

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/1/91 PM
Ephesians 6:4 "What God Expects of Parents"

Intro:

Today, we are concluding a mini-series focusing on the family. For 4 weeks we have examined "God's Blueprint for Family Living." We have seen:

- "How to be a Wife that Pleases God" (5:22-24)
- "Straight Talk to Husbands" (5:25-30)
- "The Marks of a Great Marriage (5:31-33)

Background for our Study:

Key: Christian homes ought to be different. And Christian homes CAN be different!

1. Because Christians are "in Christ", and have abundant resources (1:3)
2. Because Christians have the Holy Spirit

Q: What does God expect of children? We saw this morning.

Q: What does God expect of parents? What does God say it takes to be a Good Parent? That's our focus tonight.

Proposition: Ephesians 6:1-4 gives us God's design for the parent/child relationship.

- I. God's Design for Children (1-3)
 - A. The Responsibility (1-2)
 1. Involves an Act--Obey (1a)
 2. Involves an Attitude--Honor (2a)
 - B. The Rationale (1-2)
 1. This is Right (1b).
 2. This is Rewarding (2b).
 - C. The Results (3)
- II. God's Design for Parents (4)
 - A. What NOT to do
 - B. What To Do

This morning:

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Tran: Tonight we want to zero in on what God has to say about the responsibility of parents. Illust:

II. God's Design for Parents (4)

Illust: Bill Cosby's book on fatherhood

Key: Eph 6:1-4 was radical teaching in Paul's day.

Why was that? Callous cruelty prevailed in the Roman Empire. Unwanted babies were abandoned. Weak and deformed babies were killed.

Quote: Seneca wrote, "We slaughter a fierce ox; we strangle a mad dog; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle unless they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown."

When a child was born, it was placed before the father's feet. If the father stooped and lifted the child, that meant he acknowledged it and wished it to be kept. If he turned and walked away, it meant that he refused to acknowledge it and the child could quite literally be thrown out.

Unwanted children were commonly left in the Roman forum. There they became the property of anyone who cared to pick them up.

Even if the child lived, life depended on the will of the father. In Roman society the father had absolute power and authority over his family. He could sell his children as slaves. He could make them work in the fields, even with chains. He could punish his children however he wished, and could even inflict the death penalty. What's more, the father's absolute control over his child continued as long as the father lived.

Against this backdrop, the NT offered a striking and refreshing alternative, even a liberating alternative. The sanctity of human life is upheld. Guidelines exist both for children and parents.

Notice God's design for Christian parents. . .

A. What NOT to do

V 4 "And ye fathers, provoke not. . ."

"fathers" = more appropriately "parents"

"provoke not" = used on 2 times in the NT; don't exasperate; don't overcorrect
Used in Dt 32:21 where God said of His children the Israelites, "They have moved me to jealousy. . . they have provoked me to anger with their vanities. . ." The noun form of this word appears in Eph 4:26 translated "wrath."

What's God telling parents? A child's personality is delicate. Don't do things that make your kids unduly mad which would turn them against you. Don't provoke your children.

Disclaimer: Now there is a place for discipline. But it should never be arbitrary, or unkind. It should never be merely "to make you feel good" as a parent, to vent your anger.

Q: How do we provoke our children?

Obvious Ways (yet common): Sarcasm and Ridicule

Not so Obvious Ways: One of the most common ways parents provoke their kids is this. They smother their little offspring with UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. Perfectionism. When they were young, they blew it, and have

wrestled with guilt ever since. So they live vicarious lives through their kids. They drive them. They push them. They fail to let them be kids!

eg--when a child spills his/her milk (was it defiance or an accident?)

Key: The verb is a present tense prohibition which carries the sense, "Stop doing this." That's a significant observation. Why? There is a tendency in Christian parents to be overly strict and over-protective. So Paul cautions us, "Don't do that."

