

Intro

Let me tell you why I have so many children. After being saved about two years I met a friend who strongly encouraged many children. The idea was something like, if you have a lot of children you'll be able to disciple a lot of people. Build the church by having kids. I never lost that vision.

I don't remember it, but my grandmother told me that as a non-Christian (maybe age 20?) I said I would never, ever have children. Why? I saw no value or pleasure in children. They only disrupt life or cost money.

When dating Kaitlin the pre-marital agreement was 3-5 kids. She wanted a good number because she enjoyed children. I wanted a good number because I wanted to make disciples.

It's not as easy as my friend made it out. Thus the need for Paul's instruction this morning.

BIG IDEA: The Christian home is a critical mission field.

READ PASSAGE (3:16-21)

Body

Recap

Paul desired that believers become complete. No area of life untouched by God's word. One area we need to mature in is parenting.

Passage Focus

Christians that were converted from a godless culture. Now that I'm a Christian, how do I parent?

We'll address the children, then we'll address the parents. As a Christian, how can I help young families?

Point 1: Children, obey your parents (Col 3:20; Eph 6:1-3)

Colossians 3:20

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. – 3:20

Note children were present to hear the letter.

What's the role of children? Obey your parents say. Childhood is a time of self-denial.

Why? Because ("for") obeying parents pleases God

What's the right motive for obedience? To please God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. – 3:17

When your parent tells you to do something, you're faced with a choice. Will I respond with Jesus in mind?

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31

When your parent tells you to do something, you're faced with a choice. Will I respond in a way that honors God?

'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' – Mark 12:30

When your parent tells you to do something, you're faced with a choice. Will I love God in my response to my parent?

Children, your response to your parent is a response to God

- 1) God rules over his creation.
- 2) God delegates authority to mankind.

Governing authorities in society. Elders in the church. Husband in the home. And parents over children.

- 3) Rejecting parent authority = rejecting God.

Children, God established parental rule. So when you reject parental rule, you're really rejecting God. You're saying I don't care what God says about parent-child relationships. My way is better. I am free to reject God's design. Children that's why obedience is critical!

When a child is okay with rejecting God's authority, their heart becomes hard to God's word.

Parents, frame your authority in God's authority! You command them not out of convenience but out of duty before God.

Exceptions

The assumption here is Christian parents who instruct their children to follow God.

In cases where parents' rules conflict with God's rules, obey God rather than man.

Ephesians 6:1-3

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."

Why obey your parents? Paul gives two reasons.

First, children obey your parent because ("for") this is right. This is how God has designed the family to function.

Second, because things will go well with you if you honor your parents.

Honor = respect given to someone because you value them.

Children, value your parents. And when you honor your parents, things will generally go well for you. You won't bring self-inflicted consequences upon yourself and you won't prematurely be the cause of your own death.

- 1) You won't harden your heart and corrupt your conscience.

You won't be okay with sin which always destroys.

- 2) You won't look to your own wisdom.

You won't be left to your own folly. You'll subject yourself to God's instruction and learn how to do life from the one who created life.

- 3) You won't subject yourself to physical violence by provoking it.
- 4) You won't subject yourself to ruin through destructive substances.
- 5) You won't subject yourself to incarceration or the death penalty by law-breaking.

We're after heart obedience

Behavior must be rooted in love for God. We're not looking for outward moral improvement. We're looking for a different response to God. We want to see affection for God.

How a child does the dishes. How a child does their schoolwork reflects a heart response to God. Do we want children who do the dishes because they want to get to the video games? Do we want children who do the dishes because they're afraid of punishment? Do we want children who do the dishes so they can boast about being better than the other children? Or do we want children who do the dishes because they want to honor God, because they love us, because they care about the good of their family, because they trust God rewards obedience, because they know laziness is a sin to shun?

What about honoring parents when you're an adult?

- 1) We still honor our parents, but the honoring takes a new form.

Parenting involves training your child to function as an adult, live on their own, and care for their own family. We don't want them perpetually dependent on us.

There are unique circumstances that require altered expectations, like children with brain injuries.

If adult children are still living in the home, they should honor parents by respecting home guidelines (e.g., quiet hours).

- 2) Instead of obeying commands, we consider our parent's advice.

The parent moves from authoritarian to advisor. Brother and sister in Christ. Even friend.

If your parents don't think biblically, don't feel guilty about rejecting their counsel.

The fact that grown, adult children don't obey their parents means we seek to influence rather than control adult children who've rejected the faith.

- 3) Instead of obeying commands, we might care for a parent with failing health.

Point 2: Parents, don't provoke your children to despair (Col 3:21)

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. – 3:21

Now the fathers are addressed. This applies to fathers and mothers, but fathers, as head of the home, bear ultimate responsibility.

Provoke = doing something that will cause or incite a certain reaction. Provoke can speak to causing something good or bad. Here it's causing something that's bad: despair.

Despair = to be discouraged to the point where one lacks motivation and gives up.

Paul doesn't say what causes despair where the child gives up. He just says don't do the things that cause your children to lose heart. Paul has some unspecified parenting method(s) in mind.

Some parenting methods discourage child obedience.

