

# Ephesians 6:1-4 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS

Ephesians 6:1-3: SPIRIT-FILLED FAMILIES, PART 4

NEXT

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Any time God's design is not functioning in your family, it is obvious that it is not His design. Somebody is not following His design. A functional family is a family that operates the way God says it ought to operate. Now we come to [6:1-4](#):

"Children," he says, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

What is the responsibility of children in God's design for the family? We know the wives' and the husbands' responsibilities. Now children, what are your responsibilities in the family of God and the family that God has given to you?

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."

Now even before I get into the outline, we need to qualify the word "children." A lot of times people misunderstand that word. It is the word *teknon*. It is the word that refers to the offspring of a couple, but it is more than that. It doesn't necessarily refer to a young child. You need to understand this. In the culture that this was written, they would stay in their homes until the day they were married. What it is implying here is that if you are still living under your parent's roof, if you are still letting Mama and Daddy foot the bills, then you fit in [Ephesians 6:1-3](#). I know a lot of the older ones don't like that. I realize there comes a time when you can make your own decisions and you ought to be making a lot of decisions. The father's responsibility to a child of that age is to encourage him to make his own decisions. However, if it comes down to it, if one or the other is going to prevail, God's Word tends to lean on the fact that if you are still living under their support, then you are still obligated biblically to do what they tell you to do.

Let's break this down and see if we can find some practical things that will help us. How does God design work? You will find it in God's Word. What does God say about the children's responsibility in the Spirit-filled family?

## THE ACTION OF THE CHILD

First of all, there is the action of children towards the parents that is required. Verse 1 says,

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Earlier I was trying to teach you that word *hupotasso*, and how wives are to submit to their husbands. That word refers to an equal submitting to an equal. Paul changes the word here and uses the word that we said did not apply to wives. He changes it to *hupakouo*. Now that is different. That is an inferior. Now in God's eyes, you are all equal. But in that family you are an inferior and you are to submit to a superior, your Mother and your Father. That is what the word means. As a matter of fact, it is the grace of God if they ever explain to you why they tell you to do anything because that is what the word implies. It is like a slave to his master.

Paul uses it again in chapter 6. It is the same word used when we submit to God. We are not equals with God. In our Christian walk, we are to obey Him regardless. If we don't understand, that is one thing, but if He says it we do it, period. There are no questions asked. It is the same word.

You see, there are a lot of families that aren't Spirit-filled. They are dysfunctional. What is wrong? You've got a wife submitting to her husband and a husband loving his wife as Christ loved the church. But you might have a child in that family who says,

"I am not going to do it your way. I am going to do it my way."

God says,

"Now you have a dysfunctional family."

The problem is not the mother. The problem is not the father. The problem is that kid not wanting to submit to his mother and father. God says, "You are required."

There is a myth going around that says when a child gets saved he is not as accountable as an adult when they get saved. The Word of God says,

"Listen, whatever you have been given will be required of you."

In other words, God says,

"I have given you the same Holy Spirit that I have given to your mother and your father. If you claim to be a Christian, you are responsible to meet the design of God in the family. God will hold you accountable because the Word of God makes you accountable. The Spirit of God living in your life requires it out of you."

That's the context of the Christian home. Obviously the Apostle Paul is not including commands that are contrary to the Word of God. That is not what he is saying. One of the first fears that goes through a child's mind upon hearing this is,

"You mean to tell me that it doesn't matter what my mother and father tell me, I've got to do it even if it violates the Word of God?"

Never, never, never. That is not even the context of what Paul is talking about. Paul is talking to Christian families. Paul is trying to give the design for Spirit-filled homes. God would never have you do anything that would be contrary to His inspired, inerrant and infallible Word. You are never required to do anything that would mock the holiness and the purity of God. But when Paul uses the phrase in verse 1,

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord,"

he is using it in a sense that says if you want to live your life as a true Spirit-filled believer, the first thing God says is to obey your parents.

There are a lot of Christians, especially young Christians, who think that, if they love Jesus, the way to show that love is to get involved in the youth group at church. The Apostle Paul is saying, "No. You obey your parents in the Lord. If you want to please Him, don't start at church. Start at home."

Look in [Colossians 3:20](#). Ephesians and Colossians are basically commentaries on each other. You can't make that all the time the absolute, but here I think they are complimenting each other. In Colossians 3:20 he doesn't say,

"Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord."

He says it a different way. I think he brings out what he says in Ephesians. Verse 20 says,

"Children, be obedient to your parents in all things."

"All things" always refers to those things that God would be honored with. You are not required to do anything immoral or outside of the will of God. If a parent ever tells you to do that, back off and say,

"I cannot. I am going to obey my Lord Jesus and that violates His Word. I will not do that."

God doesn't require you to do that.

"Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord."

That is what he is saying in Ephesians. You do this in the Lord. If you want to be Spirit-filled, if you want to let the Spirit of God control you, then let the test of that be when you are willing to obey Mama and Daddy.

God says, "You do it in the Lord." This is well-pleasing to the Lord. Young people, do you want to be filled with the Spirit of God? Go home and start exemplifying the love of Jesus Christ for your Mother and Father. Let them understand that you are willing to obey them. Let them understand that they are important to you because you have sensed from God's Word that is the design of a holy God for the Spirit-filled family. Then everything else you do will have God's anointing touch.

