Parents, Do Not Provoke Your Children
Scripture: Ephesians 6:4
Code: 80-385

Now we want you to look at Ephesians chapter 6, and I know, I only get a certain amount of time on Sunday and I ate up half of what I get for tonight, because we got a little bit long this morning, so I'm not going to keep you a long time tonight. But I do want to bring to a final conclusion our brief series on Ephesians chapter 5 on the Spirit-filled life and the outcomes of that Spirit-filled life that have to do with marriage and the family. All of this really started back in verse 18, "Be being kept filled with the Holy Spirit." And we talked about the fact that we ought to be under the control of the Holy Spirit, not under the control of alcohol cause that leads to dissipation. We talked a little bit about the Christian and drinking alcohol. And then we launched off into what it means to be filled with, controlled by the Holy Spirit and how it produces all kinds of wonderful, spiritual benefits. We speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, sing and make melody with our hearts to the Lord. We're always giving thanks for all things and we're subject to one another in the fear of Christ. So it produces praise and worship. It produces gratitude and thanksgiving. And it produces a willing submission that makes the body of Christ work together.

And the Spirit-filled life is also the most compelling reality in marriage. As we get into verse 22, you remember, we have instruction about wives being subject to their own husbands, and husbands loving their wives, verse 28 puts it, as their own bodies. Even more importantly, as verse 25 puts it, loving their wives as Christ loved the church.

Now that is the key to a fruitful and effective and God-blessed marriage. Wives submitting to the leadership of the husband who leads in the same way that Christ leads His church. And we went through the details of that in the text.

Then we came to chapter 6 and we looked at the issue of how Spirit-filled families function. First, "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise so that it may be well with you that you may live long on the earth." And we talked about the importance of children being obedient and that it has a qualitative benefit in that it comes with a promise. It has a quantitative benefit in that you, if you are an obedient child, will not have your life cut short because the Lord disciplines you for your rebellion, but you'll live a full long life.

And so we've covered the general aspect of life in the church, the role of the wife, the role of the husband and the duty of the children. That leaves us with a final word from verse 4 and that has to do

with parents. It begins with the word, “Fathers,” in the English but the Greek term *patera* can embrace parents as well. And it does that, by the way, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, it is translated in your Bible as parents because it can have that meaning. “Do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” And you might think if the Apostle Paul wanted to give us a section on parenting, it might be a little bit longer than that. There might be a few more details. But again, the amazing economy of effort with which the Holy Spirit inspires the Scripture shocks us and surprises us, and yet as we begin to dig down into these powerfully loaded statements, we find that they’re much richer than maybe we would think on the surface.

Now I’ve been telling you, coming at it from a little bit of a different angle that marriage is in trouble in America. And I made the point several times, and not only in America but in other parts of the world as well, particularly those in the western part of the world. And I have introduced to you that there are lots of things that assault and attack marriage. Obviously immorality attacks marriage, homosexuality attacks marriage, divorce attacks marriage, every kind of infidelity attacks marriage. But I’ve also added the other component that singleness attacks marriage. And there is a preoccupation and a selfish culture with people wanting to fulfill their own desires, their own ambitions and not have to defer to somebody they’re stuck with the rest of their lives. So singleness becomes one of the great assaults on marriage.

And just to follow that up a little bit, as a way of introduction, in a recent Pew Trust Survey, and the Pew Trust funds a lot of surveys, the question was asked of unmarried people, a large sampling of unmarried people, “Do you want to get married?” Forty-six percent of those people said yes. Fifty-four percent of the people in a national survey said no. This is what supports what I’ve been telling you, people are hostile in many cases toward marriage.

Now, this poses a great problem because people still want to have—guess what?—children. Masses of children consequently are being born without married parents. In fact, the Pew Survey asked another question. “Is the ideal marriage a husband who provides and a wife who cares for the home and the children? Is that an ideal marriage?” Thirty percent of the people said yes. Thirty percent of the people surveyed in America believe that the ideal home is a father who provides and a mother who cares for the children and the home.

As…As that question was asked, let’s go say 30 years ago, 1977, the answer was forty-three percent. Go back another twenty years, and it was a higher percent. And I’m afraid that ten years from now if this same question is asked, it might be twenty percent. As this interest in marriage continues to decline, and as this sense that the family is a father who provides and a mother who cares for the home and the children disappears from life. But whatever is happening in the culture, the Bible doesn’t change. A father and a mother who are married have children. The father provides and the mother cares for the home and the children. That is the biblical definition of marriage and the family.

