

How to Be a Godly Dad

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Tabernacle Baptist Church

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:4

Open your Bible this morning to **Ephesians 6:1-4**. The message is entitled “How to be a Godly Dad”.

Let us read God’s holy Word.

Ephesians 6:1–4 (ESV) — “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” 4 **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**” This is the Word of the Lord!

I’m somebody’s Dad

Probably the most awesome thought I have ever thought in regard to my family is that I’m somebody’s dad. The little people in my house are going to live forever somewhere. Raising my children has driven me and sharpened me spiritually in so many ways. I can’t just live for myself or just myself and my wife. My life now includes my precious children. This morning, if you’re a mom, you’re somebody’s mom. If you’re a dad, you are somebody’s dad. That’s a fact that will never change. And if you’re like me, you want your children to turn out for the Lord.

Being a dad is an amazing thing!

How many of you men here are fathers or one day hope to be a dad? Great. You need to listen to today’s message because you have a fantastic potential to really be transformational in your kids’ lives or you have the potential to ruin your kids’ lives.

So what can you do to be a godly father?

I. Be **Present!** “*Fathers...*”

Most women who have their lives ruined have them ruined by men who leave them. But you have an amazing opportunity to be the greatest blessing a wife and a child could ever have. So you need to listen to this message so that you can be a blessing to your wife and your children.

The two greatest problems of all time are:

1. Children don't know their heavenly Father.
2. Children don't know their earthly father.

Today marriage rates are on the decline, divorce is on the rise, and cohabitation is on the rise. Our society in the last hundred years has gone certifiably insane. Media has hijacked the role of the parents. Most parents are too lazy, self-absorbed and negligent to do anything spiritually good for their children. Most parents are watching their children from the sidelines acting as if there is nothing they can do.

And chiefly to blame are the fathers! Fathers are absent from the lives of a great number of children in our country. Consider these statistics.

Statistics

- 1/3rd of all births are aborted nationally.
- 1/3rd of all births have no father listed on the birth certificate.
- 40% of all children will go to bed tonight without their father. 4 out of 10 kids are not raised with their dad.

Being a dad is important! To say that every father who brings a child into this world should raise that child is a *revolutionary concept* in our country!

Fatherless children have a much higher propensity to use drugs and alcohol, engage in premarital intercourse, father children as teenagers, and continue this brutal cycle. These fatherless kids have a high rate of transmitting venereal diseases, have high rates of mental illness and high rates of suicide. According to the U.S. Census Bureau statistics, *children who grow up without a dad are **five** times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, **nine** times more likely to drop out of schools and **twenty** times more likely to end up in prison.* What we have done in this country is to construct an entire social service welfare net to pick up the pieces for fathers who walk away from their wife and children. The main problem in this country is not the low morals and high crime, but that fathers are absent from the home.

Everything I say today needs to be heeded by both mothers and fathers. We see in verse 1, "Children, obey your **parents** in the Lord". So it is both father and mother who are active in bringing up the children.

But this passage is particularly powerful in communicating and shaping the responsibility of fathers in the life of his children. ***I cannot emphasize enough that the ultimate responsibility in the home for raising godly children rests upon the dad of the home.***

You would imagine that Paul would continue his emphasis on the parents when he gets down to verse 4 and say, "**Parents** do not provoke your children to anger, but raise them up in... the Lord". But he doesn't do that. He lasers in his focus on ***fathers***.

Fathers are so busy these days, and before they know it, they've missed their children's growing up years. They saw them born, and the next time they're involved, their walking that daughter down the aisle. You know children grow up very quickly. Some of you young couples came to this church as little children, and now you have children of your own.

Often on television and in the stereotypical American home, fathers are sadly absent. They are often too busy conquering the world and bringing home the bacon to be very involved with their wife and children.

But Christian fathers are clearly commanded to have the major part of their children's upbringing. Paul says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Today I'm going to talk about how to be a godly father, as well as the disadvantages kids have who grow up without fathers. This is not a knock on single mothers. I grew up with only a single mother in my home. This is a knock against fathers who abandon their responsibilities. The single mothers are the ones who are picking up the pieces that the guy has left. No father should ever abandon his family.

I hear about couples who want to get a divorce, and they say, well, we can't stay together just for the children. What? Yes you can. You should stay together for God first. God said, "What God has joined together, let not man separate". But yes, you should stay together for the children as well. Kids need a dad. According to the U.S. Census Bureau statistics, *children who grow up without a dad are **five** times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, **nine** times more likely to drop out of schools and **twenty** times more likely to end up in prison.*

You don't have to have a large imagination to figure out how that happens. I was well on my way into those statistics until I came to Christ. Before coming to Christ, I took that special place my dad should have had and gave that friendship and that time to friends. Sadly, those friends were not prepared to point me in the way of godliness, but they taught me the ways of the wicked and the ways of the world.

Dads and moms, if you do not get involved in your kids life, that space will be filled by someone else.

