Fighting for Your Family Series

Pt. 3 - The Child & Parent Connection

Ephesians 6:1-4

7/6/25

Psalm 127:3 says, *Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.*

It’s hard to be a kid today. It’s hard because the society says that they’re value is dependent upon their appearance, or social media status, and now even worse they’re being told they can be whatever they feel like being! TV shows, Movies, social media emphasize beauty and a materialistic view of success. And now there’s the agenda to tell our kids they’re not really who they think they are and can be what they want to be despite how they were born! Well not only is that not true, but it’s trash; it is destructive trash to our children.

On the same token, parents we are living in a world where parenting is often either neglected or misunderstood. And yet, the Word of God gives us clear guidance on how to raise the next generation—not according to the world's standards, but according to the Lord’s. I’d like to ask parents a question.

* What do you aim for in the lives of your children? We want them to be able to do well in school, be honest and excel. We want them to stay away from pre-marital sex and the deathly grips drugs and alcohol. Any good parents’ heart should be for their children to become good honorable citizens so that they can be productive to society.”
* Now if you end there, if that’s the end of your goal, ok, but as a Christian parent, we should have higher desires for our children. The aims that I just outlined are the very aims of anyone who has a moral consciousness.

But Christian parenting has to take things a step further. Especially today! We are aiming for our children to become redeemed by the Gospel, who love God with all of their hearts, and within them is the new life of Christ. We want them to love Jesus, not just because Mom or Dad do, but because their motivation has been changed by the Gospel. That’s what we are aiming for as Christian parents.

Our children are gifts from God Himself! Jesus even took a special interest in children...

* Mark 10:13-16

*13 Once when some mothers were bringing their children to Jesus to bless them, the disciples shooed them away, telling them not to bother him. 14 But when Jesus saw what was happening, he was very much displeased with his disciples and said to them, “Let the children come to me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as they. Don’t send them away! 15 I tell you as seriously as I know how that anyone who refuses to come to God as a little child will never be allowed into his Kingdom.”16 Then he took the children into his arms and placed his hands on their heads, and he blessed them.*

What was the problem the disciples had with the kids?

* “Jesus, they are just kids”. Why are you bothering with kids? Look at all of the adults who would like to hear you teach and need you.

Can I say this...If Jesus didn’t see children as a problem, nor should we...Children shouldn’t be a burden, or a nuisance, but should be looked upon as a blessing that has been entrusted to you parent...from God Himself!

In Ephesians we see this great relationship of parents and children. Unfortunately, it’s obvious that in our present world something has gone drastically wrong with this relationship. It’s a day when juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime and disrespect is skyrocketing to heights never before known. The spirit of revolt and rebellion seem almost to have become the symbols of youth in our age.

* 2 Timothy 3:1-2

*You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2 For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.*

Perhaps the most distressing thing about this whole matter is the indifference or helplessness of parents. Everywhere parents are crying out, "I can't do anything with him (or her)." There seems to be abject despair on the part of parents to do anything about this situation. They look to the police and other agencies to take over the responsibility of raising their children. There is an utter breakdown, apparent on every side, in this major relationship between parents and children.

What has gone wrong? Why is it that our nation\world experiencing this terrible tempest in this regard? It could be we are reaping the whirlwind of permissiveness which blows across the homes and through the classrooms of our nation from past philosophies.

* Back in the 20’s/30’s philosophies of John Dewey, and others of the school of permissiveness, captured the thoughts of educators and the minds of parents throughout this land. They were taught that children were to be allowed to grow up to 'express themselves,' that all discipline is wrong, that it keeps them from developing properly and fully. As a result, each generation that grew up was a generation of young people who never learned to obey and never learned to yield their will to the authority of another.

But there is relief from this in the great words of the Apostle Paul in the Scriptures in respect to the answer to all conflict. In Ephesians 5, the apostle put his finger precisely on the solution to these overwhelming problems of conflict between various groups, so prevalent in our age. He said it all in one sentence:

* Eph. 5:21 - *And further, submit to one another out of reverence (respect/fear/love) for Christ.*

Then he applies this to various relationships. We’ve examined the matter of husbands and wives, but today we come to the problem of the relationship of parents and children, and I have a message for both parties.

