

Title: The Supremely Important Role of Dad

Text: Ephesians 6:4

The Christian Post shared an article by S. Michael Craven titled, "Fathers: Key to Their Children's Faith"

During the colonial period in America men defined themselves by their level of community involvement and fatherhood. Marriage and fatherhood were seen as being among the highest aspirations in a man's life. Today the highest aspirations of men seem to be career success and personal leisure; and against these they seek to balance marriage and family.

A rather obscure but large and important study conducted by the Swiss government in 1994 and published in 2000 revealed some astonishing facts with regard to the generational transmission of faith and religious values.

In short, the study reveals: "It is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future attendance at or absence from church of the children" (Emphasis mine).

The study reports:

1. If both father and mother attend regularly, 33 percent of their children will end up as regular churchgoers, and 41 percent will end up attending irregularly. Only a quarter of their children will end up not practicing at all.

2. If the father is irregular and mother regular, only 3 percent of the children will subsequently become regulars themselves, while a further 59 percent will become irregulars. Thirty-eight percent will be lost.

3. If the father is non-practicing and mother regular, only 2 percent of children will become regular worshippers, and 37 percent will attend irregularly. Over 60 percent of their children will be lost completely to the church!

Dad's! You are crucial to the spiritual life of your child!

What is the goal of parenting? To raise adults. What is the goal of Christian parenting? To raise adults who love Jesus and serve Him faithfully throughout their entire lives. What place does passivity have in parenting? ZERO! Our children cannot raise themselves. They need constant and repetitious input from both parents. But Dad, you are crucial in helping your child develop a heart for God!

Main Idea: Become a Dad After God's Own Heart

Reference [Eph 4:21-22](#) "Put off, put on principle."

1. God's Kind of Dad Puts Off Provocation (vs.4a)

Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger...

As Paul puts pen to paper for his dear friends at the church in Ephesus, he is writing to a deeply Roman influenced culture. Ephesus was a leading center in the Roman empire! What is significant about this? Well, consider how the Roman family unit was structured. One author paints the picture like this...

The center of the early social structure, dating from the time of the agricultural tribal city state, was the family, which was not only marked by blood relations but also by the legally constructed relation of patria po-tes-tas. The Pater fam-il-ias (father) was the absolute head of the family; he was the master over his wife, his children, the wives of his sons, the nephews, the slaves and the freedmen, disposing of them and of their goods at will, even having them put to death.[1]

And Paul is writing to men in this kind of culture reminding them that they are not merely Romans, but they are Christians! And as Christians, they are to behave and function accordingly.

So, this instruction in [Ephesians 6](#), while not to be ignored by moms, is primarily to the Fathers. Fathers are to take the lead in the home, they are to be the one in the home setting the pace for everything and especially for the spiritual vitality of the family...

However, before Paul gets to that part of his instruction, he wants the Christian fathers to know there is a way to be a Dad after God's own heart and that way starts with NOT provoking your children to anger.

How could the Christian father fall into provoking his children? Many ways which I will address in a minute! But in general, I believe there to be two ways provocation can occur...

First, a father can be an excessive authoritarian...

Second, they can be a passive libertarian...

Both will provoke a child to anger.

But let's get more specific. There are many ways a father can provoke his children to anger...

Favoritism – Jacob with Joseph...

Comparison – Why can't you be more like your brother? Or worse yet, like someone else's child.

Unrealistic expectations – Putting them in a box and expecting them to be what you want versus what God has designed them to be. *"Your grandfather was a doctor, I am a doctor, you will be a doctor..."*

Over-indulging – Giving into their every whim...

Overprotection – Helicopter parents...

Rescuing – Always solving your child's problems frustrates them and stunts their own ability to think and problem solve.

Lack of rewards – Rewards are biblical. God told the children of Israel, if you obey me, I will bless you ([Deut 28](#)).

