God's Role for Fathers

Ephesians 6:4

7-26-2023

Such involvement of fathers in the life of children will be scarce in the last days. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6)

"Fathers" – Why does God address the father and not the mother? Do fathers tend to provoke their children to anger more than mothers do? Perhaps. Why didn't God say "Parents provoke not your children to anger…" After all He addressed the "Parents" in the prior verse (v.20).

Perhaps the primary reason for which God addresses the "fathers" shows the important leadership role a father has in the life of his child.

In Ephesians 6:4 Paul again admonishes the "father" by saying: "And, ye *fathers*, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
Here, Paul expands upon the teaching/training role that a father has regarding his children.

1) Teaching children spiritual truth is primarily the <u>father's</u> responsibility."

   <u>Abraham</u> was responsible to instruct his children and his household ("For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Gen. 18:19)

   <u>Joshua</u> claimed this responsibility ("but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Josh. 24:15)

   God held <u>Eli</u> responsible for failing to instruct and correct his sons ("For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." - I Sam. 3:13).

   Solomon said in Proverbs 1:8 "My son, hear the instruction of thy <u>father</u>…"

In the N.T. the apostle Paul assumes that fathers know that it is their role to encourage and bear witness to the truth to their children: "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11)

The writer of Hebrews said: If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the *(earthly)* father chasteneth not? (Hebrews 12:7)

"The Father to the children shall make known Thy truth." (Is. 38:19)

"I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:
Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.
For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Psalm 78:3-5)

I. NEGATIVE COMMAND: "Fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath" (v. 4a)

"Fathers" = shows headship and ultimate responsibility of the dad. The father sets the direction and the wife supports the direction.

Ways Fathers (Parents) provoke their children to anger:

1. Unbiblical discipline

"Spare the rod, spoil the child" (Ben Franklin)

Biblical (proper) discipline is needed. Proverbs has much to say about it. There is a right way to discipline.

Proverbs 29:15 - The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

a. **<u>Harsh</u> discipline** (unloving attitude; with anger/wrath)
"A child frequently irritated by over-severity or injustice, to which, nevertheless it must submit, acquires a spirit of sullen resignation, leading to despair." (Abbott, cited by Reinecker, p. 582).

One young girl said: "my father would use a cannon to kill a mosquito"

b. **<u>Unbalanced</u> discipline** (need both - rod and reproof - nurture and admonition)

c. **<u>Abusive</u> discipline (**uncontrolled or wrong mode and instrument)
A parent should never punch, pull the hair, ears etc. or kick a child.

d. **<u>Inconsistent</u> discipline** (Be consistent. A very important part of parenting is not to just do it when you feel like it.)

It's confusing to children to be reprimanded on one occasion and completely overlooked for the same infraction on another occasion.

ILLUS: If the traffic laws or laws of nature changed every day, you'd be very frustrated and confused. So are our kids when we are inconsistent!!

*Never let someone else (with differing standards) raise your kids. Beware of permissive grandparents!

2. **<u>Neglect</u>** (making them feel unwanted, a bother, not worthy of your time; so they turn to drugs, alcohol, immorality, bad friends (gangs))

Example: David's neglect of his son, Absalom

(Harry Chapin's song in the 70's – "Cats in the Cradle")

3. **<u>Favoritism</u>** (Ex: Isaac favored Esau over Jacob; Rebekah preferred Jacob over Esau)
Treat all of your children equally.

4. **Discouragement** - "You never do anything right!" - A failure to commend and praise positive character.

   Praise your child for his/her character (not his intelligence, or beauty, etc.). Praise your children for doing right (EX: "A" on a test, being honest, taking initiative to do something without being told, for doing an exceptional job). This will encourage them to continue to do right.

   It takes seven praises to offset one criticism.

5. **Pressure to achieve** (nothing they do pleases you)

   Our goal should be that God's will be done in our child's life. Not our will. Too often a parent will pressure a child to succeed with a motive of stroking the parent's own ego.

6. **Unfaithful to promises** - You build up their hopes (by promising something), then dash them (through neglect, etc.)
   God always keeps His word; We should keep ours.

7. **Hypocrisy** – (Play acting; pretending to be something you are not; You say one thing, but do another; "Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks"

   Children need to have fathers who are doers of God's will (not merely teachers of it).
   We cannot be bad examples!

