

“Provoking to Anger – Part 1”
Ephesians 6:4
(Preached at Trinity, December 6, 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. In this section of Ephesians beginning with chapter 5:21 Paul has been describing how the Gospel transforms human relationships – His focus has been on the family - husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters. But we are in great need of the light of God’s Word to instruct us in how to live. Paul is giving instruction so that we might know how to apply the Gospel to families. Living the Christian life is not easy. This side of heaven we are still in need of much grace.
 - A. It is difficult for wives to submit to their husbands. Paul says look to Christ.
 - B. It is difficult for husbands to sacrificially love their wives. Paul says look to Christ.
 - C. It is difficult for children to submit to their parents. Paul says look to Christ.
 - D. And being Godly parents is difficult. It demands much grace from God. It demands hearts submissive to the rule of Christ.
2. **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.
3. 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 the husband/wife relationship.

Ephesians 5:22-23 NAU - "*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church"
4. This headship is also reflected with the children. 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.

“Children, obey your parents.” “Honor your father and mother.”

But Paul then addresses fathers particularly.
5. The man has the weightier duty. It is difficult to be a Godly husband and father. William Gouge – “It is a far more difficult and hard matter to govern well than to obey well. To rule and govern requires more knowledge, experience, wisdom, care, watchfulness, diligence, and other like virtues than to obey and be subject.”
6. The husband and father is under the authority of Christ. He cannot properly rule others unless he himself is under authority.

7. 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.
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.
8. For the next several weeks I'm going to direct your thoughts and hearts towards this important subject of raising children. Paul instructs parents here using a single verse that is loaded with truth.
9. This morning we'll begin by focusing upon the first charge in **Verse 4**:
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.
10. This instruction is to parents primarily, but every one of you should take heed. What impact are you having upon the lives of children around you? Perhaps you are of the opinion, "Not my problem."
Jesus says, **Matthew 18:6 KJV** - "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea."
While this is speaking primarily of our treatment of Christians God has a particular regard for children.
11. Childhood is a one-time experience. It is a wonderful time of adventure, and exploration. They are learning new things every day. They are developing as individuals. Everyone around them is having an effect upon this development.
My children are grown but I'm still surrounded by children. I try to interact with them, play with them, teach them, and at times, correct them. Children know instantly that you care about them.
While you may not be a parent, you still can have a great impact upon the lives of children.
12. But Paul's primary teaching here is to parents. Paul admonishes and cautions with the phrase: "do not provoke your children to anger"
Ephesians 6:4 NAU - "do not provoke your children to anger"
13. "Provoke to anger" is from a single Greek verb - *παροργίζω*
Paul is using this expression to describe bringing a child to exasperation or frustration. Such a condition will lead a child to discouragement that leads to anger. Lacking the ability to express themselves rationally they act out with misbehavior.
- A. Why is this? Because children are already full of wrath. They are by nature children of wrath.
We are all by nature filled with wrath, bitterness, hatred.
Romans 1:29 NAU - "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,"
- B. Wrath is a part of our sinful nature. This is why Paul commands the believer to cast it away.
Ephesians 4:31 NAU - "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

14. But bad parenting can actually exacerbate the sinfulness of children. Most often the misbehavior of a child is a reflection of the failure of parents to heed the instruction of this verse. Either they provoke to anger and exasperation or they fail to properly train up the child.
 15. 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?
 16. I realized that parents want and need clear application here. I've uncovered 10 ways a parent can provoke their child to anger. There are certainly others, but I think these are the most common. Obviously, we can't adequately look at all ten this morning so we'll begin and then continue next time.
- I. You will provoke your children to wrath by failing to maintain your position as parent
 - A. Often parents reflect their own insecurities in how they raise their children
 1. Human beings have a great desire for acceptance and approval from others
Too often parents fear the disapproval of their children
 2. They give them everything they demand because they believe this will make their children love them
 3. The sad consequence is while they are seeking the love and approval of their children their children will actually despise them. Your child will not respect your authority if he sees you as one of his peers.
 4. Such parents will lose the hearts of their children thus provoking them to wrath.
 - B. Your purpose is not to become the friend of your children – it is to be their parent
 1. Parenting is hard work and it is fulltime work
 2. Sometimes you will have to make unpopular decisions
 - C. The Fifth Commandment commands the honor and respect of your children
 1. Your job as parent is to demand that respect
 2. As a family you can play and enjoy life together. Your home should be a joyful place. But you must never cease to maintain your position as parent.
 3. I learned this years ago as an employer. Pat and I were employers before we were parents. I opened my first restaurant when I was 22. We were often close to our employees. We would sometimes have them to over to our house. But the distinction of employee/employer was always maintained. It is a fine line but essential for the proper operation of the workplace.
 4. This is also true in the home. Your children must have a proper respect for you as their parents. You are not their peer. If you fail to stand before them as their parents you will exasperate them. They may have many friends but they need your leadership as parent.
 - II. You will provoke your child to anger by over protection
 - A. We can transfer our own fears to our children
 1. It begins by keeping them away from every germ. If they sneeze, it's off to the doctor.

