

## The Foundation For Parenting • Ephesians 6:1-4

### Parenting Series # 2

#### I. INTRODUCTION

##### **A. 18 Lbs.**

1. Last year nearly 8 million people in this country began a new phase of their lives; they became parents!
2. But many of them weren't at all prepared for the change.
3. Take for instance the man who was left in charge of his infant child while his wife went grocery shopping.
4. It was the first time he'd been left to care for the little guy and was at a loss to know what to do.
5. When the mother return from shopping she went in to the nursery to find the child bawling and her husband standing over the crib, sweating.
6. She instantly realized the problem from the stench in the air.
7. Feeling the diaper, she could tell it had been filled several times over.
8. She asked, "Honey, why didn't you change the diaper?"
9. He held up the box of Huggies that was on the changing table and pointed to the words, "Good for up to 18 lbs."

##### **B. Prepared for Parenting**

1. Having a child is a monumental step in life.
2. And many people are terrified by the idea of becoming a parent and taking on the responsibility of raising a child.
3. As couples and single moms face the challenge of being a parent, they will often seek out insight and training.
4. Capitalizing on this need, many books have been written and classes on how to excel at parenting have been formed.
5. Unfortunately, a large portion of this material is based on the wisdom and research of man rather than the wisdom and counsel of God.
6. God created us, and parenting is His idea.
  - a. it's God who fashioned Adam and Eve and told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth

- b. He's not left us without direction in how to raise our children
  - c. in fact, a good part of the Bible is instruction on parenting
7. As always, it's our task to discover what God's direction is, so it's His Word we'll use as our text & guide in this series.

## II. THE PURPOSE & GOAL OF PARENTING

### A. *The Purpose of Parenting*

1. It's always best to begin at the beginning – which in this case means discovering what the purpose and the goal of parenting is.
  - 1 **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**
  - 2 **“Honor your father and mother,”** which is the first commandment with promise:
  - 3 **“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”**
  - 4 **And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**
2. This passage will be the focus of our study throughout this series.
  - a. it speaks to both children and parents
  - b. but even the first 3 verses, which are directed to children, are *taught* by who?
  - c. right – by their parents!
3. It's in v. 4 that we discover the basic *purpose* of parenting
  - 4 **And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**
4. The purpose of parenting is found in that phrase, “*bring them up*”
  - a. this is God's mandate for parents –
  - b. “Bring up your sons and daughters”
5. Don't be concerned about the reference to *just* fathers here.
  - a. it's understood as applying to both parents when we see it in it's historical context.
  - b. when the Apostle Paul wrote this, *fathers* in the Greco-Roman

- world played little to no part in the life of their families.
- c. there wasn't much affection between a man and his wife / and children were considered as little more than burdens
  - d. it fell completely to the *mother* to raise the children.
6. When Paul directs *fathers* to take an active role in the raising of their children, he's calling them to *partner with their wives* in the task of parenting.
  7. To give you an idea of just how lightly children were esteemed in the world of that day, let me share with you the contents of a letter found by archaeologists some years ago in the ruins of Alexandria.
    - a. a man left his home on a business venture while his wife was pregnant.
    - b. he thought he'd return before the delivery but when he was delayed,
    - c. he sent a letter back with these instructions, "If it's a boy, keep it. If it's a girl, throw it out."
  8. The abandoning of newborns was a common practice in the ancient world.
    - a. every city had a designated location where people would take unwanted children and leave them exposed.
    - b. other people would come and take the children and raise them as their own, or as more often the case, they would take them and make them slaves.
    - c. what infants weren't taken in became prey for wild animals.
  9. Under Roman law, as long as a father lived, he had *absolute* authority and power over the life of his children –
    - a. even adult sons and daughters.
    - b. he could even go so far as to execute them without fear of reprisal from the law!
  10. Such was the attitude toward children in most of the ancient world – they were seen as a *burden*.
  11. But there was one nation that was an exception to this – the Jews.
    - a. far from children being seen as a *burden*, God's Word described them as a *blessing*.
    - b. "*be fruitful and multiply*" was God's *original* command • Gen. 1:28
    - c. among the many passages which refer to children as a blessing,

Psalm 127 stands out

- 3 Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.**
- 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children of one's youth.**
- 5 Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them . . .**

12. As the influence of Christianity spread throughout the Greco-Roman world, people's attitudes toward children changed dramatically.

