

Lesson on Parenting ■ Provoke Not Your Children to Wrath

by Matthew Milioni

This sermon emphasizes the importance of setting stable boundaries for children, focusing on aspects like time and attention, ability to please, listening, anger management, control and discipline, keeping promises, avoiding public shaming, being fair, showing repentance, and setting proper priorities. The speaker highlights the impact of these factors on children's emotional well-being and behavior, urging parents to nurture and guide their children in a loving and disciplined manner.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:4, Matthew 5:37, Proverbs 22:6, Colossians 3:21, Proverbs 13:24, James 5:12, Ephesians 4:26, Proverbs 29:17, Colossians 3:20, Proverbs 15:1

Topics: "Parenting with Purpose", "Emotional Well-being in Children"

Description

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Transcript

When you say no, it has to mean no. The first time, every time. That's how you, that's how we create stable boundaries in the lives of our children.

Boy, I miss that. It's good to hear a bunch of voices singing. And it's good to be together.

Melvin already said that, but I feel it too. I, one of the subjects that I get the most feedback on is a citywide we did quite a few months ago called Proverbs for Parents. And between the feedback that I've gotten from that and a bunch of people asking me about it lately, I'm actually going to speak on some parenting stuff again tonight.

You know, one of the problems of being a demographically skewed young congregation church is that we just don't have a whole lot, we don't have a wealth of family experience. And so there's a lot of us with a lot of little children just trying to figure out how life is. And I'm very sympathetic to that.

When I was, when we started a church in Oregon, we had, we were all 20-somethings. We all had a five-year-old and a three-year-old and a two-year-old and a one-year-old and a baby. And that was the whole church.

And we were just trying to figure it out. So I've been there. I'm very sympathetic to how hard it is to try to figure out what you're doing raising children without a lot of tangible experience and input.

So, but on the other hand, you know, who of us is going to step out? I'm a little reluctant in my, I have an infant, you know. I'm not, I'm not anywhere near done with this experiment of parenting. So, so it's a little bit with trepidation that we always talk about these things.

Fortunately, the scriptures have some really good things for us to grab a hold of, regardless of where we're at in our parenting. Eric and I talked about this some over, we have quite a few times in the past, but just recently over the last week, I was talking to her, we were talking about this need in the church that a lot of people are asking, like, you know, we need some, we need some more teaching on parenting and child training and child raising. And Erica's conclusion was, she's like, I, I'm ready to teach moms about how to deal with two year olds and younger.

Like, I feel like I've got some, I've got some things figured out in that domain. But above that, I still feel like I got a lot of things I'm trying to figure out. So, so just take all that as the, as where we're coming from, as we look at these things tonight.

And, and tonight I want to speak in particular to fathers. I'm going to jump off from the Ephesians passage, and just reading the one verse to start with, you don't even need to turn there, it's just Ephesians 6, I think it's the fourth verse. Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but raise them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.

It's a very simple, just like straightforward admonition in that passage. But what does it mean? Like, every time I read that, I'm like, what did, what actually did he have in his mind? What does it mean to him? What were the situations that he was seeing that he was like, you're provoking that child to wrath, don't do that. What are the places where you can provoke a child to wrath? As fathers, what are the, what are the danger points in our families for where we can be liable provoking our children to wrath? And the corrective of that is to nurture them and admonish them.

And I think all of those, I'm going to take every word for all I can get out of it in that passage, you know, we're going to look at some things that I think provoke children. I have 10 things that I think provoke children to wrath, but the curative, the alternative to provoking our children to wrath is two things that he mentions, nurturing and admonishing. And those are, it's an interesting choice of words.

To nurture isn't always connected with fatherhood, but here the apostle is telling fathers to be nurturers. That means that the father is supposed to be, you know, there in the kind disposition towards his children. He's supposed to be on his knee, taking care of and tenderly guiding.

That compassion is not a modern virtue. This is a biblical virtue of fatherhood. That nurturer is something that fathers do, and admonition, because we can't have one without the other.

