

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE OF PARENTS

Ephesians 6.4: The daily battle of parents to raise their kids right

Theme: To properly raise children, parents must instruct them in the way of righteousness—they must instruct them in how God's righteousness “works.”

This morning we are going to talk about the spiritual warfare that parents have to face as they raise their children.

(Eph 6.12) First, understand that the “warfare” of parents is *not* against flesh and blood...

- Although it may seem that way as we fight and struggle to raise our children the way God said we should.
- Our battles go beyond the physical aspect of raising our children; we struggle and fight to bring up *godly* young men and women (to teach them God's ways—the ways of righteousness).
- And that is a spiritual battle. And that is what I'd like to talk about this morning.

Qualifier: I am *not* the perfect father and my wife is *not* the perfect mother... *nor are you*. So, let's simply try to focus on what the Bible says and not point fingers at each other.

I. Fathers: For whom is this passage?

- Ephesians 6.4 is directed toward “fathers,” but we need to understand that the message is for all of us.

A. This verse speaks to both parents—father and mother.

1. Both parents are responsible before the Lord to raise their children right (both need to be involved).
2. (Prov 1.8a) The father, as the head of the household, is responsible for instructing his children.
3. (Prov 1.8b) The mother, who usually spends more time with the children, is also to be involved in governing their lives.
4. God's will is that both parents be involved in the lives and training of their children.

B. This verse speaks to all of us in general... (so don't check out just because you don't have kids)

1. ...because in biblical child training principles (which we are going to look at right now), we all can learn how God deals with us (both the lost and the saved).
2. Parents are to train their children in how to live right, and in that we can see how God does much the same thing in our lives (lost or saved) to teach us how to live right.

II. Fathers: Provoke not!

A. God starts our His instruction to parents with a negative commandment.

1. God says, “Do *not* do this,” before He says, “Rather, *do* this.” So, let's pay attention to what God points out as a problem we all face (continually) with raising kids...
2. Our natural tendency is to try to put up with bad behavior in our children because we don't want yet *another* confrontation with them.
 - It's the idea that if we ignore the problem, it'll go away. But... it never does. It gets worse.
3. And when we don't deal with the problem, we usually lose control of our emotions (explode!).
 - a) Again, remember: This is a *spiritual* battle we face as parents.
 - It is a battle that takes place inside of us. It starts in the mind (when we become aware of bad behavior that needs attention) and then moves into the area of the will (when we decide to either take action or not).
 - b) We lose these spiritual battles when we refuse to *fight* them—when we ignore them until we can't control our emotions... and then we lash out!

B. Exploding in irritation, anger, and wrath will never result in proper “child training.”

1. We all do it! It happens to everyone of us! So, don't beat yourself up for having done it. But...
2. Understand that if it happens often enough, it will provoke your child to the same (to wrath; your child will respond to your anger and frustration with anger and frustration of his own).
3. (Col 3.21) Our lack of control in this spiritual battle will also result in discouraging our children.

C. (Eph 6.4) “But...”: With the negative commandment comes the positive.

1. God shows us a better way to deal with bad behavior in our children.
2. And that is the second (and positive) command we see in Ephesians 6.4: Nurture & Admonition.

III. Father: Bring up your children right!

A. To raise a child correctly (biblically) requires two things: Nurture & Admonition.

1. *Nurturing* (as we will see in just a minute) refers to “instructional chastisement” and *admonition* refers to “instructional advice/counsel.”
2. ***Both*** nurturing and admonition are required to raise a child properly/biblically.
 - a) Nurturing (chastisement/discipline) without admonition will result in an abused child.
 - b) Admonition without nurturing will result in a self-centered, spoiled brat.
3. So, we need to take a look at both of these elements of proper, biblical child rearing so we can understand what the Bible says about each one...