Go back with me for a minute to Deuteronomy 6, just as a sort of preliminary thought before we look at Ephesians chapter 6. But in Deuteronomy chapter 6, when you have God establishing His people in the land, it gives them a formula for life. And we will pick it up with very familiar words in verse 4, the *Shema*, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” This is instruction for the fact that a family is to be under the control of parents who continually make the dominating influence of that home the Word of God. Writing it on your hands means that you view all your labors through a biblical perspective. Putting it on your head, as it were, means you view life, it’s a world view symbol through the eyes of Scripture.

We are to be that kind of people in the world today, people who raise children who are submissive to, obedient to the Word of God. Every Christian home should be a place where Scripture dominates, where it is talked about when you stand up, sit down, walk in the way, or lie down. Pervasive exposure to the truth of God should dominate a Christian family. And I’m afraid that even in so-called Christian families, that’s not happening…a lot of other things tend to dominate. Television tends to dominate, computers, athletics, social issues, pop culture, you name it.

But the plan of God hasn’t changed. Let’s go then to the sixth chapter of Ephesians with just that as kind of a sort of introduction point and take a look at this fourth verse which is so important about parenting. Now remember that we started out with the submission of the wife to the husband. Then we went to the submission of the husband to the wife, his submission takes the form of his love for her. He submits to do whatever is beneficial and blessing to her, that’s his submission. Children submit to their parents. We went through that based upon Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12, “Obey your parents,” we saw that. That is critically important. Parents are to make sure, and this is implied, that their children learn to be obedient to them. That’s part of training your children. Children are not naturally going to obey their parents…not at all. They must be taught respect and they must be taught obedience and they must be disciplined for disobedience and disrespect. That’s implied in verses 1 to 3. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, first of all, how would children know what was expected of them, connected to the Lord, unless the instruction that is given as I read to you in Deuteronomy 6 was imposed upon them.

And if I can just play off of that for a minute and say this, we have had decades now of this pervasive lie of self-esteem, that what you’re supposed to teach your children is how good they are, how great they are, how noble they are, how unique they are, how clever they are, how powerful they are because they can do anything they want to do and be anything they want to be. That’s what you’re

supposed to tell your children. And the theories of that bizarre kind of self-esteem philosophy that started in the seventies and took root in the eighties, the theory is that if you teach your children self-esteem, and this is what we were told, they'll be better people, they'll feel better about themselves because their rebellious behavior, their bad behavior, their criminal behavior is all because they don't know how wonderful they are. So, the argument really was well designed in the eighties. We can reduce crime, we can reduce unwanted pregnancies, we can reduce drugs, we can reduce school failure, we can reduce pollution, they even reached into the environmental area, if we just get young people to think more highly of themselves. So now what we have is no change in any of that for the good, all of that is far worse and we have an epidemic of liars.

We have a world full of people who lie about themselves, lie about their capabilities, lie about their achievements, lie about what they're worthy of, and it's all good. All the good science, by the way, is now beginning to say that this is a horrible experiment. It is a disastrous experiment. Here we are 30 some years later and the young generation is worse than they've ever been. They now have the idea that they're entitled to whatever they want because they're worthy of it. They're entitled to have all their needs met, all their wants, all their desires fulfilled. And they're entitled to have whatever money they want, whatever job they want, whatever accolades they want, whatever elevation they want, whatever respect they want, just because they're worthy of it. And we have a whole generation of conceited liars and hypocrites, and self-promoting people, the opposite of the kind that serve the public good even in a secular sense. What happens in a self-esteem culture is that everybody wants to look good and feel good so people lie about everything, the opposite of the right thing.

So how do we raise our children? How do we do it? Well, it's all basically boiled down to one verse, verse 4, just this one verse. "Don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Now in the church, this was clear, in the early church, the church to which the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesus and the church in general, this was clear because they would have followed the Old Testament pattern, as I laid it out in Deuteronomy. They would have been very familiar with probably the instruction for parenting that is in the book of Proverbs, the Jewish people, the Jewish believers in every city and certainly in Jerusalem would have known Proverbs. They would have known was required in the Old Testament for parenting. And it wouldn't have taken very long for the Gentile churches to wake up to what the Scripture said about parenting. And they would want to know that because in Paul's day, there existed some attitudes toward children that were really very, very abusive. If you think there's child abuse today, try this on.

