

Please turn with me to Ephesians 6:4 and stand for the reading of the inspired, inerrant infallible Word of God.

We read “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”

FATHERS

The week of May 15th was a profound week in the history of Barabbas Road church. This local body grew numerically by 3. This wasn't growth from the internet, this wasn't growth from someone who found a flyer, saw a sign, someone who was brought by word-of-mouth or some other means by which God draws people to His church. No, this was **organic growth**. Growth by God's natural design for husbands and wives. Three souls manifested into this world through God's design and given to believing Christian parents.

For most of us here at this church it was a week we've all but forgotten but for these families I assure you it's a week that they'll never forget. Now for us bible believing Christians we know that life and soul are created at the moment of conception but it seems that we wait to give the parents their proper titles until the child is brought into the open air. These titles are titles that these parents will wear for the rest of their lives **and its to one of these titles that we will look today.**

Today, on a day when our nation sits in an interesting irony where on one hand they rejoice at the murder of children yet celebrate the title which is only bestowed if child is conceived. Its a title that so many in this room wear. Its a title that resides in the trinitarian Godhead. Its a title that for some brings reminders of panic and pain and promises never kept. For others its a title that brings feelings of peace and provision and protection. This title, if you haven't guessed by now is the title of father.

INTRO

We've been going through the book of Genesis at a rate of about 50 verses at a time. When you preach through that many verses a lot of the context gets filled in for you. but this week we are in a new book and only in one verse... and for that reason I think its extremely important to draw both historical context as well as biblical context for our instruction for today.

The Apostle Paul under the devine guidance of the Holy Spirit wrote the book of Ephesians in his first imprisonment around 61ad. Ephesus was a coastal city that was under full Roman occupation at the time of writing.

We know from Acts 20 that he preached to these churches for three years with tears declaring to them the whole counsel of God. He warned the elders to keep an eye on themselves and on

their preaching knowing that fierce wolves would try to come in and destroy what God had built by twisting the scriptures.

These were churches that he had spent time with, that he loved dearly. You see Paul's love for God's people by his continuous preaching of sound doctrine and walking in sound practice. And interestingly enough that is exactly how the book of Ephesians is divided up.

The first three chapters deal with orthodoxy, proper doctrine, and the latter three deal with orthopraxy, proper practice, in other words the first three deal with **who we are** as believers and the latter three deal with how **do we act as believers**. We've been declared Saints and therefore need to know how to act as Saints. That's the overarching biblical context of the book and we will be pressing into that further in just a minute.

ROMAN LAW

Before we do that I want to bring into focus the Historical context of the book of Ephesians because that's really going to set up with the problem as I see it in our culture context today. Again I mention that Ephesus at this time was under Roman occupation and in that cultural context the Fathers were given a great deal of power over their families.

There was actually a Roman Law called the Patria Potestas which in English translates to "Fathers Power" The father had unilateral and absolute autocratic power over every facet of His children's lives. Roman fathers could sell their children into slavery at any time for any reason.

He could make them work in the fields and even store them in chains equating them to a rake, a shovel an ox or donkey. He could take them out when he needed them and put them back when he was done. Slide them rations under the guise of provider but for all intense and purposes they were simply property. All Authority Zero Love.

The ancient literature of this time states that when a child was born into this system he or she would be brought before the father's feet and if the father stooped to lift the child that was the sign that he acknowledged the child's right to life. If he turned and walked away...the child was thrown out.

We actually have document proof of such an occurrence in a letter from 1BC from a soldier named Hilarion to his wife Alis. This is the letter that the archaeologists found.

It starts: Hilarion to Alis, dearest greetings. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if when all others return I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech you to take care of the little child and as soon as we receive wages I will send them to you. If good luck to you, you have a child and if it is a boy, let it live; **if it is a girl, throw it out.**" And thus ends the letter.

Unwanted children were commonly left in the forum. They were collected at night and used as slaves. They stocked the whore houses of Rome and they became human tools for the farmers in the fields. The stoic philosopher Seneca wrote "We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge the knife into the sickliest cattle, **children who were born weak and deformed we drown.**"

Imagine that...Parents killing their own children because they had deformities...what an ancient way of thinking...that never happens in our day and age...

So this was the cultural context in which Paul was writing to his beloved church in Ephesus... and to some degree we see this type of father today. The overly strict Autocratic disciplinarian who's all discipline and no instruction.

The distant CEO father who sees his children as workers in his business and not souls to be shepherded in his family. He throws money at vacations and camps and schools using them as some sort of employee retreat in a hope to bring back good and moral standing in his company. As we will see in our text for today, this is not the type of father God calls us to be.

