

## BIBLICAL FAMILY IN A MODERN WORLD: Raising Godly Kids' Ephesians 6:1-4

### INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! I am grateful you have joined us today.

### SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are in a teaching series we've called, "A Biblical Family in a Modern World." We are looking at the topics of marriage and family according to God's plan. So far, we've looked at God's design for marriage, what it means to build a godly home, and the differing roles of husband and wife in the marriage relationship. Today we are going to be looking at world's most important job, raising godly kids. Of all the tasks we could be assigned, all the jobs we could ever hold, the most important is that of being a parent.

And you know, there is nothing more humbling than preaching through a series like this. I've been reminded of my failures each week. And this week is no different. Cathy and I are blessed with awesome kids, they have been and are a tremendous blessing to us. But I have been reminded of areas of failure more than success. And that's where I am grateful for God's grace and mercy as He has worked despite my failures. And maybe you can relate to that.

### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Baking<sup>ii</sup>**

One of the things that I really enjoy doing from time to time is making fun dinner dishes. For example, a couple weeks ago, I was looking online at different chicken recipes. I came across a recipe for Mozzarella stuffed Chicken Parmesan. So, I gathered all the ingredients and followed the instructions. It actually turned out to be amazing!

Now, sometimes, I gather all the ingredients, follow all the instructions and it turns out horrible. I don't know what it is, but there are times that the outcome just doesn't match all the prep work. Plus, it doesn't matter what I cook, I always smoke up the kitchen. I haven't figured out what I'm doing to cause that.

When it comes to parenting, it seems like the advice that we often hear is formulaic. There are books and articles out there that are entitled, "The 3 Keys to Parenting," or "The Recipe to Successful Kids," or you name it. The problem with that is that there are times that I can follow those plans and still not have the desired outcome.

Think about the Garden of Eden. It was the perfect environment, with the perfect Heavenly Father, and perfect marriage relationship. But even in that perfect environment, the outcome didn't produce more perfection. Adam and Eve still had a will to choose to be rebellious, even with the perfect Father.

When it comes to parenting, you can do everything right, follow all the right instructions, which in itself is an impossibility, but even in the perfect environment there is no guarantee that your kids will turn out the way you want. Every kid is different and parenting them has to be different. There is no formula that guarantees a certain outcome.

So, when it comes to this morning's message, I don't want to give you a formula to follow. That's not the desired outcome. What I do want to do is talk through ways we can, as parents, create an environment that is conducive to raising godly kids. The idea here is that we follow guidelines and then place our kids in God's hands, trusting Him with them.

Listen, speaking from experience, you will fail at creating the perfect environment. As a result, we are all dependent on God to fill in the gaps of our failures. Single parents, you understand this, don't you? You do all you can and trust God to fill in the gaps. We are all in the same boat when it comes to parenting.

### MESSAGE:

So, with that said, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6. We are going to be in verses 1-4 here this morning. I want to read the passage and then we can talk through what The Lord is saying. You follow along in your copy of God's Word.

*<sup>1</sup>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>"that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The first thing that I want to point out is...*

### **1) The Roles**

It is important to remember that Paul's teaching here is a continuation of what He began in chapter 4. He's been talking about when we come to Christ, we are given a new identity and the old us to be done away with and we operate in

the new us. That enables us to walk by the Spirit and as a result, we relate to others in a Christ-like way.

Paul then uses the family as an illustration as to how this all works out. This section of Ephesians, the end of chapter 5 and start of chapter 6, is known as the “House Codes.”<sup>iii</sup> It is Paul’s teaching on Christian ethics in the home. These house codes are also taught in Colossians and 1 Peter.

In the house codes, Paul is teaching that each member of the family has a certain role to play. By doing so, we reflect the relationship we have with The Lord. The husband’s role is that of spiritual leader and the wife’s role is that of willing submission to her husband. Paul then turns to the roles of children and parents. Verse 1 again of Ephesians 6. ***1Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.***

Two roles mentioned here, children and parents. Children are to obey their parents. The word translated as obey means to listen to, to obey and to answer.<sup>iv</sup> And this is a response to a command. Kids and students are to obey the commands of their parents. That means in their attitudes and actions. Obedience with the wrong attitude is still disobedience according to Paul here.

