

INSTRUCTIONS TO FATHERS

Text: Ephesians 6:1-9

INTRO: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That was day one. Then on day 6, He created man. He created Adam and Eve. And Genesis 1:26 says that God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth..." Now it says that God blessed them and then He commanded them to fill the earth. So, when it says God blessed them, it means, I think, that He empowered man to reproduce or procreate. This ability to procreate is an incredible endowment by God on man. I stand amazed so many times that God allows, even very ungodly people to retain this ability. He allows them to abuse this precious ability and He does not stop them.

Today is 'Father's Day'. I want to tell you fathers here this morning of the incredible responsibility God places on you when you bring children into this world. You see, Genesis 1:27 says God created man in His own image. It does not matter if your child is a boy or girl, when they are conceived, they are in the image of God. There, in that little child is a free moral agent. There is someone who will grow up and have their own will. There in that little child, potentially; is a devil, or a godly person. And you, fathers, have the greatest responsibility to see that that child will grow up a godly person. When God gave you a child He desired that you would train this child up to honor and glorify Him. But this child may potentially become a very wicked tool in the hand of the devil. And you fathers, are given the responsibility to see to it that they are trained up for God's glory.

And so, the Apostle Paul, in closing the book of Ephesians gives this terse command to fathers: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). I ask you, dad, do you want your children to grow up for the purpose for which God endowed you with the ability to procreate? I trust you do.

I want to tell you something else, which you may find hard to believe, but it is this: If you are not actively working at turning the will of your child to God, then you may well be actively training up a child for the devil. Many years ago I spoke to a man about the Lord. And he said he did not believe in the Lord. : "But", he said, "I allow my children

to make up their own mind." And then I say, "You may very well be training them up for the devil." So I said to this man, "When your children were little, was there a time when they loved to put on your shoes, or your wife's shoes, and they were proud as punch at how well those shoes fit, though they couldn't see how far they stuck out behind them?" And he laughed and said they had. And I asked him who had taught them that, and he got the picture.

Fathers, you have one incredible job on your hands. Sometimes I am amazed at how well some children turn out, though there seems to be very little teaching. However, that is the exception, not the rule. The rule is if you do not actively work at training them up in the right way, you may very well be rearing a child for the enemy. If that is so, you can deduce from that, that the devil does not want you to train your children in the right way.

So we want to begin with Paul's negative instruction to these Ephesian fathers he was addressing. And we can say without hesitation that this instruction is equally applicable to us.

I. INSTRUCTED NEGATIVELY

So, Paul's instructions to the fathers is first negative, 'do not'. There is something fathers ought not to do. They are not to provoke their children to anger or wrath.

Now the word translated 'to provoke' here is not in the original text. It reads like this, "You fathers, do not anger your children." There are three words in the Greek that express the emotion of anger. These are *thumos*, *orge* and *parorgismos*. Much labor has gone into the distinguishing of these three words. Bishop Trench says of the word *thumos* that it appears, and I quote, "is more of the turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings..." (Trench, 131). This *thumos*, the boiling agitation of the feelings, may come quickly and subside quickly. But this is not the word used here in our text. The second word is *orge*. According to Trench, *thumos* may develop into *orge*. Of this word Trench says, and I quote, "is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind with purpose of revenge..." (131). So we have a progression here. But this is also not the word used in our text.

Trench further says of the third word, *parorgismos*, that it is, "the irritation, the exasperation, the embitterment which must be dismissed at once..." (134). It is this word that is used in our text.

The tense of the verb 'to anger', in our passage, is present. The way I see this text, it speaks of a lifestyle that in the end leaves a child with this mind-set, "You wait. As soon as I can handle it, you will no longer tell me to do anything. Then I will show you who is in charge."

From this text, I want to challenge you fathers, consider how you talk to your children. This holds equally true for mothers but this morning we are speaking to fathers. May I challenge you fathers, to take note for a week some time, to check how you talk to your children. Check to see if most of your words and instructions to your children are negative or harsh. Check to see how many times they are gentle and encouraging. During the course of training our children, a verse my wife would often quote is, "A soft answer turns away wrath." Do you talk gently and encouragingly to your children?

I want to share something from our child training days. I want to share two things that I did over and over again. I do not want to put myself forward as an ideal parent who knows how to do things right. Many times as I grew older and learned more I said, "Oh, how I wish I had known this sooner." As a matter of fact, if the Lord had not spoken quite clearly to me, I would not be giving you this message today.

Now I do not want to say I succeeded in this, but I always tried to be encouraging. When I saw positive things, I tried to encourage. I tried to understand. A while ago one of my daughters said she had been speaking to someone of what it was like when they were younger. When they wanted permission to do something and they were not sure it would pass parental inspection, when they did get up the courage to ask, they came to ask me. And my wife would sometimes say, "Oh you old softie!" I do not know how successful I was but I tried, whenever possible, to be encouraging. When I saw something positive I tried to remember to tell them so.

