

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

Let's take our Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter six. This will be our third and final discourse on virtues of a godly man, a topical study that began on Father's Day. And beginning next week we will return, again to our exposition of the book of Acts. Ephesians chapter six. We have actually been looking at some key passages in chapter five as well as six, but this morning we are going to focus primarily on verse four of Ephesians six. Let me read this. "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."¹

Our culture defines masculinity in so many confusing ways today that most people have no idea really what a man should look like, talk like or act like. I think you would agree that if you look at Hollywood's depiction of men today it is interesting how it has shifted from the John Wayne kind of image to some kind of goofy, moronic nerd type of a guy. You see this all the time, by the way, in the commercials. Have you noticed how it is always the man who is kind of this poor, incompetent "dufus," and it is always the smart, attractive female that is straightening him out? And today you can look around in our culture and you see young men even looking and acting in ways that are just so strange. You see some that are very effeminate. You have to look twice to tell if they are a boy or a girl and sometimes even after the third or fourth look you still don't know.

And then there are other young men who think that they need to look like a gang banger. They have this machismo look and the baggy pants and all of that "home boy" looking stuff. And somehow they think that is what a man should really be like. Then there are others that are more of the athletic jocks, and you see all of the steroid abuse and all of this type of thing. But it is all external. There is no idea today among young men and even older men as to what manhood is about, what character is all about. They don't understand terms like dignity and strength and chivalry and integrity and on and on it goes.

Well, God's measure of a man is so radically different that it is almost laughable in comparison to what we see today. And that is what we want to return to, the virtues of a godly man. There are so many passages of Scripture that speak to this, but I have chosen the ones from Ephesians five and six to use in order to speak to you on this issue.

We have learned thus far that at a very fundamental level, the most important priority for a godly man is to be filled with the Spirit. We have seen that in chapter five and verse 18. This is foundational. It is the Spirit that therefore empowers us to obedience. We have learned that this requires a dying to self. It requires a surrendering to the Spirit of God as he has revealed himself in Scripture. It requires that we be permeated with the Spirit of God and therefore he will invisibly move us along like the wind moves a ship as it blows in its sail.

This requires a knowledge of the Word of God. It requires, as well, obedience to the Word. And as a result we will have mastery over our flesh and the Spirit of God will manifest himself in certain fruits that we will bear: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

¹ Ephesians 6:4.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control and on it goes. And one of the most noticeable fruits will be that of subordinating ourselves to the needs of others, especially focusing on the needs of our wives and our children. And as a result of this, then, husbands will live their wives as Christ loved the Church that we spoke about last week.

Now today we will see that when a man is truly filled with the Spirit of God and he is loving his wife as Christ loved the Church, then he will understand what it means to do not provoke your children to anger and instead bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. Now, the application of this, dear friends, reaches far beyond fathers because all of us encounter children and we need to understand these principles. So listen up.

This is the third virtue that we want to look at in a godly man. Again, number one, he has got to *be filled with the Spirit*. Number two, he needs to *love his wife as Christ loved the Church* and now, three, he needs to be a man that does not, verse four of chapter six, *provoke his children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord*.

Now here we discover a very interesting contrast of warnings. Don't do the provoking to anger, but do raise them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. The idea in the original language of "provoking to anger" is really summarized well by one who said, "This refers to attitudes, words and actions that drive a child to angry exasperation or resentment."

Now, you must understand the context here. This was utterly foreign to the people to whom it was first written. The Roman pagans of that day had no earthly idea what it was to really love other members of the family, especially children, especially fathers loving their wife, then loving their children.

There was a Roman law of *patria potestas* that gave fathers the absolute authority to do anything they wanted to in their home. They had the right of life or death over everyone in their home. They could sell members of their household as slaves. They could kill them if they wanted to. And even with newborns we find that a child would be placed at the father's feet and if the father picked it up, then the child was allowed to live and stay in the household, but if the father decided he didn't want the child, he would just merely walk away from it and the infant was to be disposed. And usually what they would do is take the infant to the town forum where others would come and find these children and select the ones they wanted and raise them as either slaves or prostitutes.