He says that obeying your parents is right. This does not mean that your parents are always right.<sup>v</sup> No, we are imperfect people, and we bring our imperfection into parenting. While parents are not always right, it is always right to obey your parents. The only exception would be if your parents ask you to do something that is contrary to God’s Word. Because ultimate obedience is to God and not to man. But it is God that has placed parents in authority over their kids. Notice that Paul says to obey your parents ***in The Lord***. That’s key.

What’s more is that in verse 2, Paul continues this thought of the child’s role. He quotes the fifth commandment. In addition to obeying parents, children are to honor their parents. Look at verse 2. ***2“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”***

Honor means to value at a high price.<sup>vi</sup> Children and students are to value their parents. And all of us here are still someone’s children. So, not only does this apply to those that are living with their parents, but we are to also honor our parents until that go to glory.

And notice what Paul adds to the quotation of the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment. That it is the first commandment that comes with a promise. That promise being that it will go well with you. Obeying and honoring our parents is beyond just doing what is right, it benefits us.

Now, there is another role mentioned here, parents. Before I am a pastor or preacher, I am a parent. This is to be our first mission in life.<sup>vii</sup> The role of parent is our responsibility to own. It is not the job of the school or even of the church. Although the church is to serve as a partner to us as parents.

Also notice that the role of parent is a specific role. In other words, it does not call parents, friends. Parents, you are not your child’s friend. That is not the role God is asking you to play. God gave us children to steward and raise and prepare them for living lives that honor Him. But I will tell you this, if you parent well in the formative years, when they grow up, they will become your friend.

So, we have the roles in the family. Husbands, wives, children and parents. Raising godly kids requires the understanding of each role. Secondly, Paul tells us in raising godly kids...

## 2) What NOT to do.

Let’s look at the first part of verse 4. ***4Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.*** That is what we should not do. A couple things that is important to know about this verse.

First, who is it that Paul is talking to? We read the word, “Fathers.” Is Paul only talking to dads here? The word that is translated as fathers can be translated as parents. The reason it is most likely translated, “fathers,” here is probably because of the context.<sup>viii</sup> In the first century, Greco-Roman culture, fathers had legal control of children and often it resulted in harsh treatment, especially girls.<sup>ix</sup> But also because the role of the father is to be that of spiritual leader of the family.

But this same word in the original language is translated as parents in other passages in the Bible. So, while Paul may be addressing fathers, or at least urging fathers to take on an active role in parenting, he still very much so keeps both parents in mind.<sup>x</sup> So, when we read “fathers” here we need to think parents. And that means that all moms and dads are to pay attention here.

The second thing that we see in this verse is what we are not to do. He says, do not provoke your children to anger. Do not means, “Don’t ever do this.”<sup>xi</sup> We are not to provoke our children to anger.

Now, what does Paul mean by that? Because if you are parenting correctly, your kids are going to get mad and upset at you. They are little sinners and sinners need to be corrected and most sinners don’t particularly like being corrected. So, what exactly does Paul mean by not provoking our kids to anger?

Well, other translations say not to exasperate. In other words, we are not to nag, provoke, pressure or push our children to anger. What Paul is saying is that we should not treat our kids in such a way where a repeated, ongoing provoking leads to a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility.<sup>xii</sup>

I want to make mention of several ways that we can provoke our children to a justifiable anger.<sup>xiii</sup> I want to mention these because they are often things that we do, and we need to avoid them. 7 actions to avoid.

First, hypocrisy. When parents take the approach of doing what I say but not what I do, it will provoke a child to wrathful anger. Listen, we, as parents, need to set the example. Godly lifestyles are more caught than they are taught. Inconsistency in standards leads to frustration.

