

Fathers Do Not Provoke Your Children to Anger

by James Jennings

This sermon addresses the topic of parenting and how parents can unintentionally provoke their children to anger. It emphasizes the importance of wisdom in parenting, the need to discipline and instruct children in the Lord, and the significance of showing love and patience. The sermon also highlights the impact of neglect, unrealistic expectations, favoritism, and lack of communication in provoking children. It concludes with a call to self-reflection, confession, and seeking God's grace in parenting.

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21, Hebrews 10:24, Proverbs 15:1

Topics: "Wisdom in Parenting", "Avoiding Provocation"

Description

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Transcript

Well, for those who don't know, who aren't on the church email, we've had two deaths in the last few days. We've got a mother with us this morning who's grieving the loss of her son. And then we have the Moraleses, if you did not see.

They're a family who was a part of our church for over a decade. And their daughter, Nicole, shortly after a week or so after giving birth to her own daughter, died at 23 years of age. And so we definitely want to remember those families this morning grieving through loss.

And it's a reminder of Psalm 90.12. Teach us to number our days. And then he gives a clear purpose why we should number our days. And what is that purpose? It's that we would have a heart of wisdom.

A heart of wisdom. And I was already planning this morning to speak to you on Ephesians 6.4 so you can turn to Ephesians. And one of the main areas we specifically need wisdom is in regards to our parenting and our children.

Our children who we are so easily reminded of in these last days are with us for a time that is unbeknownst to us. Right? Jeff and Cheryl did not know their son would die at 19. Our sister did not know her son Hector would die in his 40s.

And the Moraleses did not know Nicole would die at 23. It should definitely remind us of our need to love our children and invest time in them while we have them with us, even specifically while we have them with us in the home. But Ephesians 6, I specifically want to think about in verse 4 this command that Paul gives to the fathers.

He says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. And then he makes a contrasting statement. It's not just not to provoke them to anger, but he gives us what to do.

But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. And so God help us this morning. Let me pray.

Father, Lord, I pray that You, the God of all comfort, Lord, would indeed abundantly, Lord, comfort the Nava family and the Morales family in the midst of the suffering that they are facing. Lord, in the midst of this, we in no way want to forget Your sovereign control and power. And Lord, remembering even that power and control and Your awareness of our trials, Lord, that gives us hope.

We can trust You. Lord, I pray You would specifically help in regards to Nicole's husband, Lord, who is now left with this baby daughter Christina and no wife. Lord, would You use all of this in some way even to draw him to Yourself? Father, we don't know how to understand all of these things, Lord, but we do know, Lord, even as Bobby spoke on the funeral the other day, on Ecclesiastes, Lord, it is better to go into a house of mourning than thanksgiving, for this is the end of all mankind and the living take it to heart.

Lord, one thing I'm wanting to take to heart this morning is, Lord, us as parents, Lord, being faithful to these precious, never dying, eternal souls that You have graciously given us for a short window and period of time in history. And Lord, we are insufficient. Lord, we have blind spots.

But You're greater than that. Lord, here we are. We want to grow.

Father, I want to grow with the five children You've given me. I want to be a better parent. And so, Lord, I ask for Your grace right now in delivering this sermon.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Now, the Old Testament is filled with God being provoked to righteous anger because of Israel's sinful conduct. You can find 30 examples.

If you look at the same Greek word in the Greek Septuagint, you find the Old Testament is littered with these situations. Even Psalm 78, they provoked Him to anger with their high places. We provoke our children to anger with something just as Israel provoked God with their high places.

The provoking happens after sinful conduct takes place. Now, with God, every single response of God's being provoked to anger, what type of anger did God have? Was there righteous, just, a holy anger without sin? There was never a blemish. Even in the righteous judgments that Israel executed upon wicked nations, you dare not approach that and think there was any wrong, unjust manifestation of the anger of God.

It's a holy response. But in Ephesians 6, verse 4, we find one of the few commands directed at fathers. One of the few commands directed at fathers, just after Paul has directly addressed children.

Children, obey your parents and 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. And then he says fathers. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.

But in contrast, bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. We find a parallel verse. Craig dealt with this in 2018.

In Colossians, it says fathers in Colossians 3.21. Fathers, do not provoke. It's a different word in the Greek. Maybe it could better be rendered exasperate.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children lest they become discouraged. So we are commanded to not speak or treat our children in a way that stirs up anger in their hearts. Whether it's us pushing a saved child to have righteous anger against our hypocrisy, because that could be an application here as children having righteous anger, not just sinful anger.

Or we have a child that has sinful anger and irritation because of our words and our conduct. This is what we're being called to do. And I'm going to look at a lot of practical examples at some point.

But why is this so serious? Why is this so serious? Because we can drive them away from trusting and respecting us and push them ultimately away from trusting and revering God whom we say we serve. Why would they trust the integrity of the living God who we say we represent if we ourselves do not manifest integrity and humility in our own lives? In Colossians, the reason Paul gives to not exasperate your children is they will become discouraged. We don't like discouragement, right? I hate when I'm discouraged.

Yet, there are times I've caused my children to become discouraged or to lose heart. The perfectionist parent very apt to make their child lose heart. They can never do anything well enough.

Now, we've got a bunch of non-married people here in other places. I guess you could leave right now, right? This doesn't apply to you? Before any person who's not a parent thinks this is not applicable to you, remember Galatians 5. 26, Paul says, let us, that means everyone, not become conceited, provoking one another. Envy one another.

