**Being a Godly Father**

(many of these principles come from teaching by John MacArthur and Tedd Tripp)

It has been said that *“Everything rises or falls on leadership.”* That statement is especially true in the home where God has called husbands/ fathers to be the leaders of their families. If you are (or will one day be) a husband and father, there is no task more important than leading your wife and children.

Think about the implications of Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:25 and 6:4.

**“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”**

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

Later in this lesson, we will study some specific applications of these verses, but God makes it very clear that when it comes to the parenting process, He wants fathers deeply involved. We all understand that parenting is not easy. In fact, parenting is a lot of hard work!

Godly leadership from the husband/ father is key to having a home that pleases God. And, God’s Word has provided the answers for how a father must function if he is going to place his children in the best possible position to live godly lives. In this lesson, we want to lay a biblical foundation for the father’s part in the parenting process. We will begin with ***“First Things First”*** and then we’ll look at ***“The father’s role in parenting.”***

**I. First Things First!**

Before even thinking about exactly what to do with your children, you must give careful attention to the following four key items: your relationship with Christ, your relationship with your wife, your source of truth, your child’s nature.

**A. Your relationship with Christ**

The first key item that you must consider is your own relationship with Christ. Are you a follower of Christ Jesus? A Christian is a repentant sinner, saved through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Some non-believers may see benefits in parenting through the application of timeless biblical truth, but they will not please God by their works. It is quite impossible to “parent biblically” without personally having received and experienced God’s grace and salvation. According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, “Why is being a believer so important?”

**1 Corinthians 2:14** “*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”*

What are some other biblical reasons why only a believing parent has the potential to raise his/ her child in a godly way?

**B.** **Your relationship with your wife!**

The second key item that you must consider is your relationship with your wife. I would encourage you to go back and review the notes on being a godly husband, and see how you are doing in the following areas which we talked about …

 *Are you being faithful to your wife?*  (cf. Malachi 2:13-14; Ephesians 5:25ff)

 *Are you living with your in an understanding way?* (cf. 1 Peter 3:7)

*Are you loving your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her?* (Ep. 5:25)

*Are you leading, feeding, providing for and protecting your wife?*  (Ep. 5:25-33)

Children can see if their father loves and cares for their mother. How you treat you wife will greatly impact your effectiveness in leading your children to love and follow Christ!

**C. Your source of truth**

The third key item that you must consider is your source of truth for raising your children.

1. Where do people in society (and even some professing Christians) typically go for solutions for living? For truth about relationships? For advice on what to think about certain issues? For comfort in times of trouble? In other words, to what sources of “truth” does society listen?

2. Give an example or two of how these sources might contradict biblical truth.

3. Deuteronomy 8:3 says, *“Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”* God expected the children of Israel (and us) to live their lives with regard to a certain source.

What is that source according to this passage?

4. Jesus said in John 17:17 *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”*

What did Jesus call God’s Word?

5. How then are we able to determine what is true in regard to parenting in light of all the various theories, opinions, and philosophies that are available? In other words, how does a Christian determine what is true?

To the degree that you value and practice biblical principles instead of simply following personal experience, popular culture, or current “expert” opinions will be the degree to which you please God in your parenting.

6. Consider Jesus’ words to those who did not practice biblical principles: *“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”* (John 10:26-27).

What are two ways that Jesus describes His sheep?

**D. Your child’s nature** (spiritual condition)

The challenge all parents face is that children are not born with a natural inclination to go God’s way. In fact, just the opposite is true.

1. Roman 3:23 states, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* What is the “natural bent” that all children are born with?

2. What are some evidences, even in small children, which demonstrate this biblical truth?

3. As parents we must ask, “Am I training my child(ren) to be self-centered?” More specifically:

 “How do your children respond when they do not get their way?”

 “In what issues does my child particularly want to get his/her own way?”

4. We need to recognize that our children are born with a sin nature, bent on going their own way!

“*There is none righteous, not even one; 11there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; 12all have turned aside*”

Great challenges, then, lie before every man who desires to be a godly father. You must rely on the Lord and on His Word for success in raising our children.

What else must you do? This brings us to …

**2. The Father’s Role in parenting!**

#1 You must have the right goal!

#2 You must understand your responsibilities!

#3 You must use the right resource!

 **A. Your Goal!**

Psalm 127:3-4 states, *“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.”*

God refers to our children as *“a gift of the Lord,”* and, *“like arrows in the hand of a warrior”!* They don’t belong to us, but to God. And, like arrows shot from a bow, they have the potential to hit targets far beyond the parents’ reach. They can build upon the foundation laid by parents and take Biblical goals, ideas, and beliefs to even higher levels. However, like a warrior’s arrow, they have the potential to hit the targets only if they are “aimed” accurately. “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time!”

What is your target? What kind of a child does God want to produce? What do you want your son/daughter to be like when they arrive at the most important day of their life – the day they stand before the Lord?!

 Read Romans 8:28-29 and Colossians 1:29. What is your answer?

 **B.** **Your Responsibilities!**

Your responsibilities as a father can be summed up in two passages:

**1.** **Ephesians 6:4**, which says, **“And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”**

Pastor John MacArthur says, “*don’t let the simplicity of that statement fool you … it aims at the very heart of all that we need to know about raising our children … Every aspect of our children’s development is affected by how carefully and faithfully we apply Ephesians 6:4 to their lives*.”

 Ephesians 6:4 offers a negative command and a positive command

 a. **The Negative Command**

 *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger …”*

This is a command to not exasperate or enrage your children. In other words, don’t make unreasonable demands upon them. Don’t do things that drive them to anger, despair or resentment.

What kinds of things provoke children to anger?