And you say, "My, what a horrible thing that must have been." Well, frankly, at some level they showed more mercy than the people do in our culture today because today what do we do if we have an unwanted child? We just kill it, even while it is in the mother's womb, and then we try to justify such a murderous act by championing "a woman's right to choose." So hear the apostle's command strikes at the heart of the wickedness of that culture both then and, frankly, even now.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

There is a parallel passage that we read in our Scripture reading this morning in Colossians 3:21 where we read, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.”² . . . which means “to be discouraged,” “to become a child without any courage,” “to lose their Spirit.” . . . and certainly unkind, unloving, unfair treatment of a child will inevitably produce a sullen resignation to be obedient, but ultimately it will drive them to despair and drive them to rebellion. Many times we see children even in Christian homes that are outwardly complaint, but inwardly defiant.

I want to be very practical here for each of us this morning, especially you men. I want to give you some common ways that fathers and mothers provoke their children to anger an cause them to lose heart.

Number one, *by not loving your wife as Christ loved the Church*. Men, when we fail to do this we produce a tension in the home, a frustration that produces in the hearts of children anger and confusion, and bitterness begins to set in, and many times children begin to blame themselves. Beloved, whenever God’s order is violated, the corruption of sin will have untold consequences of heartache within the home.

I will remind you briefly of some statistics that I read in part one of this series where research has indicated a clear link between the breakdown of the family and problems that we see in society. Divorce, according to the studies that I read, is the leading cause of childhood depression. Seventy five percent of adolescent patients at chemical abuse centers are from single parent families (there is a family where a husband wasn’t even close to loving his wife as Christ loved the Church). Sixty three percent of youth suicides are single parent children. Seventy percent of teenage pregnancies are single parent children. Seventy five percent of juveniles in youth correction facilities are from single parent families and on it goes. Men, loving your wife as Christ loved the Church will have an enormous positive impact on your children. Not doing so will ultimately produce within them resentment and they will begin to lose heart with respect to many things in their life.

A by product of this and a second way we can provoke our children to anger and lose heart is through *neglect*. When a child feels like he is in the way, that he is a burden, that he is a nuisance, when a father shows no real interest in the child... “Let mommy take care of that.” . . . when that is the attitude, when daddy shows that he has got time for all the things he wants to do, but no time for the child, think what that causes in the heart of a child. The pain of being unwanted is extremely powerful, and the flesh will find many ungodly ways to fill that void. Neglect can take on many faces, men, but certainly this is a violation of the text before us that we are to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” denoting a lifestyle of loving care and spiritual involvement and intimacy.

A third way we can provoke our children to anger, men, is by *being ruled by anger* ourselves. This is the self-centered man. I think of Saul who you will recall cursed his son

² Colossians 3:21.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

Jonathan by using a loathsome appellation. He said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!”³ And we know that that produced a permanent strain in that father son relationship. Now, men, please hear this. Anger—and many of us as men we struggle with this—anger is considered one of the deeds of the flesh in Galatians five. In fact, it is listed in that list of deeds of the flesh as “outbursts of anger that produces disputes, dissensions and factions.”

This is the hot tempered man. This is the explosive man, the man that leads his family through intimidation, not through loving servanthood, not as a shepherd, but as a butcher. A shepherd leads, a butcher drives. This is the condescending man that screams and yells and throws fits when he doesn’t get his way. Everyone stays on duty with this kind of a father. Every one runs scared. The discipline is typically too harsh, and it is often done in anger. It is vindictive rather than corrective. The thought in this kind of a father when he disciplines his child is *not*, “My child, you have sinned against God and I need to show you the right way,” but rather the motivation is, “You have embarrassed me. You have made me mad. You have caused me some personal irritation or loss and so now you are going to pay.”

Proverbs 22 verse 24 we read:

Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself.⁴

And, men, let me tell you, if you are this kind of a father your children will learn those ways. They will learn it very quickly, and it will be a snare, because they will trap themselves in a self-imposed prison of rage and pride and self-will just like you. As Proverbs 12:15 says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.”⁵ That is how they will become because you have modeled that. You have provoked them to this. They have no idea how to resolve conflict. All they know is he who yells the loudest wins. And inevitably they will carry this into their marriage. And, as a result, they will never enjoy rich intimacy in a marriage or any other relationship, nor will they ever really be used of God because God will not use this kind of a man.

A fourth way, men, that we can provoke our children to anger and cause them to lose heart is by *promoting a child centered home*. Now, this is the opposite of a Christ centered home. This is a home where it is kind of a democracy and the child typically has the deciding vote. You have all seen these kind of homes and maybe you have one. This is where the child is undisciplined and defies authority and especially when they are young. They will manipulate everyone in the household to get their way through screaming and throwing tantrums and so forth. They will not obey when asked the first time, but rather they will bargain, they will question, they will dispute, they will whine and they will pout and then they will throw a fit if they don’t get their way.

