

put yourself in their shoes. Be empathetic.

m. Unshared activities

- 1) Being too busy to attend special activities hurts deeply. Children need both quality time and quantity time. It takes time to be a good parent.
- 2) Do whatever necessary to attend some of their activities.

n. Unwilling ear

- 1) Solomon wrote, “My son, give me thine heart.” (Pr 23:26). Your listening ear is the key to your child’s heart.
- 2) If you provoke your young children by not listening to them, when they are teens they will not give you their heart when you need to talk to them.

3. The Consequence

a. If we provoke our children, we discourage them.

- 1) It breaks their spirit and causes them to lose heart.
- 2) In this context, it means that the child in angry frustration feels discouraged, broken, useless, hopeless or bitter.

b. To prevent discouraging, we must change.

- 1) The first step is recognizing what things lead to provoking your children.
- 2) Ask your child (and God) to forgive you.
- 3) Look to God for help. Let Christ’s words dwell in you richly. Depend on the Holy Spirit’s filling to help you do right. With God’s help, stop provoking your children.

Conclusion: Fathers, when God said “provoke not your children lest they be discouraged,” he knew this was a real problem. Our children are tender and the way we treat them will either provoke them or promote them. As a father, I have had to seek my boy’s forgiveness in this area. How about you? While the verse is addressed to fathers, mothers can be just as guilty.

If you can see that you have been provoking your child, the right thing to do is to admit it, seek their forgiveness and God’s, and look to God for help to change. If you are a Word-filled Christian, the Holy Spirit will enable you to do the difficult tasks God has given you to do.

Song: Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord - 337

Word-filled Fathers

26 March 2017 PM – Colossians 3:21 – Col16 – Scott Childs

Introduction: (Read Text) Sir Arnold Lunn, in *Memory to Memory*, quotes from a book by M. E. Clifton James about Field Marshal Montgomery. Montgomery was famous as a disciplinarian—but there was another side to him. Clifton James was studying him during a rehearsal for D Day.

“Within a few yards of where I was standing, a very young soldier, still looking seasick from his voyage, came struggling along gamely trying to keep up with his comrades in front. I could imagine that, feeling as he did, his rifle and equipment must have been like a ton weight. His heavy boots dragged in the sand, but I could see that he was fighting hard to conceal his distress. Just when he got level with us he tripped up and fell flat on his face. Half sobbing, he heaved himself up and began to march off dazedly in the wrong direction. Monty went straight up to him and with a quick, friendly smile turned him round. ‘This way, sonny. You’re doing well—very well. But don’t lose touch with the chap in front of you.’ When the youngster realized who it was that had given him friendly help, his expression of dumb adoration was a study.”

It was just because Montgomery combined discipline and encouragement that a private in the Eighth Army felt himself as good as a colonel in any other army. Like that field marshal, we fathers can provoke or we can promote our children. God wants us to do the latter.

Transition: As we study Colossians 3:21, I want us to note the command, the consequence, and then suggest several causes.

1. The Command

a. Provoke not your children

- 1) To provoke is to stir up, to irritate, to excite to anger.
- 2) This command with a negative can mean “stop irritating.” This is a common problem among fathers. We are prone to do things that irritate our children. These irritations accumulate and hurt.

b. In Ephesians 6:4 we find a parallel command

- 1) (Ephesians 6:4) “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
- 2) The word “provoke” in Ephesians is slightly different, meaning to rouse to wrath, to exasperate, or to enrage.

- 3) “*Provoke not*” does not mean stop disciplining and training. Instead, it means discipline and train in a loving, caring, Biblical, unprovoking way.

2. The Cause

I want to give you several suggestions of things that cause a child to become irritated or provoked. A number of them came from an excellent sermon by Pastor Frank Camp called “*Sweet Parenting*”.
www.ambassadors.edu/OnlineSermons/archived_sermons.php#retsemeS_gnirpS_6002_5002

a. Unloving discipline

- 1) Parents need a loving relationship with their children. If children know they are loved, they can more easily accept loving discipline.
- 2) Unloving discipline is discipline that is inconsistent, unfair or done in anger. It is not easy to be consistent. The temptation to get angry is real. We need God’s help.

b. Unreachable goals or comparisons

- 1) Pushing your child beyond his ability provokes. Avoid questions like, “Why can’t you be like your brother?”
- 2) Such expectations and questions cause children to feel like they are never good enough to please the parent.

c. Unappreciated achievements

- 1) “Dad, I kicked a goal today!” “Yes, but it was only because the goalie wasn’t doing a good job.” Comments like this make the child feel like he is not good enough.
- 2) A common failure is a lack of praise. Strive to encourage. Be swift to complement and slow to criticise.

d. Unlived standards

- 1) This is when a parent says “Do as I say not as I do.” It’s hard to respect and obey a hypocrite.
- 2) Dad should set a good example of doing household chores and picking up after himself. *Great leaders lead by example.*

e. Unkind teasing

- 1) Kids hate to be unkindly teased or made fun of, especially in public.
- 2) Young teens are especially sensitive about their appearance. Cruel, thoughtless comments can cause deep resentment and bitterness.

f. Unreasonable rules

- 1) Unreasonable rules are rules that are too harsh or rules that do not allow for accidents. Accidents can be frustrating but they should not be punished as sinful.
- 2) This also includes rules without explanation (i.e., do it because I said so). It is easier to obey cheerfully when we know why we are to do something.

g. Unkept promises

- 1) This is when you repeatedly promise to play games or go to the park, etc., but something always comes up.
- 2) Disappointments like this hurt deeply. Sometimes cancellations are unavoidable, but do your best to avoid them. It is better not to promise than to promise and fail.

h. Unfair favouritism

- 1) A Bible example of this is Jacob’s treatment of Joseph. Favouritism caused his brothers to hate him.
- 2) It is not good to treat each child exactly the same, but it is necessary to be fair and not to show favour to one.

i. Unloving attitude

- 1) Children need love that is giving love, tender love and unconditional love. They need to see it and hear it expressed. They know what we really love by our actions.
- 2) It also provokes when a parent sacrifices for his child but complains about it. Pastor Camp gave the example of a parent who said “I could have a new car if I didn’t have to pay for your Christian school bill.”

j. Unforgiving heart

- 1) Some parents only forgive when they are convinced of real sorrow. That is wrong.
- 2) Tenderly forgive as Christ forgives you (Eph 4:32).

k. Ungodly criticism

- 1) Children hate being called dumb, stupid, or to hear you say “you never do anything right.”
- 2) No one likes ungodly criticism. It rouses internal anger.

l. Unfelt empathy

- 1) This is making light of things the child sees as serious.
- 2) Never laugh at their problem even if it seems silly. Try to