PENDULUM SWING

As I said, while I do think this type of father still exists in our culture and even in the church, I think that we have seen the pendulum swing in the last 40 to 50 years. If there is anything that history has shown us is that the cure for problems in a relativistic society is drastic reactionary change.

Since strict unloving discipline by a father lead home didnt work out, lets try giving the reigns to mom while dad takes a back seat. This has produced a culture of powerless, dopey, wimpy fathers who reside less now in a male autocracy and more in a third-wave-feminist driven matriarchy...

We look no further than the classic television shows that we all grew up on, King of Queens, Everybody Loves Raymond, Married With Children, and Roasanne and I love Lucy just to name a few. These shows portray the dopey father complaining that he can't go golf with the boys because mom needs him home to handle some need in the family.

He's often dim-witted, the butt of all jokes and his sole purpose is to fill space on the couch and to pursue and cling to a lifestyle he had pre-wife and pre-children. He's loving in an affectionate sense but unable to discipline and unwilling to teach.

The wife on the other hand is portrayed as the hero of the family, the only one with any sense, always making excuses for dad and insisting that she is the head of the household. If the father

try's to assert himself and regain some semblance of leadership she kicks against the regime until the father sadly gives up because after all...happy wife, happy life.

Its no doubt that the usurpation of familial headship has been propogated since the dawn of television and we know from Genesis 3 that it was a curse upon man and women since the time of the fall.

recap

So the Autocratic Father didnt work, no love all authority, overly harsh discipline the Matriarchal System didnt work, no authority, no instruction, no headship So our culture tried to swing the pendulum off of the scales and has introduced what is now known as The Kindergarky.

A kindergarky for those who have not heard the term is a home where the children rule the roost. Everything in the parents lives is based upon the childs whims, worries and wonders. Rules, regulations, schedules and salary expenditures are overly dictated by the moods and interests of the child.

Antinomianism reigns, zero discipline and the only instruction being given is that which the child deems is necessary for them. I read a story this week of a family who only spans their child after asking permission first. If the child says the parent may spank them then the spanking takes place...This my friends is the definition of a Kindergarky.

TURN

I bring all of this up by way of introduction because the fact of the matter is you were most likely raised in one of these three types of homes. And what you dont want to do as a fathers is to simply be reacting to what didnt work in your own life and swinging the pendulum the other way.

In the same vein you just dont want to keep what did work because the results came out the way you wanted them to...that's not discernment that's pragmatism.

Thankfully God's word on fatherhood is sufficient. and on this topic it shines forth like a lightening bolt piercing the nights sky.

Of all the noise on blogs, facebook pages, instagram accounts, pinterest boards, books ranging from telling you how much money you need to make, how many cars you need to have, or the fact that you need bob stroller for running and an uppa baby stroller for walking and if you get your stroller from the discount bin at walmart you dont love your child. thousands upon thousands of words spilled over what you're suppose to do, drive, buy and teach your kids.

Of all the noise out there on why to spank, how to spank, when to spank, where to spank, public school, private school, home school, no school or allowing them to go old school and learn from the streets.

I pray that Gods Word cuts through the cacaphany of cultural and historical circumstances and gives you a clear direction for your home. A clear picture of what God's calling of fatherhood looks like.

As we will see from our text today the father that God calls you to be is a father that is **Continually filled by the spirit, is Continually not provoking, And is continually nourishing.** - In other words, the main idea of this message is that —

Fatherhood is not punctiliar but a continuous practice. (application of an idea) Like a doctors family practice.

Lets look again to our text. Ephesians 6:4

The Apostle Paul begins, Fathers. And we do a full stop right there.

Paul starts this verse by addressing fathers which makes them the subject of our text for today.

In other places in the new testament this word can be translated as parents but if you look up at chapter 6 verse 1 you'll see that Paul has already used the more common new testament term for parents. If you're using the ESV translation your bibles will show this distinction.

Now, Clearly what Paul goes on to teach isn't something that is uniquely distinct to fathers. Husbands and Wives will share a great deal of the instruction given today but ultimately God has given the stewardship and headship of the household to Husband's and Fathers,

Thus you, dad, will be the one ultimately accountable to God for how the instruction given in the remainder of this verse is carried out in your homes.

Just to shed some light on this flip over if you will to Ephesians 5 verse 22: We read:

Wives submit to your own husband as to the lord for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is head of the church.

This is bolstered even further in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and you dont have to go there with me, where we read that the head of every man is Christ and the head of a wife is her husband. Later in that same section God's word says that man was not made **from** woman but woman from man neither was man created **for** woman but woman for man.

This again doesn't mean that mothers can't teach. It simply means that the fathers will ultimately be accountable for what is being taught. We see mothers teaching their children all throughout scripture. Timothy who was Paul's main traveling companion who he referred to as his son in the faith, learned the scriptures from his mother and grandmother.