We need to have both nurture, that kind disposition towards our children, and admonition. Admonition is, you know, all those harder things of parenting, like the boundary setting, and the rebuking, and the disciplining, that admonition, like here's what you should be doing. That needs to come out in our

parenting as well.

All the examples throughout the Old Testament that we have of these father figures, you know, in Proverbs, in Psalms in particular, the wisdom literature, with father saying, listen to me. That's an admonition. Child, listen to me.

I want to tell you something that's important. That's admonishing them in the Lord. Here's how you go.

Here's how you follow the path. Here's how you make a wise life. Here's how you make good choices.

All those things are included. So let's look together. I'm going to say one more word of prayer, and then we'll look together at these things.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the instructions of the scriptures, and we bless you especially for our families tonight. I pray for all of our families in the church that we would be wise parents, that we wouldn't neglect our obligations and our opportunities to raise children for your good and for your glory. Father, we pray that you give us some insights tonight into these texts and what it means to avoid provoking our children to wrath.

Help us to see, hear, and put into practice these things. In Jesus' name, amen. Okay, so not in any particular order, these are some things that I sat down and thought about where I think, you know, what does a provoked child look like? You know, a child that's—here's the picture of a provoked child to me.

You know, a child that you tell no one, they just grit their teeth, and that turmoil inside, that's a provoked child. When you see a child that's just ill at ease, it's not relaxed, it's not under control, the child is just like either bouncing off the walls or is sulking and has his head turned away from people, or his fists clenched, or all those things are how a provoked child looks. And children don't, I mean, they don't walk around that way all the time, but when you see those kinds of indicators, like those are physical indicators of a provoked child, something's out of whack, something needs to be set in order when that's the disposition, the physical disposition of a child.

You got to lean into those places and figure out where did this come from and how are we going to deal with it? How are we going to set this in order? I feel like also, I was just talking with somebody yesterday, I don't remember who, but I was talking with somebody about how, I hate the way things were with my family when I was a child. I mean, not a little child, I don't have any complaints about my family at all. I had a wonderful childhood, my parents were very good to me.

But by the time I reached my teenage years, I was a very provoked child and I'm not trying to put that on my dad. I think that the world is trying to, there's a lot of factors of what happens in the world that's set up to provoke children to wrath. You know, when I was a young teenager, I just thought my parents were the worst.

I couldn't stand being around them. I didn't want to be near them. I wanted to hang out with my friends, the people that really got me, you know, they understand me, you don't understand, all this, all that stuff, like there's a whole, I feel like the world is just set up to create that within a young life.

That hostility and angst and frustration and turmoil is like, it's a symptom of what's happening in the world around us. And it's my great hope that one of the most brilliant aspects of the church is the ability for us to raise children without that. And I believe that we can do that because I'm already starting to experience

that.

I love being with my older children and they love being with me. We're friends, like our time is good together. We draw towards each other.

We want to be together. We want input in each other's lives. We want those things.

And it's so contrary to the way that I grew up. And again, I don't blame my parents for that. I think they just, I was awash in a world that was trying to produce that in me.

From the music I listened to, to the people that I was around, to the things I was being taught, it was a hard, it would be really hard for them to have not, for me have not gone down that road. So, so let's zoom in on these 10 things. The first thing that I listed is that something that provokes a child to wrath is not having access to his father's time and attention.

Now, we all have busy lives. There's all a lot of things going on with us. But, but it ought to be in our priority structures that our children have a path to get our attention and our time.

That it's not, that they don't, how do you feel? Like, okay, so you walk through your day, your day-to-day stuff, and you're busy, and you're, you're bothered by this and that, and you're hither and yon. But you know that at any point in your life, you can stop and say, I need to pray, and I need to connect with God. And there's always an access window for you to connect with the creator of everything.

And if that's the case, if, if, if you have access to your father, you ought to be creating the same sense in your children. That doesn't mean that times aren't busy, and there aren't times when you don't have to say, hey, I need you guys to go out of the office right now. Papa's got to work.

