

Family Matters: Part 10

Discerning Causes Of Anger In Your Children

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,
but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
Ephesians 6:4*

God’s Righteous Anger:

Before we can determine the cause of anger in our kids, we need to think Biblically about what anger is and isn’t. Anger is not all bad all the time. God gets angry. His righteous anger is manifested against the things that are against His character. His wrath is justified and fierce. His judgments are always good and perfect. His words and actions are always pure (*Ps. 19:9*). *Psalms 7:11* says, “*God is a righteous judge and a God who has indignation every day.*” He has the right to get angry. When we sin, we provoke God to anger and rightly so. (*Deut. 9:7; 32:21; Josh. 23:16; 2 Sam. 6:7; 1 Kg. 14:22; 2 Kg. 23:26; 1 Chron. 13:10; 15:13, 15; Job 4:9; Ps. 7:6*). Yet, God is also slow to anger and gracious to us, even when we don’t deserve it (*Ex. 34:6,7; Num. 14:18; Joel 2:13; Ps. 30:5; 145:8,9*). He is rich in abundant mercy overflowing in deep love for us as believers (*Eph. 2:4*). His love is beyond measure (*1 Jn. 3:1*). The fear of the LORD should cause us to turn from sin and to live righteously seeking His good pleasure (*Ex. 20:20; Prov. 8:13; 16:6*).

Deuteronomy 6:15 “For the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God, otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.”

2 Chronicles 19:7 “Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness...”

Nahum 1:2,3,6 “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD, the Lord is... wrathful... He reserves wrath for His enemies.... The LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished... who can stand before His indignation?”

Matthew 18:34,35 “His lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Righteous Anger:

We should get angry about the things God gets angry about. Righteous anger should be evident in a believer's life. Sin should bother us in others, as well as in ourselves. A parent may be angry with a child's sin and do so without sinning. It should cause in a parent great provocation that moves them to correctly discipline their child as an expression of love. Even a child, who has been made in the image of God, can discern when something is morally wrong in the family, and feel the emotion of anger. We can provoke others, and even our great God, to feel anger because of our persistence in sin.

Deuteronomy 4:25 "When you become a father of children and children's children... and act corruptly, and make an idol... and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger..."

Deuteronomy 32:21 "They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols." (Jer. 32:32)

2 Kings 22:17 "They have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore, My wrath burns against this place and it shall not be quenched."

Jonah 4:4 "The LORD said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry?'"

Acts 17:6 "His spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols."

Ephesians 4:26,27 "Be angry, and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. And do not give the devil an opportunity."

Anger may be the direct result of experiencing something that is wrong and responding righteously to that reality, desiring justice to be done. We should be angry about evil in the world. It should bother us. We should never be complacent or accepting of what is wrong. Children may show signs of this when they say, "Daddy, in the news what they did to those people was really bad!", or "Daddy, isn't the speed limit 70 miles per hour? Why are you going so fast?" or "Mommy, why did you give an excuse for being late when that is not what happened?" or "Dad, my coach just took God's name in vain..." Our children can express exasperation, and rightfully so, of sin in the world, or sin they see in us. They are our little reminders when we don't always listen to our own conscience. When a child speaks truth into our lives, it can help us address blind spots, as long as they do it in a respectful tone and in an honorable way. Parents righteously get angry with a child's disobedience or disrespect because it is wrong and ought not

to be. Children can also reflect that same response when we are in the wrong and need a reminder to choose what is right.

We need to determine the source of anger – is it righteous or unrighteous anger? Is it provoked or unprovoked anger? Is it justified or unjustified? Was it deliberate or accidental? Are the offenses real or perceived? What is causing a child to react the way they are? There is such a thing as righteous anger.

Unrighteous Anger:

However, anger may be the direct result of unconfessed sin in that individual. Because God is merciful, He has given us a conscience that either affirms or accuses our own actions, thoughts, attitudes, words, and motives (*Rom. 2:15*). We may be angry because we know in our hearts that we should not have acted in that way or said what we said, and we are frustrated with ourselves for doing so. We may be angry because we got caught, or we are fighting an authority who says we can't rule our lives as we please. Sometimes our anger may be misplaced (*1 Chron. 13:11*). Usually, one's internal anger directly affects one's outer countenance (*Gen. 4:6; Neh. 2:2*), and it may be obvious to all something is wrong, but the individual may be completely blind to it. Children are sometimes very provoking to their parents, and parents can react in an ungodly way. A child may need correction and it is the parent's duty to punish the child accordingly, but it is never right for a parent to punish that child with unrighteous, sinful anger. He who has no self-control of himself is the last person in the world to attempt the control of another.

Genesis 4:6,7 "Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

James 4:1,2 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Do they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures..."

Unrighteous anger is manifested in different ways – either it is obvious, outward in-your-face anger or hidden, smoldering, seething, submerged, bitter

anger. It can have an immediate effect or a delayed fuse. It can reveal itself in a blow out, or a slow leak. External anger can take the form of unwholesome words (*Eph. 4:29*) or violence (*Prov. 29:11; Ex. 20:15*). Internal anger can take the form of withdrawal, apathy, sulking, pouting or a bitter spirit (*Heb. 12:15; Prov. 21:4*). One type stays around to fight it out. The other flees to fight another day. Every act of unrighteous anger will have a consequence. No one goes unscathed. Anger shows up in both a child's or adult's attitude or behavior. A defiant attitude is usually the first revelation prior to the defiant action. If a child changes his attitude and actions for good, it will change his countenance and demeanor.

These questions can help an adult & child identify inappropriate expressions of anger. (*Adapted from Heart of Anger, p. 79*)

1. What happened that provoked you to anger? What circumstances led to your becoming angry?
 - This directs the focus on the past history and ultimate cause of anger.
 - This helps the child identify the external circumstances that triggered an internal reaction.
2. What did you do or say when you became angry? How did you respond to those circumstances?
3. What does the Bible say about what you did or said that was wrong? (Use specific Biblical terminology to classify your sin)
4. What could you have done or said when you became angry? According to the Bible, how should you have responded differently when you became angry?

Undesirable attitudes and body language of a heart which are affected by anger
Arrogance/pride

Proverbs 28:25 "An arrogant man stirs up strife."

Proverbs 30:13 "There is a kind, oh how lofty are his eyes, and his eyelids are raised in arrogance."

James 4:16 "You boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil."

Verbal Anger

Proverbs 25:23 "A backbiting tongue, an angry countenance."

Haughtiness

Psalms 10:4 "The wicked in the haughtiness of his countenance does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, 'there is no God'."

Psalms 101:5 "No one who has a haughty look or an arrogant heart will I endure."

Disrespect

Proverbs 30:17 "The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother..."

Irritable Spirit

1 Samuel 1:6,7 "Her rival would provoke her bitterly to irritate her..."

Undesirable behavior patterns of the heart affected by anger

(Use Biblical terminology when you confront sin.)

*Galatians 5:19,20 "Now the **deeds of the flesh** are **evident... enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions...** those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

*Colossians 3:8 "**Put aside anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth...**"*

*Ephesians 4:31 "**Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice.**"*

*2 Corinthians 12:20 "...When I come I may find you to be not what I wish... perhaps there will be **strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.**"*

Our Attitude And Behavior Does Matter To God.

Jeremiah 12:3 "You know me O LORD, You see me, and You examine my heart's attitude toward You."

Proverbs 27:19 "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man."

