

Ephesians 6:1-4 “Reflecting Jesus in Family”

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Intro. The Bible paints a picture of the triumphs and tragedies of parenting. Timothy, Jeremiah and Esther were young and faithful; Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed -Nego were steadfast teenagers in Babylon. Josiah was only a boy when he began godly reforms as king, and David was just a teen when he slew Goliath. Nevertheless, David failed to discipline Absalom his son and brought tragedy on the family and kingdom, Eli the high Priest failed to discipline his sons and they were rejected by God’s people, and Isaac’s favoritism to Esau, and Rachel’s to Jacob, led to a divided family.

Parents want their children to enjoy a better life. We might hope to provide love, a comfortable home, good education, safe environment, nice clothes and stuff, extra-curricular activities, and more. Yet, the most important thing that we can do for our children is to prepare them to follow Jesus well. That should be the priority, because it will have the greatest impact on their lives on earth and for eternity. And more than simply understanding values or a plan, we need the Holy Spirit to empower us to reflect Jesus in family. Let’s discover how ...

Subject: The Spirit-filled family [God’s plan for family]

Object: Prepare the next generation to follow Jesus

Context: The key to the Christian Life is to be filled with the Spirit [5:18]. Last week we discovered what that looks like in marriage [5:21-33], this week we look at family, and next week we shall focus on reflecting Jesus in the workplace [6:5-9].

A. The children’s role [1-3]

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: ³ “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

Parents need to explain and instruct their children so that they can understand what God desires and requires. When Josh was about four years old, I remember asking him, “What don’t you understand?” And he profoundly responded, “I don’t know what I don’t understand.” It was a good parenting lesson for me, because any confusion on expectations was my responsibility to clarify, equip, and encourage.

Respect: obey and honor Children are called to obey [1] and honor [2] or respect their parents. Obedience deals with behavior, and is the duty of children as long as they are living in their parents’ home regardless of age. Honor or respect are attitudes and they are to endure throughout the child’s life. The phrase “in the Lord” [1] reminds children that they ultimately belong to the Lord, and they are to obey and respect parents to please God.

Children should obey and honor parents because it is the right thing to do [1]. A child has a moral debt to parents for giving life and provision to the child. Certainly, a parent ideally creates an environment that motivates a child because of love. Nevertheless, the responsibility to honor and obey are commandments from God [2, Ex. 20:12]. The 5th of the

Ten Commandments is quoted in verses 2-3. It is the first of the Ten Commandments with a reward; and the promised blessing relates to the quality and quantity of life. It seems that by honoring parents, you'll enjoy a better life, and prepare your own children to honor you as you age. And, adult children are to provide care for older parents [1 Tim. 5:4, Matt. 15:3-6]. This provides a healthy social and spiritual community for the family, and community at large. A desire to submit to parents and obey and honor them can be challenging, especially as children navigate adolescence. Those challenges are compounded as children think they know better than their parents or sometimes do know better.

Jesus is our example as He was subject to Mary and Joseph [Lu. 2:51]. Certainly, it is easier for children to honor and obey when their parents model obedience and honor to God. But the power we need to honor and obey God and parents is provided by the Holy Spirit.

B. The parent's role [4]

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Build-up and encourage in Christ, and don't provoke to wrath

In the Greco-Roman world, a newborn was placed before a father. If the father picked up the child, he had accepted the child, but if not the child was sold, given away, or left to die. At any time, a parent could sell their child into slavery or kill the child. In this context, the high standard of parenting in the New Testament is even more remarkable. Fathers can be translated parents, but also reminds us that fathers have an important responsibility regarding their child's spiritual development.

Parents are to avoid provoking their children to wrath. Some of the ways that parents can provoke their children include: favoritism, physical and verbal abuse, disciplining in anger, conditional love, unreasonable discipline, discouragement, and unreasonable expectations such as pushing over-achievement.

Positively, parents are to *bring them up*, which has the idea of nurturing. Parents are primarily responsible for nurturing their children's spiritual development, not a church, Christian school. *Training* contemplates making disciples by mentoring and correction. Proverbs 22:6 encourages parents: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." We are comforted by the principle that as we guide our young children in the faith that they are more likely to live it as adults. Modeling a genuine love for God, talking about God, prayer, regular worship with a community of faith, and serving God by serving others are ways to train your child. As an aside, the Hebrew of Proverbs 22:6 can be translated, "Train up a child in the *way he is going* ..." This relates to how God has designed your child. For example, God may have gifted your child to be a musician not an athlete or vice versa. Don't force your child to be something that is not of God, nor should you encourage them to pursue something that God has clearly declared as sin. *Admonition* is literally putting in mind, and conveys the idea of educating about God, Bible learning, and teaching them a biblical worldview.

Jesus affirmed the importance of children, and His desire that obstacles would be removed to children coming to Him when He declared, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them" [Matt. 19:14].

The power and guidance that we need to be parents who prepare the next generation to follow Jesus is supplied by the Holy Spirit.

Some parenting lessons I've gleaned along the way:

1. The love of Jesus covers a multitude of parenting shortcomings:

There are no perfect parents, and our kids don't come with an owner's manual. We've all reacted in the flesh rather than responding in the Spirit. Yet, Jesus' love for your children covers a multitude of our parenting fails. Nevertheless, we want to love them like Jesus does.

2. Confess your wrongs and seek forgiveness from your kids:

Parents need to admit where they were wrong and ask their kids to forgive them. Ask your kids periodically how you can be a better parent to them.

3. **Be compassionate:** you don't understand their world and they don't understand yours [1Th. 2:7-12]. What might seem insignificant to you can be huge to them and vice versa. Let them make mistakes, and when they hurt let them know you care and feel their pain.

4. **Be consistent:** kids seem to thrive in a stable and consistent spiritual environment.

5. **Keep praying with and for them regularly.**

Study Guide Qs

1. What are some of the obstacles to effective parenting?

2. What advice would you give new parents?

3. What are some of the challenges of being a child that parents should know or be reminded of? And what are some challenges of being a parent that children should know?

4. How would you like to apply this lesson in your life?

Digging Deeper

1. You can download free family devotional books "Gospel of John" or "70 Bible Studies from Anger to Zeal" on our church site <http://calvarynexus.org/books-and-resources>.

The books are resources for biblical age appropriate family devotions.

2. Calvary Nexus has an excellent Kids and Youth Ministries where you can help prepare the next generation to follow Jesus. To get information: Vince@calvarynexus.org and Lizette@calvarynexus.org