So here Paul is saying do not strongly challenge one another to provoke or irritate them. So all believers are commanded to not provoke one another. And fathers are not just not to provoke their children.

There's another similar verse right before Colossians 3.20, Colossians 3.19. He says to love your wives and not be harsh with them. Harshness towards the wife is a very quick way to stir her up where something's not right in her own heart or to stir her up, just actual righteous indignation because of your lack of love as a husband. So the husband's harshness in his actions and words can stir up both the wife and the children to anger.

Husbands, we've got to look at ourselves this morning. I'm not talking about the other person who you've seen their blind spots. I'm speaking to you.

I'm speaking to me. And even non-parents. How are you provoking people in the church through your conduct? It all can overflow in broader applications.

And it's interesting, the anger, if righteous, Paul says in Ephesians 4, he says right here, be angry and do not sin. And then he says don't let the sun go down on your anger. In context there, he just spoke about what type of anger? Righteous indignation.

And he's saying don't let the sun go down with that still brewing. Because if righteous indignation is long-lasting and not short-lived, it has the ability to form into sinful anger. The next day, it gives even an opportunity to the devil, Paul says.

So in other words, me pushing someone to a point of anger can actually be pushing them towards an opportunity for the devil to deceive them with some lie against God in the midst of their anger. You see? And the same thing with our child. Where are we actually pushing them? It's not just to anger.

It's to anger to carry over in the next day, and then the next day there's an opportunity to be deceived by the evil one. Now, in contrast to don't provoke one another, don't provoke our children to anger or be harsh with one another, we should do what? We should be loving. Isn't that what Paul says to the Galatians? That through love, we should serve one another.

Now, Galatians 5.26, you don't need to turn there, but what did he say comes prior to them provoking one another? Become conceited. Isn't it interesting? Pride, not humility, is what leads to provoking one another. Our pride leads us to speak and treat others in a way that stirs them up to anger because in our pride, we believe we have the absolute right to treat them the way we are right now.

We believe we are justified in our treatment. So same thing, what's at the root of fathers provoking their children? Pride. That is often the thing.

The leader in the family in his pride believes he is justified in his treatment, and no one is there ultimately to stand and correct him. And I myself am not in the home witnessing that, and I have minimal witness of that treatment in a Sunday gathering or even in a visit to the family. Now, what does pride also do? Pride doesn't just lead you to be conceited and provoke one another.

Pride will lead you to do what in regards to your own faults? What does it do? You don't see them. There is a possibility that I'm currently provoking my children to anger and I don't even recognize it because the same pride that leads me to provoke them is the same pride that keeps me from seeing how blind I am. Especially my children who are least likely to be able to express and articulate to me how my conduct is hurtful.

So in 1871, this is a long time ago, Alexander Mitchell wrote a letter to parents in the Presbyterian churches on their blind spots in parenting. He stated that he found that when correcting believers, correcting them specifically on the topic of their parenting was the least received reproof. He said that in 1871.

I've heard people say that in 2021. He said this, it has been met, this correction, with an indignant denial of the alleged facts and an expression of perfect obedience in the good intentions and exemplary conduct of the accused or suspected children. I've often marveled to observe the blinding power of parental affection of some parents whose judgment on almost any other subject I would agree on without a moment's hesitation.

But when it comes to their judgment on their children, too much partiality. On one occasion, he went to a Christian father over a situation that was absolutely obvious. And I don't have the details of what that was, but he's saying it was obvious.

And the father responded by saying, I've never known my son to be guilty of any such conduct. You must be misinformed. So just as this father did not see his blindness towards the conduct of his child, so is he not seeing his own neglect of discipline that was actually leading to his child's conduct.

So how will he then correct the child's conduct if he doesn't even agree that the child has such a conduct? And then he won't connect the dot to see part of that is most likely his own fault in a parenting failure. You see, you end up not getting any cure because you don't have a proper diagnosis. So my point is we can be blind in parenting such as blind to the ways we irritate and provoke our children to anger.

I'm saying all of that to expose you to the weakness that you and I have to hopefully make your ears and mine, even as I preach this, more attentive to ask and search my own heart to make sure I'm not with a log in my eye and unable and unwilling to recognize that. Now, is this a major deal for us to resolve such blind spots? How high on your parenting priority list should this be? It doesn't really matter. There's a lot of other things that are more important.

It's a major deal. Especially in view of the short period of time we have to impact and influence our children. And our lives are going to either affirm or deny the message that we preach to them.

So it's a major deal. Mitchell went on to say this. It is through you that your children have been launched on the ocean of a boundless existence.

And is it a matter of no concern to you whether they are to inherit immortality of glory or an immortality of woe? Can you look upon them as they are contracting habits in which lurk the seeds of endless misery and reflect that they are bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, and yet leave them depressed, onward, unrestrained, and unworn into the downward row? So, we've seen four things so far I'm trying to get you to think about. Number one, this matter of not provoking one another is applicable for all of us. Two, our pride can lead us to provoke our children and others.

Pride is a root here. And ultimately what's rooted in pride is unbelief and wrongly perceiving reality in yourself. Three, our pride can also lead us to refuse to acknowledge our faults.

And therefore we stay in our faults because our heels are dug in. And fourthly, I want you to see that the overarching conduct we need is love in our speech and life. This is ultimately about not stirring our children up to anger, but doing as Hebrews 10 says, stirring them up and stirring one another up to what? Love and good works.