There's some things going on. But if you need me, like that, if you need me, that should be the, this, if it's not said, it should be understood that there's a way to access me. That you have access to me.

You have, you have priority access to me. That there's a way that you can connect with me. That you believe that I, that my children believe that they can get a hold of my time, my, my ear, my words, and my heart.

They have access to me. If, if you want a story for what happens when this isn't the case, young Absalom ties torches to foxes and burns down his father's general's field just to get an appointment with the king. Like he literally burns down a field.

And that's not just, it's not like an empty field. It's his, it's his food. It's, it's his, the general's food he burns to the ground because he can't, he doesn't know how to get a hold of David.

He doesn't know how to get David's attention. And this is a lesson because if your children don't have access to you, they'll burn down fields in your life. They'll, they will get, they will try to get your attention.

And that comes in all kinds of different ways. But, but you won't, you don't want that. David didn't, he should have listened.

He should have had a way for Absalom to get his attention and to get an audience with him and to sit down and talk together. But if you fail that, if your children don't have access, it provokes them to wrath and they'll find a field to burn down to get your attention. Your sons will do this.

Your daughters will do this in all kinds of ways that are destructive and painful and costly. So leave windows for your children to get a hold of your time and attention. So that's number one.

They need to have access to their father's time and attention. Another thing that provokes children to wrath is when they don't have an ability to please their father. There's so many ways that the, that all of these things happen.

But when I think about my father, you know, for all the differences between my father and I, I, one thing that I know is that my father is proud of me. He likes who I am as a man. He appreciates the things that I've done and the undergirding that that provides in a person's life for you to be able to say, my father is, I have his approval.

I mean, you, you can't, you can hardly do without that and be well, like it takes a lot of work. If you don't have, if you can't say my father is pleased in me, it takes a lot. Some people don't have access to that.

Some people are abandoned by their father. Some people's fathers are in a bad way. There's all kinds of reasons why that isn't the case for many people, but it's destabilizing with our little children.

One of the things that does that destabilizing is if, if you're a moving target, if they never know what's going to make you happy or mad. And we'll talk more about that because there's a whole nother way of looking at that issue. But what do you want? Like if, if I was to ask your child at whatever age they are, you're three year old, you're five year old, you're eight year old, you're 12 year old, you're 16 year old.

What makes your father happy? What does he want you to do? What does he want? And they could, they could understand the question. Would they know the answer to that? What do you want out of them? Like, how is that being communicated? I think that a lot of people, you know, a lot of people grew up in a situation where they're not being trained, where the expectations aren't talked about, where it's not clear, where you don't know. I don't know if my dad wants me to do this or to do that.

Except for through these subtle cues and, and different layers of, of non-communicative ways of addressing things. There's all kinds of like pressure points socially and in the family and culturally where we try to kind of get what we want out of our children. But to just be able to sit and talk with your children and say, hey, here's what I want for your life.

Here's what I want you to do. Here's what I want you to be focusing on. And, and that there's, that a father should be walking with his children where he says, you're here.

I want you to go there. I don't care if that's read this book. I want you to take care of the lawn this summer.

I want you to learn this skill. I want you to do this, this well in your school. I want you, whatever it is.

And it almost doesn't matter, right? It almost doesn't matter. What matters is that you're moving a child forward. You're saying, I want you over the next six months to do this or the next six minutes to do this, that they, that there's a, there's something that's understood.

Here's what my father wants and I can do it. And when I do it, he's happy. That process creates psychologically well-adjusted children.

I know what my father wants. I know that it's something that I can do. And I know he'll be happy when I do it.

That process creates wellness in children. In the absence of that problem, any one of those steps, if your child doesn't know what he wants, what you want him to do, but he's generally confident and he knows that you get happy when he does things that doesn't fill the gaps. If you tell him what to do, but you're telling him to do things that he can't do.

