task.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:11, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Hebrews 12:7, 1 Timothy 3:4, Psalm 58:3, Exodus 4:24, Matthew 19:14, Colossians 3:20, Proverbs 29:15

Topics: "Parental Responsibility", "Godly Upbringing"

Description

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Transcript

In the new covenant especially, there's a great emphasis placed on the way we bring up our children. It's not that it was ignored in the old covenant. Let me just share a few passages of scripture with you.

In 1 Samuel and chapter 3, 1 Samuel chapter 3, the Lord, verse 10, the Lord came and spoke to Samuel, who was a little boy, and he said to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3, 11, I'm about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears it tingle. In that day, I'll carry out against Eli all that I've spoken concerning his house from beginning and it is a things concerning judgment, because I have told him that I'm about to judge his house forever. Eli was the high priest, the top person, you know, like a senior elder, we would say, in Israel.

And I'm going to judge his house forever because of the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. Therefore, I've sworn to the house of Eli that the sin of Eli's house will never be atoned by sacrifice or offering. And notice it says here, he did not rebuke his sons.

But if you turn back to chapter 2 and verse 22, Eli was very old and he heard how all his sons were doing in Israel, how they were lying with the women and the doorway of the meeting. And they were, earlier on you read, they were grabbing the sacrifice, the meat and taking it home for themselves. And this is how he rebuked them in verse 23 of chapter 2. Why do you do these such things? The evil things I hear from these people.

No, my sons, this report is not good, which I hear the Lord's people circulating. If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him. But if one man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him? Why? You call that a rebuke? And God listened to that and said, you did not rebuke your children.

That's the way some fathers correct their children. Their children grow up wayward. God is kind and strict.

And a father has to represent God to his children. And in Romans 11, 22, it says, look, behold, whenever you read behold, it means look carefully. Look carefully at the kindness and the severity of God.

God is the perfect father. An example of what a father should be. It's not the mother's job primarily to discipline the children.

It's the father's job. And if the father is a total failure, then the mother has to do it. It's like, usually it's the father who earns the living for the house.

But if the father is paralyzed and sick, the mother has to go to work. And so if the father is spiritually paralyzed and useless, not fulfilling his job as a father, then the mother has to do the matter of discipline. But then whether it's father or mother, it's the kindness and severity of God that is our example.

And in, you know, from Timothy's case, for example, his father was a Greek businessman who was probably only interested in making money. And Timothy was brought up by his mother, who initially had backslidden and gone away from God. And that's why she married a Greek, which is completely against the law.

But she repented of that and decided, okay, if I fail, it's okay, but I'm going to bring up my son in a godly way. And what a fantastic job she did single-handedly without the help of her husband to bring up her son in such a good way that by the time he was around 20 years old, the apostle Paul, of all people, selected him to be his co-worker. That'd be a great honor for any mother.

The greatest apostle would select your son to be his co-worker. So you see that a mother single-handedly can do a great job when the father fails. But it's very important to bring up our children in God's ways.

In fact, in the New Testament, it says, with an elder brother. If you're before an appointing an elder, Paul told Timothy, you're familiar with that verse. For those who are not familiar, 1 Timothy chapter 3, he's giving him the qualities of an elder.

And 1 Timothy 3, an overseer or an elder must be a person above reproach. Means there should be nothing in his life that people can find fault with, that outsiders can say, hey, this thing is wrong in this guy's life. There must be no reproach.

And then immediately it goes into the family life. He must be the husband of one wife. That means he should not be a divorced person.

A divorced person cannot be an elder in a new covenant church. And it says in verse 4, this elder must be one who manages his own family well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. That means, I'm talking now about children who are at home, not children who have grown up and gone away from home.

But when the children are at home, he must be able to keep them under control with all dignity. And if he's not able to do that, he's not fit to be an elder. Paul told Timothy, never make a man an elder who cannot keep his children under control.

Because if he can't take care of three or four children at home, how in the world will he take care of a hundred people in the church? He'd be a total failure. So now in the old covenant, there was no such requirement. Moses didn't have a great family life.

The only thing we worry about Moses and his wife was in Exodus 4, they were fighting with each other. And his children, we don't know anything about how they grew up. And Samuel, his children were absolutely wayward when they grew up.