Unfulfilled promises – Be a man of your word. [Psalm 15:1](#) (ESV) *10 Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? 4...who swears to his own hurt and does not change..."*

Neglect or indifference – [Proverbs 29:15](#) (ESV) *15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*

Inconsistency – Do you want to frustrate your child? Keep moving the target...

Treating them like slaves – They are not your personal slaves to do your bidding.

Not admitting mistakes – Your kids can see right through this and you are teaching them that your pride is more important than your honesty.

Abusive words, Ridiculing, Sarcasm, Criticism, Depreciating their worth – [Ephesians 4:29](#) (ESV) *29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

Excessive Discipline/Physical Abuse – NEVER DISCIPLINE IN ANGER – There is a vast difference between spanking verses beating...God's provision of a well-padded bum. However, there is never any excuse for beating a child into submission. This is an ungodly use of force and is beyond wicked.

Failing to show affection both Physically and verbally -

Not providing for their needs - [1 Timothy 5:8](#) (ESV) *8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

John Eadie – *The paternal reign is not to be one of terror and stern authority, but of love. The rod may be employed but in reason and moderation, and never from momentary impulse and anger. Children are not to be moved to "wrath" by harsh and unreasonable treatment, or by undue partiality and favoritism. If they be uniformly confronted with paternal frown and menace, then their spirit is broken, and the most powerful motive to obedience – the desire to please – is taken from them.*

I would like you to look at another verse with me that goes with [Ephesians 6:4](#). It is found in Colossians...

Colossians 3:21 ESV

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Paul says virtually the same thing in this letter, again to fathers, primarily. But allow me to point out a couple important additions.

First he uses a different Greek word for provoke that has an even more poignant punch...

Colossians 3:21 NIV84

²¹ Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Colossians 3:21 NASB95

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

Obviously Dad's we have a great deal of power and influence over our children. You have the power to provoke, to embitter, to exasperate. You have been given the opportunity to participate with God to mold this young person into a viable follower of Jesus! What an honor! What a distinct privilege!

But notice the next part of this verse in Colossians? We must be careful. Dad's, you are not to embitter your children, because the danger is they could lose heart!

Picture this, a great sailboat with the sails billowed out and full of air cutting through the cool blue waters of Lake Michigan on a beautiful sunny day! Suddenly the winds die down to nothing and the sails on this beautiful craft sag and become ineffective. Those sails are designed to capture air and thus propel the ship forward. No air, no movement.

What does this mean? This is what "so they will not lose heart" means. Dads, you must be careful not to embitter or exasperate your children lest the "wind gets taken out of their sails." May it never be said of you that you are a discouraging parent!

"Don't ever diminish the power of words. Words move hearts and hearts move limbs." -Hamza Yusuf

Dad's, believe me when I say that I understand how hard it is to be a father. I understand what it is like to have tremendous pressures at work and to just want to come home and relax and not think about the challenges of life for a while. I understand what it is like to allow the pressures of work, bills, trials in our marriage, to get the best of us and then get sloppy in my role as father. To become frustrated and irritable with the precious kids God has entrusted you with because they are getting in the way of your "happiness".

It's not about your happiness! *"You have been crucified with Christ and you no longer live..."* It is about your responsibility to raise up the ones God has entrusted to you. To model before them a Christ like love for God and others. To exude the fruit of the Spirit – Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Dad's, do you really want to know how well your are doing in the area of provoking your children to anger? Ask them! DON'T get defensive, don't be argumentative when they respond. Also, ask your spouse. Again! Don't be defensive! Just be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger! Give your wife and kids full permission to speak the truth to you and then, take it like a man and then determine to grow!

Please understand how important this is. Don't be offended, be determined to be God's man

Stan Miller loved me enough to challenge my thinking about my responsibility as a husband and a father. And so, I to you!

So, do you want to be the kind of Dad that is after God's Own Heart?

First step? Put Off Provocation!

