

## PARENTING YOUNG PEOPLE, II

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### INTRODUCTION:

The hardest thing to maintain in this unbalanced world is balance. We react, we pull away, we lurch, and we tumble. We do this in many ways. And, having heard the exhortation that we should teach our children to love the standard and, if they don't, to lower the standard, what temptation will confront us? The temptation will be to think that laziness and apathy are grace, and that defensiveness when confronted is zeal for the law of God. But loving God with all your mind, soul, heart and strength is a love with balance.

### THE TEXTS:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4).

### SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

Here are some of the basics of Christian living within the family. We begin with the duty of obedience (v. 1). When children are young and living at home, honor entails obedience, necessarily. When children are grown and out on their own, the duty of honor remains, but it is rendered differently (Mark 7:10-13). This is obedience rendered by children in the Lord (v. 1). The word for obedience could be rendered literally as listen-under—or, as we might put it, listen up. This attentiveness to what parents say is described here by Paul as a form of honor, and he goes on to describe how much of a blessing it will be to the children who learn how to behave in this way (v. 2). This commandment, to honor parents, is the first commandment with a promise. The promise from God Himself is that things will go well for you throughout your long life on the earth (v. 3). And then fathers are presented with an alternative—one thing is prohibited and another is enjoined. Fathers are told not to exasperate their children to the point of wrath or anger (v. 4), and instead are told to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (v. 4). Note that they are not told to provoke their children to wrath with the nurture and admonition of the Lord—one excludes the other.

### STOP EXPERIMENTING ON CHILDREN:

In construction work, one of the good things about a concrete pour is that, no matter what, a couple hours later, you're all done. This is also one of the really bad things about it. You don't want to start out with a long foundation wall and wind up with a patio.

Kids are a concrete pour. The time they will spend in your home goes past a lot faster than you thought it would. Fathers are tasked with the responsibility of bringing them up in the Lord, which means that fathers are tasked with the responsibility of working in harmony with the nature of the child. It is of course debated what that nature is actually like, and so how are parents to deal with this?

Too many Christian parents are like that old joke about the Harvard man. “You can always tell a Harvard man, but you can't tell him much.” Because we have successfully established the principle that parents have true authority in the home, many foolish parents have concluded that this means that anything they may happen to think about child-rearing, or education, or training, or courtship standards, is therefore automatically blessed of God. But fathers are told not to provoke their children because, in this fallen world, this is a very easy thing to do. This is a very easy thing for Christian fathers to do. If it had not been an easy temptation for Ephesian fathers, Paul could have saved his advice for somebody who really needed it. Paul does not make the mistake of thinking that authority makes folly impossible—he cautions against authoritative folly.

The hallmark of whether or not a father is experimenting on his kids, as opposed to bringing them up in obedience, is how open he is to the idea of someone else actually measuring what he is doing. How open is he to true accountability? “Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12). Note that phrase “without understanding.” How can you tell if parents

have undertaken their solemn responsibilities as parents with a demeanor of humble confidence? “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head” (Ps. 141:5).

#### A ROAD AND A WAY:

The Christian faith is a road, sure enough. But it is also a way. This means that how we walk is as important as where we walk. If someone has questions about what you are doing, it does not answer the concern to point at the road. It does not answer to bring out your books and web sites that argue for this particular kind of asphalt. That’s as may be, but there is something else going on.

How do you conjugate the verb firm? Do you say I am firm, you are stubborn, he is pig-headed? If you do this easily, then you have wandered from the way, whatever road you are on.

Another way of measuring this is by whether or not you require obedience of your children for their sake or not. If you don’t require it, that is selfish. If you demand it for your own reasons, that is selfish. If you require it as a gift to them, then you are modeling the same kind of obedience you are asking for.

#### AND GOD IS OUR FATHER:

There is no way for any parent to hear these words without conviction. And conviction is good. But always remember there is a hard-riding guilt that is from the enemy of our souls, and not from the Holy Spirit. Remember that as God is teaching us not to provoke others with impossible standards, He models this for us. He is not provoking us with impossible standards either. Our Father in Heaven requires nothing in this that He does not do Himself. He is the Father of all grace. The one thing to remember about this grace is that He—because He is a loving Father—requires us to freely extend what we have freely received (Matt. 10:8; Col. 3:13).



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