Listen to the words of 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes to Timothy "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your **grandmother** Lois and your **mother** Eunice and now I am sure dwells in you as well" later in chapter 3 he exhorts Timothy to continue in what he has firmly believed and how from Timothy's childhood he was acquainted with the sacred writings.

From Acts 16 we know that Timothy's mother was a believer and thus passed the truths of scripture on to Timothy.

both parents

Go with me to Proverbs 1:8

We read: "Hear, my son, your **father's instruction** and forsake not your **mother's teaching**. For they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck." We see in this verse both father and mother partaking of the teaching and instruction given to their child.

So again, mothers can teach and will teach but God will hold the fathers accountable for that teaching as head of the household. This is God's design for the home.

Secondly, Fathers implies Children. and to that end I must say that...

CHILDREN

Children are a blessing. God says children are a blessing. Psalm 127:3 "Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them"

Now a few points on this. In my eyes not seeing children as a blessing has been one of the number one ways that the evangelical Christian church has capitulated to the culture in the last 30 years.

In a selfie generation where everyone is focused on their own wants needs and desires anything that would come along and intrude on their personal happiness is not a blessing but a curse. Kids are seen as an intrusion upon vacations and riches, dreams and careers, schedules and social outings...yet I don't see any of those things being called a blessing in scripture...

So sad is the view of children that birthrates are down in the west more than any time in the history of the world. It's not because women are desiring them and not having it just because they're not wanted.

This type of thought is so ubiquitous in our culture that when the muslim brotherhood wrote their manifesto on how to take over the west they didnt say that they need to outbrain it or outmaneuver it, they simply need to outbreed it. Just look at France and Germany and you will see that their plan is indeed working.

value

If you dont value children, if you dont see them as a blessing ask God to soften your heart to them. Ask God to give you the desire to have children. God says that He alone opens and closes the womb and that He alone is sovereign over your finances. As we talked about last week, How big is your God?

Here are two areas of life that produce more worry than any other yet God has told us specifically in His word that He has both of those taken care of. He will give you children when He desires and knows its best for you as he works all things for your good and His glory.

He promises that he will provide for you and that you will never lack clothing, food or shelter.

What a way for us to trust in the goodness of God. Get married, have children, trust the Lord in the timing of these things, he knows whats best for you. You may plan your ways but God will direct your steps.

I know this personally...I desired kids from the moment I got married and the Lord in His goodness tarried for 7 years. Only looking back now can I see how he perfectly orchestrated that timing. I needed a lot of maturing to happen before He gave me River and im so thankful that he delayed.

Im also thankful to our God for His maturing work in this church. From the teenagers to the grandparents the song that I hear on the lips of you, saints, is that that you love of Children. All that said I encourage you to do your part in have them...and watch as the Lord blesses you by them.

Now, Three quick prefatory remarks before we continue.

Prefatory Remark 1

There are those of you in this room who have mentally checked out since you're not fathers and you're thinking "this has nothing to do with me" To you I would say: "All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for for teaching, for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God, (thats all of you, that's all Christians), that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. This text today may not be specifically to you, but it is absolutely for you.

You either have a father, know a father or will one day be a father. We as a church are called the body of Christ, the household of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Simply because you're not a leg doesn't mean that you shouldn't care what's happening to your leg.

God has called us to encourage one another, to love one another to bear one another's burdens, to pray for one another and to spur one another on to love and good works. Scripture does not say that you're only to do this for your same homogenous people group.

One of the best things you can do in this church (father or not) is pray for the fathers of this church. I love taking time each week in our small group to pray for the children's ministry of Barabbas Road and the parents of Barabbas Road. I urge you to do the same.

Prefatory Remark 2

Wives. I ask that you would refrain from the elbow nudges and the "I told you so's" this morning. I don't desire for this to draw out contention in your marriage. Your husbands will feel the weight of the Word of God this morning and you're to trust that the Holy Spirit will do His work. If you've been desirous of your husband to be a more devoted Godly father I encourage you to start with prayer. The means which God uses to bring about His ends.

If you're to encourage and build up and spur on the random Christian sitting next to you, how much more should you be doing that for your husband. 1 Peter 3 says that you win your husband by a quiet and gentle spirit and with respectful and pure conduct. Trust that nagging will get you nowhere.

As the proverb says: It's better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife" Do you want your husbands running to the roof? Keep nagging them, If you want them to pour into your marriage and invest in your children God's design is that you pray for them, encourage them, submit to them, be thankful for them and communicate that to them. I pray that your words to your husband will be a fountain of life.

Prefatory Remark 3

The bible was written for Christians. If you're not a believer in the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin...everything I'm saying to you this morning is secondary. In fact, what I'll be saying this morning for you is impossible.