If you find a young person who is belligerent to their parents, you have picked up an attitude. Young people, in your dating life, when you want to date a boy and that boy has those right kind of eyes, when the stars get in his eyes, he knows how to say it better than anybody. Ladies, listen to what I am saying. That boy will not obey his parents. As a matter of fact, he stretches the rules his parents have set up for him. He is supposed to be in at 12:00 but somehow he got in at 12:30. He always makes it look like there was something else that happened so he can bend it just a little bit further. His parents gave him so much money to do something, but he used it for something else. I want to tell you, ladies, you are acting foolishly if you continue dating that individual. I don't care who it is. When a young man will treat his parents that way without the respect and willingness to obey them even though God has put them in a position of authority over him, then you have got an individual who either doesn't know Jesus Christ or an individual who is walking directly opposite from the way God wants him to walk. You don't need to be in that relationship.

Young men, you had better remember that about the girls you date. A girl who will despise her parents in any way is telling you something about her spiritual walk with God. She has no concept of what it means to be Spirit-filled. "Spirit filled" describes an attitude that shows itself in an appropriate action. The required action of young people to their parents is that they obey their parents.

The verb is present imperative which is a command to do this at all times. You have no option whatsoever. Yes, the world says a lot

of foolish things, but the Word of God will tell you what the design of the Spirit filled family looks like. The Word of God is very straight and very clear. It doesn't give in where we want it to give in. When you find a young person not obeying his or her parents, not willing to respect them enough to where he or she would listen to them and do what they tell him or her to do, you've got a person who is not walking with God.

What is the action required? A command of children in the family—obey your parents. He goes on to say, "for this is right." *Dikaïos* is the word. It refers to that which is correct, that which is just and that which is righteous. You could define *dikaïos* another way, as that which is exactly what it should be. Isn't that good? God never tells us to do anything that is not exactly what it should be. The only time families get dysfunctional in the spiritual sense is when the design is broken, when a wife won't submit to her husband, when a husband won't love his wife as Christ loved the church, when a child will not obey their parents. Then you have a dysfunctional spiritual family. That is all there is to it.

### THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHILD

Secondly, there is the attitude of the child.

Now I want you to see this. It is one thing to obey. It is another thing the way you obey. He says in verse 2,

"Honor your Father and Mother (which is the first commandment with a promise)."

Now remember, anybody can go through the action. It is the attitude that you have before the action that makes all the difference in the world.

There are three motives for any kind of obedience. One is fear. I used to say to my son: "STEPHEN." "Yes, sir!" "You get upstairs right now." Whoom! He would get upstairs. Do you think he obeyed me because he loved me? Are you kidding? He obeyed me because he was scared of getting a spanking.

A second way of obeying is when you want something. Stephen, periodically, would clean up his room. It is always impressive when he cleans it up. I would say,

"Stephen, you cleaned up your room!"

"Yeah, Dad, I just thought I would do what you wanted me to do."

About ten minutes later he would say,

"By the way, have you got an extra \$20? I am going out with my friends tonight!"

Wait a minute! Why is he obeying me? Because he loves me? No, because he wants \$20. That is why he did what he did. I wasn't born yesterday. I tried the same thing with my Dad.

The real way to obey is out of love and respect, out of honor. Now I want to tell you something, when you do that for your parents, you haven't got a clue how much that is going to minister to your parents. You don't realize how much they are going to love you in return. You don't realize how it works the right way. But you have to have the purest of motives to honor your Father and your Mother. One thing that just blesses me is when I come home and Stephen has done something. I say,

"Stephen, I appreciate that. Why did you do that?"

Stephen answers

"I just love you, Dad."

Whew! I would give him anything he wants. I am as tender as I can get when it gets to that point because he loves me, not because he is afraid of me. He loved me, not because he wanted something from me. He loved me because he wanted to honor me and respect me.

God says,

"Young people, you had better put that ingredient into your obedience or you have missed the whole thing."

That is what He said. How do you do that? The Spirit of God will empower you to do anything God has ever commanded you to do. God will change your heart and your attitude. God will change your perspective towards your parents. Behind the action is an attitude. Honor your Father and your Mother.

Paul goes back to the Ten Commandments and pulls out the first commandment that is fundamental to every relationship that you will ever have. I want to show you something. If he didn't say anything else about relationships in the Ten Commandments, this is enough right here. When you get a child who grows up obeying his parents, not just because he fears them or wants them but

because he truly honors and respects the position of authority that God has placed them in, then you have a child who will honor and respect authority of all kinds and will have the kind of decent family that we need in our country today. God says it starts when you are in that home. God wants to fill you with His spirit so that you can help carry out that design in the spiritually functional way.

The word for **honor** is *timao*. The word means to esteem, to value highly, to hold in the highest regard and respect, treat as precious and to revere. Now if you don't think these commandments are important, you had better be glad you are living in the New Covenant. Moses, in the Old Covenant, said,

"He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

It is important to God, friend. He says another time,

"He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

I want to tell you, we live in such a permissive society. We have pulled so far away from God's design that we think it is okay to do anything we want to with our parents. God says,

"No, it is not. If you are going to be filled with My Spirit, you are not only going to obey but you are going to have an attitude behind that obedience which is honoring your father and your mother."

To honor your parents encompasses not only obeying them when they are young, it also has built into it providing for them when they are old. You see, if you start off honoring your parents now, you will honor them when they are old. If you don't love and respect them now, you are not going to love and respect them when they are old and have need of you. They have spent thousands of dollars on you, and there is going to come a day when they get unable to do what they used to be able to do. That is when that honor really comes to fruition and comes to the surface. You are to not only honor them when you are young but provide for them when they are old. That is what that honor is all about.