Some Christian parents exasperate their children by cramming religion down their throats. I had a friend like that when I was growing up. He lived in a straight-jacket. His list of do's and don'ts were so long he couldn't breathe. And he resented his parents for it. And when he got old enough, as a young teen, I used to watch him disobey behind their backs. Why? The rules of his parents couldn't touch his heart. In fact, they tended to isolate his heart.

Challenge: We're not interested in making our kids religious. We should be interested in introducing our children to a Person. Our aim is to teach our children to come to enjoy a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ!

That's what we're NOT to do as parents.

Illust:

Q: What are we to do?

B. What To Do

V 4 "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition"

How do we do that parents?

Key: Parenting takes parents.

Lots of parents are willing to give their kids things, or money. But what God expects, and children want more than anything is this--for us to invest OURSELVES in our children. And that takes time.

But it takes more than time. Time doing what?

"bring them up"--same word used in 5:29 "nourish" = feed

We wouldn't dream of telling our kids one day, "We're not going to feed you this week. We've fed you for the past 5 years. That's good enough. Feed for yourself this week." Why not? If we love our children, we make sure they receive proper nourishment.

Paul says godly parents that please Christ will do this. They will devote themselves to providing spiritual nourishment for their God-given children. They will strive by God's help to "bring up" their children in a certain way. What way is that?

1. In the nurture of the Lord

What's that? The word means "discipline". It's the word used in Heb 12 both of earthly fathers and our Heavenly Father who "discipline us for our good" (Hb 12:5-11). To "nurture" a child means to train a child, to provide learning opportunities for a child, and to provide correction when needed.

Prov 13:24 "He that spares his rod hates his son, but he that loves him chastens him early."

Prov 22:15 "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it from him."

Some parents fear discipline. Because of the abuse of discipline they received.

Quote: Martin Lloyd Jones, "The opposite of wrong discipline is not the absence of discipline, but right discipline, true discipline."

Key: In discipline, break the will of the child, but don't crush his spirit.

eg--that will take differ means of discipline for differ children

2. In the admonition of the Lord

Popular teaching today: "Let the child find his own way!" Paul says, No, parents need to provide an environment so that their kids can learn God's way. Parents are to be catalysts (Prov 22:6 "Bring up a child. . .").

"admonition" = lit. "to put in mind"; verbal education; instruction; warning

Listen. God says that children are NOT to be allowed to grow up w/o care or control. Parents are to verbally place in their minds what God expects of them.

Illust:

Practical Suggestion: We need balance in. . .

1. Set aside regular times weekly to teach your children God's Word
It's great if your kids hear it at church. But they need to hear it at home. They need to hear it come out of the lips of Mom AND Dad. If they don't, they'll be inclined to chuck it.

2. Learn to speak of God's Word in the flow of daily life.

See Deut 6:4-9 ". . . and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. . ."

Challenge: Parents, make a personal study of Proverbs.

Write down every reference to the family, to children, to parents. If you want to gain wisdom on being a good parent, look at the Wisdom Book, Proverbs.

Sample: (from my study in Feb 1989)

1:8 Sherry and I are responsible for character development, and the development of values in our children. We can clothe them with the most fashionable clothing, but if we fail to "clothe their characters", we've missed it.

1:10, 15 Parents are to warn their children to stay away from sin. Sin is dangerous. We can't protect and keep our children from the presence of sin. But we must teach them so they can choose to say NO to sin.

3:1, 11, 21 It's a father's responsibility to teach his children to cherish God's Word, God's values, and God Himself. It's also a father's task to teach his kids to appreciate the Lord's discipline.

Q: Acc to v 11, if a father loves his children, what will he do with them?

A: "discipline" them

Illust:

3:33 Promise! The Lord blesses the home of the righteous! Our hope!

Challenge: Parents, we need to get to know 2 things better.

1. What God expects of us
2. Our children

Stats: The ave amount of time dads spend with kids daily 37 seconds!

But the ave child spends 4-7 hours in front of the tube

Quote: Lee Iacocca, "Noone says on their deathbed, I wish I had spent more time with my business."

Illust: (in Morley, 26) Louis Agassiz--"fish" experiment

Communion: