

Parents High Calling

This morning we will look at some thoughts regarding the “Parents High Calling.”

As I was writing this talk a FOX news alert popped up on my phone regarding a shooting at a junior high school just outside of Indianapolis. A young boy shot a fellow student and teacher. There have been a couple other school shootings making headlines recently. I have a suspicion that our topic this morning is fitting for these types of incidents. Children provoked to anger by what their parents either did, or did not do in raising them. If your son or daughter is angry enough to cause someone bodily harm, then the question is, What happened to cause this child to be so hostile? Did his parents have any roll in this anger?

Ephesians 6:4 – Fathers (parents), do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

The bible declares that Children are a gift from God. They are not a burden. They are not in the way, they are not an afterthought of life. But, they are from God, given to us as one way He helps us to be conformed into the image of Christ. Through the challenges of parenting I have had opportunities to develop in the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. My children have helped me better understand my sinful heart, and to recognize my great need and dependence on Jesus Christ. They have helped me to realize the vast amount of grace I need from God to change to be more like Christ.....

Before we dig into our text this morning, let's consider what has been preached here over the last few months. If we don't understand and apply the lessons of Ephesians chapters 4 and 5, we'll be like a ship without a rudder here this morning. Chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 puts emphasis on the individual Christians growth in becoming faithful. The end of Chapter 5 puts emphasis on a Christian husband and Christian wife becoming a faithful partner in marriage by fulfilling their God given roles.

And only then do we come to today's text in Ephesians 6:4, Where Paul puts emphasis on being a faithful parent. You can't be a faithful parent, able to apply the truth of Ephesians 6:4, without first being faithful in applying the teachings of Ephesians chapters 4 and 5 to yourself personally, and to your marriage.

If you are a single parent here this morning, God can and will bless your parenting if you will look to him in your singleness. If you will press in to what he calls you to as an obedient Christian.

Please open your bibles to Ephesians 4 so we can quickly look at some truths to remind ourselves of our personal Christian walk.

IN THIS CURRENT PREACHING SERIES ON EPHESIANS; CHAPTER 4 HELPED US AS CHRISTIANS WALK WITH CHRIST AND FAITHFULLY GROW. WE HAVE TO START HERE THIS MORNING BEFORE JUMPING AHEAD TO TODAY'S TEXT ON THE “PARENTS HIGH CALLING.” SO, LET'S LOOK BRIEFLY AT SOME KEY THOUGHTS FROM EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4. AND THEN WE'LL LOOK AT THE END OF CHAPTER 5 AS WE THINK ABOUT IT IN LIGHT OF OUR MARRIAGE.

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So here we go, reflecting on our own Christian walks through Ephesians 4 and 5

4:2 – Walk in a worthy manner, in humility, gentleness, patience, showing tolerance and love for one another.

v-13, Become a mature man.

v-15, Speak truth in love and grow up in Christ.

v-17, Don't walk like the gentiles walk in the futility of their mind.

v-22, Lay aside the old self that is being corrupted

v-23, Be renewed in the spirit of your mind

v-24, Put on the new self, created in righteousness

v-25, Lay aside falsehood/speak truth

v-26, Don't let the sun go down on your anger

v-29, Don't speak unwholesome words, but speak edifying words

v-31, Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice be put away from you

v-32, Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, just as God in Christ has forgiven you

NOW CONTINUING IN EPHESIANS 5

v-1, Be imitators of God

v-2, Walk in love, just as Christ loved you and gave Himself for you

V-3-4, There should be no immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting among you

v-4, Instead, be thankful

v-11, Don't participate in unfruitful deeds of darkness

v-15, Be careful how you walk not as unwise but as wise

v-17, Don't be foolish, but know Gods will

v-18, Do not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit

v-20, Always give thanks for all things

These are some great truths regarding what my personal walk should look like. Does it?

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NOW WE'RE LOOKING AT ROLES IN OUR MARRIAGE. ARE WE BEING FAITHFUL HERE?

v-22, Wives be subject (submissive) to your husbands

v-25, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church

v-33, Husband, love your own wife as you love yourself. Wives respect your husbands

So, from what we've learned in Ephesians 4 and 5, I can understand that as a Christian who is determined to please God, I must live out a consistent Christ like life in my personal walk, then in my marriage, and finally in my parenting. This progression is highly important. Honoring Christ starts in my personal life, then moves to my marriage, and then to my parenting. If I am living out Chapter 4 and 5, I will then be growing in maturity and will be better able to live out Ephesians 6:4 in my parenting.

