

Marriage and Parenting

Topic 10 – Parenting – Father and Mother Roles

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Introduction

Last week we looked at the foundations of parenting.

- Successful parenting is determined by the parents' faithfulness, not results.
- Parents are called to be faithful stewards of their children.
- Parenting apart from submission to God's sovereignty and ways is futile.
- Children are a gift and blessing from God.

❖ **Are you a faithful steward of your children? Are you submitted to God and His sovereignty? Do you view your children as a gift and blessings from God?**

We then identified that the **purpose** of parenting is the same as the believer's general purpose in life – to glorify God.

We also saw that the **mission or goal** of parenting is the same as the believer's general mission in life – to make disciples. We can do this by proactively speaking and living the gospel to our children by:

- Taking God's powerful Word into our own hearts and minds.
- Speaking continually about the Lord and His Word through purposed and opportune events.
- Displaying God's Words in our life, living in a manner worthy of the gospel.
- Teaching our children the whole counsel of God.
- Highlighting the essential truths of the gospel to our children.

❖ **How are you proactively speaking and living the gospel to your children?**

Parenting Roles

1. The first role that parents (and all believers) must fulfill is **walking in the Spirit**.

¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ... ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:16, 22-23

If you desire your parenting to be God honoring, yet attempt to parent apart from the power that God supplies through the filling of the Spirit, you are destined to failure.

Living a consistently God glorifying life is possible only through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in the believer's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through us.

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

When a believer is submitted to God (Eph 5:18-6:9) and His Word (Col 3:16-4:1), the indwelling Holy Spirit fills (or controls) them and produces Christ-like character, heart motives, attitudes, words, and reactions (e.g faithfulness, patience, kindness, loving, forgiving, truthful, etc.). The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. This is the usual, expected state of a believer. All other role-commands are consistently, God glorifyingly possible only by Spirit-filling.

❖ **Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?**

2. Another role for parents (and all believers) is to **live out the one-anothers for your children to personally experience and see you practice**. This can be considered the outflow of being filled with the Spirit.
- Love one another (John 3:16; 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 John 4:11-12; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8)
 - Forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; Matt 18:21-22)
 - Build up one another (Rom 14:19)
 - Give preference to one another (Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10b)
 - Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; Heb 10:24-25)
 - Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
 - Edify one another (1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:29)
 - Serve one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
 - Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
 - Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10a)
 - Be affectionate to one another (1 Pet 5:14)
 - Confess sins to and pray for one another (James 5:16)
 - Be hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
 - Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
 - Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)
 - Live harmoniously with one another (Rom 15:15; 1 Thess 5:13b)
 - Show tolerance for one another (Eph 4:2)
 - Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)

❖ **Are you living out the one others outside and inside your home?**

3. Another role the parent must fulfill is that of **active involvement in a local body of believers**.

God has designed the church in such a way so that care can be brought to each believer. Parents are loved, edified, encouraged, admonished, comforted, etc. by other believers primarily in the context of local body involvement.

⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so **we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another**. Rom 12:4-5

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:23-25

In addition, parents are nowhere commanded in Scripture to take a break from using their gifts to serve others in the body (1 Pet 4:10) while parenting.

⁷The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. ⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaint. ¹⁰**As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** ¹¹Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet 4:7-11

❖ **Are you actively involved in your local body?**

4. The next role for married parents is to **fulfill your respective husband or wife roles** (See topics 2 and 3 for more details). It is interesting that in the both of Paul's passages that speak to marriage and parenting together (Eph 5:18-6:4; Col 3:16-21), he starts with marriage, then moves to the child's responsibility, then to parenting. The marriage relationship is primary in families, not children. Fulfilling these roles does several things for your parenting:
1. Provides your children a demonstration of true saving faith.
 2. Establishes security in the home.
 3. Builds unity in the marriage which is essential for God honoring parenting.

❖ **Do you view a God honoring marriage a crucial element of God honoring parenting?**

Husbands

- Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.
 - ²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Eph 5:21
 - ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil 2:3-4
- Love your wife like Christ loves the church (initiating, sacrificial, humble, volitional, unconditional, committed, forgiving, nourishing and cherishing, and practical).
 - ²⁵Husbands, **love your wives**, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ... ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ... ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband. Eph 5:25, 28-29, 33
 - ¹⁹Husbands, **love your wives and do not be embittered against them.** Col 3:19
- Live with your wife in an understanding way (with knowledge); view her as valuable and precious; show her honor.
 - ⁷You husbands in the same way, **live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker**, since she is a woman; and **show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life**, so that your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Pet 3:7
- Lead like Christ – as a servant-leader (shepherding, gentle and humble, submitted to God's will, by example, as a servant, selfless, team leader, motivating, managing well)
 - ²³**For the husband is the head of the wife**, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. Eph 5:23

Wives

- Submit to your husband as to the Lord.
 - ²²**Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. Eph 5:22-24
 - ¹⁸**Wives, be subject to your husbands**, as is fitting in the Lord. Col 3:18

- Be devoted to your husband; cultivate a fondness for him.

³Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴**so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands**, to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Titus 2:3-5

¹⁰An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹²**She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.** Prov 31:10-12

- Be devoted to domestic affairs (the family/home).

⁴so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, **workers at home**, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Titus 2:4-5

❖ **Christian husband, Christian wife – how are you doing?**

5. The next role for parents is that of **unified authority**. This is not a dictator, but the parents’ role is that of an authority in a child’s life, not a friend. Parents and children can be friends also, but the primary relationship is that of parent-child not friend-friend. This is seen in Paul’s next command after his teaching on marriage in both Ephesians and Colossians. Children are commanded to obey their parents.

¹**Children, obey your parents in the Lord**, for this is right. ²Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Eph 6:1-3

²⁰**Children, be obedient to your parents in all things**, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Col 3:20

❖ **How do you view your relationship with your children? Is becoming your child’s friend very important to you?**

Children are to obey their parents because it is “right” and “well-pleasing to the Lord”. Obey means to obey as a pattern of life. Obedience is to be “in all things” (except when obeying parents would disobey God) and “in the Lord” which explains children are to obey as an outflow of their life in Christ.

Honor (Eph 6:2) means to show high regard/respect for and so to count as valuable, to esteem, to value, or to revere.

It is important for parents to understand that they are responsible to teach their children to obey. Also, children are to obey “parents”; not just “father” and not just “mother”. It is important for parents to be united; to have consistency in what they are teaching their children.

❖ **Are you and your spouse united in your parenting?**

Adult Children

A question that is often asked is, “At what age do children stop obeying their parents?” We do not believe this to be an age, but a state. When children live independent of their parents the relationship changes and children are no longer under their parents’ authority. At all times parents are to be honored, but parenting changes when children live independent of their parents. The relationship is that of mentoring not authority.

❖ **As an adult, how can you show honor to your parents?**

6. The next role for parents is that of **encourager**. This is viewed from the negative by Paul by commanding to not do the opposite of encourage.

⁴**Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger**, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Eph 6:4

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

The Father's parental role is to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This is the father's responsibility as the head of the household (Eph 5:23). The mother's role is to assist the father in bringing up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord because she, according to God's design, is her husband's helper (Gen 2:18).

"Provoke" (Eph 6:4) means to stimulate one to the point of a brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured and not allowed to die. "Exasperate" (Col 3:21) means to excite to anger or to cause irritation or annoyance. Both of these words are in the present tense meaning that parents are to take care to not be continually doing this to their children.

The result in children of parents who provoke/exasperate is that they may "lose heart". "Lose heart" is literally "without passion, desire, or spirit" and means to become disheartened to the point of losing motivation, to be dispirited, to be broken in spirit, or to feel like giving up.

Paul was vague concerning the exact ways parents can exasperate their children. The application of this command is left to the parents as they walk in the Spirit. One thing we do know is that children can become angry at their parents for many reasons. A child angry because he/she does not want to obey their parents is not provoked/exasperated.

However, wise, godly teachers of God's Word can provide some insight. Here are several ways parents can provoke/exasperate their children (adapted from the MacArthur NT Commentary of Ephesians and Colossians).

1. By overprotection or never allowing children age-appropriate liberty and enforcing overly strict rules. These parents do not trust their child. Nothing the child does earns their parents trust and the child can begin to despair and believe their behavior is irrelevant which can lead to rebellion.
 - ❖ **Do you provide your children with age-appropriate freedom?**
2. By lack of standards (the opposite of overprotection). This is a failure to discipline or to discipline inconsistently. These children are left to their own and cannot handle that freedom and begin to feel insecure and unloved.
 - ❖ **Do you set boundaries for your children?**
3. By excessive discipline, abusing your children verbally, emotionally, or physically.
 - ❖ **Do you discipline in anger?**
4. By showing favoritism or comparing the child unfavorably to siblings or other children. A Biblical example is Jacob with Joseph.
 - ❖ **Are you careful to not show favoritism?**
5. By depreciating their worth or insensitivity to your child's problems. Many children are convinced that what they do and feel is not important. Parents who do not listen to their children can move them to be discouraged.
 - ❖ **Do you provide show your children that you value what they think and say?**

6. By perfectionism or setting unrealistic goals or pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds; by never rewarding them, or never letting them feel they have succeeded. Nothing is enough, so children never get full approval.

