

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory
In Relationship with Christ – part 4
Colossians 3:18-4:1

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This morning, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study of the book of Colossians. And we are in a section that is all about God's plan for relationships. Our text for today gives us some insight into God's plan for parents.

And I'm grateful that God has a plan for parents because I can tell you as a parent I've spent the last 20 years of my life thinking, "I have no idea what to do." Each one of our kids is different from the others. Each stage of their lives brings some new wrinkle that feels like a whole different dynamic for our family. It started out hard, trying to get them to sleep through the night...trying to get them to eat...trying to help them learn to talk and walk...Those early days were really hard. Em and I were really tired.

Looking back, I'm sort of glad that I didn't know something I now know about parenting – it starts out hard and it doesn't get any easier. You send them off to school at 5 and you blink and find them driving away from your house and heading off to college. It feels like there's always something you're supposed to know as a parent that no one has ever told you. So, yeah, I'm grateful God has a plan for parents. He has clarified the role we are called to play in the lives of our kids.

And that brings us to our text for this morning.

Colossians 3:20-21

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

If you've been with us during our study of Colossians, you might remember that Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is very close in content to his letter to the Colossians. In that way, Ephesians and Colossians sort of act like commentaries for each other. So, let's look at the parallel teaching in Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:4

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

Let's start with the first word Paul uses in both passages: Fathers.

Why does Paul address these verses to fathers and not to mothers and fathers?

1. The term "father" can be a generic term for parents. For instance, in Hebrews 11:23 this same word is used in reference to both of Moses' parents. It's kind of like when the authors of Scripture use the term 'brothers' in reference to everyone in the church.

2. Mothers and fathers share authority over their children. Colossians 3 and Ephesians 6 tell children to obey their “parents.” So, I believe these verses that are addressed to fathers are applicable to mothers.
3. But I think it’s likely that even though these verses apply to mothers and fathers, Paul is addressing them to fathers because it is the father’s responsibility to lead in the home. Many cultures, including our own, place an emphasis on the mother as the one who primarily raises the children. And even though there is a unique gifting and role that mothers play in the lives of their children, God’s design for the family isn’t for fathers to watch their kids grow up from the sidelines or constantly defer to mom. Fathers are called to lead out in raising their children.

And Paul’s instruction to parents is pretty straightforward. In Colossians, Paul says parents shouldn’t provoke their children or they may become discouraged. In Ephesians, he adds we should bring our children up, or raise them, in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

And when you combine those verses together, you get our big idea for this morning...

Big Idea: By Christ’s power, parents should raise their children with encouragement, discipline, and instruction that points to Jesus. BY CHRIST’S POWER....

It’s essential for us to remember the context of Colossians 3. Paul isn’t just telling us how we should live. He is telling us how we should live in the power of Christ.

Colossians 3:1–4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

When we place our faith and trust in Jesus, in a mysterious and miraculous way, we are united to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse 4 says that Christ has become our life. He lives in us and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit as we trust in Him.

And the rest of chapter 3 is flowing from that truth. In Ephesians 5, Paul does the same thing. Right before he gives us God’s plan for relationships, he commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit who empowers the life of Christ in us (Ephesians 5:18).

So, God’s plan for your relationship with your children is centered around your relationship with Jesus. You can only fulfil your role as a parent as you are filled with the power of Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Just think about this. How well do you think Jesus could parent your kids? How patient could He be? How wise could He be? How firm and disciplined could He be? The truth of the Gospel is that Jesus will live in you as you trust in Him. In other words, Jesus will be Jesus in you if you will yield your life to Him in faith and obedience.

And that’s not just a powerful truth for parents, that’s the world’s most powerful truth for every man, woman, and child. No matter what you are facing in this life, Jesus will be Jesus in you if you will yield your life to Him in faith and obedience.

So, are you yielding your life to Jesus in faith and obedience? Is your life being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit? If you’ve never placed your faith and trust in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, don’t wait another minute.

1. PARENTS SHOULD RAISE THEIR CHILDREN

Ephesians 6:4

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

The call is for parents to bring up their children. To raise them. To take care of them and oversee their growth – physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. There are at least two important implications to this truth that have very practical applications.

Raising your children is your responsibility.

Parents, it's your God-ordained responsibility to raise your children. It isn't their grandparents' job. It isn't their babysitter's job. It isn't their teacher's job. It isn't their coach's job. It isn't the church's job or the pastor's job. *The responsibility is yours.* You can't outsource your parenting. No one can replace you in the lives of your children.

