

FlagNaz

Belong... Believe... Become...

Parenting 911: Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness

Part 3 ~ Ephesians 6:4

“If you bungle raising your children, I don't think whatever else you do matters very much.” – Jackie Kennedy

I don't know about the rest of the parents out there, but when I put in my order for a child, I had a very specific model in mind. Now, I knew the 'politically correct' approach was to request whatever model was available and for the baby to be healthy, but deep down inside I requested a very specific model. Only later would I realize my children didn't fit the mold of the model I had requested (I suspect no parent has ever received the perfect child). Worse yet, they were unique, unlike each other, mandating a huge learning curve as I parented the children God sent me. This morning we want to explore how to engage children who aren't quite what we ordered.

1) Fathers (mothers) do not provoke...

This may be one of the most challenging instructions in the NT, especially if it is misunderstood or taken out of context. The challenge requires a tremendous amount of work if it is to be taken seriously. Consider the following:

- Understand the uniqueness of every child: Raising children would be exceedingly simple if they all popped out of the womb in exactly the same condition. Unfortunately, every child, yes every child is a unique creation, yes a one-of-a-kind creation, requiring intimate knowledge in order to avoid the admonition to not provoke. The Christian Church affirms the doctrine of “*Total Depravity*” and it is essential to comprehend if you are not going to ‘provoke your children to anger’:

- Every dimension of what it means to be human has been tainted by sin: The Christian Church has longed believed in the ‘fallenness’ of humanity in general, and within each individual, specifically. The concept of ‘total’ reflects every aspect, rather than a total brokenness. Thus, the challenge is to recognize the fallenness and develop a proactive approach toward bringing about wholeness and redemption. And perhaps most importantly, just because ‘nature’ spits you out in a particular condition doesn't mean that ‘condition’ ought to be embraced simply because you were “born that way”.

- Every human being is uniquely tainted: Raising children would be such much easier if children came out of a production factory guaranteeing a dependable product. Unfortunately, such is not the case. No child comes with any kind of guarantee at all; except none of them enters the world as God intended (reflecting the perfection of Adam/Eve). To the contrary, every child enters the world wounded by sin, and each of them, wounded in a unique manner.
- Every approach to healing and restoration must be custom built: This is the critical piece to comprehend. Every child requires a custom built approach to bring redemption and healing into their life. The effort to build a parenting platform offering healing and direction for life is dependent upon each 'tainted' parent understanding the uniqueness of each tainted child.
- Provoke to anger (): The phrase 'provoke to anger' is actually a single word. The term is typically used to describe God's response to our consistent state of rebellion. Thus the term has several key aspects.
 - Sustained bitterness (not a momentary flare of emotion): This verse does not suggest never make children angry; rather avoid the creation of long term bitterness rising up out of inappropriate actions on the part of mom and dad.
 - Recognize your own 'taintedness': This may be the most difficult dimension of parenting. Learning to recognize your own brokenness will aid you immensely in not parenting out of your own brokenness; rather, out of the redeemed you. Additionally, recognizing your own generational brokenness will prove invaluable in understanding the quirkiness of your own children.

II) Bring your children up...

The consequent instruction to 'discipline' and 'instruct' sits upon the foundation of understanding the 'uniqueness' of your child's 'taintedness'. Wise parents understand the critical role of genuinely knowing their children. All discipline and instruction ought to be built upon a complete understanding of who your child really is.

- Discipline (παιδεία/paideia): Discipline denotes the upbringing and handling of the child on the way toward maturity. Every child needs direction, teaching, instruction and a certain measure of compulsion in the form of discipline or even chastisement. Discipline is both the way of education and cultivation which has to be traversed and *discipline must always be custom built for each child*. Let me suggest it ought to rest on a foundation of 3 simple dimensions:

- Love: The biblical concept of 'love' is essential. It simply reflects the idea of sacrifice for the sake of one that is broken (rather than one who is worthy of dying for).

