

Ephesians Chapter 6
Week 3, v.4

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

Following the instruction to children to obey and honor their parents is the instruction to fathers on what not to do and what to do. The 'and' is important here because it is part of the whole instruction. Parents have an important role in teaching their children to obey and honor but not by way of bullying. Instead, discipline and instruction is in accordance with God's word. Ephesians 6:4 is a parents' job description.

Fathers – literally or figuratively, meaning parent

According to this verse, what are we instructed not to do? What does it mean to provoke someone to anger?

In this verse, provoke and anger are translated from the same word, <parorgizo> meaning to anger alongside, enrage; provoke to wrath.

In our English dictionary it means to make somebody feel angry, to be the cause of an emotion or response, to bring something about intentionally, to cause an argument. Some synonyms for this word are aggravate, hassle, goad, and irritate.

Anger is a strong feeling of grievance and displeasure. To be angry is to become greatly annoyed, furious, to resent, and even to go into a rage. The opposite of anger is calm.

How does anger affect your actions? Your thinking? Your attitude? Your speech? Usually anger causes us to act foolishly, to be unwise in our thinking. It is reflected in our attitude towards others and even toward things. Can you think of examples of when you've been angry or someone around you has been angry? How did it affect you and others? This is the opposite of what God wants us to do.

Eph 5:17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Ec 7:9 Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools.

Col 3:21 (KJV) Fathers, provoke not your children [to anger], lest they be discouraged.

Col 3:21 (NASB) Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.

What happens when you feel that someone you love or care about is never happy with you? Correction is important but so is encouragement. If your only interaction with your child is negative, they may become disheartened. Do you think of building an atmosphere for your child where they can be successful?

What is your child learning from your responses to situations as he/she watches you interact with others and themselves? How difficult will it be for them to obey and honor in the right attitude if you are always annoyed at someone or something?

The second half of Eph 6:4 tells us what to do as parents - but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Instead of provoking a child to anger, we are to train them and teach them in the things of God.

To bring them up <ektrepho> means to rear up to maturity, to cherish or train.

What does the word train imply? What is the key element of training? Should it be any surprise that children need to be told the same thing over and over until they learn?

We are to train them up in 1) discipline and 2) instruction.

Discipline <paideia> tutorage, i.e. education or training ; by implication, disciplinary correction : chastening, chastisement, instruction, nurture.

Think of the word tutor – it carries the idea of one-on-one instruction, it is close and personal. The dictionary says it is usually in remedial work – those things that are the most basic and essential, the foundations of learning.

Instruction <nouthesia> calling attention to, mild rebuke or warning : admonition

Discipline requires the giving of information and training is how to use the information. Instruction means providing correction when it is used wrong and encouragement when it is right. Parents have a huge responsibility – their role is

active and constant. As Christians, we have the perfect child-rearing manual – the Bible. Discipline and instruction is to be done in accordance with God's word. We don't discipline and instruct because it suits us but because it pleases God. A child ultimately should learn to obey and honor parents not to please parents but to please God.

Prov 13 :24 He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently

As a Christian, what would be the most basic and essential information we can give to our children? Why? How important is it for a teacher to know the subject they are teaching?

What happens when a substitute teacher takes over a classroom? Many times, they are unsure of the subject matter and don't know the routine so the class in general doesn't take them seriously.

De 4:9 "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

De 6:5-7 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up.

Teaching and instruction of children needs to be done according to God's word. The motivation should come from a heart that desires to bring a child up to know and love God.

What type of motivation for correction might be wrong? How about punishing a child simply because you are inconvenienced? How about *not* correcting a child because it is inconvenient?

Have you heard a parent say to a young child, "stop acting like a child"? This seems absurd, yet we've all witnessed this type of exchange and perhaps have even thought it ourselves. Are the things you expect from your children reasonable for their age? If they are given impossible tasks or are expected to do things the way an adult would, they may easily become discouraged.

Being a parent is a full time job which means it can be exhausting. There are no day shifts/night shifts/afternoon shifts when we are on and then get to leave. Parenting is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, job! When we are tired, our responses can be affected.

What are some tools that you can use to keep yourself from punishing your child out of frustration and anger or from neglecting to correct them because you are too tired? If you no longer have children at home, how can you encourage the young mothers who do?

Bringing children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord requires that we are practicing the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Does your child see you pray frequently? Do you pray with him/her? Do your children know you study and read God's word? Do you read about Jesus and talk about Him with your child? Is fellowship within your church family a priority? Do they see this? Have you seen parents drop their children off to youth group or church and they then drive away totally uncommitted themselves because "it's good for their kids" but not necessarily for them? What kind of message does this send to a child?

Ephesians 4:1-3: I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We need to know what it means to be a Christian and what God desires of us. This goes hand in hand with *doing* what God expects of us. What or Who does your child see reflected in your life?

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Application

Read Ephesians Chapter 6 then go back and read verse 4 again.

To provoke someone to anger means to be the cause of irritation, to intentionally cause an argument. Have you personally been provoked to anger? What plan can you make to remain calm in situations that would normally irritate you?

Do you provoke others – either intentionally or without realizing it? Do you need to be more thoughtful in the way you interact with others?

To train and instruct our children is not a suggestion, it is a responsibility. It takes time and effort, sacrifice and devotion. If you have young children, how do you feel you are doing?

What helps you stay on track?

Where can you get encouragement?

Is there someone you might be able to encourage with what you have learned?

How would you honestly evaluate your personal quiet time with the Lord?

How essential do you think this is in order to fulfill His instructions?

Read De 4:9 and De 6:5-7. Are there changes you need to make? Perhaps you need to get up early before your children are up, maybe use their nap time as your time with the Lord. You may need to be creative and you may need to sacrifice something to make your time with the Lord a priority.