It is a present attitude that carries all the way through. The action that is required, obey, *hupakouo*, as an inferior to a superior. The attitude must go along with it. Honor your Father and your Mother. It is not just the act. It is the attitude with which the act is carried out.

What can you look forward to? What is God going to do if you are willing to do it His way? He says in verse 2:

"(which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

Paul finishes the scripture in [Exodus 20:12](#) and [Deuteronomy 5:16](#). He reaches back and takes a quote that was promised to Israel when they went into the land of Canaan. It is a very significant promise. It didn't mean that if you obey your parents you are going to live to be 110 years old. That is not what he is saying. He is saying, "If each of your families will function the way God set it up and if you children will obey your parents, then you as a nation will be sustained forever on this earth."

Do you realize how important the families are to our society? The more we are willing to do it God's way, the more God says those families are going to sustain, even the society around you. Then you are going to have a long time on this earth. Christianity is so effective when it is exemplified in the lives of people who constitute families. So part of that is children being willing to obey their parents. However it is not a promise that you are going to live a long time. He is not promising you a long life, but He is promising you that the heritage you leave behind will last forever. The Christian society, the Christian family, the Christian life continues to go on and continues to have its effect. He does promise the utmost fulfillment of life, however long the individual has it, if you are willing to obey and to honor your parents. It will be well with you.

You may have all kinds of difficult circumstances to deal with, and you may not live as long as you would like to live, but I want to tell you, on the day you die you will have a fulfilled life. Why? You are going to have a happier, more stable, more successful life than the individual who claims to be a Christian who won't do what God tells him to do and is rude and is disrespectful and self-willed and rebellious. A child who says, "I am going to do it Your way, God," has a promise and that promise is you are going to have the most fulfilling life that you could ever possibly imagine. Listen, it is a fearful thing to tell somebody you know the living God and you are not willing to do what God tells you to do. It is a fearful thing.

Maybe we ought to take a pop test. We have been taking them on the parents. I wonder if we could just have personal interviews with your parents next week and find out what your attitude is like at home. I wonder if you are really Spirit-filled or if you are putting on a performance so everybody will think that you are something that you are not. You see, you will have a long life in the sense that you will have a heritage to continue. You will have a sustained life, however long you live, and it will be as full as you could possibly imagine. Whoever received Christ has the same amount of God in him as anybody else whether they are six or sixty. So the action that God requires in the Spirit-filled family for the child is obedience. The attitude is honor and respect. The anticipation is that it might be well with you. You will have such a full life that if you die when you are 18, it is alright because in those 18 years you will

have lived what some people never ever experience living a full life down here on this earth.

God has a design, folks. Why can't we get with the program? We are always trying to pamper the exceptions. We are always trying to pamper those situations that didn't work out right. Why don't we deify the ones that will work out right. Wives submit to your husbands. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Children obey your parents. Honor and respect them and God will give you a life that is so rich and full that if you die at 17, you are ready to go because there is nothing else you really want to experience because of the fullness and the well being of the life that God gave to you.

[Return to TOP of page](#)

## Ephesians 6:4: SPIRIT-FILLED FAMILIES, PART 5

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Look at verse 4 of Ephesians 6:

"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Well, Dads, it is back on us again. You know, isn't it amazing how much of a burden Paul puts upon men in the family? Not only are we to love our wives as Christ loved the church, but we are never to provoke our children to anger.

One of the things I have found in my personal walk with the Lord is there are days when I am not filled with the Spirit of God. Being filled with the Spirit of God is moment by moment, and there are some times when I just don't want God to fill me with His Spirit because I am hard-headed and I am human! I found when I am that way, my wife has a difficult time submitting to me. I have also found when I am that way, my children have a difficult time obeying me. But I have also found that when I am filled with the Spirit of God, when the love of Jesus is flowing through me, my wife has no problem submitting to me and my children look forward to obeying me. The key is men being filled with the Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul says, "Look men, shape up! You are to love your wives as Christ loved the church and you are never to provoke your children unto anger." So the heavy burden is not on the wife. The heavy burden is on the man, the husband, the father in the family.

When I am filled with the Spirit, when you are filled with the Spirit, guys, that is when everything else seems to work the way it ought to work. It is almost like the Apostle Paul anticipated a problem. He tells the children to obey the parents and then immediately he turns right around and says, "Now, fathers, don't you provoke your children to anger." He simplifies the situation by telling them what they are supposed to do and what they are not supposed to do. I want you to look at the cause of a child being provoked into anger. Then we will look at the contrast of a child being provoked into anger.

Read it again. Verse 4 says,

"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger."

Now this is a commandment and not a suggestion. The verb is present tense, active voice, imperative mood. Present tense means a lifestyle, consistently, not just a one-time thing. Active voice means you do it yourself. Imperative mood means it is a command. You have no options. Fathers, we will stand before God one day for whether or not we provoke our children to anger. God gives a standard here. It is high, very high, and only attainable by being filled with the Spirit of God.

I want you to understand as we get into this that this doesn't mean a one-time thing. Children will provoke us. We are human, and we are not always filled with the Spirit of God. By Paul using the present tense here he is not saying that you can't ever lose it. That is not what he is saying. He is saying you can't live a consistent lifestyle of losing it.