Provoked Anger In Children:

Anger in a child may be the direct result of deliberate aggravation or neglect on the part of the parents - intentional or unintentional. Even regenerated parents still struggle with fleshly habits or sinful desires. Paul said in *Romans 7:15-19* "I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." "The willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not, for the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want..." Parents do fail their kids and are bad examples. What we need to do is live a genuine Christian life before our kids, and when we do sin, admit it, confess it, and do what we ought before our children. John said in *1 John 1:8,9; 2:1,2*, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin, and if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...”

In ***Ephesians 6:4*** it says, ***“Fathers, do not provoke (exasperate - NIV) your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*** A parallel passage in ***Colossians 3:21*** says, ***“Fathers, do not exasperate (“embitter” NIV) your children, so as they will not lose heart” (“become discouraged” NIV).*** Specifically, here, fathers are mentioned, although the prior verses in *Ephesians 6:1-3* refer to both parents in general (*Heb. 11:23; Prov. 1:8*). However, “Fathers”, we have a crucial role here regarding alleviating any provoked anger in our kids (*1 Sam. 1:6,7*).

The word “provoke” (Gk. “*parorgizo*”) can mean to “irritate”, “enrage”, “aggravate”, or “to be a discouragement.” Different Bible versions translate this “exasperate” or “embitter” (NIV). “Anger” means “to drive toward utter frustration”, “resentment”, “bitterness” or “hatred” by our sinful actions or attitudes (“wrath” – NKJV). To “exasperate” means to “cause to lose heart”, “become discouraged”, “give up”, or “to cause to feel helpless and despairing.” These are in the present tense referring to today. Parents, don’t continually be a discouragement in your kids lives. This provocation of anger may be outright or passive. It may be obvious or just below the surface waiting to blow like a land mine in close proximity. Like a nuclear sub, sometimes all you can spot is the periscope, but under the surface there is war on the horizon. Dads, we can cause this type of anger. Exasperation usually shows up externally in apathy, self-destructive behaviors, isolationism, and impulsive actions – especially in our teenagers. Bad parenting does come with bad consequences. Any parent who is guilty of rigid, domineering, overbearing rule that drives a family to anger, despair, resentment, bitterness, or withdrawal, must confront their sin before it destroys them and their whole family. But a parent that also is guilty of absence and neglect also is responsible before God. The child’s duty is to obey. The parent’s duty is to teach their children discipline and obedience (*Prov. 28:7*), in the context of godly nurturing, without exasperating them in the process.

Proverbs 14:10 “The heart knows its own bitterness.”

Proverbs 15:22 says, “When the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.”

Proverbs 17:22 says, "A broken spirit dries up the bones."

Proverbs 18:14 says, "A broken spirit who can bear it?"

Hebrews 12:15 "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

Often, the most destructive force brought upon a family may come from within. *Proverbs 14:1 "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands."* *Micah 7:6 "For a son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies are the men of his own household."* *Matthew 12:25 "Any city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Mk. 3:25).* MacArthur said, "Many children from such "Christian" families end up more hostile to the things of the Lord than kids who have grown up in utterly pagan surroundings." (John MacArthur, Successful Christian Parenting, p. 135)

Biblical Examples Of Favoritism Which Leads To Exasperation:

Joseph's brothers hated him because of his father Jacob's favoritism. *Genesis 37:3,4 says, "Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his sons because he was the son of his old age and he made him a varicolored tunic. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms."* Parental favoritism between Esau and Jacob by Isaac and Rebekah led to hatred and bitterness between the brothers (*Gen. 25:28; 27:41,45; 28:8,29*). David favored his son Absalom, but later rejected him, and Absalom then conspired against his father for the kingdom (*2 Sam. 14:1,24,28-15:6*).

Personal Exasperation:

I am not known to be an angry person; I rarely get mad. However, one of the few times I have been angry in the presence of my wife and kids was when our family was tasked with cleaning out my aging parents' home to sell it to be able to relocate them near us. My kids watched an exasperated interaction between my parents and me regarding the way my parents were dealing with their cluttered home. As I was decluttering the home and throwing away what I felt was worthless items, my mother was taking those same things out of the trash dumpster faster than I could put them in. I felt completely helpless to change their situation and I lost it. It was ugly. My kids were completely shocked to see my overwhelming exasperation of anger, even though they saw the reason

right in front of them. My kids were feeling the same frustration. Although my anger could be rationalized away, it was not justified. My anger had been building up in me for many years as I saw their living condition deteriorate, and I exploded in utter frustration, rage, and helplessness. I was completely wrong and I had to go to my family and ask for their forgiveness. I understand what it feels like to be provoked and exasperated. It is not a pretty picture. Even though I believe I was right and honorable in what I was doing overall, I was dishonoring to my parents in how I said what I said. I felt I was placed unnecessarily in a difficult position because it seemed like what I was tasked with was an impossible situation. Have you ever been in a situation like that? Whenever it involves close family, it has the potential for even deeper passionate emotions.

As a youth pastor, I experienced watching an exasperated situation in a father-daughter relationship in my youth group. The father would yell and scream at his daughter and constantly embarrass her in public on youth trips. He was crushing his daughter's spirit. I took him out to lunch and confronted him with being an angry man. He admitted that his father had treated him that same way as a young boy, and he was doing what his father did now to his own daughter. Both father and grandfather had been in the military and were angry men. He knew it was wrong, but it was what he was accustomed to do for so long that it had become habitual. Even as an unbeliever, he knew his anger was destroying his family and he needed to gain control of himself. *Proverbs 29:22 says, "An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins."* *James 1:20 says, "For a man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."* I had an uncle like that and his anger ripped his marriage and family apart. The scars of that anger remain even today. Only one of that family is still alive. The rest died of broken hearts and drunkenness.

Biblically, not every action has an equal or greater reaction. Anger doesn't have to flow from every offense. *Proverbs 19:11 says, "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger and it is his glory to overlook a transgression."* *1 Peter 4:8 says, "Keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multiple of sins" (Prov. 10:12).* *1 Corinthians 13:5 says "love is not easily provoked" and doesn't keep records of wrongs. Some things are just unintentional or accidental. However, that should never be an excuse to keep sinning habitually. Families need to love each other more than loving strife. Proverbs 17:14 says, "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks*

out.” Have you ever wondered how porcupines are able to reproduce? The closer they get together, the more they poke each other. The greatest challenge is not just overlooking sinful behavior and letting people have a pass, or letting sin stack up to the point there is deep seated anger, resentment, and bitterness. We need to constantly look back at our life and how we are affecting others. When we do take a good look at our blind spots in the mirror, it may save us from a future major accident. All of us have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (*Rom. 3:23*).

Each child, as a sinner before God, is responsible for their own sin, regardless of how their parents have provoked them. Every person is without excuse (*Rom. 2:1-3*). In the same way, when we stand before God on judgment day, we are not going to get away with blaming our parents for our choices and the consequences that have followed. Our parents may have influenced us in a certain negative way, but we are responsible for what we have done, who we are ultimately, and how we have responded to others who sinned against us. Jesus said on the cross, “*Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing*” (*Lk. 23:34; Acts 2:23; 3:13,14,17*). Yet those individuals who killed Jesus were still guilty before God for their actions (*Acts 2:23,37*). Ignorance is not a valid excuse.

Parents Provoking Anger In Their Children:

(24 Ways We Can Exasperate Our Kids)

* Adapted from the Heart of Anger, by Lou Priolo, ch. 2

* Successful Christian Parenting, by John MacArthur; p.134)

* (<https://www.challies.com/articles/7-waysparentsunfairlyprovokeour-children/>)

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What are ways parents exasperate children and cause them to be embittered or discouraged?

