

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),

3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

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

There are many people in the world, real or not, that can learn the example of being a father.

This message takes us back to the best place where we can find that perfect example... to the Bible and God/Christ!

I think most of us who are fathers in this room want to, and want to be good fathers.

In my generation I got to pick from several role models.

Homer Simpson, Tim the tool man Taylor, Al Bundy, George Jetson, Fred Flintstone!

Now, apparently on TV I can even have the role model of two gay fathers parenting their child.

As for my dad, He was absent even when he was home, he would pretty much fall asleep as soon as he hit his chair.

I'm not bashing my dad, but he worked all the time and he did the best he could with what he had.

But you know, one of the toughest parts for me being a dad, and I know I'm not alone, is sacrificing my time and my desires to spend time with my son.

But that's not the only challenge.

I can do that, and really I love being with him, but then I was left with the challenge of what now?

It's like when we become fathers, all memory of ourselves actually being kids goes away, and we haven't got a clue what to do when we're alone with our children.

So I often found myself saying what do you want to do?

That just doesn't sound like leading to me?

I didn't have the best model for being a father (not even God when I was young) no matter where I looked, and so when I had a son, I was basically making it up from the best of what I saw which wasn't great.

If we're honest guys, how many of us saw this pattern as fathers and find ourselves kind of repeating it?

A father works hard to provide stuff for his family, but often don't you find that that can be an excuse?

We really want to work for our own satisfaction, and even maybe to avoid having to parent sometimes.

Don't get me wrong,

I don't think there's any bad intent here, but rather it's a sense of incompetence that we can overcome with work, so we would rather work than parent, for our own sense of competence?

And society is set up so that that's normal.

It's what we saw.

Dad is the provider and maybe the disciplinarian.

But when it comes to the more complex issues of parenting and dealing with the thoughts and emotions of our kids, we get kind of nervous and appreciate having the luxury of handing them off to mom.

Maybe this is just me, but I'm pretty sure some of you at least can relate.

It never occurred to me that I could go to scripture to see what the Father of all children says about being a dad.

So that's what I want to do today.

Some of you have seen the movie Courageous, and I believe every father should see it.

I want you to be thinking in the background of today's message is the idea of a covenant.

Our Father in heaven is a covenant maker and in this movie fathers are encouraged to make a covenant, or resolution based on His word.

The verse I want to focus on today is Ephesians 6:4 and let me just say that our primary job as fathers, as it is for God, is to build good character and values in our children.

Everything else comes from that.

Character, who we are, what we stand for; and I believe this verse gives us amazing divine guidance for doing that. Let me read it...

Three things we see in this verse.

1. Do not provoke your children to anger. What does that mean?

The word for provoke is *parorgizo* which contains the word for beside, and the word where we get orgy from, which literally means extreme passion.

I know I've misunderstood this statement and I bet many of us have.

It means, do not show violent passion beside your children, or do not model violent passion that would discourage them.

The saying applies to both how we treat them, and how we model beside them.

In a nutshell we could say, model emotional self control.

2. Bring up or nourish or nurture them, even cherish and train them, in the discipline (tutelage or correction)...

3. And the calling attention to or warning of the Lord.

Let me put it together simply, model emotional self control to your children, correct them and warn them based on what the Lord says.

We want our kids to have success in the world, and there's nothing wrong with that. But it is more important that we train them for eternity.

And so I believe that God's instruction here in Ephesians is to simply model a God centered life and correct and warn them according to the Bible, so that they also grow up in that way.

Warn your daughter about wearing revealing clothes, your son about hanging out with those guys.

That worldly success and popularity doesn't override following God.

When I look at it this way, suddenly the job doesn't look so daunting.

God doesn't need me to have all the answers, he is instructing me to control myself and look to Him for the answers, and teach my son what I learn from Him.

It's all there, and that takes a lot of pressure off.

Dads are we standing by while we live the world's way only not quite as bad?

Do we allow our children to set their own standards of what to wear, what they watch, what they listen to, because it takes too much effort and conflict to step in and stand up for Christian values? "

A child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother" (Pr 29:15).

Are we like Eli where judgment fell upon his family forever because he knew about their sin, "his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them". (1 Sam 3:13)

So, what if we do this and the children still don't follow or honor our instruction?

Let's ask what God is going to do to them if they don't follow His ways.

The previous verse in Ephesians says that life will not go well for them.

In Deuteronomy 6 we know the part that says you shall teach your children about me when you sit, walk, lie down, rise, but further along in that chapter, here's what happens when we don't fear and serve the Lord, "God's anger will be kindled against you and he will destroy you from the face of the earth".

