

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 10 Sep 2023
Sermon Title : Loving Our Children
Speaker : Rev John Foo
Text : Ephesians 6:4

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 6:4 is directed at fathers. Though not everyone is a father, we all have an earthly father. We could perhaps extend this verse to anybody who may have an influence over a young person. Think of it as loving our children not only from our own family but also in God's family, in the church family:

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4)

What fathers must do

The verse is very clear in telling fathers what they are to do and not to do. Fathers are to:

- not provoke your children to anger
- bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Unfortunately, fathers tend to do the direct opposite - provoking their children to anger and not bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord!

1. Fathers must carefully guard what we say and do with our children

- We provoke our children when we use careless words and thoughtless actions towards them.
- Beware of provoking or frustrating our children by careless words and thoughtless actions.

Provoking our children to anger is the same as frustrating them or exasperating them. The way fathers do that is through using careless words and thoughtless actions towards their children. Why will our children bother to be frustrated by what we say and do? After all, they can tune us out easily. The reason they bother and are frustrated by us is because in God's creating order and system, fathers have been given something that others do not get – the sacred position as a father to our children. Hence, our children cannot simply ignore us and that is the reason why our words and our actions can have a great impact on them.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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As a baby and young toddler, children start out innocently believing in their father and trusting their father wholeheartedly. But if we keep provoking them to anger as they are growing up, sooner or later they are going to be so trained by us to shut us out completely, to tune us out, and to stay away from the very one person that God has intended for them to rely on totally in their growing up years.

- Pattern our fatherhood after God our heavenly Father

God has intended that we model what a father is, so that subsequently our children can turn to God as their heavenly Father. Fathers need to understand that our children need to taste the goodness of their earthly father and when they have tasted the goodness of their earthly father, they will want to taste the greater goodness of their heavenly Father.

How do fathers pattern our fatherhood after God?

We are to:

- Love our children the way God loves His children.
- Care for our children the way God cares for His children.
- Be careful with our words and actions towards our children the way God does it through His words and actions towards His children.

While fathers may sincerely love their kids, it is possible that their way of showing love to their kids may seem right to them but is utterly wrong for their kids. One clear indication that you have been sincerely and honestly wrong in how you love your kids is when they are hurt by your words and actions. That is not the right way to love your kids.

What do we do then when we have hurt our children?

We are to go to them, humble ourselves before them and ask for their forgiveness. We can tell them that we are not perfect fathers, and probably not the kind of fathers that they wish we would be. We can tell them that we are trying our best and that we want to be better fathers. Each time we ask for their forgiveness, we are humbling ourselves before them and telling them, ourselves, and God, that we want to be better fathers. When we do that, restoration and reconciliation may come to our household, between us and our kids.

Some fathers may think that since it is so difficult, maybe the best course of action is not to say anything, but God has something to say about such passive parenting.

2. Fathers have a job to do for our children

- God tells fathers that they have a job to do and that job really is to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- Bringing our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord

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The word job is used here because job requires active participation. You cannot be passively parenting your kids. You need to be actively involved in their lives, in helping them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Title of a father Vs Job of a father

We must not be confused with the title of a father and the job of a father. The title of father is easily gotten as the wife is the one doing all the work for the whole pregnancy caring and delivering the child. All fathers do is to wait for that baby to pop out and then they get congratulated. They receive all the well wishes even though they are just waiting there while their wives are doing all the work - they get the label immediately.

- Yet fathers must not belittle the father label, because it has been given to you as a gift from God, a beautiful gift of children. Children are a blessing from God. Now it is your job to become a father to them, to be serious about your parenting, your fatherhood, and to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- Unfortunately, some fathers think that they have other options. They think they can outsource the job to others, namely, the mother. So, the mother ends up with not only the mothering job but also the fathering job. If the mother managed to wriggle out of that deal, then the job lands on the grandparents. Grandparents must not hijack the job of the kid's father but make sure that the kid's father does his job of fathering the kid. Your grandkid must grow up experiencing the father figure in their father. Grandparents cannot replace that because that is the role of the kid's father.
- Fathers must not outsource your job. You cannot become a shadow in the family. You need to take up the God-given leadership as head of the household. You need to take up the leadership to train, guide and teach your children in the way of the Lord. There are many ways of doing it but perhaps the best way for fathers to do their job of teaching their kids is to be around to model God's word in their lives. The greater challenge of modelling God's word in your life is that you must be living out God's word in your life. If you are not, you can never model God's word in your life. When you are sincerely serious about trying to live out God's word in your life, modelling God's word in your life comes out naturally.

CONCLUSION

Fathers, your children are watching you. Live out God's word, model God's word, be godly. Never say any careless words and never do any thoughtless actions towards them. This is God's instruction and challenge to all fathers. As you live God's word out in your life, God will give you that wisdom to help your child. If you have not done so, it is never too late to father your children. Your children may be old and adult having their own kids now but they will never close the age gap between you and them so you will forever be a father to them. May you never give up fathering your children.

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For those whose kids are still growing up please do it now. Our children are the present of the church. We must look after every young life in our community. Do not provoke the young children in our community to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Ephesians 6:4 slowly.

Reflect on your life as a child of an earthly father. What do you wish your father had done differently in bringing you up?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. What must we do in order not to provoke our children or young people in church to anger?
 - a. How can we guard what we say and do?
 - b.
 - (i) How is your parenting compared with that of our heavenly Father's?
 - (ii) What changes do you need to make to pattern your fatherhood after God?

- 4a. Do you see your title as a 'father' a sacred position given by God?
- 4b. Why is it important to understand that fatherhood is a job from God? Which part of this job do you need to work harder at?
- 4c. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4b above in the following week(s), until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony on how you have been transformed by God to be a better father to your child.

OR

Give thanks to God for giving you the earthly father in your life and also loving you as your heavenly Father.

6. As a group, seek the Holy Spirit in leading your daily lives, as you strive to live out God's word and be better 'parents' to your children or the young people in your group or our church, so as not to provoke them to anger but instead bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Lifesong – Casting Crowns <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEhlwlvOq0>
2. Servant King – Awaken Generation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fT0DIMxPVoc>
3. How Deep The Father's Love For Us – Stuart Townend
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0CDqG5STPM>

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