

# Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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## I. Introduction

What is a parent's responsibility as it pertains to their kids? What is essential to producing strong, wise, godly, well-adjusted men and women, adults who take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities? God tells you exactly what to do and how to achieve it. He will show you how to show your children who they are and what life is all about.

## II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

### Chapter 6

Having told children what their responsibility is before the Lord, how they must submit, God now addresses their parents. How are parents to submit to their kids? Yes, children must submit by obeying and honoring their parents, but how are parents supposed to submit to their children. It seems self-contradictory; how can parents who have authority over their kids submit to them? Well, it is possible and they must do it if their children are to become godly, responsible, independent adults. Everyone in the Lord's Body, the Lord's family, especially parents and children, are dependent on each other and responsible to help each other fulfill the role God gave them, 4:16. In order for children to succeed, their parents must die for them.

**6:4**, how are parents to submit, to sacrifice for their children, to put their kids before themselves? God tell parents to do two things: they must not do anything to provoke their kids to anger. And they must raise them in the "training" and "admonition" of the Lord. And "fathers" doesn't just refer to men, it refers to both mothers and fathers. Both parents are responsible before the Lord to raise their kids to be like Jesus, to live like Jesus, to see themselves and the world around them the way Jesus does. Training will involve the Lord's discipline and admonition will involve the Lord's wise counsel on what life is and how to live it.

**"Do not provoke your children to wrath"** the quickest way to turn your child over to Satan is to build anger and resentment in them. Satan's hoping that you'll do things to anger your kids so that he can take over, 4:26-27; he knows that if he can get you to provoke your kids, then he will use their anger to pry them away from God and His righteousness (James 1:19-20). If he can get you to do that, then he will provoke them to do unrighteousness.

However, we're not talking about any anger that your kids may feel over you holding them accountable to the Lord's godly standard. If you hold them to God's standard and they get mad, then it's time to find out who the problem is. Is the problem you or them: did you hold them to the standard in an ungodly manner, e.g., did you constantly criticize or give them an impossible standard? If you did, then you need to repent, apologize and ask for their forgiveness. But if you behaved godly in your parenting, then the problem is with them and it's time to have a serious conversation about why they hate God and His standard and possibly to enact some discipline.

Parents can provoke their children to anger in many different ways: you can constantly criticize and correct, give standards that are impossible to meet, ignore your children altogether (the babysitter or nanny raise them instead of you), constantly compare your children to someone more talented, regularly tell them that they'll never amount to much, fail to praise and encourage, constantly show disappointment, play favorites with your children, fail to equip them for life, baby them and do everything for them into their teens, twenties, and thirties, fail to give them the love and respect they crave (5:33), and on and on. Parents who do such things will produce children who will be angry and miserable and who will fail in life.

**“But bring them up.”** The first thing to notice here is that parents are responsible to “bring them up,” to raise their children from childhood to adulthood. In other words, what is a parent’s job? A parent’s job is to produce wise, godly, strong adults who take responsibility for their own lives. Perhaps you’re in your 20’s or 30’s and you still live at home and you’re thinking, “What’s wrong with my parents helping me; I’m still trying to get my life together?”

First question, who’s responsible for you once you’re a grown man or woman, you or your parents? When you become an adult, you’re supposed to be out of the house, not still being raised by your parents. But today’s crop of young men and women are living in prolonged adolescence. Becoming an adult is being pushed out more and more, into one’s 20’s and 30’s. What’s gone wrong? By the way, this is why society at large is suffering today. If the young men and women (and grown men and women) we see on our TV screens marching, protesting, rioting, looting, destroying property, disrespecting the authorities, and taking matters into their own hands (and I understand that not all protesters are rioters), were taught to be wise, godly, strong men and women, then they wouldn’t be reacting to this moment the way they are. If they had a legitimate grievance, then they would address it like a godly grown man and woman would.

Second question, do your parents know how to raise strong, godly adults? We are the product of our parents; what they know, we know; what they do, we do. Thus, both what our parents do and fail to do will shape how we think and live. It shapes how children, teens, and adults see themselves, the world around them and God. And if our parents don’t know, then we won’t know God or what life is about or how to live it.

