**October 14, 2018 “Fathers do not Provoke Your Children” Ephesians 6:4**

One of the things I find fascinating about the Word of God is the continual expression of what a blessing it is to have children. Psalm 127:3-5 is an example of how the Lord expects us as parents to view our children… they are a gift from God to us.

Interestingly, there are relatively few specific instructions on how to raise those children. There are verses which tell us of the nature of a child, even from birth, Psalm 51:5… “behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me”. Proverbs 22:15… “foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child and the rod of correction will drive it far from him”.

So why then are the instructions, like the one given to us in Ephesians 6:4 so non-specific in detail? Notice here there are only two instructions given. One is a negative and the other as positive.

Note the negative… “Fathers do not provoke your children to anger”. What does that mean? Does that mean that you cannot tell them that they cannot do something or go somewhere because they could get or might get angry with you? Is that what this means? Or does it simply mean that you love them and treat them in such a consistent manner that they know without a shadow of a doubt that you love them and want the very best for them, which may result in telling them… NO?

Now note the positive… “but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”. That is what we are going to focus on today in our study.

If we could boil down the raising of children into two categories, I think we would all have to agree that there are two major components that parents have to deal with; the first one is the external influences on the lives of our children and the second one is the internal component of the nature within that child. Some children are naturally more passive and others can’t sit still for more than 30 seconds without finding something else they need to explore or dig into.

Let’s look at the external influences first. Statisticians tell us that the greatest influence in the world today is the electronic media. I want to give you an example of how this media has changed our lives. I was born in 1952 and was raised on a family farm. Like nearly everyone, I knew in my early childhood, we had no running water in the house, no indoor plumbing and had a party line telephone. We as a family all ate together at specific times including coffee breaks. Saturday evening was bath night where we would all take turns in the washtub with the same water which was heated with an electric heater that looked like an old-time microphone which was placed in the water and once the water was hot, the heater was taken out and we jumped in for our bath. On Saturday night my mother would give my father a list of groceries to get while she was giving us our bath, he would get the groceries and change for the offering for each of us to give on Sunday at church. Since our church always took two offerings each Sunday morning and night, we would get a quarter for one offering and a dime for the second offering. On Sunday all the stores were closed and the only thing done on Sunday was our necessary chores and visiting with relatives. When our cousins arrived on Sunday, we would go outside and play ball with no umpires, no uniforms and usually in the pasture where the cows had eaten grass down. Unfortunately, the cows often left some residue behind their lawn manicuring techniques. That was the life I was born into.

In 1950, crime statistics showed that in the United States, 170 children in the entire country had committed serious crimes like murder, rape or aggravated assault. The ratio of adults to adolescent crime was 215 adults for every child. By 1960, the ratio moved to 8 to 1. What was the greatest contributing factor? Television!!!!

Just stop and think about what is available to us and our children on electronic media today. How much violence? How much gratuitous sex? How many murders or killings on video games? How many vampire movies or movies with supernatural demonic spirits are being promoted? Have you listened to any so-called “rap” music and listened to the way women are treated or valued? Is it possible to have “rap” without some of the most disgusting language known to man? If your children do not have this influence in their lives… most, if not all, of their friends do.

Our children are the products of what we gave to them to build their self-esteem, they are the products of what we did not give to them which is the ability of self-control.

This is the world in which you as a parent are instructed by God to raise your children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”.

1. How do we do this?
   1. What is the greatest goal you have for your children?
      1. That they be the best
         1. Soccer, baseball, hockey, volleyball or football player
   2. Is that your primary goal for them?
      1. When you stand by their grave as some parents I know
      2. What will be your greatest concern
         1. The amount of deer they killed or goals they scored or how many trophies they have won?
         2. Or where they will spend eternity?
2. If the latter is your goal
   1. Here is what you do
      1. Deuteronomy 6:1-9
         1. Have your home filled with the Word of God
            1. Ten Commandments are to be memorized
      2. Fill your life with the Word of God
      3. Fill your home with gospel music
         1. (example of The Voice)
            1. Who wants to sing or listen to dead songs?
            2. Christmas example

Mary did you know

* + - 1. Why not
         1. I was once a sinner but I came
         2. The Old Rugged Cross
  1. Why do your children need to hear these things?
     1. They need to know
        1. They are sinners
           1. Because of that they are abiding in the wrath of God
           2. John 3:16-17; 36
        2. Jesus does not want to be their buddy
           1. He wants to be their Lord and Savior
           2. Because they too have fallen short of the Glory of God… just like you and I have
        3. They need to know how to say… No!
           1. Joseph… how can I sin against God?
           2. Matthew 16:24… if anyone would follow Me, let him deny himself and pick up his cross and follow Me
           3. Titus 2:11-13

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are living in the last of the last days. Perilous days are here… but the victory is ours in Christ. Tell of that victory to your children and that they too… “are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”.