There was a Roman—basically a Roman law called the *Patria Potestes* in Latin. *Patria Potestes*, that is in English the father's power. The father had unilateral and absolute power of life and death over his children. A Roman father had so much power over his family that he could sell any family member as a slave. He could make any family member or all of them work in the fields, even in chains. He

could take the law into his own hands, he could punish any family member with his own hands, or even inflict the death penalty on a family member. And he had this right as long as he lived. No age limit, on the father's absolute control.

In reading the ancient literature when a child was born into that…that world at that time, the child would be brought before the father's feet and if the father stooped to life the child, that was the sign that he acknowledged had a right to live. If he turned and walked away, the child would be thrown away.

There is an amazing letter that comes from 1 B.C. from a man named Hilarion to his wife named Alis, A-l-i-s in the transliteration. This is the letter that the archaeologist found. Here's how it goes translated into English. Hilarion to Alis, his wife, heartiest greetings.

Ladies, when you get a letter that starts like that from your husband, your marriage is in trouble. Heartiest greetings. Well, that's a sort of British interpretation of whatever it was he said. And we might think that some English husbands might say, "Heartiest greetings, my dear." But nonetheless, the letter goes on.

"Know that we are still even now in Alexandria," he was away, he was a soldier. "Do not worry if when all others return I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech you to take care of the little child and as soon as we receive wages, I will send them to you if good luck to you, you have a child and if it is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, throw it out." That's the letter that is extant from the first century. Unwanted children were commonly left in the forum. They were collected at night and then people had them as slaves. They stocked the prostitution houses of Rome and they became chattel, human tools for slave owners. Seneca wrote, "We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge the knife into the sickliest cattle, children who were born weak and deformed we drown…we drown." That's the world, that's the Mediterranean world of the New Testament era.

Into that world comes the instruction of the Word of God very much like the Old Testament. The children, of course, are to obey their parents in the Lord and they will be quantitatively blessed with long life and qualitatively blessed because it is a command with a promise. And parents are to take seriously the responsibility of parenting and not ever provoke their children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This was very counter-culture and you just need to understand that.

Now let's take the word "fathers" there, *patera* it is the word for fathers. But as I said, it can be extended beyond fathers to embrace parents, and it's used that way of the…in Hebrews 11 of the parents of Moses. But the father is this symbol of the parental responsibility because he's the lead parent. Thus *patera* strongly places him in the place of leadership in the home. And we all understand that because that is consistently indicated throughout Scripture. I don't want to go through this again

but in Proverbs, for example, chapter 4, “Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father. When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, then he taught me and said to me.” This was the dominating pattern, the father, the mother along with it, Proverbs also talk about follow the wisdom of your mother, but the father takes the lead. He is the one responsible for teaching the children. Both are to be involved, but it is the father’s primary responsibility. He will be held, I believe, accountable to God for that instruction, to give prudence, to give knowledge and discretion to the young. That’s how Proverbs begins.

We might say, borrowing from the example of our Lord that we want to bring up a child mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. Remember that? Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. That’s those four categories. Parents then have this responsibility of raising their children in the nurture and the admonition in the Lord.

Just a little insight into the affects that the culture sees on children that are most beneficial. There was a study done at Harvard University some years ago and that study has been a very definitive study and what that study discovered was crucial factors in predicting delinquency and predicting delinquency in children five and six. They took a sampling of children at the ages of five and six, and they did surveys of those children and the homes they were in and out of that they predicted delinquency.

They checked the children four years later and they found that 90 percent of their predictions were accurate. In other words, by what they saw at five and six they could determine the future and be 90 percent accurate. They said there are four necessary factors to prevent discipline. This is what showed up. And by the way, tests like this are very interesting because they demonstrate reality and they will correspond to Scripture because God knows reality and therefore when you see reality it will match the Scripture. Here’s what the necessary factors were to prevent delinquency.

Number one, the father’s discipline. The father’s discipline. And it went on to say fair and consistent. Two, the mother’s supervision…the mother’s supervision. The mother was with the children. Where the children were and with the children when they were doing whatever activities they did. Thirdly, the mother’s and father’s affection for each other demonstrated. The mother’s and father’s affection for each other demonstrated. And fourthly, the family’s cohesiveness, father, mother, children united together in life. That is revolutionary in our current climate .