*Invite young people to the front:*

*Why Obeying Your Parents Matters to God (and to You)*

* *Ephesians 6:1–3*

*“Kids, listen to your parents and do what they say. That’s the right thing to do if you’re following Jesus. Respect your mom and dad—this is the first rule God gave that comes with a promise. And the promise is awesome: if you do this, you’ll have a good and happy life!”*

* *Colossians 3:20*

*“Kids, do what your parents ask you to do. That makes God happy!”*

*1. What’s the Big Deal About Obeying?*

*Let’s be honest—sometimes obeying your parents feels... hard. Maybe you feel like they don’t understand what you’re going through. Maybe you just don’t feel like doing what they ask. But here’s the truth: God tells us to obey our parents, not just because it helps the home run smoother—but because it’s right.*

*God actually built this into how life works. When we respect and listen to our parents, things go better—not just at home, but in our hearts, in our future, and in our walk with Jesus.*

*2. What Does "Obey" Really Mean?*

*The word obey means to listen and follow instructions. Sounds simple, right? But it’s not just about doing chores or saying “yes, ma’am” or “yes, sir.” It’s really about trust.*

* *Think about Captain America. When Steve Rogers became a superhero, he didn’t just make up his own plan—he listened to his team and followed his leaders because he trusted them. That’s what made him strong and successful.*
* *Or think about The Incredibles. Mr. Incredible didn’t tell Violet and Dash what to do just to be annoying—he was trying to protect them. When they finally listened and worked together as a family, they became unstoppable.*

*Obedience is really about trusting that your parents love you, know you, and are trying to help you grow.*

*3. God Gave You YOUR Parents on Purpose*

*Here’s something cool: God picked your parents specifically for you. He gave them the job of helping you become the person He made you to be. When you obey them, you’re doing more than just following rules—you’re honoring God. You’re saying, “God, I trust You, and I trust the people You put in my life to lead me.”*

*4. Obedience Isn’t Just About What You Do—It’s About Your Heart*

*Let’s get real for a second. You can obey on the outside but still be full of anger or disrespect on the inside.*

* *Once there was this a little boy whose mom told him to sit down. After a few minutes he finally sat, but said, “I may be sitting down on the outside, but I’m standing up on the inside!”*

*That’s not real obedience. That’s just pretending. And God sees through that kind of attitude. Obedience that pleases God comes from a heart that respects, loves, and trusts. It’s not about perfection—it’s about your attitude.*

*5. What Does God Promise for Those Who Obey?*

*Ephesians 6 says if you obey and honor your parents, “it will go well with you.”*

*That doesn’t mean your life will be perfect or that bad things won’t happen—but it does mean that things will go better, and you’ll avoid a lot of trouble.*

*As matter of fact, did you know doctors and scientists say that anger, stress, and bitterness can actually make you sick? Like seriously—things like pimples, headaches, and stomach issues can come from holding onto bad attitudes and rebellion.*

*God doesn’t just care about your soul—He cares about your whole life, including your health, your happiness, and your future.*

*6. Obedience Prepares You for the Rest of Life*

*Here’s the thing: Obedience doesn’t stop when you turn 18. Life is full of authority—teachers, coaches, bosses, leaders, even God Himself. If you learn to obey your parents with the right heart, you’re actually building a foundation for a strong, wise life. Every time you choose to obey with a good attitude, it’s like laying another brick in the building of your future.*

*This Week’s Challenge:*

*Here’s what I want you to try this week: Obey your parents the first time they ask. Not with an eye roll. Not with a “ugh”. Not with an attitude. Do it because you’re doing it for God, not just for them.*

*Say this to yourself:*

*“God, I want to trust You. Help me obey my parents with a cheerful heart, even when it’s hard.”*

**Now to the parents**...This is a two-way street. As we’ve seen, the Word of God never speaks to one party only in these relationships. Therefore, if it is true that children are to subject themselves to their parents by obeying them, it is equally true that parents are to subject themselves to their children as well. How? Paul goes on to show us in Verse 4:

* *Fathers do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 NLT)*

Some have noted that the word translated “fathers” in this verse can be understood to mean “parents”—and that’s true in a broader sense as both moms and dads should be involved in raising their children.

But Scripture puts the spotlight especially on fathers here—and that’s on purpose. The responsibility for what children become is laid primarily on the father’s shoulders. That’s a serious and sobering truth, dads. While moms often carry out the day-to-day of parenting, it is the father’s role to set the tone, the direction, and the values of the home.

