

Nurture and Admonish

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[0 : 0 0] If you'll turn to Ephesians chapter number 6, and we will look there for a little bit tonight. We haven't prayed together as a group of...

Tonight, we're going to do that before we end our service tonight. We're going to come forward and we are going to pray as our role as dads, that we will live those out. And also, we're going to pray for the Vacation Bible School down in Atlanta.

But before we jump into Ephesians 6, I want to remind you that we're just a couple of Sunday nights out from having our hymn sing. It's on a Sunday night. We're going to sing different hymns. And so if you would like to submit, you can go on Eventbrite, get the information you need to put your favorite hymn in.

And we'll add it to a list and we'll sing as many of them as we can. Also, I'm going to take one hymn on those nights and give some history on it. Or in the future, ask other people to do that.

And so you don't want to miss out on our night of singing hymns. Ephesians 6, verse 4. I'll read verses 1 through 4 as we continue to see that the Bible addresses the role of father and mother.

[1 : 0 6] It's appropriate that we would do. And we consider how this brief charge given to us here, it shapes our Christian parenting in an unchristian world, that we have a command to be given that's different than the world we live in, that if we're not getting help one another here around God's Word, we're not going to find it outside of these walls, that we live differently, right?

We live to a different code of conduct. We live following a different king. We have a citizenship here, but we certainly have a citizenship in heaven. And so we have a way in which we are to live.

And the Bible gives us that. It tells us that. It doesn't matter if all the wisdom of this world and every book in this world and every person in this world tells us to live in a contrary way, we're going to still just be simple people and go back to the Word to let it tell us how we should live out our Christian life.

Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. And all the parents said, Amen. All right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

And ye fathers, provoke not your children the wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Verse 4 is where we will spend most of our time, is looking at the command of fathers to not provoke the children, but to admonish and to nurture them and to bring them up, and for the Lord, which is the most important part of all of that that we're going to see.

[2 : 3 7] Since we're not in the book of Ephesians, and so we haven't been going through chapter by chapter, I'll remind you what you know about Ephesians. So at the beginning part of this part, the first three chapters, tells us about our great salvation, about who we are in Christ.

And it just continues and continues before it ever gives you anything to go out and do, before it makes any statements about your behavior in this world. It talks about your identity in Christ that you have here, teaching where we sit in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers and rulers of wickedness, and how we are to walk, not as unwise, but wise, knowing the will of the Lord.

And so this walking here is an idiom that talks about the way one would conduct their life, how you're to live, your practices, and your character, and what we would do in the course of our days.

So we have so much of that rich teaching about it, knowing who we are, and then we come out of it and we're looking out how to live this out. And so now when it gives us some instructions to dad, it isn't in a vacuum by itself, but it's in the context of all that we have learned so far.

And so first of all, it goes to parents, children obey your parents, but then it shifts away from parents and it goes directly to dads. And it tells us in verse number four, and fathers is speaking directly to us.

[3 : 57] And so as dads in here, we should be on high alert for all the teaching we know about the gospel. Based on that, what are we to do as dads? And then it's boiled down into a verse that has so much for us.

A conversation here about our role or function as shepherds in our home. It's a big conversation right now kind of nationally. What does it mean to be a pastor? What is a pastor?

Is that an office in the church or is that a function? Is that something that's done? Do the work of evangelists, do the work of shepherding. And you can look at that, but every dad in here, and we have several verses for you, but every dad in here needs to take ownership of your shepherding role inside of a home that you can't outsource or give away.

That that's what is given to you to do is to lead your home. The Shepherd Your Children's Heart, the book that we give out at a baby and parent dedications, that's the job that you are called to do.

I'll give you one example, 1 Samuel 3, verse 11 through 14. Such a sad story. One of the stories that I remember reading after having a son and then having more children, and it just seems to get heavier every time that I read it.

[5 : 05] The Lord said in the Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle. That's something, isn't it? Everybody's ears will hear and tingle of this.

In that day I will perform against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house when I began, and also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever. We all know that Eli and his sons were priests. They were of a unique nature in which they had a job given to do.

However, we can't escape the underlying principle that Eli is being held accountable for failing to restrain his sons. He was to restrain his sons is what the passage says.

Read a story I think will help you understand what restraint, what that expression would mean. You think of a woman being mugged on the street by a young thug as a policeman looks on. As he approached the officer to ask why he stood there and did nothing, would you be satisfied if he simply shrugged his shoulders, pointed to the young man running from the scene, and said, I know how they are at this age.

