

Fathering Like the Father

Ephesians 6:4; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 6-17-18

What broad principles does Scripture give us for parenting (at every stage)?

1. Disciple your children seasonally.

Instruction

- ‘Instruction’ is literally a ‘putting in mind’ like the practical teaching of Proverbs. (MacArthur)
- ‘Instruction’ is training by the spoken word, whether that word be teaching, warning or encouragement. It refers primarily to what is said to the child. (Hendriksen)

Discipleship is training. Teaching is the positive side of training. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
‘Seasonally’ means according to the season, not occasionally! Training for what? To rest in Jesus. To hope in God. To pursue love. To live trusting and obeying God’s Word in dependence on Jesus for pardon and power. There are different parenting styles. We must know the Word and be growing if we are to teach our children and model what we teach! Our relationship with our children changes as they change. God the Father is teaching His children. (training them through truth and positive experiences) - John 6:45; 1 Thessalonians 4:9

2. Discipline your children seasonally.

Discipline

- ‘Discipline’ is the overall training of children including the idea of correction for wrongdoing as in Proverbs 13:24. (MacArthur)
- ‘Discipline’ is chastening, training in righteousness; training by means of rules and regulations, rewards, and when necessary, punishments. It refers primarily to what is done to the child. (Hendriksen)

Discipline, as the word implies, is just another form of discipleship. It is part of the training – the negative side. It is not punishment or revenge in the justice sense. ‘Seasonally’ means according to the season, not occasionally! God the Father is disciplining His children. (training them through negative experiences) - Hebrews 12:4-11

3. Delight in your children always.

But bring them up

- ‘but rear them tenderly’ (Hendriksen)
- ‘Let them be fondly cherished’ (Calvin)

Same word for ‘nourishing’ in Ephesians 5:29! (food, mental and spiritual nourishment)
Children are a gift of the LORD and that never changes. - Psalm 127:3-5 ‘Delight’ means to be thankful they are your child, to treat them as a gift from God, to desire their good and to pursue their good. ‘Always’ means no matter how old they are or how pleasing they are; all the time, no matter what. God the Father always delights, sings over and rejoices over His children, even when He is grieved by their sin and unbelief. - Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 32:41; Zephaniah 3:17

4. Display grace to your children always.

Do not provoke your children to anger

- ‘Provoke’ is to make angry. (parallel: Colossians 3:21)
- ‘Exasperate’ means to ‘stir up’ (arouse, irritate, embitter – Lex) by constant correction so that they feel like they can never do anything right (‘No matter what I do it’s always wrong’ – Hendriksen); rather there should be more encouragement than reproof and more wise reproof than stripes; the emphasis should be on the positive. (Hendriksen)

Anger provokes anger. Changing rules provokes anger. We are to love our children as we love ourselves (neighbor). ‘Grace’ is undeserved favor. You can’t display grace to someone who deserves it. ‘Displaying grace’ does not mean that we don’t disciple or discipline, but it provides the proper context for it. ‘Always’ means no matter how old they are or how pleasing they are; all the time, no matter what. God the Father never provokes His children to anger by failing to love us perfectly. But we may think that the Father is not loving us or loving us well! – Luke 15:17-24

5. Depend on God for your children always.

Of the Lord

The discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord and is commanded by the Lord to be given to children, must ultimately be the work of the Lord in the child’s heart. Therefore, we pray and we work. ‘Always’ means no matter how old they are or how pleasing they are; all the time, no matter what. Parenting involves three: parents, children, and God. And God is the decisive factor in it all. (Psalm 127:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24-26) God the Father alone can change hearts and He does so according to His sovereign grace and timing. (Isaiah 1:2)

Final Words

- As an unbeliever, know that God is a loving, merciful Father who is ready to welcome you back.
- As a believer, trust the Father’s heart when you don’t understand the Father’s hand and know that God the Father will often not tell us the ‘why’ and yet require us to trust and obey.
- As a father, think and pray about how you are fulfilling your role and seek to grow.
- As children, trust the Father and honor your parents as imperfect pointers to God the Father.
- As parents, take your responsibility seriously but not yourself (it’s not in your control).
- As a young parent, be open to the encouragement of older parents, but don’t feel threatened or obligated to do what is suggested. As an older parent, look for opportunities to prayerfully and carefully encourage young parents, but don’t think that your way is the only way to do it. Be gracious on both sides.
- As a parent with wandering children, continue to pray and love and hope in God; their story is not over yet.