But that was not a condition in the Old Testament. So Samuel and Moses could be prophets. Eli's condition wasn't so much worse.

That's why God removed him. But Samuel and Moses continued to be prophets, even though Samuel's children were wayward. But in the new covenant, it's different.

The standard is higher to whom God has given more, more will be required. So we cannot look at the example of Samuel's children and say, well, what to do? No, we have more in the sense that we have the Holy Spirit to help us. And so we are told in Hebrews in chapter 12, that God is a father.

And it says here in Hebrews 12 and verse 7, God, it's for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? Look at that question the Holy Spirit says.

Where do you find a son whom his father does not discipline? Well, today we have to say, unfortunately, there are lots of them like that. But that's the question the Holy Spirit asks. And in Ephesians 6, you know, it's very interesting to see the contrasts here.

In Ephesians 5, verse 22, to chapter 6, verse 9, you read about family life. And in those days, families included husband, wife, parents, children, and servants in the home. Almost every home had a servant.

Like in India, for example, almost every home is a servant. So true servants are part of the family. In those days, slaves, they were part of the family.

They lived there. We don't have slaves in India, but people would come and go as servants. But here, notice it says, this is how wives must behave, verse 22.

And this is how husbands must behave, Ephesians 5, verse 25. And then it says, this is how children must behave towards their parents, verse chapter 6, verse 1. But then it does not say after that how parents must treat their children. No.

It says how fathers must bring up their children. Mothers are left out completely. Wives, husbands, husbands, wives.

Children, parents, but fathers and children. I hope you noticed that difference. Then it goes on to slaves and masters and masters and slaves.

It's only in this one place where you see a difference. Both parents are not included. Which teaches us that the primary responsibility for bringing up children is the fathers.

And he sets the pattern in the house. What must a father do? He must bring up his children, verse 4, chapter 6, verse 4, in the discipline of the Lord and the instruction of the Lord. Who's to teach children the word of God? Not the church Sunday school.

No. Unfortunately, many Christian parents leave it to the Sunday school to teach their children. They are disobeying the word of God.

My children went to Sunday school when they were small, but I did not expect the Sunday school to teach them. I taught them the word of God. I questioned them on the scriptures at home.

And that is the responsibility of the father. And so don't ever relegate that responsibility to the Sunday school. It's very, very important because I see so many Christian homes where the father is a total failure when it comes to instructing his children.

You don't have to be a great Bible teacher. You just got to read the scriptures with them and explain to them what it means. And every father, if you're not doing it, those of you who are parents, if you fathers are not doing it, I want to say to you, you're living in direct disobedience to the word of God.

If you're making your wife do it, you're disobeying God's word. If your wife does it, that is in addition to what you do. That's great.

Mothers must also do it, but that's not to take the place of the father. So as I said, sisters, if your husband is a dead loss, then you're going to do it. But I hope you fathers will take God's command seriously.

Fathers, it's a command of God. And Jesus says, if you love me, keep my commandments. Bring up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

You have to instruct them in God's word, in God's ways, and not just teach them the Bible stories, but the ways of the Lord, but uprightness, not cheating in examinations, speaking respectfully to father and mother, very, very important. That's where they learn to submit to authority. Remember, the first sin in the universe was a lack of submission to authority.

That's why Lucifer became a devil. So we want to save our children from that terrible sin. And so we've got to teach them, be subject to your parents and honor your father and mother.

And if ever your children do not speak respectfully to parents, they must be immediately pulled up and asked to apologize to their father or mother or whoever they spoke disrespectfully to, and only then proceed to do something else. Even if the other thing is very important, it must wait. Because more important is speak respectfully to parents, obey them as long as they're in the home, and teach them never to tell a lie, because children are born liars.

The Bible says that in Psalm 58, from birth they tell lies. And if your children continue to tell lies as they grow up, it's because you did not correct them. Don't take lying lightly, it's serious.

Don't take disrespect to authority, that's serious. You must teach them respect for authority when they go to school, respect for authority in society, and begins with learning to respect authority at home, father and mother. And I believe our homes must be great examples of children who are respectful to their parents.

That when others see them, we're not here to put our children up as sort of demonstration to others, but it's a bad testimony for a home where children are disrespectful to the parents. And that's what other people see. You know, we have a witness.