Even if you try to implement these principals into your life they're futile in satisfying God's wrath against you. Only one thing satisfies God's wrath against you and that's the blood of His son. I pray today that you will repent of your sin, believe that Jesus Christ paid for those sins on the Cross and that by believing in these things you will have life in His name. Romans 5:1 says that those who have been justified by faith have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, you being a better father won't save you from the fires of hell, only belief in the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sin will.

Now back to our previously scheduled programming

Fatherhood is not punctiliar but is a continuous practice.

Ephesians 6:4

Still on this word Fathers

Spirit Filling

Earlier I established the overarching theme of the book of Ephesians and that was that sound orthodoxy leads to sound orthopraxy. Proper Doctrine leads to Proper Practice. That said, I want to drill into the context of this chapter to really draw out my first point and that is that God's design for fathers is that **they continually be filled by the Holy Spirit.**

Look back with me at Chapter 5 verse 15 of Ephesians because that's what really sets the context for Ephesians 6:4 and actually all of 5:18 - 6:9.

We read "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Spirit" And I think a better translation of that would be ...to be filled BY MEANS OF the spirit. The Spirit being the active agent.

Ephesians then goes on to explain how wise, spirit filled Christians are to act. 5:22-32 addresses husbands and wives, Chapter 6:1 through 6:4 addresses children and parents and 6:5 through 6:9 addresses slaves and masters or better yet bosses and employees.

We see that all of these relationship have to deal with submission and the authority structures that God has delegated in His designs for the home and the workplace.

Now I want to bring some clarity to what it means to be spirit filled because this doctrine has been completely drug through the mud by the charismatic church. Look back again at Ephesians 5:18.

"Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit" - The greek word "be filled" is a present passive imperative. In other words, continuous (present) command (imperative) and the active agent doing the filling is not you but the spirit (passive).

Another way to say this is to say keep on being filled by the spirit. It's not an option it's not some random thing that happens to you that makes you convulse and quack like a duck. The fact that it's a command shows that it's something that can be disobeyed and thus places the responsibility completely on you.

In other words, It's conditional. Conditional upon what? Conditional upon your obedience to the other commands of Scripture. Obedience to scripture is essential to Spirit filling.

When you as a dad are walking in accordance with Gods word, in submission to his precepts and trusting that His ways are better than your ways. When you're letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. When you're living a moment-by-moment mindset to yield complete control of your life to God's Word, You'e in obedience to this command. You are being filled by the Spirit. This takes discipline and discernment, it takes daily and deep devotion in the scriptures.

The joyous byproduct of being filled by the spirit is that you will produce the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Gentleness, Self-Control.

Fathers are those the words that you want your children to describe you as? My dad, oh my dad is a loving dad. My dad is a joyful dad, My dad is patient. My dad is a peacemaker, He's Kind and Gentle and he doesn't lose his temper...I would love for these words to be the words that my son uses to describe me.

Theres even more:

Look at Ephesians 5:19 - What else does this spirit filling produce. It causes us to sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord, It allows us to give thanks always and in v.21 it allows us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:22-6:4 has been commonly referred to as "household rules" but I think that's too pejorative in light of what we just read. I think a better term would be household worship.

The joy produced by the filling of the Spirit turns any sense of drudgery in fatherhood into an experience of worship. Worship isn't just singing it's so much more than that. We're told to present are members to Christ as our spiritual worship. What better use of our members than for the nurturing and raising of our children.

Fathers if you want to raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, if you want the raising of children to be a constant source of joy you need to continually be submitted to God's Word and thus continually filled by His Spirit.

PROVOKE

So we see that God's design for you Fathers is that you **be continually filled by the spirit**. This idea bleeds over into the next point and that is that God's design for you fathers is that you are **continually not provoking your children to anger**.

Back to our text:

Fathers, Do not provoke your children to anger. Full stop right there again.

Here the Apostle Paul, as he so often does first gives a negative injunction followed by a positive one. He does this many times throughout the New Testament. In Ephesians he just told you to walk not as unwise but as wise. Not to walk as children of darkness but as children of light. To Put off the old self and put on the new self.

The verb here which translates to "do not provoke" is a present active imperative. Paul is giving the injunction and calling out you fathers specifically that you're the ones who are to not continually provoke your children to anger.

Again the present tense tells us that this is a continued action. This isn't the one off "dangle the toy too high and make him jump for it", playful provocation that is quickly quelled by giving your child what they want, this is a repeated and ongoing pattern of behavior that crescendos into a deep dwelling of rage, anger and hostility into the heart of your child.

