

Fatherhood: The Glory of Godly Leadership Ephesians 6:4

MPS God ordained fathers to lead their children to love Jesus first and live for His glory in all of life.

OBJ Every person can understand how a father can fulfill their God-ordained role by four encouragements.

INTRO One of my favorite memories of my father was how he taught me to avoid the law and getting arrested. Now, I know some of you know or have met my father, and it may shock you, but my father had some 'criminal tendencies'. I will offer one example of what I mean.

One day we raked the pine straw in our yard. Now, raking was more than an activity in our family; my father planned it so that my brother and I had yard work every week of the whole year. (Yard work was my father's number one man-making strategy for my brother and me.) Our yard was about an acre and filled with massive pine trees. By the time we raked the yard, we would fill the bed of my dad's truck two or three times and take it to the woods to dump. Well, on this one day we were on our third load and the back of the truck was filled with packed straw extending up over the sides of the truck. (I told you we had a lot of pine trees.) We drove a couple of miles down the road to a highline where we dumped the first two loads. We backed the truck up to the already large pile of straw and climbed in the bed, rake in hand, to dump the straw. As we were about to begin, a police car turned in and stopped. My father quickly pulled out his handkerchief as if to blow his nose, and whispered to me, "blow your nose or act busy." I thought, "but we are busy. We're here to dump this straw." The police officer walked over to our truck and said, "Afternoon, men. What are you up to?" My dad offered some deflative reply, "oh, you know, just taking care of business." The officer then asked, "You're not about to dump *that* straw *there* are you?", pointing first to the load of straw in our truck and then to the mountainous pile of straw on the ground. My dad replied, "Absolutely not, officer." The officer said, "Good, because dumping here on this highline is against the law. And if I saw you do it, I would have to issue a citation. Have a nice day." My dad replied, "Yes sir. You too." And that's how my father trained me to avoid the law by his criminally cunning ways; when the police show up, blow your nose or something.

TRANS Fathers, God has given us a high and holy responsibility.

God ordained fathers to lead their children to love Jesus first and live for His glory in all of life.

OBJ Today we consider the Biblical role of a father by five aspects of a father's godly leadership.

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

Ephesians 6:4

Father is no arbitrary label, but a title held for the male parent who, by God's designation, is ordained to lead the home. One verse sets forth the New Testament's central teaching for fatherhood. There are no lengthy passages prescribing all the intricacies of fatherhood for one simple reason. The whole Bible is the manual for fathers as leaders in their home, both as a handbook for 'how-to' and a curriculum of what to teach.

Aspect #1: One Priority – Lead your children to obey Jesus.

Paul's instruction to fathers comes as the culmination of his instruction to children, to obey their parents. Why does he do this? A father's principal responsibility is to teach and train his children to obey God. When Paul tells children what God expects from them, he finishes it by saying, "And, fathers, your responsibility is to make sure that your children understand and adhere to their responsibility." This is not simply one of a number of responsibilities, but the first of all. Yes, fathers have other responsibilities, but none that hold a higher glory than the godliness of their children. The first priority of the father is to lead their children to obey God.

TRANS Paul goes on to instruct how we are to do this by a negative warning and a positive exhortation.

Aspect #2: Recognize the stewardship of your authority to lead your children.

"Do not provoke your children to anger". Paul warns a father against provoking his child to anger. A father's responsibility is one that naturally tends toward negative responses of anger or frustration, because you are teaching your children to identify and fight their sin in learning to obey God. Paul does not mean your children will not get angry or that you will never

make them angry. Fathers should not be so heavy and hard on their kids that they lose all hope of ever achieving or excelling, of ever doing enough, or of ever measuring up, so that they become completely discouraged. We must learn to steward our authority in such a way that builds our children up, even when and in how we discipline them. Fathers must be careful not to suffocate the hopes and courage of their children by the sustained heaviness of our authority upon them. Yes, there will be plenty that we must do that makes our children angry. But our actions must not be such that it strips them of any hope of measuring up to our expectations. [A Father must make sure his children always know of his love and joy in them.](#)

ILLUS Blacksmith's counsel on parenting. I watched a knifemaker work one day as he practiced his craft beginning with the raw metal. He would plunge the piece of flat steel in the fire until it became red-hot, then take it out, place it on the flat surface of the anvil and hit it repeatedly with the hammer to prepare and shape the metal. Describing the process and including some life commentary, at one point he looked up and said, "You know, raising kids is a lot like knife-making, a repeated series of the correct application of right hits to heated material until you get what you want." If you heat metal too much or hit it too often or in the wrong way, it actually removes the value and strength of the metal, rendering it useless. [Fathers, we must be vigilant to guard against making our children feel hopeless in measuring up as we shape their lives for God's glory.](#)

TRANS Paul follows his negative warning with a positive exhortation that outlines a father's first responsibility.

Aspect #3: First Responsibility – Raise your children to love Jesus.

