

# **Thriving Children**

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# Thriving children

1. Thriving children honor and obey their parents.
2. Thriving children have parents who are worth honoring and obeying.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord [literally: “is pleasing in the Lord.”] 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.  
2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”  
4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

# Prosper or perish?

- Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. (1:8)
- My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. (Proverbs 3:1-2)
- The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures. (Proverbs 30:17)

# Weak father, worthless sons

- Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord. (1 Sam 2:12)
- **They would not listen** to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the Lord to put them to death. (1 Samuel 2:23-25)
- I am about to punish Eli's house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and **he did not restrain them.** (1 Samuel 3:13)

# Growing up under Eli

The boy ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli the priest. (1 Samuel 2:11)

Now the young man Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man. (1 Sam 2:26)

Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him... Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the young man. (1 Sam 3:7-8)

# Why obey parents?

- “This is pleasing in the Lord.” You are picturing how the Son obeys the Father.
- “This is right.” You are keeping one of God’s Ten Commandments.
- “That it may go well with you.” Your parents want what’s best for you. Obeying them helps you thrive materially, relationally, spiritually.
- You will be shaped by adults—it’s only a question of which adults. Your parents love you most and know you best.



## **Perfect son, imperfect parents**

And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:49-52)

# Thriving children

1. Thriving children honor and obey their parents.
2. Thriving children have parents who are worth honoring and obeying, who do not needlessly provoke them but bring them up in God's glad way.

# Focusing on fathers

Col 3:21 and Eph 6:4 tell children to obey “parents” and to honor “father and mother.” Yet “fathers” in particular are the focus of the command to bring up children and not provoke them. Why focus on fathers?

- ✓ The father has the main responsibility for his children and will answer to the Lord.
- ✓ The father has the greatest power to provoke and discourage children.

# Loving discipline

- Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)
- Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24)
- Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol. (Proverbs 23:13-14)

## Getting a good crop

Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he continually open and harrow his ground? When he has leveled its surface, does he not scatter dill, sow cumin, and put in wheat in rows and barley in its proper place? ...

Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin, but dill is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod. (Isaiah 28:24-27)

# Correction vs. cruelty

- **Disciplining:** fair, loving, limited
- **Damaging:** bullying, bodily injury
- **Scolding:** rebuking, correcting, private
- **Screaming:** raging, exploding, insulting, public humiliation
- **Directing:** teaching and example
- **Dominating:** rigid control, forcing kids to fit the same mold

## **Be careful**

- Punish direct disobedience or defiance, not goofy stunts or careless spills.
- Spanking is more appropriate when kids are quite young and respond best to quick, physical consequences.
- Parents who grew up under abusive parents might be wise not to spank but to find other forms of discipline.
- Fairness does not always mean treating all children the same. Each child is different.

# Be consistent

- **Punishment fits the crime:** Children know what to expect if they do something wrong. Consequences consistently fit the offense and don't vary with a parent's mood.
- **Walk the talk:** Parents must consistently do what they order their children to do, and avoid what they tell their children to avoid.
- **Parents agree:** Father and mother are consistent with each other. If one says no, kids can't get the other one to say yes.



# Be understanding

- He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame. (Proverbs 18:13)
- The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him. (18:17)
- A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even tempered. (17:27)
- A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. (29:11)

# Be compassionate

- As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Ps 103:13-14)
- Be alert to your child's maturity level, limits, abilities, moods, tiredness, challenges, fears.
- The main calling of a Christian parent is to display God's grace and love to children, to show compassion and forgiveness. Admit your own need of grace, and treat kids with grace.

# Be teachable

- Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him.  
(26:12)
- He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he  
who walks in wisdom is kept safe (28:26).
- The fear of the LORD teaches a man  
wisdom, and humility comes before honor.  
(15:33)

# Be involved

- Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)
- You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deut 6:7)

# Be godly

- We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God. (1 Thess 2:11-12)
- The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5:22-23)
- If godly fruit thrives in you, faith will not be forced upon your children in a way that provokes them. They will find it delicious.

# Parenthood pictures the Fatherhood of God

- You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. (Mark 1:11)
- The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. (John 5:20)
- Our Father who art in heaven. (Matthew 6:9)
- If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:11)

# **Children's attitude to parents pictures attitude to the Father**

- I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. (John 8:28)
- I do as the father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. (John 14:31)
- Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. (Hebrews 5:8)