

Fathers Train Your Children Lesson 6

Introduction: Every time a couple creates a child, they have created a spark that can never be put out, someone who will exist forever, either in heaven or hell. No peaceful oblivion awaits poor-reared children (Wilson p. 13):

ESV **Matthew 18:2-6** . . . calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “. . . whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

“When dads shoot straight, the kids will hit the mark” (Rogers, p. 186). The problem is, many dads fail to shoot straight and instead provoke their children to anger.

Father’s Responsibility: Ephesians 6:4, Paul wrote directly to fathers regarding child training. It is the father’s responsibility to create an atmosphere in the home where his children can with ease choose to follow Jesus (Rogers, p. 191).

Ephesians 6:4

******What special instructions did Paul have for fathers in 6:4?** (*Ask a father to read it*). Two things: fathers must **1**) be careful not to provoke their children to anger and **2**) must instruct their children in the Lord.

Summary: Fathers are to educate, not irritate (Henderson, p. 57).

1. Why do you suppose Paul directed this at fathers and not mothers (6:4)?

- 1) A weakness of fathers in particular is the uncanny ability to provoke children to anger.
- 2) It is also the father’s responsibility to see that his children are trained in the things of the Lord.

— Do Not Provoke —

The parallel passage to this simply says:

ESV **Colossians 3:21** Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

2. How might fathers provoke children to anger (6:4)?

- a.) John Piper pointed out that fathers have the unique ability to cause their children’s souls to shrivel into small, hard, angry shells. *How?* By being like that themselves. In Ephesians, Paul dealt in **anger** in adults back in **4:31-32** (*read aloud*). If the dad is angry and empty, so too will be his children. Anger is like defective DNA that the father passes on. The remedy is also found in 4:31 (“as God in Christ forgave you”).

ESV **James 1:20** . . . the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

Dad, are you bitter? Are you a man of wrath? Are you angry all the time?

Other fatherly actions that might provoke a child include:

- b.) humiliating** a child (public discipline)
- c.) physical cruelty** (discipline done in anger)
- d.) over indulging** a child (spoiling him)
- e.) being unreasonable** or failing to appreciate the child's maturity level
- f.) over-protection** (leading to frustration)
- g.) showing favoritism** (one sibling over another)
- h.) discouraging words** ("You'll never amount to anything!")
- i.) benign neglect** (taking no interest in)
- j.) perfectionism** (lighten up!)
- k.) being domineering** and over-bearing
- l.) inconsistency** in discipline (capriciousness)
- m.) not fulfilling of promises** (such as "I'll take you fishing this weekend" and then forget all about it).
- n.) Not practicing obedience yourself.** Children are under the authority of parents who themselves are to be under authority. Nothing undermines godly parenting more than hypocrisy (Wilson, p. 37).

— Bring Them Up —

Word Study: "Bring them up" (6:4) is from the same Greek word used back in **5:29** (*ektrepho*), there translated "nourishes". Fathers are not to ignore their kids spiritually, leaving them to fin for themselves. They are to actively *nourish* them into the things of the Lord. Furthermore, fathers are not to bore them with the things of the Lord, not lecture them into the Lord, not pound it into them. A father's discipline should be *nourishing*. A father's instruction should be *nourishing*.

The Goal: To see your children come into the kingdom. Discipline is no substitute for regeneration. The goal is salvation, not merely well behaved kids (Wilson, p. 15).

Father's Responsibility: It is the father's responsibility to create an atmosphere in the home where his children can with ease choose to follow Jesus (Rogers, p. 191).

ESV **Malachi 3:1** Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

ESV **Matthew 11:10** [Jesus speaking about John the Baptist] This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

According to Jesus, John the Baptist was the messenger sent to prepare the way for the Lord, as prophesied by Malachi. Look what else Malachi predicted:

ESV **Malachi 4:5** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

ESV **Matthew 11:13-14** [Jesus again speaking about John the Baptist] . . . all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

According to Jesus, John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah. Now, look what else Malachi predicted would happen when the messenger, when Elijah, came:

ESV **Malachi 4:5-6** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children . . .

Application: A case could be made that one sign a man is truly in the new covenant is that his heart is turned to his children. He will want to nurture them in the things of the Lord.

Be A Servant: *Who is the master of the sheep?* The shepherd. *Who is the servant of the sheep?* The shepherd. *Who is the master of the baby?* The parents. *Who is the servant of the baby?* The parents. Jesus said whoever wishes to be greatest should be the servant of all. The husband is the head of the home. He should also be the greatest servant of the home.

— Discipline —

ESV **Proverbs 29:17** Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

3. Based on Ephesians 6:4, between the father and mother, who bears the responsibility for a child's discipline and instruction in the Lord (6:4)? See *Deuteronomy 6:1 -9*. The responsibility lies squarely with the father. He may not do it all but he is responsible for the training that is done.