³ 1 Samuel 20:30.

⁴ Proverbs 22:24-25.

⁵ Proverbs 12:15.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

Everything orbits around little Johnny and he demands that every one serve him. The child learns that he is basically the ruler of his little world and is not required to submit to authority, at least none but his own. Certainly this is an inversion of the divine order. In fact, this is so serious, men, that we read in 1 Timothy 3:4, this type of fathering and parenting would disqualify you from spiritual leadership as an elder. There we read in 1 Timothy three verse four:

He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)⁶

Not only does it disqualify a man from being an overseer or an elder within the church, but also even as a servant, even as deacon. We read in verse 12 that deacons are to be good managers of their children and their own households.

Now you ask, “Well, how does this provoke a child to anger?” Well, let me answer that. You see, as they grow older they begin to discover that their desires are considered at least on the same status or with equal weight as everybody else in the house. And they think, “Well, now wait a minute. This isn’t right.” They become angry. Moreover when they eventually encounter the real world where they discover that they are *not* the center of the universe, once they leave the little kingdom that they rule in the home and they learn that they are not the supreme potentate, then they become furious. Juvenile delinquent centers are filled with these types of young people.

I would certainly hate for my son to marry a young woman from this kind of home because my son would never be able to please her and she will certainly resent the God ordained order of a wife to submit to her husband. Likewise, I would hate for my daughter to marry this kind of a man because this man will be a condescending control freak, because that is what he has learned; that is what he was allowed to do.

How do you prevent this or remedy this? Well, there is so much that could be said here and I will speak to it a little bit more in a moment, but in Proverbs 29:15 we read, “The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”⁷ And in verse 17 it says, “Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul.”⁸ Men, if your children will not obey you, how do you expect them to ever obey the Lord?

Another way we can provoke our children to anger, men, is through *over protection and control*. And here, frankly, many times, mothers are as guilty as the men, if not more so, but, men, we have to help our wives with this. This is where legitimate nurturing and protection gradually turns into a smothering control. This is where a child is simply not allowed to experience new things and try new things, make his own decisions within the

⁶ 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

⁷ Proverbs 29:15.

⁸ Proverbs 29:17.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

range and boundaries of his own maturity. Rather than having wise guidance, there is rigid control.

This is where a child—and I have seen this before—where a child lives basically in a police state, where they are micromanaged, where they are smothered, they are over protected; there is just a bondage of restrictions that produce within them a seething resentment. They are never really allowed to spread their wings and leave the nest because, “after all, honey, you might get hurt.”

Real practically, I have seen it where these type of children are not allowed to go to Sunday school because “after all they might be taught something bad”; and these children can never go over to a friend’s house to play because, “after all, we don’t know what might happen. We can’t see what you are doing.” These type of children are never left with a baby sitter because, “after all, something terrible might happen . . . can’t have that.” They can’t play in the woods “because a tick might bite you or a spider or a snake” or on and on it goes. “You can’t play any sports because you might hurt yourself.”

As a result, these children grow up to be paranoid of everything, everything from people to parakeets and they live in utter isolation from the rest of the world. This is very frustrating to a child. And, frankly, they never learn how to cope or how to function in the real world.

If I can digress for a moment, it is so sad, especially for little boys. In our culture today, even in our Christian culture, to see them being feminized. And I say this in all kindness and certainly I know this would never be the intention, hopefully, of a Christian mother. But after all, our young men spend so much time with their mothers that, dad’s, unless we step in here, this can happen. Men, young men that have no clear sense of what it is to be a man which, by the way, the danger of being feminized is that it very often leads to homosexuality, because homosexuals, dear friends, are not born, they are recruited.

It reminds me of David’s curse upon Joab. You may recall in 2 Samuel three where he hoped that Joab would have an effeminate son who “takes hold of a distaff.” In other words, “I hope that you will have an effeminate son that weaves thread from a spindle.” That was a very humiliating thing in the culture of the ancient near east. And today to see teenage boys that look like, dress like, walk like, talk like, act like and even many times think like girls, is tragic. It is wonderful for young women to be that way, but not for young men. Young men, I have seen that are scared to spend the night by themselves. They go to church camp and they end up crying and have to be sent home. There is something wrong there. Or they are afraid to look a man in the eye and shake his hand and say “hello,” afraid to try anything new.

