

INTRODUCTION

1. I would like to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians chapter six.
2. We are looking again tonight at verse 4 which says, “And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
3. In our last time together we said that the word “provoke” (parorigizo, pres.act.imp.) means “to make angry” (GING), “to arouse to wrath” (Thayer), “to exasperate” (Friberg), or “to make resentful” (UBS).
4. It means “to bring one along to a deep-seated anger.”¹
5. Now it is clear that children can exhibit sinful, selfish behavior on their own but the problem occurs when parents are responsible for this.
6. We looked last time at two ways in which we provoke our kids to anger:
7. We provoke when there is *a lack of marital harmony* between mom and dad and when mom and dad *establish and maintain a home that is child-centered rather than Christ-centered.*
8. When parents lack marital harmony it is because they not maintained a “one flesh” attitude.

¹ Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 1980). 540.

9. What I mean by that is husbands don't love their wives as Christ loved the church or they don't live in understanding with them. Wives do not submit to the headship of their husbands or respect them. When this occurs, we provoke or build a deep-seated anger in our children.
10. What are some of the signs of this? Resentment and bitterness.
11. Lou Priolo says, "As the child observes the resentment that results from his parents' lack of harmony, he becomes more susceptible to acquiring those bitter thoughts, motives, attitudes, and actions that he has seen modeled by them."²
12. So parents need to make sure they are modeling the right behavior to their kids even to the point of repenting when they're not.
13. We said the second way in which we provoke our kids is by *establishing and maintaining a home that is child-centered rather than Christ-centered.*
14. A child-centered home is one in which a child interrupts adults when they're talking. They use manipulation and rebellion to get their way. They dictate the family schedule, take precedence over the needs of the spouse, have an equal or overriding vote in all decision matters, demand excessive time and attention from parents, they speak to

²Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger : Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* (Amityville, NY (P.O. Box 805, Amityville, NY 11701): Calvary Press Publishing, 1997). 31.

their parents as though they are their peers, they are the dominate influence in the home, and they are entertained and coddled (rather than disciplined) out of a bad mood.

15. Now a Christ-centered home, on the other hand, is one where everyone joyfully serves one another, children cheerfully obey their parents the first time, they do not interrupt their parents when they are speaking to each other, they understand they will not always get their own way, they work their schedule around their parent's schedule, they have input into family decisions but not necessarily an equal vote, they understand that God has given their parents other responsibilities in addition to meeting their needs, they suffer the natural consequences of their sinful, irresponsible behavior, they do not speak to parents as though they were peers but honor them as spiritual authorities, they esteem others more important than themselves, they fulfill various household responsibilities (chores), they do not divide their parents over disciplinary issues, they are not more intimate with either parent than the parents are with each other.
16. In other words, they seek to glorify God in every aspect of their lives as their parents seek to build this kind of home.
17. Now I want us to look at some other ways in which we provoke our kids to anger.
18. The third way is by *modeling sinful anger*.

I. A Lack of Marital Harmony

II. Establishing and Maintaining a Home that is Child-Centered Rather than Christ-Centered

III. Modeling Sinful Anger

Mom, dad, how are you at controlling your anger? Are you provoking your kids to anger by your own sinful anger?

We have already learned in **Ephesians 4:26 (NASB77)** ²⁶ BE ANGRY, AND *YET* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

That means there is a righteous anger.

A. Righteous Anger

Righteous anger is indignation for holy reasons. This kind of anger is consumed with the desire for righteousness or with God's will, reputation, and honor. When God is angry, He has this kind of anger...Anyone who is righteously angry is not sinning, is not thinking of himself, and is in complete control.³

1. Jesus was in complete control when He cleansed the temple (John 2:13-18)
2. Moses was jealous for the obedience of God's Law when he was angry at Israel for their idolatry

³ Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, (Bemidji: Focus, 2002). 262.

Exodus 32:19-20 (NASB77) ¹⁹ And it came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and *the* dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ And he took the calf which they had made and burned *it* with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water, and made the sons of Israel drink *it*.

Is this the kind of anger that you're displaying in the home or is it an emotional explosion that's occurred because you didn't get something you wanted or because you were offended or hurt or because you were out of control?