Paul is saying parents need to be alert to the heart responses of their children. Things like despair. Bad methods could be causing bad responses.

The heart of the parent

I've hit on the child's heart response to the parent and God. Here the parent's heart is challenged. Am I after outward conformity and ease? Am I careful that my child isn't ruined through destructive methods?

Do I care about the heart of my child?

What might cause a child to give up?

In their book, *The Faithful Parent* (pages 127-142), Martha Peace and Stuart Scott list numerous ways parents provoke their children. The following relate to despair:

- 1) The despairing parent who always feels sorry for themselves and trains the child to respond to circumstances with despair.
- 2) The controlling, angry parent who bullies their children into obedience.
- 3) The parent who demands a perfect standard that is impossibly to meet given the child's sin nature.
- 4) The parent who fears what others will think thus telling their child, I don't care about you. I only care how you make me look.
- 5) The parent who says, why can't you be like your brother or sister? Thus communicating I like them more.
- 6) The omniscient, presumptuous parent who always knows the child's motives.
- 7) The "if love is there, it is a secret parent." The child detect any love for them.
- 8) The parent that is preoccupied by so many other things that they have no time for their children. Daddy must not think I'm important.

The child is still responsible for their response to flawed parenting. But the parent is doubly responsible for sinning themselves and causing their child to reject God's truth.

Biblical counseling

In biblical counseling, one thing the counselor attempts to do is instill the counselee with hope in God. Hope in forgiveness of sins, hope that we've risen with Christ, hope that we'll be glorified (bodies that can't die or sin), hope in God's character, hope in God's promises (he's working in me to change me).

Likewise, parents seek to instill hope in God in the hearts of their children, not despair.

How do we fight despair? With hope in God.

Point 3: Parents, don't provoke your children to anger (Eph 6:4)

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

We're on the heart again. How are my actions stimulating sin in my child's heart?

What might provoke a child to anger?

Here's some more from Martha Peace and Stuart Scott (pages 127-142):

- 1) The proud parent who is always right and will never admit their sin.
- 2) The "guess what the rules are today? parent" whose unjust inconsistency provoke wrath.
- 3) The exaggerating parent who arouses anger by overstating the case or bringing up the past instead of focusing on what's just been done.
- 4) The parent who tries to live the life they've always wanted through their child and forces their interests on their child against the child's wishes.
- 5) The "tradition or culture-driven parent" who elevates family traditions to the level of God's word.

For example, attempting to force grown children to maintain the parent's holiday traditions in their own home.

Application

Am I provoking anger in the local church or the work place? Am I acting in a way that causes others to stumble? Like poor use of the tongue.

Point 4: Parents, correct your children (Eph 6:4)

but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. – Ephesians 6:4

Our education is "of the Lord" meaning educating our children about God with the Bible.

Why correction?

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. – Proverbs 22:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. – Proverbs 29:15

We don't have to teach our children how to be selfish or how to be violent or how to lie. But we do have to teach how to love their neighbor, how to resolve conflict, how to be honest. Why? Because the entire human race is plagued by sin.

Correct how?

What we find in the Bible is verbal correction and physical discipline by spanking.

Why spanking?

To show children there are consequences for rejecting God's law. To remind children that they are under God's rule. To bring about repentance.

Point 5: Parents, teach your children God's truths

but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. – Ephesians 6:4

Note whose duty it is to educate their child in God and his word. The father. Not the pastor. Not the Junior Church or Sunday school teacher. Not Temple Academy. Primary responsibility falls on the Christian parent.

We teach our children who God is, what the Bible is, who we are, what God expects of us, how we respond to God, how Jesus' finished work on the cross rescues sinner from their plight, etc.

How does the local church help the parent(s)?

The local church equips parents to do their job.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, – Ephesians 4:11-12

We provide you with resources to thrive as parents. It could be Sunday school classes. A training weekend. Providing good Christian books on parenting. **How can I help?** Talk. Send an e-mail.

Jesus uses Christian parents to build his church

It's been said that most people become Christians by age 18.

- 1) The National Association of Evangelicals polled their membership in 2015 and found that 63% believed between ages 4-14.
- 2) A Barna study said 94% of adult Christians made their decision to follow Jesus by age 18.

What's the point? Scrap Senior Dinner? Stop evangelizing your loved ones who are up in age? I don't think so.

Then what's going on here? I'm thinking the Barna study might be a little flawed in their understanding of who a Christian is. The other study's more credible. Per the other study, 37% are converted after age 14. What's going on is most people who become Christians believe at a young age because the majority of Christians are converted through the Christian home. When you look at those not raised in Christian homes, the average age at which they were converted is higher than those raised in Christian homes.

My point is these polls speak to the importance of Christian parents and the Christian home.

Framing parental authority

Parents, frame your authority in God's plan of redemption. Explain to your children how God places children under the care of Christian parents to bring lost sinners to himself.

One way, a primary way, Jesus seeks and saves the lost in through the Christian home.

Non-Christian

God is after your heart.

Our problem is sin = Christianity is a religion of repentance.

There's hope in Christ.

Turn from rebellion to trust = a religion of faith.

Conclusion

The Christian home is a critical mission field. How can I help?