

Ephesians 6:1-4

Citizens Church - 6/6/21

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STORY ABOUT TERRENCIO IN HIGH SCHOOL

- He had been brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and he was a missionary in my high school
- He encouraged and emboldened me in my faith
- He had been trained to respect and submit to God's authority

VERSE 1 - 3

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

THE DESIGN

Children obey and are blessed by their obedience.

Parents have God-Given authority in the home that is to be a blessing. They are to teach children and help them get used to life under loving authority.

Example of line in driveway I couldn't cross.

Example of rule about doing homework 30min after getting home from school. That was a blessing.

God expects Parents to exercise that authority in a way that is a blessing to the children. A way that adds to their lives going well. In Exodus, God made a specific promise to the children that their lives would go better and that He'd bless them with long life in the promised land if they obeyed their parents as their parents lead them to follow God.

I believe Paul points out that promise here because, in general, children obeying their parents does benefit them and in general help their lives to go well.

I want to talk about what exercising authority looks like when I get to verse 4, **but first, I want to make sure we have an understanding of how we as adults might apply this to how we relate to our parents, especially since I don't see (m)any children in attendance in the room here today.**

ADULT CHILDREN

Looking at the age of many of us, alot of us have living parents, and I'd love to talk for a minute on how you might still obey this command to honor your father and mother.

Adult children still honor their father and mother but no longer have to obey.

Jesus' life. He was preaching at end of Mark 3. "Jesus, your mother and brothers are seeking you."

Jesus' response is "these, are my mother and brothers", and there is no indication that he stops what He's doing to go to them

Jesus still honored his mother. When He died, He told his disciple John to take care of His mother. He made sure His mother was gonna be taken care of.

As adult children, **we can still honor** (to prize, to revere, to value) our parents by showing appreciation for the ways they sacrificed for you. **Many of us adults who struggle to honor our parents**, struggle to do so b/c of the ways our parents have hurt or wounded us. And sometimes that becomes all that we think about when we think about our parents and we can **forget all of the sacrifices that many of our parents made for our good because of how hurt we are**.

For many of us, giving verbal affirmation and expressing gratitude to our parents would be very honoring to them and also likely help produce gratitude in us and help us to have a heart posture of honor towards our parents. And I do want to be very clear. This call to honor our parents is not only written to those who are not extremely hurt by our parents.

You might try:

- Just a quick 5-10min phone call just to check on them and say thank you.
 - Cheat code: If you don't think an extended convo would be good. I recommend calling them when you're 5-10 min away from your destination so you can tell them that you only have 5-10 min to talk but you just wanted to call real quick and say thank you
- Giving them gifts as a small way of acknowledging all of the gifts they have given to you
- Writing a letter to appreciate them
 - I wrote a poem to my dad once that meant so much to them.

I find that in most relationships, being intentional about small acts of love help both parties know that I still love you and honor you even though there's a lot of pain and tension in our relationship right now.

Don't have to obey them, and you can even let them know honestly if they are doing anything that is offensive to you. You can set boundaries with them and still honor them.

VERSE 4 BREAKDOWN

And to help us get a good understanding of verse 4, I want to break down a few words in this verse for us.

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up

Bring up (Gk) - nourish, provide what is necessary for growth, health, and good condition. Same verb used in previous chapter when Paul says that no one hates their own flesh but instead nourishes it.

The apostle is saying that parents should do what we can to provide what is necessary for spiritual growth and health for our children..

in the discipline

(Gk) tutorage, i.e. education or training; by implication, disciplinary correction:—chastening, chastisement, instruction, nurture.

One insert in a bible dictionary said that this term refers to "the whole training and education of children". Our children should be receiving disciplinary correction from us. Not punishment because of anger. Not abuse, but consequences that help them make better decisions. Hebrews 12 says that as a loving Father our God chastises us for our good.

The aim is that God would use our parenting to help our children love Him. More on this in a minute, but one of the necessary, yet very difficult components of following Jesus is obeying Him when we don't feel like it because He is in authority. By disciplining your children in love, you can help them have a category for loving discipline, where you're firm, and yet tender... direct yet kind.

When I would go too close to the street when I was younger, my parents would discipline me. When I think about Godly discipline, a way that I often describe it is, “Being willing to cause 100 tears now, to prevent 1,000 tears later.”

and instruction

calling attention to, i.e. (by implication) mild rebuke or warning:—admonition.

To bring them up in the **instruction** of the Lord is to use the God-Given authority that we have to train, educate, rebuke, warn, and correct them. Its to be willing to tell them things that might be hard for them to hear because they need to hear it.

OF THE LORD

of the Lord.

We are to give our lives training them to know God and follow Him... To seek Him and worship Him! To love Him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength!

To help us understand the importance and necessity and weight of bringing our children up in the discipline and instruction of **the Lord**, I just want to take a minute to remind us what our story is and what battle we are always engaged in.