B. Unrighteous Anger

John Piper says, Unrighteous "Anger is the cannibal emotion: It eats all the others till none is left. It does this first in fathers, and then this constricted soul is passed on to the children. Anger is absorbed as the dominant emotion and all the tender feelings die."⁴

Unrighteous anger takes two basic forms. One is explosive and reactionary and involves venting one's feelings (Proverbs 15:28; Ephesians 4:31)...The other

⁴ John Piper, Sermon Transcript: More Thoughts for Fathers on Ephesians 6:4, Preached June 20, 2007, desiringgod.org.

kind of anger is more of an inward slow burn...Both of these kinds of anger are of man and are very ungodly.⁵

Notice the difference between vented anger and the slow burn:

Vented anger is manifested by yelling or screaming, slamming things around, cursing, telling someone off, attacking verbally or name calling.

The slow burn is expressed by clamming up or moodiness, being frustrated, being irritated, being disgusted, glaring, huffing or snorting.

If you're going to deal with sinful anger in your life you must first understand where it comes from.

Paul lists it in Galatians 5:19-20 as one of "the deeds of the flesh." It is connected with pride (Prov.21:24), cruelty (Gen.49:7; Prov.27:34), clamor and evil speaking (Eph.4:31; Col.3:8), strife and contention (Prov.21:19; 29:22; 30:33). Ecclesiastes 7:9 says it is characteristic of fools. Solomon says, "Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools."

In his book, *The Exemplary Husband*, Stuart Scott gives several important facts about sinful anger. He says:

⁵ Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, (Bemidji: Focus, 2002). 263.

Anger is natural to the fallen heart. It always involves thoughts and intentions. It is caused by not being able to attain our prideful and/or selfish goals. It never accomplishes God's righteous ends. It sometimes points to something good and right that should be done about a problem instead. It is expressed in our thoughts, body language, speech, and actions. It involves a lack of self-control. It is always accompanied by other sins when it is tolerated, and if not dealt with, it will turn into something worse.

The Scriptures sums it up by telling us 4 things that cause anger:

Grievous words – **Proverbs 15:1 (NASB77)** ¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Lack of discretion – **Proverbs 19:11 (NASB77)** ¹¹ A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Bad influences – **Proverbs 22:24 (NASB77)** ²⁴ Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man.

Lack of prayer – **1 Timothy 2:8 (NASB77)** ⁸ Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

The most interesting truth about unrighteous anger is it brings its own punishment. **Proverbs 19:19 (NASB77)** ¹⁹ *A man of great anger shall bear the penalty, For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.*

If you have an anger problem, Scott gives this council:

1. Confess your past sins of anger to God and others who have been aware of it. Explain your intentions to be gentle, patient, and humble in the future and ask for forgiveness (Matthew 5:23-24).
2. Ask God to work in this area of your life and help you to put forth full effort toward Christlike change (2 Corinthians 9:8).
3. Come up with the right thoughts to combat the wrong ones you typically have. Write them out. Use Scripture or scriptural concepts in your new thoughts. Include thankfulness in your new thoughts. Put your new thoughts in prayer form whenever you can (Romans 12:2).
4. Memorize some verses on anger and some verses on gentleness, patience, forgiveness, or humbleness (Ephesians 4:23).
5. Since anger always involves pride, selfishness or both, seek to put on loving and humble thoughts and actions daily. Make a list of times and ways you can show love and humility (John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 Peter 5:5).
6. Determine what godly desires and goals you should be fixed on in situations in which you typically become angry (Psalm 40:8; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

7. Do a study on the patience and long-suffering God has with you (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 145:8; 2 Timothy 2:15).
8. Be alert, ready to exercise self-control and to change your thinking. Watch out for the situations and thoughts you have discovered. Make a concise list of each one (1 Peter 1:13).
9. Ask others to hold you accountable for your anger (Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 10:25-25).
10. Do not associate with any individuals, unless they are seeking to change (Proverbs 22:24).

Stuart Scott says, “The first step to solving a problem is admitting that you have one. One of the worst things you can do when you are angry is tell yourself or someone else, ‘I’m not angry.’ Be careful of renaming anger as being ‘frustrated.’⁶”

C. Children Learn By Example

From the time your child was born, he has been watching and following your example.

