

DAD AND THE KIDS

Ephesians 6:1-4 w/ Colossians 3:20-21

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right (well-pleasing to the Lord), HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Fathers, do not provoke (exasperate) your children to anger (so that they will not lose heart), but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
NASU

INTRODUCTION

This text is part of the larger context in which the apostle sets forth the responsibilities of Christians who are *in* authority over others and who are *under* the authority of others. Whether *in* authority or *under* authority, we have the responsibility to function and respond in a manner that glorifies Christ.

Among the greatest responsibilities on earth is that of fatherhood.

I. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DAD TOWARD THE KIDS

A. Negatively stated – Do not provoke or exasperate

1. avoid severity; in the words of the theologian, Elvis, “Don’t be cruel.”
2. Alford – “by vexatious commands, unreasonable blame, and uncertain temper”
3. It is easy to become frustrated when your child doesn’t meet your expectations, unrealistic as they are. The more exasperated dad becomes, the more likely he will exasperate the kids, resulting in them losing heart.

The man in the supermarket was pushing a cart which contained, among other things, a screaming baby. As the man proceeded along the aisles, he kept repeating softly, “Keep calm, George. Don’t get excited, George. Don’t scream, George. Don’t yell, George. We have only two more items to find. We’ll be home soon, George, so just try to relax. The we get home, it will be nap time, George.” A lady watching with admiration said to the man, “You are certainly to be commended for your patience in trying to quiet little George.” “Lady,” he declared, “the baby’s name is Ralphie. *I’m* George!”

B. Positively stated – Bring them up (nourish)

1. Discipline / Nurture – knowledge for Godly living

Out of parental concern and a desire to teach our young son responsibility, we require him to phone home when he arrives at his friend’s house a few blocks away. He began to forget, however, as he grew more confident in his ability to get there without disaster befalling him. The first time he forgot, I called to be sure he had arrived. WE told him the next time it happened, he would have to come home. A few days later, however, the telephone again lay silent, and I knew if he was going to learn, he would have to be punished. But I did not want to punish him. I went to the telephone, regretting that his great time would be spoiled by his lack of contact with his father. As I dialed, I prayed for wisdom. “Treat him like I treat you,” the Lord seemed to say. With that, as the telephone rang one time, I hung up. A few seconds later the phone rang, and it was my son.

“I’m here, Dad!”

“What took you so long to call?” I asked.

“We started playing and I forgot. But Dad, I heard the phone ring once and I remembered.”

How often do we think of God as One who waits to punish us when we step out of line? I wonder how often He rings just once, hoping we will phone home.

-- Dennis Miller

- a. training by chastening (Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15, 17; Heb. 12:7)
 - b. same word from which we get “disciple”
2. Instruction / Admonition (Deut. 6) to form the mind to correspond to God’s mind
 - a. Example – Life illustration (Glen Bell), quit church because the youth minister’s conduct did not correspond with his teaching. It’s not just preachers whose example out to be scrutinized, but parents first.

Celeste Sibley, one-time columnist for the Atlanta (GA) Constitution, took her three children to a diner for breakfast one morning. It was crowded and they had to take separate seats at the counter. Eight-year-old Mary was seated at the far end of the counter and when her food was served she called down to her mother in a loud voice, “Mother, don’t people say grace in this place?” A hush came over the entire diner and before Mrs. Sibley could figure out what to say, the counterman said, “Yes, we do, sister. You say it.” All the people at the counter bowed their heads. Mary bowed her head and in a clear voice said, “God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food.”

In prayer, Bible reading, conduct

“Don’t worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.” -- Robert Fulghum

“Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression.”

b. Teaching – To place before the mind

- by words (Deut. 6:7), whether of encouragement, remonstrance, or reproof (Trench)
- “Inform them of, and excite them to, the whole of their duty towards God.” – Matthew Henry

The average young teenage American girl views 1,500 references to sexual acts on TV annually, according to a study at Michigan State University. Boys of that age view an average of nearly 1,300 such and attend 17 R-rated movies annually. According to the teens studied, parents “never” or “not often” limited their TV viewing. There’s little indication that parents exercise any control, positive or negative, over TV viewing. -- Homemade, March, 1989

Children need boundaries. A group of educators decided to remove the chain-link fences from around the school playgrounds. They believed the fences promoted feelings of confinement and restraint. The curious thing they noticed, however, that as soon as the fences were removed, the children huddled in the center of the playground to play.