II. POSITIVE COMMAND

1. "Raise them in the discipline of the Lord" (v. 4b)

“bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

"Bring them up" - (Ektrepho) to feed; to provide nourishment (cp. Eph.5:29)

"Nurture" (Paideia) = This word comes from the word: "Pais" which means child; and refers to the systematic training of children. Paideia specifically means to train a child by discipline; to correct; to chasten (I Cor. 11:32; II Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:20; Heb. 12:6f, 10; Rev. 3:19; Lk. 23:16, 22) (See the section of Notes dealing with "How to Discipline your child")

"When children are young, it is natural for parents to exercise maximum control. But, as a child grows older, the external controls should gradually be withdrawn. This withdrawal is possible only as he is progressively taught and demonstrates the willingness to control himself. It is important for a child to be trained before the parents lose their ability to control him." (Fugate, p.169)

When a child develops internal controls the parental external controls become less and less needed. A well trained child will understand the Parent's standards for acceptable behavior and the reasons behind those standards.

a. Why to discipline

1) Your child needs to learn the difference between right & wrong

Many are living in the depths of sin today because of parents that didn't care enough to say: "No!" and restrain their children by discipline. One girl gave this testimony: "I never knew how far I could go . . . because my parents never cared enough to discipline me. I figured that if it wasn't important to them, why should it be to important to me?" (Wiersbe, p. 155).

2) Your child needs to learn the price for sin

Physical discipline teaches that sin always has consequences. Sin will always sting! There is a price for sin. The child sees himself as a law-breaking sinner in need of God's grace.

The result of discipline is that the child will be brought back into line with what he should be.

Spanking is not punishment (to pay back), but discipline (to teach) right from wrong and to change attitude and action (Heb. 12)

Spanking is an at of love (Heb. 12:6; Prov. 13:24 - "Hateth" - not an emotion, but an action, a lack of positive action; "betimes" = early = 1) young in life (diligence from day 1); 2) early in the offense (right away in the offense).

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

b. How to discipline

Is spanking child abuse? No - not if it is done in the Bible way.

(Actually, a lack of spanking is permanent injury to their character and thus true abuse)

A spanking should sting, not damage. It is pain for the purpose of healing. (EX. a doctor cuts a person with a knife; an attacker does the same thing -- but the motive (purpose) and method is different.

Never slap a child's face or strike other parts of the body, pull hair, or drag by an arm.

Abuse of physical discipline: In superstitious Dark Ages (8th - 12th cent.), it was believed that crying children were possessed by demons and that beating them was the only way to exorcise those demons. Hence the phrase: "Beat the devil out of them" was born (Ezzo, p. 52).

"Nurture . . . of the Lord" - we are to discipline our children the same way the Lord disciplines his children.

1) Out of love (for our own good)
2) Consistently

--Discipline must be fair and consistent. Someone once said: My father would use a cannon to kill a mosquito! I either get away with murder, or get blamed for everything" (Wiersbe, p. 155).

3) Effectively (you know it when God is dealing with you)

1. Before spanking, make sure that the child knows what he did wrong.

2. Spank with a thin, flexible rod (or wooden or plastic spoon) that will sting not damage. (5-7 spanks usually enough) (make sure you are not spanking out of anger; or in a violent manner)

3. After spanking,

a) talk to him about what he did wrong (explain it as sin against God; warn him not to repeat the offense)

b) Pray with him;

c) affirm your love for him; then

d) consider the issue solved and over (providing the child's attitude and action conform to what you desired)

4. The child should then willingly do what you asked; or not do what you prohibited (a repentant attitude is your goal)

c. When to discipline

Answer: For every act of rebellion against authority.

Examples of Rebellion:

1) Rebellious Attitude
When the child pouts or whines (throws fit).

Never call sin "cute" or view it as "funny". Disobedience is nothing to laugh at. It seems small now, but this attitude will manifest itself on a greater scale later.

2) Rebellious Action
a.When the child disobeys by omitting right action

When a child consistently says, "I forgot" - this shows he rebelled against putting an effort into learning the lesson.

When you give instruction - say what you mean, and mean what you say (Ezzo, p. 43). (Don't speak rashly, because you must hold them accountable for whatever you said)

If I ask my child to do something, and he does not respond (assuming he heard me), he/she is in sin. But if I call him twice, **I** am the one in sin! Why? By repeating my request, I am reinforcing and encouraging my child's disobedience. This is, in fact, training them in unrighteousness. (Ezzo, p. 43)

For obedience to be real obedience, it must be:

1. Immediate - Delay is disobedience. Children are to obey the first time you ask (immediately). The reason they don't respond until the fourth time is because you have trained (conditioned) them that they don't have to until then (that you aren't going to do anything about their disobedience until then).