"bring them up" "Bring up" means to nourish, or to rear; the sense is of looking after and caring for a child until adulthood. The father's responsibility has a definite objective, to raise children to become God-honoring, productive adults. The role of a father is not simply to "endure until", with a passivity toward, nor to 'negligently bankroll', with a lack of discernment in. [Paul exhorts fathers to intentionally lead their children to a designated point with a specific aim.](#)

ILLUS Un-parenting movement is defined as "a new approach to parenting for today's parents who are looking for an alternative to the harsh authoritarianism of the past or the permissive, anything-goes attitude so prevalent today."¹ The world loves to deride masculinity as bullish or abusive, but a vast number of our social ills today are a result of a lack of masculinity and absent fathers. Paul exhorts us that Christians reject any measure of "Un-" in our responsibility as parents.

Father, your children will learn to love what they learn from you while with you. Your children will learn what to love and how to love things in life in a healthy way not because you give them all the right principles, but because they learn it by watching you. "Bring them up" to love Jesus by "bringing them along" in your own journey. Their passion to love Jesus will be far more caught than taught. You must be walking in love for Jesus to bring your children up to love Him. If you try to *make them do* because you think Christianity teaches good morals, more than teaching them to love, they'll end up resenting Jesus. [Christian fathers have a first responsibility, an agenda of godliness and faithfulness when our children arrive at adulthood because we "bring them up" to love Jesus.](#)

TRANS The Christian's parental agenda demands an intentional strategy.

Aspect #4: Teach and Train your children HOW to love and obey Jesus.

"In the discipline and instruction of the Lord" This is the Christian parenting strategy. Discipline is not merely a form of punishment, or *whoopin* as it was known back in the day, and mostly unknown today. The wisdom of the Bible teaches that discipline is critical because it is a first-order expression of godly love.

My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof,

¹²*for the LORD reproveth him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.* **Proverbs 3:11-12**

According to Proverbs, some of the MOST UN-LOVING FATHERS are some of the most WELL-LIKED by their children, at least in the moment. But the father who trusts in God's Word, for His Will and way as best for his children, leads his children by discipline. Discipline is not merely punishment applied for wrongdoing, but refers to the whole training and education of a child; the cultivation of mind and morals, the shaping of core beliefs and convictions. There is no moment in life when a father is not shaping his children in godliness, both in *what* you do, and in *how* and *why* you do all that you do.

¹ <https://www.unparenting.com/>. Last Accessed June 8, 2021.

Discipline should always be joined with teaching, or verbal instruction. *Discipline* is a wholistic strategy that involves the whole being of the child, led by instruction AND training, or practice. Instruction begins where Christian transformation renews, in the mind. Nothing is more formative than a child's mind. From the very beginning of a baby's life, including the womb, language and speech brings definition to understanding. The most important words a father can speak to their child are the words of God in the Bible. [Fathers, when you read and explain God's Word to your children, you frame their thinking and shape their understanding of everything by the wonder and glory of God's truth.](#)

Deuteronomy 6 teaches this when it says that we are to teach our children diligently, to brand their hearts with love for God by obedience to His Word. Christian fathers do this when we sit at home, walk along the way, before bed and first thing in the morning. You must talk about loving and obeying Jesus on the sports field, court or arena as much as in the classroom. Discipline is the wholistic process that shapes a life around that which you want it to represent in its finished form. [The Christian father shapes his children to center all of life on Jesus by talking about how we know, love and obey Him at all times in all of life.](#)

Fathers – DO NOT neglect the potency of your words in your voice echoing in your child's mind; it is important in speaking and damaging to withhold them. I have counseled countless numbers of people who when we arrived at the root of their problem it stemmed back to something they heard, and still hear, their fathers say to or about them. This is true of all kinds of people of all ages. I've listened to people deeply enslaved to sexual sin tell of the abuse and neglect of their father; as well as highly successful people who in listing all their successes then stated, "Everything I did was simply to try and prove my father wrong because all I could hear in my head was his voice telling me I would only ever be a failure." I still hear my father's voice at my baseball games, "Atta boy, Lane, let's get a hit."

[Fathers, your children will hear your voice the rest of their life, and their life will be shaped by it. Be intentional with your words like "I love you." And "I am so proud of you." And be strategic with your words, to make sure your instruction is as Paul states, "of the Lord", like reading a scripture passage to reach a point of discussion or lesson of life. IF you lead your children by reading God's Word to them, they will not only love you for it, but learn to love and follow God because of it.](#)

Aspect #5: Strive to produce Christlikeness in your children.

The Christian parenting strategy has a very specific aim, to lead your children to become more like Jesus. Now it is true that only Jesus transforms a person. But the work of a father aligns outwardly what God works inwardly. This "outward alignment" joins a father with God in His divine, inward work. Talk about what God is doing in your heart and life with your children so they will learn to listen to God in their heart and mind. [The Lord is at work IN a child's life when a father is working ON a child's life.](#)

[God ordained fathers to lead their children to love Jesus first and live for His glory in all of life.](#)