

Ephesians

6:1-4

Introduction

Parenting is a frightening task in today's world. The influences against the family seem overwhelming. Failures seem to outweigh successes in training-up respectful, responsible children.

Faith promises to overcome your fear. You should *not* fear the world, but you *should* fear the Lord. The fear of the Lord is your response to His *love* for you, and to His *life* in you:

1. Because He loves you, you are afraid of disappointing Him.
2. Because He has given you life, you are afraid of deviating from His Word.

Your fear of the Lord encourages you to find and follow His commands for training-up your children. His commands flow from His love and they show forth His life. God has not given you a spirit of fear; by faith you can trust that He will guide and direct your parenting.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Show Whether Or Not You Fear Your Lord As You Train-under Your Parents, and #2 You Show Whether Or Not You Fear Your Lord As You Train-up Your Children.

#1 You Show Whether Or Not You Fear Your Lord As You Train-under Your Parents (v1-3)

This section of Scripture dealing with relationships began in verse twenty-one of chapter five where Paul told all believers to “[submit] to one another in the fear of the Lord.” In each relationship – your marriage, your family, and your work – Paul first addresses the

person or persons who are called upon to submit. In doing so he reinforces how important it is that we all adopt an attitude of submission to God's proper order for society.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

The word for "children" does not refer only to very young children but to your offspring of any age who are still under your roof. In verse thirty-one you learn that men and women are no longer under their parents authority once they marry. But until then, especially while living at home, they need to "obey."

"Obey" literally means *to hear under*. It means to listen *attentively* and to respond *appropriately*. "In the Lord" means in the fear of the Lord, or for the sake of the Lord. "This is right" means it's the way God designed the family to function.

Paul is addressing children, but it's clear that he's also addressing parents. Children ought to obey; but they don't, especially when they are young. The Minnesota Crime Commission – not a Christian organization - issued a report which said, in part:

"Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it: his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty, he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children but all children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal..."

Your child is born with imputed sin; he or she inherits a sin-nature; he or she commits individual acts of sin. God understands your child and has delegated parents the duty of training them up. It is "right" to command your child's obedience.

You need to agree it is "right." The world today has much to say about children's *rights*. But the emphasis should be on their *responsibilities* and your raising them "right." The rightness of parental authority is not based on psychological case studies or human theories, but upon God's love and life.

Ephesians 6:2 *“Honor your father and mother,”* which is the first commandment with promise:
Ephesians 6:3 *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”*

“Obey” involves *actions*; “honor” involves *attitudes*. Again I’d point out that, while Paul is addressing children, it’s the parents who must insure that their children honor them. Attitudes are perhaps even more important than actions. It is from the attitudes that the actions result.

“Honor your father and mother” is the key principle behind all right human relationships in society. A person who grows up with a sense of honor for and obedience to his parents will have the foundation for respecting the authority of other leaders and the rights of other people in general.

The promise “that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth” was a *material* promise to Israel; it is a *spiritual* promise to Christians. You discover God’s spiritual best and blessings for you as you train-under your parents, learning obedience and respect.

If you fear your Lord, you will obey and honor your parents right up to the point where they ask you to disobey God. If you do not obey and honor your parents, **then you do not fear the Lord**, despite your arguments to the contrary! Too many Christian kids go around demanding their rights but denying their responsibilities. Don’t look at your parents and excuse your lack of submission on their frailties and failures. Your lack of submission to them is about **your** failure to fear your Lord. It’s about **your** relationship with Jesus. He loves you; He’s given you life. Trust Him by submitting to His command that you obey and honor your parents.

#2 You Show Whether Or Not You Fear Your Lord
As You Train-up Your Children
(v4)

You are to work hard at training your children because you love them and desire what is truly best for them. Here is how you are to do it:

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

“Fathers” is from a Greek word usually referring to male parents, but frequently to both parents. Speaking of fathers: Even secular sources now readily admit that the increasing absence of fathers is a major contributing factor to the deterioration of the family.

Parents are told **to not** provoke their children to wrath. This suggests a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility.

Going to the extremes of *ill-treatment* or *indulgence* will provoke your children to wrath:

1. Ill-treatment would include things like showing favoritism, pressuring your children to over-achievement, humiliating them and belittling them. It would include setting a bad example for them. It would certainly include physical and verbal abuse.
2. Indulgence is just as destructive. Indulgence is whatever teaches your children to prefer themselves over others rather than to have a proper respect and restraint for people and property.

Parents are told **to** “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” “Bring-up” refers to the overall process. It is defined by its two principles, “training” and “admonition.” We could call “training” *discipline* and “admonition” *discipling*.

The process is bringing-up your children; the principles are discipline and discipling. What are the practices? Pam and I teach a study on parenting practices that requires six sessions, and even that is not long enough. The text of those sessions is on our website, on the Bible Studies page under *Principles for Parenting*. It is a biblical strategy for parenting based on six practices: *Scheduling, Spanking, Shepherding, Supervision, Socializing, and Separating*.

