

"FATHERS, RAISE A CROP FOR ETERNITY"

Ephesians 6:4

How did Sarah feel the affliction of her parents' failure to set limits? J.C. Ryle: "If you do not take trouble with your children when they are young, they will give you trouble when they are old. Choose which you prefer."

I. FATHERS MUST TAKE THE LEAD IN RAISING CHILDREN

A. The Father is in the Lead

Why is the father singled out? Verses 1,2,4. Deut 6:10. General Douglas MacArthur: "By profession, I am a soldier, and take pride in that fact, but I am prouder, infinitely prouder, to be a father. A soldier destroys in order to build; a father only builds, never destroys. The one has the potentialities of death; the other embodies creation of life; and while the hordes of death are mighty, the battalions of life are mightier still. It is my hope that my son, when I am gone, will remember me, not from the battle, but in the home repeating with him our simple, daily prayer, "Our Father Who art in Heaven."

B. Fathers Have to Work Together

He is not merely addressing the separate fathers in the congregation, but the fathers as a distinct group. 1 Tim 2:8. Last November: parents' meeting on "Social Media and the Hypersexualization of Tweens and Teens." Did you follow up with other Dads? Sunday School? Joshua 5. Band of brothers.

C. The Mother Must Support the Father

A wife who submits to her husband will follow his spiritual leadership with the children. A wise husband will not micromanage his wife (1 Tim 5:14.) She will follow her husband's lead. To undercut and undermine the father, especially in front of young children, is a terrible thing to do! 5:33.

II. FATHERS CAN RELY UPON THE COVENANT OF GOD'S GRACE

A. Have Respect to the Covenant!

Paul is talking about raising your children in the covenant of grace, an idea that warms the heart of every Reformed parent. There is nothing neutral. Deut 6:6-7. As long as the children are in the house, they are under the father's covenant headship. He is responsible to see that they follow the covenant, at least in the externals. Ex 20:8-10. B.U.S.Y. = Burdened Under Satan's Yoke. Josh 24:15. Do you believe in making your children brush their teeth, or do they decide at 18? The fine young man with the "drug" problem.

B. Covenant Succession is the Biblical Norm

Isa 59:21. Covenant succession means that the children of believers are expected to follow in the faith of their parents. This is accomplished through the divinely ordained means of covenant nurture. The father and mother are the main means of covenant nurture. Eph 2:8-10. Saved by grace, and equipped by grace to fulfill the terms of the covenant. Being godly parents is one of the good works God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in. Goal of bringing children *up* in the Lord is to bring them *to* the Lord.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it this way: "We should give our children the impression that the most wonderful thing in the world is Christianity; and that there is nothing in life to compare with being a Christian. They see us and they see the joy that we have in it, and the way we marvel and wonder at it all. They should be saying to themselves, 'I am longing to be as old as they are, so that I can enjoy it as they obviously do.' If you give children the impression that to be religious is to be miserable, and that it consists of prohibitions and constant repression, you may well drive them into the arms of the devil. Never be entirely negative and repressive."

III. FATHERS HAVE TWO PARTICULAR TASKS

A. Fathers, Train Your Children

Training (*paideia*) = teaching with teeth in it. It means to cultivate proper character. Hebrews 12:5. Greek dictionary: "to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior." A trained athlete has been under the tutelage of a coach, who shapes their habits. A parent does the same with a child. Habits must be formed.

A young child especially needs to know what is expected of him, and what are the positive and negative consequences of his behavior. Deut 28-30; 27:4. Must have consequences, like coming late for a dental appointment. Not just correction: bringing out the gifts and graces the Lord has given to him.

C. Fathers, Admonish Your Children

Use of verbal means to correct a fault. "To put (a word) in mind." Romans 15:14. The father needs to know what the child is doing, how the child is thinking, how the child ought to think, and how to bring God's word to bear on the situation. Proverbs 29:15, "The rod (training) and rebuke (admonition) give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

IV. FATHERS MUST NOT PROVOKE THEIR CHILDREN

A. Don't Provoke Their Sin Nature

Deut 4:25-26. Fathers likewise are to avoid the predictable response when their kids' fleshly nature gets riled up. Don't -- be angry yourself; play favorites; be harsh and sullen; fail to provide needed boundaries; ignore your kids; be more interested in your hobbies. Gal 5:22-23

B. Don't Exasperate Them, Either

Parallel text: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." (Col 3:21, NASB). Here Dad is warned against bringing them to the point of exasperation; when the children throw up their hands and say, "What's the use! Why bother! It's impossible to please him!" How do parents do this? Unrealistic expectations of their children; re-living their childhood through them and trying to make them who they wished they were; changing the rules like they change their socks; withholding love, affection and encouragement.

Conclusion

What really matters to a godly parent is that their children are born again of the Spirit, repenting of their sins, trusting Jesus Christ their Lord, and living a life of covenant faithfulness. A godly father in the hands of Jehovah is a mighty tool to bring about their salvation.