Our Story. (Wake up call)

Family, just to help us wrestle with the weightiness of this call to discipline and instruct our children in the Lord, I wanna tell you something that many of you already know.

Our world has One Hope.

There is only One:

- Answer
- Hope
- Solution
- Savior, Salvation

To all the problems and hurt and suffering and injustice in this World and that is Jesus!

And He has called out His people to be about the work of joining Him in fighting against sin and darkness as we represent Him as Citizens of His Kingdom!

Family **that is our story**. That is the story that everything in our lives is to be centered around, including our parenting... because nothing is more important than that! Nothing is more important than people knowing Jesus through faith in Him and being freed from penalty, power, and presence of sin!

So as Christians, we must parent like that is true!!

We must parent like nothing is more important than that.

As a church that exists to be a Jesus-Centered Family on Mission with Him, it is vital that your parenting be centered around the Good News of Jesus.

And, if you're a parent, God is calling you to prioritize bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction **of the Lord**.... And I'm harboring on this point because...

We often live as if the end of verse 4 says “**Bring them up and discipline and instruct them:**

- **To have good morals”.** To be fair, having good morals... is different from disciplining and instructing your children to practice good morals... is different from disciplining and instructing your children in the Lord. Its one thing for me to let my 8yr olds know that its wrong to hit someone if someone makes them mad! But its another thing to show them Jesus on the cross dying for and praying for His enemies and also show them that He calls us to follow His lead and do good to our enemies and pray for those who mistreat us!
- **To Do Well In School.”** Obviously helping your children do well in school is good and godly, but if we are to truly be Jesus-Centered, then we care more about our children knowing Him than how they’re doing academically. **Parents I have to ask you, which do you think more about?** I know a lot of parents that care a lot about making sure their children get into a good school, but haven’t done much thinking about whether or not they are setting an example for their kids that shows the value and goodness of God by prioritizing spiritual disciplines.
- **To Be Successful.”** In school, sports, on the job, in relationships.
- **To not embarrass You.**
- **More Examples.**

I find that, in general, as parents we are very often instructing and disciplining our children towards something. We’re going to find ourselves instructing them towards whatever we care about the most, and we’re going to be taking some type of corrective measure when they are not following those instructions...

But, we’re called to bring them up in the discipline and instruction **of the Lord**. So, I just want to give you a few action points that I think will help you bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

1. NORMALIZE FAMILY SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

AT MY HOUSE THAT LOOKS LIKE...

At my house that looks like:

- Us having **Very short morning bible studies** (3-7 verses) where my 8yr olds read it and tell me what they read. And then I give them one main point from the passage. Its on their morning checklist just like eating breakfast and brushing their teeth
- My wife leading them in prayer each morning on the way to school
- When I remember, if my child is stressing about something, me praying with them about it and asking God to help us to trust Him
- Making sure we prioritize worship services and community groups at our church so our children know how much being around the body of Christ

And by the way, one of the best things about raising Children in the church and in community is your children get to see what it looks like to be single and be a Christian or be married with kids or without kids and be a Christian. It is so beneficial for you to be engaged with Christians in different life stages and circumstances. Adults without children in the room, I hope you are willing to allow yourself to be used by God in the lives of children in your church!

(TIP) At my house that looks like, letting our children have say-so in how we follow Christ together..

When my oldest two were 3, we would go through the Jesus Story Book Bible with them. At first I was trying to get through every story in the book, but then Malachi kept asking to do “The Goliath Story”. I think we did that story basically every day for more than three months. And I was fine with that! My son

was happy to be learning about the bible and about God, and I don't ever want to stifle that by telling him that he needs to seek God the way that I do it or the way that I think he should do it.

Same thing for when I used to do worship songs each night with them. When we first started, I was like, which one of my favorite worship songs would you like to sing tonight? And then after a while they started telling me that they didn't want to do my worship songs. So I decided to let them pick the worship songs... which meant a lot of the time, I'm worshipping God with them singing along to a kids worship song on youtube, but they, some nights, really enjoyed it.

And when you find practices for bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord that your child really likes/enjoys, that's going to make your job a lot easier

2. CLEARLY COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS

As you're teaching them what Jesus has to say about how they should live, you need to make sure they know specifically how you expect them to do that. For example, in this passage in Ephesians, it says that they are to obey you, in the Lord. Which means, you expect them to do what you tell them to do.

In the Frederick house, once we think you're old enough to understand authority and right and wrong, the expectation is that I will tell you to do it one time. That's what it means to obey your father and mother. I don't have to get you to agree with me or understand why I'm telling you to do it, even though, most of the time, I will tell you why I want you to do what I'm telling you to do.

In my home, **because my children like to use questions to avoid doing what they're supposed to do**, or delay doing what they're supposed to do... after I ask them to do something, they have to say, "yes sir" before they ask me why they have to do it, and I reserve the right to say, I'm not answer that question right now. Go ahead and do what I've asked you to do. Its okay for them to have questions, but they need to know that obedience doesn't require agreement.

