

Biblical Leadership and Parenting

This paper examines the complementary roles that a father and mother perform in parenting, and other biblical principals involved in raising a child.

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 training a child:

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

In Ephesians 6:4a, God clearly places the responsibility of training upon fathers. In the original Greek, the phrase “*Do not provoke your 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 ongoing sin.

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

In Ephesians 6:4b, the phrase “*bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,*” we find the frequency, means, and source of a father’s training:

- The Frequency – The phrase “*bring them up*” is an imperative present verb denoting a command involving a continual action. An example of continually raising 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 Means– The means 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 the corrective discipline of God (Hebrews 12:6-11), how God instructs believers (Titus 2:12), and the Word of God training a believer in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek word for “*instruction*” comes from the root word which means “to set the mind.” It conveys the idea of “admonishing or warning.” Therefore, the phrase “*in the discipline and instruction*” also includes instruction, discipline, training, admonishing, and warning.
- The Source – The source of the father’s “*discipline and instruction*” is summarized in the phrase “*of the Lord.*” The Holy Spirit seeks to guide the father 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 raising up his child through instruction, discipline, training, admonishing, and warning. Bringing up a child 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, the father and mother’s instruction are equal in influence. It reads, “*Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.*” In Ephesians 6:1-2, the father and mother have equal authority in the child’s life. It reads, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER...*”

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.

The depravity of an unsaved child:

Like all unsaved people, an unsaved child is a sinner because of Adam’s sin (Romans 5:19a). He is spiritually dead and walks according to the course of this world (Ephesians 2:1-2a). He follows Satan and lives in the lusts of his flesh (Ephesians 2:2b-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).

Parenting an unsaved child:

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*" (Ephesians 6:4). Believing 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 or his parents, but God. Romans 9:15-16 reads, "*I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION. So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*"

Believing 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). 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).

The salvation of a child:

In contrast, when a child places his faith in Christ, he experiences the same salvation as adults. He becomes a new spiritual creature (2 Corinthians 5:17) and is spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:5). He has been freed from the power of sin (Romans 6:18) and has been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). He is indwelt with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) who seeks to guide him throughout each day (Galatians 5:16) and teach him all things (1 John 2:27). He has been given a spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:10-11) for the building up of the church body in love (Ephesians 4:16). As he is trained by his parents (Ephesians 6:4), equipped by his elders (Ephesians 4:11-12), and encouraged by the congregation (1 Thessalonians 5:11), he begins to understand these truths and begins to grow up in all aspects into Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Serving our children at TVBC:

Our ministry to children is based upon two biblical principles:

1. Parents are to raise their children. Fathers are to continually bring up their children "*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4), and children are not to "*forsake your mother's teaching*" (Proverbs 1:8).
2. Elders are to equip believers in the congregation. Elders are to equip "*the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:12).

Therefore, our ministry to children can be summarized as follows:

- Nursery and preschool classes are available for parents who attend our worship service, Sunday school classes, and Tuesday women's Bible study. In our preschool class, we share simple Bible accounts and the gospel message.
- Our grade school, junior high, and senior high children attend our Sunday morning service and remain in the service during our elder's teaching time. Under the oversight of their parents, our children are invited to attend our adult Sunday school classes and weekly Bible studies.

We value the fellowship and ministry of our believing children. Their serving in our congregation is necessary for our body to function as God intends (1 Corinthians 12:22-25).

Conclusion:

The responsibility of training children primarily rests with the father, although it is clear that the father and mother play collaborative roles in this training process. In the church, believing children are trained by their parents, equipped by the elders, and encouraged by the congregation. As they begin to understand biblical truth, they will begin to grow up in all aspects into Christ. We value the fellowship and ministry of our believing children. Their serving in our congregation is necessary for our body to function as God intends.

"Doctrinal Papers" were written by the elders for the purpose of shepherding, overseeing, and equipping the flock of Treasure Valley Bible Church.