

## Seeking to Apply God's Word to Our Lives

# Biblical Leadership and Parenting

This paper examines the distinct yet complementary roles that a father and mother perform and other biblical principals involved in parenting.

### Fathers:

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul writes, *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* In this verse we can make several observations concerning a father's role in parenting:

#### ***"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"***

In the beginning of verse 4, God clearly places the responsibility of spiritual training upon fathers.<sup>1</sup> In the original Greek, the phrase *"Do not provoke you children to anger"* is a command that literally reads, "Do not continually provoke your children to anger." Although godly parenting can result in a child becoming angry, in this verse the provocation is caused by the father's sin.

#### ***"but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"***

The phrase *"bring them up"* means to "nourish or feed." In the phrase *"bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,"* we find the frequency, manner, and source of a father's nourishing:

- **The Frequency** – The phrase *"bring them up"* is an imperative present verb denoting a command involving a continual action. An example of continually nourishing a child is found in Deuteronomy 6:7. It reads, *"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."*
- **The Manner** – The manner is summarized in the phrase *"in the discipline and instruction."* The Greek root word for *"discipline"* is defined as "discipline, instruction, training." This word is used to describe how God instructs believers (Titus 2:12), how the Word of God trains believers in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), and the corrective discipline of God (Hebrews 12:6-11). The Greek word for *"instruction"* comes from the Greek root word which means "to set the mind." In this verse, it conveys the idea of admonishing or warning a child. Therefore, this manner includes instruction, discipline, training, admonishing, and warning.
- **The Source** – The source of the father's nourishing is summarized in the phrase *"of the Lord."* The Holy Spirit seeks to guide the father in nourishing his child, using the authoritative and sufficient Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Therefore *"Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"* speaks of the father continually nourishing his child through instruction, discipline, training, admonishing, and warning. This nourishing is to be directed by the Holy Spirit using the authoritative and sufficient Word of God.

### Mothers:

While God's Word doesn't provide specific instructions to the mother in regards to teaching her children, it is clear that the father and mother play collaborative roles in this training process. In Proverbs 1:8, Solomon describes the father and mother's instruction as being equal in influence. He writes, *"Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."* In Ephesians 6:1-2, the mother is shown to have the same authority and respect as the father in the raising of children. It reads, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER..."* By virtue of the unity found within their marriage, the father and mother are to work in harmony together under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-6:4).

### Other biblical principals involved in parenting:

It is important for parents to understand both the depravity of an unsaved child and the change that occurs at salvation. When a person is born, he is a sinner because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-19). He is spiritually dead, walks according to the course of this world, follows Satan, and lives in the lusts of his flesh (Ephesians 2:1-3). He is a slave of sin (Romans 6:6), an enemy of God (Romans 5:10), and cannot do one good thing (Romans 3:12). As he grows up, he understands God's invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature, but he refuses to honor God or give Him thanks (Romans 1:18-20). He will often mimic his parents' faith but is unable to understand spiritual truth (1 Corinthians 2:14).

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<sup>1</sup> When the father is not a believer or is no longer with the family, the believing mother assumes the role as the spiritual leader of her children (2 Timothy 1:5).

In contrast, when a child places his faith in Christ, he experiences the same salvation as adults. He is a new spiritual creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). He is free from the penalty of sin (Colossians 2:13-14) and the power of sin (Romans 6:18). He is spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:5) and a slave of righteousness (Romans 6:18). He is indwelt with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) and blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). At salvation, his life begins to change. God's Word is living and active in his life, judging the thoughts and intentions of his heart (Hebrews 12:4). The Holy Spirit seeks to guide him into all truth (John 16:13), teach him all things (1 John 2:27), and lead him throughout each day (Romans 8:14). As he is trained by his parents, equipped by his elders, and encouraged by the congregation, he will begin to learn to speak truth in love and use his spiritual gift for the building up of the body in love (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:4-7).

Sometimes it is difficult to discern whether a child has placed his faith in Christ or is simply mimicking his parents' faith. During these times of uncertainty, parents are to continue raising their child *"in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* All parents desire to see their unbelieving child place his faith in Christ. Yet, it is important to recognize that salvation is not dependent upon the child nor his parents. Salvation is dependent upon God, whom has mercy on whom He desires (Romans 9:15-18).

Parents should expect a division between themselves and their unbelieving child. Jesus said, *"Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law"* (Luke 12:51-53). The degree of division between parents and their unbelieving child is based upon how much the parents' lives reflect Christ (John 15:18-20). During times of division, parents are to love their child (Ephesians 5:1-2), teach him God's Word (Ephesians 6:4), and look for opportunities to share the gospel (Colossians 4:5-6).

As with all believers at TVBC, the elders desire to see believing children equipped for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).<sup>2</sup> This equipping can be summarized as follows:

- Nursery and preschool classes are available for parents who wish to be undistracted while attending our worship service, Sunday school classes, and ladies Bible studies. Since an older preschool child can place his faith in Jesus Christ, we share simple Bible stories and the gospel message. You can bring your preschooler to the Sunday morning service if he does not distract others around him.
- Grade school classes are available during our Sunday School hour. Prior to our worship service teaching time, grade school children are released to attend an age appropriate class. Parents are invited to bring their grade school child to their adult Sunday school class and keep their child in the worship service during the teaching time if they feel their child will benefit more from the adult teaching and fellowship.
- Our junior and senior high teens attend our Sunday morning service and remain in the service during the teaching time. They are invited to attend any of our adult Sunday school hour classes and weekly Bible studies.<sup>3</sup> We value the fellowship and ministry of our believing teens. Their prayerful involvement in our congregation is necessary for our body to function as God intends (1 Corinthians 12:22-25).

### Conclusion:

The spiritual leadership in parenting clearly rests on the shoulders of the father. While guarding against provoking his children to anger through sin, the father is to *"bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* While God's Word doesn't provide specific instructions to the mother, it is clear that the father and mother play collaborative roles in this training process. These roles and responsibilities are unconditional and not dependent upon a child's salvation or response to God's Word.

"Seeking to Apply God's Word to Our Lives" papers represent an overview of various Bible doctrines. Each paper contains biblical truths that often set TVBC apart from other churches and religious organizations. We invite the congregation's biblically based feedback as we seek to accurately handle the Word of God.

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<sup>2</sup> The local church is composed of believers in Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). As elders, we are responsible for the equipping of the believers for the work of service (Ephesians 4:11-12). Often there are unbelieving children attending our Sunday school classes. For this reason, we encourage our teachers to regularly share the gospel message while teaching the Bible.

<sup>3</sup> We do not provide classes exclusively for junior high and senior high teens. There is a Sunday school hour class in which several of our junior high, senior high, and adults attend.