

Rearing Children

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise ;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth, And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4)

The word children is used in the family sense for the family has been under consideration with admonition to husbands and wives in Ephesians chapter 5. The family is a unit with each role operating in relationship to the other.

Children are commanded to obey their parents. Paul affirms this is right. The thrust of this passage has to do with the matters from which character is built such as: disciplinary matters, sound advice, and instruction that is for the good of the child. It is in these things that the child must be careful to obey their parents.

If parents want their children to be strong morally, then let the parents be morally pure. If the parents want the children to grow up with a good taste for church attendance, then the parents should take them to church with great joy of purpose.

The case for obedience of children is built upon one promise. Paul says simply, “For this is right.” But why is it right?

It is right for children to obey parents because it was the parents who brought them into the world, granting children life and above all, the hope of eternal life in heaven. Mothers suffered the pain of childbirth. Fathers suffered the frustration of laboring to provide for their children. In our infancy we would have perished from the face of the earth, had our parents not cared for us when we could not care for ourselves. Since our parents are older, they have more experience in life and are in a position to share valuable information with us that will be of great profit to us along the way.

In one place Paul commands, “Children obey your parents.” In another place Paul teaches, “Honor thy father and mother.” What is the difference between obedience and honor?

Obedience involves teaching. Honor involves behavior based on our love, respect, and reverence for them which would demand obedience whether we are in their presence or not. The command, "Honor thy father and mother," comes with two (2) promises attached: 1) that it will be well with thee, and 2) you may live long on earth.

Notice Peter's words in the following passage, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain from his tongue and evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1st Peter 3:10-12).

It is better to learn from other's mistakes. Parents have suffered through problems, made mistakes from which they have learned and from their experiences they are able to share information with us that is helpful. Children need to and learn from their parents.

"Provoke not your children to wrath." What does this mean? Wrath refers to a temper tantrum. Here it is used in a broader term to refer to an unbecoming lifestyle, a sinful way of life, out of step with the teaching of the scriptures.

Provoke means the sour temperament or to ruin one's outlook and aspiration. Children come into the world with no knowledge of good or evil. The way they are handled, taught and cared for will result in the formation of character. If the character is soured from the start, then the child is likely to pursue a life of ungodliness. However, if the child is brought up in the nurture of the Lord, his character will be slanted towards godliness and righteousness. Paul keeps this theme from his writing in Colossians 3:21, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." A child can be discouraged with life, especially with religion; by the way they are treated or mistreated by their father. Parents, but especially fathers, have a grave responsibility to bring their children to the admonition of the Lord.