

# Ephesians 6:1-4 (Missing End)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let me ask you to take your copy of God's Word and turn to Ephesians chapter 6. As stated previously, we're taking a single Sunday break from our study of Daniel! to address the fathers and potential future fathers of our congregation.

First, before delivering any exhortation, dads, I want you to know that we see the hard work that you are doing, and we are generally very proud of you. I'm looking at two dads rocking babies to sleep in the back corner right now, and it's wonderful. Being a father is not easy, and we are seeing your efforts and the fruits of your labor. I don't know if any of you pay attention to the Babylon Bee, but one of the headlines from this morning, I don't even know why I was on Twitter this morning, but nonetheless, it said, entire nation takes a day to celebrate useless parents, which is the suggestion of our culture that dads play no part in parenting except to follow the child to begin with. And it's, of course, tongue-in-cheek, but your labor matters. But that said, we all have improving to do in our parenting. So I also do not want you to stop growing in your fathering, but please take today's brief exhortation as an encouragement to do well and not in any form as condemnation. Second, the Greek word rendered in verse 4 of Ephesians 6, fathers, can also mean parents, although it's a different Greek word than we see translated as parents in verse 1. Now, I appreciate the translation of the word into our English word as fathers, as dads are to be the heads of our households and ought to be giving leadership in the raising of children, with mothers as helpers in this most precious responsibility.

So either way, you think it ought to be translated. The point is this, moms, don't let the teaching of this text be lost on you. Now, further this morning, if you're not a parent, don't check out on us. I hope that you will be encouraged as we consider the ways that our Heavenly Father disciplines us. Godly parenting is meant to model, it's meant to be an outflow of the way that we are parented by God. So I hope you'll find that encouraging. Now, today we're going to give particular attention to verse 4, but to set the stage a bit, we'll begin reading in verse 1 of Ephesians chapter 6. Before I read, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good, and so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Ephesians 6, verse 1 and following.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment, with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. So again, we're going to spend most of our time on verse 4, but before we do that, children, let me have your attention. There's kids in the room that can hear me and understand what I'm saying, but the Apostle Paul is speaking to you in verses 1 through 3, and he tells you that it is good for you to obey your parents. Your parents were given to you as a gift from God to help you follow him so that your life will go well, and by his definition of that, not ours. You ought to listen to the godly discipline of your parents, and you need to extend forgiveness to your parents when they mess up, because they have and they will mess up. Now, children, you're done. Let's focus our attention on verse 4. The first half says, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Fathers, and by proxy, mothers, are exhorted to not anger our children. But is this possible? We have experienced anger from our children when our discipline is careful, and it is gentle, and it is fair. I can remember Judah as a two-year-old sitting in timeout screaming and me correcting him and telling him that if he continued to do so that I would spank his bottom, and he balled up his little fists, and he got this angry look on his face, and he pounded the floor, and then guess what happened to little Judah? We had been very patient with him in the process, but he got angry nonetheless, right? Are we being told here to tiptoe around our children's feelings in such a way that we ensure that

they will never get angry?

[ 5 : 12 ] After all, anger is a condition of the fallen heart. Those of us who are redeemed, who have new hearts, still find ourselves getting angry. So is it even possible to not anger a child?

Votie Bakken once said at a conference I attended, and he said it in his big deep voice, which I can't do. He said, do you know why babies are so small? Because if they weren't, they will kill you the first time you didn't give them something that they want. We have all witnessed the fury of an infant.

They can get so extremely angry because they're hungry or they're tired. Surely Paul doesn't want us to center all of our child training on our children's feelings in such a way that they always get their way. So what does he mean? Now, two details are going to help us understand his meaning. First, in the text, the word provoke is in the present tense, which means that it speaks to a state of being. He's not just talking about an action. He's talking about the very being of our children. Paul is saying, do not make your children provoked with anger. Don't make them children who would be defined by their anger. So it would seem that this is a deep-rooted type of anger, an anger that is set against the father and against the father's leadership. The second detail we can note, if we look to the parallel passage in Colossians chapter three and verse 21, Paul uses the same word provoke, but with a different qualifier this time. He says, fathers do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. So when we take these two details together, it becomes obvious that Paul is not exhorting fathers to avoid our children ever becoming angry with us for this is inevitable, but rather to parent them in a way that they do not turn against our good parenting in angry discouragement. The last half of the verse gives us the adverse of this. What is then the opposite of this to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord? When we see the word discipline, we automatically think, at least I do, of punitive action, right? Being a harsh consequence to something that's been done. But that is not at all what Paul has in mind. His idea is much broader. The word discipline means to train. It's the same word that we use for discipleship. When a top athlete is referred to as disciplined, we don't think of them as receiving daily spankings, right? It's not what comes into our mind, but of carefully training their bodies for whatever task they have set themselves to. This is what Paul is referring to. And our children need two types of discipline. They need instructive discipline, being told and shown how they are not to act. Beloved parents, we will not do this well if we do not know how our children are to act and how they are not to act. We are not the ones who define that.