Nothing goes more against the spirit of Christianity than the attitude some fathers take: “It’s my job to make the money; raising the kids is her job.” Well, not in today’s world, and that idea is nowhere in the Bible. As matter of fact, according to God’s Word, the ultimate responsibility for the health and direction of the home lies with the father as we’ve covered in detail a few weeks back. That’s why this verse speaks directly to him.

So how should a father submit himself in love to his children? By avoiding anything that stirs up anger, resentment, or rebellion in their hearts—and instead, leading with patience, godly discipline, and Christlike instruction.

**I. Understanding What “Provoke” Really Means**

When Paul says, *“Do not provoke your children to anger,”* he’s not talking about everyday irritation or a moment of pouting when they don’t get their way. That kind of frustration is normal and expected when you’re raising a child.

The word here for *anger* refers to something deeper—**a lasting, rebellious kind of anger**. Paul is saying, “Parents, especially fathers, don’t treat your kids in a way that drives them to rebellion.” It’s a warning about pushing them so hard—or being so neglectful—that they finally break away from your authority altogether.

**II. What Drives Kids to Rebellion? Two Common Mistakes**

There are two main things that provoke children to rebellion: **Indulgence & Harshness**

**Indulgence**:

This is where many parents fall today. In the name of "keeping peace," we give our kids whatever they want, let them make their own choices far too early, and refuse to say “no” because we want to be their friend instead of their parent. Notice what Paul says: *“Bring them up.”* Not, *“Let them bring you up.”*

Children are not meant to raise themselves. God gave **you**, the parent, the responsibility to lead them—not the other way around.

* A father walked into the living room and saw his 3-year-old daughter watching a murder mystery—something obviously not meant for a child. Feeling uneasy, he said gently,
“Sweetheart, you don’t really want to watch this, do you? “She nodded, “Yes.”
He tried again: “I don’t think this is good for you. Don’t you think you should turn it off?”
“No.” “Well… maybe you ought to change the channel. “Again, she refused. So finally, he gave in and let her keep watching.

Can I be bold enough to say a 3-year-old is not capable of making that kind of decision. That call needed to be made by the parent—with love and with firmness. Letting children make adult decisions too early doesn’t give them freedom—it gives them fear, insecurity, and confusion.

**Harshness:**

The other side of indulgence is being overly strict, cold, or abusive. Rules without relationship will always lead to rebellion. Yelling, punishing in anger, humiliating your child—none of that reflects the heart of God.

Paul doesn’t just say “bring them up”—he says to do it with the discipline and instruction of the Lord. That means loving correction, gentle boundaries, and teaching with patience, not punishment out of frustration.

* There was a father who ordered his family about like a martinet. He had been in the military, and he tried to run his household that way. He assembled the family every morning, lined them all up, the wife and the children, and gave them their orders for the day. One day when he had them lined up, he said to them, "Now, any questions?" One little boy raised his hand. The father said, "What is it?" The boy said, "How can I get out of this outfit?"

Ok, so being a Christian parent, what’s the Bible’s Blueprint for Discipline? The book of Proverbs is full of wisdom for parenting. Its message is simple and two-fold: A child must learn obedience...and discipline is an act of love.

* Proverbs 13:24

*“Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.”*

Let’s be honest:

* A timeout won’t always work.
* Taking away a phone or tablet won’t always work.
* But sometimes, a firm and loving spanking—done with self-control, never in anger—can make a lasting impact.

Yes, society might frown at that. And yes, some have experienced **abusive discipline**, which is wrong and deeply damaging. That’s not what we’re talking about. We are speaking of biblical discipline, which is never abuse—it is correction with wisdom, love, and a goal of restoration.

When the Apostle Paul speaks of “discipline and instruction in the Lord,” he’s offering parents a balanced and Christ-centered approach to raising children. The word translated instruction means “to put into the mind.” It’s not just about correcting behavior—it’s about shaping thinking, values, and the heart.

It is absolutely essential that children experience discipline—because discipline is one of the clearest marks of love. The book of Hebrews reminds us that no loving father goes without correcting his child. Why? Because correction is proof that the father cares. In the same way, when God disciplines us, it’s not because He’s angry or out to punish us—it’s because He loves us too much to leave us in our mistakes. And that same principle applies to our children: loving discipline tells a child, “You matter to me too much to let you go the wrong way.”