1. Marital Disharmony

This is seen in the lack of harmony in the home between dad and mom. It may involve a constant argumentative or disrespectful tone between spouses, unresolved conflict, no love or affection displayed around the kids, open resentment directed towards a spouse by a spouse, one spouse trying to gain more favor with the kids causing the children to have to choose sides between the two parents, or shared-living within a divorce situation. It may be a reaction

to role reversal because mom is working and dad is staying at home, which is opposite of what God designed and the children need. If mom does work, it should only be temporary or supplemental. God has called dads to be the main wage earner and provider for the family (1 Tim. 5:8). Mom's gift is to nurture the children (Prov. 31; 14:1; Titus 2:4,5) and create a warm home environment.

When dad and mom are not doing well, the kids will not be doing well. Nothing brings greater security and harmony to a family, than when a husband and wife are walking together and faithfully lovingly each other before God. When dad and mom are critical and resentful towards each other in the presence of the kids, you can bet that cancer will manifest itself eventually. Dads, the greatest gift you can give your kids is to love their mother self-sacrificially.

Proverbs 17:14 "Abandon the quarrel before it breaks out."

Proverbs 20:3 "Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel."

Malachi 2:14-16 "The LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of our youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. What did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce..."

Matthew 12:25b "Any city or house divided against itself will not stand."

Matthew 19:6 "What God has joined together, let no one separate."

Ephesians 5:22-33 "Husbands love your wives, wives respect your husband."

Titus 2:4,5 "Older women... encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children... be workers at home... being subject to their own husbands."

Hebrews 12:15 "See to it that... no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

1 Peter 3:1,7 "Wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." "Husbands live with your wives in an understanding way... show her honor..."

Questions: What are ways in which your marriage has not been harmonious? If someone asked your children, what would they say? How have you talked about your spouse in a negative light before your children? How has disharmony affected them?

2. Unrighteous Anger

This is mainly seen in parents who habitually model a sinful unrighteous anger before their kids. Remember, anger begets anger. The cycle perpetuates itself (*Prov. 22:24,25*). This is also seen when parents punish with uncontrolled anger, which usually is overly harsh, verbally abusive (venting, yelling, screaming, or using unwholesome words or tone), physically abusive, excessive, or unreasonable in their punishment. This is volcanic activity where lava is spewed everywhere. This may happen when a parent disciplines a child out of personal embarrassment or hurt.

Discipline should never try to beat the child into submission by the use of brute force. If you have to wrestle or pin a child to the floor or it comes to fists, your unhealthy discipline has gone too far and is not Biblical correction. God's word is clear about the sin of abusive authority done in anger.

Psalms 37:8 "Cease from anger, forsake wrath. Do not fret, it only leads to evildoing."

Psalms 38:1 "O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, and chasten me not in Your burning anger."

Psalms 39:3 "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue..."

Proverbs 12:18 "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword."

Proverbs 14:17 "A quick-tempered man acts foolishly."

Proverbs 22:24,25 "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself."

Proverbs 29:11 "A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back." (NIV "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.")

Proverbs 29:22 "An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins." (19:19)

Proverbs 30:33 "The churning of anger produces strife." (15:18)

Ecclesiastes 7:9 "Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools." (12:16)

1 Corinthians 13:5 "Love does not insist on its own way; it is not easily angered or irritable..."

Colossians 3:8-13 "Put aside all anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth."

James 1:19,20 "Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (Prov. 14:29)

"Children become hardened under an iron rod. Sternness and severity of manner close up their hearts. It is most dangerous to make them afraid of us." "Our children should have a healthy respect and fear of the rod, but without love, to continually bear down on children with a heavy hand will exasperate them and cause them to lose heart." (Withhold Not Correction, p. 95)

Questions: What are you modeling at home regarding conflict resolution? What is your personal plan to not discipline your children in your anger? Do you find yourself many times angry because your child has sinned against you, rather than you being upset because he sinned against God?

3. Insults or Verbal Abuse

This manifests itself in parental put downs, sarcasm, scoffing, venting anger, labeling, using explosive words like "you always" or "you never", name calling, using a demeaning sharp tone of voice or body language (haughty eyes), belittling, mocking, ridiculing, teasing, scolding, returning insult with insult, nagging repetition, or irrational speech. A constant, critical, vindictive attitude will break a child's spirit and will dry up the bones (*Prov. 17:22*). We say the most hurtful things to those we say we love the most – things we would never think of saying to anyone else. We sin with our mouths more than any other way.

Parents should never make fun of a child's inability, failures, or physical features (lacking coordination athletically, lacking intelligence, undesirable looks). Words like, "Son, you throw like a girl..." or "My daughter is just a chubby dingy blonde..." are very hurtful and unwholesome. Laughing at your kids for stupid things they do may come back to haunt you. Remember, it may be what we just said that was offensive, but usually, it is how we said it that was so destructive.

Our tone of voice and body language says far more than the words we choose to express our feelings. Some have said our tone and body language is 7x more potent than just our words themselves.

Psalms 101:5 "No one who has a haughty look and arrogant heart will I endure."

Proverbs 30:13,17 "Those whose eyes are ever so haughty and whose glances are so disdainful..." "The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother." (NIV)

If a parent does label their child by a Biblical designation (lazy, angry, foolish), the child needs to understand God's view of their choices and correct it for the good. A parent should avoid all "unwholesome speech." "Unwholesome" means "rotten" or "putrid."

Ephesians 4:29,31 "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth..." "Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Proverbs 10:19 "When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable; but he who restrains his lips is wise."

Proverbs 10:32 "The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse." (16:21,23,24)

Proverbs 12:18 "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Proverbs 13:3 "He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin."

Proverbs 15:1 "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Proverbs 15:23 "A man finds joy in an apt answer, how delightful is a timely word."

Proverbs 15:28 "The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil."

Proverbs 16:23 "The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips."

Proverbs 17:27 "He who restrains his words has knowledge..."

Proverbs 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

Ecclesiastes 9:17 "The words of the wise heard in quietness are better than shouting of a ruler among fools."

Matthew 12:36 "Every careless word that people speak they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

James 3:2,6,10 "We all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man able to bridle the whole body as well." "The tongue is a fire... and sets on fire the course of our life..." "From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing... these things ought not to be this way."

1 Peter 3:9 "...Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult..."

There is a difference between scolding and Biblically reproofing or rebuking. In 1890 H. C. Trumbull, great grandfather to Elisabeth Elliot Gren, said this about the dangers of scolding children.

"Scolding is, in fact, never in order, in dealing with a child, or any other duty in life. To 'scold' is to assail or revile with boisterous speech. The word itself seems to have a primary meaning akin to that of barking or howling... Scolding is always an expression of a bad spirit and a loss of temper... The essence of the scoffing is in the multiplication of hot words in expression of strong feelings that, while eminently natural, ought to be held in better control... If a child has done wrong, a child needs talking to; but no parent ought to talk to a child while that parent is unable to talk in a natural tone of voice, and with carefully measured words. If the parent is tempted to speak rapidly, or to multiply words without stopping to weigh them, or to show an excited state of feeling, the parent's first duty is to gain entire self-control. Until that control is secured, there is no use of the parent's trying to attempt any measure of child training. The loss of self-control is for the time being an utter loss of the power for the control of others..."