That means parenting has to be your priority. Let me put this in really practical terms. You can't parent your kids unless you spend time with them. Quality time. Intentional time. Eat meals together and put down your phones. Play games. Talk. Don't throw them a device or sign them up for every activity under the sun and call that parenting.

If you have been blessed with children, raising them is your responsibility. And raising your children is your goal.

What I mean is that God's design is for your children to grow up. So, your goal is to help them grow up. You aren't trying to raise perpetual adolescents. The goal isn't for your kids to be dependent on you for everything for the rest of their lives. The goal is for them to grow into fully formed followers of Jesus who leave your home and follow Jesus as healthy, Christ-honoring adults one day. Teach them responsibility by giving them responsibilities. Teach them to make good choices by giving them choices to make. Treat your 6-year-old like a 6-year-old. Treat your 16-year-old like a 16-year-old. Treat your 26-year-old like a 26-year-old.

It's God's design for our children to grow and leave our homes and start homes and lives of their own. Two of our three children are technically adults and I kind of hate it to be honest. I'm talking to God about it a lot these days and He keeps telling me that it's the only way I'll get grandkids, so it's what I've got to do.

Raising our children is our responsibility. So, what does it look like when we raise our children in Christ's power?

2. PARENTS, RAISE YOUR CHILDREN WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

Colossians 3:21

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

The word "provoke" in Colossians 3 means "to cause someone to react in a way that suggests acceptance of a challenge; to irritate or embitter." Imagine you are in public, and you walk up to a stranger and challenge them to a fight. You've just provoked them.

And the Bible says not to do that with our kids. Don't constantly pick a fight with them by pointing out every little flaw or focusing on what they don't do well. Don't nag them. Don't hound them. Don't make them feel like you're impossible to please. That's not godly parenting. That's ungodly provocation. And the result is that your children will become discouraged. They'll lose heart.

The opposite of that is encouragement. Mom and Dad, your child is the unique creation of God. They are His masterpiece. He's designed them with strengths and gifts. And it's your job to help them discover the amazing person God has created them to be. Don't compare them to their siblings or their friends. And definitely don't make them feel like you're trying to force them to be just like you. Don't try to relive your childhood through them. Your athletic career is over, bro. Your kids don't have to like the sport you played or pursue the job you've chosen for yourself or them.

Now, be careful not to go to an extreme here. Take off your mom-goggles and be honest with them. Don't idolize them or worship them. Don't make them the center of the universe. Don't tell them they are going pro in everything. But they will go pro in something, and it's your job to cheer them on in whatever direction God has formed them to go. Celebrate the unique and special ways God has shaped them by encouraging them.

Here's a practical challenge for all you parents: look for something every day you can celebrate in the life of your child.

How encouraging are you to your kids? How often do you tell them how proud you are of them? Do they know all the ways you think they're great and special? I don't care how old your child is, they can always use a word from their mom or dad that says, "I think you're amazing and I'm blown away by the person God made when He made you."

Parents, raise your children with encouragement.

3. PARENTS, RAISE YOUR CHILDREN WITH DISCIPLINE

Ephesians 6:4

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

Discipline means to train or correct. Discipline is the training and correction that helps someone know the difference between right and wrong. It's the training that helps someone learn the right way to live. And discipline is an essential part of parenting.

I think you know I love my kids, and I know I just told you to encourage your children, but there's something about all our kids that you probably don't need me to tell you, but I'm going to say it anyway. Our kids are born sinners. They don't have to be taught to sin. It's in their hearts from day one. And discipline is how we train our kids to see their own sin and it's how we train our kids to choose a better way.

God has made this world with various laws. And all the laws of God come with consequences. Take the law of gravity. If you roll off the couch, the law of gravity kicks in and there's a consequence to that action. Same thing if you jump off the roof of the house. The law of gravity comes with consequences. And it's really important for you to teach your children the law of gravity. That's why we had to tell Logan he wasn't allowed to jump off our roof. True story.

And there's another law. It's the law of sowing and reaping. If we sow to our flesh by choosing sin, we will reap destruction. If we sow to the power of God's spirit by choosing righteousness, we will reap God's blessing and a fruitful life.

And discipline is what drives that truth home to the hearts of our kids by helping them understand there are always consequences to the decisions we make. If you love your kids and want to see them flourish, then discipline is one of the primary expressions of your love. That's why the Bible says God disciplines every one of His children.

Let me give you a few quick principles on how we can effectively discipline in a way that reflects the discipline of God our Father.

Effective discipline is an act of love.

God disciplines us because He loves us. It would be unloving to let us destroy our lives. He loves us too much to let us live in sinful patterns of destruction. So, love your kids enough to tell them "No."