We can only learn this from God's word. Do not take your cues from this world about how your children should or shouldn't act, but rather from God's word. After all, we're to bring them up in the discipline and training or the instruction of the Lord. If all of that is packed into the word discipline, why then does Paul also say instruction, right? I think some people will read this and think of the negative consequence and the positive, but actually quite the opposite is true. The word instruction, the Greek word means warning. Our children need to know that the eternal consequence for them not obeying God is eternal punishment. They need to understand that the temporal instructive discipline and temporal corrective discipline of their parents is not ultimately aimed at their external behavior. It's a good thing that our children learn how to behave appropriately, but that's not the main point. It is ultimately aimed at their hearts. We want our children to fear and love God.

[ 10 : 18 ] This is the great end of all godly parenting, right? So we're to discipline and instruct. That is why we must discipline and instruct our children by God's word and why we must discipline and instruct our children according to God's ways. So not only does the last half of verse four tell us that we should discipline and instruct them by God's standard, by his word, but in consistency with his character. We are supposed to parent our children the way God parents us, the discipline and instruction of the Lord. So to help us think about this a little bit, I for many years wondered what exactly or how exactly do I avoid doing this work of provoking my children to anger? And then I came across a book that I'll come into you. It's got one of the worst book covers I've ever seen, but the content of it is so good. And it's called the heart of anger by Lou Priolo. And he gives in there 25 ways that parents provoke their children to anger. And these are observations that he's seen across as many years of biblical counseling. These are on the back of your bulletin for you. And I think there's some extra out there in the hallway. If you want to grab them at some point, we do not have nearly enough time today to talk about every one of these things. And some of them are a little bit redundant. They overlap a bit.

And I think by design, right? I think that Lou wants you to read through these things and apply them very carefully to your heart to think, am I doing any of these things? Is there any way that I'm developing this kind of sinful anger in the hearts of my children? So I do want, I'm going to read through them and I just want to make some notes at a couple of them. You'll note the ones that I bold faced on the back of your bulletin. Those are the ones I'll stop and make a couple of comments about just to help us think well about this together today. And of course, I would commend to you that book, especially if you have a child who you find is particularly angry as a child. So let's talk about these just briefly.

Number one, a lack of marital harmony, right? If there's not peace in the house, how can we expect our children to be at peace? Number two, establishing and maintaining a child centered home. Number three, modeling sinful anger. We cannot expect our children to not have hearts of anger. If we have hearts of anger, this is what we're expressing to them. They are watching us. They are being disciplined by the way we act, even when we're not trying to disciple them. James writes in James chapter four, beginning in verse one, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? So what's happening in our hearts is what causes the types of strife that comes out of us. And the beginning of verse two, he says, you desire and do not have. So you murder, right? We want our house to be peaceful. We want our house to be clean. We want our children to be obedient. We want to not be bothered when we get home. And so we get angry.

We say in essence to our spouses or to our children, I wish you didn't exist when we act in this way toward one another, right? So modeling sinful anger is a way to provoke this kind of anger in your children. Number four, habitually disciplining in anger, right? So there's the anger now aimed in the instruction of our children. Number five, scolding our children. Number six, being inconsistent with our discipline. Our children will never learn to obey if the expectations that we set for them are not clear, if the consequences are not clear, and if the corrective discipline is not consistent, right?

[14:38] Adults like this kind of thing, right? Have you ever worked a job where you didn't really know what your boss expected of you, and you weren't really sure what would happen if you didn't meet the expectations? That's a frustrating place to work. I've worked in those kinds of environments. Like, we love this kind of clarity, what the expectations are, what the consequences will be, and then with our children, we need to be consistent following through with that discipline. I wonder how many of you prepared your children for today.

Did you talk to them about what you expected of them during our time together? Why your expectations are important, and what would happen if they were not obedient? This is an example, right? If not, I want to encourage you to try to do so next week, or the next time you go to grandma and grandpa's house, or, right?