But when he finally ekes his way through, you're happy, that still isn't working. If you tell him what to do and it's things he can do, but then you're not pleased in his behavior, it's not meeting the mark. You have to fill all of those places.

Here's what you should do. You're able to do it. And I'll be happy if you do it.

All of those, all of those should be together. Another way of identifying this issue of ability to please is that I think that our children should be grounded. They should be rooted in our pleasure.

They should know that they are our pleasure and our delight. I see it. I don't, fortunately, I don't see it near as much in the church.

Praise God for that. Would to God it was never in the church, but I certainly see it in the world. Children are often talked about in these terms of a bother or a problem or in the way of their life or too expensive or some kind of negative connotation.

If you're the child, what are you supposed to do with that? I didn't ask to be here. You brought me here. Why do you have a problem with me? I didn't make this happen.

It ought to be the opposite. Our children ought to be cherished and they won't be cherished unless you tell them in word and action. I value you.

You're important to me, not just because of the things that you do, not just, not just task oriented, but you yourself, the person you are is very important to me. I want our children to feel like they're, they're the most important thing. And you have to say that and you have to communicate that in your actions.

If you struggle communicating that to your children, knock it off. I don't, I don't care if you came from a father who wasn't very communicative. You, you can't do that.

You're not allowed. You have to communicate to your children. You have to communicate well to them.

You have to tell them how you feel about them. It doesn't matter if you didn't have access to that. I'm sorry, but it's your job to communicate well to your children.

How important, how special, how lovely and how wonderful they are in your sight. It's, it's, it's needful. You have to say those things and you have to tell them why.

I think you should tell them why. Not just I love you, but I love you because I love you because you're so kind. I love you because you're so obedient.

I love you because you're so lovely. I love you because, I love you because you should have, you should, that's a regular conversation, especially when they're little. The littler they are, the more important that is to make that the, the heart of their family life is I'm loved and cherished by my father.

He loves me in particular. Me especially. Something that provokes our children to laugh, to, to, to wrath is, is not listening to them.

If, if your child's experience with you is always hearing not now, don't bother me, I don't have time, go tell your mother, go talk to somebody else, go outside, that provokes a child to wrath. The same reasons that we talked about with time and attention, but it's, it's, it's not just time and attention, it's listening. The time to just sit and listen and spend time as a family, sitting around a table or sitting on the couch and just having time to talk.

A child who's always told not now, go away, will be provoked to wrath. It's important to, to mention that we have to, we have to be mindful of the things that are getting in the way of our time with our children. Whether that's, you know, our devices, our work schedule, our, our ministry, whatever those things are, they need to be in their proper priorities.

We need to have time to listen to our children. And if you want to have a big family, then you need, you need to, you need to account for that. It's really, I, I, I felt like kind of a, a dork writing it down.

It's so cliched, but time really does go fast. It's, I sound cheesy even saying it. I'm, I'm here to tell you, I'm still young enough.

I'm in my forties. I still have little children, but 20 years literally just goes by in a blink. And you wonder, where did it go? Like, where did it go? How do I have grandchildren now? I can hardly believe it.

I wake up in the morning. I'm like, where, where did the last 20 years go? It's like a blink. And I know now that the next 20 is going to be the same way.

It just, the Bibles tell us, and it's kind that they do, but it's so hard to observe because a day is a day and 24 hours is 24 hours, but it doesn't do that in your head. In your head, you wake up and you're in your forties and you're like, I cannot believe that I have adult children. I can't believe that my parents are in their seventies.

Where did it go? And, and I say that all because that moment when you tell the child, I'm too busy for you, like for the child and for you, you should be careful about that analysis. I'm not, it has to be done sometimes. We've got to pay bills.

We've got to work. We've got to do things, but be careful how often you do that. Because you don't get to go back and, and you only get them at that age for a little bit of time.

These developmental milestones of five and 10 and 15 and 20, like they come and they're gone and that's the chance you get. And if you spent that time saying, I'm too busy, I got other stuff to do or not paying attention or, you know, listening out of the corner of your ear instead of really sitting and, and locking eyes and having a conversation with children, you'll miss it. You'll miss it.