The Bible says, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. So our light, our witness to others is important as a family. And one important part of our witness is a family's husband-wife relationship and the way our children behave.

Very, very important. And I've noticed from observing many churches now in the last nearly 50 years, that people sometimes make an excuse, oh brother Zach, what to do, some children are like that, they're born like that. That's a lot of nonsense.

Because I've noticed one thing, in some families, all the children are disrespectful and do not speak respectfully to their parents. And some other families, all the children are respectful and speak respectfully to their parents. Why is that? That's got nothing to do with the odd child being disrespectful, that some children are different.

It's got 100% to do with the way those parents brought them up. And it's a, the light must shine brightly, and it's a very important thing. And I'm not saying this to condemn anybody.

You see, the sad thing in Christendom today is that many preachers are afraid to speak the truth firmly, because they say, oh, these people will feel condemned. Well, if they are disobedient, they need to feel convicted, not condemned. And if they don't feel convicted, something is wrong, you'll just let them go astray.

Jesus spoke more strongly than anybody else. Do you know in the Bible, nobody spoke about hell, going to hell as much as Jesus, because he knew what hell was like. And I hear very few preachers speaking about hell today.

They don't love like Jesus. That's why they don't speak about hell. That's why so many people go to hell.

So we want to save our children from that. So here is a command and a promise. I'll conclude with this.

Proverbs 22. Here is the command. The first part is a command.

The second part is a promise from God. If you do the first part, God will do the first, second part. It's like a contract.

When you sign a contract with a reliable person, if you've done fulfilled your part of the contract, that person will fulfill his part of the contract. So here is your part of the contract. Train up a child, Proverbs 22.6, in the way he should go.

Not when he's 10, 12 years old. Train him up from the age of one, even before children learn to speak. I've learned through many years of watching from my own children and grandchildren that the first, that one word that all children will understand at the age of one is the word no.

When they're planning to do something which is wrong or which is going to hurt them and you say no, they learn that meaning of that word pretty quickly and you can test it out. I believe that even a one-year-old can learn that. It's probably one of the first words in the English language, in any language that they need to learn, the word no.

You're not permitted to do that. So train up a child in the way he should go. Whose responsibility is that? Don't pray, Lord, bring up my children properly.

Don't, Lord, please let my children be wholehearted. God will do his part if you do your part. It's a contract.

And if you don't, if you sign a contract with somebody and you don't fulfill your part and you wonder why the other person didn't fulfill his part, it's because you didn't fulfill yours. So here's your part. Train up your child in the way he should go.

And here is God's guarantee, guarantee, better than the guarantee you can get from any company for any product you buy. When he is old, he will not depart from it. And I don't want you to condemn yourself that when he's old means when he's 10 years old.

No, I think he's referring to when he's really old and the Bible, let's say when he's 30 years old, he will not depart from it. So I read it like this. If you train up your child in the way he should go, as long as he's at home, very often he's at home only for about 18 years.

When he's grown up and he's 30 years old, he will not depart from God's ways. And one of the classic examples of that in the Bible is Moses, who was brought up by his mother almost single-handedly because the father was a slave at work all the time, morning till night. The mother brought up Moses.

Just the few years she had him at home for seven or eight years. And when he grew up at the age of 40, he stood for God. He refused the riches of Egypt.

He refused the simple pleasures of Egypt. He stood with God's people. It's a tremendous testimony of an Old Testament mother.

Moses' mother and Timothy's mother are two outstanding examples of those whose fathers were not available to help their children and did a great job. But how much more we can do for our children if both father and mother are converted and they can bring up their children in God's ways, I pray. Because I tell you one thing, it's my great burden.

God needs generation after generation of godly people who will stand for him. And if you're standing for him in your generation, I want to ask you, who in your family is going to stand for God in the next generation? Nobody. And if the second generation in your family nobody's going to stand for the Lord, how in the world will anybody stand for the Lord in the third generation? So it's a question of whether you love Jesus and love his testimony and love his church and you want the church to continue powerfully standing for the truth in the second generation and third generation.

For that reason, for the glory of God, bring up your children in the fear of God. I say that to every one of you, especially to those whose children we're going to dedicate now.

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