

The Means of Parenting • Ephesians 6:4 • Series #4

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Are You Ready To Have Kids?

1. There's a test prospective parents can now take to see if they're ready to have kids.
2. There are 8 parts to it. It goes like this: You're supposed to see if you can endure certain challenges . . .

1. The MESS TEST:

- Smear peanut butter on the sofa and curtains.
- Place a fish stick behind the couch and leave it there all summer.

2. The TOY TEST:

- Obtain a 55 gallon drum of Legos (if Legos are not available, you may substitute roofing tacks).
- Have a friend spread them all over the house.
- Put on a blindfold.
- Try to walk to the bathroom or kitchen.
- Do not scream (this could wake a child at night).

3. The GROCERY STORE TEST:

- Borrow one or two small animals (goats are best) and take them with you as you shop at the grocery store.
- Always keep them in sight and pay for anything they eat or damage.

4. The DRESSING TEST:

- Obtain one large, unhappy, live octopus (they turn bright red when they are unhappy).
- Stuff into a small net bag making sure that all arms stay inside.

5. The FEEDING TEST:

- Obtain a large plastic milk jug and fill it halfway with water.
- Suspend it from the ceiling with a stout cord.
- Start the jug swinging. Try to insert spoonfuls of soggy cereal

(such as Fruit Loops or Cheerios) into the mouth of the jug, while pretending to be an airplane.

- Now dump the contents of the jug on the floor.

6. The NIGHT TEST:

- Prepare by obtaining a small cloth bag and fill it with 8-12 pounds of sand.
- Soak it thoroughly in water.
- At 8:00 p.m. begin to waltz and hum with the bag until 9:00 p.m.
- Lay down your bag and set your alarm for 10:00 p.m.
- Get up, pick up your bag, and sing every song you have ever heard.
- Make up about a dozen more and sing these too until 4:00 a.m.
- Set alarm for 5:00 a.m.
- Get up and make breakfast.
- Keep this up for five years.
- Look cheerful.

7. PHYSICAL TEST (for women):

- Obtain a large bean bag chair and attach it to the front of your clothes.
- Leave it there for 9 months.
- Then remove ten of the beans.

PHYSICAL TEST (for men):

- Go to the nearest drug store.
- Set your wallet on the counter.
- Ask the clerk to help himself.
- Now proceed to the nearest food store.
- Go to the head office and arrange for your paycheck to be directly deposited to the store.
- Purchase a newspaper. Go home and read it quietly for the last time.

8. The FINAL:

- Find a couple who already have a small child.
- Lecture them on how they can improve their discipline,

- patience, tolerance, toilet training and child's table manners.
- Suggest many ways they can improve.
 - Emphasize to them that they should never allow their children to run wild.
 - Enjoy this experience. It will be the last time you will have all the answers.
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B. Sad, But All Too True

1. Of course, this is a humorous but cynical view of the challenges often found in parenting young children
2. And it reflects something of the *pessimism* many people have about child-raising.
3. As we've already established in our series on parenting, God intends children to be a blessing
4. Child-raising is in fact one of the things God in His grace has given us to be blessed and to come to a better understanding of our relationship to Him as our Heavenly Father.

C. Recap

1. So far in our series we've looked at the Foundation of parenting and seen the purpose and goal of raising children.
2. Last time we looked at the *focus* of parenting and saw that we must aim, not merely at behavior, but at the heart.
 - a. children are born in to this world little sinners with corrupt hearts; what they need is a new heart
 - b. so biblical parenting aims at the heart – at bringing the child to faith in Christ, first and foremost,
 - c. and then grooming that renewed heart toward faithfulness in the Lord
3. Today we'll look at the *means* of parenting.