❖ **Are you encouraging your children by awarding small successes?**

7. By failing to show affection. Parents need to communicate love verbally and physically. This would include not being available or having time for other things but not your children and not keeping promises.

❖ **Do you show your children that they are loved, even when they sin?**

8. By not providing for their needs. By providing necessities, parents show their respect and concern for their children.

❖ **Do you provide for you children's needs (not necessarily wants)?**

9. By criticism without praise. This child learns to condemn himself and to find fault with others. Parents should seek to create in the home a positive, constructive environment.

❖ **Do you provide constructive criticism or always fault-finding?**

10. By neglect or indifference. The result is rebellion (David and Absalom).

❖ **Are you involved in your children's lives?**

11. By hypocrisy. By being different at home than you are with other people.

❖ **Do you have a church face and a home face?**

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul used positive parenting examples when talking about spiritual care, a positive contrast of the negative “provoke” or “exasperate”.

⁷**But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.** ⁸Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. 1 Thess 2:7-8

¹⁰You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹just as **you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,** ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 1 Thess 2:10-12

7. The next role for parents is that of **nurturer**. After looking at the negative in Ephesians 6:4, Paul gives the positive.

⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** Eph 6:4

“But” in the Greek is a contrast word. The opposite of “provoking to anger” is “bring them up”.

“Bring them up” means to provide adequate nourishment, to nurture. It is a present imperative calling for this to be the parents’ lifestyle or habitual practice.

“Discipline” means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity. It is a broad term, signifying whatever parents do to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them develop and mature as they ought. It includes the idea of correction for wrongdoing. It is the overall training of children.

“Instruction” means putting in the mind and implies the teaching of the Lord's ways through His Word. It is any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.

It is important to understand that it is not enough to “not provoke”, parents must also put on the positive of nurturing their children.

❖ **Are you nurturing your children or do you leave that to electronics?**

A Word for Single Parents

Much of the Bible’s teaching on parenting is centered on a two parent model – two believing parents who are striving to be obedient to the Lord through the power of the Spirit. Yet, we also know that there are many families who do not have two-parent households and the Scriptures speak to this also.

Even if only one parent is present or only one is a believer, that one must seek to honor the Lord and His Word by applying the commands and principles of nurturing their children. Above all, God is there in those situations.

⁵**A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. ⁶God makes a home for the lonely;** He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land. Psa 68:5-6

⁹**The Lord protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow,** But He thwarts the way of the wicked. ¹⁰The Lord will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord! Psa 146:9-10

Concluding Thoughts

Parenting is not easy, yet with the Lord’s strength it is possible to parent in a way that honors Him. Parents must be filled with the Spirit, live out the “one-anothers” for their children to experience, be actively involved in a maturing body of believers, fulfill their marital roles, be a unified authority in the home, be an encourager, and be a nurturer. Neither the father nor the mother will be able to do these things and to do so to the glory of God unless they choose to bow before God and His word.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: Your teenage child disobeys nearly all the time. There are few times when you ask him/her to do something (like get out of bed, move quickly to help the family, do chores, do schoolwork, etc.) that he/she does it without grumbling and complaining. You are at your wits end. What truths from today’s study might help? What should you focus on?

Yourself #2: You grew up in a single parent home so you don’t know what the big deal is with being unified with your spouse on parenting issues. After looking at our study today, what are some changes you might want to make to honor what God has called you to be as a parent?

Someone Else #1: A friend knows you are a churchgoer. She (He) knows your kids aren’t perfect, but there is joy and peace in your family that she doesn’t enjoy. She asks how she can have the same thing. What might you share with your friend? What is your primary concern? What other things might you share about Biblical parenting?

Someone Else #2: A workmate seems down recently. You ask if he (she) is ok and he gives the normal, “everything is fine” answer. But you press and he finally tells you of the difficulty he and his wife are having with their 2 year old. In thinking about bringing biblical care to your hurting friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What is the next thing you might share with him?

Marriage and Parenting – Additional Study
Topic 10 – Parenting – Father and Mother Roles

Read Ephesians 5:18-6:4 and Colossians 3:16-21.

Where does the power to fulfill God's pattern for marriage and family come from?

List the ways in which you fulfill God's plan for marriage and family?

List the ways in which you do not fulfill God's plan for marriage and family?

What would the leadership role of bringing up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord require of the father?

What would the assisting role of bringing up her children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord require of the mother?

How difficult would it be for a husband to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord if his wife did not believe that he loved her?

How difficult would it be for a husband to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord if his wife was not subject to him?

Read through the list in this study of ways in which a parent can provoke/exasperate their child. In what ways do you provoke/exasperate your child? What should you be doing instead?

Read through the "one-anothers" listed in the study and note how you can live them out to your children.