All of us are going to lose it from time to time. We are going to blow it from time to time. But quickly that can be healed by simply asking for forgiveness and helping your child to realize we are all human. None of us have reached the stage of perfection. But that is not what he is saying here. He puts it in the present tense. The verb that is used there for "**provoke to anger**" is one word. It comes from two Greek words. One of the words is para, which means alongside. The other word is orgizo, which is the stage of getting more angry and more angry and more angry. Orge is the word for anger. Orgizo is more the process of getting that way. In other words, anger can build. Anger can get worse and worse.

So what Paul is saying is the lifestyle a father lives in front of his child on a consistent basis has the potential of provoking that child to anger. That anger, folks, is a deep-seated thing inside of a child. I imagine there are some adults who are still dealing with anger that they were provoked while they were being raised by fathers who did not follow the God's design for fathers. Anger is something that we are going to see that perverts a child's thinking and reasoning perspective. Not only that, it also prevents him from emotionally, maturely relating to other people. It is an anger that sometimes he doesn't even know he has. It is an anger that

perhaps has not been seen.

In Ephesians Paul says,

"Don't provoke them to anger."

It is the kind of anger that makes a child like a time bomb, ready to go off at any moment, ready to simply explode and do things that the father would never dream his child would do.

In Colossians 3:21 Paul shows another side to the father-child interaction writing...

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children."

He uses another word there instead of "provoke." It is the word *erethizo*, which means to stir up. Sometimes just the attitude of a father stirs up a child. A child is doing fine by himself but the father's lifestyle is stirring him up. That is the word.

Then it goes on to say in verse 21,

"that they may not lose heart."

Now that is a pitiful word right there. That word means that you have broken the spirit of a child and the child doesn't even have enough inside of him to get angry. So on one side you have a time bomb ready to go off. On the other side you have a lethargic child whose spirit has been broken all because a father did not fulfill the design God said fathers ought to fulfill. They can't do it except by being filled with the Spirit of God.

### WHAT DOES "PROVOKE" MEAN?

This really caused me to do some thinking. What does the word "provoke" mean? One of the first things I do when I find a word that I don't quite understand is to run it through Scripture. The problem with this word is it is only found one time right here in Ephesians. So I looked at the context. What does the context of this say? The context is "being filled with the Spirit of God." What have we already said? When I am filled with the Spirit of God, it is going to produce a lifestyle on the outside that is not going to provoke my child to anger. But if I am not filled with the Spirit of God, it is going to produce a lifestyle that has the potential of producing anger in my child, pushing him into a state of emotional anger, deep seated anger either to where he will explode one day or to where he becomes so lethargic and broken of spirit he hardly ever says anything.

So I began to think of Ephesians. What kind of lifestyle would do this? Turn back with me to chapter 4. How does a father provoke a child? Let me tell you, Dads, until you get serious with God, until you get on your face before Him, until you are willing to obey Him in every area of your life, you run the risk of pushing your child into a state of deep seated emotional anger. That anger can pervert every relationship that he ever wants to have. It keeps him not only from relating to God properly, but from relating to others. Look at families that have been destroyed because of one of the spouse still has anger they have never allowed Jesus to heal and to cleanse. The result in that family is like a domino effect -- One falls, another falls, another falls and another falls.

In Ephesians 4:22 (See message) Paul says,

"that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, and put on the new self."

In other words, when I am filled with the Spirit of God, I am going to live differently on the outside than I used to. I am going to appear to be different. I am going to be seen to be different. I am going to make different choices. I am going to look at things differently. I am going to have a divine perspective on things than when I am not filled with the Spirit of God.

In verse 25 let's see what it is about a wrong lifestyle that could provoke or push a child into the state of emotional anger. Verse 25 says,

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one *of you*, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

Paul is saying that a person who has on the old garment lives a deceitful life. Not only would he lie with his lips, he lies with his life. In other words, everything about him is deceitful.

Now you might say: I am a father and I don't want to provoke my children to anger. You are talking about putting on a brand new garment, a brand new way of behavior. You are telling me that if I am not filled with the Spirit of God that I am going to live a deceitful life. What do you mean by that? I hope you are asking that question because I am going to try to answer it. It is living a double standard in front of your child.

"How can I live a double standard in front of my child?"

Well, you tell your child never to talk about others but your child overhears you speaking unfavorably about someone. That child looks at you and sees a double standard. You tell your child to read his Bible and love Jesus and go to church, but that child never sees you on your knees in prayer, never sees you in the Word of God, never sees you plow through and try to learn and try to study God's Word. He sees that Bible sit on a shelf day in and day out. It's picked up on Sunday and put right back on that shelf. That child says,

"Wait a minute. There is something deceitful about all of this. You are telling me to do something and you are not even willing to live it yourself. You are never willing to admit that you are wrong. You are always blaming somebody else."

Oh, I want to tell you something, friend, it truly is

"like father like son."

When you start watching kids grow up who are bitter or critical, check it out with Daddy and I guarantee you that you will find it right there in that house. Because that is a double standard and a deceitful lifestyle. It is deceitful. Why bring them to church if you are not going to live it yourself? That is provoking your child to anger. That child hears one standard from Scripture and he sees another standard in his daddy. You are preaching a standard that you are not willing to live up to yourself, living a lie before your child.

Look at Ephesians 4:26:

"Be angry and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

In other words, if I put on the old garment, if I am not filled with the Spirit of God, my anger is going to have sin with it. What does that mean? It says in the book of James that the anger of man never accomplishes the righteousness of God. So there are two kinds of anger: righteous anger and my anger. When I am not filled with the Spirit of God, what is wrong with my anger? My anger is directed at the person, not the failure, not what caused the person to do what he did. But if my anger comes from the Spirit of God, it is directed at the sin or the problem. It is never directed at the person.