We should be provoking one another. Not to sin, not to even righteous anger and putting someone in that situation where there might even be an opportunity the next day for the devil, but to stir them up to love and good works. So, when was the last time you stirred someone up to anger with your impatience and your harsh conduct? Do you know of anyone angry at you right now? Though their anger is sinful anger, it's their own sin, Paul makes it clear we're responsible to not do something that leads them to it.

Right? This is a very biblical principle emphasized in multiple places. Jesus says in Matthew 18, 7, woe to the one by whom what? Temptation comes. Just stirring them up in our conduct, in our words, that might lead to sinful anger, that's not an insignificant thing.

And Jesus says, woe. Not w-o-w, w-o-e. Right? A serious type of curse.

So we should recognize this. So let's think for a moment about anger. About anger.

Which the word provoke in the Greek in Ephesians 6, 4 carries this meaning of leading them to wrath. Even if you look at the literal, I don't believe it even has the word anger in it, but the translators put it there because of the word provoke. Now, what is the difference in a brief statement, not a whole sermon, between sinful anger and righteous anger? How would you make that distinction? The most common way and I think the right way to make the distinction is one's anger, when it is righteous, they are concerned about the offense primarily being against who? God.

Right? When one is primarily concerned about how the offense affected oneself, this is often full of sinful anger and it's so personal what has happened. Now, you and I's anger and impatience can be a massive cause of our children's anger, right? Our actions, attitude, speech can make the child sinfully angry. They can be annoyed, irritated, inflamed.

And Paul's saying we are not to conduct ourselves in a way that nurtures evil in the heart of our children. We are not to do things that push them to a point of anger. And again, you guys and anyone in the church without children, same thing to you with the brethren in the church in the life of a Christian.

Now, this is a very interesting point. There's supposed to be an ouch point that this guy mentioned. Proverbs 22:24 Listen to this verse.

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. Let me read that first part again. Make no friendship with a man given to anger.

What application could you draw if the father is constantly given to anger? How would that apply to the child? What would you say to the child? Should you even be friends with your father? Should your child even be hanging around you according to this proverb? You know what it says? If I command my kid, make no friendship with a man given to anger, but I'm that man, lest you learn his ways so my child is learning my ways, am I in any way by my conduct entangling my children in a snare? I want my children to be around me and learning from me and imitating that which is good. And yes, imitating the humility of acknowledging whatever fault that I have when I've had it and going to them and clearing my conscience. Sam Crabtree in his book Parenting with Love and Correction, I think he's quoting someone else, he said this, some people do not realize they have anger issues until they are parents.

And then all of a sudden, buttons are pushed and tempers flare. Some moms and dads think they need to be firm to get their point across, but their version of firm is really an expression of anger. Therefore, parents should earnestly pray that our meek Lord Jesus would root out unholy, underlying, and overtly angry expressions with their children in discipline and daily interactions.

Our anger provokes anger in our children. And we do not want that. But you catch his point? What if my definition of firm that I've now created as a standard in my household is actually a manifestation of anger? But everyone around me agrees, oh, daddy's just being firm.

I mean, it's a holy firmness. It's a right, strong response as the leader of the home. Crabtree is saying you could so delude what anger is and isn't in the household where the father is actually, his firmness is anger, but he's calling it something it's not.

Kind of like the false prophets calling, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace. And if you say, well, there's no way that could apply to me. No, no.

We need the humility to recognize the same pride that leads us to provoke our children to wrath could be the same pride keeping us from recognizing a blind spot. And the truth is we all have blind spots at certain points, and whenever we think we're consistent, we always have the ability to go back into another blind spot. Now, I don't have time in one sermon to deal with everything contained in these verses.

I'm not going to dice up verse 1, 2, 3. I don't have time for that. But why does he directly address fathers and not both parents? I've heard some, they right away make the statement, well, it's because the dads are the ones who get angry more. I don't see that there.

That's not what's happening. Where is that saying that the man is the one who always gets angry? What did Paul just establish in Ephesians 5? What about the man? The man is the head. He is to lead.

So Paul is addressing the leader, knowing if you address the main person, say, in the government, what will that do? It will go down through the chain of command and affect the conduct of all. The leader is responsible. You hear that, husband? You and I, we're responsible.

We can't neglect this. We need to be alert. Husbands can affect change in the whole structure of how our families operate.

A lot can happen in one week. If you're really determined. Our wives are called to submit to us.

Paul's established that. And then a stronger word is even used for children. They are called to obey.

That's a stronger word than the word to the wife to submit to the husband. As Colossians 3.20 says, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. I mean, this is an incredible privilege that by our harshness and impatience, we can crush those who are following our leadership.

I'm commanded to not be harsh with my wife. And I'm commanded to not provoke my children to anger. To not exasperate my children.

Here I am trying to lead this family unit. There's a lot of pressure. As some of you have rightly said, you would rather be on the submitting role of the marriage than on the leading role of the marriage.

Because you've been in leadership long enough, you want to get a demotion and you want to go back down because of the pressure. But you know what? We don't have that option. We're not going to change roles and we're not going to ignore the Word of God.

And if God has put you in that place and He's made you a man, guess what? You'll be able to do this enabled by the power of His grace. So, I want to give a list of how we provoke our children to anger. And a lot of these I got from The Heart of Anger by Lou Priolo.

