



In our preaching series, "Building a Home: One Room at a Time," we've spent the last six weeks looking at God's blueprint for a family, each week learning or being reminded of God's way to construct and operate a family. For some of us, this might mean tearing down a room, so to speak, and rebuilding something God's way.

Today we're focusing on the role of the father in the family. In preparation for that, let me remind you of the basics of God's blueprint for the nuclear family as described in Ephesians 5 and 6.

Husbands and wives are to live in submission to one another (Ephesians 5:21). As brothers and sisters in Christ they are equally valuable and treat one another as such. This was a complete departure from the operating practice of an Ancient Near Eastern home.

In function and practice, although husbands and wives are submitting to one another, the husband is the head of the household, meaning he has primary responsibility (Ephesians 5:23).

The wife's role in the household is to be a helper, a succor (Ephesians 5:22).

How do children fit in? They obey their parents and honor them (Ephesians 6:1-3).

### **What is the Role of the Father?**

**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).**

Whose primary responsibility is it to **not** exasperate your children? The father's. Whose primary responsibility is it to train your children? The father's. Whose primary responsibility is it to instruct your children? The father's. This verse gives us the ... what should we call it? We won't call it instructions because men don't read or listen to instructions!

How about this? This verse gives us the slow cooked BBQ tri-tip of being a dad. The first bite of that delicious, mouth-watering BBQ is:

#### **Do not exasperate your children**

**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**

Exasperate = provoke them to anger. It's the same concept in Colossians 3:21. "**Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.**" It's different ways of saying the same thing—do not stir up their anger.

Has anyone noticed? That's difficult! Children are emotionally volatile. To sooth anger outbursts in our children, I have two tips:

#### **1. Don't do or say things that are unloving or unfair.**

- Don't give them a rule they can't keep.
- Don't discourage their dreams.
- Don't neglect to spend time with them.
- Don't pour all of your heart into your career.
- Don't punish them unjustly; if they didn't know a rule, the punishment should be equitable to the violation.
- Don't remind them of past failures.
- Never confuse their identity with their behavior. If they tell a lie, they lied. Don't call them a liar. If they insult you, they disrespected you. Don't yell at them and call them stupid. Deal with the inappropriate action without tearing down their identity.
- Don't break your promises.
- Don't act like you're always right.

The second tip is a bit more indirect but likely more important.

#### **2. Help them identify the source of their anger.**

Kids are going to overreact. Moods will swing to the extremes. When your child is in a state like this, put on your detective hat and start asking questions: Why are you so angry? They don't know. I love you. Sometimes I get really angry too. How are your grades? How are things going with...? Tell me about a sport, activity or job. You were with a friend or a group yesterday. Where did you do?

As you are asking, you are listening with a discerning ear to identify a hurt or a fear or a feeling of being out of control. When you identify what "it" is talk to them about God and that thing.

Once I noticed that I was more angry than normal. I was quickly on the edge. One day while driving a man made a hand gesture toward me as he drove past. I was so bothered that I stopped my car, leaned out my window and stared at him driving away. Then I got out of my car, stood in the street with my hands out to the

sides wishing he'd come back. You're thinking I'm crazy but don't worry, he was about 90 years old so I knew I could handle him!

What was going on there? An anger outburst for a silly matter. That's exactly what our kids do. Dads, it's our job to help them navigate these confusing matters.

It took me months to come to my conclusion. I had three big areas in my life, three big frustrations that I could not solve. I wrote in my journal, "I feel oppressed, powerless, confused. I don't have the ability to solve any of these. And any 3 could radically impact or change my life. Subsequently, I feel like my life is out of my control. I'm scared by the turmoil and I'd run this life differently if I was in control."

Dads, we need to know how to navigate our emotions so we can help our children navigate theirs. Our kids will learn a lot about life and the character of God the Father from us. We know that's crazy, but that's how it works.

Sure, they're going to learn this from both parents but dad's, it's primarily your responsibility to ensure it's happening. That can be overwhelming. So remember, it was no accident that you are the father of your kids. You can handle this task. God put you there with your kids because you are the best man for the job. Look to God for wisdom and strength for your task.

That first bite of slow cooked BBQ was good, wasn't it? That bite has a lingering memory to it. You can share the memory of that experience with your friends later! Here's the second bit of tender, slow cooked, BBQ for you.