Now put that in the context of the family. Here is a father who harshly disciplines his child because his child failed. He directs all of his anger towards the child, never wanting to see what the problem is, never looking at the sin, never looking at what caused the problem. There are a lot of men in that boat.

Ephesians chapter 4 verse 27 says,

"and do not give the devil an opportunity."

The word "opportunity" means exactly that.

In the context of Ephesians 4:3 (click message) says that we are to diligently preserve the unity of the Spirit. You can't produce it. You preserve it. The first thing you do to destroy it is when you don't let the Holy Spirit of God control your life. You put on that old garment and what happens is in verse 30: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Let me just say this. When a father will not obey Jesus Christ, when a father will not submit and get in the Word of God and live by the will of God, a father opens the door for the devil to play havoc in his family. It starts with that man who is not willing to bow before the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Fathers, do you want to bind Satan off your children? Do you want to cause him to be absolutely unable to reach your children? Then get on your face before God. Get into the Word of God and start living like a godly husband ought to live. That in itself will be protection for your family." Why do we think it is something we say? Dear Lord, it is how we live. That is what Paul says in 5:1 (click message): Don't talk it, walk it! Mime the love of God and then that love becomes a blanket of protection, an umbrella over your family that is incredible. Yes, the devil can always get to our kids once they get out of the home. But I guarantee you one thing, if the devil ever somehow lures my child into whatever, I want to be sure that I stand honest before God and blameless that it wasn't in my home. It had to be outside my home. I want to do everything I can possibly do to keep my child from being provoked into anger, from getting into a deep seated emotional state where he can't relate to anybody and doesn't have a clue about what real freedom is all about.

Ephesians 4:28 (click message) says,

"Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have *something* to share with him who has need."

There are two things in that verse that we looked at earlier. One is a person without the control of the Spirit of God in his life won't work and won't share. If a person does let the Spirit of God control him, he will share and work. In other words, one is a taker and

the other one is a giver.

Now how does this relate to the family? How can we possibly apply this to the family? Stay in that same flow of thinking. A man who won't go to work and support his family has just robbed from his child and has caused seeds of anger to grow within that child. You see, God destined us to work. God destined us to be responsible and take care of our family. A man who won't do that has caused something that could be irreparable in a child if he won't set the stage and the model for him and do the things he is supposed to do.

Secondly, he refused to share. You see, a person not filled with the Spirit of God, a father not filled with the Spirit of God, has time for nobody but himself. He doesn't have time to share with his child his love. He doesn't have time to share with his child his knowledge. He won't sit down with him along the way. He won't take the Word and explain it to him. He won't help the child in any way. A child is almost out on his own. There seems to be an indication from God's Word that this is provoking the child into a state of emotional anger. He is crying out, "Daddy, Daddy, help me, help me!" But Daddy doesn't have time. Somebody told me the average time a father spends with his child per day is about four seconds now. It used to be about 30 seconds. No wonder! We have dads who are more interested in making a buck than they are in taking care of their own children.

The Apostle Paul looks ahead and sees a problem. He tells the children to obey with honor. But then he says, "Now wait a minute. Fathers, don't you provoke your children to anger." In other words, there is a balance here. In verse 29 he says,

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear."

Oh, folks, there is a contrast here. Unwholesome or edification. Do you know what the word "unwholesome" means? It means rotten, putrid. That is exactly what it means. In other words, it is anything that comes out of the old garment towards a child which is nothing more than rotten words. It does not build that child up. It tears that child down.

The word "edification" is the word used for building a house. So one is constructive, and one is destructive. Remember now, this is not a one-time thing. This is a consistent lifestyle of talking down to your child. A person who has no building up words whatsoever in their vocabulary is always tearing them down. A child makes a B and the father says, "Well, why didn't you make an A?" He never has anything to encourage that child whatsoever. It is a consistency, and it provokes that child unto anger.

You know, I am glad it isn't a one-time thing. I was scared of the dark when I was growing up. My Dad worked a lot of overtime in order to get me through school. I remember one night, I was afraid of the dark so I came downstairs and sat on the steps. I had my little teddy bear and blanket. I was crying. I could see monsters in my closet and all kinds of big things under my bed. I could see shadows of things coming in my windows, and I was just afraid. I remember I woke my Dad up. He had been working a lot of overtime and was a little irritable because of it. Obviously I was provoking him. I remember him to this day saying,

"Well, alright, you little coward! Come on in here if you need to and lay on the floor. That's alright if you are going to be a sissy, if you are going to be a coward!"

Did that sting me? Well, I am almost 51 years old and I still remember it. I thank God for a Daddy who didn't do that all the time. He was a tired Daddy and it was on a night when I shouldn't have gone downstairs. I should have stayed upstairs. He came to me the next day, put his arms around me and said,

"Son, I am so sorry. I didn't mean that. I was just irritated and I was tired."

Folks, that is going to happen to me and you until the day Jesus comes back. What I am talking about and what Paul is talking about is the consistency of never building up your child. You know what I am talking about?

You see, a lot of people don't know how to build somebody up by what they say. Everything they say is talking down to them. A child grows up scared to death of mama and daddy. We are supposed to encourage them, grow them up and nurture them in the admonition of the Lord. But what we end up doing is talking them down. I want to tell you something. We don't even know the damage that is doing to our children. We are living in a generation right now from the damage done in a previous generation. We are seeing a monster that has been created that the world has never known before.