[6 : 18] Would that work for you? I doubt it. This would satisfy you no more than if he said, that fellow did that because he's a sinner, and I can never change a sinner's heart. We don't ask police officers to change hearts, but to restrain evildoers, and that is precisely what parents are charged to do.

That's what Eli was found guilty of, is he brought no restraint into his children's lives. So there's aspects of our children's lives that we know that we do not have the ability to change.

We can only influence on all that, but that does not negate our responsibility there. Fathers are divinely appointed as leaders of their household. There's no more important influence in the life of a child than the influence of the home.

They say some crazy number about how many kids leave church after they graduate high school, and every time that stat comes out, there's all kinds of research of how we ought to reinvent youth ministry.

But don't you believe that we're looking in the wrong room, if that's the case, that we should not just turn the youth room upside down, but we should turn our homes upside down, if that really is the case in America, if that's what's going on, that we have a responsibility to help people in what they're doing, and their responsibility in raising their children.

[7 : 32] 1 Corinthians 11.3, But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Ephesians 5.23, For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Savior of the body.

1 Thessalonians 2.11 and 12, As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as Father doth his children, that he would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Ladies, I did not read these verses primarily for you in here. I read them for every one of us a minute here to say that we have been given a large responsibility inside of our home, and that every godly woman I've ever met said amen to that.

They were grateful for the man's rightful place in the home, and they wanted us to lead. There's many places in the world that need to be proclaimed, and our homes by fathers is certainly one of them.

At camp, we told the teenagers we'd make decisions at night. There'd be preaching, and our invitation time was together in a youth group because we believed that the decisions they were making would also require decisions by us inside of the church.

[8 : 42] Hannah Ewing could not be baptized the night unless Greg filled up the baptistry, unless we put it on the schedule, unless we spoke to her. Her decision required us to make some equal decisions as well. And I tell you, camp decisions often die because teenagers make decisions that aren't met equally by the adults in their lives that make decisions as well.

I told the teenagers, I said, if Graham, who and Olivia, we had a special time of prayer with them because of some special decisions that had been made at camp through the years, and Graham had been coming there, I believe, since he was about 15, and I said, what would it look like at 15 if God was going to lead you in the missions?

And the answer is he would place a desire in your heart. And he places that desire in your heart, and that desire would begin to change. You would take different opportunities. You would invest in different things.

You would be involved in the work of the ministry that all your friends should be involved in. And my son Thatcher said he was interested in Bangladesh. Not Bangladesh, because that's not how you say that, right? In Bangladesh, all right?

And he talked about Bangladesh. That is certainly a place in the world that needs the gospel proclaimed in it very loudly and very often. Another place that needs it is in our home and by us.

[9 : 57] If we would be louder and proclaim the gospel in our homes, the light would shine brighter, it would shine farther, and we must be diligent about doing that. Let me read you a quote here by John Bunyan.

First concerning the spiritual state of his family, he ought to be very diligent and cautious, doing his utmost both to increase faith where it has begun and to begin it where it is not.

I love that. Utmost increased faith where it has begun and to begin it where it is not. Therefore, he must diligently and frequently bring before his family the things of God from His holy word in accordance with what is suitable for each person, and let no man question his authority from the word of God for such a practice.

Let nobody question the fact that a dad ought to be often in front of his kids, teaching them about the word of God, that it's suitable for them, sharing with them, and saying, you're not going to believe this.

You've got to see this story. We should be almost jealous, right? If somebody was to tell our kids some of the great stories of the Bible and we didn't have that same opportunity.

[11 : 04] Provoke them not the wrath is how this starts off. It gives us some guidelines of what ought to be done in the passage. It says, Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.

And so provoking our children, how would we do that? This undue harshness and condemnation, unreasonable expectation that does not fit upon their current capacities. We train them towards complete obedience, but we have to help them along the way.

And kids can surprise you, right, with what their capacity is to do something. They won't mention what kid was in our home, but they asked, could they weed eat? And I said, sure, if you can start that weed eater, you can weed eat whatever you want.

Five minutes later, the weed eater's on, and the kid was running through the neighborhood, all right, using the weed eater. I had no thoughts that he could start the weed eater. And you'd be surprised at what they're able to do, but as dads, we have to become students of it.

Katie Holden here, when Katie was like three years old, she's in the back, I didn't have any kids, and I was with Jason, he was home on furlough, and we went into her grandma's house in Tennessee, and I said, is Katie walking yet?