So a lot of these I took. I kind of modified some. And I found a series of his on YouTube where he deals with how to provoke your children to anger part one, part two, and how your children disrespect you.

It's forwarded by John MacArthur. I haven't read the whole book, but overall, it's been a very good book. Food for the thought.

Now, with that said, what should the first example be from the text itself? Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. What is the first way that you can pull out about how fathers provoke their children to anger? By not listening to that word B-U-T. That contrasting statement.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Oh, okay, I won't do that. No, no, He doesn't stop there.

He commands you to do something. If you don't do the very command He's given, you ignore the positive aspect of the command. That's the first way you and I will provoke our children to wrath.

To anger. Right? By not doing the positive. By not training them, you will do the opposite and provoke them.

If I don't invest the time and the energy to nourish, instruct, admonish, and discipline them, right there you're going to provoke them to anger. I mean, that's step number one. If you want to make your child angry, don't do your role.

Don't invest the time and the energy into your children. Now, when I say, when Paul says bring them up, what are we talking about here? We are talking about thousands of hours of your life. Alright, a child is no pet cat.

But you get the cat and it just kind of does its thing on its own and it cleans itself and it just goes around and you kind of give it food every once in a while and you check on it every once in a while. A lot of people are treating their kids like that. Right? Just set them in front of technology and let technology babysit them all day long.

I'm not saying there's not a place for technology to help babysit your child, but this is a time investment. Right? You don't just get out there and interact a little. We're living our lives together and we have a brief window.

Right? Did our brother and sister know that their daughter, five years after being 18, would now be gone? They didn't know that. Right? And we don't know. Jeff didn't know, and Cheryl, that their son would die at 19.

We don't know these things. It should give us a heart of wisdom and a desire to not be negligent. Now, he's still speaking to fathers here when he says, but bring them up.

He's not talking to the mothers. Not that mothers are not involved, but again, it's all in this structure that Paul has already established. If a saved father is in the picture, which I realize some sisters do not have that, and this falls on you, it's their responsibility to make sure this instruction and teaching is happening.

That it is happening. Now, briefly, Phil's thinking about how you provoke. If how you provoke is by not doing what the text says, let's think here about what some of these terms mean.

So the first thing he says here is, bring them up. Bring them up. What word is bring them up? Has anyone studied this before? Do you know what word that is? It was just used in v. 29 of chapter 5. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes.

It's the only other place. It's in the entire New Testament. It's the word nourish.

Paul just used that. So husbands, I've got to nourish my wife. I've got to nourish my children.

I've got to bring them up. Nourishing them. There's this nurturing care to raise them to a full maturity, to a point of stability, to a point of independence.

You even find that same word in the Greek Old Testament in Psalm 23. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still water.

That's the word. Lead. Right? The Lord is doing this to us.

David is saying the Lord was nourishing me. We too are to do that. We're called to provide physical, spiritual nutrition to nourish and to not hate our own flesh through a lack of provision for it.

And then you've got the word discipline. I know a lot more could be said on a lot of these terms, but I have limited time. Discipline.

You find this same Greek word in another place in the New Testament and it kind of sheds more light. But Hebrews 12, speaking about God fathers us, right? And obviously, God's wanting us to father after Him. And it says there, for the moment, all discipline seems painful.

There's a pain involved in discipline rather than pleasant. But later, discipline yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been what? Trained. Right? So there is training.

Why do they write a book called Training Up a Child? Or that word? That's what's involved in discipline. It's training. You've got pain and training going hand in hand.

And you're headed somewhere. Where did the writer of Hebrews say you're headed? It later yields what? Peaceful fruit. Peaceful fruit.

Wait, you mean I should really expect as a parent that my children should be providing joy? Yeah. Even if they're lost. There should be some sense that they're a joy and not a rot to my bones.

But the Proverbs say a child left to himself does bring rot to his mother's bones. Obviously, if you don't know it, discipline is so much more than just spanking. Proverbs 29 says, the rod and reproof.

That is, you're bringing the heir to light. It gives wisdom. But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Often, all you have is a parent who's reproofing and they're exposing the heir. And then you've got a parent over here they don't really instruct and reprove, they're just spanking the child. You don't need one without the other.

You need both together. If you don't do that, it will provoke your child. So, in Hebrews, what does it talk about? God's care towards us.

It's motivated out of love. Does love motivate your discipline? Does love motivate your training up of your children? Proverbs 13, 24, whoever spares the rod hates his son. But he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

What does Paul say? He says if you don't get disciplined by the Lord, not Paul. Sorry, the writer of Hebrews, whoever he was, if it was Luke, Paul. What does he say? If you don't get disciplined by God the Father, what does that make you? An illegitimate child.

Right? It's as if you're not his child. In the same way, if my neglect of my kids is such that I neglect them, someone could say, is that even your child? And I say, yes, it is my child. And their response should be, then why aren't you investing in them? And obeying what? Scriptures teach.

A fast way to provoke your child is to not discipline them in love and to fail to take the time and energy to instruct and reproof them with gracious words and bring them up to this point of maturity. I mean, you think about this. How frustrating is it to get hired at a job and then the manager kind of invites you in, gives you your name tag, gives you one instruction and just leaves you to figure out what to do? Would you be happy to be working? It irritates you.

Right? Many parents, it's the same thing. Oh, little guy did some wrong, bam, bam, bam, and then, you know, I've got to get back to the highlights. I've got to get back to the job.