   After God teaches us something from His Word, what percent (%) of the time does God want immediate and complete obedience? 100%

   As parents, if we expect less than 100%, we are teaching our children disobedience.

When we tell our children to be quiet, and they are quiet 80% of the time, we put up with it. What will you do when you tell your children, "Don't sleep with your girlfriend" and they only obey 80% of the time??

2. Without Question (can ask "What" to clarify command, but never "Why") We are to ask God "Why" about trials, but never about obedience. Sometimes God provides a reason, but we have no right to ask Why.

3. Without Complaint. Attitude is just as important as action. Grudging compliance reveals a heart that is not willing to obey.

4. Complete - Partial obedience is not obedience.

b. When the child disobeys by committing wrong action

When a child talks back, he has rebelled.

If a dad gives a command, and the child appeals to mom. That child has just undermined Dad's authority.

Another example of challenging authority: The reply, "Why can't I" or "Do I have to?"

How long to spank?
By 5 years - 85% spanking should be completed 5-10 years - 95%
10-13 years- 99%
13-15 years-100%

(Normally, parents should not spank a teenager - this form of correction is too late then)
(Ezzo, p. 55)
Four Stages of Maturity:

1.0-5 years - Disciplinary Stage - must establish parental authority

2.6-13 years - Training Stage - must give what & why info.

3.14-19 years - Coaching Stage - give more responsibility (train toward independence)

4.19 & up - Friend Stage - Adult to adult. Give advice when it is requested.

"How to Raise a Brat" -
--When an infant, always feed on demand.
--When crying, always pick up.
--When having trouble sleeping, always rock to sleep.
--When throwing a fit, say, "Isn't that cute?"
--When the child disobeys, overlook it.
--When he/she has a conflict with a little friend, always defend your child.
--When the child wants something, always give it right away.

NOTE: A <u>good</u> parent always gives the child what he/she <u>needs</u>!--But what he/she sometimes needs is a NO!
--When the child sins, never spank or teach.
--If you do spank, do it inconsistently.
--When you want obedience, barter for it (EX: "If you're good, I'll give you this") The child learns to be a manipulator.

"A child <u>left to himself</u> bringeth his mother to shame"

Years ago, the then Duke of Windsor (who referred to the rod as a switch) said, "Everything in the American home is controlled by switches -- except the children!"

2. "Raise them in the <u>instruction</u> of the Lord" (v. 4c)

"Admonition" (Nouthesia) = lit. "to put into the mind; to correct the thinking" (not merely factual information, but right attitudes and principles of behavior)

Parental admonition will involve:

1. Teaching your children Bible Principles.
2. Encouraging your child's positive character and behavior.
2. Verbally confronting your child's disobedience.
3. Lovingly rebuking such disobedience or sin.
4. Instructing the Child as to:
    - What is right
    - What is not right
    - How to make it right
    - How to keep it right

Prov. 22:6 - "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This is an axiomatic, eternal principle from God (NOTE: context describing causes and resultant effects)

"Train" = to begin, or initiate a young child in the right direction. To start out right.

Same word as when Solomon initiated/dedicated the newly-constructed Temple (I Ki. 8:63; II Chron. 7:5)

The word originally meant to "rub the palate" of a child with chewed dates to get it to acquire a taste for food; EX: midwives would rub palate with oil before child began to suck. The word means to make experienced or accustomed to what you want (as a horse gets accustomed to being directed by a rope in its mouth) (BDB, p. 335)

If we get our children accustomed to what is right, they won't depart!

"The way" = the proper road

"Old" = mature

"It" = the way (road) we trained them on

Teach your children God's standards for purity, money management, ethics, etc. (The best way to teach = by precept and example!)

Turn to: Deut. 6:4-7 (**v. 7)

How to teach God's Word to your children:

1. Apply it to yourself first (v. 4-6)

2. Teach repetitiously (diligently = lit. to repeat. The word described the sharpening of arrows by repetitious striking [Is. 5:28; Ps. 45:6]; ILLUS: sanding metal objects)

3. Teach specifically (the commands of God (v. 6)

4. Teach continually (not limited to specific time periods) (from sunrise to sunset)

    a. Simultaneous training - "When . . ."
    b. Informal training - (While sitting, lying down in house; while

walking outside of house)

"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition **of <u>the Lord</u>**"

The phrase "of the Lord" has 3 obvious ideas:

1) Bring them up the same way God brings up His children.
2) Bring them up in the principles of the Lord; In His Word.
3) Bring them up by means of the power of His Holy Spirit to His glory and honor.