Ephesians 4:31 (click message) sums it all up:

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

Let me just take a quick run through that.

**Bitterness.** When you get a Dad who is bitter because he got fired on a job or because of something else and he begins to let that attitude seep out to his family, he doesn't realize there is a tender little life there, little ears that don't understand everything his daddy understands. That bitterness begins to get inside that child. I have seen this in churches over the years. If you get a Dad who is miffed inside of a church, you will find a son the same way. Just give it a period of time and the son will end up exactly like the Dad.

Bitter.

Paul uses the word "**wrath**." Do you know what that means? That means that you just explode in anger. The word "anger" is the same word we are looking at in 6:4.

The word "clamor" means loud shouting, speaking loudly and unruly to your child.

The word "slander" means that you are in a place and you actually talk against him. You even say things that would demean your own child in front of other people and the child hears it.

All of this is wrapped up in malice. Malice is the house that all of these words live in. Let all of it be put away from you.

## DADS AND IMMORALITY

There is one more thing that will provoke a child to anger. Look in Ephesians 5:3-10. Do you know what it is? It is immorality. Dads, let me say a personal word to you. If immorality is in your life at all, somehow it is going to filter to your child. Incest. Oh, dear God, may it never be named among us! The damage that would do to a child. Sexual immorality. Yet in the church of Jesus Christ it is rampant today like never before. And we wonder what is wrong with our generation.

Daily I've got to realize that if I don't walk filled with the Spirit of God, I can produce anger in my children over the years. I can produce something in them that would cause them not to even be able to relate to God or their friends or anybody else. As a matter of fact, it would put them in a state to where they are ready to explode or put them in a state where their spirit is so broken that they are lethargic and can't even produce a reaction of any kind.

Being filled with the Spirit of God not only is a command, it is a very important part of the Christian life. As a matter of fact, it is the very ingredient of the Christian life. I've got to be under the control of God. He has the only design for my family. Until I am under His control, I am going to risk pushing my child into a state of emotional anger that may never be repaired on this earth.

I wish Paul would get off the men's back, but he hasn't got off yet. What can we do then? What can we do? What are we supposed to do? None of us have arrived. It scares me to death the responsibility that God has put on us. We take it so lightly.

Remember this dads, that little child is watching you. He is admiring you for you are the hero of his life. Make sure you don't let him down and don't let God down. Be filled constantly with the Spirit of God. That means when you are wrong, you confess it to God and you confess it to your child. Keep it transparent, keep it open and that child will grow up as healthy as you ever wanted to see a child grow up. He won't see Christianity as religion. He will see it as the life of Christ lived out through you and that is what you want him to see.

### Ephesians 6:4: Spirit-Filled Families, Part 6

by Dr. Wayne Barber

The Apostle Paul certainly has been hard on the men. As a matter of fact, he just doesn't let up. Ephesians 6:4 says,

"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

A father not being filled with the Spirit of God is the context of chapter 6. Ephesians 5:15 began the subject of walking wisely in the midst of a perverse generation. In the midst of that Paul connects the thought of 5:18 (click message) which says,

"be [being] filled with the Spirit."

The word "filled" means controlled by. The simplicity of the message of Ephesians is that God lives in me and wants to control me. I must bow and yield in surrender to Him. That is the simplicity of the message. When I am willing to do that there are certain things that will happen in my family. You see, God has a design for the family. It was His idea, not man's idea. Therefore, when I am willing to be filled with the Spirit of God, I will love my wife as Christ loved the church. Then my wife will submit to me as an act of obedience to Jesus because she wants His design to work out in our family. Our children will obey us with honor because they want to please the Lord. As a father, God will keep me from provoking my children unto anger. That means when I am wearing the right garment it does not offend my child. But when I wear the wrong garment, it provokes him into a state of anger.

Folks, if you have ever lost it with your child, ask them to forgive you. Go on and be honest. Go to them and say,

"I am sorry. Will you forgive me? I have asked God to forgive me. Will you forgive me?"

All of us are human. Remember, spirituality is not an arrival, it is a pursuit. Being filled with the Spirit does not involve perfection, but

it does involve consistency. What kind of consistency? Always doing it right? No. It involves times when we just choose, out of being human, to do it our own fleshly way. We always do damage, but immediately upon doing that, we run to the cross, ask God to forgive us, confess our sin and immediately repent. We seek forgiveness of whoever it is we have offended, especially our family. The consistency is not always doing it right. The consistency is when you do something wrong, you do what is right. You repent, confess and immediately get back into the flow of the control of the Spirit of God. It doesn't involve perfection, but oh how it does involve consistency.

When my life shows a consistency, not of repentance, not of confession, not of seeking to make it right, but a consistency of not caring, a consistency of no Word of God in my life, a consistency of doing it my own way, then that is what Paul says will provoke my children and drive them into a deep-seated state of anger that will pervert and prevent relationships for years to come unless the Holy Spirit of God intervenes with the grace of Jesus Christ.

We are going to look now at the contrast and, hopefully, the cure of provoking our children. Paul not only tells us what not to do, but what to do as fathers. Look at what he says in verse 4:

"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

What a tremendous contrast to what we saw before. The phrase, "bring them up" is very, very precious. It means to nurture them. It is found back in 5:29 in reference to the way one treats his own body. He nourishes. He cherishes it. It is found in the way Christ treats the church. It is found in the way the husband treats the wife. Now we find that the fathers need to treat the children that way. It means to nurture them. Another way of saying it is, provide for them with tender care. Another way of saying it is,

"Fragile, handle with care."