- **Acceptance:** Children who know they are loved and accepted in spite of their brokenness, thrive. Understand 'acceptance' is a critical foundation for discipline and instruction.
- **Forgiveness:** Failure happens. It is part of the process of growing up. Nothing provides the freedom to grow-up more powerfully than forgiveness.
- **Instruction (youθεσια/nouthesia):** For most of us the concept of 'instruct' is a neutral term. Not so here. The term for instruction describes an effect on the will and disposition, and it presupposes an opposition which has to be overcome (total depravity). It seeks to correct the mind, to put right what is wrong, to improve the spiritual attitude. The basic idea is that of the well-meaning earnestness with which one seeks to influence the mind and disposition by appropriate instruction, exhortation, warning and correction.

Ensure a safe (not painless) and engaging environment: An important part of helping your child grow is to encourage them to play and explore their world and the first step is to make sure that their environment is safe and interesting. Catch them in their failure and return them to the task.

Creative a positive learning environment: Children need a supportive, nurturing environment in order to develop their skills. Make sure their skills are moving forward.

Use assertive discipline: Discipline plays an important role in a child's emotional and social development. It can help children learn to accept rules, develop self-control, consider others when expressing their feelings, and take responsibility for their actions. Assertive discipline involves being consistent, acting quickly when children misbehave, and teaching them to behave in an acceptable manner. How parents deliver discipline, and it must be unique, plays a key role in how successful it can be. *Assertive discipline works best when parents support each other and use the same approach.*

Have realistic expectations: Children are all individuals with different personalities and develop at different rates. It's important that you as the parent don't expect more, or less, of your child than he or she is physically or intellectually able to do.

Take care of yourself as husband, wife and parent: Raising children is a full time job and it's easy to get into a pattern of putting off your own personal needs. But parenting can actually be easier when you take the time to seek out peer support, companionship, intimacy, recreation and even time alone! If your own needs as an adult are being met, it's much easier to be patient, consistent and available to your child.

- **Of the Lord:** Those who are radically committed to being counter-cultural have already discovered the necessity of teaching a methodology radically different than the cultural norm. Accept that you are going to be different.

Day 7: The Hard Way

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Matthew 7:13-14

“God’s grace turns out men and women with a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, not milksops. It takes a tremendous amount of discipline to live the noble life of a disciple of Jesus in actual things. It is always necessary to make an effort to be noble.”

—Oswald Chambers

A ‘trek’ of any kind, by its very nature, requires effort. And those trekking after the Serving King soon discover His trek is not meant for the timid; to the contrary, His way is hard, extremely hard, and only sustainable by those seeking ‘life’ to the fullest. Many will set out after Him lured by lofty ideals of peace and brotherhood, easily distorted into communities of self-absorption where ‘grace’ covers a multitude of sin, that slothful lifestyle where ‘I’ rules in a life of leisure. But the consequent ‘milksops’, ultimately wanting nothing more than a ‘grace butler’ to clean up after a lifetime of undisciplined living, soon discover ‘milksops’, or ‘momma’s boys’ as they are more commonly called, have no access to the ‘narrow gate’, discovering instead they have simply become too bloated on ‘cheap grace’ to enter the narrow gate, the life of discipline required by those following the Serving King.

But ‘milksop grace’, redemptive as it may ultimately be, ought never be confused with ‘God’s Grace’ and the radical empowering flowing in the life of those who have refused the services of the ‘grace butler’, that imaginary friend who beckons at your every call, wiping away every ‘me mess’ the unbridled ‘I’ has created, instead, mandating the life of ‘Grace’ routinely producing those “...with a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ.”

Understand, the noble life is not hard to find. It is the natural by-product of those who trek closely on the heels of Jesus. But don’t expect the crowd, singing praises to the lofty ideals of Jesus, to join you as you glide through the narrow gate on the heels of Jesus. Sadly, the ‘grace butler’ has rendered far too many of them unable even to squeeze through the narrow gate. They will simply wait for His return, content to praise ‘grace’ until the Serving King returns for them. But yours is a different calling. It is the ‘hard way’ of disciplined nobility. Trek on, even when the others are left at the gate....

If you are visiting with us today and would like a copy of Dr. Minter’s, ***Mornings With Oswald***, please stop by our visitor center for a complimentary signed copy. Volume II, ***More Mornings With Oswald***, can be found at your local Christian bookstore or any online retailer. Thank you for being a part of our worship experience this morning.