Now It almost goes without saying that if you're a father who's continually filled by the spirit and continually walking by the spirit that you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Included in this fleshly walk are works such as sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, **fits of anger**, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. Paul adds to this list specifically in Galatians 5:25 and includes the word **provocation**...

So dads the simplest way to not continually provoke your children to anger is to continually be filled by the spirit.

Now if you were able to walk by the spirit 100% of the time you'd have no need for this instruction. The fact of the matter is you're a fallen creature who is **being made** into the likeness of Christ, but you are not Christ. You're a sinner in constant need of a savior.

So if you walk around not heeding this instruction because you believe yourself to be the perfect dad I warn you by saying that there is only one perfect father and you are not Him. In fact 1 John 1:8 tells you that if you say you have no sin then you deceive yourself and the truth is not in you.

Note that this text does not say that you will never provoke them to anger. No doubt your wills are going to clash. As you lay down biblical truth in your home as you lay down discipline and instruction anger is going to come out of your child. But you can't throw out Godly discipline and instruction simply because it's making your child unhappy.

You as a father are to remain faithful to this task **regardless** of your child's reaction. Discipline and instruction aren't to be given based on your child's response but on your faithfulness to God's teaching.

Nowhere in this text is there a qualifier that says "only teach them and discipline them if they enjoy it" that's not nurture and care, that's a kindergarkey.

A vociferous response to God's teaching is not a reason to stop God's teaching nor is it a reason to dumb it down and start tickling their ears with what they want to hear. You fathers are to preach the word when it's in season and when it's out of season **to your children**.

Now in studying for this sermon I had a lot of time to research and think on some of the ways that we as fathers can be prone to continually provoke our children to anger. I've gleaned some of this from wise older Godly men in my life, some from scripture and some from being a son for the past 35 years.

This isn't an exhaustive list, I'm sure there are hundreds more to add, this is just what I was able to come up with.

First Way

The first way I see fathers continually provoking their children to anger is by placing unreasonable demands on them. I think this is prone to happen when you as a father forget that your children are just that...children.

You fail to take into account their immaturity and their lack of training, their cognitive ability and their lack of social awareness. Children have silly ideas and they say silly things...often times in the worst of times and the worst of places.

But they are allowed to do that...they're not intellectuals. If you're constantly badgering them because they do silly things and say silly things you will begin to crush out of them the experience which is uniquely childhood.

The second way I see fathers continually provoking their children to anger is by being physically abusive. This is the autocratic father who is either too stupid or too undiscerning to know the difference between discipline and violence. This is the grossest misuse of delegated authority on the highest of scales.

Thirdly you will continually provoke them to anger by ridiculing them in public and especially in front of their peers. The little jokes and one off sayings and character jabs that you take at them will build up a mountain of internal pain and torment that over time will crush them.

Ephesians 4:29 tells us that no corrupting talk should come out of your mouth but only that which is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. The opposite of gracious talk is belittling talk.

Fourthly, You will continually provoke your children to anger by showing favoritism and unhelpful comparison. Saying things like “why can’t you be more like your sister” “Why aren’t your grades as good as the neighbor kids” “you’re brother was a good surfer, why aren’t you?”

We’ve seen the perils of favoritism as we’ve gone through the book of genesis as a church. Issac favored Esau over Jacob, Rebecca favored Jacob over Esau. Whole nations and peoples divided and years of familial animosity as a result of the favoritism of a father. If one of your children asks you who your favorite is, you would do well to respond “you both are.”

God has shown no favoritism with you, you are positionally the same as any other believer at the foot of the cross. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female for we are all one in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1 tells us that God has blessed ALL of us who are in Christ with EVERY spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Fifthly, You will continually provoke your children to anger by failing to express approval at even small accomplishments. How easy it is to do this...in the business of your day you come home and your child is standing there with this drawing ready to be put on the fridge and your fighting the temptation to say “what is it?”

And in a rush you say yeah that’s great honey. And they know that your mind never even engaged the event. They go off to their room and say “he doesn’t even care” And obviously you do, but perception is reality.

Sixthly, you will continue to provoke your children to anger by being arbitrary in your discipline so that you children never know where they stand. One minute its a disciplinary offense, the next minute its nothing.

One day their action causes you to fly off the handle the next day it doesn’t. This paralyzes a child. They dont know weather to duck or run. Smile or frown. Your discipline is lead by your fleshly emotions and not by spiritual discernment.

Seventhly and lastly, you will continually provoke your children to anger by making them feel like an intrusion in your life. You need to make sacrifices for them. Sacrifice your own agenda,

your own time, your own schedule, your own plans, your own possessions. If you never sacrifice for them they will begin to think that they're a burden in your life.

They will be left broken and discouraged.

Please turn with me to Colossians 3:21 - this is the parallel text to our text for today.