- a. in fact, Christians became known as the ones who took in the abandoned infants, not to raise them as slaves, but to adopt them as their own children.
- b. it was Christians who established the first orphanages
- c. and the idea of what it meant to be a *father* took on an entirely new dimension

13. And all because those first Christians sought to put in to practice what God's word says about children and about the role of parents.

14. So when Paul speaks to fathers in v. 4, he is not *excluding* mothers; rather, he is calling upon fathers to *join with their wives* in the raising of their children

- a. it's critical that parents be united and agreed in the raising of their children
- b. it will often happen that a man and woman will marry and have children and then, based on how they were raised, they will emulate that parenting style with their children
- c. but those styles are different, and they butt heads – parenting can be a huge source of turmoil in a marriage.
- d. it's right here that a father and mother can resolve their differences
  - 1) follow what this passage says
  - 2) instead of each of you insisting on your *own* ideas on parenting,
  - 3) discover what God says, and follow *His* plan – take *His* counsel.

- 4) end the parenting-style conflict by following agreeing to take God's direction in the raising of your children.
15. This is God's *mandate* to parents –
- the very *purpose* of parenting.
  - to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”
16. The words “bring them up” translate one word in Greek = “ektrepho” (ek-tref-oh)
- it means to *nourish up to maturity*
  - to *cherish with direction*
  - it captures the idea of a long process that begins when something is weak and feeble and then tenderly provides whatever is needed until it attains its own secure standing.
17. I remember teaching my children how to ride a bike
- I would put them on a kiddie bike that was small enough for them and had training wheels.
  - but even with training wheels, they wobbled a bit on the seat, so I literally hovered over them.
  - they had no experience in pushing on the pedals and at first lacked the coordination to push forward and down and then alternate their legs.
  - so with one arm around them, I would push down on their little foot
  - I was all over the place, trying to keep them on the seat, the handlebars pointed in the right direction, their feet turning the pedals!!!!!!
  - but as they picked it up, I backed off my direction and guidance and let them take more and more control of riding.
  - my oldest son is 19 and next week we take the training wheels off his bike!
  - seriously, each of my children took different lengths of time to become comfortable riding their bike.
  - I had to tailor my assistance to their unique needs
18. This is what it means to “*bring them up*” - we need to provide *whatever assistance* our child needs to grow to maturity, to find the direction God intends them to take.
19. Take careful note of the *intimacy* this word portrays.
- synonyms for *ektrepho* are “nourish” and “cherish”
  - this speaks of tenderness and diligent care

- c. which stands in opposition to the kind of parenting that provokes our children to anger.
- d. look at the first part of v. 4 . . .

**4     **And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.****

- e. if I may paraphrase, “You fathers, don’t neglect your children as the rest of the world does, and so treat them with such harshness because you see them as nothing more than burdens to be endured. If you treat them this way, it will provoke them to anger and hostility back at you. Instead, cherish your children and take an active hand in raising them to become all that God intends them to be.”
  - f. that is really the thrust of what Paul is saying in v. 4
  - g. that is the purpose of parenting – to bring children up in the Lord.
20. Mom, Dad; God has given you a sacred commission, a holy task – Bring up your Children!
- a. you have been given a precious gift – a human being, created in the image of God for His glory
  - b. that child is so precious to God, Jesus died for him or her!
  - c. there is no gift God gives that is more precious than a child.
  - d. and so, because of that gift, that precious resource God has given you, you are a steward
  - e. and we know what God expects of stewards – faithfulness!
21. As Paul makes so abundantly clear in v. 4, Parents are to take an active role in raising their children.
- a. this job cannot be *deferred* or passed on to someone else
  - b. a mother or father may *delegate* a part or portion of their duty to helpers, but they cannot *defer* their responsibility to raise their child
22. Many parents today think that it’s someone else’s job to raise their children
- a. they try to defer their responsibility to the school or the church.
  - b. they think it’s the job of child-care to raise their child.
23. But it isn’t – the mother and father are responsible for raising their children.

