

## Spirit Filled Parenting *Part 2*

*Ephesians 6:4*

*“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”*

Proverbs 3:11-12

**Introduction:** As we’ve focused on how the Bible defines marriage and parenting these last few weeks, I trust there have been many good discussions about particulars, questions raised about certain situations, and hopefully a large amount of self-reflection. We have stated that marriage and parenting are hard yet possible in the fear of Christ and transformation of the gospel, which means both are a **faith filled venture** from beginning to end. But this does not mean that all of our angst goes away or often the regret of the past. *Did we do it right? Are we doing it right? Did we mess up? Could we have done things differently or better?* The answer to these questions is, of course, that no parent is perfect, and even though we have the best intentions, we make imperfect decisions, HAVE most likely frustrated our kids, and would do things differently if we could do it over. But, we **MUST REMEMBER** that we neither save nor condemn our kids, but do our best to set them up with an understanding of God the Father in His sovereignty and love, Christ in His grace and mercy, and the gospel of forgiveness and restoration. The gospel does not keep us looking back in regret but forward in gracious hope. Parents can be the first to admit their frailty and failure, even asking for forgiveness when that failure is clear. We also have an opportunity to help others now, sharing our experiences and struggles to the next generation.

In thinking through parenting, there were **two indelible lessons** my parents gave:

- 1) When asked how they “produced” four children who all walk with the Lord, they wisely deflecting ANY praise or credit, saying instead, “it was all by the grace of God”. Yes, they raised us consistently, disciplined us (some of us more than others), demonstrated that commitment to God and His church were valuable, and were committed to each other. But they also knew that salvation came from the Lord alone, so they can only step back and **praise, not take credit**.
- 2) When a certain youngest son came home from Bible college the first time, a bit full of himself and with enough Scriptural knowledge to be dangerous, he questioned *why John and Pat Bakker did not do more formal teaching with us* (and probably some other punky questions). The answer showed they were confident in the Lord and humble before Him: *“You’re right. There are a lot of things we would do differently and probably should have done. But you will have an opportunity to clarify/fix what we did so that you can make your own mistakes.”* They simultaneously put me in my place (much needed) and gave a huge principle of parenting. They continued to train me in my adult years and reminded me that kids must ultimately take responsibility for their actions.

Parenting is discipleship. A disciple is both one who believes and learns. Our goal as parents is to point our kids continually to Christ, to help them see God’s love and goodness in all things, and to show them what it means to be a follower of Jesus. To disciple someone starts with evangelism, but does not simply stay there. In parenting, we have an opportunity to share Christ **over time**, not in a hit and run way but for as many years as they are under our care. *But how do we do it?* That is what we’ll look at again this morning.

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

Before we get into the positive specifics of parenting, it’s important to review where we’ve been. **First**, look at the end of this verse, that the goal of bringing up our children in “*of the Lord*.” What have we seen about Christ being Lord in this whole study?

- **God’s sovereignty and Christ’s Lordship are PERVASIVE, touching ALL of life and leaving nothing outside of His authority** – As we’ve already seen (Eph. 4:6) God is overall, in all and through all, and in Jesus, all things were created through Him and for Him and hold together in Him (Col. 1:15-17). This means that all of life (and we’ll see next week in our work environments) is under the Lordship of Jesus, giving opportunity to worship Him in all areas of life.
- **Submission is the default setting for all Christians** – We ultimately submit to Christ out of reverential fear, recognizing that HE has ultimate authority, and thus submit to the structures He set up. This requires us to humble ourselves, trust Him, and yield our own will.
- **Being filled with the Spirit is required for joyful submission and glorifying God** – Submission is NOT our fleshly default response, so everything commanded in relationships is contingent on us yielding to and walking by the leading of the Holy Spirit, who guides us in the Word and convicts us of sin
- **God changes from the inside out** – How does culture change? Not by changing structures and systems, but when hearts and minds are transformed. Healthy, righteous, and yes, relationships where submission is upheld are the ways the world will see a difference in Christians and see Christ, breaking down the wall between our words and life.

**Second**, notice that the call to parents and fathers particularly, is to “bring up” their children. This is the same word as in **Eph. 5:29** concerning nourishing one’s body. This signals that there is both a **goal of parenting** and a **process** to engage in. We are tasked with bringing up our children in the fear and understanding of the Lord, knowing that we will release them from our authority one day, preparing them for a life of worship and service to Christ. Last week we looked at the ways that a parent can frustrate, embitter, and provoke our children to anger. This week we want to delve into the positive part, how we guide and warn our children, training them in a life that seeks to glorify God.