2. God's Kind of Dad Puts On Preparation (vs.4b)

Ephesians 6:4 ESV

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Okay, so we are commanded by God's Word and empowered by God's Spirit to Put off **provocation**, but we cannot simply stop there. We must replace what we have gotten rid of. There is now a vacuum that ***will*** be filled with something. So we must be proactive in filling that vacuum with what the Lord tells us. And do you see what He tells us men? Instead of provoking, Dads are to bring their children up - *that is, rear or nourish (ektrepheete, "provide for physical and spiritual needs"; also used in Eph. 5:29)[2]*

And they are to do this in two specific ways...

Dads are to bring them up *in the **discipline** of the Lord*

Dads are to bring them up in the **instruction** of the Lord

By the way, notice what it does not say. Dads are to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the DAD. No, we are to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the LORD. Yes, you have good ideas, and great ways to incorporate discipline in your children. You have amazing things you can teach your children. But our first priority is to follow the Lord's ways. These ways, for the Godly Dad, are the primary focus!

One more thing, do you understand what is assumed in these two commands of God? You can't pass something along that you do not know!

Trevor is a Barber and a good one, at that. He knows a lot about that profession that I do not know. He spent countless hours learning the discipline and instruction of barbering. He can teach barbering because he knows barbering.

Now, let's say I told you I was a barber. What would you presuppose about me? That I had spent the time in the discipline and instruction so I would be competent to cut your hair. I have not! Do not allow me to cut your hair. It will not be pretty! And most certainly, I would not be able to teach you barbering because I simply do not know it! I need to know it in order to teach it!

What do you call someone who claims to be something but actually is not? A charlatan or a con-artist.

Dad's if you call yourself a Christian, you had better not be a charlatan or a con-artist. You have a holy, God ordained call on your life to raise your children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. NO CHRISTIAN DAD GETS A PASS! So, are you disciplined in the Lord? Are you instructed in the things of God? You had better be because God commands you to pass these things on to your children. No exceptions!

If you are not, but you are at a place in your heart where you believe this to be one of God's primary calls on your life, let me give you some simple advice...START!

You, by God's grace, have got this! Remember Paul's challenge to his "son in the faith"?

1 Timothy 4:7-8 ESV

⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Oh, and Paul doesn't just say to Timothy, "Do as I say, not as I do." No, He demands spiritual discipline from himself as well.

1 Corinthians 9:27 ESV

²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

In other words, He doesn't allow his body, his feelings, his, emotions, his desires to dictate to him what he will and will not do. No! He puts his body in its place in order to be obedient to God!

Dad's there are tons of things vying for your time and attention. Things that seem so important, crucial even. But they are not. They are fool's gold, worthless in the end.

Yes, you have to have a job and work hard as unto the Lord. But your job is not your Lord!

Yes, it's good to have hobbies and recreation, but if those things take you away and distract you from your main priorities. But your recreation and your hobbies are not your life!

Turn off your phone, your iPad, your virtual life and engage in the life you have right in front of you!

Listen, men! When you sign on to marriage and parenting, you are signing a death certificate. Death to self.

Galatians 2:20 ESV

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Actually, you sign that death certificate when you become a follower of Christ. Marriage and parenting are two of God's best tools in His toolbox to help me realize it is no longer about me. I now have a glorious privilege to live for God and others. Marriage and parenting show me this tangible reality day in and day out. And as Dads, we get a little taste of the enormous sacrifice that Jesus joyfully made on our behalf.

Okay guys, all guys! Young men and old men. Dad's, uncles, brothers, grandfathers, we must share in this responsibility to be God's men so that we can raise the next generation to love God and understand the beauty of the Gospel.

Dad's, your first and best disciples are your kids. Work as if their relationship with God was up to you; trust Christ knowing He is the One that can turn their hearts!

Okay, are you ready to put on preparation?

Dads are to bring them up in the discipline of the Lord – Paul understood all too well that the job of the parents, the dad in particular, is to provide discipline for the child until the child can discipline themselves.

