

“Provoking to Anger – Part 2”
Ephesians 6:4
(Preached at Trinity, December 13, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verses 1-4** speaks of the parent child relationship. First Paul addresses children - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Children have a duty to honor their parents. But parents have a high responsibility for their children.
2. Both mothers and fathers have a responsibility for the proper care and training of their children. Children are commanded to honor and obey both parents. But as we’ve seen, the man is the head of the home. This is reflected in Paul’s words of **Verse 4:**
Ephesians 6:4 NAU - "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
3. While mom has an incredible influence upon the children, the father is responsible for setting the agenda of the home. He has a higher accountability. Paul’s instruction is to fathers primarily because of the order of authority in the home. But the instruction in **Verse 4** is to mothers and fathers alike. I’m going to direct this instruction to parents.
I pointed out last time that Paul gives a two-fold charge:
 - Do not exasperate your children or provoke them to anger.
 - Train them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
4. I’m focusing first of all on the first part.
Do not provoke your children to anger.
Children are wonderful pieces of clay that can be shaped and molded by the hands of faithful and skillful parents. They can also be inflicted with wounds that will scar them for life. They are fragile little human beings with their own feelings and sense of self-worth.
5. “Provoke to anger” is from a single Greek verb - παροργίζω
Paul is using this expression to describe bringing a child to exasperation or frustration.
6. I mentioned last time that years ago I taught on this verse in a general sense of pressing parental responsibility. Afterwards I was approached and asked for some specifics. What are some ways parents can provoke their children to wrath?
7. I’ve uncovered 10 ways a parent can provoke their child to anger. Last time we looked at the first six
 - Failing to maintain your position as parent
 - You will provoke your child to anger by over protection
 - Favoritism – showing partiality between your children
 - Over indulgence
 - Unrealistic high expectations
 - Unreasonably low expectations

8. This morning I'll set before you the final four. Remember, we could identify others. I'll bring out some as we continue with the proper training of children.

VII. Hypocrisy

- A. Parents lose the respect of their children when their actions are inconsistent with their teaching
1. "Do what I say, not what I do" is never a good principle of raising children
 2. When they see you at church putting on an air of holiness and then see you at home with little regard for Christ you will lose their respect – and they will also have little regard for Christ.
 3. One of your most powerful tools of instruction is the example of your life.
 - a. Charles Bridges: "If the child hears of godliness, and sees but wickedness, this is bringing him bread with one hand, and poison with the other; beckoning him with the hand to heaven, and at the same time taking him by the hand, and leading him in the way to destruction. A child learns more by the eye than by the ear."
 - b. Parental leadership and pastoral leadership has many similarities. Peter writes of the importance of the pastoral example:
1 Peter 5:1-3 NAU - "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."
- B. Children are amazingly smart – they quickly discern the priorities of your life
1. You teach them much by your actions
 2. They will know the objects of your love – material things, sports
 3. They will know your priorities.
 - a. If you go to work when you don't feel well but stay home from church they see your priority
 - b. They know the priority of the church in your family. They will learn a high view of the church from you.
 - c. They can easily see the importance of God in your home. They know if He is seldom spoken of. They know the agenda of your home. They know if their discipline is the result of your irritation or the desire to honor God.
 4. Your hypocrisy will exasperate your children

VIII. Failure to demonstrate your child's importance

- A. A child can be made to feel he is unwanted, undesired, unimportant
1. Your child can be made to feel he is an inconvenience.
 2. You continually express the countless ways he is keeping you from doing the things you want.
 3. A parent must be willing to make sacrifices for the children. And the sacrifices must be made with joy

- B. Your children should know that you love them unconditionally
1. They must know that you don't love them more or less based upon their actions. Your love must not be something they have to earn
 2. You will never win their heart unless they have your heart
They must have your love, attention, commitment, time, affection, concern, involvement, and on and on.
 3. You should be reflecting God's love for you which is an unconditional love full of pity and grace.
 4. Pharisaical demands of obedience without love builds up resentment.
- C. You must express to them that you value them; you value their opinion
1. You can provoke your children to wrath when you don't allow them to voice their thoughts. You have to listen to them.
 2. While you should demand obedience and respect you should be approachable.
 - a. This is the nature of our relationship with our heavenly Father
 - b. God says obey. He makes absolute demands. Yet we can go to Him in prayer and express our heart
 3. You must maintain dialogue with your children
 - a. You make rules but you should explain why.
 - b. If they disobey they should be allowed to explain the reason for their disobedience.
 - b. When they speak listen with your heart – hear what their concerns are
- D. Your desire is to capture the heart of your children
1. Your little girl has to know that she's her daddy's treasure
 2. She must know that her welfare is your great interest; that you will protect her and defend her. She will trust her life to you. When a prospective suiter comes calling she will trust your evaluation. You will only give her to the right man.
 3. Your son will value your wisdom as he makes the great decisions of life because you have demonstrated that his wellbeing is of the greatest importance to you.
 4. What a tragedy when parents put everything else before their children.
- IX. A failure to discipline
- A. By being too lenient - by not applying enough discipline or proper discipline
This is far too common today
1. There is a total breakdown of discipline today - even among Christians
 - a. We are guilty of turning our children into objects of worship
 - b. Most parents pander to their children
The children rule the home
 2. Even worse our culture has rejected the proper discipline of children
 - a. Many are appalled today at the thought of spanking children
 - b. This is because they don't have a proper concept of accountability. Corporal punishment teaches children that there are consequences to their actions.
 - c. There is a false view of man - that he is basically good. The truth is children are depraved and must be taught subjection to authority.

