

Homework – 5
Ephesians 6:4
“Raising them Right”

1. John Wilmot, the former Earl of Rochester, said, “Before I was married I had three theories about raising children. Now I have three children and no theories.”ⁱ Only those who have tried to rear children can truly understand that, “Insanity is hereditary. You get it from your children.”

2. Being a parent is an inexplicable blessing, and at the same time it is an incomparable challenge. No other endeavor in life will so excite you and exhaust you, bless you and break you, delight you and drain you like the task of bringing up a child.

3. Someone once asked a mother of three, wild, pre-schoolers whether or not she would have children again if she had it to do all over. She immediately answered, “Sure, just not the same three.”ⁱⁱ

4. Though you may at times wish you could trade in your children for a model with less maintenance, the reality is that your child is a unique gift from God. In His sovereign wisdom, God has entrusted you with the life of another person, one that is usually a lot like yourself.

5. With the blessing of children comes the high and heavy responsibility of being a parent. It is not for the squeamish, the selfish, or the foolish. Parenting is the task of a lifetime, and it carries with it great risks, but also eternal rewards.

6. Christian parents have an obligation to rear their children in accordance with the teachings of the Word of God. Godly parents do not simply raise their children; they raise them right – in a way that is biblical and pleasing to Christ.

7. As you read through the Apostle Paul’s domestic theology in Ephesians chapters 5 and 6, you find valuable instructions for every relationship within the family. Paul opens chapter 6 by speaking to children, and then in verse 4, he addresses parents.

8. Though he uses the word “fathers”, it is clear that he is speaking to both parents when he says, “...provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

9. I want to examine this verse more closely, and draw from it three important principles for the godly parents who desire to raise their children the right way. Notice these principles with me. First of all, if you want to raise them right:

I. TREAT YOUR CHILDREN WITH CARE

1. If you ever watched a toddler fall 600 times in a single day, bouncing their heads off of furniture and the floor, then you know that kids can be remarkably tough and resilient.
2. While kids are physically tough, they are emotionally fragile. That is why Paul begins his instructions to Christian parents with a negative command. He says in verse 4, "...provoke not your children to wrath."
3. That phrase "provoke not" can be translated a number of different ways. It means to irritate, or to agitate to the point of causing resentment. Some have translated this phrase as, "Don't exasperate your children."
4. The idea here is of not treating your children in such a way that you bring them to a point of frustration, anger, despair, and resentment. In other words, a godly parent will be careful in how they treat their children.
5. Notice a couple of things about the treatment Paul prohibits in this verse. First of all, think about:

A. The cause of an angry child

1. In verse 4, Paul does not say exactly how a child can become exasperated and angry, but I think there are some clear causes that we can identify. There are probably many, but just think about these few.
2. First of all, *a critical parent* can cause a child to become angry. There is a difference in verbal correction and hurtful criticism. The parent who constantly harps on a child's flaws and failures, always pointing out what is wrong with a child, is creating a child that will be full of resentment.
3. Also, *a confusing parent* can create an angry child. What I mean is the parent that is inconsistent. A parent who demands one thing from a child, but does another themselves, or the parent who allows one thing today, but demands something else the next, is a confusing parent.
4. Further, *a controlling parent* can raise a resentful child. Kids should not be out of control, but they should not be over-controlled either. The parent that tries to dominate and dictate every aspect of a child's life is creating a rebellious and angry child. On this point, Pastor John MacArthur says, "Their wills can be guided, but they cannot be controlled."ⁱⁱⁱ
5. Also, *a cold parent* will produce a frustrated and angry child. The mom or dad that is detached and distant from their child; who shows little concern or interest, and refuses affection and affirmation, is a cold parent.

6. Finally, among many others, *a complacent parent* will raise an angry child. The complacent parent is the one who is too busy with other things, or simply too lazy to give their children what they need. The child of a complacent parent will grow up with resentment and frustration.

7. The godly parent must be careful, because the life of a child is an impressionable and fragile thing. Our impact upon them is enormous, and can be dangerous if we don't treat them with care.

8. Think with me not only about the cause of an angry child, but also:

B. The cost of an angry child

1. Look again at verse 4. Paul says, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath..." Why would the apostle begin his instructions to parents with this negative command?

2. The answer is because he knew that once a child had reached the point of exasperation and frustration, the parent would no longer be able to effectively teach and lead them. The parent who raises an angry child cannot expect to raise a godly one at the same time.