II. TRAINING & ADMONITION

A. Ephesians 6:1-4

¹Children, 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.**

1. It's the last phrase of v. 4 that we'll be concentrating on this morning – “the training and admonition of the Lord.”
2. Like everything in Scripture, there's a unity that ties it all together
3. So let's recap what we've discovered so far about the purpose and the goal of parenting
 - a. the *purpose* of biblical parenting is to – as Paul says here – Bring children up, in the Lord.
 - b. the *goal* of parenting is found in vs. 1-3, to *teach* children obedience and respect
 - c. we'll talk about *that* next Sunday
 - d. but this morning, we want to see what *means* the Lord prescribes for teaching children
 - e. **HOW** do we bring them up in the Lord?
4. It's clear in v. 4, isn't it – through *training* and *admonition*.
5. These are the means of *godly* parenting
6. Great – just what do they mean?
 - a. how do we train and admonish our children?
 - b. what's the process Paul describes here?
7. The answer to that is found by doing some digging into what these words meant in that day.

B. Training

1. The first word, *training*, is the Greek word *paideia*.
 - a. in some places it's translated as *tutorage*
 - b. it spoke of education by training, as opposed to mere instruction by speech
2. For several years I worked in the fast food industry and was responsible for taking a team of trainers from place to place to open new units.
 - a. I had hand selected the members of the team; picking the best workers on each position
 - b. one of the criteria I used in picking people was their ability to

- train* someone else
- c. not everyone who can do a job well, can show someone else how to do it.
 - d. our team of 6 would arrive at a new location and over 5 to 6 days, train a staff of 30 to 40 on how to do virtually every job in the place.
 - e. as the team leader, it was my task to *train the trainers*.
 - f. I came to realize that training and teaching are two different things
 - 1) *teaching* aims merely at imparting *knowledge*
 - 2) *training* aims at translating that knowledge into personal experience and skill!
 - g. do you see the difference?
 - h. it wasn't enough for the grill trainer to *talk* about how to make a hamburger
 - 1) he didn't sit in the lobby at a table with his trainees and explain the process of burger making
 - 2) they stood at the grill and he *showed* them
 - 3) then he allowed them to try it and either corrected or praised them, depending on how they did.
 - 4) after several practice burgers, he showed them *yet again*, and this time they saw even more as they watched a skilled grill-man do the job.
 - 5) over the period of just a few hours – they became proficient at making burgers and fries and all the rest of the requirements of the job.
3. Biblical parenting means more than mere *teaching*
- a. teaching is important but it cannot end there - there must be *training*
 - b. we must *show* our children how to live, and then patiently allow them to try it for themselves –
 - c. correcting and praising the entire time.
4. In the Old KJ Bible this word is translated as “nurture.”
- a. though our idea of nurture has changed somewhat in the last 400 years,
 - b. there's one aspect of it that remains the same,
 - c. and that's the idea of *intimacy* and *tender closeness*
 - d. for most people today, *nurture* conjures up a picture of a

- mother cuddling a newborn infant.
- e. nurture involves protection and warmth.
 5. It's important that we carry this flavor of the word into the idea of training our children today.
 6. The reason I say that is because of the hurried pace of life most of us live.
 7. Parenting is NOT something we can reduce down to a fifteen minute slot on our organizer.
 - a. it's not a task to be checked off our To-Do list
 - b. it's not a strategy in our Master List of Objectives for life.
 8. Children are human beings, created in the image of God and the object of His eternal affection and attention.
 9. Parenting isn't something we do, so much as parents is what we ARE!
 10. We're raising our children 24 hours a day – even when they're at school or we're at work.
 11. What I do, the choices I make, even when I am not with my kids, is changing me as a man and a husband and a father – and all *that* I take home with me at night and pour in to my wife and children.
 - a. the choices I make all day determine how much *time* I will have to spend with my kids
 - b. the choices I make all day will either commit me to things that will distract my attention from them, or free me to focus on them
 12. The point is, we need to be mindful that the task of parenting is 24/7.
 13. And if we're to train our children, if we're to nurture them, then that means we HAVE TO SPEND TIME WITH THEM, *showing* them how to live.
 14. Remember some years back, how someone came up with the idea of quality time vs. quantity when it came to investing in relationships.
 - a. it became fashionable to say that while a person didn't have much *quantity* of time to spend – they would make it *quality* time.
 - b. this seemed to be a good excuse for a lot of people who wanted to relegate important relationships to the background of their