So listen to them. Another thing that provokes children is an angry father. Anger begets anger.

And if you have, if you have anger that's expressed in your home, your, you are making your children angry, children, people deal with anger in different ways. Some people, it makes them shut up. Some people, it makes them act out.

But if you're expressing anger in your home, you're teaching anger in your home. That's just how it works. That's how having children works.

When you get angry, you're demonstrating to your children how to deal with that situation in their life. If you use anger to get what you want, children will use anger to get what they want. And if you notice those patterns in you, you've got to stop and figure out where that's coming from and figure out how to not be that way.

Because you are going to recreate that in your next generation. If you have a problem with anger, like it's an ongoing pattern, it's not a, it's not a radical set of circumstances where you, where you, you, you lash out in a way that you shouldn't and you've repented and you made it right. If it's a pattern of behavior, you got to get into the church.

You got to get into your agape. You got to get into your LDG. You got to bring some people in that situation.

You need to start developing some accountability. You need to start figuring out where this is coming from and you need to start figuring out the tools to not be that way with your family. It's not okay.

Anger is not okay. This is for men and women. Men aren't the only ones that are angry in their homes.

I feel like this is something I know about. Eric and I were very angry people when we were first converted and we had so many bad habits when we started our marriage and started our family. It has to be worked out.

You can't allow anger to, to be in your home. You got to figure out different ways to deal with things. Anger is a shortcut, right? It's a way of, it's a, it's just like violence.

It's a shortcut. If you blow up loud enough, people will do what you say. That's always the root of anger.

When you meet somebody who's angry, they're trying to control the people around them with that anger and that ultimately ends in violence, but it's always about controlling the people around you. I feel out of control, so I'm going to blow up and I'll blow up loud enough that it makes the people around me conform to what I think needs to be done. That's the pattern for anger and it's destructive.

The other thing, another thing that, that provokes children to wrath is a lack of control or supervision or discipline. Um, I thought of this passage about the child in Galatians. It's in, um, Galatians four.

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father. It doesn't matter. You know, I want to look at our children as heirs, heirs of us, heirs of the kingdom of God, heirs of the promises of our fathers, but they have to be under tutelage.

They have to be under control. They have to, the way that I think of this issue of, of, of how to, how to create well adjusted children is that we want to create, we want to create a world around them, a world of order. And, and just like, just like the task stuff, it almost doesn't matter where the boundaries are, not totally, but, but the fact that there are boundaries, like that there's a, there's a space within which this child can feel free to move about.

Here's what happens if a child doesn't know his boundaries. And when I say boundaries, I mean, I mean rules. I mean, everything, depending on the age of the child, everything from don't go by the steps, don't touch the stove, don't go out the door.

Don't go on the street. Don't, don't get on the internet when they're older. Don't be out doing these things.

Don't talk to these kinds of people, whatever the boundaries are and the boundaries should grow with the child, whatever they are, they create a space where, where you're free, right? Like within this domain, I can do everything there is here to do, but a child without properly set boundaries, a child that doesn't know the defined borders of behavior and conduct. I always think of it this way. I think of every time I see a child lashing out, acting out like you ever take a baby.

Some of our babies, especially Cephas had, had this, um, had a sensory issue where he always felt like he was falling. Like he was always startling. It didn't matter where he was.

He was always startled, but you see it with all little babies. It's a developmental thing. You take a little baby and you lay them back and they'll startle like, because they don't know what the space around them is.

They haven't developed the sense of themselves in space and spiritually and psychologically. That's what the borders of your father's rules do in your life. They make it so you're not like free falling.

So you know where the edges are. I know I'm not supposed to do that to that and what's in here. I'm free.

And this is why children with boundaries, they, they're more independent, they're more stable, they're more confident because they have, they don't, they're not always trying to figure out when they're going to hit the ground. They know where the ground is. They know what's underneath of them.