### 1. **Guide Your Child Through Discipline** – “*but bring them up in the discipline...of the Lord*”

When it comes to our children, discipline is often misunderstood and counterintuitive. But show me an unhappy elementary child who is out of control, who gets in trouble consistently, and who is mean to others, and almost assuredly it can be sourced to an undisciplined home life. The word Paul uses here for *discipline* is the word ***paideia***, a word that connotes a spectrum of meaning, from *discipline*, *training*, and *education*. It has to do with whole-life training in the Lord, not simply correcting when rules are broken. This is where we see parenting is immersive, cannot be outsourced, and provides a foundation for future discipleship. If you have been blessed with children, faithful parenting is the most important investment you can ever make. *What does disciplining our children mean and look like?*

- **Guidance through correction** – Biblical discipline of our children is always countercultural. In the Roman world in which the Bible was written, fatherhood (*patria potestas*) meant that the husband/father had complete control over the family, even the ability to legally sell their kids into slavery or punish by death. We know that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and it

created an environment of fear and heavy handedness. Today, because of abuses by parents and a culture that denies Biblical manhood, fathers have often swung the pendulum the other way, giving in to their kids, suing for artificial peace, and moving the line of discipline to appease their kids. But the Bible is clear: *to love our kids IS to discipline, consistently, firmly, and under control.* This is reflective in God's love and training of US!

**Proverbs 3:11** – *“My son, do not despise the LORD’s **discipline** or be weary of his reproof, <sup>12</sup> for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”*

**Hebrews 12:7-10** – *“It is for **discipline** that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not **discipline**? 8 If you are left without **discipline**, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who **disciplined** us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they **disciplined** us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he **disciplines** us for our good, that we may share his holiness.”*

**Proverbs 29:17** – *“Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.”*

But what does this discipline look like, and WHY do we do it? The answer is, it changes as our kids grow, but the goal remains the same. When our kids are younger, we seek to train them even before we can teach them. Here is what **H. Clay Trumbull** wrote about the *paideia* of our children:

*“Training is a possibility long before teaching is. Before a child is old enough to know what is said to it, it is capable of feeling, and of conforming to, or of resisting, the pressure of efforts for its training. A child can be trained to go to sleep in the arms of its mother or nurse, or in a cradle, or on a bed...a very young child can be trained to cry for what it wants, or to keep quiet, as means of securing it. And, as a matter of fact, the training of children is begun much earlier than their teaching.”<sup>1</sup>*

The point is this. Habits are formed early in our children. They learn by actions before they understand what words mean. When we are willing to establish early on that there are lines that cannot be crossed, that the expectation is to answer and respond the first time, and that there are consequences to disobedience, we communicate and train our kids that **there is God given authority in their life, that life is not about them, and that they can rest in the consistent care of their parents.**

When we were at a stage to spank our girls, Erin and I had to work through a process to ensure we were not punishing but correcting, not doing it out of anger or frustration but teaching. There had to be direct defiance or disobedience, not a lack of dexterity (the difference between knocking over a lamp and running into it AFTER being told to stop running in the living room). We would talk through the “why” of the process, explain that obedience is important, that they can be forgiven, and would pray with them. In the beginning I feared that my girls would run FROM me, but the exact opposite happened. They wanted to be closer as a result. Their attitudes would change. They knew that there was no “3” count of response or bargaining. It means that we’ve never had to yell at our kids to obey, since that would signal that our kids no longer understand authority. Kids will ALWAYS push the boundaries of authority since it is our depraved nature. Discipline does not save, but it trains our kids to know that they are **not the final authority in life**, and that lesson ripples into every aspect of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Lou Priolo, “Teach Them Diligently: How to use the Scriptures in Child Training”, p. 72

- **Guidance through teaching a worldview** – But *paideia* is far from over as our kids get older, it has merely begun. In fact, it is true that training of our kids goes on whether we engage in it or not. Our kids do not live in a neutral world where we send them out to simply discover the truth that is out there. They are sent out to a world that seeks to *captivate their minds and hearts* (2 Cor. 10:3-7). In the Greco-Roman culture, the idea of *paideia* was to train the whole of a student. Richard Tarness explained it this way:

*"The classical Greek system of education and training came to include gymnastics, grammar, rhetoric, poetry, mathematics, geography, natural history, astronomy, and the physical sciences, history of society, and ethics and philosophy, the complete pedagogical course of study necessary to produce a well-rounded, fully educated citizen."*<sup>2</sup>

Rome understood that to produce citizens, they had to be schooled under Caesars care and system. The reality is that a worldview education **USED to be done by the church**, but that shifted away under secular humanism, creating a separation of Biblical truth which was relegated to areas of faith, and *education*, which held down the sciences and arts. This created a *secular-sacred* divide that we live with today, meaning God has been cut out of education and Christ has been relegated to *helping people feel better and be better*. **This is why parents training their children is so important!** They will not receive a Biblical worldview in worldly systems, so it must start and be thoroughly done in the home.