But there was another thing I did. When I thought things were not the wisest or something was not the best choice, I sought to discourage those kinds of things. And if I thought it was safe to let them learn by doing it, I would do that so they would learn from experience that that probably was not the best thing to do.

But when I felt permission for something, or a quest for something would be in any wise dangerous to them, I would say, "No. You may not do that. You may not understand why. I trust you will learn. But no, you may not do that."

I learned many things from our child training days. I learned I was not nearly as wise as I thought. I learned that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. I learned that I was a failure. I learned to repent for things to my children. Let me tell you parents something about repenting to your children when you do wrong. First, you do not lose their respect. Second, they are so very quick to forgive, you will be amazed. And third, they will probably have forgotten it happened in a very short time because they are content. They know all is well.

But I want to warn you fathers. If you will be mostly negative, if your children can hardly do anything right, if you will mostly harp and nag, or even anger them; you may well live to regret what is too late to fix. You will look at your son or daughter and find you do not know them. You will have lost and it will be too late. Do not, whatever you do, provoke your children to wrath. You see, in our text this is a command. This is not optional. In our text, I think it is not an occasional event. It is something that has grown deep into your child over time.

II. INSTRUCTED POSITIVELY

But our text is not only negative. Actually two thirds of these brief instructions are positive. Our text goes on to say, "...but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." I want you to go to Genesis 18 for a moment (read 17-19). "And the

LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

God puts a high premium on fathers who command their children and their household after them in the way of the Lord. When you train up children that learn to do righteousness and justice, God is pleased. And so Paul says, "Fathers, do not anger your children, but train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Now this text speaks first negatively; 'do not anger your children'. Then positively; 'but do train them up'. The word 'to train' is *ektrepho*. It comes from a word meaning to 'rear', as in rearing children. It has the idea of nourishing. In Ephesians 5:29, it speaks of nourishing the body. In 6:4, I would take it as nourishing the soul. Now the Apostle will tell us how to do that. We are to train them up or nourish them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We want to give some time to that for dads this morning.

A. The Nurture Of The Lord

Now the word translated 'nurture' is *paideia*. Vine's dictionary says it denotes the training of a child. It comes from the word *pais*, meaning a child. If you want to look this word up in Vine's they refer you to look under the word 'to chasten'. So it has the idea of discipline, or correction or instruction.

Now this is to be the 'nurture of the Lord'. What kind of discipline does the Lord approve of? Well, let me encourage that you avoid discipline in anger. Let me tell you as well how to avoid discipline in anger. When you ask your children to do something, teach them that you are not expressing a wish. Teach them that you mean what you say. If you do not expect them to obey until you have told them about 10 times, you will

probably discipline in anger. Let me ask you parents, how many times do you tell your children to do something before you mean it? Is it 10? They will try 11, and then you will be angry. Is it five, but your voice has reached several too many decibels; then they will wait for that last decibel. We learned some things too late as well. Today there are numerous fine Christian books available on this. Teach your children to obey the first time you tell them to do something.

Now you may say, "I am afraid to tell you this, but when our child gets angry, we can't do anything with him or her." Let me tell you something as kindly as I can. If that is so, you are failing both God and your child. And you may say, "But I don't know what to do." We all have gifts, and we all have weaknesses. If you cannot handle your child, go for help as soon as possible. Now pride will keep you from this, so get rid of that first. Then go to somebody you trust and you can see they have their children in control and say, "Would you help me out? What do you see I'm doing wrong?" Get help. Read books that to help on this and get to work before it is too late.

Now I am talking to dads. Dads, the major portion of responsibility in this area falls to you. When your wife sends your child to you, you do your job. And maybe you say, "When things get bad with my child, only my wife can handle him or her." Then dad, you are a failure. And maybe you say, "But I don't know what to do." Get help. Tell somebody you trust. Tell them how it is. Get help.

You see, our text talks about the 'discipline' or 'nurture' of the Lord. I want to read some Proverbs for you to help you see the importance of this: Proverbs 10:13 says, "Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, But a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding." Now I think what we have here is hands on training, discipline. It is, as someone has said, applying the board of education to the seat of learning. Somebody said there is a direct

communication between the seat and the heart. The message comes through loud and clear. You see, sometimes the rod connects to the brain a lot more efficiently than many words.

Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." How many parents have not thought, "I love my child too much to spank him or her." The problem is our understanding of love. Real love disciplines.

Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him." I know that sometimes it is important to sit down and explain some things. But I have seen some parents sit down with their little child and lovingly explain to them why they should not have done such or such when talking was not in order. Spanking was in order. Sometimes one good whack is worth a thousand words. You see, this is the discipline of the Lord. It is approved by His Word.

Proverbs 23:13 says, "Do not withhold correction from a child, For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die." Verse 14 then says, "You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell." Today we hear so much anti spanking teaching that I think sometimes we are unaware of how unbiblical we have become. Look at the power of the rod, when rightly applied. It will spare many a child from death, and deliver many a child from hell. That is huge.

