

PARENTHOOD

1. Problem.

- a. There's no such thing as the perfect parent.
- b. The parents of the Bible are usually not that good.
- c. Fatherhood is under assault in the Western world in general and in New Zealand in particular. Statistics show the results.
- d. Often addictions keep us from being the fathers God asks us to be: alcohol, drugs, hobbies, video games.

2. Importance.

- a. "The entire man is, so to speak, to be seen in the cradle of the child."¹
- b. There is no greater opportunity for discipleship than our children.
 - (1) "If we just did family discipleship well, our churches would be full, our mission efforts would never lack workers, and ministries would be fully funded."²
- c. The home is the primary context of our spiritual formation.
- d. A healthy society is inconceivable without a strong family life.
- e. Virtually every social problem can be traced back ultimately to the home.
- f. Christian parents are to jealously guard their responsibility, never entirely surrendering it to church or school. It is their own God-given task. Nobody can adequately replace them.

3. Responsibilities.

- a. Prayer.
- b. Stability.
 - (1) Marriage presents the greatest likelihood a father will remain part of an intact family.
 - (2) Compared to married parents, cohabiting parents are 4-5 times more likely to separate.
 - (3) Children and adults do better when parents get married and stay married.
 - (4) Order your child's world with structure and routine.
 - (5) Couch-time teaches children about their parents' rapport.
 - (6) Establish patterns, policies, rituals, and routines.
 - (7) "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."³
- c. Protection.
 - (1) Children raised by their married biological parents are by far safest from all forms of abuse.
 - (2) The likelihood of abuse in single-parent families is nine times greater than in a non-single parent family.
 - (3) The presence of biological fathers protects children from child abuse.

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville.

² Eric Himelick.

³ David O. McKay.

- (4) We are to protect our children from everything hostile to their spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health.
- d. Affection.
- (1) Children have two questions: Do you love me? and Can I do whatever I want? Our answers to them must be yes and no, respectively.
 - (a) “I love you, son. But you must learn to obey Daddy.”
 - (2) “I was a very idealistic, very romantic kid in a very typically Midwestern Methodist repressed home. There was no show of affection of any kind, and I escaped to dreams and fantasies produced, by and large, by the music and the movies of the ’30s.”⁴
- e. Discipline.
- (1) “Discipline your children; you’ll be glad you did—they’ll turn out delightful to live with.”⁵
 - (2) **Eph 6:4** 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the ***discipline*** and instruction of the Lord.
 - (3) **Heb 12:5-11** 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? My son, do not regard lightly the ***discipline*** of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord ***disciplines*** the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. 7 It is for ***discipline*** that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not ***discipline***? 8 If you are left without ***discipline***, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who ***disciplined*** us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they ***disciplined*** us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he ***disciplines*** us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all ***discipline*** seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
 - (4) “Habits form character.”⁶
 - (5) Tips.
 - (a) Start very young (age two).
 - (b) Between the ages of two and ten, stay on top of the discipline.
 - (c) Use age-appropriate spanking, but seldom.
 1. “Don’t be afraid to correct your young ones; a spanking won’t kill them. A good spanking, in fact, might save them from something worse than death.”⁷
 - (d) Lay down simple and sensible rules, regularly and systematically observed, until habit becomes second nature.⁸
 - (e) Require listening with eyes, ears, and heart.

⁴ *Playboy's* Hugh Hefner.

⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, Pr 29:17.

⁶ Sprinkle, 91

⁷ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, Pr 23:13-14.

⁸ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 50.

- (f) Require immediate, complete, sustained, and proper heart response to instruction.
 - (g) Never give commands you are not prepared to insist on.⁹
 - (h) Require eye contact and “Yes, Daddy” before and after giving instruction.
 - (i) Do not add “okay?” at the end of instruction.
 - (j) Persistently appeal to the child’s moral sense.¹⁰
 - (k) Seldom raise your voice.
 - (l) “Slow-bedience is not obedience.”
- (6) There is a balance between Victorian strictness and *laissez-faire* permissiveness. The opposite of no discipline is not cruelty, but balanced, controlled discipline.¹¹ Self-control is an essential prerequisite in the control of others.¹²
- f. Instruction.
- (1) **Eph 6:4** 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and ***instruction*** of the Lord.
 - (2) **Dt 4:10** 10 Gather the people to me that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth and that they may ***teach*** their children so.
 - (3) **Dt 6:7** 7 You shall ***teach them diligently*** to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise.
 - (4) **Dt 11:19** 19 You shall ***teach*** them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, when you are walking by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise.
 - (5) “Teach your child a skill today. A skill is a gift that lasts forever.”¹³
 - (6) “We remember ten percent of what we hear, fifty percent of what we see, and ninety percent of what we do.”¹⁴
- g. Respect for authority.
- (1) Demand that your children respect the authority of your wife and their mother.

4. Manner.

- a. Involvement.
 - (1) “Too busy” people are the ones who lose their children.
 - (2) “Quality time is quantity time.”¹⁵
 - (3) Fathers, we are irreplaceable. We must get involved.
 - (4) There’s no better way to connect than to spend one-on-one time with your child.

⁹ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 45.

¹⁰ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 45.

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 248.

¹² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 279.

¹³ Sprinkle, 78.

¹⁴ Sprinkle, 79.

¹⁵ Jason Winslade.