Proverbs 22:15 ESV

¹⁵ Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Discipline does not come naturally for a child in large part because discipline means saying “no” to self. We, from the time of infancy, are focused on self. We cry when we don't get what we want. We fuss when our sibling grabs the toy that we wanted to play with (even though you weren't playing with it at the time). We yell and scream and manipulate and control to try to get our way because we are natural rebels who are deeply in love with self. Parenting, fathering in the Lord, is God's way of breaking children of their profound self-focus. And who should understand this better than the godly father!

David, a man after God's own heart ironically was not a Dad after God's own heart. He was pathetically passive when it came to raising over 20 children. Maybe it was because he was so busy running the Kingdom or because He was a man of war and off fighting battles or because of his many wives (eight mentioned in the bible)? Whatever the case, David was not known for saying no to His children. Not a great plan! Giving your child whatever makes them happy and never standing in their way is a recipe for disaster!

1 Kings 1:5–6 ESV

⁵ Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king.” And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. ⁶ His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, “Why have you done thus and so?” He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom.

When Amnon (David's son) raped his sister, Tamar (David's daughter by another wife), David was furious...

2 Samuel 13:21 ESV

²¹ When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.

But he didn't do anything about it. He refused to do what God's Law commanded and he kept his son from facing the consequences of his decision. Absalom, David's other son, would later kill Amnon because of what he did to his sister.

Absalom, because of His blatant disrespect for his father, the King, would stage a coup and take the kingdom away from his own father.

Do you see the dysfunction in this family?

All of this, because David failed in the area a disciplining his children!

Men! You cannot afford to fail. While there is no guarantee that if you raise you children right they will turn out right. God's word has a lot to say about your responsibility to step up to the plate!

Proverbs 22:6 ESV

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

While you and I cannot change anyone, that's God's job. He does desire to use you to mold your child into the image of Christ!

The Three C's of Discipline

Concern – You have to care! And you must care what God wants your child to be as well as you must care for your child. If you discipline out of anger because your child is annoying or irritating you, then you are concerned for the wrong person. You are concerned for you! You must be concerned for your child that he sees his or her need for Christ...

Correction – You must be willing to correct your child in a way that pleases God. This is a balancing act. Correction should be painful because sometime pain is the only thing that can break through our stubbornness. But there must be a commitment on your part to not be passive, to not simply let their mother take care of the punishment. Sometimes a child needs to hear the authoritative rumble of the father's stern voice telling them to change their ways! You, Dads have to realize that this, if done properly, is an act of love. You are helping them to see the error of their ways and show them the proper way laid out in the scriptures.

Proverbs 13:24 ESV

²⁴ Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Proverbs 19:18 ESV

¹⁸ Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.

Proverbs 23:13 ESV

¹³ Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.

Proverbs 23:14 ESV

¹⁴ If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 29:17 ESV

¹⁷ Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Coaching – Discipline isn't all about correction, it is also about showing the right path. Encouraging someone to go in the right direction. If our language with our children is always no, then it is not biblical nor helpful and is a sure path to discouragement. It is easy to say no, but is it more helpful to redirect and a better way. God has mapped a way out for his Children. It is a dad's privilege to show this path to his children.

Proverbs 3:5–6 ESV

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Children, do you know the best gift you can give your dad this father's day? Honor him by listening to him and showing him respect!

Dads are to bring them up in the instruction of the Lord – Okay, Fathers, another responsibility we have is to instruct. To teach. To equip. This is taking the third C of discipleship, coaching, to the next level. As I've already challenged you earlier, you cannot teach what you do not know. So, spend much energy on KNOWING!

2 Timothy 3:16–17 ESV

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Read the bible. Read theology, listen to podcasts, listen to preaching online. I like to listen to books when I am driving around in my car. It is amazing how much ground I can cover by listening ten minutes here and eight minutes there! Have discussions with others about the bible and theology. Take advantage of our equipping classes. If bringing our children up in the instruction of the Lord, our equipping classes need to be filled up with the men of our church!

So then the question is, how do I go about accomplishing this? How do I instruct my children? Let me give you some practical ideas.