A father’s discipline, a mother’s regular consistent daily supervision, a father and mother’s affection for each other demonstrated, and family cohesiveness, time spent together. Where that existed you had a healthy whole child.

Another test was done by a medical doctor and a book was written called Christian Child-Rearing and Personality Development, this is a man named Paul Meyer. And his study revealed this, and this is

quite interesting. Five things are essential to right parent/child relationships…five things. One, love…love, dominating love in a home. Parents love for each other, parents love for the children. Two, discipline…discipline. Regular and again, just and firm discipline. Three, consistency…consistency. And when Paul Meyer looked at this issue of consistency, it was not just consistency in discipline, it was consistency in standards, principles, responses, rules, reactions so that the child doesn't get punished one time for something and get away with it another time. A standard isn't set here and then violated here. Love, discipline, consistency and the fourth, said Dr. Meyer, was example. In healthy families parents do not expect children to live up to standards they themselves don't adhere to. Parents should never expect their children to live up to standards they themselves do not observe. And then number five in guaranteeing a healthy, parent, child relation, a man at the head of the home.

There's a comment made in that book, "The vast majority of neurotics, both children and adults, grew up in homes where there was no father or the father was absent or the father was weak, or the mother was domineering. So again, when the world looks at parenting, this is what it comes up with from a medical viewpoint, from a sociological viewpoint, the absolute importance of these things. This is reality because that's all consistent with what the Bible says. Love, discipline, consistency, example, a man in the home, father's discipline, mother's supervision, mother and father with affection for each other, family togetherness, that's all biblical. That's all what we saw in verses 22 to 33 in a marriage. So that's what sort of undergirds the simple statement of verse 4.

Now let's take that statement in verse 4 and just look at it practically for a minute. First there's a negative statement, "Don't provoke your children to anger. Don't provoke your children to anger." Don't make them mad. There is a parallel statement, Colossians 3:21, "Don't exasperate your children so that they will not lose heart." Don't exasperate them, provoke them. By the way, the verb "provoke," *parorgizo,* is an intense form of to make angry. It means to create an irritation that angers them. Don't do what angers your children. What exasperates them. What frustrates them. What embitters them. What disheartens them.

Now you have a delicate balance here because you have to exercise authority, you have to exercise discipline, you have to establish standards, you have to hold them to those standards. Discipline has to be corporeal, you spare the rod, you spoil the child. So you're disciplining in a physical way. How do you discipline and not cross a line to frustrate your children? How does a parent end up provoking children and making them angry and consequently creating bitterness, animosity, conflict, hostility in the home and having the kids bolt and destroy the relationship that the parent wants with them?

Let me just talk to you a little bit as a father here, a little practicality. Here are a number of ways that you can really irritate your children. Number one, by overprotection…by overprotection. Fence them in, never trust them, never give them opportunity to develop independence, mock their decisions, you must take some risks. You cannot deprive them of all freedom. You cannot take away all their

independence. Deprivation will instill an angry mood in a child, especially when they compare themselves to the freedoms that other children have. They will not read that as love. They will not read that as for their benefit. They will read that as abusive. They are people. They have been created in the image of God. They are the special care of God. God has a plan in their lives and while you are to bring them to the knowledge of the gospel and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and bring them under the power of the Holy Spirit as much as you can be the instrument by which God does that, you do not have to be God in their lives. Giving them wisdom and insight and input and when they're young, disciplining them and teaching them by that discipline to make wise decisions, to make noble reactions even to disappointing things, that's fine. But you must allow them to express themselves little by little. And even when they have a really dumb idea and make a dumb comment from time to time, affirm that that's a wonderful insight, at least at the point at which they are in life. Encourage them to think for themselves. Encourage them to make decisions. Allow them to feel some of the pain of a bad decision. Don't over-protect them, you'll strangle them and they'll become bitter.

Another way that you can frustrate your children, exasperate them and provoke them to anger is by favoritism. There are a lot of illustrations of this, even, of course, in Scripture. Isaac favored Esau over Jacob, Rebecca favored Jacob over Esau. The sad results are well known to everybody. Favoritism is a very, very bad thing in a family. It will cause a child to become angry and bitter if that child is not treated equally to the others. You don't want to say to your children, "Why can't you be like your older sister?" "We don't have any problem with your brother, why are you the way you are?" That kind of brow-beating depreciating, downgrading will cause deep hurt and frustration. I even have had my grandchildren say to me, "Papa, who's your favorite grandchild?" Have you ever have yours ask you that? Who's your favorite? And my answer might range from, "Well right now you are," to "I love you all the same." It's one thing to say that, it's got to be demonstrated.