Lou Priolo says, “When you or your spouse model sinful anger, you may inadvertently teach your

⁶ Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, (Bemidji: Focus, 2002). 263.

children that the only way to solve problems is to win.”⁷

Proverbs 22:24-25 (NASB77) ²⁴ Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, ²⁵ Lest you learn his ways, And find a snare for yourself.

It's sad when you have to say, “Don't imitate your parents when they're mad!” They are people “given to anger.” In this case—unrighteous anger. Solomon says if you associate with a man given to anger or with a hot-tempered man, you will “learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.”

You will become what is modeled before you.

Children need the right attitudes modeled before them.

Paul said he offered himself as a “model” to the Thessalonians in **2 Thessalonians 3:9** “that you might follow our *example*.”

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 to “show yourself an *example* to those who believe” in “speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.”

⁷Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger : Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* (Amityville, NY (P.O. Box 805, Amityville, NY 11701): Calvary Press Publishing, 1997). 32.

He told Titus in **Titus 2:7 (NASB77)** ⁷ in all things show yourself to be an *example* of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified.

1. They need to see the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB77) ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2. They need to see you imitating God by being “kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other” (Eph.4:32).
3. They need to see you imitating Christ by walking “in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph.5:2).

John MacArthur says, “Christian parents who goad their children to anger, or fail to give them the nurture and admonition of the Lord, forfeit all the benefits of a distinctively Christian family. Virtually no environment is more unwholesome for a child than a nominally Christian family where parents invoke the name of the Lord but neglect to provide the proper loving nurture and admonition. Many children from such “Christian” families end up more hostile to the things of the Lord than kids who have grown up in utterly pagan surroundings. Christian parents who neglect Ephesians 6:4 will reap what they have sown—

pain and heartache equal to or surpassing that of worldly families.⁸

IV. Habitually Disciplining While Angry

If you struggle with anger, then you will struggle with it when you're disciplining your children.

There are several things you're teaching when you discipline while you're angry:

A. Inconsistence

In one situation you do it right but in others you discipline when you're angry. This is communicating inconsistency in the discipline process. This will also make your children scared to come to you or to admit their sin because they're afraid of your explosions.

B. Ignorance

When you also discipline when you're angry, you're communicating that mom and/or dad doesn't really know *how* to discipline.

Lou Priolo says, "When you are angry, it is easier for you to overdiscipline. Your anger may be perceived by your child as a personal attack. If he views your discipline as such, he will likely suspect that your

⁸John MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting : Raising Your Child With Care, Compassion, and Common Sense* (Bedford, Tex.: Word Pub., 1998). 136.

motive for the discipline is vindictive rather than corrective. If he concludes that this is your motive (thus violating 1 Cor. 4:5), he will find it difficult not to get angry. The emphasis of your thinking and of your subsequent discipline should be on what the child has done *by sinning against God, not on how his action has caused you some personal discomfort, trouble, or embarrassment.*

If you do find yourself more upset because your child has sinned against you than you are because he sinned against God, you must quickly and prayerfully get your heart in such a state that personal desires are temporarily set aside. You must be willing to lay aside your personal rights and forgive your child's offense against you so that you may focus on fulfilling your parental obligations to him. Only then can you discipline your child with the assurance that your passion is not unholy anger.⁹

C. Inappropriate Boundaries

If you're always angry when you discipline you're teaching your children how far they can go before you explode. They will keep pushing the boundaries.

⁹Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger : Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* (Amityville, NY (P.O. Box 805, Amityville, NY 11701): Calvary Press Publishing, 1997). 32.

What can you do to overcome this? Confess it as sin and repent. Go over the 10 steps I shared with you from Stuart Scott's book *The Exemplary Husband*

1. You and your child need a time out

This is a cooling off time and a time for both of you to check your heart.

2. Once you have gained self-control correct your child

- a) By instruction

Proverbs 22:6 (NASB77) ⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

John MacArthur says, "There is only one right way, God's way, the way of life. That way is specified in great detail in Proverbs. Since it is axiomatic that early training secures lifelong habits, parents must insist upon this way, teaching God's Word and enforcing it with loving discipline consistently throughout the child's upbringing."¹⁰

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB77) ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for

¹⁰John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Pr 22:6.

training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

b) By spanking

I said a few things a last Wednesday about spanking but let me suffice it to say the Scriptures teach it and we are to obey the Scriptures.