Scheduling advocates putting infants on a realistic schedule of feeding, wake-time, nap-time, and play-time – all controlled by the parents, *not* by the demands of the infant. *It is a life saver!*

Scheduling lays the foundation for a disciplined home in which good discipling can take place. As your child grows, scheduling gives way to other disciplines: You have bedtimes... You have mealtimes... You have control over entertainments... You can initiate chores... As your kids get even older, you can enforce curfews. I know of no greater tool for laying the foundation of discipling and discipline than scheduling.

Spanking is a controversial concept today. Several countries have made corporal punishment of children illegal with criminal penalties for parents who violate the law. There are groups in America calling for such legislation. Surprisingly, more and more Christians are refusing to obey God by refusing to spank their sons and daughters. Scheduling may be a suggestion; spanking is not. It is a commandment. You can fear the Lord and follow His commandment; or you can listen to the world.

We began by gently flicking or slapping the hand. At about fifteen months we were using a wooden spoon on the buttocks. At ages five or six we were using a small paddle. Then we went to the larger paddle that took us up to their youth. The deciding factor for moving from one implement to the next was that it was no longer effective. We were done with spanking at around age ten. By then your children should have learned self-control and you can develop other non-corporal disciplines.

As far as administering the spanking:

1. Decide ahead of time what actions **and what attitudes** will call for spanking. Then be consistent!
2. Spank out of love while you are under control and not angry. Spanking is not violence and does not teach violence; it is not “hitting” kids; it is not abuse.
3. Spank in private, away from brothers or sisters or other adults. The spanking isn’t meant to humiliate your child in front of others.

4. Spank as soon as possible after their behavior. You must be willing to interrupt your own life and activities to deal with their discipline
5. Talk about why they are getting a spanking, then have them in a secure position. Smaller children could be put over your lap; older children should bend over and hold their ankles, looking forward or with their eyes closed. The spanking is a swat with the paddle on the buttocks. **Do not allow them to resist!** Resistance will earn additional swats. Intense, angry, defiant screaming and crying also will earn additional swats.
6. If possible, if you are a married couple, **the father should spank.** Don't argue with each other in front of your kids about whether or not to spank. If one of you thinks they need to be spanked, **do it.**
7. One swat, properly administered, should be sufficient unless they've earned more for the reasons we've just discussed. The swat shouldn't be a brutal application of force; it shouldn't send them crashing forward. It is a stinging pain. It is a surface pain – not a deep wound. You don't need to be strong to administer it. And yes, it *is* legal to spank in the State of California.
8. Let them cry – but their crying must be under control and not be defiant screaming. Then hug, comfort, and have them ask for forgiveness. After all, what they did was sin, and sin should be confessed and forgiveness promised.
9. **Do not bring up their behavior afterwards!** It's over and they received what was due. Just as God forgives us, forgive them and go on.

I cannot emphasize enough that you are **commanded** to properly administer corporal punishment. Proverbs 13:24 says, “he who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” If you are against spanking, or are not really practicing it, *you do not fear the Lord.*

Shepherding is *teaching* your kids about God and then *talking* with them to *tie-in* spiritual principles with their everyday experience. Deuteronomy 6:7 says, “You shall teach [God’s Word] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Surround them with God’s Word from a young age. Minimize or eliminate other influences that detract from spiritual things.

Supervision is a key element in training up kids. Know exactly where they are, why they are there, and who they are there with. You must approve the friends your kids hang around with. It's not up to them to choose; *it's up to you*. 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns, "stop being deceived: *Wicked friends lead to evil ends.*" (International Standard Version).

Socializing overlaps with supervision as far as choice of companions and other activities. Socialization involves things like school choices and social celebrations. School used to be easy; you had no choice. You sent your kids off to public school. Now you *do* have other choices: private Christian school and homeschool. Do your research; do what is best for your particular children. Celebrations are important in our culture: Easter, Halloween, Christmas. You need a biblical strategy for celebrating them. Then there are the parties, the sleep-overs, and such.

Separating is the ultimate goal to keep in mind. You are training up your kids to send them away. When they go away, it is to establish their own biblical home. And there should be something left in your home: A joyous, wonderful, growing love for your spouse.

Conclusion

In 1950, Harvard University sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck developed a test to determine whether or not five- and six-year-olds would become delinquent. (*Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* [Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950], pp. 257-71). *It proved to be ninety-percent accurate!* They discovered that the four primary factors necessary to prevent delinquency are:

1. The father's firm, fair, and consistent discipline.
2. The mother's supervision and companionship during the day.
3. The parent's demonstrated affection for each other and for the children.
4. The family's spending time together in activities where all participated

These sociologists stumbled upon what God had already laid down as a foundation! The problem isn't in knowing what to do; it's in doing it.

You may be married to an unbeliever; you may for any number of reasons be a single parent; you may be remarried and in a blended family; or you may both be Christians but not be following God's rules for your roles of head and helper. **Your particular circumstances do not in any way detract from God's love for you or His life in you.** *But neither do they detract from God's principles for parenting!*

All of us, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, *can* and *should* fear the Lord and find and follow His commands.