Just running through some thoughts. You can also provoke your children to wrath by pushing achievement…pushing achievement unrealistically. There are many, many parents, sometimes in the academic area, sometimes in athletic area, other areas of success, sometimes socially, who literally crush their children with pressure to excel, whether it's in school, academics, activities, sports, whatever it might be. The pressure is so profound that the child is crushed. I never think of this without remembering a girl many years ago in our church, I remember her vividly and Patricia would remember her as well. She ended up in the padded cell at UCLA in a strait jacket. She was about 17, beautiful young girl. And I heard about it because I knew her and so I went to visit her at the hospital and I remember the conversation that I had at the psyche ward at UCLA. They said, "Well you can't come in." And she's in a special cell and nobody can see her but a psychiatrist because you might do damage to her and I had some kind of response, "Well how much damage can you do additionally to pump somebody who's in a padded cell? I'm the pastor from her church and I think I can help."

Well they told me she's catatonic, she's in a catatonic state which means she's glazed over, she just stares into space and doesn't respond. I said, "Well, please, I want to see her," and I was pressing

the issue. And I said, “I promise you I won’t do any damage.”

I’ll never forget, I went in, there was a bed in the place and I sat on the bed, I said her name and I said, “Hi, how are you?” She looked right at me and just in her normal voice she said, “Not so well.” So much for the catatonic state. Found out she was so profoundly traumatized because she couldn’t achieve academically what her parents wanted her to achieve. And the only way she could escape was to pretend to be completely insane, which she wasn’t. I had a conversation with her. I had another conversation with her. It’s clear that she could talk to me just like always talked to me.

They let her out of the hospital. In a few weeks she took her life. She couldn’t be what her parents wanted her to be. And it was so extreme that this beautiful young girl ended her life. That’s the most extreme illustration but a very personal one. Children will become bitter trying to live up to unrealistic and foolish expectations of parents. They won’t be happy. They won’t be joyful. Let them be what they’re capable of being. Encourage them. Don’t force them for the sake of your own pride to be high achievers. That will provoke them to anger.

Another way that parents provoke their children to anger is by discouragement…by discouragement. No rewards, no approval, no honor, no affection. That’s very hard on children. They desperately want approval. And guess who they want it from most? From Mom and Dad. They need to hear, “That’s wonderful, that’s great. You’ve done a terrific job at that.” You don’t gain any ground by tearing down. Look for ways to reward your children. Look for ways to honor them. Look for ways to elevate them. Genuine ways, not artificial ways.

Another way you can provoke your children to anger is by failing to sacrifice for them…by failing to sacrifice for them. Sacrifice your own agenda, your own time, your own schedule, your own plans, your own possessions for them. If you don’t make sacrifices for your children, then they’re going to be convinced that they’re nothing but an intrusion. And they’ll resent you. They’re just burdens. I mean, it can come down to something that you think you need but you know your child has a desire for something and you sacrifice what you think you need for what you know is in the heart of that child. That sends a very important message to that child, that you’re not an intrusion, you’re more important to me than I am. Because you’re the parent, it’s easy to be the bully in the home and it’s easy for you to fulfill all the things that you want and give little thought to the desires of the hearts of the children. Never make children feel like they’re the second-class citizens, they’re intruding into your life. Take them to places they want to go and don’t say, “I don’t have time for you, I can’t be bothered with that.” Or they will resent you.

Another way that you can provoke your children to wrath is by failing to allow for growing up. Let them make mistakes. Let them goof up. Let them be ridiculous. Let them have ridiculous ideas. Don’t condemn them. Don’t expect perfection, just look for progress.

Another way that you could provoke your children to anger is by neglect…by neglect. A neglected child would be an angry child. Never use withdrawal of fellowship, withdrawal of affection, withdrawal of love from anybody as a means of punishment. And remember that lack of discipline is a form of neglect. This is a great sin today, neglecting children…neglecting to discipline them, neglecting to love them, neglecting to sacrifice for them.

And another way that you can provoke your children, this is pretty obvious, by bitter words…bitter words, physical cruelty. You have the word power to devastate your children. You can put devastating words together that they can't match you. They can be crushing and you can make them angry by physical cruelty.