\*\*\* See at the end of this lesson, Lou Priolo’s, “***25 Ways to Provoke a Child to Anger*”**

 b. **The Positive Command**

 “… *but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

*“Bring them up”* is not a passive command; it requires action, and it requires effort. There are two aspects to this command:

*bring them up in the discipline … of the Lord, and, bring them up in the … instruction of the Lord.”*

The command to bring them up, implies that our children cannot grow up in a way that pleases God on their own – they need your involvement in leading, feeding, providing for and protecting them.

 Proverbs 29:15 says, “*A child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother*.”

Proverbs 17:25 says, “*A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.*”

 How is a father to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

 i. Do all you can to point your children to Christ!

Teach your children about God’s holiness: because God is holy, He hates sin and judge sinners. He will not allow them into His presence.

(cf. Psalm 15; Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14)

Teach your children about their sin: help them understand that they do not measure up to God’s holy standard.

(cf. Mark 2:17; Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23)

Teach your children who Jesus Christ is (Saviour and Lord) and what He did on the cross.

(cf. John 10:30; 14:6; Hebrews 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:4)

Teach your children how they must respond to God’s truth with repentance and faith.

(cf. Is. 55:7; Luke 9:23; Romans 10:9-10)

ii. Train your children to live a life of **godliness** and **wisdom**.

Ephesians 6:1-3

Proverbs 4:1-8

 James 1:21-22

 iii. **Protect** your children!

Remember, you are responsible for the stewardship of the children God has given you (Ps. 127). You are responsible for **all** of their influences (teachers).

a. You are still **responsible** for what your children are being taught. Psalm 1:1; Col. 2:8ff; Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 6:14-19; 10:5 All parents are “home-disciplers”; all parents are called to teach their children.

b. You are responsible to keep watch over your children’s **friends** and **entertainment**, etc. Ps. 1:1; I Cor. 15:33; Prov. 13:20; 22:24-25 *Your children are being bombarded with ungodly influences: TV, media, peers (social media). You have the duty to protect them!*

c. You are responsible to bring **godly influences** into your children’s lives.

d. Seek to help one another (as dads) through prayer, encouragement and exhortation. Humbly grow together (iron sharpens iron 27:17)

 **C.** **Your Resource!**

The second key passage that sums up your responsibilities is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. God’s instructions for Israel provide us with wonderful insights into raising our children.

How is a father to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

 i. **Hear the Lord with an Obedient Heart!**

 Vs. 4 *“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”*

 Do you know Him? Are you saved? Is He your Lord?

Do you obey His Word? James 1:22; John 10:27

Do you trust Him? He is sovereign and He is good!

 ii. **Love** **the Lord with a Devoted Heart!**

Vs. 5 “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might*.”

Jesus said this is the greatest commandment from God. Is it true of you? Are you teaching it to your children?

 iii. **Embrace God’s Word with a Teachable Heart!**

 Vs. 6 “*These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart*.”

The Word of God must first be in your heart before you can teach it to anyone else!

 iv. **Teach God’s Truth to Hungry Hearts!**

Vss. 7-9 “*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. 8You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates*.”

 Fill your home with reminders of God’s Word.

Take advantage of opportunities to apply the Word of God to life as it happens.

Interact daily with your children about God’s truth.

Teach them by your example. Let them see what it looks like to love and obey Christ.

Teach your children about the blessings of salvation and living for the Lord.

**25 Ways to Provoke a Child to Anger**

(from How to Help an Angry Child, by Lou Priolo)

1. Lack of marital harmony

 Genesis 2:24 “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

2. Establishing/maintaining a child-centered home

 Colossians 1:18 “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”

3. Modeling sinful anger

 Proverbs 22:24-25 “Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, Lest you learn his ways, And find a snare for yourself.”

4. Consistently disciplining in anger

 James 1:20 “For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

5. Scolding

 Ephesians 4:29 “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment,* that it may give grace to those who hear.”

6. Being inconsistent with discipline

 Proverbs 13:24 “He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”

7. Having double standards

 James 1:8 “A double mindedman *is* unstable in all his ways.”

8. Being legalistic (Making man-made rules equal to God’s law, or a test of spirituality)

 Colossians 2:20-22 “If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with the using)-- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?”

9. Not admitting when you are wrong

 Proverbs 28:13 “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.”

10. Constantly finding fault

 Matthew 7:5 “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”

11. Parents reversing God given roles

 Ephesians 5:23 “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.”

12. Not listening to the child’s opinion or side of the story

 Proverbs 18:13 “He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.”

13. Comparing children to others

 2 Corinthians 10:12 “For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”

14. Not having time to talk

 Ephesians 5:16 “Making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

15. Not praising the child

 Romans 13:7 “Render to all what is due them: . . . honor to whom honor.”

16. Failing to keep promises

 Matthew 5:33 “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’”

17. Chastising him in front of others

 Matthew 18:15 “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

18. Giving too much freedom

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

19. Not giving enough freedom

 Matthew 23:4 “And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger.”

20. Making fun of the child

 Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind one to another.”

21. Abusing them physically

 James 1:20 “For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

22. Calling them names

 Ephesians 4:29 “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment,* that it may give grace to those who hear.”

23. Having unrealistic expectations

 2 Peter 3:18 “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

24. Showing favoritism toward one child over another

 James 2:9 “But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

25. Employing child-training methodologies that are inconsistent with God’s Word

 2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

**Application: Take the following steps:**

1) Identify the specific ways you have been provoking your child to anger. (Matt. 7:1-5)

2) Confess these sins to God. Ask His forgiveness and the child’s forgiveness. (1 John 1:9)

3) Develop a plan with your child’s assistance (if possible) to replace those sinful behaviors with biblical ones. (identify / confess / repent (turn) = put off and put on)

\*\*\* Memorize Ephesians 4:31-32

“***Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*** *32****Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”***