- a. they may *delegate* the school to teach *certain subjects* to their son or daughter -
  - b. but who's responsible for their EDUCATION?
  - c. a parent may delegate the Sunday School at church to teach some spiritual truths to their child –
  - d. but who's responsible for their MORAL DEVELOPMENT?
  - e. parents may need to place their child in day-care and delegate the workers the task of overseeing the child for a few hours a day –
  - f. but who's responsible for the child's SOCIAL MATURITY?
24. A book came out a few years ago titled, *It Takes A Village* which advocated a kind of *socialized* parenting.
- a. parents were presented as important -
  - b. but *greater* emphasis was placed on the role of the whole of society taking on the task of raising children.
  - c. Paul refutes that idea and places the responsibility for raising children with their parents!
25. In raising their children, parents may use many tools, but they realize they cannot duck or defer the RESPONSIBILITY for parenting to someone else.
26. So again , the purpose of parenting is to Bring Them Up In The Lord!
27. Parenting is an *active* participation in the life of a child that begins at conception and progresses all the way to the point of maturity – when a child is able ride the bicycle called life on their own to the destination God has ordained for them.

## **B. The Goal of Parenting**

1. Next we turn to the GOAL of parenting.
  2. Now that we know it's purpose – we ask where it's headed.
  3. The goal is also found here in v. 4
- 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**
4. We'll be looking at these words “training and admonition” in our study next week.
  5. For now, notice the character of this training and admonition – it's

“of the Lord.”

6. What is it the Lord wants parents to train and admonish their children *toward*?
7. The answer is given in vs. 1-3 again . . .
- 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**
- 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:**
- 3 “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”**
  - a. while these words are aimed at children,
  - b. it’s the parents who have the task of *teaching* them!
8. Vs. 1-3 tell us that the basic duty of children is *obedience* and *respect*
9. That’s what we’ll take a look at in our last study of the series.
10. So here’s the goal of parenting – to teach obedience and respect!

### **C. Success**

1. Let’s recap because it’s critical we understand the foundation for parenting.
2. The *purpose* of parenting is to *Bring Children Up In The Lord*.
3. The *goal* of parenting is to teach children *Obedience* and *Respect*.
  - a. I realize this is all pretty straightforward and that most of you already know this
  - b. this isn’t some kind of earthshaking revelation
  - c. but it’s right at this point, as we speak of the GOAL of parenting that we need to be careful.
4. I would ask that you note something important at this point:
  - a. I did not say the goal of parenting is obedient and respectful *children*.
  - b. of course we would all rejoice if our children did turn out respectful and obedient
  - c. we hope and pray for that
  - d. but we must be careful to differentiate between our faithfulness as parents and the faithfulness of our children.
5. If we measure our success as parents by how our sons and

- daughters turn out, we may be using a false criteria.
6. God determines our success on whether or not *we've* been faithful to bring our children up according to His counsel and direction, not on how they respond.
  7. As John MacArthur says, “The outcome of a child, as a factor taken by itself, is no reliable gauge of the parent’s success.”<sup>[1]</sup>
  8. He goes on to say, “The true measure of success for Christian parents is the parent’s *own* character. To the degree *we* have followed God’s design for parenting, we have succeeded as parents before God.”<sup>[2]</sup>
  9. Many people today are concerned over an educational philosophy called OBE – Outcome Based Education
    - a. the bottom line of OBE is *results, outcomes* – of getting certain things *out of* students
    - b. because results are the *bottom line*, the *means* of education are manipulated to accomplish the ends
    - c. it’s the old, “the ends justify the means” idea all over again.
  10. A lot of parents use OBP – Outcome Based Parenting
    - a. they want obedient and respectful children
    - b. they make this their primary aim and use *whatever* means available to accomplish it
  11. Biblical parenting isn’t an OBP program.
    - a. success in parenting isn’t measured by what *children* do;
    - b. it’s measured by what *parents* do in the raising of their children.
  12. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”
    - a. many people misunderstand this verse to be an iron-clad promise that if we apply the right means – our children will grow up to be godly men and women
    - b. as a result, many parents who’ve endeavored to faithfully follow God’s counsel in the raising of their children have been devastated when their children walked away from the Lord in their adult years.
    - c. they consider themselves abject failures as parents because of the way their son or daughter turned out.
  13. They misunderstand the *nature* of the Proverbs
    - a. Proverbs are not *promises* from God

