

Parenting and the Gospel

Ephesians 6:1-4

Big idea – New life in Christ leads to new family dynamics as children willingly obey and parents intentionally nourish their children to maturity.

Intro –

Parent-centered vs child-centered vs God-centered home

Parent-centered – parents are the kings building their own little kingdom.

Paul Tripp – “When they [kids] fail to live up to our expectations, we find ourselves not grieving for them and fighting for them, but angry at them, fighting against them, and, in fact, grieving for ourselves and our loss.”

Driven by pride and appearance; often self-centered in which decisions are based on what the parent; comfort becomes a driving goal

Child-centered – parents are slaves building a kingdom for their children

Lou Priolo – “A child-centered home is one in which a child believes and is allowed to behave as though the entire household, parents, siblings, and even pets exist for one purpose – to please him.”

No (or inconsistent) consequences for bad behavior, manipulation, the child always “wins” – always gets what he/she wants, parents walk on egg-shells not to offend their child

God-centered home – parents and children seeks to honor God in their home

Lou Priolo – “In contrast to a child-centered home, where pleasing and serving the child is the dominant theme, the God-centered home is one in which everyone is committed to pleasing and serving God. God’s desires are exalted over everyone else’s. Everyone in the family may be expected to sacrifice personal pleasure if God’s will requires it. This philosophy teaches children to serve rather than be served, to honor rather than be honored.”

Values truth, not concerned with parents or children “winning” as an end in itself, discipline is conducted for the child’s good to shape them in a God-honoring direction (not merely as an expression of the parent’s anger)

What are the nuts and bolts of a family like this?

How can we move from theory to practice? This short section is packed with clear, helpful instruction.

Disclaimers and clarifications

Don’t claim to be a parenting expert. I’m in the trenches!

We’ll be looking at responsibilities of parents. Don’t take them as guarantees.

Faithful Parent – be faithful to the responsibilities God has placed on your shoulders. Trust Him to work in the heart.

1. Children are responsible to ***obey*** and ***honor*** their parents. Ephesians 6:1-3

a. This part of the letter addresses children directly. It assumes kids are in the gathering of the church and listening to the Word of God being taught.

b. Obey

i. To obey means to listen to and be subject to – literally means “to listen under”

- ii. In the Lord
 - 1. obeying parents (whom you can see) is a way to obey God (whom you cannot see)
 - 2. Just like a Christian employee is to work “as to the Lord and not to men” (v. 7)
 - 3. Good because every parent makes mistakes, every parent has their own struggles with sin
- iii. **Colossians 3:20** ²⁰ Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.
- iv. This is right
 - 1. Not because it is easy, not because it makes your life easier, not because you want to be seen as a “good kid”, but because it is the right thing to do.
- c. Honor
 - i. To honor means to ascribe worth to someone or something. Used elsewhere of the price or proceeds for something.
 - ii. Quotes from the 10 commandments as they were repeated in Deut 5:16 to the people.
 - 1. In the 10 commandments, they are given as expectations because the Lord had rescued the Israelites out of Egypt. As God, He has every right to lay down expectations that are vertical and then horizontal. Just like with the previous verse where he says to obey because it is “right.”
 - 2. He doesn’t need to sweeten them with incentives. And yet he does with this one. It is to their benefit to honor their parents.
 - a. Either God-given favor from honoring parents or a natural byproduct of honoring parents is a better life (in general) a la Proverbs.
 - iii. Do the commands to obey and honor ever expire?
 - 1. **Genesis 2:24** For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
 - 2. **Matthew 15:1-9** – Hypocrites who ought to be honoring their parents by providing financially but are weaseling their way out of it
 - 3. The command to obey ends at least at marriage. You could argue, I think, that to the degree you are dependent on your parents into adulthood, you owe them obedience.
 - 4. The command to honor never expires. It may take a different form, but it is still present.
 - a. Give weight to their input in your life.
 - b. Speak well of them.
 - c. Provide help for them as needed.
 - iv. Children – do you want to have the best chance at a happy life?
 - 1. Obey and honor your parents
 - 2. They are the first authority in your life.
 - 3. You learn self-control. You learn to do what is right without grumbling and complaining.

4. Gordon MacDonald - A child who received no instruction or correction would be personally miserable and socially intolerable.

2. Parents are responsible to **bring up** their children to maturity. Ephesians 6:4

Bible speaks to the culturally powerful as well as the vulnerable. Parents, husbands, employers, government leaders are not all powerful. Their authority is bound by scripture.

Why is this directed to “fathers” and not “parents?”

Both fathers and mothers are expected to discipline and instruct their children.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 1:8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching;

Proverbs 6:20 My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;

The word translated “father” can be used of both parents as in Heb. 11:23

Fathers have a unique burden and responsible to see that their children are disciplined and instructed in the Lord.

Fathers and mothers should of course work together and be unified. Mothers will of course often have a larger amount of time with children if she is staying home with them.