2. As they get older you protect them from every perceived danger
 Don't climb that you might fall
 Don't skate too fast, you might skin your knee – Don't forget the kneepads and elbow pads.
 Don't go near that dog.
 We need to protect our children from unnecessary risk, but we must also understand that life is filled with danger.
 3. As we try to protect them from every danger they soon cease to try hard and difficult things. They are easily frustrated and angered by failure.
 4. Chuck Norris – “Today we live in a culture that promotes comfort, not challenges. Everything is about finding ways to escape hardship, avoid pain, and dodge duty.”
 5. This is the first generation where children aren't encouraged to go outside and be kids – with all the skinned knees, bruises and sprained ankles.
- B. Life is full of dangers – you have to teach your children to face the scary things and overcome them.
1. This may begin by examining your own life. Are you robust or are you turned aside by every difficulty? Are you willing to step outside your comfort zone?
 2. Train up your children to be strong, robust, confident. Train them to attempt difficult things. We're not talking about foolish blunders, but confidently attempting hard things—stepping out of their comfort zone.
 3. And you have to teach them that they although they can do great things, they don't do them in their own strength. Teach them about our Savior and mighty God. Christianity is about attempting great things to the glory of Christ our Savior.
 It was William Carey who said, “Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”
 4. If you over protect your children they will never attempt hard things. When difficult, scary times arise they will flee in fear. This will be an unending source of frustration for them.

III. Favoritism

- A. Most often families will have more than one child
1. It is impossible to treat them exactly the same
 - a. Boys will be treated differently than girls
 - b. Older children will be treated differently than younger
 - c. Strong-willed children will be treated differently than compliant
 - d. A trustworthy child will be treated differently than one who continually breaks the trust.
 Young person: If you lie to your parents and continually prove yourself untrustworthy, don't complain if you aren't given the same trust as your other siblings.
 2. But never should we arbitrarily treat one differently than the others. We should guard against showing favoritism or having a greater regard for one child over another. And you must not compare one with the other saying, “Why can't you be more like your brother?”

- B. Favoritism is poison to a family
1. It creates resentment between siblings and division among families. Look at the lives of Jacob and Esau where Rebecca favored Jacob while Isaac favored Esau. Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers resulting in their great hatred of Joseph.
 2. It creates frustration and anger within young hearts
 3. You will never win their heart if they think you have a greater regard for the other children in the home. It will prove a constant source of anger and frustration in your child's heart.
- IV. Over indulgence
- A. This is a great indicator of our affluence
1. Birthday parties are social events
 2. Moms spend their days chauffeuring between one activity and another thinking this is the mark of good parenting. The term "soccer moms" has become a part of the American lingo.
 3. And their kids have to have the latest style of clothes, the latest video game console or electronic gadget.
 4. As soon as they are able to drive they get their own car.
 5. Parents spend more time playing with their kids than training them. This is true even in Christian homes where far less attention is given to their souls than to their physical desires.
- B. The danger in many Christian homes is turning their spiritual wellbeing over to others while the attention at home is given to indulging the flesh
1. The greatest thing for your child isn't finding a youth group of peers. It is a home where Christ is the center of everything.
 2. Instead of a life is filled with activities the benefit of a safe home with loving parents who continually shine forth Christ cannot be undervalued.
 3. Sometimes the most beneficial "activity" is to give them time to simply explore God's creation on their own—to discover new things and invent new things, while Mom and Dad are always there to answer their endless questions.
- V. Unrealistic high expectations
- A. Some parents are never satisfied
1. The child can never do well enough and great successes are ignored as insignificant.
 2. Failures result in harsh reaction
 3. You must resist the impulse of competing with other parents and their children.
 4. We cannot relive our lives through the lives of our children pressuring them to do things we were unable to do. We must not use our children as a means of satisfying our own pride.
 5. Carefully guard against robbing your child of his childhood.
 - a. Remember, childhood is a wonderful time that can never be repeated. If you rob your child of this time they will resent it their entire life.

- b. You can do this by piling on too much responsibility. This is especially true of older children caring for the younger.
 - c. Children must be allowed to be children
 - B. As a parent you must know your child well
 - 1. You must be sensitive to the various states of their development and base your expectations accordingly.
 - a. They don't all crawl or walk at the same age
 - b. They don't all talk at the same age or with the same clarity
 - c. Different children have different attention spans. I'm not saying you should overlook continual carelessness but you must be wise to recognize their immaturity.
 - 2. Not every child will be good at sports. Not every child will excel academically. Know your child's gifts and limitations.
 - 3. A child should never be made to feel he is never good enough to meet your expectations. Unrealistic expectations result in frustration and anger.
 - 4. What a wonderful model we have with our Heavenly Father who shows such pity upon our immaturity
- VI. Unreasonably low expectations – this is similar to the danger of being over-protective
 - A. Within the scope of our child's ability we should hold forth high expectations
 - 1. Children will usually rise to the level of the expectations of their parents—presuming they are reasonable expectations. You should cheer on your children as they attempt great things.
 - 2. It is not wrong to make failures an opportunity for growth.
 - 3. We should help our children to grow with ever increasing expectations. I've seen children over 10 being allowed to color during the sermon – that's a low expectation. A gentle nudge when they fall asleep is not a bad thing or requiring them to take notes is not a bad thing. And it isn't a bad thing to increase the level of their chores. I once knew a man who wouldn't let his 16 year old son use the ZTR to mow their property.
 - B. We should encourage our children to try new things
 - 1. We should hold forth great praise for successes
 - 2. You are training your children towards adulthood. This means you need to press upon your young adults the seriousness of life and the need to prepare themselves

Conclusion:

- 1. These are some ways we can frustrate and discourage our children.
- 2. Our goal is to train up children equipped to face the obstacles and difficulties of life with boldness and confidence.
- 3. Our ultimate goal is to train up children who understand clearly the greatness of Christ and the great benefit of a life lived in submission to Him.