Effective discipline is not an act of anger.

God isn't angry with His children. The wrath of God will never fall on us because His wrath was satisfied at the cross of Jesus. So, don't discipline your kids from a heart of anger. If you are angry, you need to put yourself in time-out, pray, calm down, and then discipline. Anger provokes a fight and discourages our kids.

Effective discipline is consistent.

God is gracious and kind, but He is never inconsistent. If something is wrong, then it's always wrong. So, be consistent. It's never ok to lie. It's never ok to be disrespectful. It's never ok to put others down. It's never ok to backtalk mom. It's never ok to steal a toy from another child or to come home at 10:30 if the curfew is 10. Be consistent. Don't ignore disobedience just because you're tired or they are tired. Don't come down hard on Tuesday and let anything go on Friday. Be consistent.

Effective discipline is personal.

God works in us as individuals. Some of us need a gentle nudge of the Spirit and it gets our attention. Sometimes I need a spiritual 2x4.

Did you know that all your kids are different? One of my kids needed an explanation for every rule we ever made. One of my kids just needed a firm word of correction. One of my kids needed spanked every day from 2 years old to 5. As you get to know your kids, choose what best teaches that child. Don't go to crazy extremes that make your children feel like you are wildly inconsistent with your discipline, but don't fall into the trap of thinking one size fits all. It doesn't. Discipline is personal.

Effective discipline is aimed at the heart.

Godly discipline isn't behavior modification. It's about training our hearts, not adjusting our behaviors. Make sure you talk with your kids about why something is wrong. Talk to them about what's going on in their hearts. Listen to them. And make sure you point them to Jesus. The point of discipline is not just to expose our sin it's to point us to the only One who can save us from our sin. As you discipline your kids, make sure you are telling them about Jesus and letting them know how He is saving you from your sin.

That brings us to the next thing we see about raising our children.

4. PARENTS, RAISE YOUR CHILDREN WITH INSTRUCTION

Ephesians 6:4

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

Alongside discipline is instruction. The word “instruction” means “to impart understanding; to teach.” Parents are the primary teachers in the lives of their kids. We are to teach them about the world. We are to teach them about every facet of life. We teach them how to talk. We teach them how to spend money. We teach them how to take care of themselves.

But notice the phrase at the end of verse 4 – in the Lord. The primary thing we are called to teach our kids is the truth about the Lord. Parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children. Do devotions together as a family. For those of you with small children or grandchildren, I highly recommend “The Jesus Storybook Bible.” It’s a great way to learn the stories of the Bible and how they all point to Jesus.

Talk about the Lord as you are riding in the car. Pray together over dinner and use that time to ask them how you can pray for them. It doesn’t have to take long but give them a verse of Scripture that you’ve been meditating on that day. When you go to the beach, point out beauty of God’s creation. Remind them of the time Jesus calmed the waves by His word. Bring them to Vacation Bible School and talk with them about each day’s lesson.

Most of all, give them a parent who is growing in their relationship with Jesus. Read your Bible and let your kids know what you are learning. As God is exposing your sin, especially the sins you’ve committed against them, model repentance by learning to tell your kids you are sorry and asking their forgiveness.

Time goes by quickly. Don’t let it slip away and don’t let this world become the primary teacher of your kids. By the power of Jesus, raise your children with encouragement, discipline, and instruction in the Lord.

And as we close, let me give a couple quick points of application to those of you who no longer have kids in the house or maybe have never had kids.

Kids, pray for your parents. They aren’t perfect and they need Jesus. Commit to make their jobs easier by growing in your relationship with the Lord and encouraging them to do the same. Parents of grown children, you might sit through a message like this and be filled with regret about the way you raised your kids. Don’t stay there. Lay it at the feet of Jesus. If you need to apologize to your adult children, do it. And accept the grace and forgiveness of Jesus. If your grown kids aren’t following the Lord, pray for them and trust that your heavenly Father loves them more than you do. You can trust Him and His grace to be sufficient for you and for them. There’s only one perfect parent and it’s not you or me, it’s God our Father. Bring your hurting heart to Him and let Him mend it.

For those of you who don’t have children, as you hear these truths use them as catalysts to pray for the people who have kids. Ask God to give them strength to be godly moms and dads. You might not be a parent, but you can be a friend and support those who are.

For all of us, rejoice and be glad that we can be children of God our Father through faith in Jesus. Rejoice in the work He is doing in you right now – encouraging you by His Spirit, disciplining you to make you more like Jesus, and instructing you through the ministry of His word.