You may be surprised what your children can accomplish when you set very clear expectations for them, when you give them very clear consequences, and you follow through with those corrections. There's been a trend lately that I've seen from a lot of Christian parents. I call it the parenting with grace trend, which really is a perversion of grace, and this means that we will, in an attempt to express our father's love, we will overlook some of your sins. We know the consequence would normally be, but we're not going to give you that consequence, because we want you to understand that our God is a God of grace.

But this is not the way that God deals with us. There are always temporal consequences for our sin. What we have paid for us in Christ is the eternal consequences of our sin. Praise be to God, right?

[16:18] We deserve death. We deserve hell. But if we believed in Jesus, he has taken on the punishment of death for us. But God does not dismiss the temporal consequences. There are still consequences for our action. Why?

Because he loves us. So if you're getting caught up in this parenting with grace trend, let me just say to you that you're not being loving, you're being lazy. And I fall into that trap a lot, right? I give the so-and-so, come here. And they don't come on the first try. And it's so much easier just to say it again than go through an entire discipline process with them. But the loving thing to do is to say, I expect you to obey me the first time, right? And to track through with whatever consequence we have laid out for that. The way that we parent with grace is that when our children don't act like our children, and anytime my children disobey me, they are expressing that they don't believe that I love them and I care for them, right? They're not acting like my children when they do that, right? The grace piece is I don't hang a free child sign around their neck and set them out on the curb,

right? The grace I show them is that they're still mine, that I love them and I care about them and I want them to be corrected for their good, right? This is the way I follow through consistently. And I don't do this perfectly, but this is the work that we ought to be doing, being consistent in our discipline, right?

Praise be to God that in Christ, Romans 8, 1, there is therefore now no condemnation, right? We will not be found guilty eternally for our sin. But the author of Hebrews writes in chapter 12 and verse 7 that it is for discipline that we have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline, right? Our God is consistent with us to help us, to train us in righteousness, and we need to be doing the same. We need to be extending that to our children as well. So work at being consistent with your discipline. Number 7, having double standards. Number 8, being legalistic. Number 9, not admitting you're wrong and not asking for forgiveness. Parents, if we ever get anything right, it's by grace alone. Amen? Because God has helped us get it right. So we have all the reason in the world to be humble in our parenting and no reason to be proud.

We will make mistakes. We will make mistakes. And the parent who is striving to not provoke their child to anger will be willing to admit their wrongs and ask their child for forgiveness.

[19:08] Ask their child for forgiveness. You can ask my children. I have issued countless apologies to them. And I can tell you, it is a humbling thing to ask for the forgiveness of a two-year-old.

And, you know, your father corrected you. You needed to be corrected, but I corrected you in anger. And I should not have corrected you in anger. Will you forgive me? It will melt your heart for a two-year-old and say, sure, dad. Right? Dad, it is good for your soul and it is good for your family to ask for forgiveness when you have been wrong.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 7, verse 3, speaks about removing a log from your eye to see clearly the speck that's in your brother's eye. If you'll allow me a little bit of editorial privilege, I'd like to read verses 3 through 5 to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your child's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your child, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite.

First take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your child's eye. We ought to always view our own sin that way. Our sin is always the log and other sin is the speck, right? And we ought to work to remove that. So be willing to be humble and admit that you're wrong and ask your children for forgiveness. Number 10, constantly finding fault. Number 11, parents reversing God-given roles, right? Women in the house having to step up and be the lead disciplinarian. Number 12, not listening to your child's opinion or taking his or her side of the story seriously. I heard a story, a friend of mine told me a story of his friend who got home and his mother had told him he had to go tell his father what he had done that day. And the son began telling the story and the father got angry with him and decided to discipline him. And the son was trying to continue to talk and the dad would not hear what he had to say. So he spanked him, sent him to his room.

And after, you know, the dust had settled, he went to his room and he said, now you can tell me what you wanted to say. And he said, mom already spanked me. He didn't take the time to hear him, right? And to understand that the punishment had already been delivered. But he was just meant to tell his father what had happened. Number 13, comparing them to others. Number 14, not making time just to talk. Number 15, not praising or encouraging your child. Our children need to know that we delight in them. Not because of anything particular that they have done, but just because they are. Our love for them doesn't need to be conditional, right? We just need to say to them, I love you. I delight in you.

[22:15] You bring me great joy just because you're mine. Father's Day is a great day for that. Dad's just to say happy father. I'm so glad I'm a dad. You made me a dad. I'm so glad to be your dad. We have so much opportunity to build relational equity with our children by constantly telling him that we love them, that we are proud of them, that they make us happy.

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