

## PROVOKING YOUR CHILDREN

Ephesians 6:4 ... "...fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Today's verse does not apply only to fathers. When Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, the culture left most of the disciplining and training of children to fathers. Even if mothers had a role in training children, fathers had the last word. In today's culture, both parents should have equal roles in raising and training their children.

To "provoke," means to cause action. You can either provoke your children to love others, or you can provoke them to hate. "Wrath" is a verbal or physical result of intense anger. So, if you provoke a child to wrath, you are forcing him or her to act out their resentment toward you or others with rage, often violently. In fact, wrath is so extreme that the Bible uses it to describe God's judgment on us if we reject him. Job 5:2 tells us that wrath kills a foolish man. So, parents, if you cause your child to act out such hostility toward you that they demonstrate their rage, perhaps even violently, you are killing yourself spiritually, which could lead to eternal separation from God if not repented. And, teachers, listen carefully because you often see children more than their parents do. Your bad behavior can also cause children in your care to act out in rage.

Today's verse goes on to tell us to train up our children according to the principles of God. Has God ever trained or disciplined you so harshly that you hated him, or tried to hurt someone in your rage? Did God, after you were saved, abandon you because he was too busy, or because he had to work far from home? Did God ever yell at you, curse you, or call you an offensive name? Did God ever beat you with a rod or a whip until you bled? Did God humiliate you in front of your friends, tease you to the point of embarrassment, laugh at your mistakes, or tell hurtful stories about you to others? Did God ever get drunk and push you around, lock you out of the house, or make fun of the way you look or talk? Did God ever force you to sin by making you buy liquor or cigarettes for him, or to lie to your mother about where he goes and what he does outside the home? Did God show favoritism to your older brother or sister, because they were the first born in your family? Did God ever tell you to shut up?

Parents, there are two steps to avoid provoking your children to wrath:

- 1) Make sure you are saved and obeying Christ in your own life, and
- 2) Treat your children as God treats you with love, forgiveness, patience, firmness, and respect.

Parenting can be frustrating, stressful, and tiresome. But, if you resent the demands of parenting and express that resentment toward your children, you will kill yourself by being a foolish and ungodly father or mother, and perhaps destroy the lives of your children in the process. On the other hand, Christian parents raising their children as God treats them, can find parenting to be the most rewarding and blessed experience of their lives.

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