### **Biblically train your children**

**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; *instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

Train = disciplinary action / correction. Restated it says, "***Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up with disciplinary action and correction ... of the Lord.***" Hebrews 12:11 says, "***No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.***"

This training "of the Lord" gives the quality of the training. The rules, regulations, rewards and punishments come from the Bible. Biblical training involves what is done to the child. It's like what a great coach does with his players. He teaches with three steps:

1. Tell
2. Show
3. Do

The telling is short—5 minutes. The showing is short—5 minutes. The doing is long—20 minutes. Like if a soccer coach wants to teach passing to his players. He will tell them that you have

to kick the ball in front of where they're running so their teammate doesn't have to break stride as they run down the field. Next the coach will show how to do it with a demonstration. Lastly, the coach will break the team into groups and have them practice this new skill by doing it over and over and over again. This last step is how they will truly learn to become proficient at passing the ball. If you leave the doing step out, the players will never learn this skill. Likewise with biblically training our kids. We must give them opportunities to learn by doing.

Here are some examples of biblical training:

If you want to teach them to be humble, take them with you to serve others. I have a friend who took his sons with him to paint over graffiti in the city they lived in. Through this simple act of serving his boys learned to be humble.

If you want to teach them that hard work is part of life, have them do work projects around the house along side you. Clean the inside, paint the outside, trim bushes, cut the lawn, water the flowers.

If you want to teach them compassion, show them compassion when they don't deserve it. Take them with you as you show compassion to your neighbor.

If you want to teach them grace, show them grace in a way that costs you something.

If you want to teach them to use their God-given gifts, model that for them and help them experiment with activities until they find theirs.

Last month I ran a 5K race with Allie, my 10-year-old daughter. She trained with a group of girls from her school for this race and each girl chose one adult to run with them. I knew Allie was a fast sprinter, but I didn't know she was a fast distance runner too. As we left the crowd behind, there was just a small cluster of girls ahead of us. We were near the end of the race and up until that point I had been giving her tips on running form and technique. Then something changed. I told her, "Allie, God made you to run. Your muscles and body are built for this. He wants you to feel his delight when you run. Keep going girl. You are awesome!"

If you want to teach them to be humble, take them with you as you serve others.

If you want to teach them how to resolve conflicts, let them watch you fight with your spouse and watch how you work through it and make up, which should involve a kiss at the end!

If you want to teach them to be obedient, take payments when they disobey.

If you want to teach them to be hospitable, help them prepare the house to host people.

If you want to teach them how to handle defeat, give them enough freedom to make mistakes. When they fail, don't punish them. Let the experience itself teach them the lesson. This is how character is formed.

If you want to teach them to be fearless as they follow God's plan for their life, take scary steps of faith yourself and let them watch you.

Experience is a powerful teaching tool. In these ways we are biblically training our children.

These are some tasty bites of BBQ, getting active with our kids and letting them learn from doing. Our last bite for today is to...

### Biblically instruct your children

**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**

Instruction = the Greek word *Nouthesia*, which means "to give a mild rebuke or warning." Restated it says, "**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and give mild rebukes and warnings of the Lord.**" The same word is used in 1 Cor. 10:11, "**These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.**"

Biblical instruction involves what is said to the child. Tell them what to believe about God. Tell them the truths about Jesus. "**These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up**" (Deut. 6:1–7).

Around the dinner table. While driving in the car. Take a walk together. Go to breakfast together on a Saturday morning. Lay in bed with them at night. Freely talk about God. Pass along your beliefs. Some of this is done with a structure:

- Daily Bible reading with the family
- Question and answer system like a Catechism
- Weekly memory verse

- Weekly attendance at Sunday worship
- Weekly Bible study
- Annual week of summer camp

These structures are important because they show our children that we value biblically instructing them. This is important.

Some of this is done with less structure:

- Praying with your kids spontaneously. A friend of mine, Bob, would always pray with his kids when he heard a siren. His 18-year-old daughter told me this impacted her greatly.
- Out at dinner talking about how the Lord is working in your life. Asking about their relationship with the Lord.
- Talking about God and his beautiful creation on the walk to school or on a campout or on a hike.
- Hanging around the house, talk about the Lord.

Integrating biblical instruction into the spontaneity of life shows that our beliefs are authentic. This is important.

There you go, dads. Instructions—I mean, an amazing BBQ meal—about our role as dads are don't exasperate your children; train them and instruct them.

Dads, remember, it's your primary responsibility to lead your home and raise your children. Pour your heart and your time into this. It's a noble act.

I want to briefly address our failures because you are not going to be a perfect father. What happens then? Ultimately, it is God the Father's responsibility to father all of us. And he does this perfectly!

He makes up for all the deficiencies in all fathering.

He is a perfect father who makes sense of the failures of every dad.

He is a perfect guide who will untangle the messes every dad makes.

He is perfectly sovereign and he mysteriously uses the brokenness of fathers for his good.

Thankfully, he's redeeming our efforts, the good we do and the mistakes we make, to raise up the next generation. Let's turn to Jesus and find our strength in him for this task. And let's trust God to father our children when we mess up.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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1005 Shell Blvd. | Foster City, CA 94404 | 650 349.1132 | [www.cpcweb.org](http://www.cpcweb.org). Additional copies available on request.