- other pursuits
 - c. not too long ago sociologists realized the fiction of *quality* time when it comes to parenting.
 - d. it turns out what kids need is time – lots of it!
 - e. for parenting, quality IS quantity!
15. A man had just came home from work.
- a. his son was waiting for him at the door.
 - b. as he came in his son asked "Daddy, how much do you make an hour?"
 - c. being tired from work the man was a tad impatient and said, "Your mother doesn't even know that!"
 - d. the little boy pleaded, "But please daddy, how much do you make an hour?"
 - e. the man said "I make \$20 an hour."
 - f. the boy asked "Then can I borrow \$10?"
 - g. the man yelled "No!" and left the room.
 - h. that night he felt bad for the way he treated his little boy.
 - i. so he got out of bed and went to his son's room.
 - j. the boy was still awake.
 - k. he went over to him and gave him the \$10 he had asked for.
 - l. the boy took another \$10 out from under his pillow and said, "Now that I have enough, can I buy an hour of your time daddy?"
16. We must spend time with our children!
17. And to that end, let me issue a caution about something that most of us probably already struggle with – TV!
18. Some time back, *Good Housekeeping* magazine ran a report on a study that was done on the use of TV in the average American home.
- a. a Detroit newspaper made an offer to 120 families.
 - b. the families were promised \$500 each if they would agree not to watch TV for just 1 month.
 - c. 93 of the 120 families *declined* the offer – only 27 accepted!
 - d. the reporters tracked what happened
 - e. each family had been watching television from 40 to 70 hours a week -- that's between 5 and 10 hours a day.
 - f. at first serious pains were experienced from the cold-turkey withdrawal from the tube.

- g. but within a short time, people adapted and some really good things happened
 - 1) books were pulled off the shelf, dusty from neglect, and read.
 - 2) families played games, listened to the radio, and enjoyed playing music together.
 - 3) younger kids took their baths at night without throwing a fit.
 - 4) older children willingly practiced their lessons and did their homework.
 - 5) family members became closer.
 - 6) there was far more face to face time between parents and children
 - 7) there was a marked increase in *patience* between family members.
 - 8) creativity among all was enhanced.
- h. but as soon as the month was over, all the families returned to their addiction for nearly the same number of hours as before, some even MORE.

19. Citing several studies on the effects of TV on children, the "Christian Medical Society Journal" wrote,

The primary danger of the television screen lies not so much in the behavior it *produces* as the behavior it *prevents*. Turning on the TV can turn off the process that transforms children into people and paralyzed viewers into thinking, caring persons. That's why one 9- year-old was overheard saying: "I'd rather watch TV than play outside 'cause it's boring outside. They always have the same rides, like swings and things."

- 20. Not only does television present a challenge to parenting in terms of *time*, it often flatly contradicts the very values we're trying to train in our children.
- 21. You know, there's been this on-going debate about whether or not TV influences behavior.
 - a. any time a critic of the media decries the shameful lack of morality and crass materialism that's depicted on TV and tries to call network executives to exercise some restraint for the way they are polluting the minds of people –

- b. the media-moguls say that TV doesn't *effect* the culture, it only *reflects* it
 - c. they say TV doesn't effect the behavior of people.
 - d. but wait a minute – that's not what they tell prospective advertisers!
 - e. they go to businesses with the selling point that if they advertise on their station it will indeed affect behavior – people will get up out of their seats, climb in their car and drive down to Mickey Dee's for a burger and fries!
 - f. a promotional piece in *Advertising Age* magazine brags, "Any channel can deliver eyeballs. But how many can include hearts and minds?"
 - g. in another ad in the same magazine, MTV calls itself "not a TV channel, but a cultural force."
 - h. in another MTV ad a young man is seen relaxing in an arm chair with his remote control.
 - 1) the ad copy tells us this man is the "opinion leader" among his friends.
 - 2) the headline declares, "Buy this 24-year-old and get all his friends absolutely free."
22. I am not advocating the removal of the TV, though some might feel compelled to do that – more power to you!
23. What I'm saying is first of all, recognize the powerful force that TV represents, both in terms of time commitment and framer of thoughts and motives.
24. If part of the task of parents is to train our children HOW TO LIVE, and that includes how to respond to this corrupt age with it's immorality and misplaced priorities, then we can *use* the TV as a portal on the world and help our children to filter it through the lens of Scripture.
- a. when immorality is shown on TV, don't just sit there silently and enjoy it vicariously
 - b. mark it, identify it as immoral, as sin, and speak God's perspective to it.
 - c. in this way, we train our children to not just be mindless robots who accept whatever the world says
 - d. we teach them to think and respond biblically to the wisdom and ways of the world