I've got to get back to this. No instruction. No communicating.

No raising up. No nourishing is happening. I don't have time.

What's more important than this, parents? What's more important than this? I mean, seriously. It's not a minor thing that many men will make an idol out of the ministry at the neglect of their family. And I would say there are women who do the same thing.

Right? You can make your work like Martha in Luke 10 such a priority of serving where you're neglecting what is necessary. For her, it wasn't her kids that was sitting at the feet of Christ. Right? When it's all been said and done, when my kids are gone, or even maybe when my kids might actually die before I do, I will look back and I will reflect on how I did as a parent.

Not in a self-condemning way because we all have different faults. But I don't want to have regret that I was negligent and didn't give it my all. John MacArthur, he says, discipline is training by rules and regulations enforced by rewards and punishment.

Proverbs 13.24, it's said to diligently discipline them. Many miss that word. I discipline my kids, they say.

What's the text say? Diligent. Diligent. Just as much as wrong discipline provokes a child, so does discipline that is inconsistently given forth.

Inconsistency is one of the greatest failures of parents. When I look at my own failures as a parent, it always comes back to inconsistency because of my laziness at certain points. You know, one day the child is punished for this.

The other day you don't care. You're basically creating in your child all manner of confusion. As Tim Conway said, it's better to have five rules you uphold than 150 rules that you don't uphold.

As one brother said, most parents are afraid of exasperating their children by being too firm. But most parents exasperate their children by not being firm consistently. Consistently.

I will never forget a family. You all do not know them. They're not among us.

But this family, I'll never forget. The father would consistently discipline the child, train the child, love the child. The mother just gave the child her own way.

Could do whatever she wanted, all the freedom she wanted. Wouldn't discipline them. And you know what I found out the daughter said to someone? She said, I hate one of my parents and I love the other.

Which parent do you think she hated? Her mother. The world says, no, that's wrong. The parent who gives the most freedom to the child should be the parent that the child loves the most.

No, that's incorrect. That's so disrespectful that you're just going to give them all manner of freedom and you're telling them, you don't matter to me. I'm not going to invest.

I'm not going to do what's hard. I'm not going to confront you when I could confront you. Lou Priolo says, if boundaries are unclear, then you provoke them by tempting them to violate because you don't always deal with it.

It's just unclear. Make and enforce rules or else provoke the child to be angry at your inconsistent, flippant leadership where they just don't know what's good and what's not. Still thinking about Ephesians 5. Wives are to submit to the husbands and the husband is to lead.

You could provoke your children by the parents not being on the same page. I mean, you think about the frustration some of us have with the government's lack of being on the same page. Right? It's like one branch says, you just go try to do your taxes and you've got all these different people saying all these different things.

It's just confusing. Some children, that's what it feels like. It feels like going to the IRS and the kid can't get a clear answer from dad or mom and it's just confusing.

Kids shouldn't be doing their taxes at six years old or feeling the stress that one feels when they do their taxes in a business tax form. Look, our culture, I mean, we're all aware there are many angry parents who their version of spanking is just flat out physical abuse. There's all sorts of parents who their quick way to get their kid to be quiet is to be angry at them and to slap them on the face.

Paul and the Bible is not dealing with physical abuse. The whole topic in many ways has become taboo because of these things. In some countries, spanking is even banned.

You think of our brethren in Switzerland. They don't even allow it legally in that country. I mean, America's going to be headed towards that one day at some point.

But Paul, you know what's incredible? Paul's telling parents to not provoke their children in what type of era? In a Roman era? Where a Roman father had absolute power over his household and if the children angered him, the father had the legal right to disown the child and sell them into slavery or kill them. And Paul comes along and says fathers, don't provoke your children. I mean, Paul's not coming along and saying fathers, stop selling your kids into slavery that one kid who had a fit, you killed him.

Stop doing this. Paul's not saying that. Paul is giving a standard.

And you don't find do not provoke your children to wrath in the Old Testament. Paul is giving the standard of love to the Christian that carries over towards my wife. You don't find love your wife as Christ loved the church and the Old Covenant.

I mean, he's upping the standard because we've got the Spirit, therefore we've got the power as a corporate nation of circumcised, of the heart, Jews. Is my overall discipline aimed at helping change my

child and form them? I mean, is that what is even behind it? Can I say I'm doing it for their good? Can every opportunity that I'm involved in training them, am I sitting there with a heart that this is for their good? I mean, is that what's motivating it? Clearly, we provoke our children to wrath if we physically abuse them. And one example of that Luke Priolo gave is in Luke 22 with Balaam.

It's not even a child. But just seeing the man's treatment of the donkey is a stark reminder of how some parents treat their children. The donkey bucked off his owner for what purpose? To save his life because an angel was in the way.

What did he say to the donkey? If I had a sword, I would what? Kill you. They're idle threats, right? Threats of killing. There are parents who make those comments towards their children.

Then what did he do to the donkey next? He struck him in haste. And what was behind a lot of this? He got embarrassed because he fell off his horse. He got embarrassed.

Balaam was out of control. The donkey was trying to help. I know this is not some kid's movie.

That actually happened in the Bible. Incredible, right? You face this situation and that's the response. God forbid that be among us.

I mean, I didn't think of this verse until right now, but Galatians 5. I think it's 24. It's always been a sobering verse. In the list of those who will not inherit the kingdom, he says those who have fits of anger will have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

He doesn't say those who are slavishly... I mean, I haven't looked up the word fit, but there's this idea. This constant fits of anger manifest an unregenerate heart. So, another thing here.