"In giving commands or in giving censure to a child, the fewer and the more calmly spoken words the better. A child soon learns that scolding means less than quiet talking and he even comes to find a certain satisfaction in waiting silently until the scolder has blown off the surplus feeling which vents itself in this way. There are times, indeed, when words may be multiplied to advantage in explaining to a child the nature and

consequences of his offense, and the reasons why he should do differently in the future; but such words should always be spoken in gentleness, and in self-controlled earnestness. Scolding – rapidly spoken censure and protest, in the exhibit of strong feelings – is never in order as a means of training and directing a child... No child is ever helped or benefited by any scolding that he receives; and no parent ever helps or benefits his child by means of scolding. Scolding is not always ruinous, but it is always out of place.”

“If, indeed, scolding has any good effect at all, that effect is on the scolder, and not the scolded. Scolding is the outburst of strong feelings that struggles for the mastery under the pressure of some outside provocation. It never benefits the one against whom it is directed, nor yet those who are its outside observers, however it may give physical relief to the one who indulges in it. If, therefore, scolding is an unavoidable necessity on the part of any parent, let that parent at once shut himself, or herself up, all alone in a room where the scolding can be indulged in without harming anyone. But let it be remembered that, as an element in child training, scolding is never, never in order.” (H. Clay Trumbull, Hints On Child Training, Eugene, OR: Great Expectations, 1990, p. 129-131)

Questions: What are some words you have said or things you have done which have been unwholesome and you deeply regret? Do you need to go to your children and ask his forgiveness?

4. Little or No Discipline

This is seen in the lack of boundaries, parental neglect, or parents being impulsive. A child centered home is one where the child rules and the parents are at their beckoning call. The parent places the child at the center. *Matthew 10:37b says, “He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”* This is the home where there is little or no correction and every whim or cry is met with immediate attention, provision, or reward. The child begins to think they are the center of the universe and everything revolves around their wishes. In a child-centered home parents only exist to serve the child. You may see this in a home where the child escapes obviously needed consequences, is demanding or manipulating, interrupting, selfish, disrespectful in their tone, or dictates the daily schedule. Here the child rules, but is not happy, and no one around them is having fun either. God’s design is for a marriage-centered home where the husband and wife’s relationship is the primary focus, not the child. Eventually, the

lack of boundaries or restraints in the child's life end up causing a person to question if the parent really loves the child. Usually this state brings great frustration to the child and shame to the family. When a child is trained by the rod, it brings great comfort and security in his life (*Ps. 23:4b*).

Proverbs 13:24 "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."

Proverbs 29:15 "A child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."

Ecclesiastes 8:11 "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore, the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil."

Hebrews 12:7,8 "For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons."

Questions: In what ways have you withheld correction or not given appropriate discipline when it is due? In what ways have you only corrected partially and it did not result in desired behavior change? Do you have a child-centered home?

5. Inconsistent Discipline

When parents have different standards of discipline between them, unjustly correct, unclear in their expectations, or constantly change the rules, the child often becomes confused, frustrated, or angry. If a parent is lenient at one moment, and then overly harsh at another, or gives no limits on one occasion and then is overly strict on another, it can cause exasperation in a child. Example: (1) Mom has one form of discipline; Dad has a completely different form. (2) Mom sees something as wrong and must be stopped, Dad allows the behavior to continue. (3) One day the child loses privileges after doing something unwanted, the next day nothing happens for the same thing. (4) One day they get spanked, the next day they are only talked to concerning the offense. A child who never knows what to expect in discipline can become insecure. There is a great sense of security in knowing what to expect and where the boundaries lie, and that when a child disobeys clear expectations, they will be consistently corrected, firmly in love. The rod of correction returns the child to a place of submission to his parents. Setting firm boundaries does not detract from freedom and security, but rather enhances it. We all work better when we know what is expected of us. It

is wrong for a child never to know what is coming next because it is based on the constant mood swings of an unstable parent. This inconsistency will cause fear, anger, confusion, and exasperation in a child (Plowman, p.113)

1 Kings 18:21 "How long will you hesitate between two opinions?"

2 Corinthians 1:17,18 "I was not vacillating when I intended to do this was I?" Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes, and no, no at the same time?"

Matthew 5:37 "Let your statement be, "Yes, yes, or No, no. Anything beyond this is of evil." (Ja. 5:12)

Questions: How have you been inconsistent in your discipline? How have you been confusing to your kids in your expectations or house rules?

6. Unwillingness to Listen

This frustration may show up with parental impatience, selfishness, apathy, lack of interest, ignoring or disregarding a spouse's or child's wishes or point of view. Do you care what your family is trying to say?

Proverbs 18:2 "A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind."

Proverbs 18:13 "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him."

Luke 8:18 "So take care how you listen..."

James 1:19 "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."

This is not the same issue with normal discipline where the general relationship with the child is broken because of the child's disobedience or disrespect. Here the break in relationship takes place until things are repented of, reconciled, corrected, and made right again. Make sure you have the facts accurate, but this is not the time for a sit-down conversation on what you meant by what you asked of your child. Children can use this opportunity as a smoke-screen or diversion from your call to obey. A parent must discern between a child demanding he be heard, and genuine helpful conversation about what is happening. I have said to my children, "Obey me first, and then we can talk." Children are good at manipulating a situation by asking for conversation, hoping you will forget what you asked them to do in the first place. (I have heard some

students do this to sidetrack a substitute teacher from the daily required assignments.) I do want to listen and to know and understand their thoughts, but not at the expense of their obedience, and not if they are acting in disobedience by insisting that talking is what is most important at the time, rather than doing what was asked of them first.

Questions: Are you a good listener? Do you care about your family's perspective? How have you given the impression that you don't care? What would your spouse or kids say?

7. Favoritism or Comparison

This will manifest itself when there is preferential treatment given between siblings or when a parent is partial to one specific child who seems to please them more. A parent may even give one child gifts and privileges that another may not get, which causes division among the children. Favoritism always divides. "Why do I have to do this and he doesn't? That's not fair!" "Why do you allow her to have a smart phone and not me?" Don't use one child's strengths or abilities as the standard against which to measure another's performance or value. Be very careful of unkind comparison. Do you want to really anger a child, then make them feel less than everyone else or the "black sheep" of the family. "Why can't you be like your sister...?" "Why are you the only loser in this family?" The results of this will be bitterness, trickery, deceit, jealousy, and family tension.

- Isaac favored Esau over Jacob (*Genesis 25:28; 27:1-45*)
- Jacob preferred Joseph over his brothers with a gift of clothing (*Gen. 37*)
- In the Prodigal Son, the older brother felt the father gave his younger brother a pass. *Luke 15:29,30 "I have never neglected a command of yours and yet you have never given me a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends, but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him."*

2 Corinthians 10:12 "For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding."

Questions: How have you shown preference or favoritism for one child over another? Have you been guilty of divisive comparison or preference?

8. Double Standard or Hypocrisy

This shows up in hypocritically expecting from your child what you personally are unwilling to do. When we hold our child to one standard and yet we live differently, or when we do exactly what we tell them not to do, this inconsistency breeds anger and exasperation. Someone once said, “Your talk walks, and your walk talks, but your walk talks more than your talk talks.” Children know if a parent’s faith is real and sincere or fake and hypocritical, and it does affect them. The same rule should apply to all. Consistency in life is the best policy. Inconsistency breeds chaos.