25. There are a few TV shows that we watch at our home.
- a. generally, we pick family friendly-programs
 - b. but even then, there are moments when the characters will do and say things that are less than righteous – sometimes they are blatantly immoral.
 - c. running live commentary has become a part of our TV viewing routine.
 - 1) Lynn and I not only correct what's in error
 - 2) we identify and praise what's praiseworthy
 - d. it's gotten to the point now where our 9 year old daughter usually beats us to the punch
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26. In classical Greek, this word *training* referred to the *entire* task of educating a child and preparing him or her for life.
- a. so along with instruction, example, and actual hands-on was added the necessity of *correction*
 - b. and this correction took the form of *chastising*
27. Here we go – I realize that this is controversial ground today, and that's unfortunate because it only shows how far our culture has drifted from it's biblical moorings.
- a. it's been said that the modern American home is one in which a switch controls everything except the children.
28. I'm an advocate of the use of the rod in parenting because the Bible says to.
- a. AND – if the rod is used in a *Biblical* manner, it isn't abuse – it's good parenting
 - b. spanking, when applied in a manner *consistent with the Biblical idea of training*, and not merely as a reflection of parental *anger*, is a critical element in effective parenting.
29. Proverbs 13:24 says . . .

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

- a. the word promptly means without delay
- b. in just a moment I'll explain when the use of the rod is appropriate, but for now, note that discipline needs to be applied quickly.
- c. the fact, is, the younger the child, the more *quickly* discipline needs to be applied because there needs to be a *connection*

- between the discomfort they're experiencing and the wrong behavior they just demonstrated that warrants it.
30. You see, that's the goal of the use of the rod – to make children realize that evil and wrong choices result in pain and loss.
 31. As adults, we know that often times the result of our choices and actions are delayed.
 - a. but the younger a child is, the greater the disconnect with the passage of more and more time
 - b. prompt discipline teaches a child of the inevitability of results.
 32. If as children we're taught that poor choices result in bitter fruit – it will groom our hearts and minds to restrain such choices.
 33. Discipline aims at weaning us off evil and foolishness.
 - a. and that's why it says that the parent who hates his child will withhold discipline
 - b. the child who isn't disciplined will more than likely grow to live a life marked by wrong choices that will lead to his ruin.
 34. Proverbs 23:13-14 makes it even more clear . . .

13 Do not withhold correction from a child, For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

14 You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.

- a. this word “beat” sounds harsh – but wait!
 - b. what's the *motivation* behind the use of the rod conveyed in these verses?
 - c. it's that the child will be safe and protected from real harm!
 - d. how can that be abuse?
35. Proverbs 22:15 says

Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

- a. this gives us guidance on when parents ought to apply the rod
- b. *foolishness* in Proverbs refers to *moral failure*, not innocent mistakes
- c. spanking a 1 year old for spilling milk is inappropriate because that's not foolishness
- d. foolishness is when a *6 year old* spills her milk every night and her mother has told her to exercise more care

- e. a 6 year old is over the awkward stage of learning how to use their body
 - f. she is fully capable of obeying her mother when she tells her to be careful with her glass of milk.
 - g. spilling her milk now is a reflection of her *choice* to disregard her mother's instructions; and that my friends, is a form of rebellion
 - h. rebellion, as we've seen, is one of the greatest moral failures there is
 - i. Proverbs 22:15 tells us that spanking, when applied in a manner consistent with scripture, will help to drive such foolishness out of a child's heart.
 - j. it will help them make the connection between their moral decline and the pain it causes.
36. Finally, Proverbs 29:15 says

The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to *himself* brings shame to his mother.

