

“Raising Children”
Ephesians 6:4
(Preached at Trinity, December 27, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In these verses Paul is addressing duties regarding the family. As we've seen since **Verse 21** of the previous chapter, the Gospel has a transforming effect upon every human relationship. We can see it most clearly demonstrated in the family. **Verses 1-4** speak of the parent child relationship. First Paul addresses children - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Children have a duty to honor their parents. But parents have a high responsibility for their children.
2. In **Verse 4** Paul addresses the duty of parents towards their children. Both mothers and fathers have a responsibility for the proper care and training of their children. But as we've seen, the man is the head of the home.
3. Paul gives a two-fold charge:
Do not exasperate your children or provoke them to anger.
Train them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
4. So far our I've directed your attention to the first:
"do not provoke your children to anger"
Paul is using this expression to describe bringing a child to exasperation or frustration. Such a condition will lead a child to discouragement that leads to anger. You have great power over your children. But this power must never be abused. Your actions can frustrate them, discourage them, and provoke them to anger. Your great duty as their parents is to gain their heart. This takes great wisdom and grace as you raise them to maturity. I set before you 10 different ways you can exasperate your children or as Paul says, "Provoke them to anger." There are many more that we could consider. They all reflect a failure in some aspect of parenting.
So Paul sets before us the second aspect of this verse.
5. As we come to the second aspect of this verse our attention is this matter of training up our children. Paul puts it by way of contrast: "Do not provoke your children to anger but rather train them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
6. This morning I want to us to continue to look at the weighty matter of parenting.
 - A. You decided to have children. It is a weighty matter. You have brought an eternal soul into the world. It is a wonderful privilege to train them.
 1. The Christian women of the early church saw raising children an honor
 - a. This was a period when the marriage bond was very lax and men and women changed partners with great frequency. Children were often seen as a misfortune.

- c. instruction - *νουθεσία* – refers to instruction. It is the noun form of the Greek verb that refers to exhortation or admonishment.
As their parent you owe your children training – secular and spiritual, all from a Christian biblical perspective.
Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NAU - "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
8. Paul is saying that as parents you have the duty to provide for your children physically and spiritually and bring them to maturity under the disciplines and doctrines of Christ.
9. As we consider Paul's instruction I want us to consider several points.
- I. Raising children is about guiding the heart – All three of these parental responsibilities must be directed towards the heart.
- A. Raising children is about training them in Godliness – it's a heart matter.
Richard Baxter wrote of the importance of giving great attention to the spiritual instruction of your children.
"Though learning is found in schools, godliness is more often received from the education of careful parents. When children and servants come to the church with understanding, godly, prepared minds, the labors of the pastor will do them good; they will receive what they hear with faith, love, and obedience. It will be a joy to the minister to have such a flock; and it will be joyful to the people that are such to meet together in the sacred assemblies [and] to worship God with cheerful hearts. Such worshippers will be acceptable to God. But when families come together in gross ignorance with unsanctified hearts, there they sit like images, understanding little of what is said. [They] go home little the better for all the labors of the minister."
1. How do you view the Lord's Day? How do you view worship? What value do you place upon preaching?
 2. Do you prepare your children for worship?
Their souls are at stake
- B. Raising children is about guiding, training, shaping and nurturing their hearts. The goal is for them to turn their hearts to you and to God.
There is a close relationship between the words *discipline* and *disciple*.
1. This is the goal of Godly parenting – to gain the hearts of our children and for their hearts to be given to Christ.
 2. We want our children to give their hearts to both their earthly father and their Heavenly Father.
 3. This is a far greater work than just controlling their behavior.
 - a. This is a work of training—of shaping hearts.
Proverbs 22:6 NAU - "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it."
 - b. The word for "train" can also be translated "dedicate"
Training children demands shaping their heart and thus making it dedicated to the right path—not in the way it *would* go but in the way it *should* go.

4. The hearts of our children are corrupted by sin.
 - a. To simply restrain them does not deal with the sin. Discipline must deal with the heart
Proverbs 22:15 NAS - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
 - b. God deals with our heart in conversion. He captures our heart. This is the great distinction between the Law and Gospel. The Law cannot make us Godly because it cannot change our heart. The Gospel alone has the power of God's transforming grace. The Gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation.
 5. The wise parent recognizes heart issues
 - a. Screaming in anger at a sibling is really no different than striking them. Can you see the problem is the heart?
 - b. Words of disrespect to the parent reveal a sinful and rebellious heart
 - c. Fighting off efforts to spank reveal a stubborn and unrepentant heart.
- C. The Bible provides parents with instruction for raising their children. It provides parents with wisdom to impart to their children. Do a search of the "my son" passages in Proverbs. For example:
- Proverbs 1:8-10 NAU** - "Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; ⁹ Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck. ¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent."
- Proverbs 2:1-5 NAU** - " My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, ² Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; ³ For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; ⁴ If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God."
- Proverbs 3:1-2 NAU** - "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."
- Proverbs 6:20-23 NAU** - "My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother; ²¹ Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. ²² When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you. ²³ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life"

