

## **Rejoicing in Restraints, part 8: The Family**

Assorted

(preached Pine Grove 10/4/20 Sun PM)

### **Introduction**

Another week, another show of childish behavior in the world.

And no I am not talking about a riot in the street, I am talking about two men running for president of the United States.

If you watched the first presidential debate this week, you witnessed a lot of childish behavior.

Name calling.

Talking over one another.

I was about ready to watch one of them simply stick his tongue out at the other.

In fact, I almost expected that to happen the way the debate was going.

It was completely exhausting, and when it was over, I simply asked the Lord to show mercy to our nation.

If two men vying for the leader of the free world can't act above the level of a 5th grader, there is little hope for that nation.

At the rate it was going, each of them should have been made to sit here last week as we examined God's instruction to children because that is how they were acting.

Now while we are here, let me offer my 30 second biblical voting counsel.

No matter the election and no matter the candidate, no believer would ever vote for someone who is pro abortion or pro homosexual marriage or pro sin in any way.

Believers vote for righteousness even when it is only found in small portions.

Sadly, it is found in tinier portions every day in our country, as evidenced by the childishness of both candidates this past Tuesday.

No let me add this.

When the attitudes at the top are immature, the people under them are equally immature.

When the people at the top can't have a civilized conversation, the people under them don't stand a chance.

And that is exactly what we see in our streets today.

Childish, immature behavior.

Name calling.

Yelling and screaming over each other.

It is truly discouraging in many ways, and if my purpose was found in the trying to save our nation, I would be out of hope.

But my purpose is not found in saving our nation, my purpose is found preaching the gospel and watching God save souls.

And to that end, I have great hope.

Now, we are in midst of a long series of topical messages on restraints in society, and the reason we are looking at these is to help us live a life pleasing to God though the world around us crumble.

And we live that pleasing life by honoring the restraints on sin that God has placed in every society in world history.

Those restraints are the conscience, the family, the government, and the church.

And we have only made it completely through one of these restraints and that is the conscience, which is God's alarm system to alert us to sin.

WE are now looking at the family, which is God's design to discipline sin.

WE have already said that the conscience uses guilt and shame to keep us from sin, and the family uses discipline and instruction to remove sin from our lives.

Now, the primary way the family does that is through parenting.

Parents are designed to be the child's first taste of authority in the world.

This is their role, and when it is ignored, sin erupts.

Like we said last week, it may show up in what seem to be cute ways in toddlers, but that sin in our children gets ugly in a hurry.

And though we may watch TV and shake our heads at the rioting and violence of this younger generation, someone needs to call their parents to account.

Because they often failed to be the authority that God intended them to be.

And look, God's instruction to parents is not lengthy.

It takes all of one verse in Ephesians 6.

It takes all of one verse in the book of Colossians.

Now there is plenty of instruction in the book of Proverbs and there is instruction in the book of Deuteronomy, but in its simplest form, it is easy to understand.

So we are going to be looking at it tonight in verse 4 of Ephesians 6.

Let me read it to us.

***4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.***

Before we look at what this means, I want to highlight two important truths that surround this verse about parenting.

First, this is clear instruction but it is not a step by step parenting book.

Which suggests one very important concept that we all need to remember...

There is freedom in the everyday forms of parenting.

Biblical parenting may look different from household to household.

If you want to split a church, ruin a friendship, start a fight, tell another parent how to parent that goes beyond what the Bible says here.

The truth is that obeying the commands that we will see tonight can be done in a number of different parenting styles.

The principle to remember is this...

As long as a parent is not violating the principles we see here, their style may be different from yours.

Some Christian parents allow more freedom with TV and movie choices.

Some parents don't own a TV or let their kids go to movies.

Some Christian parents have a lot of family rules.

Some parents have very few.

And we need to show grace to those who don't parent just like we do.

Now, I want to be clear.

There is nothing wrong with offering your personal experience of parenting to others.

There is nothing wrong with responding to questions about parenting with your own convictions...

But it crosses the line when your style needs to be every other parent's style.

It is important and necessary to show grace in the area of Christian parenting.

The second truth you need to understand is that this is instruction to both parents.

You say, well this says fathers...

And that is true. Most translations use the word fathers here.

But this same exact word is translated parents in Hebrews 11:23 when it refers to Moses' parents.

Since fathers are the head of the home, it is important for them to shape the parenting of the children.

But this instruction applies to you moms as well.

Now as we look at this verse, it is really two commands in one verse.

The first is a negative....

The second is a positive...

First, the negative...

Fathers (or Parents), do not provoke your children to anger...