CONCLUSION: Is there hope for parents who have been delinquent in training their children? Yes. it's never too late to make corrections. This is a giant step toward successful re-parenting.

First - call a Family Conference; explain you have made errors in their lives; apologize for them.

Second - explain what God requires in the areas of obedience and respect.

Third - explain new course of action from this time forward. Join in prayer for wisdom to do what is right (Ezzo, p. 81)

The best way to insure that your kids turn out right is for <u>you</u> (as parents) to be right.

If you are tolerant of sin in your life, you will tend to be tolerant with your children.

If you are overindulgent - your kids will generally get whatever they want.

If you are selfish - so will your kids be.

You will feel like a hypocrite trying to correct something in your kids that you are.

Paul wrote to Timothy:

> ***Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity***. 1 Timothy 4:12

"Despise" - To think down upon; to under-rate; to think slightly of.

Some might think: "what does he know about God, spiritual matters, about fathering, etc. He's but a young man, inexperienced, etc.

"Youth" - not necessarily someone who is a teenager or pre-adolescent.

"In the ancient world a person between 30 and 40 years old could be considered young (Kelly). One Rabbi said that a person at 30 was fit for authority and at 40 he was fit for discernment (M, Aboth V, 21) (cited by Reinecker, p. 627).
Paul writes to Timothy, who is the pastor at Ephesus. He is not a boy, but a young man in charge of the spiritual leadership of this important area of Asia Minor. So Timothy must be somewhere between 25 and 35 years old (just about where most Dads are with young, impressionable children).

Being young is no excuse for a bad testimony, language ("word"), lifestyle ("conversation"), relationships ("love"), attitude ("spirit"), convictions ("faith"), morals ("purity").

"Be thou an example" (present, middle, imperative - ginou from ginomai) - Become thou. Regardless of your past, start setting a good example. Perhaps you have been a failure in your past; this word points to a new beginning.

The present tense implies a continual (lifelong) example.

The middle voice implies choice and determination (an act of the will) that you will decide to be exemplary.

"Example" - tupos from which we translate "type."

Tupos primarily denoted "a blow" (from a root tup--, seen also in tupto, "to strike"), hence,
(a) an impression, the mark of a "blow," <John 20:25>;
(b) the "impress" of a seal, the stamp made by a die, a figure, image, <Acts 7:43>;
(c) a "form" or mold, <Rom. 6:17> (see RV);
(d) the sense or substance of a letter, <Acts 23:25>;
(e) "an ensample," pattern, <Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5>, "pattern"; in an ethical sense, <1 Cor.
10:6; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:7; 2 Thes. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12>,
(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)
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Men, we need to be . . .

--a mold worth duplicating.
--a pattern worth copying
--a model worth imitating

Example . . .

1) Example plays an important part in the formation of character; and its influence is felt more than that of precept.

“Children possess an imitative disposition. They look up to their parents as the pattern or model of their character, and conclude what they do is right and worthy of their imitation.” (Rev. S. Phillips, 1858, The Christian Home, cited in Teaching and Learning America’s Christian History, the Principle Approach, by Rosalie J. Slater).

2) Example may be good or bad (it is never neutral).

3) Example is teaching by action
Thus, the child is a living commentary upon his/her home and his/her parents. The child is the moral reproduction of the parent (whatever you sow will be reaped).

4) Example instructs a child before he/she can learn to speak and understand words (Phillips)

(Children from birth are like “walking camcorders” recording everything they see visually and audibly in your life and home)

* Dad, your family needs you to be an example worth following!

1. Be an example worth copying in your LANGUAGE
(Can your children copy how you TALK?)

We sin with our tongue when we:

--gossip
--lie
--use foul language (curse words, vulgarity)
--speak idle talk (vanity)
--sing the devil's song (beware of the music you hear and sing)
--tear others down

"In word" - in speech; refers here to what you say and how you say it.
The content of your words and the manner in which you say them.

Inflection, tone, pitch, etc., communicate more than the actual words you say!

How did you talk to your wife and children on the way to church this morning?

Do your words hurt or help? Build up or tear down? Edify or mortify?

If walls had ears (and could gossip), what would the walls of your home say you said?

Eph. 4:29 - Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but
that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

2. Be an example worth copying in your LIFESTYLE
(Can your children copy how you ACT?)

"Conversation" - An old English word which meant behavior, conduct, manner of living, or lifestyle.