J. Vernon McGee told a story about a father that kept a jug of whiskey out in the barn. Every morning he was in the habit of going out and getting himself a little swig. One morning he headed out to get his usual and he heard someone behind him. He turned around and saw his little son following behind him in the snow putting his little feet in the footsteps where his father had walked. The father asked, “What are you doing son?” He answered, “I’m following you in your footsteps.” The father told his son to return to the house and then he went into the barn and smashed the whiskey bottle never to return to it again. Your child learns the most, not by what he hears you say, but by what he sees you do.

Matthew 23:3 “All they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds for they say things and do not do them.”

Philippians 4:9 “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things...”

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”

Questions: Are there any confusing double standards in your home? How have you been hypocritical rather than authentic? How have you said one thing and done another? Are you consistent or inconsistent in what you say and do? Are you a stumbling block or stepping stone to the gospel and righteousness?

9. Never Admitting Wrong or Asking Forgiveness

This offense involves an issue of pride and self-denial on the part of the parent. If a parent continues to sin without ever being moved toward repentance and confession, there is no reconciliation. It will only foster anger within the family.

*Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."
James 5:16 "Confess your sins to one another..."*

Remember, the parent is never to be held accountable by the child, nor should the child be allowed to scold the parent. The parent is accountable to God and the other spouse. A child must honor and respect their parents, even when they are wrong, and whether they admit it or not. The position of authority must not be challenged. Never allow your child to scold you in a disrespectful tone of voice. ("Mommy, you were wrong and you need to say you are sorry to me;" or "Daddy, you did something bad and you need a spanking").

Questions: When is the last time you admitted you were wrong to your children and asked them to forgive you? Have you allowed your children to treat you with disrespect when you were in the wrong? Are there things that you need to reconcile with your family?

10. Constant Negative Criticism

A child can become discouraged by a lack of parental approval, by being overly critical, condemning, accusing, judgmental, constantly pointing out the negative or finding fault, being nitpicking and rarely being pleased, limiting praise, or when a child never feels encouraged. "No matter what I do, I can't ever get it right." "No matter what it is, I can never please them..." If our children feel we are always down on them, pointing out their faults, giving reasons we are disgusted with them, telling them they can never do anything right and everything they do is wrong, they will become embittered, despairing and lose heart. Don't rob your children of the joy of childhood. Don't always focus on the negative or you will only have negativity. Balance reproof with genuine praise and encouragement. Look for the good things your kids are doing that please you. Tell them so often. Give praise where praise is due. Thank them for helping or noticing or choosing what is right. Someone once said that it takes 10 positive affirmations to balance out one negative criticism. Negative criticism is always weighty. You will never gain the heart of your child if you only talk with them when something is wrong. Constant negativism kills any possibility for healthy, open conversation.

Hair Ginott said, "A child learns what he lives. If he lives with criticism, he does not learn responsibility. He learns to condemn himself and to find fault with

others. He learns to doubt his own judgment, do disparage his own ability and to distrust the intentions of others. And above all, he learns to live with continual expectation of impending doom.” (Haim Ginott, Between Parent And Child, New York: Macmillan, 1965, 72)

Proverbs 15:23 “A man finds joy in an apt answer, how delightful is a timely word.”

Proverbs 16:24 “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Proverbs 19:11 “It is his glory to overlook a transgression.”

2 Corinthians 2:5-11 “Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.”

Galatians 6:1 “If anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...”

Colossians 4:6 “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”

1 Peter 4:8 “Love covers a multitude of sins...”

Questions: How are you at praising your children? How are you being an encouragement to them? Do you focus more on what they do wrong than what they do right? How have you focused only on the negative behavior of your children? What are some things you can praise your children for that they do well? List five positive qualities you see in each of your kids.

11. Broken Promises

Anger can show up in a child feeling apathy, suspicion, distrust, resentment, or loss of respect in a parent who doesn't keep his or her word. Don't make a promise that you can't or don't intend to keep. Don't say it if you won't do it. Your word should matter. If there is a good reason you cannot keep your promise, then ask forgiveness, and plan an immediate alternate date to fulfill what you said. I remember watching the movie “Hook” where a father did not keep his promise which led to a conflicted family and an exasperated son.

Proverbs 13:12 "Hope deferred makes the heart sick..."

Psalms 15:4 "Honor your word even when it hurts."

Proverbs 20:25 "It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly, and only later to consider his vows." (6:2)

Proverbs 26:19 "I was only joking."

Hosea 10:4 "They make many promises, take false oaths, and make agreements, therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds."

Matthew 5:37 "Let your Yes be yes, and No be no." (James 5:12)

Questions: What promises have you not kept to your children that you need to ask forgiveness and make things right? Do you do what you say?

12. Overprotection

This possibility of exasperation can be the result of a lack of trust we have in our own children, where we assume the worst, and we smother or limit our child's chance for freedom because of inappropriate fear or worry on our part as their parent. Parents may feel they are acting in the child's best interest, but the child may not be convinced the barbed wire fence is always necessary. Boys especially need to be allowed to be adventurous (within reason) to develop in them strong, courageous qualities we long for in godly young men. Too many rules and restrictions without privileges become a suffocating prison. Many who cannot abide such confinement finally become frustrated, throw off their shackles, and rebel. If a parent always says NO, or continues to shelter a child from certain tasks, opportunities, or risks, the child will never gain the skill and ability necessary to make wise decisions on their own.

Examples of this overprotection might be the parent always making the meals, doing laundry, or paying for everything – never allowing a child to experience hard work or money exchange, or feeling a child needs constant surveillance (even though they have been trustworthy). A parent might require minimal work or not delegating responsibility so the child never develops a work ethic. Parents may have extreme safety concerns ("No you can't go... you might hurt yourself...") which may stifle a child from even trying something new. This may happen when a parent shelters a child unrealistically from worldly influence to the point that a child is never allowed to think on his feet. Children need a healthy balance between being protected and being allowed space to grow. Children need opportunities for independence to learn from their mistakes.

Children need to learn self-discipline through personal experience. If everything is done for them by an adult, they will never learn for themselves. Greater freedom or privilege should result from greater proven trustworthiness. Yes, we need to protect our children from harm, but we also need to give them a chance to grow up and learn new things – even things we ourselves have not experienced. Many of the greatest character-building proving grounds in life involve taking calculated risks.

Proverbs 20:6 “Who can find a trustworthy man?”

Luke 12:48 “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

Philippians 4:6,7 “Be anxious for nothing... and the peace of God... will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Matthew 6:31,34 “Do not worry about tomorrow...” (Lk. 12:26)

With the increase in a child’s obedience and trustworthiness, greater opportunity and freedom can be granted to a child. Teach faithfulness and integrity. Freedom is never free. Freedom also doesn’t mean I can do whatever I want whenever I want. We are always under authority and life is full of reasonable restrictions. With every violation of trust, it should mean a loss of privilege. Once trust is lost, it is much more difficult to be regained (example: riding a bike around neighborhood, overnight stay at friend’s house, staying up later, use of money, greater responsibility using a lawn mower or yard equipment, using knives safely, oversight of siblings). Healthy parental discernment and protection is a good thing, but if it becomes unhealthy worry or fear, and there is no real trust in God’s sovereignty and protection, it can become detrimental to a child who never gets a chance to grow up or experience life for himself. Remember, you need to be training your children to leave your home. They can’t do so if you never allow them to walk out your front door because of your stifling worry or misplaced fear. Some of my family’s greatest training experiences has been in God’s great outdoors backpacking, rock climbing, hunting, or whitewater rafting – all which come with some risk. Make sure you train them in advanced first aid - just in case. We have trained our six children to be wise in what they do choose to do, and to trust in God’s sovereign protection and His provision.