*What does Biblical training look like?* Here is what **John Piper** said about this idea of training:

*"This word (paideia) signifies the actions that a father takes to give his children the abilities and skills and character to live life to the glory of God. It involves being **shown how to do the things the Christ-exalting life requires** and being held accountable to them as well as you can. That is, a father will guide all his words and ways by God's Word and depend on God's wisdom and strength to apply them and make everything serve the glory of God. **In other words, the most important thing in raising children is that they come to see Christ, the Lord, as supremely valuable as Savior and Lord and Treasure of Life.**"*<sup>3</sup>

This means that the role and job of a parent is to train our children to see and savor Jesus Christ in all areas of life, and to rest in and glorify the sovereignty of God in everything, since they will not naturally do so. One of my friends several years ago questioned the way his son was taught by his grandma. The young boy would ask who made the flowers, the sky, the clouds, and so on. Grandma would say "God did". My friend believed that was a cheap cop out and not helpful for his son long term. But we talked about the fact that we **START** with the premise that God is over all things, and when our kids learn about photosynthesis and water cycles and solar movements, it simply deepens that understanding. We teach our kids to connect all things to the glory of God, that there is nothing that He doesn't touch or is intimately involved in, and nothing is hidden from his purview.

- **Guidance through God's Word** – But where is the source of this training?

**2 Tim. 3:14-17** – *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which **are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed*

<sup>2</sup> Alan Pue, "Rethinking Discipleship: Why Christian School Matters", p. 41

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pg. 40.

*out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for **training in righteousness**,  
<sup>17</sup> **that** the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*

There is no short cut here, parents. This does not mean spouting verses at your kids, but does mean that you have clarity in what the Scripture says about Christ, the gospel, holiness, and God's glory. It means that as our kids begin to read and understand the Scripture for themselves, they become aware of the consistency with how they were raised. It means that we NEVER leave Christ anywhere, but talk about Him much, praise Him always, thank Him for all things, and connect dots for our kids back to their greatest need. *Do you notice the word "paidiea" here?* The Word of God **trains in righteousness**, so that we will be complete and equipped. But we also have to prepare our kids for a wicked world set against them, and not to be **afraid, but be prepared**.

2. **Warn Your Child Through Instruction** – The word "*instruction*" here is the word *warn or admonish*. It is the idea of influencing the mind or putting into the minds. Again, this goes with the idea that the world is not neutral so preparation is mandatory. Here is what Paul said as a goal for everyone in **Colossians 1:28-29**:

*Him (Christ) we proclaim, **warning everyone** and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ**.<sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

The pathway of maturity is through the gateway of warning and teaching. Paul is very clear that it takes hard work. It requires parents to know the Word so they can know the world. In **1 Corinthians 10:11**, Paul said that the stories of the OT were written as examples to us, "*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down **for our instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come.*" The point Paul was making is that to understand how to live in any culture requires us to LEARN from what is written for us in Scripture. We learn about idolatry, grumbling, sexual immorality, putting God to the test, etc, NOT by examining social media, but understanding God's Word. We know that the pressure our kids face is always **internal AND external**, and we need to warn on both fronts.

Finally, warning requires that WE walk in wisdom with those who also walk in wisdom, since we cannot undertake this whole venture alone. "*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm*" (**Prov. 13:20**). The most significant resource we have in parenting is a life fully yielded to Christ in all areas of life, and the most powerful tool is the living and active word of God, since training is both **caught and taught**. So we teach our children out of our **own experiences**, both what we have learned and how we have failed. We are willing to show them how to make decisions, how to take responsibility for actions, and willingly taking consequences. We walk with them, not perfectly, but consistently. Parents are primary in training, but we do not do it alone.

God has provided a community to help us in training our kids. This is where the church comes into play. We must walk with the wise to become wise. There are people in the church who have walked the path before you/us, who have learned much from experience, and can help guide us in the path. We have others who can help influence and model the truth to our kids, saying the same thing we do but from a different voice. We invest time in purposeful relationships, putting our kids around others who will influence them well.

We also must be involved and evaluative in the overall education of our kids. **John Piper** said, "*God does not intend for Christian children to be taught by unbelievers and to be surrounded most of the day by intense, worldly pressure. That's not what childhood is for. It's for being shaped and molded by wise,*

*loving Christian adults.”* This means that as educational models change, we are willing to be that much more engaged in our children’s lives, what they are being taught, and who teaches them. There are valid models of education (public, home, private, Christian), and each require us to be the primary influences and take responsibility for what our kids are being taught.

Parenting is a great and glorious opportunity. It requires us to be yielded to Christ, filled with the Spirit, and trusting of God’s sovereignty. The task is large, but the joyful yield is worth it. May our children know they are loved, fully equipped, and learn to set their hope in Christ. The battleground for our kids’ minds and hearts is raging now more than ever, and the need for godly parents must rise to the challenge. God gives us all that we need to accomplish what He has commanded, and that is especially true in the realm of parenting.