

## “The Difficulty of Parenting” - Ephesians 6:4 – July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018

- The title of today’s teaching is “The Difficulty of Parenting.”
- Before we dive into this big verse before us today, I think its incumbent upon me to say something very important at the onset.
- Namely, that of the utter impossibility of parenting our children in and of ourselves by way of our own strength, skills and ability.

- Please know that I’m in no way posturing myself as an expert when it comes to being a good and godly father to my children.
- For both my wife and I, any success in parenting has only come because God has extended both His grace and mercy to us.
- So much so that He has not paid us as our parenting failures deserved and instead has been faithful when we were faithless.

- I’m hoping you’ll bear with me as I do my best to provide an explanation and the application of what Paul is saying in verse four.
- One of the questions concerning this verse is why Paul says that Fathers are not to exasperate their children and not mothers.
- The answer to this is twofold, first because culturally the fathers are the authority, and naturally, the mother is more nurturing.

- Another question we would do well to answer has to do with the translations of this verse, particularly as it relates to provoking.
- Most translations render it provoking, but it carries with it the idea of treating our children in such a way as to make them angry.
- I prefer the word exasperate because it means we have the propensity to irritate, frustrate, infuriate and as such embitter them.

Colossians 3:21 - Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

- The reason I wanted to go into this is because we as parents can place unrealistic and impossible expectations on our children.
- While the intentions of a parent may be good, the reality is that they are trying to relive their lives vicariously through the child.
- The problem with doing this is we set our children up for failure by virtue of how often times that’s not the way God wired them.

I like how one commentator explained it, “Wise is the father who understands that his children are not to be molded, but to be unfolded. In other words, you have the privilege, Dad, of observing your child carefully, seeing how God made him—and then unfolding what God has built into him from the moment of conception, all for His glory.”

Proverbs 22:6 - Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

- Perhaps it goes without saying, but this Proverb has been the source of much debate and it’s also been largely misunderstood.
- This on two fronts, the first of which has to do with the meaning of the way he should go, and second, not departing when old.
- I would suggest the meaning is to train a child according to their particular bent, and they will continue in it when they’re older.

This is why the Amplified Bible parenthetically renders Proverbs 22:6, Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.

- Let me hasten to say that this does not mean we just let them do whatever their particular bent is, rather, we’re to train them.
- The word for training Paul uses is the same word in Hebrews 12:5-11, which is translated chastening in corrective discipline.
- In other words, we customize our training according to the child’s bent, correcting and directing them in the ways of the Lord.

- Before we go any further, there’s something here that I think I would be grossly remiss were I not to take the time to point out.
- It’s this word, “instead,” which to me not only provides the explanation, but with it the application to our lives in our parenting.
- This because instead of bringing them up in the training and instruction of the Lord, we pressure and push them to please us.

- Sadly, many a parent has been too harsh in demanding perfection from their children, which leaves them inadequate and bitter.
- When this happens, it’s only a matter of time before that child will see their acceptance, solely based upon their performance.
- In other words, they won’t feel loved for who they are, and instead, become discouraged because they are never good enough.

- If this weren’t bad enough, parents who push this way do so under the banner of challenging their children to be high achievers.
- However, what they don’t realize is that whether the child gives up or becomes successful, they can become bitter either way.
- We as parents would do well to examine ourselves to see if we’re a rancher who drives a herd, or shepherd who leads a flock.

- If you’re anything like me and I suspect that you are, you’re probably experiencing a myriad of emotions about today’s teaching.
- Everything from discouragement to hopelessness and everything in between, especially the emotion of guilt, which is the worst.
- For some, the feeling of guilt set in because you think it’s too late. You’re children are older and you’ve made all the mistakes.

- I’ll bring it to a close by offering some words of encouragement. First, it’s never too late for your children no matter their age.
- Never, ever give up on them, even if they are the quintessential prodigal who is as far away from you as they are from the Lord.
- The reason being is that the most powerful weapon we possess as a parent is prayer, and a wayward child is no match for that.

- Secondly and lastly, let me encourage you to not only pray for your son or daughter, but also unconditionally love them as well.
- By that I mean, loving them no matter what may be the very thing they have lacked growing up because of loving conditionally.
- One of the most encouraging verses that God has ministered to me in this regard is in Paul’s epistle to the Romans chapter 2:4.

Romans 2:4b ...the goodness of God leads you to repentance