

## “Ye Fathers”

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As a father, much of my time is spent considering parenting and meditating on being the best ‘dad’ I can be. As I sit at my desk and glance over my shelf I can see just how many books I have on the topic: Common Sense Parenting, The Christian’s Home, The Battle for the Family, Bringing up Boys (if God so blesses me), God’s Design for the Home, among others. However, as I look away from those books, I cannot help but see the Book of books sitting next to me.

Nothing is more instructional or profound than the Bible when it comes to any topic, including parenting! Parents have the most important role to play in the care and concern of their children. In fact, if godly parents will treat their children as they ought, children will be much more likely to subject themselves to their parents in obedience and will certainly honor them all the way through life of this earth (Eph. 6:1-3) and are much more likely to live faithfully to death. A verse that reverberates in the mind of Christian dads is Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.”

Although mothers and their roles in the family dynamic are specifically addressed in other passages (1 Tim. 5:10-14; Tit. 2:4), fathers are particularly spoken to in this text. A quick study of the Greek text shows that the word translated “fathers” is not a generic term for parents but a precise term for fathers. However, wives, as the God ordained helpers to the fathers in this text also must contribute to the monumental task of child rearing. The command to fathers is two-fold, first they are not to provoke children to wrath and second they are to bring those children up in the nurturing and admonition of God.

How do fathers not provoke their children to wrath? They must be willing to be an example to their children in everything from worship service to daily interactions. If children see their parents behaving poorly, they will follow suit. Fathers with short tempers and angry dispositions are pitiable examples to the children they are raising. Also, fathers need to treat their children with respect. They should not speak negatively of their children to others or put them down without careful consideration at any time. Fathers have the ultimate example in God Almighty. A study of the Old Testament should produce an amazing respect for God’s grace, mercy, kindness, love, provisions, and especially patience.

Simply bringing up a child in the Lord will not provoke them to wrath. Nurturing a child is required and includes protection, feeding, providing for, training, educating, to develop, and to cultivate a child. Certainly physical needs of children must be met, but this text stresses the need for spiritual cultivation of a child. Timothy serves as a good example (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15).

Children must also be admonished in the Lord. The American Heritage dictionary defines admonish with the following:

To reprove gently but earnestly.

To counsel (another) against something to be avoided; caution.

To remind of something forgotten or disregarded, as an obligation or a responsibility.

Admonishing is the idea of correction with the end purpose to make better or to make stronger. Certainly this is how Christians should feel about correcting their children. Some today would claim that it is inhumane to spank children, but the Bible disagrees.

Proverbs 13:24, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

Proverbs 22:15, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”

Proverbs 23:13-14, “Withhold not correction from the child; For if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, And shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.”

There is indeed a God given command to discipline children. This discipline should always be in love as God would discipline us (Heb. 12:6-13).

We have a loving example in the Father in heaven. Throughout the Bible God displays every attribute of a wonderful earthly father: love, mercy, grace, provision, patience, justice, and the like. We are servants of God. In all truth we are not even qualified enough to be servants, but he has gone beyond allowing us to be his servants. Through Jesus Christ we all have the ability to be sons of God.

For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him (Rom. 8:15-17).

Earthly fathers can see the ultimate example, the perfect Father by looking more closely at God!