You hear the phrase, “A mamma’s boy.” You see sissies today, young men that can’t do a push up or they are such butter balls they can’t run around the block. It is a tragic thing. They know nothing of self defense. They are scared of the dark. They are scared of bugs. They are scared of animals. They are scared of people. They are scared of thunder. They are scared of the outdoors and ultimately it leads to a fear of man rather than a fear of

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

God. And I think, “My, what a contrast to David.” Remember David? What a fearless young shepherd and warrior king, described in Scripture as a rugged and even a well built, strong young man. You will recall that when Saul’s men recommended David to come and play his lyre to soothe Saul’s trouble spirit, they described him in 1 Samuel 16:18 as skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech and a handsome man and the Lord is with him.

What a great résumé. Isn’t that great? Men, this is what we want for our sons. And this is the type of young man that we want our daughters to marry. Paul exhorted men in 1 Corinthians 16 verse 13, “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”⁹ I love that. And then he said, “Let all that you do be done in love.”¹⁰

Yes, children are immature. They are foolish. They need some protection. They need some control. But, dear friends, they must learn obedience and wisdom through the experiences of life. Don’t force them to live in some little bubble. In Hebrews 5:8 we read that even Jesus learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And in Luke 2:52 we read Jesus matured in four specific ways. There we read that Jesus “increased in wisdom, stature, in favor with God and men.” In other words, he grew intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually. That is what we want for our sons.

Fathers, we must be careful here to give our children age appropriate boundaries as we guide them into maturity and see to it that our wives help them in the same. But they must be increasing in freedom with these boundaries in order for them to learn to be able to function on their own as they become young men. So don’t smother them with over protection.

We have had a robin’s nest up in our porch and we have been able to watch that mother and father robin work with those little ones and to see them finally get to a point where it is time to leave the nest, and they kind of shove them out and stop feeding them and eventually that robin leaves. That is what you want with your sons and your daughters. But you don’t want to control them by making every decision for them or they will either rigidly conform or some day they will break free in rebellion.

Children are much like an untrained horse. If you press him too hard and too long he will explode in rebellion. There is a delicate balance between gentle guidance and harsh control. Far too many Christian young people that I have worked with over the years that enter into marriage have no idea how to function in many areas of life, primarily because they were smothered. They were controlled by their parents growing up, and in many ways they were made to fear all of the wrong things. Well, let’s be committed to guiding, not controlling them as they move forward.

There are many other ways that we can provoke our children to anger. I will not elaborate on them, but they could be things like being inconsistent in your discipline, showing

⁹ 1 Corinthians 16:13.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 16:14.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

favoritism, humiliating your child in public. Oh, that is a tragic thing to have a parent call a child a name and smack him in public or whatever.

Lou Priolo in his book *The Heart of Anger* has some others that he lists. And I quote, “Never admitting you are wrong and asking for forgiveness, constantly finding fault, parents reversing God given roles, not listening to your child’s opinion or taking his side of the story seriously, comparing them to others, not taking time just to talk, not praising or encouraging them, failing to keep your promises, chastening in front of others, mocking your child, abusing them physically, ridiculing or name calling, unrealistic expectations, practicing favoritism, child training with worldly methodologies inconsistent with God’s Word,” and on and on it goes.

So, men, let’s be careful here, and women as well. Instead of these kinds of things that will drive your child to anger and resentment, we are commanded in verse four of chapter six “to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” And this will be the final virtue that I would underscore in this series of discourses.

Notice the word “discipline,” *paideia* (pahee-di’-ah), in the original language. It is an interesting term. It refers to the systematic teaching or training or schooling or guidance of a child. This includes chastening, correcting, and even the use of punishment as well as education to bring them up, to tenderly nurture them. That is what “bring them up” means, “in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.” And certainly this demonstrates our love for the Lord as well as our love for a child. Proverbs 13:24 we read, “He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”¹¹ Frankly, I see far too many time outs rather than time out between licks. There is a difference.

The term “instruction” is a bit different and yet it overlaps. It is *nouthesia* (noo-thes-ee’-ah) in the original language and it overlaps this concept of discipline. It means “to put in mind,” literally. It is a term that refers to admonishing or warning, training, teaching. You have heard of *nouthetic* counseling. That is what that is, training, teaching, warning, et cetera.