Folks, we have to understand something. Many times we want to treat our kids as if they are adults. They are not. They are fragile and we need to handle them with care. That is the word for "bring them up." Treat them as you would treat your wife, as Christ treats the church, as you would treat your own body.

There are two things that he tells us to do that are involved in this nurturing, in this bringing them up, in this handling them with care. There are two things the father is responsible to do. Now, if he does these things in the proper love, proper attitude and proper tender care, it will not provoke his children. Something else may, but this will not. It will not provoke his children to anger. First of all is discipline. Paul says again in verse 4:

"bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

### **DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN IN THE LORD**

Let's take discipline first. Every child, every young person reading this just cringed. They can see Daddy pulling out the baseball bat. I am glad my father did not know Hebrew because the word for "rod" in Hebrew means club! I am very grateful my father was illiterate when it came to Hebrew. But praise the Lord, young people! The word "discipline" is not a bad word. It is the word *paideia*. It means child training, to bring up a child.

There are three things that are involved in this discipline. I found this over in Hebrews. It is the way God treats us as His children. We are to treat our own children the same way. In other words, when we are filled with the Spirit of God, God in us will lead us to discipline our children and we will do it in His love and His caring way. Turn with me to Hebrews 12:5 and let's look at it. What does it mean to discipline our children?

**First**, it involves setting standards and boundaries and reproofing the children when they cross those boundaries or break those standards.

Hebrews 12:5 says,

"and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproofed by Him.'"

The word "reproofed" means to be exposed. The word "reproofed" implies something that you can't miss. How can you reprove someone for doing something wrong if there has been no standard set previously.

In other words, I have to set standards and boundaries for my children and I have to use those standards and boundaries to raise them up in the nurture of the Lord. You know, Dad, if you have not clearly explained the standards and the boundaries, then don't get so bent out of shape when your child breaks them. Have you found that true in your family? So often I was so busy thinking and assuming that my children understood, especially when they were little. I just assumed they understood that the house was clean

and they were supposed to keep it clean. But they didn't know. I didn't preset the boundaries. I didn't properly explain what they could do and what they couldn't do.

I find so often fathers expect the mother to set those boundaries. The father, assuming they have been set, corrects the children when the children didn't know clearly what the boundaries were. God is so good to us. God just sets the boundaries. Whoever wrote the letter of Hebrews (a lot of people think it was Paul but we don't know that for sure) was writing it to the Jews. There is a Jewish flavor to the whole book. He tells them,

"Christ is better than Moses. Christ is better than the prophets. Christ is better than the angels."

Think about Jewish history. Go back sometime and read Deuteronomy 28-29. Look how clearly God not only set the boundaries but He preset the consequences of breaking the boundaries.

If you are riding down the road and all of a sudden there are these red flashing lights from behind, you know that you have broken something that is a law. Now when that man gets out of the police car, he has all the law backing him. He had a law that we all know and we also know that we broke it. We have a pretty good idea what the consequences are going to be. So we don't have to get bent out of shape. The policeman doesn't have to get bent out of shape. He doesn't have to walk up to the car and say, "What are you doing!" We know what we have done. He knows what we have done. We can be reasonable about it.

That is exactly what God does for all of us. God says in His Word, "This is what is going to happen." There are people all the time getting mad at God.

"Why does He let all these bad things happen in the world?"

God preset the consequences of sin before sin ever occurred and there is not one man on the face of this earth who can shake their fist in the face of God. Man sinned, therefore, we now live under the consequence of that sin. God doesn't yell out of heaven and beat us down. He said,

"This is it. Here is the standard. Here are the boundaries. It is preset. Now, if you break it, here are the consequences."

The second thing this discipline involves is to understand that it is an act of loving your child. Every kid is thinking, "Thanks a lot." I remember Mother sometimes preset the consequence of beating me. You see, once those standards were set, once they were clearly explained, when Mother would finally carry out the consequence, she would always say to me,

"I just want you to know this is hurting me more than it is hurting you."

"Right, Mother!"

"And I am loving you, son."

I could think of other ways, I tell you what. It really is a way of expressing love to your child.

Look at verse Hebrews 12:6

"For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."

"You mean to tell me God hurts me because He loves me?"

That's right. And as He hurts me, He is trying to get my attention so He can heal me in the process. So it is an act of love when you correct your children. When that child has boundaries, when that child has standards, that child knows if he crosses those boundaries there are going to be consequences. That is a godly act of love for your child. Your child needs those boundaries.

So it is an act of loving the child. The child needs the boundaries. The child needs the standards.

But thirdly, it is the only way in which we earn respect from our children. Now wait a minute. Maybe you have a personality like I have. I hate confrontations. Everybody knows that about me. I will do everything I can do to keep from confronting something that I am uncomfortable with. I am always at a loss for words. If it comes to a debate, I lose every single time. I can't even think. So a lot of times I would think,

"Well, I am loving my child by just letting him go a little further."

No, the way you earn respect from your child is to go ahead and set those boundaries.

You say,

"Now where is that in scripture?"

Well, look with me in Hebrews 12:9:

"Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them."

See, the two are connected together.

"You mean they disciplined them and you respected them? Come on, man, we want freedom."

Freedom in a spiritual sense is never the right to do as you please, it is the power to do as you should. Somebody has to set the boundaries. Somebody has to call the shots. Somebody has to say,

"You cannot cross this or this is the consequence."

When you do, you are loving them. When you do you are gaining and earning their respect. So it involves those three different things.