Always remember that we can't accomplish this without the transforming power of grace.

Now let's look closer at today's text:

Ephesians 6:4 – Fathers (parents), do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

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

This morning I want us to look at the two key TRUTHS from this verse. These are not suggestions for the Christian, they are commands.

1. Father's (parents), do not provoke your children to Anger
2. Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord

1 – The first truth from Ephesians 6:4 is, we are not to provoke our children to anger.

We are commanded here, not to provoke. Don't do it! I am not to exasperate, frustrate, anger my child by sinning against them in speech or actions. I am not to provoke my child to anger and put them in a position to sin in responding to my harshness.

When talking to struggling parents I often remind them during conflict with a child that, "Someone in the room needs to be the parent."

John MacArthur writes.....To "provoke to anger" suggests a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility.

Tim Challies – 7 Ways Parents Unfairly Provoke Their Children

1 - Goodness instead of holiness. We may provoke our children to anger and discouragement when we teach them to be good instead of holy, when we care more for their good behavior than their holy hearts. We can too easily content ourselves with outwardly moral children instead of children who are inwardly holy. We can focus on bad behavior instead of the sinful heart that causes and enjoys that bad behavior. This will eventually provoke our children to anger and discouragement because they will see that we are calling them to a standard of behavior that is impossible, a standard they cannot reach until their hearts are first transformed. Not only that, but they will see the gap between what the Bible teaches and what we promote, and they will sink into angry despair. Parents, don't content yourself with good kids but pray for holy kids, for children whose good behavior flows out of a transformed heart. Shepherd them with and to the gospel instead of badgering them with unfair and impossible demands.

We need to live before our children in such a way that we can say not only “Do what I say” but “Do what I do.”

2 - Hypocrisy instead of authenticity. We can provoke our children to anger and discouragement when we live with hypocrisy instead of authenticity, when we hold ourselves to one standard but hold them to another one. When we allow this, our children will see that we have no firm standard and they will come to believe that the Christian faith only calls for change in the eyes of other people, not in the eyes of God. Yet God calls us to discipline and instruct our children by explanation and demonstration, by explaining with words and demonstrating with our lives. We need to live before our children in such a way that we can say not only “Do what I say” but “Do what I do.” We need to take our cues from the apostle Paul who could boldly tell others, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). (See [The Humblest Words](#).)

3 - Doubt instead of confidence. We can provoke our children when we live in great doubt instead of great confidence in God's desire to save them. There are all sorts of good things we want for our children, but nothing more than their salvation. Parents can live with crippling fear that God will not save our children, and this fear has consequences: We can become heavy-handed, demanding our children turn to Christ, or we can become manipulative, constantly begging or pleading with them to make a profession. Our children may then grow angry and discouraged because they will see their parents professing faith in a God who is sovereign and good but then acting as if God is neither one. God's instruction to parents is to discipline and instruct our children with confidence that God loves to save the lost and that he saves them through the appointed means—the gospel. (See 1 Timothy 2:4 and [What Gives God Pleasure](#).) As we expose our children to the gospel through our discipline and instruction, we can expect that the gospel will do its work. We need to raise our children to hear the gospel proclaimed and to see it lived out. All the while we need to trust that God will work through his gospel.

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4 - Fear instead of boldness. We may provoke our children when we raise them in fear instead of boldness. It is wise parenting to protect our children by holding back evil influences until they have developed and matured. But it is unwise parenting to so shelter our children that they never see and experience sin and its ugly consequences. Many parents make decisions about relationships or church or education or family involvement based on fear. But fear-based parenting provokes children because we create a fictional world, a bubble that does not reflect reality. Not only that, but we hide from our children the experience of seeing sin and its consequences, the undeniable reality that sin promises joy and life but brings sadness and death. While we need to boldly raise our children to be in but not of the world, we cannot do this by sheltering them entirely from the world. We need to wisely protect our children, but without fearfully sheltering them.