What does this mean...

In Colossians 3:21, there is a similar command,

Fathers (or Parents) do not exasperate your children...

Provoke to anger and exasperate are the same action...

In the Greek, the word for exasperate was used for an instrument called a bellows.



It was used to get a fire started.

IT had two handles and a leather bag in between.

You would pull the handles apart and air would be drawn into the bag.

You would go to a fire that was just beginning and push the handles together...

And the stream of air would be added to the small fire to make it blaze.

That is the picture that the Bible is painting here.

Parents, you are not to be the ones adding fuel to the fire in your kids.

You are called to put out the fires in your kids, not to make it bigger.

I am reminded of Proverbs where we find that a gentle answer turns away wrath....

But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Parents are not to exasperate our kids, or provoke them to more anger.

Now, this certainly doesn't mean that your child's anger is always your fault.

No, their anger comes from their sinful nature.

But as parents we also have a sinful nature, and we must understand that we must fight against a nature that can cause us to provoke our children to anger.

We must fight against a flesh that we still possess as believers that causes us to make situations worse rather than better.

So how can you provoke your kids to anger?

*1) You can provoke your child to anger with the comparison game.*

The temptation to say “Why can’t you be more like your sister or brother or even one of their friends” will be there, but resist saying it.

Your children are uniquely made in the image of God.

When Jacob favored Esau over Jacob and Rebekah favored Jacob over Esau, it caused trouble for generations.

Do not paly favorites within your own family for sure, and certainly don’t favor or compliment your child’s friend over your own child.

You may think you are motivating your child to improve, but you are actually creating a hidden resentment.

*2) You can provoke your child to anger with the pressure of high achievement.*

First, we should have high expectations for our kids in behavior, academic, and social areas.....

But we must never have unreasonable or unreachable expectations.

*#3 You can provoke your kids to anger with over-protection.*

Parents who guard every step of their child are in some ways expressing a lack of trust in God's care.

That doesn't mean you leave your child alone to play in the road...

But it also doesn't mean that you have to know exactly what they are doing every waking minute of the day.

Give your kids some rope as they mature.

Let their interests come forth.

Don't shoot down every idea with "that's never going to work."

Christian families are very guilty of this at times.

One of the men who disciple me in the Lord said to me..

"Give your kids more and more responsibility while they are still at home..."

That way if they mess up, you are still there to help with the messes that they will make.

The worst thing is to push them out of the nest and into the world on the same day.

Let them explore while you are there with an eye still on them but not necessarily hovering over them.

And I think that is wise advice.

As fallen creatures, our nature pushes us to try and control things that are only in God's control.

Over-protection is the outcome of a heart that wants the best for our kids.

And that is not a bad thing.

But you will not be able to lock your kids inside the house for the rest of their lives.

That is actually called kidnapping and you can go to jail for that.

Slowly turn your kids over to their rightful owner, who is known than God Himself.

*#4) You can provoke your kids to anger with over indulgence and no indulgence.*

Here is what I mean...

You create resentment by not ever sacrificing for your kids or doing things they enjoy.

You can also create resentment by always doing what they enjoy.

This is the balancing act that often gets out of balance with families.

I think we are living in a time when the pendulum is clearly on the side of always doing what our kids enjoy.

I know families who have made idols out of their kids desires.

If their baby wants it, they get it.

And you say how does that provoke a kid to anger...

That should provoke his happiness.

But the reverse is what happens.

When you meet all their needs and desires and then they encounter teachers and friends....

Who don't meet their every need, you have a kid frustrated at the world and eventually at you...

"No" is a good word to hear at times.

Though some parents think that is the dirtiest word on the planet.....

Kids actually need limits in their lives...

They need clear lines in the sand on what their family will and won't do.

Want to see a kid who has had every desire met in life by their parents?

Turn on the TV and watch shows about kids who grew up famous....

On the other hand, your kids need to see you sacrifice for them.

They need to see you submitting to their needs at times.

They need you to step away from your housework or your TV and simply do something that your kids want to do.

However, the kids need to clearly know who is driving the ship.

A spoiled kid becomes a spoiled adult.

A kid who watches you meet their need expects a God who will always fulfill their every desire.

And when he doesn't, they will look for someone who will.

*#5 You can provoke your kids to anger with inconsistent discipline.*

A constant question of parents is discipline, and we will get into that in a minute in the final part of this verse...

But let me say this before we talk about how to discipline....

Your kids will get frustrated by an inconsistent discipline policy in your family.

If they break a rule today and nothing happens....

And then they break the same rule tomorrow and get disciplined, they get confused.