B. To raise a child correctly (biblically) requires *nurturing*.

1. Preface: We need to biblically define the term *nurture*.
 - a) Here we see a problem that we've noted numerous times before: Reading into Scripture our own definition of a word.
 - b) When we hear “*nurture*,” we think of feeding, supporting, protecting, and encouraging a child.
 - c) And what we often fail to do is compare Scripture with Scripture to find out how the Bible defines the term.
2. A biblical definition of *nurture*.
 - a) Ephesians 6.4 is the only mention of the English word *nurture* in the Bible.
 - (1) So, we need to see how the Greek word for *nurture* is translated in other verses so we can get some synonyms.
 - (2) There are two other passages in the Bible where we see this same Greek word...
 - b) (2Tim 3.16) The same Greek word for *nurture* is translated *instruction*.
 - To nurture a child is to *instruct* him in *righteousness* (in doing right).
 - c) (Heb 12.5-11) The same Greek word for *nurture* is translated *chastening/chastisement*.
 - To nurture a child is to chastise him—discipline him—with corporal punishment.
 - d) Putting these references together, we can see a simple, biblical definition of *nurture*:
 - To nurture a child is to *instruct* him in the way of righteousness by *chastening* him (by “spanking” him).

3. Don't miss the bigger picture here!

- a) This “nurturing process” teaches the child the way of righteousness—it teaches him how God's righteousness “works.”
- b) (2Tim 3.16-17) The process is simple:
 - (1) Doctrine: We tell the child what is right (e.g., “Don't touch that”).
 - (2) Reproof: We bring to the child's attention that he has done wrong (e.g., “I told you not to touch that, and you did”).
 - (3) Correction: We motivate the child to change his wrong behavior to right behavior.
 - The biblical method of motivation: (Heb 12.5-11) Pain on his bottom.
 - (4) Instruction in Righteousness: In this way (following this process), we are instructing the child in the way of righteousness—in how God's righteousness works.
- c) God's way of righteousness—how God's righteousness works.
 - (1) Doctrine: God established what is right (expressed in his Law). Obviously, like children, man chooses to disobey that Law, and God continues in the “nurturing” process...
 - (2) Reproof: God brings to the sinners attention his rebellion and disobedience (through conscience or even the preaching of the cross).
 - (3) Correction: Pain and discomfort follow...
 - (a) For the sinner who is still breathing, this can take many forms (convicted heart, health problems, unemployment, etc.).
 - (b) Ultimately, God's punishment of the sinner will be the pain of hell and the lake of fire.
 - (4) Instruction in Righteousness: God's ultimate goal is for the sinner to turn from his “bad behavior” and submit to the will of God.
- d) **The bigger picture**: The proper “nurturing” of a child will instruct him in God's ways of righteousness—in the way God will deal with that child later when he is an adult.
 - (1) Proper “nurturing” of a child will prepare him to respond correctly to the Gospel!
 - (2) Failure to biblically “nurture” a child will teach that child that God is a push-over, and there are no serious consequences to rebellion and disobedience.

4. God's prescribed instrument to biblically nurture a child is called a “rod.”

- a) In the Bible, this is literally a thin piece of wood longer than it is wide (like a switch, a rod).
 - (1) The Bible calls this nurturing instrument the “rod of correction,” which indicates that there should be a special and specific rod set aside (“sanctified”) for use only in the nurturing process.
 - (2) For example:
 - (a) A wooden spoon could be used for nurturing, but it can also be used for cooking. That muddies the waters when the child sees it.
 - (b) However, if a specific and special rod is set aside for one specific use (nurturing), then that rod acquires a certain authority: It becomes “the rod of correction.”
- b) The rod of correction is God's chosen instrument to instruct children in the way His righteousness works:
 - (1) (Prov 13.24) The rod is applied in love (not in anger) in order to instruct the child in right behavior.
 - (a) Side note: Here is the key to avoid losing your temper with your children.

- (b) “Betimes” means “soon”: Use the rod *immediately* and *consistently* (i.e., betimes)...
 - i) At the first indication of rebellion and disobedience, apply the rod (don't wait until you're angry and frustrated; rather, use the rod “betimes” because that is the way to use it *in love* to instruct the child, teach him, and nurture him).
 - ii) And then be consistent: Apply that rod of correction at *every* indication of rebellion or disobedience (by doing this, you will teach your child that God will not let even the smallest of sins go unpunished—that is how His righteousness works).
- (2) (Prov 22.15) The rod is applied to instruct a child in God's ways. That is why the Bible says the rod will drive foolishness (rebellion and disobedience) far from him.
- (3) (Prov 23.13-14) Proper, biblical nurturing of a child will not kill him (regardless of what modern psychology says).
 - (a) God gave that child a plumb little rump, padded nicely for the application of nurturing.
 - (b) Proper, biblical nurturing will teach your child how to respond to the Gospel later on in life (when God bears down on him with conviction and correction about his sins).
 - (c) And this brings us to the goal in the biblical nurturing of our children...