3. You can bring your children to church, and you can tell them that they need to love the Lord Jesus and serve him, but if you are frustrating them and angering them by your lousy and careless parenting, don't expect them to listen to your spiritual guidance.

4. If you are not careful in how you treat your child, you will lose the power of influence over them, and while they may grow up in your house, you will not have raised them.

5. A police officer saw a little fellow walking down the side of the road with a backpack. The officer pulled over and asked him, "Where you headed, son?" The little boy answered, "I'm running away from home." The officer said, "Why are you doing that?" The boy replied, "Because mom and dad won't mind me anymore."

6. Some kids run away, but others have been pushed away. The parent that is not careful will drive their children to anger, rather than developing them into adulthood.

7. Notice a second principle we draw from this verse. If you are going to raise your children right, not only must you *treat your children with care*, but notice also that you must:

II. TRAIN YOUR CHILDREN THROUGH COMMITMENT

1. One of the most famous verses in the Bible, dealing with the subject of parenting, is Proverbs 22:6. It says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

2. In Ephesians 6:4, Paul echoes part of that verse when he says that rather than provoking your children to wrath, you should, "...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

3. Notice that phrase "bring them up". It is translated from one Greek word, and it means to bring up to maturity. The idea is of caring for someone until they have grown up into adulthood.

4. Understanding this, we are reminded that parenting is not a part-time job. It is a process that requires commitment. As someone has noted, "You spend the first two years of your child's life teaching them to walk and talk. You spend the next 18 years telling them to sit down and be quiet."

5. In all seriousness, the Bible tells us that parents who want to build and train good kids must be seriously committed in a couple of specific areas. First of all, a godly parent must be committed to training their children:

A. By consistently disciplining them

1. Look again at verse 4. We are told to bring up our children "...in the nurture...of the Lord." That word nurture is translated from a word that speaks of the entire process of training or rearing a child.

2. The same Greek word is found in Hebrews chapter 12, and it is translated as "chastening." In verse 4, the word "nurture" is talking about the work of disciplining your children.

3. One of my favorite preachers is a young professor and pastor named Dr. Russell Moore. He recently preached a sermon at the church where pastors in Kentucky. The title immediately got my attention. His sermon was entitled "The Purpose-Driven Paddle".

4. I believe that in spite of the changing attitudes of our day, every loving, godly parent will have and use a "purpose-driven paddle." Discipline, including that of spanking, is clearly laid out in the Word of God.

5. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him [diligently]." Consistent, firm, and loving discipline is a commitment that every Christian parent must make.

6. Do you realize that when you discipline your child, you model theological truth for them? Hebrews 12:6 says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

7. By consistently disciplining your child, you teach them that sin has consequences, and that God loves them too much to let them continue in their sins.

8. Likewise, the parent who does not discipline their child, or who is inconsistent in their discipline teaches their children that God’s Word is not true, and that committing sin has little or no price.

9. Christian parents must train their children, not only by consistently disciplining them, but also:

B. By carefully directing them

1. Look again at verse 4, and notice the other word that Paul uses. He says, “...bring them up in the...admonition of the Lord.” Mark that word “admonition”. It is translated from a word that literally means “putting in mind”.

2. The idea of “admonition” is verbal instruction and direction. It is the education that a parent gives to their children.

3. I thank God for those who work as teachers and educators in our schools. They fill an important role in our society, and they are not appreciated as they should be.

4. However, the person who does the most to direct your child and to shape their thinking should not be their history teacher, or their guidance counselor. It should be you – their parents.

5. Godly parents cannot afford to delegate the education of their children to an employee of the state. If you are going to raise your children right, then how they think, and how they view their world must be taught to them by you – not a government mandated curriculum.

6. In many ways, parents are teachers who don’t get the summer off. You are supposed to be the primary educator and instructor for your child. You are to admonish them, and direct them as they mature and grow into adulthood.

7. When baseball legend Harmon Killebrew was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, in the class of 1984, he told about how his father had taught him and his brother how to play baseball in the front yard of their home. He said, “One day my mother came out and told him we were ruining the lawn. My father told her, ‘We’re raising kids, not grass’.”^{iv}

8. We need more parents who understand the priority of raising and training their kids. It is a commitment that must come above everything else. It is the commitment to consistently discipline and carefully direct the life of the children with which God has entrusted them.

9. There is a final principle that I want to draw from this verse. If you are going to raise your children right, notice not only that you must *treat your children with care*, and *train your children through commitment*, but notice also thirdly that godly parents must:

III. TEACH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT CHRIST

1. Notice the last three words of verse 4, "...of the Lord." All of Paul's instructions to parents are capped off by this statement. The efforts of a Christian parent are all aimed at producing a child who knows and loves the Lord.