And we are to do both of these, notice, “of the Lord.” In other words, it is according to his method, not our method, not the world’s method. Men, we have got to learn to shepherd the heart of our child. We don’t want to just come along and just force them to do things externally. I mean, you can train a monkey to do that. But you have got to shepherd the heart of a child. And that begins by understanding that that child’s heart is depraved and it has got to be transformed some day by the Spirit of God. He has to have a new heart. He has to be born again.

We need to regard our children as spiritually dead. We need to treat him as though he is blind and deaf and bent on corruption and self destruction, for he is. We need to regard him as at enmity with God, regard him as being in rebellion to God, ruled by his lust, in

¹¹ Proverbs 13:24.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

bondage to his sin, completely ignorant and indifferent to the character and consequences of his sin.

We read in Proverbs 22:15, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”¹² Now, frankly, at this point most parents fail. They fail to see the venom of sin within the child’s nature. How often I see parents laugh at little acts of defiance and call it “naughty, naughty,” rather than leaping into action as if they just saw that child bit by a poisonous viper and doing everything they could to bring the correction of discipline as an antidote to that which would ultimately destroy that child. Unless you see a child’s sin nature, dear parents, as something that is a deadly poison within, you will never have a sense of divine urgency when it comes to truly shepherding your child’s heart and bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I often tell parents that foolishness in the child’s heart is like cancer. If you found out that your child had some cancer, even if it was a little bit, what would you do? Well, if it is just a little bit you would ignore it, right? Of course not! You would do everything you could to eradicate it immediately. Why? Because if you don’t, the metastasizing corruption will spread and eventually destroy the child.

Beloved, without such a violent reaction to your child’s sin do you know what will happen? You know what will be your priority? . . . sports and music lessons and academics and recreation and shooting and all these other fun things that have their place. They will become the greater priority which will be the sure recipe for your child’s ruin.

And, men, we must start this urgent ask in the early days of our children’s life. I want you to think about this for a moment. Isn’t it interesting that by God’s grace, the child is predisposed to grasping great amounts of knowledge and even without question in the early stages of life? We have got to take advantage of this golden opportunity because the clay of their character is easily molded in the early years of their life. A wise parent is going to shape that character before it becomes hardened by sin, and before it becomes cast in the die of worldliness and all of the temptations that are there. So we have got to be consistent to this end. We have got to be decisively determined.

As Proverbs 19:18 says, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”¹³ Proverbs 13:24, “He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”¹⁴ In other words, there is a consistency about this. And in Proverbs 23:13, “Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him,”¹⁵ or literally strike him, “with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.”¹⁶ In other words, through physical discipline you will find that you will protect that child and you will teach that child and deliver his soul

¹² Proverbs 22:15.

¹³ Proverbs 19:18.

¹⁴ Proverbs 13:24.

¹⁵ Proverbs 23:13.

¹⁶ Proverbs 23:13-14.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

from Sheol, meaning that you will help protect him from dying an untimely death as a result of his sinful lifestyle.

Unfortunately, I fear that too many fathers follow the terrible example of Eli. Remember the priest Eli who honored his sons the Bible says, Hophni and Phinehas, more than he honored God? And he therefore failed to discipline them. 1 Samuel 3:13 we read that God judged his house forever, “For the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.”¹⁷ You will recall the rest of the story. Hophni and Phinehas were slaughtered by the Philistines and Eli when he heard the news the Bible says he was a 90 year old man that was morbidly obese. He was sitting on his seat there at the gate of Shiloh. I have been there and seen where that would have happened. He was so shocked that he fell off backwards and broke his neck and died.

Now, men, you probably are asking the question, “Ok, pastor, where do I begin with instructing and disciplining my child?” Well, there is a great textbook in the Word of God. Certainly the Word of God itself is the textbook. But if we focus primarily just on Proverbs we will find much that we can learn here. Proverbs is the book of wisdom, the book of instruction about man’s relationship to God and man’s relationship to himself, man’s relationship even to others. And I wish to offer you for a few minutes here this morning five pillars of instruction that every godly man will be committed to in bringing up his children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

Number one, men, and again ladies you are a part of this, but, guys, you have to set the example. You are the leaders. Number one, *train them*. Teach them to fear the Lord their God. This is the dominant theme of Proverbs. We read in chapter one verse seven. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”¹⁸ And might I add that given enough time, unless you teach your children this, they will despise wisdom and instruction.