Well those are just some practical things to think about. You have the responsibility to discipline your children in a context of love, but you don't want to step over the line. One writer put it this way, "If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to trust. If a child lives with approval, he learns to accept himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns how to find love in the world."

So that's the negative side. Don't provoke them to wrath. Now, let's just a comment or two about the positive. Back to verse 4.

"Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord," or nurture and admonition as the old versions say. Bring them up, bring them up, they won't get there on their own. That's a verb that tells you what you need to do, bring them up, raise them. That's why we talk about raising children, growing children. It's an enterprise. And you could go back to Deuteronomy 6 and what did we read in Deuteronomy 6? What are the components that God places in that text inside families. One, recognize God as supreme, the Lord is One. That's how you raise them up. Recognize God as supreme. And then love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And then obey His Word. And then teach by example. That's all in Deuteronomy 6. And then constantly use life as the classroom, when you stand up, lie down, sit down, walk in the way. And then leave reminders about the priority of God's Word everywhere, all around the house. Put it on your doorpost, put it on your hands, put it on your head. And Deuteronomy 6, verses 10 to 12 ends that passage by saying, "Warn them…warn them about the evil around them in the world." Now there's a formula. Go back to Deuteronomy 6:4 to 12, recognize God as supreme, love God, obey His Word, teach by example, use life as a classroom, leave reminders around of the divine priorities, and warn them about the world and its evil.

Bring them up that way. Bring them up in the discipline…the discipline, *paideia…paideia,* a word used for training children, instructing children, teaching children. Used in Hebrews 12 for discipline, “Whom the Lord loves He disciplines. Whom the Lord loves He chastens.” So what is discipline? It is training by rules…listen…training by rules and regulations enforced by rewards and punishment. That’s discipline. Training by rules and regulations enforced by rewards and punishment. That simple…that simple. That’s discipline.

Well what is the next word? Verse 4, Instruction, *nuthaseia(?)*, it means verbal teaching. So the first is kind of what you do. You establish rules and you hold them to the rules and you reward them when they obey them, and you punish them when they don’t. This is verbal instruction. This is what you say specifically to the child, the instruction that comes from the Lord. But simply, you teach them the Word of God. Teach them what God wants them to know. And you start with recognizing that they’re unregenerate.

I mentioned last time if there’s a strange doctrine kind of a minority doctrine in Reformed Theology called Presumptive Regeneration which says that if a child has been baptized as an infant, you can presume they’re regenerate. That’s a foolish concept. To presume that a child is regenerate is to defy what Scripture says, that they’re all born sinners and that sin has to be confronted and driven out of them with discipline…as well as instruction. Children are in desperate need of salvation and then after salvation, sanctification.

So the instruction is, regarding salvation and then sanctification.

Well, if we are faithful to do these things, we have done all that we can do to invest in our children. One father summed it up this way. “If I were starting my family again, I would love my wife more in front of my children, I would laugh with my children more at our mistakes and joys, I would listen more, even to the smallest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending to be better. I would pray differently for my family, rather than focusing on them, I would focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would do more encouraging. I would bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to the little things, deeds and words of kindness and thankfulness. But mostly—said this father—I would love God more, every day seeking to adore Him in front of them.” This is how Spirit-filled parents raise their children. This is a goal for all of us. Let’s pray.

Father, we thank You that we’ve been able again tonight to open Your Word, talk just practically and simply about such a crucial area. We have such little hope for families I our world today, in a culture of people who are totally disinterested in what the Word of God says who are consumed with their own selfish desires, who have no interest in a biblical pattern for family, no interest in the biblical model, no interest in Your divine commands, no interest really in what kind of children there are in

future generations. It seems impossible to stem the tide, to change the course, to alter the world and it is. But You haven't asked us to do that. You've asked us to be the church, to be the church. And so we can pray that we as the church, the true church of Jesus Christ will be the kind of Christians, the kind of husbands, the kind of wives, the kind of parents and the kind of children who will model the blessedness of Spirit-filled family life so that we can show the world something pure, something wonderful, something rich, something rewarding, something satisfying, fulfilling, joyous in our families, something that makes the gospel attractive and Christ attractive, something that will captivate the heart of the lonely and the isolated and the forgotten and the abused and the rebellious. Show them a better life, a better way. May we not only be Christians in the world, but may we be Christian families in the world. And may our attractiveness draw people to the gospel and to the Savior. And this we ask for Your glory. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).