Proverbs 19:18, "Discipline your children while there is hope; do not set your heart on letting them die".

Chasten, punish your children for disobedience or the alternative is much worse.

Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof produces wisdom", and 29:17,

"discipline will give you peace of mind".

The good kind of discipline that teaches children best is the kind I got sometimes, and many of you did as well.

And yes it is based somewhat on fear.

The satanically ruled world, though produces many people who abuse rather than discipline, and so the most effective disciplinary methods we have, have been made illegal (thank you Satan).

And you can't tell me that the outlawing of discipline by parents, police, teachers, etc has had an overall positive effect.

Our heavenly Father is certainly not afraid to use fear as a disciplinary guidance tactic.

Uhhh obey me or burn in Hell, or have enemy nations come against you.

Kids have a hard time looking into the future, so we might say, you don't understand this now but if you do this there will be rewards or consequences in the future.

That's gonna slide right by them.

But they certainly do understand punishment now.

It motivates much more effectively.

But we can't forget the first part of that verse in Ephesians.

To discipline and correct with self-control in a calm, loving manner.

Effective punishment for wilful disobedience will not discourage a child.

A constant angry, dictatorial attitude will.

Drawn out lectures will.

Discipline needs to be like when a child touches a hot stove.

The stove isn't angry with the child, it is simply giving immediate painful feedback and consequence to teach the child to never again touch it, and it works really well.

Our discipline needs to be immediate, quick, and make sense.

But it also needs to be backed up with the word of God.

It needs to instruct.

Sometimes I wonder if we shouldn't all memorize the Proverbs and have our kids memorize them.

They're full of straight forward wisdom from God for an effective life.

The problem is that most of the world doesn't abide by biblical principles anymore, so when we do, it may not always appear to be working well.

If everyone was committed to them, this would be utopia.

That is one way Satan has made it so much more challenging to live in obedience to God's ways, because it's against the grain.

Our children look at people who try to follow God's ways and see the results in the world and get the same doubt that Satan put in Eve's mind, "Is this really the best way?"

But why is it that most people don't follow the instructions of God's Word even in the church?

It's very simple, fathers have not followed their primary instruction from the word to teach and discipline their children in the Lord.

Yes, this heaps a huge responsibility on dad's who have focussed on the duty of providing material things for their family, and yes God wants that.

But in a very real way, God has placed the responsibility for our children's character and soul's right into our hands.

And I want to say to dads, don't even worry too much about all the other commands right now, focus on doing this one well.

Love your wife sacrificially, and discipline, instruct and correct your children in the Lord.

You do that well, and you're way ahead of most fathers and most Christians.

If you have seen the movie.

The future is best shown in the Courageous movie, where these few men have searched scripture for how to be a good father, and are having a ceremony to make this covenant before God and their families.

Imagine if every man in the church of Jesus Christ made those commitments and took them seriously, never mind outside of the church.

Do you think the world would be different?

If every professing Christian father, approximately five hundred million of them completely obeyed God in this one area, I believe the world would be changed.

What does it take?

Desire and courage.

You gotta want it and you gotta be courageous.

Really it's what we all need to be real Christians period.

Wanting to live by God's Word, and being courageous enough to do it in spite of the worldly opposition.

What's at stake?

Our children's souls, and not only that, their futures in this world.

Look at how fast the world has changed in the last 100 years.

Probably more change than in the previous 1000 years.

There's no reason to believe that pace is going to change.

And that means that if we change, the world could be very different in a very short time.

Now I know this is heavy and we are going to leave here today and quickly forget about what we heard this morning.

I'm going to be off to Get lunch right after this, some of you will be going out for brunch, or whatever.

Enjoy your father's day, but I want you also to enjoy being a godly father everyday.

Try not to see this as a burden, but as an adventure that will have such positive consequences that you will celebrate in the days and months and years to come.

Ask yourself right now, what will I be most proud of the day I die?

How many bushels of grain I produced in my lifetime, how many cars I sold, that amazing renovation I completed on my house, those trophies I won.

You know what I'm talking about.

Do you think you will ever be happier or prouder than when you see your children enter heaven?

Evangelism and living for God begins in the home, so commit to that above all other things.

But most of all, commit to knowing and doing God's Word.

We have it for a reason, and it isn't just to be inspired or to absorb knowledge, it is meant to be done as our guidebook for life.

When you take your last breath and everything else fades away, what will you have, what will be most important, what will be the regrets that slap you in the face.

And guys we can't do this alone.

And we can't let each other get away with casual disobedience.

It's too easy for that to become contagious and the norm.

The stakes are too high.

So what are we gonna do?

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Fred Fitzgerald Ph.D.