What is the result of the continuous provocation of your children. Scripture is clear in this area. Colossians 3:21: Fathers, do not provoke your children...lest they become discouraged.

Fathers, let us examine our lives and ask God to reveal areas in which we are provoking our children to anger.

DISCIPLINE

So dads, you're to **be continually filled by the spirit.**

You're to **not continually provoke your children to anger.**

BUT you ARE to continually do something. And that something is to **nourish them through discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

Back to our text Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, **But** bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

This greek verb for "bring them up" is found only one other place in the new testament and that is in Chapter 5 vs 29 where Paul is drawing a comparison in which a husband should love his own wife as much as he loves his own body.

Lets read that together,

Ephesians 5:29 - "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church"

Its the word translated there as "nourishes". This word can also be translated as feeds...He feeds it and cherishes it. Therefore you fathers bear the responsibility of nurturing and cherishing your children fondly, to rear them tenderly and to sustain them spiritually. You're to foster an environment based upon love.

Again the place of the mother is not in question, she is vital in the followthrough of this instruction, but you dad are not allowed to sidestep the responsibility. You are the one who is to bring them up to maturity.

This is a call to no one else. Not your child's Sunday school teacher, not your child's pastor, not your child's teachers, not the public school not the private school, not the government. You and as you operate within the economy of your household are to bring your child up to maturity. This is not a sit-back and throw some money at it endeavor, this is a continual personal investment in the life of your child.

This word "bring them up" in our text is once again a present, active, imperative. It's a command for fathers that they are to continually bring up their children. There's no secrecy in this verb, no gnostic idea, you just need to raise them. You need to be there, you need to be present continually.

Paul then goes on to say how you fathers are to bring them up. and that how is..."In the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Discipline

Lets take a look at this first word, Discipline.

There is a lot that is baked into the word discipline but I think its best understood and summed up to mean "enforced conformity" And in the context of this passage it means **Enforced Conformity of the heart and life of your child to God and His truth**. How are you to enforce it? By punishments and rewards but always in the atmosphere of love.

Its the same word used in 2 Timothy 3:16 for training "All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness. Notice the "teaching" is already mentioned in this verse.

Training therefore involves the action of the one being trained and then the helpful consequences of doing poorly or well. Said even more simply its education that emphasizes activity and discipline. While this discipline is most definitely verbal it is also physical.

While almost all Christian fathers would approve of verbal discipline there are those who don't approve of physical discipline. Thankfully God's word doesn't need their approval.

I think at the core of the physical discipline issue is the fathers wrong understanding of their child's nature. Now While you kid may be adorable he or she is not removed from the curse of the fall.

Romans 3:23 says that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **All means All**.

Romans 3:10 says that "None is righteous no not one, no one understand, no one seeks for God".(No one means No one.) Including your child. Psalm 51 declares that all children are brought forth in iniquity and at the moment of conception they receive a **fallen nature**.

Because of this your children will naturally desire to do wicked and evil things that are contrary to God's ways. By removing discipline from their life you are allowing them to walk down a path to ruin. Regardless if they believe in Jesus or not, you as a father need to train them to know that God's ways are the best ways.

That you're not just pulling right and wrong out of the middle of nowhere but that you have delegated authority to punish evil and promote good and you've been given that authority by God himself.

Listen to Proverbs 22:15 - "folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the **rod of discipline** drives it far from him"

Listen to Proverbs 29:15 - "**The rod and reproof give wisdom** but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother"

Finally....Proverbs 13:24 - "Whoever spares the **rod hates his son** but he who **loves him is diligent to discipline** him"

And that hits at the heart of the matter. Discipline both verbal and physical is an act of love toward your child.

I'll say it plainly, spanking your kid is one of the most loving things you can do for them.

In the self-esteem driven, self-help kindergarky culture that exists today the truth that physical discipline is an act of love sound ludicrous. The worlds ssystem controlled by the prince of th he power of the air manifested in Freudian and pop psychology says that the way to love your children is not to discipline them, to not spake, to spare the Rod. My friends, my fellow fathers, that's a lie more of out of the pit of hell than anything on earth.

And of course it is, the devil doesn't want disciplined children, he doesn't want them corrected He doesn't want them knowing God's precepts. He wants them gender confused, self obsorebed, lazy, gluttonous, idolatrous. He wants them all doing what is right in their own eyes, acting and living like their is no God.

Exactly as the scripture shows us in judges. The word of God was rare in those days and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Welcome to a world filled with mans wisdom. Freud, Maslow, Pavlov all atheists, all without the fear of God, all telling you how to raise your kids. Fathers, dont buy the lie.

Again, fathers, both verbal and physical discipline are acts of love toward your children.