Secondly, discouragement. Parents, if you never compliment your kids, you will push them to justifiable anger. We should be generous with praise. You might say, “My kids are terrible, though.” Well, catch them doing good. We need to find something positive and celebrate that. What gets rewarded get repeated.

Thirdly, favoritism. When we show favoritism toward one child at the expense of another, we create all kinds of dysfunction. Take Joseph for example. Remember in Genesis he was the obvious favorite? Ultimately it created dysfunction to the point that his brothers sold him into slavery. Don’t show favoritism.

Fourthly, helicoptering. When we suffocate our children by so hovering over them and restrict them, they will be provoked to anger. This position communicates an inability to every trust them and continually calls into question

everything they do. Helicopter parents usually think they are building a closer relationship with their kids, but in reality they are smothering them.

Fifthly, overbearing. The way this usually shows up in parenting is by so pushing our kids toward achievement that they feel like they could never measure up. This will push them away and provoke them to anger.

Sixthly, selfishness. When we make our family all about us, it leads to aggravation. What we communicate is that the world revolves around us and our kids are actually an inconvenience. That kind of attitude communicates that kids are not welcome. Remember how Jesus inconvenienced Himself to make time for children.

Lastly, abuse. Physical, verbal, sexual, mental, emotional, and spiritual abuse will push a child to anger. And rightfully so. In no way, shape, or form are any of those okay.

So, we’ve talked about the roles and what not to do. In the second part of verse 4, Paul tells us how to raise godly kids by telling us...

### 3) What TO do.

Let’s look, again, at verse 4. *4Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger [what NOT to do], but [instead] **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*** Here Paul gives us three things to do that will serve as guidelines in raising godly kids. First, ...

#### A) Be Intentional.

The phrase, “bring them up,” demonstrates that raising godly kids requires intentionality. In other words, it doesn’t just happen on its own. Sin only moves in one direction. Our natural tendency is to move away from God, not toward Him. As a result of that truth, Paul urges parents to make a resolution to intentionally bring up kids in the way of The Lord.

I think too often, we as parents take a passive approach to parenting. A lack of involvement, and lack of intentionality, leads to the family being tossed to and fro by every wind that blows. The biblical role of a parent is to take an active and intentional role to parenting. We are to bring our kids up. Secondly, ...

#### B) Provide Discipline.

Paul says to bring kids up in the discipline of The Lord. I think, in an effort to avoid provoking kids to anger, many parents go to the other extreme and do not provide discipline. But that approach is an equal error.

Discipline is a biblical thing. There are two different forms of discipline presented in the Scriptures. There's corrective discipline and preventative discipline.<sup>xiv</sup> Let's talk about those two for a moment. First, ...

### 1) Corrective discipline.

The word translated "discipline" in verse 4 means to train.<sup>xv</sup> One way you train a child is by correcting wrongdoing.

Parents, the most loving thing you can do for your children is to correct them. The way my parents corrected me was by way of the belt of truth. Anyone else know what I mean? And listen, I didn't grow up to hate my parents. I'm actually grateful for it. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't grateful in the moment, but I am now.

Proverbs 23:13-14 says, ***"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. <sup>14</sup>If you strike him with the rod [better translated branch or offshoot], you will save his soul from Sheol."*** Do you hear that mom and dad? Discipline isn't going to kill your kid. Actually, the opposite. It will save them from a life of destruction.

Now, parents, there is a right way and a wrong way to do this. If you are disciplining out of anger, you are most always in the wrong. Any discipline you exercise must be motivated by correction and training in godliness. That's corrective discipline. Now, let's talk...

### 2) Preventative discipline.

We must place guardrails in our lives to keep our lives on track. Developing godly habits builds character within us and helps us avoid pitfalls. What types of preventative discipline are you building within your kids?

Godly kids learn responsibility. They contribute to the family and society. Things like doing chores, attending church, and learning to overcome obstacles. Listen, those things build character. Shielding kids from learning responsibility and overcoming obstacles is unloving. They will have to face those things when they get older.