I want to make this point to dads who are in the home, but may be neglecting your home. It is vital for you to be at home. More than work, more than your leisure, you need to be at home with your wife and children.

Before I get into this point, let me speak to those young men and young ladies out there who don't have a father in the home. I can speak from my heart because I was raised for most of my upbringing without a father. It's very hard. You are going to have some difficult things you'll need to sort through. You may not have a dad at home. Or perhaps you did have a dad at home, but he wasn't engaged.

The easiest thing in the world to do is to become bitter. Don't do that.

A. A father's presence must be a high priority (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

We live in a workaday world that puts insane amounts of pressure on the man of the house to be busy beyond comprehension. As dads, we are tempted to think our main job is to "bring home the bacon".

We have the temptation to think family and fathering is secondary. It's not as important as my vocation. God tells pastors this: [**1 Tim. 3:4-5**] – A pastor "must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" The same goes for every parent. How can any of us be used of God in His church if we are not doing right in our family?

Parents must be engaged at home. It used to be taught to ministers: "Take care of God's people, and God will take care of your family". This is a contradiction of apostolic teaching.

B. A father's presence is for protection (Eph. 6:4 – "*Fathers... bring them up in ... the Lord*").

We have a fence in our back yard. It not only gives the children boundaries and keeps them safe from getting out into things that would harm them, but it also keeps bad things from getting in. According to **Ephesians 6:4**, this is the *father's* responsibility. A father is to be a fence or a protector for his wife and children.

Eph. 6:4, "**Fathers**, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Earlier, Paul tells the husband to lay down his life for his wife as Christ laid down His life for the Church.

But if that husband is also a father, it is His responsibility to engage Himself in the lives of His children in nurture and instruction.

If the father is not present in the life of the kids, often other influences will take his place!

I know when I grew up, my mother didn't want me to be a lazy kid with a desire to break the law, and with no respect for women. She didn't want to become so angry and confused that I turned to alcohol and then to drugs to get a break from the pain of life. She didn't want these things for me, but she chose them when she divorced my father after 24 years.

Now I am not speaking against single mothers. I am speaking against absentee fathers. And I am speaking about the wife who might be thinking about

II. Be **Patient!** – “*do not provoke your children to anger*”

1. Children naturally gravitate toward sin. Why? Life flows out of the heart, and our hearts are inherently rebellious against God. So what the Bible says is what we need is a new heart that is submissive to God (Eze. 36:27; Jer. 32:39 – I will give you a new heart, I will give them one heart).
2. The goal is not that we would have morally compliant children, but children with redeemed hearts. The goal is to have kids who have hearts that love Jesus. “If you love me Jesus says you’ll keep my commandments”. So if you have kids with hearts that love Jesus, you’ll have obedient children.
3. Now what Paul says right up front is that the responsibility for the raising up of a godly seed falls squarely on the father.
 - Eph. 6:4, “**Fathers, do not provoke [exasperate] your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**”
 - It is primarily the father’s responsibility to make sure the kids get raised in godliness. This is not even clear to most people in the church today! When they are little it’s the Sunday school teacher’s job, and when they get older it’s the youth director’s job. The church has bought into the secular lie that it is someone else’s responsibility to raise their kids.
 - Don’t yell at the teachers or the leaders of the church because your child is broken. It is the moral responsibility of parents, and specifically of fathers to take the means of grace in the Bible and seek the conversion of your child. By God’s grace this is possible, but we cannot abdicate our responsibility
4. The first responsibility the Lord gives to fathers is a negative one. Don’t provoke them to anger or wrath. Anger? Why does Paul immediately begin with this? Because fathers are prone to neglect relationship. When a relationship is neglected or broken, there is anger. Often a father thinks his whole job is to bring home the paycheck. But that is only 10% of a dad’s job. 90% is raising his kids in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
5. If a child feels neglected or misjudged or misunderstood, anger follows. This kind of anger is poisonous. This anger as an emotion devours almost all other good emotions. It deadens the soul. It numbs the heart.

Don’t cut off the connection to your children, because you need to train and nurture and counsel them. They need to respect and love you. Anger quenches love

and respect. Don't provoke them to anger. Don't exasperate them. Don't frustrate them. How do dads do this?

