

Bringing Up Children (Ephesians 6:4)

A. Preliminary thoughts.

1. Children are a blessing, not a curse (**PSA 127:3-5**) and a society that ignores this in trouble from internal chaos and demographic shifts which represent value shifts also.
2. Children need to know that they are dearly loved by parents, safe and secure from danger. Obedience and proper character development are enhanced by these, and our Heavenly Father thus provokes us to love and good works. **1JO 4:16-19; 2CO 5:14-15.**
3. Child abuse is horrible when it exploits or maims the body or the mind but beware of subjective definitions of abuse: wicked children deem Vitamin N (No) abuse while pseudo-science does not deem genital mutilation/gender reassignment surgery abuse.
4. Child beating is not child abuse since “beat” simply means “to strike repeatedly.” One could “beat” a child with a wet noodle and that would hardly be abuse. Nor would it help.
5. Biblical instruction on child training, including child discipline, is neither outdated nor radical. There are modern professional child/family psychologists who affirm the same methods and back it up with data. Consider Dr. James Dobson, Dr. John Rosemond.
6. Children are male or female and are not genetically homosexual or racist. Respect this and don’t confound their development with pseudo-science or bad parenting which warps their image of themselves from God.
7. Children are to be raised by parents in trust for God Who desires a godly seed (**MAL 2:15; PSA 144:11-12**) and godliness is profitable in all things in this life (**1TI 4:8**) since it teaches charity and boundaries by “love thy neighbour as thyself” (**GAL 5:14 c/w ROM 13:10**) and so maximizes positive human interactions.
8. Jesus Christ is the ultimate model of childhood development. **LUK 2:51-52.**

B. bring up: a. To bring into a higher position; to elevate, raise, rear, build up; to raise to a point or amount, etc. b. To rear from childhood; to educate, breed.

1. This implies that “bringing up” of a child is to raise him from out of a lower state of character to a higher state which one has already attained to, since “bring” means, “To cause to come along with oneself.”
 - a. This is obviously hindered if the parent is not of a higher character, still thinking and acting like a child (an increasing problem in our culture: kidults). Maturity means putting away childish things. **1CO 13:11.**
 - b. Such an effort would be like *the blind leading the blind*. **LUK 6:39.**
2. The children of Israel were “...**brought up** out of the land of Egypt...” (**EXO 33:1**), out of their bondage. Parents need to lead their children out of the bondage of their natural inclinations and imaginations. **GEN 8:21; PRO 22:15.**
 - a. Children will not develop good character without proper guidance. **PRO 29:15.**
 - b. They will not choose healthy diets or habits by nature (**ISA 7:16**) and capitulation to their poor choices generally produces children with unnecessary health trouble and self-destructive traits.
 - c. They will be oppressive by nature. **ISA 3:12.**
 - d. They will assume their demands should not meet with resistance and they will manipulate weak parents accordingly. **1KI 1:6; 1SAM 3:13.**
 - e. Parents should think of themselves as noble liberators who are loosing the child from the grip of a monster called Sin Nature and driving that beast away.
3. In **EPH 6:4**, Paul lays the onus upon fathers. c/w **ISA 38:19; MAL 4:5-6.**
 - a. This underscores the importance of having an engaged father in the home.
 - b. Mothers have critical roles also. **PRO 1:8.**

4. **EPH 6:4** contrasts provoking children to wrath and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 - a. provoke: To incite or urge (a person or animal) to some act or to do something; to stimulate to action; to excite, rouse, stir up, spur on.
 - b. nurture: Breeding, upbringing, training, education (received or possessed by one). b. Moral training or discipline. [O.E.D. cites **EPH 6:4** here].
 - c. admonition: The action of admonishing (putting in mind of duties); authoritative counsel; warning, implied reproof.
 - d. Common sense tells you that children who are tyrannically beaten into compliance or are as demeaned as Jonathan was by Saul (**1SAM 20:30-34**) are likely going to react defensively, angrily. Such parenting is the sin of no "...natural affection..." (**2TI 3:3**). God's children are precious to Him. **ISA 43:4; MAL 3:17**.
 - e. Parents may provoke their children to wrath by *not* bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A child learns from the school of hard knocks the realities his parents should have taught him and ends up bitter and hateful.
 - f. Parents may provoke their children to wrath by being not themselves regulated by the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and this breeds frustrated anger. NOTE: children will note, inventory and be ready to chamber every bit of "double-standard" ammunition you provide them.
 - g. For some children, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is the very thing that provokes them to wrath, not because the model is wrong but rather the child thinks he is God Whose will is sovereign. Do not fall for this form of idolatry, and administer the antidote early. **PRO 13:24**.
- C. Training has precedence over teaching, especially in very young children. A relatively non-academic parent with good values can reasonably train a child to have good character. Do not idolize education, ignorance or indifference.
 1. NOTE: You will train your child, positively or negatively. This is unavoidable, and you don't need to train him to be a fool since that comes naturally. **PRO 22:15**.
 2. Children are to be trained up in the way they should go (**PRO 22:6**), the ways of God.
 3. train: III. 5. To treat or manipulate so as to bring to the proper or desired form; *spec.* in Gardening, to manage (a plant or a branch) so as to cause it to grow in some desired form or direction... 6. To subject to discipline and instruction for the purpose of forming character and developing the powers of, or of making proficient in some occupation...
 - a. O.E.D. cites **PRO 22:6** as an example of this definition.
 - b. Training a sapling is wiser than trying to train a seventeen-year-old oak tree. Don't let the season of hope slip by. **PRO 19:18**.
 - c. Training is *manipulating*. Make sure that you are the manipulator!
 - d. Do not be conned into thinking that you must wait until your child can intelligently dialogue and reason before you begin to train that child in acceptable behavior by positive and negative enforcement. **PRO 13:24**.
 4. Critical principle: positively reward good behavior, never bad behavior. This is basic. **1PE 2:13-14; 1CO 11:17, 22**.
 - a. Praise good behavior and you may expect more good behavior. **MAT 18:3-4**.
 - b. Be wary of praising naturally good looks or talents lest you encourage vanity. **2SAM 14:25; PRO 11:22**.
 - c. It is positive *effort* that should be praised or rewarded. Prizes go to victors, bread to workers. **1CO 9:24; 2TH 3:10**.
 - d. Children need to know the instructive value of losing, of equal opportunity rather than equal outcome. Real life does not give everyone the same trophy.