

# Fathers, Train Up Your Children

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of raising children in the fear of God, drawing examples from the dedication of Jesus and the faith of Moses' parents. It highlights the responsibility of parents to instill values, discipline, and the word of God in their children, urging fathers to take the lead in this role. The sermon stresses the need for a balance of kindness and severity in parenting to ensure children grow up to honor the Lord's name.*

**Scripture:** Luke 2:22, Hebrews 11:23, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Malachi 4:5, Hebrews 12:7, Romans 11:22

**Topics:** "Parenting in Faith", "Responsibility of Fathers"

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## Description

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## Transcript

You know that it is always a great joy for us as a church to pray for children because that's the next generation and we need to take care of them right from the time they are children so they don't go astray, particularly in the world in which we live with so many bad influences. Any parent who is careless is going to lose his child, without a doubt. So, there is no command to dedicate children.

There is a command to baptize. There is a command to break bread. Those are the only two commandments Jesus gave in relation to any external rituals.

But the reason we dedicate a child is because Jesus was dedicated as a baby as we read in Luke chapter 2 and it says in the last part of verse 22 they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. So, even Jesus was sinless, holy, son of God. As a baby they brought him to those days to the temple to present him to the Lord and from that day onwards Mary and Joseph were careful to take care of him and bring him up.

That's an example for us. I want to show you an example also in Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews 11 and verse 23.

Here it speaks of the faith of Moses' parents which saved him when he was a child. If Moses' parents did not have faith, Moses would never have existed. Because there was a law at that time, the king of Egypt, the pharaoh was afraid that the men in Israel were becoming stronger and they would overthrow the Egyptian kingdom.

So he ordered that all the male children should be killed as soon as they are born. But we read in Hebrews 11.23 that Moses' parents did not kill him. They hid him for three months because they had faith that there was some purpose God had for this child.

I don't know how they had that. It says here, they saw the child was a beautiful child. Now I don't know what that means.

Was he very handsome, good looking, fair? I don't know. But I think they saw in their heart this is a beautiful child in God's eyes. I don't know whether you see all your children as beautiful children.

It's very important to see our children as beautiful children. And we will want to preserve them and bring them up in God's ways. And that's what they did.

And they were not afraid of the king's edict. And they hid the child. And you know how they kept the child in a basket and put it into the river and the child was protected.

But then we read that when Moses grew up, here's again something that you see the parents did. Verse 24, when Moses grew up, there were three things he refused. And those are the three things today we teach Christians to refuse.

One is the honor of the world to be known as Pharaoh's daughter. And the second is the pleasures of sin, verse 25. And the third is the wealth of the world, verse 26.

So those are the three things we urge people today, right? Reject the honor of this world. Reject the pleasures of sin. And stop worshipping money.

And here Moses, he didn't have a Bible or anything. How did he learn this need to reject these three things? I'll tell you. There's a verse in the Old Testament that explains it.

Turn with me to Proverbs 22. I don't know whether all of us parents are training our children to reject these three things when they grow up. There are many pleasures in the world we can enjoy.

The pleasure of ice cream, the pleasure of playing sports. But the pleasures of sin is another thing altogether. We can use money, but we are not to be enslaved to worship money.

Proverbs 22 and verse 6 is the answer. Train up a child in the way he should go. And when he's old, like when Moses was 40 years old, he will not depart from it.

He did not learn to hate the pleasures of sin in Pharaoh's palace. He did not learn to reject the treasures of Egypt in Pharaoh's palace or the honor of this world. He learned it when he was a child.

Pharaoh's daughter told Moses' mother, bring him to me when you have weaned him. I don't know how long Moses' mother had him. Maximum seven years.

Because Pharaoh's daughter didn't want a child who could not be told what to do. So maximum seven years or probably less. But in those years, every time the mother saw that child, she knew, I'm not going to have him forever.

I'm only going to have him for a very short time and then he's going to go out into a wicked world. And I better put some values into his head now, into his heart. So that he will keep them in mind when he grows up.

You also are not going to have your child forever in your home. Sooner or later he'll leave your home. And you can bind him with many rules when he's in the home or she or he.

But once they leave the home, what they do depends on the values you put inside their heart. And this is true. It works both ways.

You train up a child in a way, careless way. When he's old, he will go in that careless way. You train up a child in a godly way.

When he's old, he'll go in that godly way. And that's a promise. That's a condition.

Train up a child in the way it should go, in God's promises. When he's old, he will not depart from it. That does not mean that he won't have a little up and down experience.

When they come from childhood to teenage years, they go through a little period of tension. Because they think they have become adults and they are still children. But those are the years when you must love them.

Embrace them. Encourage them. So that they come through that difficult period.

The teenage years and the early twenties are a difficult period for many children. Not all. Some find it difficult to go through that.

But if you love them and care for them and encourage them that period, they will come through. And they will not, as they grow up, they will not depart from what they learned in their childhood. So I don't know.