- Dad is absent. You're never there to tuck them in at night. You look at all the photos for the zoo and the activities, and it's clear that you're not in most of them. Dad's not at school functions. Dad's not at important events and important days. Some of you moms might be occupational widows. Your husband is never home. You need a connection to raise your kids for God. This cuts it off. You've got to be there.
- Maybe Dad is present, but he ignores the child altogether and is uncaring or uninvolved. I heard of a world renowned doctor who was working on writing an article for an important medical journal. His son had sneaked into his study. As the son jockeyed for his dad's attention, the dad without looking at the child reached for a box of candies and gave it to his son. A little later as the son drew near, hardly losing concentration on his article, he gave his son a pencil to write with. Finally the boy said, "Dad, I don't want candy. I want you!" Dad's you can be home, but not home. When you are home, BE HOME!
- Dad is there in the home, but he never relates with the children. Everything is always serious. There's no games, no genuine happiness together.
- Dad is in the home, and is the super spiritual dictator, but is not consistent with loving the children, rarely shares the Word with them in a loving way, and rarely prays with the children.
- Perhaps Dad is lazy. He might earn money, but he's not good with finances and blows it on irrelevant things and does not take care of his family.
- Perhaps the father is mean or abusive to his wife, and is combative and argumentative in front of the children. This will exasperate the child.
- Another thing that is common is that the father bullies and yells at the child. He might even do this with a Bible verse, so it sounds spiritual. One thing you need to realize, as James says, **Jas 3:17**, "the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."
- Dad uses discipline, not as a training measure, but as a punitive measure. Dad wants peace in the home, so since his peace is disturbed he spansks the child. He doesn't know if there's been defiance or disobedience against the Lord. His peaceful quietness is disturbed so somebody's gonna pay for it. So discipline becomes a way to crush the child, and it becomes a way to give retribution. The discipline of our children is always for training and never retribution. God is the only one that can give retribution.

- With that as well, a father can provoke his child by mocking his child. He might tell his son, “You throw that ball like a girl”. “You can’t do anything right”. “You’re not like your older brother”. In other words dads tell their kids they don’t measure up. Instead of unconditional love, the love becomes conditional, based on my arbitrary desires. When this happens the child is frustrated and confused. This cuts off the connection you need dad to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 - Fathers embitter their children because they don’t know the difference between childishness and defiance. Defiance is a breaking of the fifth commandment. It is willful disobedience. So a father might constantly be on their son or daughter because they are being silly or because they do childish things. But the tone toward the children is always harsh because the child never seems to measure up. He or she almost wants to apologize for being a child. Running in the house gets the same consequences as lying or stealing. Loudness gets the same consequences as hitting your sister. Often fathers don’t understand the difference between childishness and defiance, and it embitters their children against them. It breaks the connection you need to have with your child.
6. Be connected! Anger occurs in the heart of the child who is not connected to his parents. Of particular need is a heart connection with the father.

III. Be **Pro-Active!** – *“bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Tenderly – bring them up

Example – discipline, training

A. Set up the right **environment** for godliness. *“bring them up”*

This speaks of the soil of the home.

We are to **“bring them up.”** This phrase has the idea of **“nourishing them to maturity”**. We are to tend to them like we would a tender plant. We are to help them reach their fullest potential in the Lord. We are to help them **“be all they can be.”**

If we are to do this, then we are going to have to invest the one thing that most parents are not willing to give up: time. According to a recent study, the average father in America spends a whopping 3.7 minutes with his children every day! What a tragedy. Is it any wonder that we are raising a generation of juvenile delinquents?

Illustration: As a father looks back... I would spend more time with my wife and children. I would throw more footballs, go to more tea parties, play with more baby dolls and build more roads in the dirt that go nowhere. If your children are

still young, take it from me, give them the greatest gift of all: give them you, give them your time.

2. Train them in Godly **habits**. “*bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” This is the training in godly habits.

The word “**discipline**” has the idea of nurturing or fostering godly habits. It could also be translated “nurture, or train”. It’s the idea of the constant repetition of good habits. If a plant is to grow it needs constant sun and rain. The more consistent and constant the habit is, the heartier the plant. The same goes for a child.

We are instructed very clearly in Deuteronomy about exactly how this training in godly habits should take place.

Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (ESV) — “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 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. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

The best thing you can do for your kids is to love Jesus yourself – to live out a genuine Christian life before them. Habits are easier CAUGHT than TAUGHT. If you want your children to pray, then you pray.

3. Counsel them in Godly **wisdom**. – “*bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” This is the training in godly wisdom.

The word “**instruction**” is **nouthesia** and it means “*to admonish, to counsel, to come along side, to encourage*”. It refers to the act of guiding children toward maturity by coming along side them and teaching and counseling them.

Again, Deut. 6 tells us how to do this. At all occasions we should be finding a time to have a heart connection with our child so that we might fill them with godly wisdom.

4. Godliness can only attained and sustained through life if our children **know** the Lord. “*of the Lord*”

– 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. Everything is measured by how that might be biblically achieved.

All of this nurture and admonition is to be “*of the Lord.*” We are to steep them in the Word of God, not our opinions, our preferences or our prejudices. When we teach our children to believe like we do, they will be as messed up as we are.

When we train them in the things of the Lord, they will grow up and live lives that glorify and honor God.

Conclusion: In all we do for our children, we give them no greater gift than when we point them toward Jesus Christ. If our love, our discipline, our encouragement and our instruction are centered in the Word of God; we will more likely than not raise children that are in the will of God. Keep God in the center of all you do as a parent!

Those with no father need to seek the heavenly father. Think of Timothy. I even think of Peter’s children. I think of circumstances that are not ideal. Seek the heavenly Father!