Questions: How much healthy freedom do you allow your children to have? What do your children need to do to gain greater opportunities and independence? What do you allow your children to do to increase their ability to do things on their own? How are you handing them the baton to develop skills to leave home? What is your greatest fear regarding your children?

13. Overindulgence

“The average child of the present generation receives more presents and more indulgences from his parents in any one year of his life, than the average child of a generation ago received in all the years of his childhood” (Hints On Child Training, p.36). This problem can show itself when a parent is absent, for whatever reason, and tries to compensate for their lack. They are excessively permissive, or willing to spoil a child by giving unwarranted freedom. Parents who lavish their child with material things may try to compensate for neglect and the lack of quality time together. Most children would rather have time with dad and mom than a new bike or smartphone. Whatever is keeping the parent away, is not worth the cost to a child not having available loving parents. Nothing is a better substitute. *Presents* are never a good substitute for our *presence*. Toys do not equal time. Getting more fun stuff from a parent does not remove the building resentment and anger in a child who feels neglected or unloved. Quantity *and* quality time speaks volumes to a child who knows his parents truly love him and want to be with him.

A child-centered home is where the child is treated as the center of the universe and who develops a demanding, entitlement mentality. She may get angry when she does not get her way or if he doesn't get what material things he thinks he deserves. (*Prov. 13:24 “a child who gets his own way...”*). A child who is given too much freedom will eventually feel insecure and unloved because no clear boundaries are communicated. Children need someone who loves them strongly enough to say NO! Parents who over-indulge, coddle, or shower their misbehaving child with gifts are actually displaying unloving behavior toward the child. True love sets limits! A child ought not to have what she wants merely because she wants it. It is healthy for a child to learn to do without what he longs for to train him in self-denial and self-control. A parent must train a child to get along without a great many things which seem desirable, rather than indulge him in his desire. Any parent that gives their child anything and everything their sinful

heart desires only sets up his final self-destruction by giving him just what will destroy him. Hands-off parenting is always destructive. The child's nature is simply allowed to take its natural course. *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child..."*

J.C. Ryle said, "Take heed that (over-indulgence) does not make you blind to your children's faults and deaf to all advice about them. Take heed lest it make you overlook bad conduct, rather than have the pain of inflicting punishment and correction. Nothing is more unpleasant than giving pain to those we love." "Now it is the shortest way to spoil children to let them have their own way. You must not do it, whatever pain it may cost you unless you wish to ruin your children's souls." "Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea 'it is a little one.' There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone and they will soon be great." "If you do not take trouble with your children when they are young, they will give you trouble when they are old." "There is no surer road to unhappiness than always having our own way. To have our wills checked and denied is a blessed thing for us. To be indulged perpetually is the way to be made selfish and selfish people and spoiled children are seldom happy." (J.C. Ryle, The Duties Of Parents, p. 24,25,27,30)

Ginger Plowman adds to this, "Anyone with a garden knows the importance of being consistent with little weeds. If they are let go all summer, they are incredibly hard to pull. It was easy when the roots were small and didn't go very deep. But to pluck out those weeds later is a backbreaking job because they have been over-looked for so long. These roots have gone deeply and spread widely." (Don't Make Me Count To Three, p. 121)

Proverbs 13:24 "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."

Proverbs 29:15 "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."

1 Kings 1:5,6 "Now Adonijah... exalted himself saying, 'I will be king.' His father (David) had never crossed him at any time by asking, 'Why have you done so?'"

1 Samuel 2:12,29 "Why (Eli) do you honor your sons above Me?"

When a parent realizes their sin, the best place to address the neglect is to acknowledge and confess it directly to the children. “I need to ask your forgiveness. I have allowed you to continue to disobey me and have not trained you the way I should. It is my responsibility as your parent to train you in wisdom and righteousness, but I have acted foolishly and what I have done has not been pleasing to the Lord. I ask you to forgive me. Also, I have asked God to forgive my disobedience. From this time forward, I will be obeying God in my role and correctly disciplining you as God has called me to do.”

Questions: How have you spoiled your kids, rather than giving them the time with you and the discipline they desperately need? Is there any true substitute to a parent spending quality time with a child?

14. Unrealistic Expectations

This frustration can manifest itself in perfectionism or putting too much pressure on a child to achieve to a certain level of output with no room for failure. Love may seem to be conditional on a child’s performance. “No matter what I do, I can never satisfy my parents...” “I can never get it perfectly right for my dad.” Our love should never be conditional on a child being something they are not, or expecting something from them they cannot accomplish. A child will trust and return love when they know a parent truly loves them, desires to understand them, and is committed to their ultimate good. Too many times parents try to relive their own uncomfortable childhood through their kids by wanting their children to be what they never were (athletes, musicians, intellectuals). You can often tell this by who is yelling uncontrollably at their kid’s soccer game. It will show you which parent is reliving their childhood in their children. Encouragers, not yellers, inspire kids to reach their full potential. Contentment is a virtue, not discontentment or perfectionism. There is nothing wrong with wanting our children to do well. I have often said to my kids, “If you do your best, then that is all you can do.” If they lose a game, get a B or C grade, or mess up in a piano recital, it isn’t the end of the world. Be satisfied with them giving their best, not with unrealistic perfection. We need to be content with what they do and encourage them onward. Our emphasis should be on our child’s inner character development, not just their outer performance.

Allow children to experience childhood without projecting on them to act or think like an adult before their time. Let children play and be children. Those

days quickly pass. Love them even when they fail. Keep in mind your own past failures. I am a competitor too, and God has molded me to not wish for more than He desires. Perfectionists tend to think in extremes – all or nothing – everything is great or bad, perfect or worthless. Don't judge people's worth by one's performance which no one can measure up to and no one is ever good enough to please. You can crush a child's spirit if you expect too much out of them. Give them time to improve their skills and abilities as they grow. Our own kids have far surpassed Linda and I on many levels. Thank God we are not all alike. Thank God for His faithfulness.

Psalms 103:14 "For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust." (Heb. 4:15)

1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child, when I became a man I did away with childish things."

1 Thessalonians 2:11,12 "We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, as encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

Questions: Do you have any unrealistic expectations you have placed on your children? Do you communicate to your children you are pleased with what they do reasonably accomplish? Do your kids fear your displeasure which has stifled them from giving their best for fear of messing up?

15. Neglect, Absence, or Disinterest

In Roman society dad was king. A newborn child was placed at the father's feet to determine its fate. If the father walked away, the child was left to die. The most devastating abuse is that of parental neglect by treating a child as if he doesn't exist. A parent can give this impression by being unavailable or too busy most of the time. This can cause a child to feel unwanted, unloved, or may cause the feeling they are an intrusion, distraction, or interference. The parent may fail to show proper affection by spending necessary time with them. A parent can give the impression of being unconcerned, disinterested, or communicate love that is conditional ("I will love you if you..." or "My wife and I used to do all that fun stuff... until we had kids..." or "we would love to go, but can't now because we have children"). Dads, don't give your kids only your leftovers at the end of a day. Leftovers are ok once in a while, but after a while, it will turn their stomachs sour

and they will become discouraged and angry. Parents can show indifference by never being interested in what their kids enjoy, by never asking what they are doing, reading, thinking, playing, or feeling. This disinterest will isolate a parent from their children's fantasy world and experience. Engaged parents need to step in to their child's world and see life through a child's eyes. Children will come alive to you if you do. Some of the best times I have had with my kids were building forts with couch cushions, playing nerf dart wars, or Lego in our home. Disney's movie *Christopher Robin* with Winnie-the-Pooh portrays this need in families.