And so they can run about in the world. They can run, jump, skip, hop, whatever they want to do because they know as long as I'm in here, I'm okay. There's no problems.

I can do whatever I want within this capacity. And, and again, that has to grow with the child. You try to put, you try to constrain an older child in these little tiny spaces and it's not good for them.

But you have to have these senses of boundaries so that you can develop properly so that you can examine and explore and, and ask questions and figure out how the world around you works. If you're always, if you're always, imagine if you, if you took a, if you took a child and there was like a shock collar on him and, and whenever he got to some arbitrary position, you'd push a button and shock him. And there's no sense to figure out why this happens.

Like there's no way to define the space within which you'll get shocked or you won't. Imagine the shock is either physical discipline or, or, or displeasure from your parents or disappointment or whatever it is. But when you don't have established boundaries of behavior and conduct, it's like just arbitrarily like, because, because children will run around and they'll, they'll, they'll look for that fence.

They'll look for the line. They'll look for the edge of, of acceptable behavior because they want to know. And if we don't supply that for them, they're going to find it.

That means they're just going to run as hard as they can until they find out where the stopping point is until they find out where the shock is. So they find out where the fence is and then they'll say, okay, well, there it is. That's how far I can go.

Mama says, don't touch that. So the child says, is that, is that what, is that really what that means? And so he'll reach out and if he touches it, when mama said no and nothing happens, well now he's confused. Well now, which is the case? Was that a touch or is that a no touch? And so then he'll find something else.

And mama will say, don't touch that. And he'll reach out and touch it. And if nothing happens, if he doesn't recognize that that's a boundary, well, he still doesn't know what the boundary is.

So then he's got to find the next thing. And when, and now this time, this time mama says, no, don't touch. And she sounds very stern.

And the child says, well, maybe when she sounds very stern, that means not to touch. So he'll reach out and touch. And as soon as the child reaches out, mama says, no.

And I say, okay, well, maybe when she says it twice, it's okay to reach out and touch. No, no, no. But was that where the boundary is? And he reached out and then it's something dangerous.

So he'll either get burned or mama will smack his hand or something like that. And then he goes, oh, okay. That's where the real boundary is.

That's how child, that's how children are learning their environment. There is, if you have children, there is no way to escape that process I just described. That's a developmental process of a child.

That's how he learns about the world around him. It's what's built in him to do. He is going to do that.

So are you shaping that environment or are you following the child around until it gets to a dangerous enough place that you have to step in? That's the question. And if you're wise, when you say, no, don't touch, you'll make sure that he doesn't touch. Then you don't have to do all that other stuff.

It's harder in the moment, right? Because whatever, because you don't want to, or because you're busy, or because you got three other children running around, or you don't feel well, whatever. It's easy to say no and not mean no, but it won't do what you're looking to do. When you say no, it has to mean no.

The first time, every time. That's how you, that's how we create stable boundaries in the lives of our children. I think a caveat to that is that as a child grows, you know, I talked about these expanding boards, as a child grows, if those things are essentially arbitrary or meaningless and they have the ability to understand that, you're doing a different kind of damage than you're training something that you shouldn't be training for.

But when we're talking about little ones, like this idea that if you say no, you need to mean no, it's hard to know sometimes as a parent when to pick those battles, when to make sure that you say no. But I've done it in my own life and I watch it in a lot of our families that no doesn't mean no. And you're way better off, just don't say no.

It's way better off to just let the child run if you're not ready to mean no when you say no, than to say no and go through that no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no process. Because you're just undoing everything if you do that. And, and they'll figure out where your real lines are.

That's, they know, you may not know, but your children know. I promise you that. I knew, I knew exactly where my mother's line was.

Through, like children are little scientists, they're behavior scientists in this regard. And they will figure out where the line is. And they'll know it better than you.

Because it matters more to them than to you. It's their world. The other thing about those boundaries and issues is that it's really important that you, you're investing the time and work to figure that stuff out at home.

