

“Do Not Provoke You Children To Anger” – Pt 1: Giving Children Love to Live With

(Ephesians 6:1-4)

INTRODUCTION:

1. I want to talk about this because there are direct connections between parents’ actions and their children’s actions and the deplorable state of our country.
 - A. The recent tragedy that took place recently (at a school) in Nashville, TN., that resulted in the loss of seven lives has been on my mind all this past week.
 - B. The details, including who did the deed, why she did it, how it is being reported, etc., has truly bothered me and deeply saddened me.
 - C. I truly feel for the families involved and the grief and pain they are feeling.
 - D. But I also mourn for what such an event, and the many others like it, say about the state of our country and the deterioration of its moral fiber.
2. People want to say that the problem is our “society is sick.”
 - A. And although I understand the language and have used it myself, the problem with our society is not that it caught some “moral cold” or “ethics virus” that it must endure for a time.
 - B. The problem with our society is *self-inflicted*, the product of very bad choices that have gutted it of godly morals, values, and a conscience.
3. The problems continue to grow exponentially, not because *society is ruining everyone*, but because *society is being ruined* by the breakdown of the foundation of society, which is the *home/family*.
 - A. There is no doubt that the home is under attack by Satan. And Satan intends no good!
 - B. His success in eroding of the foundations of the family, including the rejection of the God-given institution of marriage, the rejection of the biological male/female design for marriage (Gen. 2:22-24), and the fact that parents are abandoning their roles and responsibilities have worked together to produce a generation young people who are:
 - i. **Confused!** They have no idea who they are...even biologically, or what their purpose in life is, or the means of coping with life’s difficulties, or any idea as to why their lives have these difficulties, seeing there is no understanding that actions have consequences.
 - ii. **Angry!** They are angry at life, at their parents, at society, at religion, and even at God. They feel short-changed and empty. And society is telling them that rage, violence, and vengeance are the answers, especially when pointed at God, His word, and His people.
 - iii. **Lashing out!** For as we have recently seen, though it was certainly not the first time, these people are reacting in violent, irresponsible, hate-filled ways, with little or no concern or conscience for what they are doing to others and themselves. **They want to die**,...and to **harm** and **kill** as many others as they can while doing so.
4. This downward spiral of confusion, anger, and lashing out is not going to be stopped by the government enacting more laws, etc., but by people turning their hearts back to God.
 - A. Yet, for that to happen homes and families must change. Those bringing children into this world must accept their parental responsibilities and approach their roles with godliness.
 - i. For, if the home is godless, it will crumble resulting in society becoming godless and crumbling, even as we are witnessing today.
 - ii. Of course, for godliness to rule the home, we must be more evangelistic because they are not going to learn God’s word on their own!
 - B. So, I want to talk about parents *not provoking their children to wrath* because I believe that is much of the reason we are witnessing these awful things.
 - i. To do that parents must **give their children love to live with**.
 - ii. In addressing this I am in no way denying or minimizing the personal accountability of those who are doing these deeds. Everyone must be held accountable for their actions!
 - iii. But I do believe the problem starts with parents **provoking their children to wrath** by failing to provide the things their children desperately need from them.
 - iv. So, today I want to talk about how parents need to give their children “love to live with.”

BODY:

I. Children need their parents’ love.

- A. Parental attitudes and actions strongly influence a child's life.
 - 1. In fact, the first few years of a child's life are called **the formative years** because of the impact they have on a child's entire life.
 - a. This is not to discount the importance of the years of training that must follow.
 - b. But it does say that the love you show or fail to show to your child, even at a very early age, will have a significant impact on the rest of their life!
 - 2. Yet, parents are failing to fill these years with real love, in epic numbers, because:
 - a. They spend most of their time and strength chasing wealth, believing that the *stuff* they can give their children will *translate into love*. But it does not work that way!
 - b. They are too self-centered, too caught up in their own lives and its drama, to consider anyone else's needs and desires.
 - c. They are too wrapped up in social media, TV, or video games to put those things away and take time to **interact with real people**, even their own children! And they are teaching their kids to do the same!
 - d. They are too lazy to do the work needed to love their children! For, my friends, it is work—lots of it—if you are going to do it right, if you are going to do it as God says.
- B. Much of what we are seeing today is the results of a lack of parental love.
 - 1. Love is one of the strongest emotions, if not the strongest, we deal with in life.
 - a. I have seen people do the most unwise, even crazy, things that mess up their lives completely because of what they believe to be “love.”
 - b. And when you add to that the strength of the bond between a child and his/her parents, no one can rightfully deny the vital importance of parental love.
 - c. So, if we want our children to grow to become happy and fulfilled adults, the odds are overwhelmingly greater when a strong parental love is part of that bond.
 - 2. When love is missing from the family, children will grow to be confused and angry adults.
 - a. How is that unloved child going to believe that anyone else can or will love them?
 - b. How is that unloved child going to know the value of love and how it is to be shown to others?
 - c. How is that unloved and unappreciated child supposed to love and value who God created them to be, to know they are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14), when those that gave them life never expressed this to them in any meaningful way?

