

that he has offended God, and God has ordained the parent to rebuke, correct, and discipline him to bring him to repentance so that God can cleanse him.

- 9) Am I too busy to spend quality time with them?
 - a) Life is busy, but we only get two decades to mould our children into god-fearing believers.
 - b) We must give parenting top priority, just after God and our spouse. If parenting ever comes before God or our spouse, that is sin.
- 10) Do I fail to pray for my children every day, asking God for wisdom to rear them for His glory?
- 11) Do I confess to them when I fail and seek their forgiveness?
 - a) Many children have never heard their father or mother say, "I was wrong, would you please forgive me."
 - b) Unconfessed failures are sure to provoke your children.
- 12) Have I turned away my children's hearts?
 - a) Do they come to me with their burdens, questions, and concerns? Do they trust my decisions? If not, I have probably turned away their hearts.
 - b) Solomon wrote, (Proverbs 23:26) "**My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.**" When you have your children's hearts, you will be loved by them, be trusted by them, have good communication with them, be their intimate friend, be their tender mentor, and be a godly example they want to follow.

Conclusion: It is difficult NOT to provoke our children because we all have sin natures. We also struggle to walk in the Spirit and without His help, we will often fail. It is also difficult because we have many character flaws. If any of the character flaws noted describe you, it is adding to the difficulty of you NOT provoking your children. Please do not ignore sins that you must confess and change. Stop provoking your children. Pour your heart into gaining their hearts and keep them.

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Why is it so Difficult NOT to Provoke Our Children?

24 September 2023 PM – Text: Colossians 3:21 – Topic: Parenting – Series: Col23

Introduction: "You can tell when a father doesn't have his kids' hearts. You can sense the disrespect and anger, the bitterness and emotional distance. The kids don't want to be around him. They no longer listen to him. But children who trust their dad's counsel and leadership are those whose fathers have been proactive in winning their hearts." S. & A. Kendrick, *The Resolution for Men*, p. 105.

S. M. Davis adds, "The key ingredient in raising good children is to get their hearts early, keep their hearts, and be extremely vigilant not to lose your children's hearts. If you do lose your child's heart, then quickly find out where and when you lost it, and put into action a plan to get their heart back, not matter what it takes to do it." *Ibid.*

In Colossians 3:21, God said, "**Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.**" The word "provoke" simply means to excite to anger. The word translated "discouraged" means to be without heart, despondent, or disturbed in mind.^{CWSD} When fathers (or mother's) provoke their children, they lose their children's hearts. However, it takes a lot of work and prayer NOT to provoke our children. **Transition:** Why is it so difficult NOT to provoke our children? Consider with me some of the reasons God gives us in His Word.

1. We have Inherited a Sin Nature

a. All humans are born with a sin nature.

- 1) (Romans 5:12) "**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**"
- 2) There are no human exceptions.

b. Our sinful children struggle to obey us.

- 1) We looked at this in some detail as we studied Colossians 3:20.
- 2) Obedience goes against their nature.

c. Our sin nature struggles to respond biblically to their disobedience.

- 1) When our children disobey, it grates our selfish nature.

Thus, God addresses fathers in Colossians 3:21.

- 2) We do not always lovingly discipline our kids to help them see that they have sinned against God. Instead, we may discipline them harshly because they have irritated us.

2. We Struggle to Walk in the Spirit

a. We know what God expects

- 1) Colossians 3:1-16 clearly tell us that God wants us to be saved, separated, sanctified, and saturated in His Word.
- 2) The parallel passage in Ephesians 5:18-21 places the focus on allowing the Holy Spirit to fill or control us.

b. It is our duty to then walk in the Spirit.

- 1) Walking in the Spirit of God is living in such a way that we allow Him to control us. He cannot do this if we do not obey and flesh out our duties in these two scriptures.
- 2) If the Word of Christ is not dwelling in you richly as you daily study and apply the Scriptures (v.16), you will have a difficult time NOT provoking your children. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to respond properly to sinful children.

3. We have many Character Flaws.

a. None of us is perfect

- 1) We have many character flaws. Our children are among the first to pick up on them.
- 2) It is these flaws that can provoke our children and cause them to be discouraged or lose heart.

b. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you examine your character for flaws.

- 1) Do I speak to or treat my children harshly?
 - a) Often, those who speak harshly struggle to see it in themselves. Ask your spouse. You may even ask your children.
 - b) It is possible to be stern without being harsh. Harshness is like slapping with the tongue. If your children cringe when you speak, your words or tone may be harsh.
 - c) The Scriptures' "Golden Rule" applies here. (Matthew 7:12) "**Therefore all things whatsoever ye would**

that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

- 2) Do I criticise them more than I complement them? (Colossians 4:6) "**Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.**"
- 3) Do I lack compassion or empathy toward them? God admonishes us to be **tenderhearted** in Ephesians 4:32.
- 4) Do I listen to them carefully and seek to understand their needs? James admonished, (James 1:19) "**Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:**"
- 5) Do I say it and show my love to them sufficiently and unconditionally? Jim Berg used to say to his small children, "**Do you know what I like most about you? – Everything!**"
Heard in a sermon by Berg. We want to be loved, and our children do as well!
- 6) Do I address their sinful behaviour rather than their sinful hearts?
 - a) Often Christian parents seek a behaviour change rather than focussing on heart change. We just want them to be good.
 - b) Yet, correcting the outward behaviour without addressing the inward rebellion will only produce a pious Pharisee.
 - c) Children must learn that every disobedience and sinful action is an offence to God. Their greatest need is to seek God's forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9).
- 7) Do I discipline biblically – fairly, proportionately, properly, privately, and lovingly?
- 8) Do I discipline them in anger?
 - a) Because children are irritating and repeat offenders, they can be very irritating. I must admit, I struggled with this at times.
 - b) The right thing for us to do it to send the disobedient child to his room while we calm and focus on the fact