Turn with me to Hebrews 12:5

We read:

"My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him for the Lord disciplines **the one he loves and chastises** every son who he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you **as sons**. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline in which all have participated then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

(to summarize that in the words of Jay Vernon McGee, God doesn't spank the devils children)
verse 9. Besides this we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time as it seem best to them but he disciplines **us for our good** that we may **share his holiness**. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it **yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it. "

Here we see that God the father disciplines those that He loves and we see that the goal of this discipline is to bring us back to living a holy and upright lifestyle as we partake of His Righteousness and His Peace.

We see discipline used as an act of love in the local church when we have to go through the process of church discipline. Church discipline isn't an act of cruelty but an act of love. We as a body desire to restore this person to fellowship, both with God and with us.

We know the ruin and pain that will be caused by letting them continue to live in unrepentant sin. That's why God calls us to go to them, to warn them and to plead with them in the hopes that they would repent and ask God for forgiveness.

And this is the hope that you as fathers have. Lord willing when you go and discipline your child either physically or verbally he will at some point say he is sorry. What an opportunity to share the gospel with your child and the love of God with your child. In those moments dads you must forgive them. Forgive them instantly.

Forgive them 7x70 just as God in Christ has forgiven you. Does God hold our sin against you? Does he harbor it for days on end filling out punishments and room sentences that last for weeks months or years? No. The second we confess our sin God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Its instantaneous familial restoration. God in his omniscience then chooses to remember our sins no more. You want to show your child the gracious Love of our Heavenly Father, be quick to forgive. Be quick to forgive.

I have now just a few practical points on discipline that I believe will keep you from provoking your children to anger. When you discipline them:

1. Explain to them what they did wrong and why you are correcting them.
2. Have them explain it back to you
3. Dont discipline them in anger and as much as possible try to do it privately
4. Dont use physical discipline if they are too young to understand what you are doing. Thats not disciplines, thats abuse.
5. Use the scriptures. Allow them to continually see that these aren't arbitrary rules but Gods rules.
 1. Ask them, "what does God say about what you did?"
 2. Ask them, "what did you do wrong according to the scriptures?"
 3. Ask them "What happens when you disobey God?"
 4. Ask them, "What must I do as a father under God's authority because you acted this way?"
 5. Ask them, "What aught you to do in the future?"

So fathers, we see that one of the ways in which you are to bring your children up in the Lord is to continually give them discipline when necessary. This may come in the form of physical correction or verbal correction.

You establish rules and you hold them to the rules and you reward them when they obey and you punish them when they dont.

I heard it well said that if instruction is the food we give our children then discipline is the medicine.

With that in mind lets go to the next word that Paul has for us, the final word that we'll look at this morning...Instruction. Instruction.

INSTRUCTION

Lets go back to our text, Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do no provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. I hope by now you are close to memorizing this small verse and I think it would do you fathers well to make that a goal.

So instruction.

Again if discipline is the medicine then Instruction is the food. Instruction is best understood as verbal teaching. Verbal teaching of what? Verbal teaching of God's ways, Gods designs and Gods plans. It's teaching them what God wants them to know. In other words its teaching them the scriptures.

I want to point out again that what Paul's saying here is directed at fathers. Fathers, it's your job to do this. Not the church, not the state, not the school, not me, not matt, not rob, not paul...you. As head of your household you will be the one that God holds accountable for the input of Truth into the life of your child.

No doubt you should bring your child to church and let them sit under the preaching of the Word and learn from the preaching of the Word. Let them learn from the men and women in childrens church. Let them see your love for God by your love for God's people in your love for the local church.

However one hour a week isn't going to cut it. This needs to be continually done in your home.

If your child sees you dust off your bible every saturday night but dust off your baseball glove three times a week where will they think your priorities lie? They're smart, they will notice that dad speaks differently at church, that he smiles more at church, that he treats mommy differently at church, that he treats them differently at church...Kids can spot a hipocrite a mile away. They're extremely perceptive.

You're truly without excuse fathers to not have some semblance of family worship or family bible study in your home. If your child knows more about **disney** than they do about their own **depravity** you have a problem.

Family worship doesn't have to be some hour-long overly daunting task where you put a pulpit in your living room and preach to your family every day...though that would be awesome. (kari hears sermons) It can be a morning prayer and a scriptures reading, a 5 minute family devotion before dinner, a prayer and a scripture while tucking the kids into bed. Singing a christian hymn together in the den, watching a sermon together on youtube. **It doesn't need to be complicated but it does need to be continuous.**

The children's church curriculum that we go through here at Barabbas Road Is called Generations of Grace. Your children will go through the bible 1 time every three years simply by bringing them here on Sunday morning.