What behavioral traits do your children see in you?

Do they see . . .

--laziness
--materialism
--gluttony
--self-centeredness

"Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks."

What you do speaks so loudly that (if your kids see inconsistency in you), they will not hear what you say!

Is your home a haven or rest or a war zone? (a scene of fighting, arguing, clamoring – each selfishly out for their own interests)

God would never ask us to be something that He is not.

We should never be hypocrites and command something of our children that we don't do. If you do, your children may comply (they will listen to you) until they become teenagers.

Don't set double standards.

If you impress upon your sons the need for diligence, truthfulness, respect for the "golden rule" but are a quitter (jobs, serving Christ, etc.), boast of shady business conquest, or boast of your own getting even with others – don't be shocked at the children you produce!

3. **Be an example worth copying in your RELATIONSHIPS**
(Can your children copy how you LOVE?)

What is your relationship to your family?

Love is measured by the time and attention you give to them; by the unselfish sacrifice you make for their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being

4. **Be an example worth copying in your ATTITUDE**
(Can your children copy your ZEAL FOR GOD?)

"In Spirit" - (T.R. & KJV) - to be an example "in Spirit") means to have a zest (zeal) for spiritual things; to have an enthusiastic attitude about God and the things of God.

This person is not dull, drab, or depressed, but is excited about Christ and the new and abundant life He gives.

Mom and Dad set the mood for the home. A child's display of emotions is often a reflection of the frustration he/she feels over the mood of his parents.

"Let your light so shine before your children..."

Note: In setting the example, this does not mean that you never admit the Wrong you commit. You must. Parents need to be real and transparent in
front of their children. They need to see that you make mistakes, seek forgiveness when needed, admit fault.

5. Be an example worth copying in your CONVICTIONS
(Can your children copy what you BELIEVE?)

A conviction is a belief you would be willing to die for.

Do you have “Sunday morning only” convictions?
Sooner or later, fathers, your children will need to understand what motivates our speech, conduct, and love. What drives our outward actions?
What fuels our behavior? It must be faith.

Does your faith drive you to action? Does it influence your behavior?

If it produces no works, then it is surely dead and useless (you really don’t believe).

--when was the last time your son or daughter saw you on your knees?

--when was the last time your children witnessed you reading God’s Word? (you don’t do it to be seen by them, but if you do walk with God within your house, they will see it).

ILLUS: A child said, "Dad, what is God like?" The reply: "I don't know - go ask your mother."

No dad knows all the answers, but he should know the elementary doctrines of the Christian faith - for we are responsible to God to teach our children!

A family without a father is like a teach without a coach; like a plane without a pilot; like a ship without a navigator.

6. **Be an example worth copying in your HOLINESS**
(Can your children copy your MORALITY?)

"Purity" - Holiness or sanctity. The word refers to purity of act and thought (Lock).

The word covers not only chastity in matters of sex, but also the innocent and integrity of heart (cp. II Cor. 6:6) (Kelly) (cited by Reinecker, p. 627)

You can't say "Son, keep yourself pure . . . remain a virgin, etc." when you are slouched down on your couch watching porn and sleaze on your TV set!

Your moral purity (or lack thereof) (to a degree) will be reaped in your children.

Are you the kind of person you would want your son to become?

Would you want your daughter to marry someone like you, Dad?

When you die, will you leave behind memories that point to God?

Will you leave your children a faith and example that will guide them when your voice speaks no more?

SEE POEM "To Any Daddy"

CONCLUSION:

You cannot withdraw blessings from your home until you deposit into it.

The Law of sowing and reaping applies (Galatians 6:7).

Whatever you invest into your relationship will determine what you get out of it.

MY RESOLUTION

I do solemnly resolve before God
to take full responsibility
for myself, my wife and my children.

I will love them, protect them, and serve them.

I will teach them the statutes of God
as the spiritual leader of my home.

I will be faithful to my wife, to love and honor her,
and be willing to lay down my life for her as Christ did for me.

I will teach my children to love God with all of their heart,
all of their mind, and all of their strength.

I will train them to honor authority and live responsibly.

I will set an example of faithfulness in my walk
with the Lord and in my service for Him.

I will work diligently to provide for the needs of my family.

I will walk in integrity as a man answerable to God.

I will seek to honor God, obey His Word, and do His will.

I recognize that I must rely exclusively upon
the grace and power of God to fulfill this resolution.
I submit to His strength and wisdom.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."