[12 : 16] And Katie walked up to him and said, yeah, I'm walking, you know? She's like three years old, but as not having kids yet, you don't know. You ever hand a guy who doesn't have kids like a little baby?

You better be careful. They may set it down, all right? And just let them see what they can do, because you haven't yet become an expert at knowing what they're able to handle. We need to be so close to our kids that we're able to understand what they're able to handle.

Can they handle a 25-pound bag, a 40-pound bag, a 50-pound bag? And if they can handle a 30-pound bag, then don't insult them with a 10-pound bag, but don't break their back with a 50-pound bag.

And that's a way in which we could provoke them. The wrath is setting an unreasonable expectation upon them. Treat our children with fairness. Do not humiliate them. Do not command them to do something that they don't have the power to do.

We could be inconsistent in our discipline. We should teach children the word of God, what is right and what is wrong. Teach the children the fear of the Lord. And all these things are supposed to admonish them and to teach them and not provoke them towards wrath.

[13 : 18] Not to set them up for rebellion and disobedience. And then the words, bring them up. Spurgeon says, It is just inhumane.

Family religion is necessary for the nation, for the family itself, and for the church of God. Would that parents would awaken to the sense of the importance of this matter. It is a pleasant duty to talk of Jesus to our sons and daughters, the more so because it has often proved to be an accepted work.

For God has saved the children through the parents' prayers and admonitions. May every house in which the volume shall come honor the Lord and receive his smile. May the Lord look down upon our homes and we receive the smile as we share this gospel.

And from the very beginning, even before the fall, Genesis 128, when God gave Adam a work to do to be fruitful and to multiply, to rule and to subdue, this task would have to expand beyond the borders of Eden into the whole world, a place where God was present, known, served, and worshipped.

And they knew that he was present, which means that God gave Adam, before the fall, a multi-generational family discipleship ministry.

[14 : 35] That was the plan. It wasn't just to fill the earth with people, but it was to fill the earth with people that would worship him. And how was that going to happen? He was going to tell his kids in such a way that they would tell their kids and they would tell others.

And the book about being a disciple maker, I recently saw a quote by it and it says, the disciple maker really knows how they've done their job when they see their student's student teaching somebody.

When they see their student's student teaching somebody, the disciple maker really knows how they want about their job. That's what Adam would have had the opportunity to do. He would have seen this whole world be filled with people worshipping God.

And God, before the fall, gave a multi-generational family discipleship to Adam. And it was a gift and it was good and it was a wonderful thing to be involved of.

So how can we understand such a mandate apart from a clear calm of multi-generational family discipleship? It's also seen in the New Testament. When Paul acknowledges Timothy, he says, this guy had a good upbringing.

[15 : 38] He doesn't mention the seminaries from him or anything like that. He says, mom and grandma did right by this young man. This kid knows some stuff inside of our home. Even the qualifications of being an elder and being a pastor, it would say that it has to be a defective disciple maker inside of his home.

So he has to govern. He has to set boundaries inside of that. Fathers are specifically called to raise children in the faith, as we saw in the day of 1 Thessalonians. And then the clearest link in the New Testament, the family discipleship pattern, is seen right here in Ephesians 6.

And it tells us what we are to do. This ministry, the nurture, it's sometimes used positively and negatively. In this case, it's positive. It requires repentance and calling our children to faith and humble life of obedience.

Psalm 87, 78, 4 says, We will not hide from their children showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

That we ought to let our kids see this. We shouldn't hide this from them. God has done something wonderful in your life, and your kids should hear about it. The president of Princeton many years ago, Charles Hodges, says, The character of the church and the state depends on the character of the family.

[16 : 54] If religion dies out in the family, it cannot elsewhere be maintained. We're not talking about if we are hiding God's great works, it is not going to pass on to another generation.

And so we need to nurture. It means we need to cultivate in their lives the ministry of the Word, knowing that it's been given by inspiration of God and it's profitable. We're supposed to teach it to them.

We're to teach God's Word to children out of our own heart with diligence, not casually or carelessly, but to share with them that God's Word is vital in our lives, and therefore it should be vital in theirs.

My niece just went off to our camp, and then she went to another camp, and when she came back, she got teary-eyed because she was telling about a Christian schoolteacher who had told all of his youth group that two years ago previously, he had made a decision that he wanted to go, and he was going to now pastor a church in California.

And that whole youth group was sad about the fact, but how wonderful was it that a group of young people got to see adults making decisions based on the Word of God.