Proverbs 26:3 says, "A whip for the horse, A bridle for the donkey, And a rod for the fool's back." You see, a fool can become wise, but not usually from words. It takes the rod. Maybe we have some dads here who cannot handle their child. When that child throws a tantrum, nothing seems to help. Well, I will tell you something, or the Bible is not accurate; if anything will help, it is the rod.

I was told a story once about two brothers. The one was getting old enough to try the tantrum. So

he threw a tantrum. He threw himself on the floor and screamed and whacked his head on the floor time and again. And the dad said, "I see you need a little help here." And so he helped him hit his head a little harder until it hurt enough that the desire for that kind of action came to an end. I'm not sure that is the right way, but by and by his little brother tried the tantrum trick and the older, wiser brother looked at him and said, "It won't work". Have you taught your child that it won't work? Have you noticed how children sometimes try their tricks when you are in a store or you have company? Oh, it takes wisdom.

Listen to one more Proverb, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to *himself* brings shame to his mother" (Pr 29:15). The rod, used rightly, can impart a lot of wisdom. It is hard to apply the rod, but it is harder when the child brings shame to the mother and it is too late to do something.

Dads, since you have children, you have a job to do. Do it, or you will live to regret it. You have been God's instrument to bring children into this world, and now it is your responsibility to turn their hearts towards God. These children are all free moral agents. There is an incredible capacity in each of them, either for good or for bad. Because of sin and the sin nature, they are bent on being bad. One of the key agents to bend their will to the right is discipline, godly discipline. It is the rod that will help them overcome this sinful nature which they received from you. Do not minimize the importance of this. I am not recommending the rod or belt as discipline for every matter that displeases you. As a dad, you will need barrels full of wisdom. You will need to discern when to discipline, and when not to discipline; but discipline there will need to be.

B. The Admonition Of The Lord

So, maybe by now you say, "Wow. Is discipline the only thing there is to training children?" Answer? No! I do expect though that it is the

first language children understand. When they learn what NOT to do, you have come a long way. But our text has yet one more piece of advice. Fathers are to train up their children in the *admonition* of the Lord. Here is a second part to child training.

The word translated 'admonition' is *nouthesia*. The first part of this word is the word, nous (spell). It comes from one of several parts of the mind. (Ill. of man and the mind.) Now, spanking is directly applied to the body, but it affects the phreen, which is the data processor of the mind. By discipline, the data processor now becomes the vehicle for verbal training. As I see it, discipline makes you teachable. I think that is why Paul dealt with that first.

But, discipline is only one part of the process. The second part is putting things into the processor by way of teaching so that it will be stored in the nous. This is *nouthesia*, the word in our passage. This teaching will give wisdom for life by words. You must teach your children by instruction. You see, in our text we spoke of the discipline of the Lord and here we have the admonition or teaching of the Lord. It is teaching our children godly things.

Did you notice dads, that our text says, 'Fathers... admonish, or teach your children?' Oh yes, mothers are to teach their children too. But the heavier spiritual training is to come from the dad. This is your job.

I want to point out two ways in which this teaching may be done. First, in life in general. Go with me to Deuteronomy 6 (read 6-9). When you buy your wife some flowers, you are teaching. When you speak roughly to your wife, you are teaching. When you get angry, you are teaching. When you use swear words or off color words, you are teaching. The most powerful way you teach your children is by how you live your life so look at verses 17-18 (read).

But, there is another way to teach, and it is also very important. That is by setting aside times as you can fit into your schedule, when you sit down with them and instruct your children or teach them from the Word of God. Look now at verses 20-25 (read). You may wish to check out the library. There are materials there to help you with this.

Let me recommend a few things. If your wife does the Sunday School Bible reading program with the children, then you take one day a week or more to do it. Teach your children the Bible stories. Consider teaching your children the Catechism. If you do not know how, you may ask for the notes I use and take any thoughts from there that might help you. Gear for their level. If they are quite young, you have to teach at their level. But teach. This is father's day. Our text is addressed to you, not your wife. YOU teach your children.

We have in church here a Sunday School ministry. It is not a substitute for dads teaching their children, it is a support for dads teaching their children. I want to tell you something from experience. As parents, you need all the help you can get. You need to do all you can, and you need all the help you can get. We are offering some of that in Sunday School.

But the bulk of the responsibility falls to dads. So, our text says, "Fathers, train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

CONCL: So, we conclude this "Father's Day" message. First, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath. I think this is an anger that comes as a result of a long time of wrong training by parents. The end result is a child that says, "Just you wait. I won't always be treated this way." How many parents have driven their children to wrath? And what a tragedy when it happens.

But Paul goes on to spell out how to train up children in the right way. They are to be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is first to be in the discipline

of the Lord. The Bible sets out what that is, especially in the Proverbs. In the early years, the rod is very important language. I am by no means an expert in this area, but I think the rod applied aright, will almost have completed its work in the first 5-7 years.

But, that is only one part of the godly training. The other is to teach by way of instruction. By putting information into their minds by life and by lip.