- (5) As Christian fathers, we are to be very involved in the lives of our children. We are to provide consistent, steady, watchful guidance.
- b. Responsibility.
 - (1) “Nothing is more detrimental than to leave matters of imprint open to a child’s choice.”¹⁶
 - (2) We must not accept mediocrity when excellence is called for.
- c. Maturity.
 - (1) Counter your child’s negative emotion with calmness.
 - (2) “No amount of nagging will raise our children’s standards above our own.”¹⁷
- d. Sympathy.
 - (1) Keep an open door of sympathy and intercourse between your heart and your child.¹⁸
 - (2) “Be ever soft and pliable like a reed, not hard and unbending like a cedar.”¹⁹
 - (3) Remember what it was like to be a kid. Remember your own childhood.
- e. Encouragement.
 - (1) Speak words of life to your children, and avoid words of death.
 - (2) We are to help build our child’s identity and self-worth.
 - (3) Nothing causes a child’s personality to blossom like the positive encouragement of loving, understanding parents.
- f. Humility.
 - (1) Be a model of repentance and confession before your children.
 - (2) What two problems, if solved, would mark the most positive difference in our family?
 - (3) Who are your closest friends? What do you enjoy about each one?
 - (4) Is there something I do that annoys or embarrasses you?
 - (5) In what way would you most like to see me change as your Dad (or Mum)?
 - (6) Is there some secret you are keeping from me out of fear that I would love you less?
 - (7) If you were dad or mum, what would your rules be?
 - (8) Is there anything I do that makes you angry?
- g. Grace.
 - (1) We are not to indoctrinate but to act as a catalyst. We must teach Christian values of truth and goodness, defend them, and recommend their acceptance, but at the same time abstain from pressure or coercion.²⁰

5. Mistakes.

- a. Never deceive a child.²¹

¹⁶ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 50.

¹⁷ Sprinkle, 52.

¹⁸ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 48.

¹⁹ Talmud, quoted in Sprinkle, 39.

²⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 249.

²¹ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 45.

- b. **1 Ki 11:39** 39 Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for [Solomon’s rebellion], but not always.
- c. “Never use a cannon when a water pistol will do.”²²
- d. **Hos 4:6** 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And because you have forgotten the Torah of your God, I also will forget your children.
- e. Abuse of any kind (emotional, mental, physical, sexual, or spiritual).
 - (1) **Mt 18:6** 6 ... Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me [Jesus] to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
- f. Apathy: ignoring the spiritual development of youth.
 - (1) We are to take time and trouble with our children.
 - (2) “If parents but gave as much thought to the rearing of their children as they do to the rearing of animals and flowers, the situation would be much different.”²³
 - (3) Consider Francis Schaeffer’s “Personal Peace and Affluence.”
- g. Busyness: putting hobbies in front of quality time with youth.
- h. Hypocrisy: Being one person in public and another person in private.
- i. Mediocrity: failing to challenge youth to be the best they can be.
 - (1) **1 Ti 4:12** 12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.
- j. Provocation.
 - (1) **Eph 6:4** 4 Fathers, do not provoke (παροργίζω) your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - (2) **Col 3:21** 21 Fathers, do not exasperate (ἐρεθίζω)²⁴ your children, so that they will not lose heart.
 - (3) Avoid actions toward your children that tend to cause resentment:
 - (a) Showing favouritism.
 - (b) Excessive punishment.
 - (c) Unreasonable expectations.
- k. Delay: Waiting too long to get started. A person’s youth is a window of opportunity.
- l. Irresponsibility.
 - (1) I.e., Rousseau.
- m. Erroneous view of children.
 - (1) Don’t fall for the totally non-directive approach to parenting, leaving children to find their own way.

6. Practices.

- a. Meals together.
- b. Devotions together.
 - (1) Let your children observe you praying to the Lord, out loud, every day.
- c. Ministry together.

²² Sprinkle, 126.

²³ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 290.

²⁴ “[T]o cause someone to react in a way that suggests acceptance of a challenge, *arouse, provoke* mostly in bad sense *irritate, embitter*” (BDAG, 391).

7. Roles.

a. Fathers.

- (1) Satan hates fatherhood and will do anything he can to break it down.
- (2) Who are fathers are is the greatest indication of who we will be.
- (3) Almost instinctively children will come to view matters from their father's standpoint.²⁵
- (4) Our fatherhood derives from the fatherhood of God.
 - (a) **Eph 1:2-3** 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Messiah. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Messiah, who has blessed us in Messiah with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places....
 - (b) **Eph 3:14-15** 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named....
 - (c) **Eph 4:6** 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- (5) We are to care for our family as God the Father cares for his.
- (6) God is a father, not a mother.
- (7) Adam is the first father of humanity. Jesus is the second father of humanity.
- (8) There are few good examples of fathers in the Bible.
- (9) By God's grace we can stop cycles of sin that have run through our family.
- (10) The buck stops with the father. He is ultimately responsible. He is the official spokesman of the family.

b. Mothers.

- (1) A woman cannot take the place of a father, nor can a man take the place of a mother.

8. Objective.

- a. "Godly parents do not guarantee godly children."²⁶
- b. "The ultimate purpose of parenting is to help our children move out of our lives."²⁷
- c. The job of parents is to set up their children for success, not to live their lives for them.
- d. "The father becomes, as years go on, a friend, companion, and almost an elder brother, though always surrounded by a halo of honor and respect which no elder brother can lay claim to."²⁸
- e. Our love for our children is expressed in helping them develop their full potential.²⁹

²⁵ F. B. Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 35.

²⁶ *Walk Thru the Old Testament*.

²⁷ Sprinkle, 16.

²⁸ Meyer, *Religion in Homespun*, 51.

²⁹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 246.

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