Anger can come as a result of lack of oversight, where a parent gives a child too much freedom to roam or be unsupervised. A child left to himself will self-destruct unless he or she is trained to be trustworthy and make wise decisions on their own when parents are not around. Parents need to be actively aware of where their children are and clued in to what they are doing. Some parents may take a hands-off approach in the early years, but the impression the child gets later in life is that my parents don't really care what I am doing, which ultimately communicates a lack of love or neglect. (*Prov. 29:15 "A child who gets his own way..."*). If the only time your kids get your attention is when they are in trouble, they may tend to get in trouble more often just to have you pay attention to them. To have a relationship with someone, you must have quality *and* quantity time together. Many times, a child gets neither and becomes embittered.

Deuteronomy 6:7 "You shall diligently teach them to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (engaged, not disengaged parenting)

*2 Samuel 14:24,32 "(David about Absalom) Let him not see my face..."
"(Absalom) Why have I come up... it would be better for me still to be there...Let me see the kings face..." (David refused to see Absalom for a period of time which caused Absalom to feel embittered and eventually he conspired against his father the King.)*

Questions: How are you communicating you love your kids? Have you given them too much freedom to cover up your absence or given them the impression that you don't care by being unavailable? How engaged are you with your

kids when you are home? What kind of relationship do you really have with your children?

16. Public Chastisement or Embarrassment

When a parent embarrasses, scolds, ridicules a child in public before their friends, or the kids receive the brunt of a joke, it can cause anger in a child. Parents should choose the right time and place to correct their child and strive to discipline in private away from the public eye. When we discipline in front of others, the focus is not on the child's sinful heart, but it becomes an offense of unnecessary humiliation they may feel. We may win the battle but lose the war. There may be rare exceptions where public rebuke is in order (*Gal. 2:14; 1 Tim. 5:20; Jer. 28:5*), but as a general rule, rebuke and discipline should be done in private, with a goal not to embarrass the child.

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private."

Questions: How have you disciplined your children in public that brought them great embarrassment? How do you openly talk negatively about your kids when you are with others?

17. Unwarranted Distrust and Doubt

When a parent unreasonably questions a child's judgment or is too rigid in their control, it can cause exasperation. Trust has to be earned, and greater freedom comes with proven trust. But if a child never feels his parents trust him even with minimal tasks, he can become discouraged. A parent's confidence in their child is of great value to a child. Why? Because you believe he can and that is significant to a child. "My dad believes in me!" "He thinks I can..."

Proverbs 20:11 "It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself if his conduct is pure and right."

Proverbs 20:6 "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man?"

1 Corinthians 4:2 "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."

Questions: Do you believe the best first? Are you giving your children more responsibility so that they can prove themselves trustworthy? Do you praise your children for what they have done right? What are you doing to cause your children to know you believe in them?

18. Using Scripture as a Club

“If you beat up your children with God’s Word, they will shrink from it when they are young and flee from it when they live independently. We must be sensitive to times when our children feel overwhelmed by us verbally. Bring God’s Word with care and compassion, even when it speaks to correct or rebuke.”
(Instructing A Child’s Heart, Tripp, p. 21)

Make sure you have balance between law and grace and are not living a life of spiritualizing everything while you yourself are living in hypocrisy. Kids see the inconsistency or contradiction between what you say and what you do (*Matt. 23:3, 4, 13, 23-28*). Make sure we are listening to our own preaching. There is a danger in “Christian” families of children being more hostile to the things of God because of hypocrisy in the home. Parents, if you say one thing, but do another (which is inconsistent with the Bible), and you are completely blind to your own sinfulness, your child may become angry, apathetic, and disinterested in spiritual things. They may even copy your example and become good at playing the game of spirituality without obedience. When your talk is not what you walk... you have a problem, and it will show up in your home.

Parents, because of your uncertainty if God will save your child, you may become heavy-handed, manipulative, demanding, or even beg your child to respond to the gospel according to your own timing or understanding, rather than allowing the Spirit to work in the child’s heart and according to His timing. No parent can force their child into the kingdom (*Jn. 3:8*). Only God can change the heart of a child in His timetable and His way. Our responsibility as parents is to exalt Christ in our home and point our children to Him in everything we do (*Rom. 10:13-17*). Kids want to know if we truly believe what we preach.

Romans 2:23 “You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?”

John 7:19 “Moses (gave) you the law, yet none of you keeps the law.”

Hebrews 7:19 “For the law made nothing perfect, but a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God.”

2 Timothy 2:15 “A workman... accurately handling the word of truth.”

19. Being Falsely Accused or Without Appeal

Parental injustice or punishing a child too quickly before all the facts are in can cause exasperation. If there is no way to appeal and only justice is served, we had be better get the facts right. *Proverbs 18:17* “The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him” (*Job 34:17; Ps. 94:21*). *Exodus 23:7* says, “Keep far away from a false charge and do not kill the innocent or the righteousness...” If there is ever a time when we falsely accuse our child, and the evidence proves later that they were innocent, we have nothing to lose and everything to gain by confessing our sins to them, acknowledging we were wrong and need their forgiveness.

1 Samuel 17:28-30 (brother’s anger burned) “Why have you come down? Who have you left those few sheep... I know your insolence (rude, disrespectful) and the wickedness of your heart, you have come down in order to see the battle.” (David was wrongly accused by his brothers)

Psalms 119:78,80 “(They are) wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts... may my heart be blameless toward your decrees.” (David was obedient even with false accusation)

1 Peter 2:21 “But if, when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”

1 Peter 3:16 “Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

Questions: Have you ever falsely accused your child because you have acted in haste and did not get all the facts? Have you allowed your children an opportunity to appeal your decision and to listen to additional information which might help you be more just in your final conclusion?

20. Excessive Discipline or Violence

A parent can exasperate a child by being impulsive, too restrictive, having too many strict rules, or being a tyrant. How a parent comes to spanking or using force does matter. It should never be done in an unreasonable, pointless, harsh, or in an unduly severe way. A child’s embitterment towards a parent can be the result of a using excessive physical force or being abusive. No parent should ever

discipline a child in out-of-control rage. This is detrimental to any child and would only crush their spirit or cause return anger and rage. It is hard to over-discipline children if you balance discipline with loving affection.

Deuteronomy 27:24 "Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret."

Psalms 6:1; 38:1 "LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath." (NIV)

Psalms 111:5 "The one who loves violence (God) hates."

Proverbs 3:31 "Do not envy a man of violence, and do not choose any of his ways."

Jeremiah 10:24 "Discipline me LORD, but only in due measure, not in your anger, or you will reduce me to nothing." (NIV)

1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7 "No striker..." (KJV)

*Questions: Have you been too harsh and unreasonable in correcting your kids?
Do you need to go to them and ask their forgiveness?*

21. An Irritable Disposition

If a parent is generally critical, complaining, grumbling, grouchy, sarcastic, or exhibits no joy in life, it can bring a child to despair. Negativity breeds negativism. A parent can express their irritation with non-verbal reactions which communicate a frustrated attitude with their children. This parental personality seems always down and never happy, and is a cloud over the rest of the family who might actually be joyful. Someone who is all work and no play can really be discouraging to live with.

Psalms 101:5 "No one who has a haughty look and arrogant heart will I endure."

Proverbs 27:19b "... As face reflects face, So the heart of man reflects the man."