You obviously provoke them while habitually disciplining them while angry. Are you disciplining them because they're sinning against God? Or because they embarrassed you and caused you personal discomfort? What's going on there? Parents provoke their children by making the child's obedience primarily about obeying them and not God. Ephesians 6, verse 4 says, Obey your parents in the Lord.

In the Lord does not modify parents. It is not saying if your parents are Christians and in the Lord you are to obey them. But in the Lord modifies obey.

He is saying children obey not just because your parents said so, but obey the Lord. Our primary goal in our children's obedience is about obeying God. And if they disobey, their offense is primarily against God.

It is not all about us. Ephesians 5, verse 21 says, The obedience is out of reverence for Christ. For those submitting.

Do your children primarily obey you because they fear you or because they fear the living God? And His authority over you and His commands for them to honor and obey you. This is a way many parents, I think, provoke their children. It's all personal.

It's all about them. God's not even in the picture. How could you do this, son? You hurt your mother so much.

I'm not saying the hurt to the mother is irrelevant. But that's not the big picture here. It's the mom's personal hurt.

The big picture here is the sin against the holy God. And that's a prime opportunity to point that child to Christ and His shed blood. So, are we doing this positive command? Do we give our kids instruction in the Lord? Lou Priolo said, When I give them commands, am I making a clear enough distinction between man-made temporary rules that I determine are right as a person in comparison to God's eternal ones that are clearly spoken? Do you realize that if my child is saved, as they grow, they need to come to their own conscious conviction on certain gray areas in the Scriptures and it's far better for them to come to that conclusion as a believer and have their own conscience informed from the Word of God than for me to take my conscience, transplant it, and stick it into them? That's not helping them become an independent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as they're getting older.

It goes without saying, if child training with worldly methods that are inconsistent with God's words will provoke your children to wrath, right? I mean, that's an obvious one. Rep. Bradley says, If you cease a time of chastisement before it's produced humility, this is probably the greatest cause of exasperated children.

Parents attempt to subdue the will through biblical chastisement, but each attempt they end before the child has humbled himself and accepted responsibility for his actions. Many parents fight strong-willed, angry adolescents because they consistently fail to bring humility through their discipline. Proverbs talks about that, right? Is the Bible my standard? Do I really believe that this is the inerrant and fallible Word of God that rightly, balancedly, correctly interpreted and applied? God will honor that.

We can provoke them with verbal abuse. Lecturing them too loudly for long periods of time. Being harsh and mean.

You can provoke them when you correct them for conduct that you yourself do, yet you do not even acknowledge. As someone said, consider the degree to which you are self-disciplined. It is only to that degree that you can expect to succeed in disciplining your children to correct his anger problem.

If I'm trying to correct my little guy's anger problem and I don't correct the anger problem in my own life, it's just a foolish endeavor. A failure to live out your God-given roles in marriage will provoke your children to wrath. If the husband doesn't lead, it creates insecurity in the child.

If the wife does not love the husband and children as Titus 2 says, it creates insecurity in the child. Neglecting or reversing roles creates uncertainty in the child. If the wife goes against the husband's authority, the child can then resent the mother.

Or if the father doesn't lead, the child then starts to resent the dad for not leading. And then on top of that, we're confusing our kids with what are biblical gender roles. We need to have marital harmony.

Children long to see a father love his mom. A wife who gets emotionally attached to someone other than her spouse will stir up anger in the child and insecurity. Children need their parents to lead and not follow them.

That's a big way we can provoke them to anger. We just don't do what Paul talks about in Ephesians 5. And all that's rooted in love, right? So, another thing under just the reality if you can provoke your child to anger by your hypocrisy, that they're easily able to smell out. If you do this enough, what will happen is they will start to conceal their anger and you will think they are okay.

When in reality, you're actually creating a new normal. You have a new normal in your household that none of us know about because so much of our lives in the household no one is there as a fly on the wall. And some don't communicate everything that happens or they don't know how to communicate it.

Therefore, when they get counsel, they're communicating it. And I hear it as one thing, but I'm not correctly understanding the situation because they're lacking the words by which to articulate what's actually happening there. And therefore, my counsel is not applicable.

And I'm running out of time. I've got 15 minutes. Okay.

So here are some more that I believe are scriptural principles. The scriptural principles, you could back these up. In me being 35, my oldest child being 8, many of these obviously came from Lou Priolo's book *The Heart of Anger*, as I mentioned.

I have not completely been there, done that, got the t-shirt. But so much of this matters to me because I'm in the midst of parenting. These are not things I want to think back when I'm 60 and say I wish I would have done this, this, or that.

Because there's no longer that opportunity unless I adopt many children to that point or something of that nature. Parents can make their child angry by subjecting them to humiliation and embarrassing them. You just relay something humiliating about them publicly or you speak critically about them to someone or you mock your child or you make fun of your child or you demean their intelligence or God forbid you make a negative comment about their looks.

I mean, look, there's a difference if the boy doesn't comb his hair and his hair looks crazy. Say something. Sure.

I get the comb, son. The hair is a different animal. We could talk about the hair all day on our children.

But you talk about weight, athletic abilities? You want to make your child bitter, resentful, angry towards you? Should we give biblical names for sin when addressing our child? Yes, I do not shy away from telling my children about their utter wickedness before a holy God and the glorious grace of Christ. Parents provoke their children to anger by scolding them. Oh, I mean, the harsh tone.