Third question, have you asked God for help? It doesn’t matter how badly your parents botched their job; it doesn’t matter how badly you’ve botched your life—Moses was 80 years old when God came calling! If you’re a parent who failed to raise a strong, godly, independent adult, don’t beat yourself up over it. Forget the past and ask God to show you how to do it now and then help your son or daughter. If you’re a child of bad parenting, forget the past and ask God to show you how to be a strong, wise, godly adult. God has the wisdom, power, and ability to transform every man, woman, and child into the man or woman they were always meant to be (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 3:13).

**“[I]n the training.”** The second thing to notice after “bring them up” is that parents are responsible to raise their kids in the “training...of the Lord.” There are two things that a parent must do as they raise their kids and both come from the Lord: the first is discipline. They must raise them in the discipline of the Lord. As you’re showing your children how to grow up and be strong, godly adults, they will make mistakes, they will disobey, and they will outright rebel against God. Depending on the severity of the mistake or sin, you will discipline accordingly. This includes corporal discipline. Remember, you’re to discipline them according to the Lord’s discipline not yours. Will you trust Jesus to tell you how to discipline your kids? It’s crucial that you believe what Jesus says; if you don’t believe Him, your kids won’t either.

If you don't believe in spanking, if you think that it harms your child instead of help him/her grow up to be a well-adjusted, strong, godly adult, then you need to ask yourself where you got that idea. Whenever we contradict God, we must understand that He's right and we're wrong and that Satan has deceived us. God is crystal clear that spanking is part of raising a child; in fact, he says that any parent who refuses to spank, hates their child; to love your child is to spank them when appropriate (Proverbs 13:24). Now, there is such a thing as child abuse, even in Christian homes. And God NEVER condones physically or emotionally abusing your child. The spanking God prescribes is never designed to harm or scar your child. If your discipline harms your child, you're not spanking, you're abusing and you need to stop. In godly spanking, the child knows why they're being spanked, the pain goes away within minutes, its consistent not erratic, it doesn't damage physically or emotionally, it's done only on the buttocks, it's never done with your hand (or foot!) but with a flat wooden spoon or the like, it's never done in anger or frustration but in love, it's done with mercy and grace which means that sometimes you give them opportunity to get it right or you consider extenuating circumstances, e.g., was the child tired or hungry, and when it's over you tell them that it's forgiven and forgotten and that you love them.

**“[A]nd admonition of the Lord.”** The second thing you as a parent must do which also comes from the Lord is that you must admonish, i.e., you must instruct your child. You must give them the Lord's counsel and wisdom on how to live life. You will teach them foundational issues like who God is, who they are and who the real enemy is. You will show them that God is not an ogre who hates them or an implacable policeman watching their every move, but a Father who loves them (Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:9-10, 19) and carefully created them to be something marvelous and wonderful and for a definite purpose (Psalm 139:13-16). You will show them that Satan is the real enemy in their lives and he never stops attacking (Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 Peter 5:8). But you will also show them how Satan is no match AT ALL for God (1 John 4:4) and how easy it is to defeat him (James 4:7 cf. Matthew 4:1-11).

You will show them that it's always a battle between the Lord's Truth and Satan's lies, the father of lies (John 8:44) vs. the Lord of Truth (John 14:6), that his attacks are always the same and involve the same three things: isolation, deception, accusation. You will show them how Satan's goal is to get them to believe that God is their enemy and keeping something from them, that they can live independent of God, and that there is something wrong with them which God will punish (Genesis 3:1-8). You will show them how Satan's pattern of attack is repeated over and over in the Lord's heroes, e.g., Moses (Exodus 3-4) and Gideon (6:1-18).

You will show them the Lord's wisdom on everything, from respect for God's sovereignty and wisdom, to sex, to money, to retirement, to laziness, to hard work, to marriage, and on and on (Proverbs 1-31; Ephesians 1-6). You will show them exactly what it is to be a grown man or woman of God, how to be like Jesus in every way (2 Corinthians 3:18). And you will instill in them a love for God and His advice; you will show them what it is to obey out of love instead of fear (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) so that when they grow up, they won't depart from God or His path (Proverbs 22:6).

### III. Conclusion

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*