- II. This "bringing up" of children begins at birth
 Charles Bridges – "The gardener begins to graft in the first rising of sap. If the crooked shoots of self-will and disobedience are not cut off, their rapid growth and rapidly growing strength will greatly increase the future difficulty of bending them. We may begin our work too late, but we can scarcely begin it too soon. Never let the watchfulness to check the buddings of evil be relaxed, and to cherish the first tenderness of right feeling."

- A. From the beginning a well-ordered home should be a priority
1. Children thrive in an atmosphere of structure
 - They should immediately be put on a schedule – set times of feeding, sleeping, etc. This structure should continue.
 - Children feel secure when they know what to expect
 - Consistency is at the heart of effective child training
 2. We must take advantage of the tender hearts of their youth. Our hearts only grow harder when left to our own sinful inclinations. It is hard to shepherd a heart long hardened by sin. It is foolish to think you can wait until they are 3 or 4 to begin the process of **Verse 4**
- B. Children should be given clear expectations of behavior with clear expectations of censure for failing to meet those expectations.
1. It is wrong to punish a child when he hasn't been given a clear rule. This is one of the dangers warned about here and in Colossians **Ephesians 6:4 NAU** - "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"
Colossians 3:21 NAS - "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart."
 2. It is also wrong to allow a child to disregard a rule without consequence. First time obedience is a must; otherwise, children know they can disobey at least once and get away with it.
 3. God's Law gives us both a clear standard as well as a clear penalty
You must always be honest and fair.
 4. Parents should also encourage good behavior by example.
1 Thessalonians 2:11 NAU just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children.
 5. Teach them what the Bible says good behavior looks like and praise them when they are obedient. We want to teach children that godliness is as much about who we are as it is about who we are not.
- III. The matter of corporal punishment – as I pointed out last time, the misapplication of rod of discipline will exasperate our children.
- A. Spanking is sanctioned by God
Ephesians 6:4 NAU - "but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
discipline - παιδεία – refers to proper discipline and training. You owe your children stable and consistent discipline and correction.
Proverbs 22:15 NAU - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
Proverbs 29:15 NAU - "The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."
1. Make sure the offense is clearly known and make them acknowledge the offense. The goal is compliance.
 2. It should be done in private – you are not trying to embarrass or shame your child. Even though they are small you should respect their dignity

3. Spanking should never be in anger. It must never be extreme or abusive. It should never be abusive but sufficient to be a matter of dread to the child. It should be intentional and measured.
- B. Spanking is not the only form of discipline
1. Not every child is the same and not every child responds the same to spanking. **Hebrews 12** compared God's discipline with our earthly fathers **Hebrews 12:9-10 NAS** - " Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness." God's "rod" of discipline takes many forms.
 2. We are dealing with issues of the heart. Sometimes other forms of correction are more effective. The issue is teaching the child of the offense. Perhaps kneeling in the corner or sitting alone for a season.
 3. Often a verbal reproof is sufficient – provided the parent has the respect of the child and his authority isn't questioned.
 4. Avoid over use of corporal punishment that can diminish its effectiveness. Charles Bridges- "The rod is medicine, not food: the remedy for occasional diseases of the constitution, not the daily regimen for life and nourishment. To convert medicine into daily food gradually destroys its remedial quality."
 5. We must remember God's tender dealings with us – always out of love and always with a redemptive purpose.
 6. Maintain a spirit of joy in the home. There should be a great contrast between the normal ease of the home and the seriousness of discipline.

Conclusion:

1. There are few responsibilities on this earth as weighty as the raising of children.
2. Training children involves seeing the big picture.
It is about entering into their lives on an intimate level. It is about understanding them as human beings. It is about knowing their particular strengths and weaknesses. It is about understanding their needs.
This is essential whether you have two or twenty children. Large families are wonderful but you must enter into the life of each individual child.
3. Training is as much about encouraging as it is about correcting.
Training includes grieving with your child when he fails and pointing him to the ultimate solution to our own weakness and inability to render perfect obedience.
Training children is a Gospel endeavor.