Not careful with your words. Just in pride, you lash out because your child did not treat you correctly at that moment because they should treat you perfectly because you're just so special. That's one of the worst things.

The harsh tone. The impatience in the heart. And you know, we see it in others.

When we're out in the store, you see a parent just scolding their child and you see a parent telling their kid, no, you can't have this and the kid doesn't respect the parent. The kid just starts yelling. It's humbling.

It's sad. There's no joy there. You provoke your children by not keeping your word.

Failing to keep your promises. This could be minor like you tell them it's time to leave and then you start talking for several more minutes. That might provoke them to wrath.

If there's really a need to stay, have you in some way maybe tried to express that to them about plans have changed? And then you get them to the point where they know these things are going to happen.

And they don't need you to communicate it to them. But if we need to break a contract we've made, we need to do that clearly enough as we can.

Because Paul said in Colossians 3, do not lie. The last people we want to lie to are the little people in our house. We can provoke them to anger by being a perfectionist.

By demanding too much of them. Critiquing every failure of theirs. Why not rather show them mercy? Instead, some mention all the faults, all the time.

The child comes away believing their parents are never or rarely ever pleased with them. Are we giving praise to our children and acknowledging areas they achieve in something? Or are we primarily nitpicky and always correcting their work or criticizing them? And my mother-in-law, I asked her for example, she mentioned even just a few years ago, now her adult daughter Evangeline and they were washing the dishes and she said, as we were filling the dishwasher, I was too picky with the arrangement. When it came, it didn't really matter.

I exasperated her with that and I had to apologize. If you never communicate approval, you're forcing them to hunt for it outside from friends. They're not going to get it from you and therefore they're not going to be transparent with you when something in their life happens because you don't have that trust.

As the book says, shepherding a child's heart. We're wanting to win their heart. Parents provoke their children by not admitting they're wrong and asking for forgiveness.

I mean, are you teaching your child to not acknowledge their sin? If you don't acknowledge your sin before your kid, you're saying to your kid, you don't need to acknowledge your sin before me, and then that implies you don't need to acknowledge your sin before a holy God. And if they don't acknowledge their sin before a holy God, they're never going to come to Christ. If they don't get in the light and then refuse to come to the light, lest their deeds be exposed.

If we're children of light, our children should look at us and say, my dad is a children of light. He walks in the light. He always takes pains to have a clear conscience before God.

He doesn't rationalize every single error that he makes and try to put the best spin on it to make him look the best. And again, this applies to all of our relationships. This isn't just parents.

Put this in your brother-brother relationship or another sister to another sister in the church. We provoke them by never taking their side of the story on certain matters. You just consistently believe evil of them.

You just let them see your suspicious look all of the time when they come in your presence. You never give them a chance for a fresh start. And this often happens with a strong-willed child.

When they're at fault, you just start to lose total trust in them and you never really give them an opportunity to gain that trust again. And then before you know it, they're 18 and they're gone. We provoke our children by not giving time to talk and build a relationship with them.

They're going to go to others. We provoke our children by wrongly comparing them to others. Should we compare their behavior to how it was more positive in the past? Sure.

Should we call them to imitate people? Sure. We should encourage them forward, but there's a big difference between that and really demeaning and hurting them with comments about them. The worldly

idea is the father who's more into the sports than the kid, right? And he's in the stands.

The kid's playing with less aggression than the dad in the stands. And I was a basketball referee. There was a game.

My dad was reffing. A parent pointed a laser pointer at the kid's eyes shooting the free throw in a middle school game. Why on earth would a parent do that? Parents are so consumed.

The kid's not even wanting to do the sport as much as the dad is. That clearly is provoking them. If our kids want to do things that we like, then that's great.

If they want to do other things, there are certain ways to encourage that. We provoke them by neglecting them. Too busy.

Not enough positive time. You're only giving your attention to all these other things. You're neglecting your child.

That's very, very sinful. We make our children angry by trying to manipulate them to gain control. You know, you act in a way to get them to obey because of an emotional reaction.

Have you ever heard a mother make a comment something like, if you love mommy, you'll do this. Right? That's sad. If our kids disrespect us so much that they would not obey us unless we pull out such a card like that.

And you know what? I don't know if that's anyone here, but if someone here is thinking that applies to them, don't be discouraged and you lose heart in your parenting. I'm not trying to make you lose heart. I'm trying to give you some ammunition to think, to apply, and to consistently live out in your life.

We provoke our children by not making sacrifices for them. They conclude they're a burden in our lives. We don't take them places they want to go.

They just end up resenting us. And you know what? Some might say, well, some people idolize their kids and they make their kids the priority and their kids lead everything. That's not what I'm saying.

That's not what Scripture calls us to do. There's a right balance. We provoke our children by not allowing them enough freedom.

Right? The child shows they can be trusted, but you overprotect. You're insecure. You're fearful.

You want to have perfect children. And therefore, all that concern leads you to overprotect them. And you say, well, they're young.

It's good to do right now. And before you know it, they're not young anymore and you're still doing that. We should want our kids to have a sense that they can have increased freedom and responsibilities, right? This all leading up to their first job.