- a. the rod should always be seen as just one part of the process of discipline
 - b. in the application of chastening there must *rebuke* as well.
 - c. we need to make sure our child understands *why* they are being chastened.
 - d. what did they do and how was it wrong?
37. Of course, this means we need to think through a few things about how we apply discipline in our parenting.
- First – never spank for something you haven't already given clear direction on.
- Second – taking the time to review the NEED for correction will make sure you aren't just lashing out in anger or disappointment at your child. It will remind you of WHY you are administering the discipline, and will go far to frame HOW you administer it.
- Third – following the discipline, allow your child some time to think about the whole process
- their error, the result, what it says about them and their need
 - then make sure you END the period of chastening with a

renewal to fellowship and an affirmation of your love and affection.

- Pray with your child!

38. You see, we're to pattern the chastening of our children after the chastening the Lord uses on us.

Hebrews 12:5-11

5 . . .

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

⁷If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

39. There is so much more we could say on this, but we must move on.

C. Admonition

1. Besides training, we are to *admonish* our children
2. The word means to call one's attention to something
3. If training looks to the whole process of grooming a child for adulthood, admonition speaks specifically to the task of *verbal instruction*.
4. It refers to the goal of reasoning with someone so as to build

- within them the ability to see things in the right way.
5. And that's why Paul adds the words, "in the Lord" at this point
 6. We must bring our children up in the admonition, or WORDS - OF THE LORD
 - a. not in the words of Lance, or Dr. Spock, or this or that so-called expert
 - b. we must instruct our children in the word and ways of the Lord.
 7. This is why God commanded the people of Israel to put His word on their doorposts, and to bind it on their hands and before their eyes.
 - a. it was to be the context in which they lived
 - b. it was to be the filter through which they looked at the world, and the world looked at them.
 8. Mom & Dad – you want a good book on Parenting?
 - a. read Proverbs
 - b. memorize the 10 Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.
 9. David said, "Your Word, O Lord, I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You."
 10. When we admonish our children, we reason with them from Scripture, helping them to frame their lives in the reality of God and His love and truth.
 11. Mom & Dad, take time to listen to your children!
 - a. ask them questions, and really listen to their reply
 - b. find out what God is doing in them and seek to cultivate it by pointing them to Him.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Do Not Provoke Your Children to Wrath!

1. There's one last thing we need to look at in Ephesians 6:4
2. Paul says –

Do not provoke your children to wrath.

3. A loaded mini van pulled in to the campsite.
 - a. 4 children leaped from the vehicle and began feverishly unloading gear and setting up the tent.
 - b. the boys rushed to gather firewood, while the girls and their mother set up the camp stove and cooking utensils.

- c. a nearby camper marveled to the youngsters' father, "That, sir, is some display of teamwork."
 - d. the father replied, "I have a system; no one goes to the bathroom until the camp is set up."
4. Talk about provoking your children to wrath!
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5. As we saw in our first study, in ancient Rome, fathers had total autocratic control over their house and children
- a. so much so that they could even put them to death with no fear of reprisal from the law
 - b. it's not hard to see how easy it would be for fathers to provoke hostility and hatred in their children if they possessed that kind of unrestrained power
6. Paul cautions Christian parents, to avoid provoking their children to anger.
7. In Colossians 3 he says

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

8. There are many ways parents can provoke their children to frustration and anger.
- a. in light of what we've looked at today, one of the ways they can provoke anger is by only dishing out rebuke and correction and never offering praise and encouragement.
 - b. another is by setting the standard so high no matter how good our child is doing, they can't achieve at the level we demand
 - 1) I recently read about a teenage girl who was an A++ student, Valedictorian of her class, head of the cheerleading squad, star of the volleyball team, and much more
 - 2) but she wrote a letter saying that because she could never measure up to her mother's expectations, it wasn't worth living anymore.
 - 3) she signed it, and committed suicide.
 - c. we can provoke our children to wrath by being unfair and showing favoritism at home.
 - d. by being a hypocrite and creating a credibility gap; making promises but not following through on them.
 - e. we can provoke a child to wrath by making light of their problems

9. Rather than provoking wrath, the Lord calls us to provoke them to the Lord through tender, diligent attention.
10. May He by His grace, empower us to just such a commitment.