Men – do not abdicate this role. Do not outsource your kids discipline and instruction to mom, youth leader, SS teacher.

It will take time, it will be hard, you will need to depend on the Lord

a. Do not **provoke** your children to anger. (v. 4a)

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

Interesting that it starts with a “do not.” God shows such care for children here.

Parenting that provokes:

1. **Inconsistency** in enforcing the rules.

a. Am I in trouble because dad had a bad day or because this is a rule I knew was wrong?

2. **Unrealistic** expectations

a. Unrealistic for the age

3. **Uncommunicated** expectations

a. First comes the rule, then comes the discipline for breaking the rule

b. Often, the order is

i. Behavior that mom/dad doesn't like

ii. Yelling

iii. Discipline

- iv. Assumption that the child knows what he did wrong
- 4. ***Disconnected*** from loving relationship
 - a. Be with them. Spend time with them. Listen to them.
 - b. They are not merely your children. They are unique image bearers of God.
- ii. Kids – don't be easily provoked. Your parents will make mistakes. Forgive them and move on.
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 13:4-5** Love is patient, love is kind . . . is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,
- b. Bring them to maturity through ***discipline*** and ***instruction***. (v. 4b)
 - “bring them up” is the same as translated “nourish” in 5:29
 - You do not have self-parenting children. No one does.
 - i. Correct them in order to guide toward maturity.
 - 1. **Proverbs 3:11-12** My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof, 12 For whom the LORD loves He reproves, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.
 - 2. **Proverbs 19:18** Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death.
 - 3. **Proverbs 29:15** The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.
 - ii. Teach them what is true and how to live.
 - 1. Should be taught by example and instruction.
 - 2. **2 Timothy 3:10** Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,
 - a. Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy
 - 3. **Philippians 4:9** The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Example and Instruction

Example

		High	Low
Instruction	High	Discipling	Teaching
	Low	Modeling	Neglecting

Neglecting (low example, low Instruction):

- Proper behavior neither displayed nor taught.
- Parents are either too busy or too passive.

Teaching (low example, high Instruction):

- Proper behavior is taught but not consistently displayed
- Children feel they are being “preached at” and often breeds disrespect for parents

Modeling (high example, low Instruction):

- Proper behavior is displayed but not clearly taught or explained
- Child must rely entirely on observing the behavior of parents to gain a system of values, beliefs, and norms
- Belief is that behavior is better “caught than taught.”
- But children are interpreters. They may not interpret your action in the way it is intended.

Discipling (high example, high Instruction):

- Parents teach their children by both word and deed.
- This method is consistent with the idea of discipleship within the rest of the church body and should be applied to parenting as well.

c. Teach them ***diligently*** (Deut. 6:7-10)

i. We should teach ***repeatedly***. (v. 7a)

1. Literally “repeatedly” – used of sharpening a sword because it is repetitive – do you ever feel like you are endlessly repeating yourself to your kids? Good!

ii. We should teach them as we go about ***daily life*** (v. 7b-10)

1. Every family homeschools. Every home is a classroom. Every parent is a teacher.

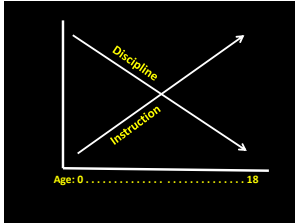
iii. We should teach ***pleasantly***.

1. **Proverbs 16:24** Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.
2. How would you give your daughter a new fairly expensive necklace that you bought for her 16th birthday? Would you ball it up and toss it at her? Or would you present it to her in a way that showed that she and the gift matter? (Younts, *Everyday Talk*)

iv. We should be ***intentional***, yet ***flexible***.

1. Breakfast, at dinner, after dinner, before bed
2. Maybe your family literally homeschools and you incorporate Bible time as part of your school day.
3. Maybe your kids go to public or private school and you take a few moments to read half a chapter of Proverbs at the breakfast table or dinner table.
4. Common concerns -
 - a. “We’re too busy” –

- i. If your child had a shot they needed every day, you would find a consistent time during the day to give it to them. We make time for what we see as important.
- ii. For the most part, this should fit into what you are already doing – driving them around, helping with homework, eating dinner together
- b. “But I don’t know enough to help my child”
 - i. That’s why Deut. 6:1-6 starts with the parents
 - ii. It’s ok to recognize you have a lot to learn. Just don’t stay there. Read, listen to the Word, be in a Bible study, come to our ABF time



3. Key Truths

- a. Parents, be **faithful** to your responsibilities but place your **hope** in the Lord.
 - i. It’s not your technique that will save your child or guarantee a well-adjusted adult.
 - ii. Kids are still individuals.
- b. **Discipline** your kids when they do wrong and show them lots of **love**.
- c. You can be part of God’s family by **receiving Christ**.
 - i. **John 1:11-13** He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
 - ii. Few things expose our sin and failures more than parenting. You may look back with great regret. You may feel like you are dropping the ball currently. That’s why we need the gospel.