Practically speaking, teach them the attributes of God. Go to the Old Testament stories where his attributes are vividly portrayed. In Proverbs nine and verse 10 we read, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”¹⁹ Now, men, understand that fear of the Lord really produces three things. One, you want to see within them a reverential awe of the glory and the majesty and the holiness of God. And, secondly, you want to see a sober awareness of his right to judge sinners. You want them to understand that God hates sin, that his law demands perfect righteousness. And they will begin to understand very quickly that they fall far short of the glory of God. And, thirdly, you want them to have a trembling fear of their own guilt for having violated the law.

They need to understand the consequences of sin. They need to understand their own sin nature, that they cannot change. They need to understand their need for a Savior. And they will never understand that unless they first become desperate with a sense of need

¹⁷ 1 Samuel 3:13.

¹⁸ Proverbs 1:7.

¹⁹ Proverbs 9:10.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

for mercy and grace. They must understand that they are deserving recipients of the wrath of God unless they repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Men, teach your children the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell, and then and only then will they ever see their need for the Savior. Men, begin here with your sons and daughters. In Proverbs 14 verse 26 we read:

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death.²⁰

And in verse six of chapter sixteen we read “And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.”²¹ So, number one, *teach them to fear the Lord their God.*

Number two, *teach them to reverence the Word of God.* The palmist as said in Psalm 138:2, “I will bow down,”²² in other words I will reverence, “I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name.”²³

Men, practically—and there is so much that could be said here—but practically teach your sons and your daughters that *the Bible is their most prized possession.* Teach them to even treat the actual book with reverence. This is not something to be pitched around or neglected. Read it often. Ground them in its truth. By God’s grace the Holy Spirit will some day—and ultimately this is his role—but some day he will teach them to love it as you do and as I do. Proverbs one, right at the very beginning, the first five verses says this. “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.”²⁴ Here is how he begins. Here is why he wrote it:

To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,
To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;
To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, A
wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding
will acquire wise counsel.²⁵

Now, beloved, this only comes through the Word of God that according to 2 Timothy 3 is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation. The word of God that is profitable for teaching and reproof and correction and training in righteousness. Men, let them see in you a reverence for the Word of God.

I remember as a young man very vividly on Saturday nights very often my dad would be upstairs studying his Bible at the kitchen table. Now, you must understand that our

²⁰ Proverbs 14:26-27.

²¹ Proverbs 16:6.

²² Psalm 138:2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Proverbs 1:1.

²⁵ Proverbs 1:2-5.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

television was down in a real nice basement that we had and Saturday nights was a special occasion because we only were allowed to watch a few shows on television, but one of them was *Bonanza*. I lived for *Bonanza*. And when dad would see something in that ancient old book that was more interesting than *Bonanza*, it was confusing to me. But, dear friends God will use that confusion to stimulate you towards Godliness and to give you a love for the word.

So confuse yours sons and your daughters with your reverence, your passion for the truth of Scripture. Sit down with them. Read the Bible to them. Read Bible story books to them. Explain the great doctrines to them. And don't get caught with this thing, "Oh, they can't understand it." Well, that's right. They won't understand a lot of, but you would be surprised how much they *will* understand. And they will understand more and more as they grow. Saturate their minds with Scripture because we know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ.

Thirdly, teach them *to guard their hearts against temptation*. A child must learn early on that he has an enemy within and an enemy without. He must learn that he has the enemy of his own flesh that will utterly destroy him, and likewise, the enemy of Satan.

Proverbs is filled with such practical warnings. Let me give just a few of them to you. In chapter one we are taught to guard ourselves especially for our young people to guard against ungodly peer pressure. In other words a child—and you could teach them this—teach them to choose their friends wisely. "My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent."²⁶ It goes on to say:

Do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, For their feet run to evil, And they hasten to shed blood.²⁷

Practically, keep them out of the malls when they all go to hang out. Warn them against fools that scoff at the word of God. If you just kind of go through proverbs this is what you see. That is kind of the next thing, "Scoffers"... and teach their children this, "and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge."²⁸ "They are going to laugh, son and daughter. They are going to laugh at what we believe. They are going to laugh at God and at his Word." Why? "Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD."²⁹ The text goes on.

They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.³⁰ Fathers, teach your children this stuff.

²⁶ Proverbs 1:10.

²⁷ Proverbs 1:15-16.

²⁸ Proverbs 1:22.

²⁹ Proverbs 1:29.