-- James Dobson

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KIDS TOWARD DAD

A. Honor

1. The primary motivation is not the promise of long life, but that it is God's will (Deut. 5:16: "Honor your father and mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you.")
2. to place value in and on them; obedience is primary means of displaying honor

B. Obey

1. Implicit command; needs no explanation, being implied by the natural relationship of authority and submission
2. Obey them as they teach you the way of the Lord. Prov. 4
3. Dads must teach their children to obey.

Albert Barnes asserts that "most of the cases of crime that lead to the penitentiary, or the gallows, commence by disobedience to parents."

It's up to Dad to teach his children to honor and obey. Tell Grimm's fairy tale.

CONCLUSION

Some Minimum Daily Requirements by Charles White

Your child's journey from 4 to 14 is very short. Christian parents need to put God into each day during this impressionable time. As a father of five foster children and a preschool teacher for 10 years, I'm convinced that the following practices – instilled early – can teach children to hold onto God during the difficult adolescent period:

- **Hang a picture of Christ in each child's bedroom.** Children are often quicker to respond to pictures than to words.
- **Teach your child how to pray.** By the time a child is 5, he should be able to speak one-sentence prayers with a parent. By the time he's 6, he should be looking for answers to his prayers. But avoid correcting a child's prayers. They are between him and God.
- **Bless your child each morning . . .** Place one hand on the shoulder or head and repeat a blessing from Scripture, such as one of the following: "*May the Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you and give you peace.*" (Num. 6:24-26) or "*May God strengthen you with power through His spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith*" (Eph. 3:16). You can also choose your own words. The spirit of the blessing impresses even the youngest children. Giving a blessing can also renew a parent's heart.
- **Take short walks.** Get outside to God's world as much as possible . . . Let creation declare the glory of God.
- **Purchase Scripture cards** from your Christian bookstore and leave them on the kitchen table. Reading from God's Word as part of

the mealtime prayer is a great way to remind the family of God's presence.

- **Display your child's Sunday school lesson.** Letting a youngster's efforts die a painful death on the car floor can leave hurt feelings.

Of course, none of these efforts is a guarantee that your daughter or son will know God. But incorporating some of these ideas will be a daily reminder of His presence and love.

– Charles White, Focus on the Family, September 1992, p. 13

How?

- Conscious and deliberate teaching of God's Word, just like anything else deemed valuable and useful
- Accompanying them in and to Bible instruction

Daddy had a little boy; his soul was white as snow;
He never went to Sunday school, cause Daddy wouldn't go.
He never heard the Word of God that thrills the childish mind
While other children went to class, this child was left behind.
As he grew from babe to youth, Dad saw to his dismay,
A soul that once was snowy white become a dingy gray.
Dad even started back to church and Bible study, too;
He begged the preacher, "Isn't there a thing that you can do?"
The preacher tried and tarried, and said, "We're just too far behind;
I tried to tell you years ago, but you would pay no mind."
And so another soul was lost, that once was white as snow;
Sunday school would have helped, but Daddy wouldn't go.

- Pray for their salvation and spiritual maturity

DECISION: Dad, teach your child about honoring and obeying God right now by surrendering your life to the Lord

Grimm's Fairy Tale

Once there was a little old man. His eyes blinked and his hands trembled; when he ate he clattered the silverware distressingly, missed his mouth with the spoon as often as not, and dribbled a bit of his food on the tablecloth. Now he lived with his married son, having nowhere else to live, and his son's wife didn't like the arrangement.

"I can't have this," she said. "It interferes with my right to happiness." So she and her husband took the old man gently but firmly by the arm and led him to the corner of the kitchen. There they set him on a stool and gave him his food in an earthenware bowl. From then on he always ate in the corner, blinking at the table with wistful eyes. One day his hands trembled rather more than usual, and the earthenware bowl fell and broke.

"If you are a pig," said the daughter-in-law, "you must eat out of a trough." So they made him a little wooden trough and he got his meals out of that. These people had a four-year-old son of whom they were very fond. One evening, the young man noticed his boy playing intently with some bits of wood and asked what he was doing.

"I'm making a trough," he said smiling up for approval, "to feed you and mamma out of when I get big."

The man and woman looked at each other for a while and didn't say a word. Then they cried a little. Then they went to the corner and took the old man by the arm and led him back to the table. They sat him in a comfortable chair and gave him his food on a plate, and from then on nobody ever scolded when he clattered or spilled or broke things.

One of Grimm's fairy tales, this anecdote has the crudity of the old simple days. But perhaps crudity is what we need to illustrate the naked and crude point of the 5th commandment: honor your parents, lest your children dishonor you. Or, in other words, a society that destroys the family, destroys itself.

Have we done similarly with God? He annoys us, so we put Him in a corner. Then we find our kids doing the same. It's time to bring God back to the table!