I praise God. My father-in-law and mother-in-law, they trained my wife to the point where at 16, she worked at a job as a shift manager at Taco Bell, was going to college at the same time, and she had the maturity to be able to do that and have that freedom because of all the training leading up to that point. And there's lessons she then learned in that environment and she's able to go home while still at home

with her parents and talk through those issues and get help from them while it's fresh and she's not removed from the household.

One goal of parenting is to teach your children to be independent. You can't overly protect them from all that is out there for their growth. They're going to have different failures and learning experiences.

We want to walk by them in the midst of this. So you can provoke them by not allowing enough freedom and you can provoke them by allowing too much freedom as I already illustrated earlier from the one family where the daughter said she hated the mother who gave her all the freedom. Another thing, we provoke our children by not being patient enough when they don't understand.

I think my biggest failure as a parent is this. If I'm blind, maybe there's something else I do not see it. We provoke our children by not being patient.

You say something and you say it perfectly. Brother, everyone in the world should understand what you said. It was so articulate.

It was so clear. It was said with the perfect tone and then your kid says I don't get it. What do you mean you don't get it? Even if you don't say a word, impatience is internal in the heart.

It doesn't always manifest itself. My mother-in-law said there were tears over algebra lessons because Bob was not patient enough when the kids didn't understand. And people might say, oh, yeah, it's funny.

It's school. No, it's sin. You being sinful to your children in school, that's not a respectable sin that oh, that's just going to happen.

It's just going to be normal in GCC that all the parents get impatient with their kids because they don't learn at home. No. I know we can all relate to it.

That's even a wrong statement. Doesn't that comfort you? We can all relate to it. I hope not.

Hasn't one of us found the grace of God and the Spirit of God at such where you find victory? Right? People make a little comment. Oh, we all do that. We all do that.

God help us to believe. That can go right against faith. We provoke them to wrath by pushing achievement to an extreme.

We provoke them by unrealistic expectations. We provoke our children by always waiting until the last minute. You're in the middle of an activity and you never give advance warning that it's time to end.

It's always at the last moment. And are there times you've got to be at the last moment? It is. But there's a time to have the courtesy to let them know a certain amount of time until we go, so you're not always just pulling them right away.

We provoke them by showing favoritism. Children are going to be different than one than another. We need to love them without partiality.

God has adopted us, His children, and made us coheirs with Christ. We provoke them by denying them time with their friends when we do not have a valid reason. Terry told me after working hard on the farm, one of the children thought Bob did not give them enough time with their friends.

And she said maybe that's not the case when kids live in the city, but when you're on a farm, she probably had a valid complaint. She rarely had time with her friends. So here, in closing, children.

And a lot of the children are back there right now. Maybe that's a good thing. I don't know.

But if you're a child here and you're listening to this, I want you to know that the point of this message is not to give you ammunition towards your parents. If in anything you think you've received some ammunition by which to be critical of your parents, you are self-righteous. And you need to repent of that.

You need to see your own sin. Do you want your parents to fail so you can feel good? I hope not. Children, don't wrongly judge your parents' motives that they don't want you to have fun.

Don't tell them it's not fair. You're not getting your way. Blah, blah, blah.

You need to believe your parents, they absolutely care about you. To parents, a fundamental way to not stir your children up to wrath is in Proverbs 15. A soft answer turns away wrath.

But a harsh word stirs up anger. Isn't that incredible? That's what he's talking about. And he directly deals with what? Speech more than conduct here.

So, so much of all this comes down to communication. How do you communicate to your children? And how you communicate comes down to how you're walking by faith, putting on the new man and believing the promises of the Lord. How do you communicate non-verbally? You know, the phone, you put the emoji.

Will you have an emoji in real life when you're in a conversation? You're making some sort of expression. You might be saying the right words to your kids, but you've got the wrong emoji on the face. Or you might have the right emoji, and you might have the right words, but you might have the completely wrong tone.

Proverbs 16.21, the wise of heart is called discerning. The sweetness of speech increases your ability to persuade. If you've identified any way, you provoke your children, I admonish you, do something about it.

What do you do? Confess it to God. Confess it to your child. Acknowledge it.

Get it in the light. Expose it. Call it what it is.

A child indeed will learn from what they experience in life. And what they experience in my house is going to dramatically form my children. It really is.

So lastly, as I mentioned, we should provoke one another. Not to anger. The same Greek word for exasperate in Colossians is found in 2 Corinthians 9. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.

The zeal stirred them up to what? To good. To good works. Right? We should be provoking one another to good works as Hebrews 10.24-25 talks about.

We should be stirring one another up. We should be stirring our children up. What positive acts can you do right now to stir your children up? Well, may God help us.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, this whole topic is in many ways absolutely overwhelming. Lord, we have so many insufficiencies.

And I pray, Father, if there are some blindnesses, blind spots in my life or my brothers' and sisters' lives, Lord, would You reveal that to us? Lord, we want it to be seen now. Not in 20 years. And so, Lord, we pray for the sake of our precious little children that You'd do that very thing.

And Lord, I think about all the Morales children who are yet living. Lord, I pray that You'd use even the death of their own sister this morning in their own lives to affect them to call out to You while they have life and breath. Lord, I think specifically about Mary Omi.

I just pray You'd be merciful to her. So Lord, here we are. We commit ourselves, our kids to You.

We're cast on the grace of God. Lord, no matter how we think we do as a parent, Lord, at the end of the day, we need You to come down and save our children. Lord, despite all of our failures and inconsistencies, Lord, would You be merciful to them? In Jesus' name, Amen.

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