That said, one of the biggest reasons we as a church chose this curriculum is because it comes with a supplemental parents guide that expands on the lesson your kids learned on Sunday.

And not to bring out a lot of conviction here but how many of you fathers **even own one** let alone go through it with your kids. Are you actively engaging with what your children are learning on Sunday or do you simply use our Children's church as a **day care service**. - You can pick up the guide at the connect desk after this service if you need one or talk to pastor Rob.

But, Even now some of you are still thinking...I dont have time, I dont have 10 minutes a day, its too hard...Thats ok, thankfully scripture speaks to that as well. Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 6 verse 4

This is was our Gods command to the fathers of Israel on the banks of the Jordan just before they were about to enter the Promised Land. There's much to be learned from this text that is applicable for our text today.

We Read:

Deuteronomy 6:4 - Hear O Isreal: The Lord our God the Lord is one You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (stop right there for a moment and understand that **FIRST** and **FOREMOST** the fathers here need to know the words that God is going to say. They need it to be in their hearts) continuing, vs. 7.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.

I love this, God's telling you that the teaching of the bible should be done everywhere at all times and in all places. If you think you dont have the time for a family devotion, great, redeem all the other times that you have with your children and use those to teach them the scripture.

This is just how Jesus taught. He would teach in the synagogues but he would also teach as he went and often drawing upon his surroundings. For instance he taught that the kingdom of God

is like a tree, a mustard seed and a field. He interacted with different types of people and drew upon them for His teaching. You can do the same...

homeless

When you see the homeless man as your driving to your kids to sporting events use that time to teach them about the sluggard of proverbs. Use that as a time to teach about the poverty that falls upon the drunkard. Use that as a time to teach about how we as Christians are able to worship God by helping the poor. Use that as a time to teach about the perils of seeking after riches.

Use that as a time to teach about the testimony of Moses and David and the Apostle Paul, how they were murderers and adulterers and yet God saved them. Tell them that the blood of Christ can cover any sin no matter how great and he is able to save any man in any condition because it's God who elects and God who calls.

zoo

When you're at the zoo or the natural history museum take time to correct the lies that are being told about creation. Use that as a time to teach about the Creator God, about His wrath and the flood. Use that as a time to show them that the book of Genesis reveals the genesis of Anthropology, zoology, cosmology, geology and oceanology. It reveals the genesis of marriage, gender, government, angels, and the genesis of Sin.

Your children need to hear continually that they're sinners. They need to know the reality of Hell and that their actions are not only violations of your delegated authority but of Gods ultimate Authority.

They need to hear continually about the price that was paid for the remission of their sin. They need to hear about the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They need to know these truths and **you are the one dad** who is to make sure that they know them.

There are teaching moments all around you... The truth is you're either too lazy, too ambivalent or too distracted to see them. And im sorry for being so harsh but there is too much at stake.

Now do you see the reason for needing to be spirit filled. If you're not pouring into scripture its not going to be pouring out of you. If its not pouring out of you it won't be pouring into them. Fathers you need to know the Word of God in order to teach the Word of God. You are the resident theologian of your household.

You as the father are responsible for continually preaching the gospel to your child. Fallen sinners dont need to be disciplined they need to be evangelized. I plead with you to get your

priorities in line. Use the best most alert moments of your day to teach and preach the gospel to your children. Figure out a way to be switched on for the time you have with your family.

Dads, how much of your exertions are wasted trying to make your kids great basketball players, wrestlers, football players, dancers, gymnasts, fill in the blanks. How much of our exertions are wasted trying to make sure they live in the right house in the right neighborhood. How much of your exertions are spent trying to leave them a nest egg.

How much of your exertions are spent making sure they'll have the right clothes and the right gear and the right school and the right cars the right camps the right phones. How dare you let these secondary, tertiary items become your focus when God has given you the care of a Soul.

A soul doesn't need stuff it needs nourishment and that nourishment to come from a father who is continually present. Who nourishes his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

I'll end with this...

This is a quote by Charles Spurgeon who was considered to be the prince of preachers. Not only was he a preacher but he was also a father. A father that believed in the total depravity of his children and the need for them to hear and know the gospel realizing that it alone has the power of God unto salvation. You may have heard this before, it tends to make its rounds on facebook and in pulpits across America but I want you to hear it with a new context.

You, just like me hear the words damned sinner and are prone to think of a co-worker, a relative, maybe the person you brought to church today, but I want you to hear it with your children in mind.

Spurgeon says "if sinners be damned...church, If our children be damned...at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let none go unwarned and unprayed for"

Fathers, let us not grow weary in doing good. Let us be men of God who walk in the good works which Christ has set before us. Let us be men who evangelize, nurture and care for our children continually...

Fatherhood is not punctiliar but a continuous practice...lets pray.