Before you discipline your child:

* Discipline yourself.
* Seek the Lord.
* Ask for His wisdom.
* Let your correction reflect His character—firm, just, and loving.

When you discipline the right way, your child won’t grow up fearing you—they’ll grow up trusting you, and through your love and leadership, they’ll begin to know the heart of God.

Truth is setting boundaries are love. A child without boundaries grows up to believe the world owes them something. A child with loving discipline grows up knowing how to respect others, handle disappointment, and live with purpose.

* Boundaries create security. Just like walls protect your home at night, rules and limits protect your child’s heart and future. They may push against those walls at times, but they will also feel safe inside them.

As our children grow, our parenting must grow with them. What begins as physical discipline in early years should mature into thoughtful counsel, deep conversations, and clear understanding. We don’t remove boundaries—we simply learn how to enforce them with more wisdom and grace. Discipline becomes less about control and more about connection.

Closing:

Parents, we are called to create a home that reflects the heart of Christ—an atmosphere of emotional safety, spiritual direction, and deep relationship. That takes time, intentionality, and example. Spend time with your children—not just doing things for them, but with them. Let them know you and take the time to truly know them. That’s how trust is built. That’s how influence grows.

We must live out our faith authentically:

* If we want our children to believe that material things don’t matter most, then they need to see us investing in eternal things—not just buying more for ourselves but giving generously to the work of the Lord.
* If we want them to believe God is a refuge in times of trouble, then they need to see us responding to life’s challenges with prayer, peace, and faith—not panic, fear, or anger.
* If we want them to believe love is stronger than hate, then that love must start at home—how we speak, how we forgive, how we handle conflict.

You can’t expect your kids to believe what they’ve never seen you live.

Parents, your role is not to control your children forever. Your role is to prepare them for life—to love them, guide them, and release them.

* So set godly boundaries.
* Offer grace and truth.
* Give time and attention.
* Walk with them. Talk with them.
* Let your life model the very gospel you want them to believe.

And never forget discipline only works in the context of relationship. You earn the right to correct by being present, invested, and loving. Children don’t need perfect parents—they need present ones. Let’s be those kinds of parents.

This is the calling God has placed on us as parents. Our children are not just our responsibility—they are one of the greatest gifts the Lord has ever given us. And for those who may feel like the connection with their child is strained or broken, there’s still hope.

* Again, to our young people: no matter your age, God’s Word is clear—honor, respect, and obey your parents as an act of obedience to the Lord. Not just because they’re perfect (they’re not), but because God says it’s right—and He blesses those who follow His way.
* To the parents let’s rise to the challenge God has given us. Let’s love our children deeply, teach them diligently, and raise them faithfully in the ways of the Lord. Let’s not simply tell them how to live—let’s show them through how we live.

And may we never forget the wisdom of Proverbs 22:6:

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

That is the promise we cling to. Let’s walk in that calling—by God’s grace and with His strength.

Here is a closing altar call prayer specifically crafted for this sermon:

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Closing Altar Call Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come before You today, grateful for the gift of family. Lord, You have entrusted us with children – whether as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, spiritual mentors, or leaders in this church. We acknowledge that they are not ours alone – they belong to You.

God, we confess that sometimes we have fallen short. We’ve allowed anger, fear, frustration, or busyness to get in the way of loving, teaching, and disciplining them Your way. We ask for Your forgiveness today.

I pray for every parent here:

That You would give them wisdom beyond themselves,

Patience that reflects Your heart,

And love that never gives up.

Lord, for those who feel like they’ve failed or that it’s too late to reconnect with their children, remind them today that nothing is impossible with You. Bring healing, reconciliation, and restoration to strained relationships. Soften hearts on both sides and bring peace in homes.

I pray for every child, teen, and young person here:

That You would help them obey and honor their parents – not just with their words or actions, but with their hearts. That they would grow to know and love You deeply, Jesus, and live out Your purpose for their lives.

Father, I pray for families that are broken, weary, or divided today – would You unite them under the lordship of Christ. Let Your love be the bond that holds them together.

As we leave this place, help us to remember that the way we build our homes shapes the generations to come. Let our homes reflect Your grace, Your truth, and Your presence.

We dedicate our families to You afresh today. We ask for Your strength to fight for our families – not by our own power, but by Your Spirit.

In Jesus’ mighty name we pray,

Amen.