The important thing for parents to remember is establish a few reasonable family rules and then...

Enforce those rules with consistency.

IF they break rule on Monday and you laugh with them....

And then they break it on Tuesday and you spank them...

It provokes them to anger...

Kids need clear and reasonable rules...

But they also need clear enforcement and punishment for breaking those rules.

So how are we to discipline?

Well, the first thing to note about discipline is that it is active.



The middle of verse 4 says to bring them up..

The Greek word is ektrepho, and it is an action word that means to strongly nourish or feed.

This is why we call it raising kids.

It is active.

If you want to raise tomatoes, you have to plow, plant, water, feed, weed and prune.

You can't sit in the hose and have pretty tomatoes.

You have to take an active role in it.

Same with your children.

Passive parenting is not biblical parenting.

You cannot leave your kids to their own devices.

You can't let the school raise them.

The church raise them.

Your parents raise them.

The pastor raise them.

Their teacher raise them.

You gave birth.

You raise them.

What in the world has become of parents who think it is everyone else's responsibility to raise their children?

And this even applies in the home.

Dads, don't leave it up to your wives.

And wives, be careful not to let "go see your Daddy" become your favorite phrase.

Kids are given two parents for a reason, and they are to both be active in both discipline and instruction.

So be active bringing your kids up.

Look, I get it.

There is a lot on your plate as an adult.

There are work obligations.

There are family obligations.

There are church obligations.

There are all sorts of obligations in your life.

Then there are obstacles in your life.

You are tired.

You are hungry.

You are lazy.

You need time alone.

Let me remind you that family is a series of submissions in your life, where every member of the family seeks to submit and serve the needs of the other members of the family.

Same is true for parents.

You submit to the needs of your kids.

This doesn't mean you let them tell you what to do, but it does mean that some of your needs may go unmet while you serve their needs.

And you know what happens when parents don't submit to their kids?

Kids end up dying in the back of hot cars because the parents have to go to a casino to gamble.

Kids end up dead in cars that are run off into lakes because mom wants to be able to date without having to get a baby sitter.

And these are just the extreme examples.

Failure to sacrifice for your kids means that you have no idea about who are your kid's friends...

What they are being taught in school that contradicts the Word of God...

Or even what they learned in Sunday School because you don't want to sacrifice your time.

I often the stories of heart broken parents with wayward kids, but when you dig deeper, you often find parenting problems.

Dads who were too busy with their hobbies.

Moms who were interested in material things so they took a job and neglected their home.

Dads who spent hours with their friends but very little time with their kids.

Moms who spend hours at gym but very few hours at home.

And to be perfectly honest with you, it is hard to feel sympathy for parents who refused to sacrifice and submit to the needs of their kids.

Now that isn't always the case with difficult children, but it is often the case.

Let me simply say.

Serve your children.

Don't make idols out them.

Don't satisfy their every need.

Don't throw money at them.

Instead, be active in your parenting and the rewards of it will be a great blessing in your life.

So proper biblical parenting calls for active and submissive parents.

A second aspect of biblical parenting is discipline and instruction.

Simply put, discipline is correction.

And instruction is information.

Instruction always needs to be a part of our discipline.

Without teaching why their actions were wrong, we violate the principle of the first part of this verse.

We provoke them to anger.

You see, children need correction but they also need instruction of why they are being disciplined.

Correction without instruction creates confusion.

This is why “because I said so” is lazy parenting.

Look, if the Lord disciplined you and gave no indication why, you would be confused.

Same is true of children.

They need discipline and instruction.

This means that you as a parent better know what the Bible says and be able to explain why it is wrong to stick out your tongue at mom.

Why it is wrong to take a cookie without asking.

Why it is wrong to talk back to dad.

So parenting is active, parenting is corrective, and parenting is instructive.

Next week, we will finish up with how to discipline and what exactly to teach, and then I will add the ultimate goal of parenting.

Let me end with this...

## **Conclusion**

John Quincy Adams was the 4th president of the United States.

His Father John Adams was the second president of the United States.

Well, John Quincy had a son named Charles Francis Adams.

He would not go on to be president, but he offers some encouragement to all of us parents tonight.

One day, his father took him fishing.

They caught nothing.

That night, each made an entry in their diary, which was a family tradition.

The father wrote this.

“Went fishing with my son today caught nothing—what a wasted day.”

That same night, Charles Francis Adams wrote this.

“Went fishing with my father—the most wonderful day of my life!”



Look parents, be faithful to be active and be corrective and be instructive.

And the fruit of that faithfulness and time will be returned and rewarded.

Let us pray.