³⁰ Proverbs 1:30-32.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

You go on to chapter two. You see the priority of pursuing wisdom, something that your child will be tempted not to do. Tell them, “Son, God wants you to be wise in the Word, to know it and to live it. But let me tell you. Everything in you is going to fight that. You will much prefer to spend countless hours with the inane task of texting your friends rather than spending time in the world.” Teach them that.

It goes on and talks about warnings against the strange woman.

The adulteress who flatters with her words... For her house sinks down to death And her tracks lead to the dead.³¹

Men, teach your children the power of their own lusts, their sexual lusts and the enormous power of immoral women to seduce and the extreme dangers of sexual immorality. They are never too young to begin to learn some of the basics of these truths.

The text goes on teaching about lying and the importance of speaking the truth. Guard yourself against laziness. Develop a good work ethic. The text will talk about the guarding against materialism. The child... children need to learn to manage their money wisely. Teach them to guard against selfishness. And, again, I am just kind of going through some of the highlights of proverbs. Learn to love your neighbor. Guard against anger, the dangers of alcohol, gossip, pride, hypocrisy, debt, slander, judging without hearing both sides. And on and on it goes. If you are going to bring up your children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord, go to the instruction manual. Start going through it and teach this to your children.

A fourth thing that we need to teach them is to obey their parents. Go back to Ephesians here. In verse one we read, “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.”³² In other words, saying that to obey their parents is to obey the Lord because, after all, he has placed the children under the authority of the parent. And in verse two and three:

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.³³

And, by the way, this was a promise related to life in the Promised Land under a theocracy. You see, juvenile delinquency was not an issue in those days because it was not tolerated. My how things have changed. If you don't believe me we could go to Deuteronomy 21 and beginning in verse 18 we see how serious God is about the Fifth Commandment for children to obey their parents. Here is what it says for the people of Israel to do.

³¹ Proverbs 2:16, 18.

³² Ephesians 6:4.

³³ Ephesians 6:3-4.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town.

And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.’³⁴

Just using an example here. Then here is what happens. “Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear of it and fear.”³⁵

Now, again, needless to say there was no juvenile delinquency facilities there. They did not have any issue of gang bangers. You didn’t see kids walking around with the whole gothic look. You didn’t see scantily clad women, these trollups trying to entice people with their sexuality, no MTV vulgarians, no spring break debauchery. They wouldn’t have had, as we have today, rebellious teens walking around with all of the tattoos and all of the piercing and the hats on sideways and the baggy pants showing the underwear and all of that type of stuff. They wouldn’t have had that among the people of God.

No surprise in 1 Timothy 3:2 the apostle Paul speaks of disobedience to parents as one of the marks of wickedness that will prevail upon the earth in the latter days. In fact, disobedience to parents was one of the sins of Israel that resulted in the Babylonian exile. You read that in Ezekiel chapter 22.

Men, the point is simply this. Teach your children to obey knowing full well that it is contrary to their nature. Be like Abraham whom God chose according to Genesis 18:19 so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. Men, you are in charge here. Lead in this respect. And even like Jesus we want our children to be in subjection to their parents because Jesus, according to Luke 2:51 was in subjection to his parents.

Let me give you a special note here. Men, if you can understand this—and I am sure you can and women, mothers—if you teach your child to obey—now catch this—immediately, without question . . . and I know that takes some work, but it can be done . . . but if you teach your child to obey without question and immediately, you will instruct them—now catch this—in *the matter of faith*. Because a child will begin to learn to trust what is said to them.

Now, too many parents bargain with their child as if they have got to finally gain the child’s approval, like a politician campaigning for a vote. “Now, honey I want you to do this. Now, now, now, mommy said do this.” Then you have to give 14 examples of why this is good as if finally on the 14th one the child is going to say, “Oh, thank you, momma. That makes so much sense. I will be glad to do that.” Of course that never

³⁴ Deuteronomy 21:18-20.

³⁵ Deuteronomy 21:21.

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

happens and so it is foolish to do that. But you must understand here, that family, according to God, is not a democracy. It is a dictatorship of benevolent wise authority. And children must learn that their understanding of the matters of life are far inferior to that of the parent, and their role is to submit not to question, not to bargain.

