



SERMON SINGLES

Father Figure

Ephesians 6:4

NOTES INTRODUCTION I love what President Franklin Roosevelt said: "We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future." In the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul gives fathers the best advice and wisdom on how to be the father your children need you to be. In a simple but sublime sentence, Paul shares with us four things we need to give our children to be the parents we ought to be. **KEY POINTS** 1. Give Your Children Gracious Affection Paul starts today's key verse by telling fathers not to exasperate their children. The word "exasperate" is a very strong word. It means to "provoke anger" or in today's language we would say, "Don't do anything to light their fuse." So what does this look like practically? In the spirit of what Paul said, let me share with you four things never to do with your children. First of all, don't aggravate your children. Has this ever happened? You aggravate a child. You make him angry and then out of his anger he pops off and says something disrespectful and then you punish them because they were disrespectful when you started it to begin with! That is exasperating your children. Second, don't humiliate your children. Don't ever publicly embarrass your children; it can cause more damage to your relationship than you realize. Third, don't frustrate your children. Don't start unnecessary arguments. One of the most important things parents need to learn is not every hill is worth dying on. As your kids get older, there will be plenty to debate and discuss that needs to be debated and discussed and can be done so with passion and conviction. But don't ever create a hill to die on that is not worth dying on. Finally, don't intimidate your children. Don't push your children to be something they don't want to be or can't be. Don't try to live your life through them. Let them choose their own path and their own careers. If you have been guilty of doing any of these things I would encourage you to do what I've done. Go to your children and ask forgiveness in those areas where maybe you have failed as a father. Model for them what it is like to give children gracious affection.

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NOTES 2. Give Your Children Gainful Direction It is not enough to put a roof over your children's heads. You must do all you can to put the Lord into your children's hearts. So Paul tells us, "...bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). The word "bring up" literally means "to rear" or "to nurture from childhood." I don't believe it is ever too late to try and give your children good direction, but it is best to start early. We are to "bring them up in the training of the Lord." Now the word "training" refers not just to education (that is knowing what is right), but it refers to direction – to leading them to do what is right. It literally means "train up a child." Again, this is why you start early. Early on you give them gainful direction on how to respect other people, how to be courteous to other people, how to be kind to other people, how to get along with their brothers and sisters, how to obey their parents, and how to be responsible for their actions. Start from the womb dads and moms and get the God of the Word into their hearts and get their hearts into the Word of God. There is a right way to live life. There is a right way to relate to children. There is a right way to think and act and it is found in God's Word, and from that Word, you give them gainful direction. 3. Give Your Children Good Correction There are two things to remember when you do have to discipline your children or correct your children. #1 – Correct at the right time, in the right place, with the right spirit. #2 – Correct constructively – not destructively You see if you are always too hard on your children you will make your children hard, but the reverse of that is also true. If you are too soft on your children, you make your children too soft. When you have to correct your children, you need to make sure they understand why you are correcting them. What you are saying is, "I love you too much to let you behave this way. I love you too much to allow you to be less than what I know God wants you to be." The purpose of correction is not to discourage your children; it is to encourage your children. The purpose of good correction is not just to punish your kids if they do something wrong, but to encourage them to do what is right.

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4. Give Your Children Godly Protection

Every parent should bring their children up to be moral, good, kind, respectful, courteous, obey the law, and behave. That is a given. The difference is, for most parents, that is the ceiling. For a Christian parent, that is the floor.

As a parent, your primary job is not to raise good children; your primary job is to raise godly children. The goal and ambition you should have for your children is that they know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and that their lives are completely and fully surrendered to Him.

This is the primary responsibility of dad and mom because ultimately the greatest influence in the lives of your children should not be the church, the school, the pastor, or the coach. The greatest influence should be the parents. As a parent, you are the spiritual leader of your children. This is not a responsibility you can delegate to someone else. The number one desire, goal, ambition, and hunger of a true godly parent is to rear godly children. It takes godly parents to raise godly children and it takes God to make a godly parent.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1.	What is one way you can show your children gracious affection this week?
2.	How are you giving your children gainful direction right now?
3.	When was a time you didn't correct your children in a healthy, God-honoring way? What can you learn from this experience that you can implement next time you need to correct your children?