2. Raising your kids right means teaching them what is right. That means that you must teach your kids about Jesus. As a parent, the Bible calls upon you to be an evangelist in your home, and witness to your kids.

3. It is sad when a parent is more concerned about their kids going to college than they are about them going to heaven. It is a tragedy when a father will teach his son how to catch a football and run down the field, but he will not teach him how to carry his Bible and walk with Jesus.

4. If we are going to do our homework, we must begin by teaching our own children about Christ. I want to say a couple of things about this priority of being a witness to your children. First of all:

A. Don't neglect this opportunity

1. I am afraid that too many parents spend little or no time talking to their kids about the things of God. Dr. James Dobson once observed that, "We spend so much time trying to give our kids the things we did not have, that we have forgotten to give them that we did have."

2. Unreservedly, I would say to any parent, regardless of what you give your children, if you do not teach them about Christ, you have failed them as a parent. You must not neglect the opportunity you have to teach your kids about Jesus.

3. Some parents neglect this opportunity by outsourcing it. What I mean is that they think it is the church's job to teach their children about Christ. Therefore, they feel that as long as they take their kids to church, their kids will come to know Jesus.

4. While the church should help you in teaching your kids about Jesus, it cannot replace you! A Sunday school teacher, or a youth pastor will never be able to replace a godly mom and dad that personally witness to their kids.

5. Other parents neglect this opportunity by replacing it. That is, they feel that as long as they involve their kids in good activities, and keep them busy with innocent activities, that will somehow save them from sin and hell.

6. Understand; your child doesn't have to go wild to go to hell. Just because they make all-stars and honor-roll doesn't mean they will make it to heaven. You can raise a valedictorian, who goes to Harvard, but ends up a pagan that dies and goes to hell.

7. You ought to encourage your children to achieve and succeed, but don't be fooled into thinking that a successful child is a saved one. Don't neglect the unique opportunity that you have to lead your children to Christ!

8. Notice something else about the priority of teaching your children about Christ. Don't neglect this opportunity, and also, I would say to you:

B. Don't negate this opportunity

1. It is one thing for a parent to witness to their children about Jesus. It is another thing for that parent to walk with Jesus in front of those children.

2. Some parents carry their kids to church, and preach to them about their need of Christ, but then they negate all of that by the hypocritical way in which they live their lives.

3. Don't tell your kids that God loves them unconditionally, and then shun them when they disappoint you. Don't expect your kids to read the Bible if you never open yours.

4. Don't look for your kids to appreciate the church if you hardly attend it. Don't expect your kids to understand the sacrificial death of Jesus if you won't even sacrifice your favorite TV shows in order to spend time talking to them.

5. Don't think your children will believe in the power of Christ to change a life if they see no change in you! You will negate your opportunity to witness to your children if you don't live for Jesus yourself.

6. A little boy asked his dad one day, "Daddy, what is a Christian?" The dad thought for a moment, because he wanted to give a good answer to such an important question. Finally he said, "A Christian is a person who loves and obeys God. He loves his friends, his neighbors, and even his enemies. He is kind and

gentle and prays a lot. He looks forward to going to heaven and thinks that knowing God is better than anything on this earth. That, son, is a Christian.”

7. The little boy sat quiet for a minute, and then he said, “Daddy, have I ever seen a Christian?”

8. As a Christian parent, if you are going to raise your children right, you must share Christ with them and show Christ to them. You must teach your children about Christ!

1. The children’s Sunday school teacher asked the class, “Why do you love God?” There were a number of different answers, but the best came from a little boy who said, “I guess it just runs in the family.”

2. It is God’s intent that Christian parents bring up their children according to the mandates of His Word. Godly moms and dads are supposed to produce godly children.

3. For this to happen, and for parents to raise their kids right, fathers and mothers are going to have to treat their children with care, train their children through commitment, and teach their children about Christ.

4. Your kids don’t need perfect parents; but they do need godly ones. The greatest thing you can do for your children is to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

ⁱ Morgan, Robert J., Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2000), p. 591

ⁱⁱ Swindoll, Charles, The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart, (Word Publishing, Nashville, 1998), p. 75

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur, John, Ephesians, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1986), p. 317

^{iv} McHenry, Raymond, McHenry’s Quips, Quotes, & Other Notes, (Hendrickson Publishing, Peabody, MA, 1998), p. 181