5 - Anger instead of patience. We may provoke our children to anger and lead to their discouragement if we raise them with anger instead of patience. So many can testify that their parents used anger or the threat of anger as a means of correction and punishment. Discipline was not delivered with calmness and self-control but with angry slaps or cutting words. And of course this leads to anger. A parent's anger leads to their child's anger. How couldn't it? But in this case the parent's anger is unjust while the child's anger is just. God expects that we will discipline and instruct our children with patience and kindness. This involves modeling the very actions, attitudes, and words we want them to display.

6 - Aloofness instead of involvement. We may provoke our children when we raise them with aloofness instead of involvement. Too often we are involved in our kids' lives only when there are problems. We have little real relationship with our children, but then come rushing in during times of danger, disobedience, or difficulty. The parents I most want to imitate are the ones who deliberately build friendships with their children, who have a vision of their grown children being their friends and Christian brothers or sisters, and who then work deliberately toward those goals. These parents give time and attention to their children while they are young, they raise them with kindness and discipline, and they do this by holding in mind the future relationship they long to have. Parents, we need to pursue and befriend our children. (See [An Unexpected Blessing of Parenting](#).)

7 - Pride instead of humility. We will undoubtedly provoke our children to anger and discouragement if we raise them in pride instead of humility. Every generation of Christians seems to have to rediscover the ugliness of pride and the beauty of humility. Every parent needs to discover it as well. Parental pride manifests itself in a hundred different ways, but perhaps never more clearly than in an unwillingness to seek our children's forgiveness. Pride convinces us that apologizing to our children displays weakness, that it gives them power over us. Nothing could be further from the truth! Humility convinces us that apologizing to our children displays the greatest strength, that it models the very character of Christ. We will inevitably sin against our children so we need to humbly seek their forgiveness, trusting that while God opposes the proud he gives great grace to the humble (see James 4:6).

Provoking our children leads to deep seated anger and rebellion in them.

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2 – The second Key command in Ephesians 6:4 is “Parents, bring children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”

Parents, we are to discipline and instruct our children. If we love them we will discipline them. To allow a child to live life according to their desires, with little to no discipline and biblical instruction, is not love but neglect. This type of parenting is provoking your child. She may fight to be independent and to live life according to her terms, but she is neither mature, or wise enough to discipline and train herself. Left to herself, she will more than likely grow to be more and more rebellious against God.

Discipline consists of all of training, including punishment. It is not just about spankings. If the extent of my discipline and training is punishment, I’m neglecting my duty as a parent. It’s also teaching them good behavior and attitudes. It’s what proverbs teaches. Respect authority, stay away from evil doers, do good to others, be a good citizen. While we are targeting the heart for true change we are also helping the child to be disciplined and comply with authority.

Biblical discipline and instruction are emphasized as the way to life and wisdom. Here are a variety of proverbs that speak to the issue of disciplining and instructing our children:

For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life. (*Proverbs 6:23*)

Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

(*Proverbs 12:1*)

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

(*Proverbs 13:24*)

Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.

Proverbs 19:18)

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

(*Proverbs 22:6*)

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him. (*Proverbs 22:15*)

The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. (*Proverbs 29:15*)

Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul. (*Proverbs 29:17*)

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Discipline in all its aspects—positive and negative, physical and verbal—should be applied, not abusively, but in a way that encourages the child to become the kind of person God intends.

How then should you instruct your child? Let's look at Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 to 7.

Deut 6:4-7 - Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up.

Gods commands must be on my heart, and then I am to teach them diligently and consistently to my children.

Aren't you glad that God has not left us without instruction in parenting. You know, the lasting impact your parenting will have on your child, won't come from the structure of how you parented, but, by if you parented with a soft heart, a firm hand, and Gods truth through scripture, controlled by the Holy Spirit.

All parents come up short because we are at war with our own sin, we are not precise in our decision making, and we don't love as well as we should. But we and our children have great hope because of Christ and the transforming power of his grace.

So Parents, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. – THIS IS THE PARENTS HIGH CALLING, THERE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT CALLING.

In closing, consider the confession of one Christian father,

My family's all grown and the kids are all gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do. I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more—at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness. And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God.