Another expectation that I have for my older two children is that they would try to **pursue reconciliation** with each other when one of them offends the other. So, they don't just get to tell on the other to try to get me to get their sibling in trouble. Not that I won't punish them if they breaking a rule, but I don't want them to think punishment is a replacement for reconciliation.

So, the specific expectation is that before you come to me, if your brother wronged you, you need to do 2 things:

1. Tell them how that thing they did made you feel
2. Tell them what you want them to do

I've been trying to teach this to my children for years, and I'm not always great at remembering tot do it and they're not great at doing it, but when we use it, its fantastic. One of them will say something like, "When you never play the games with me that I like, it makes me feel like you don't like me. Will you play the games that I like sometimes?"

Or, "When you took that from me, it really made me sad. I want you to apologize and give it back." How did it make you feel? And what do you want them to do?

Since that's my expectation, I'll send a crying kid back to their room to be reconciled with their sibling, and oftentimes, they don't need to come back down and have me intervene after that.

That's what we do now, but when they were younger, I would just have them look at the eyes of the person they wronged, and say I'm sorry, will you forgive me?

- If they say it in a way that's too playful... they have to start over

3. CONSISTENTLY GIVE CORRECTIVE CONSEQUENCES

I said earlier that my expectation is that my children would obey me the first time. You and I both know that very frequently, that doesn't happen. So, as will be the case in life for them outside of my home, I make sure that they have consequences that they don't like when breaking the rules.

And, I find it to be most helpful and effective when I deal with them the way I would like a supervisor to deal with me if I'm not meeting expectations. Most of us have had to be corrected in some form or fashion on a job before. I prefer that my boss talks to me respectfully and tactfully. I prefer that they be honest with me about what I've done wrong without belittling me.

I believe that me thinking about it that way helps me to correct them while still walking in step with what Paul writes at the beginning of verse 4 where he says

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger

Now we know that this address is specific to Fathers here, so to dads in the room, you want to make sure that you are very intentional and thoughtful about how you're going to discipline your children faithfully without being unnecessarily provocative. And obviously, it's godly for mothers and fathers to heed this instruction from Paul.

Some things that provoke anger in children from my experience that I believe we would do well to avoid are:

Letting our anger dictate how we punish our children. This is not to say that if you're visibly angry when you punish your child, you're in sin. I'm not saying that at all. But I would say that you don't want your anger to dictate how harsh the consequence is. And you don't want the punishment you give them to be a means of you venting your anger or frustration against them.

A godly corrective consequence is not retaliation. This is not, "you embarrassed me in the store so now you're pay for that." That's not what we're talking about. And that's one of the reasons that I keep going back to, "What would be a good and effective way for a supervisor to respond to me if I did this thing wrong? What is a fair way for my boss to correct me if I am consistently willfully defiant and they need to make sure that I know that that will not be tolerated?"

Thinking about it that way helps me to not retaliate but rather give an effective, corrective consequence.

That said, you don't wanna over-correct and be passive with this. Your kids need to get used to having consistent consequences. And they need to know that they can't get out of them by throwing a tantrum or by wearing you down with questions.

- they need to develop self-control
- If you're not more stubborn than your kids, they will often miss out on developing self-control

4. MODEL FOLLOWING JESUS

This point has so many different implications that its tough to narrow it down enough to be most helpful, but there is one thing that I want to emphasize to you. You are going to mess up as a parent. If you're anything like me, you're going to mess up a lot. And as you're seeking to point your children to Jesus and train them up to follow Jesus, what they need to see from you is not someone who is pretending to be a perfect parent, but rather someone who messes up a lot and is consistently:

- Running to Jesus
- Confessing their sins
- Asking for and trusting in His forgiveness
- And apologizing to them and asking them for forgiveness when you sin against them

That's what they need! They need to see what its *REALLY* like to be a Christian. They need to learn from you how to repent because they're gonna mess up! They're gonna sin. They need repentance modeled for them!

I know many parents from my experience, especially moms, who are so heavily weighed down with guilt and shame about their parenting flaws and the ways that they have sinned against their kids, and I just want to say, you need to cling closely to Jesus, who knew every single parenting mistake you'd ever make, and still chose to die for you and unite you with Himself and make you His.

And its important that you keep that truth in the forefront of your mind and in the depths of your heart, first for you own spiritual health, but second that you might model for your children what it is to be a deeply flawed and sinful Christian that is renewed with hope, faith, and joy because you have a real savior who gives real forgiveness to real broken people.

Because you being a flawed parent doesn't disqualify you from bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. No not at all. In fact, you should see responding to your flaws correctly, as an essential part of training your children to follow god as you model following Jesus for them. You model following Jesus to them by being a flawed parent that gives your life to pointing them to the only perfect parent, our Father, in heaven.