5. The goal of nurturing a child:

- a) We chastise a rebellious, disobedient child with the rod of correction in order to instruct him in righteousness—in how God's righteousness works. And we do that with a goal in mind...
- b) **Goal: *Humble, willing repentance and a desire for forgiveness and a restored relationship.***
 - (1) (Prov 19.18) You child will cry, weep, and wail... but until he is broken over his rebellion and disobedience (until he is genuinely sorry), his need for “nurturing” is not over.
 - Apply the rod to his little buttocks until his little heart is broken over his wickedness.
 - (2) Remember, nurturing is instructing a child in God's way of righteousness by chastising him. And what is God's goal in chastising us?
 - (a) When we chastise our children, we are teaching them how God will deal with them according to His righteousness.
 - (b) And part of that “way” of God's righteous dealings with sinners is God's goal in the whole process. What does He want? Ultimately.... *reconciliation!*
 - i) For the lost: That requires humble, willing repentance (brokenness over sin) and a desire for forgiveness and a restored relationship with God in Jesus Christ.
 - ii) For the saved: God desires for His chastening in our lives is to produce a humble, willing repentance and a desire for a restored relationship with Him.
 - (3) We as parents should model the Gospel every time our children rebel and disobey!
 - (a) Their rebellion and disobedience should immediately and consistently bring pain and discomfort (because that is how God will deal with the sinner, lost or saved).
 - (b) But, that pain and discomfort is applied *in love* because it is meant, ultimately, to restore the relationship that the rebellion destroyed in the first place.
 - (c) And so the child needs to learn that the way to stop the pain and discomfort is through *repentance and faith*—turning *from* his sin in brokenness and confession, and turning *to* his parent in a genuine desire for forgiveness and restoration.
 - (d) That is the Gospel. That is how God's righteousness works. That is biblical child training.

6. But, there is one more aspect to add to a child's up-bringing... Ephesians 6.4...

C. To raise a child correctly (biblically) requires *admonishing*.

1. Admonition is counsel, advise, and warning. It is *teaching* your child, because to bring him up in the ways of the Lord requires more than application of the rod...
2. Parents need to talk to and with their children in order to teach them of God and His ways.
 - a) Help them to learn of God and to understand God's ways. Help them to grow up, to grow to maturity, to be prudent and wise... *to be godly*.
 - b) And this isn't about some "family altar." This is about maintaining proper and healthy communication with your kids so that you can continually speak to them about God and admonish them (teach, instruct, counsel, warn).
3. But, understand this: Admonition will only be accepted after nurturing.
 - a) As your baby grows (begins to crawl; the two- or three-year-old), you will find most of your time is given to "nurturing" him (although right after the rod breaks the rebellion, you'll have a wonderful opportunity for a quick admonition about how God deals with sinners).
 - b) Later, as the toddler grows to being a child, you should find that you spend more time admonishing him than nurturing him.
 - (1) And that should reflect our lives in the Gospel.
 - (2) As we grow in Christ, we should experience fewer and fewer "nurturing moments" (where we rebel and pitch a fit, and God applies correction). As we grow in Christ, we should respond more willingly and gladly to God's Word without the "motivation" God's chastening.

Conclusion: (Eph 6.4) The Spiritual Warfare of Parents

The home and the family are a battle ground (who didn't know that?!).

- (Eph 6.12) But, we need to remember that our battles in the family are *spiritual* in nature, even though they manifest themselves in the physical world.
- We need to *nurture* and *admonish* our children (not provoke them) so that we can teach them God's way of righteousness—how God's righteousness works.
 - ✓ We *nurture* them so that they learn that rebellion and disobedience bring pain and discomfort.
 - ✓ We *admonish* them so that they learn of God—what He is like and how we are to relate to Him.

In this way, we can train up our children to respond correctly to the Gospel when God begins *His* nurturing and admonition into their lives.

- God's goal is their humble and willing repentance, and their desire for forgiveness and a restored relationship with Him.
- That, then, is our goal in raising our children:
 - ✓ We wage a spiritual battle with our children as we endeavor to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 - ✓ We are instructing them in righteousness so that they are prepared to respond correctly to the Gospel for salvation... and then how to respond correctly to the Word for sanctification.