What happens teaches – If your children see you praying, reading the scriptures, talking to others about theology, they will get the idea very quickly that these activities are important. Also, if you are married, love your wife. Speak kindly and respectfully in all situations. When you fail admit it and seek forgiveness. Be honest in all your dealing. Do your best to exude Christlikeness because talk is cheap but WHAT HAPPENS TEACHES!

Have a dedicated daily Word time – Nutritionists are saying we should eat 5-6 small meals every day for optimal health. Others stick to the 3 meals per day (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner). Whatever your preference, if you do not have a regular time of feeding your body, you will become sick, weak and helpless. That is the way God has designed us. We need constant nourishment. So it is spiritually!

Matthew 4:4 ESV

⁴ But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

I can guarantee you that if you are not regularly feeding on the Word of God, you are not doing well spiritually. Men! Have a dedicated word time each day! You cannot teach what you do not know! And then, have a time sharing what you have learned with your family.

Pray with your children every night before bed – There is no better way to finish the day than to take the time to tuck your children in and pray with them. It teaches them that God is the one who is our Father and that their father needs the wisdom and guidance of the heavenly

father in order to be the father he is called to be. It teaches them a dependence on someone other than self. It shows them that there is one higher than I that I must look to and obey. It teaches them to pray!

Look for teachable moments –

Deuteronomy 6:4–9 ESV

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

As you are going, show them God!

You, Fathers have been given to glorious responsibility to raise up the next generation and it only takes one generation to forget the Lord, so we, as a church desire to help you with this holy task. The question for you is, are you willing?

What's your plan? Perhaps you are already doing an amazing job disciplining and instructing your kids. Praise God for that. But, if you are like me, raising children was more challenging than I originally thought it would be. And, on many occasions, I failed.

Folks, can I just be honest with you this morning? My opportunity, in large part, with my children has now past. There are many things I would do differently. I do not stand before you as an expert in being a father. I stand before you with much regret. I am afraid that when my kids were small my interests were pursuing ministry and education. I believed ministry was being everything for everybody. We had an amazing youth group – eighty kids! It was fantastic. My kids, however took a back seat all because I was "serving the Lord!" Then throw education on top of it so I could be equipped to "serve the Lord" and my kids took a back seat again. It was all so important at the time that I failed to see what was important at the time and now that time is forever gone. Don't get me wrong, I am grateful for the ministry I had and the education I received. I just think I could have done it far differently so that my kids didn't sit so far in the back seat!

Now I know I sound like an old guy, but you young fathers hear me and hear me well. You've got one run at this and there will be many, many good things vying for your attention. But God has given you a mandate from His word. This is not a request, but a command from God Himself.

Ephesians 6:4 ESV

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Christian fathers. Your job is so much more than earning a paycheck and providing clothing and shelter for your children. You've got one shot at this, do it well! Are you prepared?

Review – Become a Dad After God's Own Heart

- God's Kind of Dad Puts Off Provocation
- God's Kind of Dad Puts on Preparation!

Conclusion

You may be sitting there this morning thinking, I can't do this! I don't have the spiritual wherewithal to make this happen. I didn't realize this was my responsibility when I began to follow Christ! I simply do not have the strength! And you are correct! It is interesting that the command given in chapter six is predicated by chapter 5:18-20

Ephesians 5:18–20 ESV

¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Be filled with the Spirit! Of course this assumes a relationship with Christ. You can by no means accomplish [Eph 6:4](#) if you are not a believer. But you also cannot accomplish [Eph 6:4](#) as a Christian without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. God doesn't ask you to do anything that He doesn't empower you to do!

He does the same thing in [Colossians 3:16-17](#) (which comes before 3:21, Fathers do not embitter...)

Colossians 3:16–17 ESV

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I point this out to you to give you some hope this morning, Dads. Do you want to be a Dad after God's own heart? Two things...

Be filled with God's Spirit and be filled with God's Word, and I guarantee you will be a Dad after God's own heart!

Dismissal

- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_ancient_Rome

[2] Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 642.