Look at verse 11:

"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, [I don't like to be disciplined, do you? I don't like standards] yet to those who have been trained by it, [Do you see the process? It is a process. We have to realize that discipline is a process. It is not a one-time thing] afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

It is going to have a beautiful yield if we will do what God says. It is a process.

There is one other thing about it. In Revelation 3:19 it is actually acting like God. When you are disciplining your child, you are acting like God. Listen to what God says. It is almost the same thing He says in Hebrews but I want you to see it over here in Revelation because this is the letter to the churches. He says,

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent."

Jesus is saying,

"Because I am loving you, because I am reprovng you, that is an act of my caring for you. Now do what you need to do. Repent. Change your ways and conform to what I want in your life."

So, nurturing my child, bringing him up as a fragile, tender vessel, caring for him, handling with care, involves first of all setting boundaries and letting the consequences and the boundaries be clearly understood by the child. You have to train them in it. You have to tell them over and over and over again. For instance, if you tell your child not to go out in the street to play, what does your child do? Is he taught? Does he understand? Sure, he understands. Sure, he is taught. Does he go out in the street? Probably. So what do you do? Reprove him. Bring him back in. Whatever you do, whatever your standard, whatever your measure of correction is, do it. So the next day comes around. You have reprovved him. You have corrected him. You've instructed him. What does he do the next day? He goes right back out in the street. Every day you keep doing that and you keep doing that. What are you doing? You are training that child. Is he trained yet? Not until he gets out of the street. One morning you forget to tell him and you think,

"Oh no, a bus has run over him."

You look out in the front yard and there he is, in the yard, not in the street. What has happened? Is he taught? Yes. Now he is trained by that standard, by those boundaries and he understands the consequences.

Then secondly, you have something else to go along with it. Just setting boundaries and correcting them when they break it is not enough. It does not qualify, much to the disappointment of many fathers. There is more to it than that. He says back in our text in Ephesians 6:4,

"...and instruction of the Lord."

Bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. There is more to it than just setting rules and punishing them when they break those rules. The word for "instruction" is the Greek word *nouthesia*. It comes from the word *noutheteo*, which means to help a person by placing into their mind things that will benefit them. In other words, you are not just setting rules. You are explaining those things and you are putting them in the context of their relationship to God. You are giving them information that will help them down the road.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:12. We see the word used there and it brings it out very clearly what it means. He says,

"But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction."

In other words, this instruction is important. There is a two-fold meaning here. Not only is there information, but the primary meaning of the word means warning, to warn them. So what are we talking about? It is something that is meant to encourage them. It is information they need to have, but it serves as a warning for what may lie ahead.

So the father is responsible to take the child aside, not only set boundaries, not only set consequences, but also to give information and how this relates to the Lord and how they are to relate to the Lord. He is to teach his child in the Lord, in the Word and let that child be encouraged by it. He also is to let all the teaching serve as a warning for what may lie ahead.

Look in Titus 3:10. We find that word again and we see how it is used. I want you to see how it is translated as "warning."

"Reject a factious man after a first and second warning."

That is the word we are looking at.

Over in 1 Corinthians 10:11 it is the same thing. The word has the primary meaning of a warning, an admonition. So you are doing it as a father loves his child, fragile, handle with care. He wants to nurture and bring him up. He looks out in the world and sees all the things that the child is going to face. He wants the child to know Christ. He begins to instruct the child. But in the midst of instructing him in the Lord and taking the Word to the child, he begins to draw boundaries and tells the child,

"Now if you cross this boundary, here is going to be the consequence."

So the child grows up with standards and boundaries. But he also grows up with information and instruction in the Lord. The two seem to balance each other out.

"Do you mean to tell me the father is responsible to spiritually instruct his children in such a way that Jesus is seen as caring and compassionate and loving to them?"

This may seem trite to you, but the word "Lord" in verse 4 means a lot to me. That word "Lord," *kurios*, in their culture meant more than just master, like we preach it. It meant compassionate, caring Lord. Do you realize that when you instruct your children in the Lord, the way you present Jesus to them is one of the most important things that you can do for your child?

Ephesians 6:4 says,

"Dad, it is your responsibility to be the spiritual instructor and the spiritual leader of your family. Don't blame the church! If your child is not doing well, Dad, where are you missing it?"

It is up to me, as the father, not only to instruct my child, but to present the character of Jesus in such a way that the child can understand what is going on around him and be nurtured in the admonition of the Lord and mature in the midst of even adverse circumstances. The responsibility is ours, not the church's, not the youth pastor's. It is the Dad's responsibility to nurture that child in the admonition of the Lord.

Dad's, we have a responsibility to get our kid's head straight so they can learn from God, be instructed in the Word, guided with boundaries and grow up in the midst of whatever circumstances they find themselves. Quit blaming others and let's understand what our responsibility is from Ephesians 6.

Fathers, remember, God will come alongside you. God will seek you out to get your attention somehow. When He gets your attention, you need to sink your life into His Word, sink your life into the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God will cause you to raise your children without provoking them unto anger.

A medical person told me recently that one of the biggest causes of physical and emotional problems in people is deep-seated anger. I guarantee you I know where it came from. It came right out of the family. There was probably a dad who wouldn't get in the Word of God. Because of that he has a child now rebelling and going the wrong way. He was provoked with no standards. Anger has risen up within him. He is either ready to explode or he is so lethargic and so limp because his spirit is broken. He is probably even suicidal. All because of a dad. That scares me.

[Return to TOP of page](#)