Trying to work that out when you're in public, or when you're at meeting, or when you're around other people, and everybody's not into it, you know, that's not the time to be exploring boundaries and setting them with your children. Do the work at home. Like do that stuff with your children.

With your little children, especially for a young family, you ought to be sitting down a couple times a week for no other purpose than just to train the children. Just to sit at the table, just sit on the couch and say, okay, here's what we're going to do tonight. We're going to sit still for 10 minutes, okay? Let's start the clock.

You can make a game out of it. You can draw on the board. You can do that however it's fun for your family, or edifying, or whatever you want that to be.

Just do it. Just spend a couple minutes every week saying, okay, now we're going to sit still. I want you to sit here.

Or you can have them stand up. Or you can have them march around the yard. I don't care what.

It doesn't matter. Do whatever's fun for the children. We used to play with my older ones.

We used to play a lot of papa may I. Dumb game. Mother may I, but it's papa. Go pick up the chairs.

Papa may I. Go out the door. Papa may I. It's just training them to be responsive to the direction and the boundaries of their father and their mother. Okay.

Let's review. Not having access to father's time and attention. Inability to please.

Not listening. Anger. And a lack of control.

Another thing is not keeping your word. And I feel like my wife is much better at this than I am. I'm convicted from time to time about this issue.

Tell my children we're going to do something and we don't do it. Or tell them, yeah, I'll take you here. I'll do this thing.

And I get busy. And it's not as important to me as it is to them. And so it doesn't get done.

That provokes your children to wrath. You know, the stories that I've heard from the angriest people come down to, like, especially in a broken or divided home. You know, the child sitting waiting for his dad to come.

His parents are divorced and he's sitting looking at a window. His dad said he was going to come pick him up at 3 o'clock on Saturday. And he sits there and 3 o'clock comes and goes.

And 3.30 comes and goes. And 5 o'clock comes and goes. And 8 o'clock comes and goes.

And there's a phone call at the house. And it's six hours later. And, oh, I'm sorry, Junior.

I couldn't make it because this happened. And the fury that that builds in a child's life. Like, you can just, it's like lighting an atom bomb.

It just, that lie explodes in a child's life. And we need to be very, very careful. Especially these, you know, important things.

Things that are important, not to you, but to the child. Don't, don't not keep your word to your children. It will make them angry.

They'll feel like you're not trustworthy. And you can't be believed. Jesus said, let your communication be yay, yay, nay, nay.

Whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil. It does bad things in people's hearts when people aren't trustworthy. Especially people who should be trustworthy.

People like your parents. And while we're on it, that goes for the church, too. It goes for everybody in your life.

We need to be honest people. When we say something, we need to do it. Even to our own hurt.

That's a principle of righteousness. Don't leave the children out of that. Another thing that provokes children to wrath is public rebuke or shame.

Don't shame your children in public. If you've got to deal with something, deal with it in public. Don't do it in private.

Speak well of your children and your family with other people. I mean, there's a time and a place to talk about problems and issues in the church with trusted, close people. But in general terms, don't speak ill of your family around other people.

Like I said, if there's things to deal with, deal with them at home. Deal with them behind closed doors. Deal with them in a place that's appropriate to talk about what's wrong and how to fix it.

Shame is another thing like anger. It can be used to manipulate people. It can be used to try to create conformity.

But it will always burn you in the end. Shame is not a good way to try to get people to conform to what you want. For those that are come from families that joke around a lot, it's something to be careful of.

I like to joke around with my children. And I feel like there have been a few times when I've crossed the line and said something that was funny, that was too short. It's not good to do to people, especially a young person who's just coming up in the world and trying to figure out who they are and where they belong.

Be careful with their reputation in public. Another thing that provokes wrath in children is partiality or favoritism. We have a running joke in my family that my favorite child is whoever's two.

And that's generally true. I love two-year-olds. They're my favorite people.

But I don't have any favorite children. I love all my children. And they'll pick up.