Moses, when he was 40, he did not depart from what his parents told him. And the responsibilities with the parents. And I want to show you another verse, especially in relation to the last days.

It's the last verse of the Old Testament. Malachi chapter 4. Malachi 4, verses 5 and 6. I'm going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. That is the church.

The last day prophet. The Elijah who came before Christ's first coming was John the Baptist. Jesus said that.

And the Elijah who is going to come before the last day and before the second coming of the Lord is the church. The body of Christ. One person.

The new man, Christ. In the spirit of Elijah. And what he's going to do, especially in the last days, is going to be a tremendous attack by Satan on families.

John the Baptist, the first Elijah, his message was repent. Repent and be baptized. Repent and be baptized.

Because that was the need of that time. The message of the second Elijah, preparing people for the second coming of the Lord, is not primarily repent and be baptized, but to the church. Fathers, turn your hearts towards your children.

And then the children will turn their hearts towards their fathers. Where a child fails to grow up in a godly way, the fault is 100% with the father. Because the Bible says that fathers are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6, verse 4. It doesn't say parents. Very important to understand that. Both parents are responsible.

But if the father is the head of the home, it's very clear. See, always the contrast is, let me show that to you. Ephesians 5, verse 22.

Wives, subject to your husbands. 25, husbands love your wives. So, wives, husbands, husbands, wives.

And then in chapter 6, verse 5. Slaves, you are obedient to your masters. Verse 9, masters to slaves. So, you see, it's exact opposite.

Husband and wife, wife and husband. Master and slave, slave and master. But when it comes to parents and children, you see the difference.

Verse, chapter 6, verse 7. Children obey your parents, and then it's not parents, it's fathers. You notice that difference? Verse 4. You think it should be parents. Don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

No. God puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the head of the father. So, dear brothers, don't blame your wife if your child goes astray.

If your son is not serious about following the Lord, your daughter is not serious about following the Lord, they drift away from the church, they want to go somewhere else, and do things contrary to the Lord. You ask yourself whether you have obeyed Ephesians 6, verse 4. Did you teach them the instruction of the Lord? Did you teach them the scriptures? Did you make sure that they knew the Bible? It's possible. If you urge them and speak about it, when you sit around the dining table, don't ease yourself by saying they go to church.

Church is not the place. It doesn't say churches bring up the children. No.

I never believe that my children should be brought up by Sunday school teachers. No. It was my responsibility as a father.

I believe that. I've made sure that they knew the scriptures before they left the home. And not just the knowledge of scripture, but the principles of scripture.

And it's very important that all of you fathers take that responsibility. Don't dump that responsibility on your wives. Just like you take the responsibility to earn the income.

And don't dump that responsibility on your wife. It's a lazy father who tells his wife to go to work and earn the money. And he sits at home doing nothing.

And it's a lazy father who dumps the spiritual responsibility on the wife and the mother. And says bring up the children. And does nothing himself.

Now when the children are small, you may not know. Drift is not seen so easily. But if you have not instilled those values into them, when they are grown up, 18 years old, 20 years old, you'll find.

They're not going to listen to you. And when they go away from home, they'll bring great dishonor to the Lord and great sorrow to your heart. So learn from Moses' mother that it is possible to instill values into your child's heart when it is very young.

In such a way that even when he's 40 years old and grows up in the most wicked, sinful, rich palace like Pharaoh's palace, he can still stand for the Lord. Even though it means suffering like Moses suffered. It's a tremendous example.

Timothy's father was just a businessman interested in money. What do you do when the father is absolutely irresponsible like that? Then the mother has to take over. So, sisters, if your husband is an absolutely irresponsible, good for nothing, useless husband who just earns money but teaches nothing of scripture to his children, that's a useless, irresponsible father, then I'm sorry to say, sisters, you have to take that responsibility.

Say, Lord, my husband is absolutely irresponsible in teaching the scriptures to my children, so what do I do? I have to do it. Then God will help you. But I feel sorry how God will judge those fathers who produced children and brought them into the world and never cared to bring them up in the fear of God.

So take that seriously. They're not only the instruction of the Lord, but the discipline of the Lord. Discipline is not the type of discipline worldly people have.

They get angry and they hit their child. I don't mean that. It says the discipline of the Lord.

The Lord disciplines His children and He always disciplines in love because He wants the good of that child. And there's not a single child that can be without discipline. I've seen, I remember one case of a young man who used to come here and he got married and left now.

But I remember, I think I met his, his father was a nominal Christian. And one of the things his father told me was, I never disciplined my child. He was such a good child and I would always discuss with him.

Imagine discussing with a four-year-old or five-year-old. That's the best way to ruin him. And the result of it was, when this young, this boy grew up and came as a young man, very educated.

And came here, studied and got a degree and was attending CFC for years. Went completely astray. Turned against CFC and all because, he's never come back.