ESV **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**. . . these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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**.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 requires 24/7 lifestyle training in the things of the Lord. It is "as you are going" discipleship.

Moms too! Even though it is the father's responsibility, his would be a nearly impossible responsibility without the assistance of a godly help-meet. God designed fathers to need help from the mothers. For example, look at the impact of a godly mother and grandmother on Timothy:

ESV **2 Timothy 1:5** I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

The sad question about Timothy is: *Where was his Dad? Was he dead? Was he pagan?*
Ideally, the dad should take the lead in the instruction of his children in the things of the Lord but praise the Lord for godly mothers.

5. In English, what is the difference between discipline (6:4) and training? The verb discipline is generally seen as punishment for disobedience. Training is teaching a person a still or behavior (you train athletes and teach math students). Training may involve discipline for wrong doing.

4. What did Paul mean by discipline in 6:4? See *Proverbs 3:11-12, 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15, 2 Timothy 3:16*. The Greek word for discipline in 6:4 (*paideia*) really is more the idea of training. The NIV renders this as “training”. This same word is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 (separately from teaching):

ESV 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness . . .

Fathers are to train their children, not merely punish them for infractions. The root of *paideia* is the Greek word for child (*pais*). A pediatrician is a doctor focused on children. *Paideia* is child training, from education to correction.

ESV Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

John Piper said *paideia* is the action a father takes to give his children the abilities, skills and character to live life to the glory of God.

Act of Worship: Worship is not just something we do on Sundays. Worship is also a lifestyle of obedience. Ideally, everything we do should be from a heart of worship. We take God’s commands to fathers about child-rearing seriously because we worship Jesus. In that sense, even spanking your children should be an act of worship, else you should not be doing it (not in anger, not out of frustration, not revenge).

— The Importance of Child Training —

Frustration results from the lack of nurturing discipline. If your kids bug you, it is your own fault! They must be trained. Training is difference between child proofing your house and house proofing your child!

Bedtime Routine: Even something as seemingly small as a set bed time makes a difference. A 2013 British study on bedtime routines suggests that young children who do not have a regular sleep time are more likely to suffer behavior issues. Erratic bedtimes can cause a similar effect to jet lag and the longer it goes on the worse behavior can get. Parents who started putting their children to bed at consistent times noticed an improvement in their behavior, as did their teachers. Going to bed at different times could disrupt natural body rhythms and cause sleep deprivation. In turn, this undermines the way the brain matures and the ability to regulate some behaviors (Professor Yvonne Kelly, University College London, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health).

Outward behavioral training is only part of it. Much more important is inward character training:

Susannah Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, reared seventeen children and had this to say about conquering self-will in child training: "The parent who studies to subdue it in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving [of] a soul. The parent who indulges it does the devil's work, makes religion impossible, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body, forever" (*The Journal of John Wesley*, p.106).

ESV Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

The Lord loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to just leave us the way we are. He works in us to make us like Jesus; so too parents (fathers) with their children.

Pain In Child Training

6. What can we learn about discipline from Hebrews 12:6 and 12:11?

a) God the Father still disciplines us as his adult children:

ESV Hebrews 12:6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Based on Hebrews 12:6, a man who refuses to discipline his son is, in effect, disinheriting him (Wilson, *Federal Husband*, p. 97).

Discipline should be done out of love and never anger, frustration or revenge. It must be fair and it must be consistent.

b) Discipline is supposed to be painful. Sometimes mothers are too tender; it can be a kindness that kills. God has required us to inflict pain on those we love (Wilson, *Federal Husband*, p. 98), just as He disciplines us as His children:

ESV Hebrews 12:11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

How might Hebrews 12:6,12 impact our child training?

Speeding Example: Many people go up to 10 mph over the speed limit because they know they won't get a ticket if they just break it just that little bit. Now imagine if the police department no longer issued any tickets for speeding, and instead started nagging and threatening. There would effectively be no speed limit. If you speed, the policeman would pull you over and explain how sad it makes him feel for you to break the speed limit. Envision a policeman sitting by the side of the road, red in the face and shaking his fist at every speeding car. Law and order would break down (Pearl, p. 22).

ESV Proverbs 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

No Christian father would turn to his wife and say, "Honey, let's destroy our children." Yet if you fail to discipline your child, that is exactly what you are doing. It is to hate him (Wilson, p. 142).

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

Switch or Hand? Proverbs says to use a "rod", which we interpret to mean a switch (the Hebrew can mean offshoot or branch). Parents should not to spank their child with their bare hands. Your hand can cause deep bruising. A light, wispy switch will only cause surface pain, not deep muscle bruising. We feel pain on the surface of our skin, not deep inside the muscle. A switch hurts much more than a bare hand and is much safer.

Joke: At a parenting seminar the speaker told the parents they should switch their children. One of the parents responded, "I would if I could find someone willing to trade!"

