

# Essentials In Rearing Kids

Child-rearing is a vital part of family life. Both children and parents need to know what God expects of them in the experience of having kids in the home. The prophet Malachi wrote that the Lord made the man and the woman into "one" in marriage so that "He might seek a godly seed." The Lord wants our families to produce godly offspring. No place in the Bible summarizes child-rearing more compactly and clearly than Ephesians 6:4. Actually, the first four verses of this chapter cover the whole subject of the parent-child relationship! Let us look at the three great essentials of growing up from the viewpoints of both parents and kids, using Ephesians 6:1-4, and getting some help from Proverbs.

## 1. Love/Obedience.

Parents must love their children, and children should respond by obeying. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John 14:15, 15:9-10). The Father loved the son, and the Son responded by loving the Father enough to obey Him. The Son loved us, and we should love Him enough to obey Him. The first essential is love from the parent evoking love from the child expressed in obedience.

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

"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath..."  
(Ephesians 6:4)

Fathers are to love their children in such a way that they do not provoke them to wrath. Provoking to wrath means acting as a parent in a way that hinders the child from acting as a child should. The child is still responsible for any rebellion or disobedience in his life, but God acknowledges that his parents have provoked him, and bear some of the blame. How does a parent provoke his kids to wrath? David in the Old Testament presents a sad example of a Christian father who provoked his children. Notice three of his sons who went wrong, and why.

(a) Amnon (II Samuel 13)--provoked by David's neglect! Had his father cared enough to know what was going on in his life and to keep an eye on his sons and daughters, Amnon would not have fallen into terrible sin.

(b) Absalom (II Samuel 14)--provoked by David's unforgiveness! Had his father dealt with the son's wrong in the way God had dealt with his own sin, Absalom would not have become the rebel we find him to be in II Samuel 15-18. The belated mercy and half-hearted forgiveness David bestowed upon Absalom provoked him to wrath.

at (c) Adonijah (I Kings 1) --provoked by David's permissiveness! "His father had not displeased him any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (v. 6) As a result, this son was so self-centered that he grew up to commit great wrongs (See also I Kings 2).

Parents must love their children enough to work at rearing them right, and to tell and show them all the time that they care. Children should obey their parents. To disobey loving parents would be as wicked a crime as not loving one's children!

## 2. Discipline/Honor.

"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," says Ephesians 6:4 to fathers. The word "nurture" is a translation of the Greek word paideia, which involves chastening. Right child-rearing always involves correction and corporal punishment. See this in the Book of Proverbs!

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (13:24)

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." (19:18)

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."  
(22:15)

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (23:13-14)

Obviously, the Lord tells us to spank our children. Children should be spanked when they knowingly rebel against their parents' authority. Their human nature is sinful and will lead them into great wickedness if children are not trained in a biblical way to control it. Hebrews 12 says that God chastens His children because He loves them, and that properly spanked kids give their fathers "reverence" and "subjection" (v. 9). So Ephesians 6:2-3 commands children to "honor" their parents. Lovingly administered spankings make respectful children. A child's reverence or respect of his parents is important because his attitude toward them will effect his attitude toward God. God has promised that things will "be well with" those who honor their parents. So parents should lovingly, scripturally, and consistently discipline their children, and kids should always honor and respect their parents.

### 3. Teaching/Listening.

The "admonition" of Ephesians 6:4 refers to teaching. Parents are the primary teachers in the lives of children. See what Proverbs 1:8 says.

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

Anybody who studies the book of Proverbs knows that parents are to teach their children, and that children are supposed to listen (2:1, 3:1, 4:1-5). Start a regular session in your home for teaching the children. Dad can read the Bible and explain what he reads. Mom can help Dad lead the children in learning Bible verses and in praying. Do this daily, if at all possible. Make teaching an important part of child-rearing. Be responsible for all the teaching the child receives--in Sunday School, through the media, at school during the week. Take charge of his training, and get rid of anything bad that is now part of it. Discipline and teaching go together. Discipline enforces right behavior and teaching gives children the reasons for right behavior. Teaching without discipline does not work, and discipline without teaching can provoke to wrath! Children should heed their parents' instructions and advice. God gives us the particular parents we have and sees that they know many of the particular things He wants us individually to know. Take your parents' words seriously!

<b>Decision:</b> We will provide a Christian home for our children, with the essential elements of love, discipline, and teaching.
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