We have got to remember, dear friends, that unbelief is the adversary to faith. We have got to remember that unbelief is the very doorway to death. So you say to your son, “Son, here is what I want you to do. I don’t want you to ask questions. I want you to respect my authority and trust my wisdom because, son, some day you will understand better that my wisdom is greater than yours and some day, by God’s grace, your wisdom will be as mine.”

Now if you go into the military they give you hundreds of thousands of commands, and they are to be obeyed immediately without question. Now why do they do that? Well, I have not been in the military, but they tell me that when you have thousands and thousands of commands given to you and every time there is a positive outcome, eventually a soldier learns to have trust in their commanding officer so that in the heat of battle they will have confidence that what they are commanded to do will likewise have a positive outcome. But to allow your child to whine and pout and beg and barter all that does, dear friends, is reinforce the sin of unbelief . . . “I don’t think you know what you are talking about. I have a better way.” If they don’t trust you, they will not trust God.

J C Ryle, a great evangelical pastor of England wrote this in 1880 and I quote, “Reason with your child if you are so disposed at certain times, but never forget to keep in mind if you really love him that he is but a child after all, that he thinks as a child. He understands as a child and, therefore, must not expect to know the reason of everything at once. Set before him,” he says, “the example of Isaac in the day when Abraham took him to offer him on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. He asked his father that single question, ‘Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And he got no answer but this, ‘God will provide himself a lamb.’ How or where or whence or in what manner or by what means? All this Isaac was not told. But the answer was enough. He believed that it would be well because his father said so and he was content.”

Ryle goes on to say, “Tell your children, too, that we must all be learners in our beginnings, that there is an alphabet to be mastered in every kind of knowledge, that the best horse in the world had need once to be broken, that a day will come when they will see the wisdom of all your training. But in the meantime if you say a thing is right, it must be enough for them. They must believe you and be content.” So teach your children to obey immediately, the first time.

And, finally, men, *teach them to pray*. I would encourage you to do this even before they have made a profession of faith because prayer teaches them to bow before God in humility, but especially after they come to Christ. Model this most profound discipline in your own life. Let them see you pray, not just before meals. Let them see you pray with your wife. Let them see you pray on your knees with them. Let them hear you pray with them. Let them hear you pray for them. And I say, even get on their knees because that

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

is such a visual picture of humility for a child. Get on your knees with them. Hold their little hands by their bed. Those were precious times when my children were growing up. Guide them in prayers of petition. Guide them in prayers of praise. Let them hear your heart, and what a joy it is to hear theirs when they pray.

Parents, isn't it great when you hear your little child pray? Begin to get a real grasp of how they are thinking. Men, guard against canned prayers, careless prayers, irreverent prayers. Give them guidance, but yet let them speak their heart as well because, after all, we know that the Spirit helps our weaknesses for we do not know how to pray as we should as we read in Romans 8:26. But the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. If he does that for us, he will do that with our children as well.

It is so sad to see young men and women who are weak in the habit of prayer. One of the ways you will typically know this is they will be terrified to pray in prayer groups. I used to love to pray with my children and to hear their hearts. And as my children became older, and I am sure they remember this, I would almost without fail say to them when even as teenagers they would be going to bed, "Remember your prayer life. Remember your prayer life." You see, friends, this is the very air a true Christian breathes to sustain their spiritual life. So, men, teach your children to pray.

Well, these are a few things that will help you as you endeavor to bring up your children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord because, men, this is one of the virtues of a godly man.

And may I close by just encouraging you, all of you men, to examine your hearts. Am I a man that is truly filled with the Spirit of God, controlled and permeated and influenced by his power as he has revealed himself mightily through his Word? Am I that kind of a man and if I am then I will be a man that loves my wife as Christ loved the Church? And we went over all of the many ways that that would include. And likewise, am I a man therefore who does not provoke my children to anger and cause my child to lose heart, but instead, I bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord?

Men, some day we will have to answer for this. So may I encourage you to take it very, very serious, and watch God produce a bountiful harvest of joy in your marriage and in your family and in the days of your grand children and your great grand children.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. By your grace I pray that we will apply them to our hearts, that you will be glorified, that our wives will feel loved and that our children will feel loved and that our children would grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ and the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Lord, bless all of the men of this church and all of those who are a part of it in other ways. Lord, bless our wives and the mothers and the uncles and the aunts and the

Virtues of a Godly Man – Part 3

Ephesians 6:4

Dr. David Harrell

grandparents. God, may you produce a great, great harvest of godliness in the families of Calvary Bible Church. I pray this for your sake. Amen.

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