Proverbs 30:13 "Those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful." (NIV)

Philippians 2:14 "Do everything without grumbling or arguing." (NIV)

1 Corinthians 13:5 "(Love...) Is not irritable or resentful..." (ESV)

Questions: Dads, what is your temperament when you walk through the door after work? Can you leave the office at the office or do you bring it all home with you? Moms, if you work, do you bring your frustration home with you?

Does it show up in how you speak to your children? Do your kids see you as a joyful person? What is the last fun thing you did together as a family?

22. Focusing on Outward Goodness, Not Inward Holiness

This frustration is found when parents emphasize external compliance (goodness) or being moral, rather than addressing heart issues in themselves and in their children. This is striving to look good rather than be good. In the same way, parents can focus only on visible bad behavior, rather than dealing with a sinful heart which is causing the bad behavior. What this creates is little Pharisees with a wicked heart who look good only for personal gain in the moment. A true compliant child is one who acts rightly from the inside out. A defiant child fakes the outside but hides his true identity. This family plays the façade that they are righteous, when in reality, there is rot at the core and it eventually oozes out when exposed. When the child has the chance to be free from parental control, he acts out his true nature, internal character, and reveals his unbelief.

Matthew 23:5, 25, 28 "They do all their deeds to be noticed by men." "You clean the outside of the cup... but inside you are full of robbery and self-indulgence..." "Outside you appear righteous (beautiful) to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Luke 20:19, 20, 23 "They understood that He (Jesus) spoke this parable against them so they watched Him and sent spies who pretended to be righteous in order that they might catch Him in some statement... But He detected their trickery..."

Questions: Are you more concerned that your child looks good to others, than what is really going on in their heart and mind? Is image everything? Why is a child's attitude and motive equally as important as his action? What is the difference between being good or acting in personal holiness?

23. Parental Arrogance

An attitude of pride in the home, especially from the parents, will eventually cause great conflict and frustration. Pride and selfishness go hand in hand. It can also show up in not seeking counsel when things in a family are not right. *Tim Challies said, "Many young parents today are reluctant and even resistant to asking advice about their parenting. While others can see blind spots, the parents themselves remain blind to them."* Young parents are not asking

seasoned parents for input or assistance. This is the first sign of pride. True humility seeks out mature godly mentoring relationships for help. *J.C. Ryle said, "I would rather correct a man about anything, than his parenting."* Some have said, "Who are you to tell me anything about my parenting..." When everyone is an expert but no one seems to know anything for sure, there is a problem. When authors and bloggers are the ones just starting their families, they present untested partial knowledge. Sometimes it is just good for a parent to admit, "I don't know what I am doing, please help me." Parental arrogance filters down to the child when things appear differently than they really are. The kids know it. This can give a false sense of momentary control and stability when people are looking, but it is a facade. Even mentoring examples will humbly admit they learned how to parent as they were going along – sometimes by trial and error. Those who have come through the teen years and their children have not only survived, but thrived into their adult years, those mentors are the ones young couples should be seeking out for godly wisdom and close mentoring relationships.

Psalms 59:12 "Let them be caught in their pride..."

Proverbs 8:13; 11:2; 16:18; 21:24 "Pride and arrogance and the evil way."

"When pride comes, then comes dishonor." "Pride goes before destruction." "Proud, Haughty, Scoffer, are his names, who acts with insolent pride."

Proverbs 12:15 "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel." (26:12; 28:2)

Proverbs 18:2 "A fool does not delight in understanding but only in revealing his own mind."

1 Timothy 2:2b "...Entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Titus 2:3-5 "Older women... teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."

Questions: What is the attitude of your family? Would you be known for your pride or your humility? How can arrogance cause division and conflict in a home? If you are not doing well with your kids, are you willing to humbly seek help? Do you find yourself trying to appear in control when in

actuality you are not? Who are the possible mentors in your life that have traveled through the parenting years honorably that you could seek out?

24. The Absence of Love or Misuse of Love

Parents can give the impression that love is for sale or conditional on certain performance or behavior. Parental love should never be based on what a child does or does not do. We may not like what they do sometimes, but our love must never be leveraged or withdrawn because of bad behavior. Your affection should not be optional. (“I will love you if you...” or “I love you because of...”). Most parents find it easy to see their children’s faults, but hard to see their virtues. If you ask a parent to list a child’s faults, the list will come quickly. But if you ask the parent to identify evidences of God’s grace in their child, the list will often come much more slowly. Why is this? We tend to focus on the negative and let that drive our parenting. Instead, we need to look for the good qualities in our children and bring it to light. Behind every child’s weakness is a corresponding strength. After you have corrected their sin, remember to highlight their strengths.

Children desperately need to know and feel their parents love them unconditionally. We communicate love through focused undivided attention, eye contact, listening, verbal encouragement, and appropriate physical touch. When is the last time you hugged or kissed your kids – I mean really hugged them and told them you loved them? Words of affirmation are like gold (*Prov. 12:14; 15:23; 16:24; 18:4; 25:11*). When parents sacrifice things they enjoy to be with their children instead, that speaks volumes to a child. When we get married and have children, we need to be willing to deny ourselves and put our marriage and family first over our hobbies, athletics, time with friends, personal enhancement, and outside pursuits. Our spouse and our children are our most precious possessions. Don’t give them second best. Love them wholeheartedly and self-sacrificially. The Bible speaks much about love.

Romans 12:9, 10 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to one another in honor.”

1 Corinthians 4:21 “Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 "Love... patient... kind... is not easily provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered... endures all things... Love never fails."

1 Corinthians 16:14 "Let all that you do be done in love."

2 Corinthians 5:14 "For the love of Christ controls (compels) us."

1 Peter 1:22 "Fervently love one another from the heart."

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His love for us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Questions: How have you communicated to your children that you only love them if they are good or when they do what you want? After you correct them, do they still know you love them? How do your kids know you love them unconditionally? When is the last time you told them "I deeply love you?"

Anger in a family can only be corrected by talking about the cause of those emotions of anger and frustration. We have to communicate. We must acknowledge the areas we have exasperated each other and strive to correct those offenses Biblically. We cannot be silent and expect it to work itself out on its own. If we don't gently, kindly, humbly let each other know how we have hurt each other, we will never find reconciliation between us. Guaranteed, we will say or do something within the family that will hurt one another. How we model true love and reconciliation is crucial in a family.

As a parent comes to realize certain areas they have been the cause of pain to their child, and they acknowledge it and repent of it, then God directs them to restructure their words and actions to bring their lives into subjection to Biblical principles. God will begin to do a work of reconciliation in the family and the children can be trained to deal with their anger righteously before God.

As you evaluate these possible ways you have exasperated your children, you now have an opportunity to acknowledge your sin, confess it before God and your children, and ask them to forgive you, which will change your behavior toward what is right. Every day is a new day to live in obedience. Practice the words, "I see how my sin has hurt you. I am so sorry for my words and actions that were wrong, and I ask that you would forgive me." It is hard to admit and say, but well worth the healing which will take place in your family. "God have mercy on me a sinner."

God can do amazing things with of a couple's faithfulness in their marriage, with their willingness to address the hard places of relationship conflict and potential causes of anger in children. When we choose to raise our children Biblically and deal with our own anger rightly, it will only shape future generations for good. ***"Do not exasperate your children"*** is not optional. If we have been guilty of provoking our kids, we need to get on our knees and repent before God, to our spouse, to our children, and ask the Lord to bring healing to our home.

Dale Payne