

## Parenting Insights from Ephesians 6:1-4

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Based on these verses, responsibility of healthy, conscientious, trustworthy children falls on each member of the family unit. There is a universal standard of expectation within families around the world regarding this hierarchy of roles for father, mother, and each of the children within the familial system.

Firstly, *children* are called to *obey* their parents regarding the things that are simply right. Again, this is a universal standard that has existed since Adam and Eve. The statement is simple. There are no loopholes or conditions. Children, do what your parents tell you to do, solely because it is the right thing to do.

The second point of instruction for children is to *honor* your father and mother. This means to obey them with the right attitude. To honor someone means that you hold them, their thoughts, their feelings, in high regard and with respect. A parent's instruction to a child is a special and powerful passing down of family values, principles and beliefs. Many of these virtues can only really come from ones father and mother.

Sadly, far too often, resources other than father and mother are instructing our children and instilling their primary values. Extended family certainly has an important role in this process, but I am implying the role we have allowed media, music and other secular sources to play into how our children define who they are and what defines them as people.

Kids, understand that your father and mother are looking out for your best interests. Your parents have lived through a lot of situations that has given them the insight and wisdom that comes from experience. Because of love, they are trying to spare you from the poor choices that will lead to regret and consequences. Even if you disagree with them, you are instructed to obey them. In doing so, you are also obeying God. This obedience to God and parents holds a promise of a good and long life because of God's blessing, and because of avoiding the pitfalls that disobedience inevitably brings.

For the aforementioned to happen, the proper foundation must be built and maintained. This is where the directive turns to dad. The Apostle Paul makes an interesting contrast between *provoking* a child to anger, and *inspiring* him or her with the consistency of discipline and instruction of knowing Jesus Christ, and following the Biblical tenets of knowing Him. This will only happen if the father establishes and maintains the standard in his own life as the spiritual leader in his home. This is a profound responsibility and wonderful honor, to have such a powerful influence in ones sons and daughters lives. Your sons will grow into

manhood following his primary role model—you; and your daughters will seek out a man like you, because you define manhood for both of them.

Dad, your kids will do what you do, not what you say. When a child sees inconsistency in his or her father's life, the child will be internally conflicted which direction to go. If dad is hypocritical and inconsistent, your kids will call you out on it. This double standard often leads to disobedience in children because they will not take your instruction seriously if you don't. This, in turn, often leads to the father trying to control the child's *behavior*, which leads to the child's anger.

So many of these issues are completely avoidable by seeking to mold your child's *heart* first. Be consistent as a role model; be genuine and verbal in your love for your family and for God. Allow your legacy to be the foundation that your children can step out onto in life. If that foundation is solid, they can step out with confidence and boldness because they believe in their competency and know the limits and boundaries that they need to work within.

On the other hand, if your legacy leaves a faulty foundation of inconsistency, hypocrisy and excuses, your children will step out onto a slippery foundation that leaves them with anxiety, resentment, excuses and compromise. They will push the envelope with the rules, because you do.

Another important point to remember is that father and mother need to be a cohesive team whom the children cannot play against each other. This greatly adds to the legacy and firm foundation of godliness and stability. Also, know who they are as individuals. What are their likes and dislikes, what are their personality traits, strengths, weaknesses, gifts and abilities? Spend time with them and develop a close relationship so that they will feel comfortable to communicate with you.

Together, as father and mother, be careful in how you allow your children to be entertained. What shows do they watch on the television? What kinds of music do they listen to? What friendship circles do they hang around in? what is important to them? There is no greater investment we can make during these rapidly passing years than to invest ourselves into our children, but we also need to remember to invest into ourselves first—the things that matter, the things that have eternal value.