I hope this isn't an issue among us. It shouldn't be. But it's worth mentioning.

It is a factor that provokes wrath. I think where it could be an issue with us is the oldest youngest distinctions or boys and girls that could receive different treatment. You could, a child could pick up on some sense of favoritism over those kinds of issues that we should be careful of.

I have two more things that I think provoke wrath in children. One of them is never seeing your father repent or make things right. If you haven't had seasons in your life where you've had to sit your family down and say, I'm sorry.

It wasn't right of me to do. I dealt with that completely wrong. I need to ask your forgiveness.

Here's what happened. Here's how I'm going to make sure it doesn't happen again. Here's the open invitation for you to speak to me if you see these things.

If you haven't done that ever with your family, you're probably missing it. Children need to see that their father is an above repentance. It's important for a whole host of things for their own repentance, not least of which, but just to know that they're not always wrong.

That sometimes their father can be wrong too. That there's room and space for an authority figure in their life to be wrong, to admit it, to not hide it, and to deal with it in an open and a real way. It's really healing for a family.

It's only a few times I saw my father do that, but I still remember them. They're important occasions. The last one is a father can't prioritize.

And this has to do with those boundary setting issues in large degree, but it's a little more nuanced than that. It's that pick your battles thing that we talked about with boundaries, but it's more than just the process of setting boundaries. If there's not a proper priority, if some arbitrary small thing creates as much of a problem or as little of a problem as some giant issue that's core to our family identity, if there's no distinction, if there's no prioritization, if little things aren't little and big things aren't big, it creates a kind of chaos that a child can't figure out his own sense of priorities in the world.

I feel like I need to describe that. One of the children hits another child, and there's a big deal with that. The parents come in.

We have this big to-do. We figure it out. We sort it out.

Everybody's involved. It's a big deal. We don't hit.

Okay, that's one thing, but then the next morning, the little toddler spills milk on the floor. It's a big to-do, and everybody's upset. There's all this hoop and holler about milk on the floor.

How is milk on the floor the same as hitting people? Why does that get the same response? You have to vary those responses. You have to let milk be milk, spilt milk be spilt milk, and violence be violence. There needs to be a distinction between those two things.

So, that's a list of 10 things. Not having access to father's time and attention and ability to please. Not listening.

Having anger in the home. A lack of control or borders. Not keeping your word.

Public rebuke or shame. Partiality or favoritism. Never seeing your father repent or a lack of priorities.

Those are 10 things that I think we can focus on. In our homes, to try to not provoke our children to wrath. And in each one of these things, if you think through that list, there's a nurturing way to respond to the issue that we're pointing out in that item.

So, that's everything for us tonight. Let's pray one more time. Melvin, do you have a song we can close with at the end? We'll just do a chorus.

Let's go ahead and pray. Why don't we stand? Heavenly Father, we want to recognize here as your people tonight our real responsibility to the children that you've given us. To the children that you will give us.

Father, we want to take this task, this opportunity as seriously as we can. I know, Father, that our families, we love our children. We're so grateful for each one of them.

We're grateful for our access to them and their lives and who they are as people and what you're doing with them. And Father, we know that there are a million ways to fail and one way to go right. Father, we want the right amount of gravity and seriousness when we consider who we are as parents.

We want to weigh the task with the eternal weight that it should have. I pray, Father, for our families. I pray that you would give us grace and wisdom.

I pray that you'd help us as a young group of people, Father. I pray that you'd fill in the gaps with grace. The places where we don't know exactly what to do or how to do it right.

Father, I pray that you would give us a special grace to be good parents. To raise children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. Father, it's our greatest desire that our children would serve you and love you as we do.

We ask for your help. We're begging you for your help, Father, in this most holy of tasks. I ask for your blessing on our families.

I ask for your blessing, in Jesus' name, on our children. We love you and we thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/EKkA9uo2RQA.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/matthew-milioni/lesson-on-parenting-provoke-not-your-children-to-wrath/>

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