I think we buy into the lie that we are to make life easy for our kids. That that's the way to love them. Listen, don't provoke them by being overbearing, but let them face challenges. And sometimes we learn more from failure than we do success.

So, we are to be intentional and provide discipline. Thirdly, ...

### C) Give Instruction.

In Judaism, parents were the first teachers. The first three years of a Hebrew boy or girl's life, the mother was in charge of the education process until the child was weaned. Then the father would supervise the teaching of The Law to the boys. And the dad would teach the son a trade. Parents were the first teachers.<sup>xvi</sup>

I think our tendency is to outsource our children's education to those that do not share your same biblical convictions. Now, here me clearly. I am not saying that our public school system is not good. That's not the case. Our school districts here in Mt. Pleasant benefit from good and godly teachers and administrators. My point simply is that we need to take an active role in teaching our kids a biblical Christian worldview.

We all have roles to play in the Christian family. Husbands, love and lead. Wives, follow your husband's lead. Kids, obey and honor your parents. Parents, don't provoke your kids, but instead be intentional, provide disciples, and give biblical instruction. When arrange our homes in such a way, we and our society will be recipients of a blessing beyond our ability to understand.

### CONCLUSION:

Maybe you are here today and you are at your wits end. Parenting is a challenge and you are tired. On one hand I say welcome to the club. But on the other hand, I encourage you to lay it have the feet of Jesus. God's Word encourages us to cast our cares upon Him because He cares for us. Perhaps the way you respond to today's message is to cast you parenting before The Lord and allow Him to lead and guide you. We would love to pray with you.

Others of you here today have never been born again. You can't be the parent God is calling you to be because you've never given your life to Jesus. We would love to visit with you today about what it means to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life

## ENDNOTES:

<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1986; Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, *Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos Back into Order*, Houston: Lucid Books, 2016; Charles R. Swindoll, *The Strong Family*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1991; Jerry Pipes, *Building A Successful Family*, LifeWay: Nashville, 2002; Skip Heitzig, *The Most Important Job in the World*, sermon preached at Calvary Church Albuquerque, October 28, 2012, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/57/sermon/871>; J.D. Greear, *Love Incorruptible: God's Laboratories*, sermon preached at Summit Church, March 19, 2017, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/gods-laboratories>; Jack Graham, *All in the Family: Generation Next*, sermon preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church, May 20, 2018, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0m0xLP5b5k>; Michael Youssef, *Parenting 911: Setting the Example*, published by Leading The Way, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/watch/teaching/series/parenting-911/part-2>; Josh Walters, *Three Principles to Raising Godly Children*, sermon preached at Seacost Church, 4 years ago, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymx7y1jzOeE>; Tony Evans, *Raising Kingdom Kids*, sermon preached at Oak Cliff Bible Church, 10 years ago, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOSXz8b9aMU>; Vance Pitman, *Family Matters: A Word to Children and A Word to Parents*, sermons preached at Hope Church Las Vegas, September 8 & 15, 2019, accessed online: [https://hopechurchlv.com/message\\_passages/ephesians/](https://hopechurchlv.com/message_passages/ephesians/).

<sup>ii</sup> Illustration inspired by Josh Walters illustration.

<sup>iii</sup> Pointed out by Klyne Snodgrass, page 293.

<sup>iv</sup> Strong's Concordance, 5219, hupakouó.

<sup>v</sup> Quip taken from Jack Graham.

<sup>vi</sup> Strong's Concordance, 5091, timáo.

<sup>vii</sup> Jack Graham.

<sup>viii</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1986, page 316.

<sup>ix</sup> Snodgrass, page 325.

<sup>x</sup> MacArthur, page 316.

<sup>xi</sup> Vance Pitman.

<sup>xii</sup> MacArthur, page 317.

<sup>xiii</sup> This list is synthesized from both Skip Heitzig and John MacArthur.

<sup>xiv</sup> This section is taken from Skip Heitzig.

<sup>xv</sup> John MacArthur, page 319.

<sup>xvi</sup> Pointed out by Skip Heitzig.