[18 : 00] I immediately wrote that teacher. I got to go to Christian school the last two years, and the most influential moment was one of those teachers opened up a map to me and showed me where Ukraine and Russia was, and he says, God is calling me to this area of the world, and I'm training, the church is going to send me out.

That's the first time that I really recognized adults making decisions based upon the Word of God. Nurture, cultivate, and evangelism. How many days of the years has it been since we joined with our children to pray by the name for a lost friend?

Which acquaintance of your child could you volunteer to help pick up for church on Sunday or Thursday? Could your children name an adult friend of yours that they know are seeking to lead the Christ?

That's a convicting thought. Do my kids know the names that ought to be on my prayer list of who I'm praying for? When was the last time someone made a profession of faith that a member of your family had a part of reaching?

What steps can you take this week to lead members of your family to have a heart for the lost? All of that has to do with nurturing and cultivating, gardening the hearts of our kids, teaching them how to use their time in their lives.

[19 : 12] A person's concept of reality and truth will determine their beliefs. A person's belief will shape their values, and the person's values are going to drive their actions.

So we need to be nurturing. We need to be investing into our children and all of those things. We should be grateful for the church that is helping give a God-centered worldview. But at the same time, as parents, we cannot negate our responsibility to making sure that they are being nurtured and cared for.

And so this admonish has to do with the negative aspect that you would say and calling them towards that, to teach children the truth. Because if we don't teach them the truth, somebody will very quickly be willing to teach them error.

And every place that you don't fill in the blank, it's kind of like Mad Lib. Have you ever played that game where there's this sentence and there's all these blanks? If you don't put the right words in the sentence, somebody's going to put the wrong words in the sentence.

If you don't teach them a biblical worldview, a biblical theology about everything. Biblical theology we heard tonight about slavery. What does the Bible say about it? What does the Bible say about work? What does the Bible say about time?

[20 : 16] All of that, the Bible has something to speak about. You don't answer those questions. You don't fill in those blanks. The world will be very gladly to fill those blanks in without us.

And then lastly, before I ask them in the come of the Lord. And you fathers, provoke not your children the wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is where Christian parents engage in their duties towards the children.

It's in a different category than all other parents that are not Christians. John 17, 3. And this is life eternal, that you might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

To say that Jesus is Lord means that he is the rightful king of the universe. He is a ruler of the world, is commander of all armies of heaven, and all Christian soldiers. He is now reigning until we put all enemy underneath his feet.

Jesus is in charge of our family. As a little kid, maybe one of your kids have said this to you, hopefully not, but they said, Who died and made you in charge? Any of you ever have the audacity to ask your parents that one time, right?

[21 : 17] Or maybe that's what you would tell to your siblings, right? Who died and left you in charge? And I know the question isn't asked properly, and I don't mean to be irreverent, but our kids need to know that Jesus Christ died, and he is in charge, and because he's in charge, for the time that you are with me, I'm in charge.

And they need to know that. They need to know that you're in charge, that you've been given responsibilities. More than just making something great out of them so you're proud, you live every day of the fact, knowing that you have a stewardship from the God of heaven.

That they should know that you are more fearful of disobeying your heavenly Father than they may even be of disobeying you. I don't make the rules. I'm just living by them, right? I'm not in charge.

He is in charge. But since he's in charge, down here on earth right now, I'm going to have to be in charge. They need to see the Lord is there, that we do this as unto the Lord.

And when a family is filled with the Spirit, everything will be oriented around Christ. Jesus 5, 18 tells us not to be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. And then after that, verse after verses says that the Spirit will produce a song in our lives.

[22 : 26] Verse 19, the Spirit, verse 20, will produce gratitude in our lives. Verse 22, it says it will produce a reverence and a mutual submission. Wives, submit your husbands. Husbands, love your wives.

Children, obey your parents. And the Spirit calls fathers to bring up their children in discipline and instruction of the Lord. This Christian family life is a work of God's Spirit and the lives of those who do everything for Christ's sake.

That's what they have to know. That is the in-sum game of it all, is that we are doing this as unto the Lord. The way that I parent is for God's glory, which makes it all so very, very serious and important and wonderful all at the same time.

Isn't that what you want to do with your life? Isn't it? To bring glory to God? God, that's the greatest thing that we could do with our lives. And as dads, our children, is the opportunity that He has given us. A great stewardship, a great responsibility, greater than anything else that you could be put over, over any company, over any country, a greater responsibility.

God has given you this opportunity. And He's given us as a church an opportunity to help one another.