Proverbs 22:15 (NASB77) ¹⁵ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13-14 (NASB77) ¹³ Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ You shall beat him with the rod, And deliver his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 29:15 (NASB77) ¹⁵ The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Someone once said, "Children need two pats on the back. One high enough to encourage them when they do right, and one low enough to discourage them when they do wrong. Effective discipline requires knowing which end to pat.

V. Scolding

Mark 14:3-5 (NASB77) ³ And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head. ⁴ But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?" ⁵ "For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor." And they were **scolding** her.

The word that Mark uses for "scolding" (*embrimaomai*) is translated "murmured" in the AV. It means "to speak harshly" (USB) and was used "to describe the snorting of horses" (Priolo). The word "expresses intense agitation" (Friberg).

In his book, *Hints on Child Training*, first published in 1891, H. Clay Trumbull, considered by many to be the founder of Sunday school, explains:

"To 'scold' is to assail or revile with boisterous speech. The word itself seems to have a primary meaning akin to that of barking or howling.

Scolding is always an expression of a bad spirit and of a loss of temper ... the essence of the scolding is in the multiplication of hot words in expression of strong feelings that, while eminently natural, ought to be held in better control.

If a child has done wrong, a child needs talking to; but no parent ought to talk to a child while that parent is unable to talk in a natural tone of voice, and with carefully measured words. If the parent is tempted to speak rapidly, or to

multiply words without stopping to weigh them, or to show an excited state of feeling, the parent's first duty is to gain entire self-control. Until that control is secured, there is no use of the parent's trying to attempt any measure of child training. The loss of self-control is for the time being an utter loss of power for the control of others.

In giving commands or in giving censure to a child, the fewer and the more calmly spoken words the better. A child soon learns that scolding means less than quiet talking; and he even comes to find a certain satisfaction in waiting silently until the scolder has blown off the surplus feeling which vents itself in this way. There are times, indeed, when words may be multiplied to advantage in explaining to a child the nature and consequences of his offense, and the reasons why he should do differently in the future; but such words should always be spoken in gentleness, and in self-controlled earnestness. Scolding—rapidly spoken censure and protest, in the exhibit of strong feeling—is never in order as a means of training and directing a child.”¹¹

A. Our Words Are to Be Gentle

1. When we scold it fuels anger

Proverbs 15:1 (NASB77) ¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

¹¹Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger : Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* (Amityville, NY (P.O. Box 805, Amityville, NY 11701): Calvary Press Publishing, 1997). 33.

2. Scolding, as Trumbull states, reveals a lack of self-control

Galatians 5:22 states that the “fruit of the Spirit is...self-control.”

B. Our Words Are to Encourage

1. Corrupt words do not encourage—they defile

Ephesians 4:29 (NASB77) ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear.

The word “unwholesome” (sapro) means, “worthless, rotten, or bad.”

2. Corrupt words are to be put away

Colossians 3:8 (NASB77) ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

When Paul says to “put them aside” (apotithemi), he means they need to be “cast off.”

This “word used for taking off clothes (cf. Acts 7:58; Rom. 13:12–14; 1 Pet. 2:1). Like one who removes his dirty clothes at day’s end, believers

must discard the filthy garments of their old, sinful lives.¹²

CONCLUSION

1. Parents are you provoking your child to anger by a lack of harmony in your marriage, or by establishing and maintaining a child-centered home rather than a Christ-centered home, or by modeling sinful anger, or by habitually disciplining while angry, or by scolding?
2. If you answered “yes” to any of these, you need to see this as sin and repent immediately asking God to change your heart and your ways as a parent.
3. Also, ask God to help you to invest in the time needed for these changes, so that you will bring your children up to please and honor Jesus.
4. In our next time together we are going to look at a few more ways in which we provoke our kids to anger.
5. Let's pray.

As we pray tonight, let me ask you a question, “Are you praying for the salvation of your children? What about yourself? Have you been delivered from the wrath that is to come on the whole world?”

¹²John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Col 3:8.

If not, will you turn to Christ right now by repenting of your sin and confessing Jesus as your Lord?

Romans 10:9-10 (NASB77) ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Call on Him right now as we pray.