- b. they're wise sayings about the character and nature of life.
  - c. rather than seeing the Proverbs as unchangeable rules, they are meant to be understood as truisms, as maxims and basic principles.
14. For example, 2 verses prior to 22:6 we read this, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor, and life."
- a. we certainly can't take *that* as an iron-clad promise!
  - b. while it's generally true, there are exceptions,
  - c. and in fact, when we see an exception, we're surprised BECAUSE we expect the principle the proverb articulates to be true.
  - d. the exception proves the rule – if you will.
  - e. while it's *generally* true that humility and a fear of the Lord will result in success in living, scripture is filled with warnings that the godly will suffer persecution and even be put to death.
  - f. you see, the Proverbs are not meant to be individual, specific promises of cause and effect, but wise sayings about the basic principles that under gird life.
15. So as we look at Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."
- what we see is not a *rule* but a *principle*; and that principle is this: If parents bring up their children in the way God directs, then the direction their parenting has been leading them to will be taken when the child matures.
16. But parents must diligently guard themselves from aiming their parenting at the child's outcome, at their behavior.
17. Behavior is the feedback we need to use in training and admonishing them in the Lord.
18. Let me say it again -
- a. success in parenting isn't measured by what *children* do;
  - b. it's measured by what *parents* do in the raising of their children.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. A Picture of Daddy

1. The pastor of a church in the Midwest asked the teacher of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Sunday School class to have his students draw a picture of God.

2. The pastor was going to preach the next week on people's ideas about God and compare them with scripture.
3. So the children went to work and drew all kinds of things
  - a. some drew rainbows
  - b. others drew big, bright clouds
  - c. a couple drew giants with huge hands
  - d. but one girl drew a picture of an ordinary looking man wearing shorts, sandals and a Hawaiian shirt.
4. When the teacher asked her whom it was she said, "I don't know what God looks like, so I just drew my daddy instead."
5. In parenting, God invites mothers and fathers to experience Him in a new way.
  - a. as we faithfully follow His direction as parents,
  - b. we begin to understand our relationship to Him much better.
  - c. the things we look and long for in our children, we realize God looks and longs for in us.
6. It's by raising children that we understand the Father-heart of God so much better.
7. And then we find that we start seeing Him as the ideal, the model we are to base our parenting on.
8. As our young children look to us, what they ought to see is the love, truth, tenderness and security of their Heavenly Father.

## ***B. Practical***

1. I know that what we look for in a series like this is practical tools we can take home and use right away.
2. Today's message was not about the tools but about the *blueprint* for parenting
3. I have lots of tools in my garage.
4. Now I could take out my tools, grab a piece of wood and get to work – but the question is; Making What?
5. Any project begins with the goal clearly in mind.
6. Let's face it – many people today have no idea what God's purpose and goal for parenting is – that's why we had to begin here.
7. In the next two studies we'll hand out some tools, but let's end today by making sure we realize what the purpose and goal of parenting is.

8. The Purpose of Parenting is to Bring Children Up In The Lord
  - a. and we've seen that what the NT means by that is to *tenderly* and *actively* direct them from conception to maturity in the path of God
  - b. parents are given a holy commission and as such are stewards of the precious gift of their children
  - c. as with all stewards, what's required is faithfulness
9. The Goal of Parenting is to *Teach* obedience and respect.
10. Now that we've laid the *foundation* for parenting, next week we'll look at the *focus* of parenting and see what the Bible means by the training and admonition of the Lord.

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[1] MacArthur, John, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, pg. 17

[2] *ibid*