For years and years and years. He, all because the father said he didn't discipline his child. I saw that before my own eyes.

The result of a father not disciplining his child. He had religion, plenty of religion. He could quote scripture and all that.

But he could never fit into any church. He went from here to another church and never fitted in there. And there was great sorrow in his home.

But it says here in Hebrews 12, see this sentence. Listen to the word of God. Hebrews 12, 7. When you are disciplined, God deals with you as with sons.

Because, this is the question I want you to answer. What child is there whom his father does not discipline? Today I say Lord, I'll show you many children like that. But in those days the question was, which child is there who his father does not discipline? Unfortunate.

The Holy Spirit says, is there a child who the father does not discipline? Even Almighty God who is a perfect loving father disciplines his children. If you have heard only encouraging, comforting words from the Lord, I'll tell you, you have not heard God at all. If you really heard God speak to you, you will not only hear comforting and encouraging words, but you'll hear words of rebuke.

I've heard some strong words of rebuke from the Lord. And it's made me sit up and do something about it. And if you read the scriptures and you only get comforting and encouraging words, I want to say you're imagining that God is speaking to you.

If God is really speaking to you, you will hear comforting words and you'll hear strong words of rebuke because he's not like these useless earthly fathers who don't discipline their children. He's a loving father who disciplines his children. So let's follow God's example.

And then, look at the word he uses here. Let me read earlier on. Verse 5, the last part.

My son, Hebrews 12, 5, don't regard lightly the discipline of the Lord. Don't faint when he reproves you. Do you ever get such a reproof from the Lord that you almost faint? Don't faint because the Lord disciplines only those whom he loves.

He does not discipline those who are not his children. You don't discipline those who are not your children. God does not discipline those who are not his children.

I mean, they may suffer a lot of problems because they live in sin, but it's not God's discipline. But see what God does. See this verse, verse 6. He scourges every son of Mary.

Do you know what a scourge is? A scourge is a leather thong. The closest equivalent we have is the belt which you wear around your pants, your trousers. God uses a belt on his children.

I followed the Lord's example myself. I found it here. He uses a belt on every single son whom he receives.

And if you're a good father, you will do the same as the Lord has done on every child God has given you. And then you can have a guarantee from God. When he's old, he will not only depart from the ways of the Lord, he'll bring credit to the Lord's name and credit to your name.

But if you're soft, then you're trying to be holier than God and you can suffer for that. We need to have that balance of grace and truth, of the kindness and severity of God. Turn to Romans chapter 11.

Two characteristics of God that every father and mother should have. Romans chapter 11 and verse 22. Behold then.

The word behold means look carefully. Look very carefully. Have you done that? At the kindness and the severity of God.

You can see that in the Old Testament. If you read the Old Testament prophecies and the Old Testament histories and all those books. I hope you read them.

You will see that the kindness and the severity of God through his prophets and through the way he dealt with Israel. And you can see it in the New Testament too. The kindness and the severity of God.

That balance. It's only the Holy Spirit can help us to maintain that balance. So, it's not only kindness, it's not only severity.

And it's a wonderful thing that God gives parents so that there's a balance. You know, maybe one parent alone cannot manage this. So then God gives another parent as well.

So there's a, between the two, there should be a balance of kindness and severity. I mean, if you're not spiritual enough to have kindness and severity yourself, then at least with your wife or your husband, there should be a balance between the two of you of kindness and severity. That's the only way to ensure that your children grow up in the fear of God.

Otherwise, whichever church you go to, you can be part of CFC, your children will grow up to disgrace the name of the Lord. Forget about you getting a bad name. Many times parents are thinking, what do people think of me in CFC? My children are all gone astray.

Forget what people think of you. Your name is worth nothing. Throw it in the garbage.

Think of Jesus' name being disgraced by the way your children are behaving or living. That's the thing that should concern you. So if you have that concern, and your first prayer in your heart is for your children is our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Not my name. Hallowed be your name. You ask yourself, if your child is going astray, if some of your children are going astray, or they're not really following the Lord, ask yourself, please ask yourself honestly, are you concerned what people are thinking about you as a father or mother? Or are you concerned about the Lord's name being dishonored? And very often if you're honest, you will discover that you're concerned that people are thinking about you.

Oh, look at that brother. Look how his children are. Forget it.

When the Lord sees you're more concerned about your name, he may not help you. But if you stop praying that and saying, I say our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, I tell you many, many believers, their prayer is hallowed be my name. Don't let my name be dishonored by my children.

Forget it. I don't care. Don't let the Lord's name be dishonored.

Make that your prayer and you may find that God answers your prayer for your children. Start praying the way the Lord taught us to pray. Hallowed be your name.

And all these children who are coming up now to be dedicated, I want to tell you parents, pray that prayer. Lord, let your name be hallowed and honored and respected the way when my child grows up. Okay.

Parents, please come forward quickly, all of you whose names are called out. Can you come up here one by one? Hey, can you give me a mic?

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