

Fathers and Discipline

In modern American child rearing is by and large the duty of the mother. Our mother sees after our schooling and behavior. Even church attendance is often left to the mother. However, the Bible gives clear and undeniable responsibility to fathers: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4 NIV).

The total education.

As we saw in the preceding lesson, Fathers are responsible for the total education of their children. *Training* suggests the broad education of the child and *instruction* includes chastisement and correction (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). *Of the Lord* gives special focus aimed at character and religion as taught by the Lord. Although mothers are equal partners in child rearing, fathers cannot abrogate or delegate their responsibility. Colloquially speaking: "It's a two-man job."

Abusive discipline.

As fathers do the job, they are warned against abusive discipline: "Do not exasperate your children." Eph6:4 NIV. The New King James Version says: "do not provoke your children to wrath." In the NKJV, the discipline part of this direction is in the word *training*. Training is by word as well as correction and reproof, as in the word *disciple*. Fathers should replace the overuse of nagging, hassling, and even striking, with instruction from the Bible and coaching to bring the child to this standard of behavior. However, fathers are never to ignore abusive, disrespectful, or sinful behavior.

The discipline of a loving father.

True children enjoy the discipline of a loving father. Proverbs 3:11-12 is quoted in Hebrews 12:6: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." NIV. The Hebrew writer expands stating several truths:

- Fathers discipline those they love.
- Children respect fathers who discipline them.
- Fathers must discipline children, as they think best.
- Discipline is for the child's own good.
- No discipline seems pleasant at the time.
- Later on, discipline produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.

The physical necessities.

Fathers are to provide the necessities of life. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake." Paul stated our obligation to our families in I Timothy 5:8: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." The golden rule applies to fathers. One might say: "Do unto your children as you would have them do unto you."

Conclusion.

In conclusion, fathers are responsible for instruction, training, discipline, and life's necessities. However, as we have discussed, rearing children is a two man job, involving the mother also. In single parent homes, mothers and fathers must go it alone. This is also the case when there is a protracted absence of the parent, such as one who is away in the military or one who is sick and incapacitated.

Study questions.

1. What is the meaning of "Fathers do not exasperate your children"? _____

2. What do the words *discipline* and *disciple* have in common? _____

3. How does the Lord show his love to his sons? _____

4. At the time discipline is being administered, how does it seem? _____

5. What is the harvest of discipline? _____

6. What attitude do children have toward fathers who discipline them? _____

7. What obligation do fathers have toward providing their children with the physical necessities of life? _____

8. How can the church help single moms with the discipline of their children? _____