II. Parents must love their children

- A. Parents must, first and foremost, give their children **agape** love.
 - 1. Agape is the greatest form of love and is the love God shows toward us.
 - 2. It is not love shown by giving a child whatever he/she wants or letting a child do whatever they please.
 - a. Children do not know what is best for them.
 - b. They will eat candy all day, never take a bath, never go to school, etc., if you let them!
 - 3. That God's love is agape love means that He **always does what is truly best for us**, which sometimes means saying “no” and allowing us to face pain and suffering. And parents today need some real training in that kind of love!
- B. Children need to know that their father loves them.
 - 1. Fathers' absenteeism in the home is one of the greatest problems for today's children.
 - a. Fathers are absent, whether it is physically, emotionally, or in their responsibilities!
 - b. Children do not have a father to lead them, to make the difficult decisions for them.
 - c. They have no one to show them what a real man, a godly man, is supposed to be!
 - d. And we are seeing the obvious confusion and havoc this is producing!
 - 2. A child needs to know their father cherishes them as a gift, a reward, a blessing from God (Psa. 127:3-5 – “Behold, children are a **gift of the LORD**, the fruit of the womb is a **reward**.⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.⁵ How **blessed** is the **man** whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.”).

- a. One way you show this by providing what they need (Matt. 7:10-11 – “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”).
- b. But know that best gifts are not things, or stuff, but your time and attention.
 - i. Even the world in moments of clarity knows this to be true.
 - ii. Harry Chapin’s song, “Cat’s in the Cradle,” expressed this especially well.
 - 1) It spoke of a boy whose father worked all the time and gave him gifts, but “never had the time” to give his son the loving attention he craved.
 - 2) Therefore, the boy grew up to be like his dad, working all the time and never having time for his family, including his father!
 - iii. The point is simple. Your children learn how to love from you.
- C. Children need to know that their mother loves them.
 - 1. God wants mothers to love their children (Titus 2:3-5 – “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴ so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to **love their children**, ⁵ to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”).
 - 2. Mothers show this love by the nurturing care only you can provide.
 - a. Mothers can do this so very well that God’s loving care is compared to it.
 - b. Isa. 49:15 – “Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.”
 - c. Isa. 66:13 – “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem.”
- D. Parents, you have one chance to raise your children in love, and that chance passes quickly!
 - 1. So do not rob your children of the one thing only you can give them!
 - 2. Do not provoke your children to wrath by failing to show them the love they desperately need from you to help them live a meaningful life!

III. Children need to know God loves them

- A. Though parental love is vital, it is not enough to sustain your child throughout their life!
 - 1. Children leave home and parents leave this earth! Therefore, children need love in their lives that will never fail them.
 - 2. True parental love must include your child knowing their heavenly Father’s undying love.
 - a. For, only God’s love can be counted to be an active part of one’s whole life!
 - b. Only God’s love can uphold them when life brings unspeakable pain and suffering.
 - 3. Without God’s love in their lives, it is no wonder children are growing up to be confused and angry adults, seeing **they are without a most important tool needed to cope and overcome**.
- B. So, children need to know that God offer them love...
 - 1. Though **undeserved** (Rom 5:5-8 – “...**hope does not disappoint**, because **the love of God has been poured out within our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly**. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**.”). God love helpless, flawed, ungodly, sinners!
 - 2. They need to understand that God’s love is offered through **great sacrifice**.
 - a. They need to know that God’s love for them meant giving his Son (John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”).
 - b. They need to know that God’s love for them meant being willing to live on this earth in the form of man so he could die as the propitiation, or appeasing sacrifice, for our sins (1

John 4:9-10 – “In this the **love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**”).

- C. Children need to observe God’s love in their parents’ lives through parents’ willingness to...
1. Personally sacrifice yourself for their good and that of others (1 Jn. 3:16-18 – “We know love by this, that **He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** ¹⁷ But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, **let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.**”).
 2. Do good for them and others even when undeserved (Matt 5:44-45 – “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”).
 3. How different the lives would be of so many people today if they knew God’s love and the amazing change it brings. They surely would not be shooting people, or burning down businesses, or punching people in the face, or threatening others!

CONCLUSION:

1. In the next lesson on this topic we will consider how parents must *give their children a law to live by.*
2. But before we close I want to say that I know children can choose to reject their upbringing, can choose to follow Satan, and reject the Lord and His people, can choose the confusion, anger, and violence of the world over the wisdom and peace of Christ.
3. But those who have experienced and known God’s love through the dedicated, loving lives of their parents are far less likely to do so.
4. So, I encourage you to love your children as God has loved you so that you will not be guilty of provoking your children to wrath.
5. Of course, the live of love begins with acknowledging and responding to God’s love in your life by trusting Him and obeying His will.
 - A. You have experienced God’s love throughout your life in all the good things that you have enjoyed but may have taken for granted.
 - B. So, do not ignore His love, or put off responding to His love, for another day.
 - C. Will you come to Jesus today in F-R-C-B?