ESV Proverbs 23:13-14 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Joke: Years ago, the Duke of Windsor said, "Everything in the American home is controlled by switches — except the children!" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich*, p. 152).

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

Diapers: You can't effectively switch a child through his diapers; it won't hurt. All you will succeed in doing is knocking his spinal cord out of alignment.

Qualifier: Discipline should be in keeping with Galatians 6:1.

ESV Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

The purpose of discipline is not revenge but rather teaching, training and character building. The sin committed by the child should be identified and named. Perhaps an appropriate passage of Scripture could be brought to bear. Make allowances for maturity issues, but not moral issues. The overarching goal is of a father's discipline is to teach the child to honor his father and mother (Wilson, p. 100).

After Discipline: Fathers must also comfort and encourage after discipline:

ESV Psalm 103:13-14 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

There must be a heart of love behind the discipline.

On Raising Children: "Be fair. Be firm. Be fun" (Rogers, p. 187).

— Instruction —

7. When you think of instruction (6:4), what do you think of? See 1 Corinthians 4:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:15. We might think of a class room lecture, but the Greek means more than that.

The KJV translates this as admonition (6:4). What is an admonition? In English, an admonition is a gentle or friendly reproof; it is counsel or warning against fault or oversight. "Instruction" is from *nouthesia* (basis for the term nouthetic counseling). Literally it means "a putting in mind". It is training by word, usually a word of reproof, remonstrance or blame (*Exegetical Greek Text*, p. 377). It has to do less with information as it does with right attitudes and principles of behavior (MacArthur, p. 319). It is council. It is admonition, instruction, warning (BAGD, p. 544). It is very much application oriented instruction.

This same Greek word (*nouthesia*) is used in:

ESV 1 Corinthians 4:14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

ESV 1 Thessalonians 5:14 . . . we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

ESV 2 Thessalonians 3:15 Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Sum: Fathers should nurture their children in the training and admonishment of the Lord.

— Of The Lord —

Of The Lord: As with discipline, it is to be in the sphere of the things belonging to the Lord. Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord" (6:1) and fathers are to bring up their children in the instruction "of the Lord" (6:4).

9. What types of things are included in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (6:4)? It should include attitudes, actions and character.

It is the father's responsibility to create an atmosphere in the home where his children can with ease choose to follow Jesus (Rogers, p. 191).

Application: The family, not the church, is designed to be God's primary vehicle for training up children in the things of the Lord.

Sunday School: In one episode of the 1930s Little Rascals series, one of the rascals declared, "Any boy don't go to Sunday School is bad". Sunday school was originally stated in England as an evangelistic ministry to the destitute children of godless parents. No self respecting Christian parents would ever send their kids to Sunday school (it implied that spiritually you were a failure as a parent). Modern churches should probably rethink having Sunday Schools for the children of its members, because to some extent it takes the pressure off of fathers to teach their children about the Lord.

What ways have you found helpful in teaching your children the things of the Lord? Ways to instruct children include: **1)** Children's catechisms **2)** Reading Bible story books when young **3)** Family devotions **4)** Constantly teaching as a lifestyle, while living life, not letting opportunities pass **5)** taking them to church.

So What?

10. Fathers, how can you avoid provoking your children to anger? Do not be angry yourself! As head of the home, serve you children by purposing to train and admonish them in the things of the Lord.

11. How can a father fulfill his responsibility for bring his children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

1) Pray for them!

ESV **Job 1:1-5** There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters . . . and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

2) Train and admonish them in the Lord

Summary: The most important thing in raising children is that they come to see Christ, the Lord, as supremely valuable as Savior and Lord and Treasure of Life. We must lead our children ever more faithfully to love Christ above all. This includes our adult children (John Piper).

Recommended Reading:

Growing Kids God's Way by Gary Ezzo
Instructions for Training in Righteousness by Doorposts
Baby Wise series by Gary Ezzo
To Train Up A Child, Michael Pearl
What the Bible Says about Child Training, Fugate

References:

Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

McArthur, John *The McArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986)

Henderson, *MATBS Theological Journal, Ephesians*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Memphis, TN)

Pearl, Michael & Debi, *To Train Up A Child* (Pleasantville, TN: 1994)

Rogers, Adrian, *Adrianisms* (Collierville, TN: Innovo Publishing, 2015)

Wesley, John *The Journal of John Wesley* (Chicago: Moody, 1951)

Wilson, Douglas, *Federal Husband* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press)

Wilson, Douglas, *Standing On The Promises* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997)

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

Teacher's note: These lessons are based on the ESV and are designed for 45 minute sessions. If you can hand out or email out each lesson's questions a week in advance it will encourage people to think about the passage during the week. Coving each question in class will give importance to the questions and give incentive for the class to spend time preparing for the discussion.

Stephen E. Atkerson

www.NTRF.org

07/17/16