- d. There must be consequences for actions - it must begin at the home and then to society as a whole. We can witness of the breakdown in proper child rearing as our prisons are overflowing.
- 3. Children must be disciplined including the use of the rod. The Bible gives us ample reasons why
 - a. Because God demands it - has modern man become wiser than God?
Proverbs 23:13-14 NAU - "Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from Sheol."
 - b. Because of the nature of the child
Proverbs 22:15 NAU - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
 - c. Because love demands it
Proverbs 13:24 NAU - "He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently."
 - d. Because of the consequences of a child left to himself
Withholding the rod will provoke him to wrath
Proverbs 29:15 NAU - "The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."
- 4. While corporal discipline or spanking is the usual means of discipline it is not the only means. The important thing is that there is discipline and that it is applied properly.
- 5. What does it mean to be too lenient in discipline?
 - a. The moment a child demonstrates rebellion it must be addressed. Immediate submission must be demanded.
 - b. Tantrums are efforts of a child to manifest autonomy. They are saying, "My will hasn't been honored and I am letting everyone know." Young children must be taught that their wills are subject to the authority of their parents. This is what is meant by authority.
A tantrum must never go unaddressed
 - c. Open disobedience must never go unaddressed. Immediate compliance must be demanded.
 - e. At what age. As soon as they are able to purposely manifest their wills against yours. We call them the terrible twos because there is a battle of the wills going on. The child must not win this battle.
- B. By being inconsistent
 - 1. An important aspect of proper child discipline is consistency. The reward of consistent discipline when the child is young is a well behaved respectful young adult.
Proper discipline is not simply seeking to control the actions of your children. You are seeking to win their heart.

2. There must be rules and there must be consequences for breaking the rules.
A. W. Pink – “The least offense of a child against the rulers of the home ought not to pass without due correction, for if it find leniency in one direction toward one offense, it will expect the same towards others, and then disobedience will become more frequent till the parent has no control except that of brute force.”
3. Inconsistency is either arbitrarily changing the rules or changing the consequences
4. Children need to have consistency and order. Rules need to be known and their enforcement must be the same every time.
5. You are provoking your child to wrath when you are inconsistent. They will assume they can disregard your will and get away with it.
6. You are also inconsistent if you discipline one child more or harsher than the others. You must be consistent and equal among all.

X. Abuse – physical, emotional, psychological
Unreasonable, unfair, or harsh discipline
(sarcasm, ridicule, anger)

- A. It is abusive when discipline is too severe
 1. By making impossible demands or being overly critical –
 - a. You must remember their weakness just as God remembers yours.
Psalms 103:13-14 NAU - "Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust."
 - b. We should guard against harsh criticism or harsh cutting words
 - c. You should guard against spanking in anger
 2. Again, you must remember there is a great difference between defiance and a mistake. Mistakes should be corrected but not disciplined
 3. You must be careful and patient with development
 - a. Young children are prone to forget - short attention spans
Their minds are not fully developed
They do not give great attention to detail
 - b. Their coordination is not developed - poor skills
 4. The punishment must be appropriate to the infraction
 - a. Rebellion must be punished quickly and harshly
 - b. Disobedience stemming from forgetfulness receives less severe punishment
 5. Discipline must have a redemptive purpose. You are teaching your children that their actions should honor God.
- B. Your children must understand that your discipline is the result of your love for them and your love for Christ
 1. Never discipline in anger. They must understand your motive is repentance not revenge.
You are seeking to honor God, not just impress other people

2. It is good to explain to them why they are being spanked and then after they have stopped crying explain how much it hurt you to spank them but you can't allow them to disobey you or show you disrespect.
- C. More about abusive discipline
1. Spanking is designed to correct, not to injure
 2. It is never acceptable to strike a child in the face.
 3. It is never permissible to ridicule or demean a child with harsh abusive language
 4. Discipline should not humiliate or shame. It should be done in private.
 4. Remember the purpose of discipline
 - a. It is not to meet the expectations of others – your purpose is not to gain the approval of others or impress them with your ability to control your children.
 - b. It is not to vent your own anger over your children's actions
 - c. Discipline is meant to correct bad behavior out of a motive of love and to teach them God's demands for their life

Conclusion:

1. You have great power over your children. But this power must never be abused.
2. Some wrongly see raising children and discipline as a matter of control. If we can control their church, their schooling, their friends, their television, their computer use, etc. they will grow up to be good, faithful, respectful children. While parents provide direction in all of these areas, simply controlling these things does not deal with the ultimate issue of the heart.
3. Your actions can frustrate them, discourage them, and provoke them to anger. Your great duty as their parents is to gain their heart.
Proverbs 23:26 NAU - "Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways."
4. May God grant much grace as we train these young hearts.