

Ephesians 6:4

Keys to a Happy Home - Duties for Dads (and Moms too!)

”Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” This quote was issued in 1555. The Protestant Reformation was taking firm root; that same year, Mary I became queen of England. Mary was a staunch Roman Catholic seeking to drive all anti-Catholics out of England. In 1555, some 75 clerics were burned at stake. Two of them were Hugh Latimer, bishop of Worcester under Henry VIII and Nicholas Ridley, bishop of London. Both refused to recant and were burned at the stake together at Oxford. As the fires burned, Ridley began to cry out; upon which Latimer called to him imploring him to “play the man . . .”

This modern time sees parents “playing the parent.” Unfortunately, the stress is on the word PLAY! I heard of one couple who went to Las Vegas. They took their nine year old daughter with them. While the parents played the slot machines, the little girl was playing hide and seek in the casinos with an older boy. The parents were asked by management to keep their eye on the child. When it came time to leave, she was nowhere to be found. They looked all over the casino and eventually found the girl in a bathroom, raped and murdered. The surveillance cameras had captured it all. The children had gone into the bathroom and 30 minutes later the boy came out, but not the girl. Can you imagine what the parents felt when they found their daughter - BUT they got to play!

Instead, we need to stress the PARENT part. Like Latimer implored Ridley to stand up and be counted, we need to stand up and be counted as parents. The scripture is here addressed to Fathers! Paul uses the Greek word, pater, which means the masculine biological parent. Yet the context makes it clear that he is not talking to male fathers alone. What he says here to the fathers applies to the mothers as well. The TEV translates the verse as, “**Parents**, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead, raise them with Christian discipline and instruction.” So notice these duties on the part of parents that make for a happy home!

Notice first **poor parenting or parents that play**. The scripture simply says, ”do not provoke your children to anger!” Provoking to anger is an irritating action or speaking in a way that stirs up! Keith Hernandez was one of baseball's top players in his prime. He was a lifetime .300 hitter and won numerous Golden Glove awards, a batting championship, a Most Valuable Player award in his league, and he has even been on a World Series winning team. Yet he has missed out on something crucially important to him -- his father's acceptance and recognition that what he has accomplished is valuable. In a candid interview about his relationship to his father, Hernandez says, “One day I asked my father, 'Dad, I have a lifetime .300 batting average. What more do you want?' His father replied, 'But someday you're going to look back and say, 'I could have done more.'”

Parents, watch your words with your children! I am so often amazed at what I hear parents say to their children. I know how difficult it is to watch your tongues with your children. But if we want happy homes it is imperative - we must watch what we say to our kids! I have compiled my list of ten most provoking statements parents often make:

1. That's the most stupid thing I've ever heard!
2. Where did you get an idea like that? Are you on drugs?
3. Why can't you be good like your brother (or sister)?
4. Sometimes I wish you'd never been born
5. You only think about yourself and don't care about the rest of us
6. Don't be so lazy - get up and get busy
7. This room looks terrible OR You look ugly
8. You may be book smart but you haven't got any common sense
9. You are very irresponsible and undependable
10. You're costing this family way too much money!

These are not exhaustive, only samples; there are so many more that could be added! The point is to say, do not speak to your children in such a way as to provoke them! Remember, once a word is out you cannot draw it back! As far as these types of provoking statements we would do well to remember that a closed mouth gathers no feet!

Why are these types of statements made? Why do parents speak such? I believe in many instances it is simply because they're only PLAYING the role! Not realizing the tremendous responsibility, many parents speak without thinking. The result is that children are provoked, relationship erodes, and damaged lives result!

Notice next, in contrast, **proper parenting or parents that parent!** Paul says to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." As the TEV translates it, "raise them with Christian discipline and instruction." Grammatically, this is in the future tense which signifies what we are to begin doing and continue doing!

How? Paul mentions two things every Christian parent should do for children: First of all, NURTURE or DISCIPLINE (i.e. training, chastening). The Greek word is paideia which means education through discipline. This is training by action. It suggests a Christian discipline that regulates character. Have you ever housebroken a dog? How do you do it? There are two key elements: consistency and firmness. Why are you firm? Do you hate the dog? NO - you simply do not want messes on your floor! Now, obviously, children are not dogs. But just like you leave a dog alone and it will mess all over your floor, you leave a child alone and see what kind of mess he makes! Unfortunately, it is not one you can pick up with paper towels and Lysol! It becomes a messy life that results in disaster for all those around!

Do you want a happy home? Of course! Well dad, mom - part of the key is to discipline; train; nurture your child to be what God wants him or her to be! It is not the church's responsibility; it is not the school's responsibility; it is not even the state's responsibility! It is yours - you must educate through discipline. How? You teach kindness by being thoughtful and gracious at home. You teach patience by being gentle and understanding over and over. You teach honesty by keeping your promises to your family even when it costs. You teach courage by living unafraid with faith, in all circumstances. You teach justice by being fair and dealing equally with everyone. You teach obedience to God's Word by precept and example as you read and pray daily with your family. You teach love for God and His Church as you take your family regularly to all the services. Parents, your steps are important because others follow.

It is not easy - I know - I speak from personal experience! Yet all our excuses are poor patches for the garment of failure! Biblical discipline is lovingly guiding your child to realize that there are consequences to their actions and shaping their behavior appropriately! Leave it alone and it will be shaped anyway - just not how you want! Bring them up in the nurture, in the discipline of the Lord.

The second thing Paul mentions is ADMONITION or INSTRUCTION. The Greek word he uses is *nouthesia* which means literally putting in the mind. This is education by instruction, a training by word. Whose responsibility is the intellectual education of our children? It is the parent's. The scripture does not say, State, bring up the children. Neither does it say Church, bring up the children. It clearly says, parents, raise them with Christian instruction. That means a Christian world view in all areas of knowledge! This is one of the main reasons my wife and I have chosen to homeschool our children. I was well into my seminary education before I understood that you do not have to pack your faith away before picking up a science book! It took that long before I realized that you do filter EVERYTHING through the light of God's revelation!

But that is indoctrination, you say! That is right! That is exactly what I am talking about! If you do not indoctrinate your children, the world will! I tire of liberal arguments about indoctrination. I believe this is seen most prominently in the evolution/creation debate! Liberals want ALL evolution and NO creation taught. They call this education, but it is really indoctrination! TRUE educators, however, teach BOTH! The liberals may call it indoctrination, but it is really education! Am I saying I want my children to know about evolution! I sure do - but from a Christian world view. You see, when you have absolute truth you do not have to fear any educational theory or method! We can talk to our children about evolution, abortion, sexuality, or any other "worldly" issue. We not only can but we MUST. But we must teach from a Christian world view helping them understand that God still has absolute standards we will answer to!

I am often asked, do you believe that everyone should homeschool? In today's culture, I certainly believe that is the preferred option for Christian parents, but the reality is that not everybody can practically homeschool. But whether we homeschool or not is not really even the issue. What I am saying is simply that the intellectual development of our children is our responsibility as parents! You will not be able to stand before God to account for why your children believe and think as they do and say, "well God it was that school that messed them up!"

Contemporary recording artist Bob Carlisle (composer of the song "Butterfly kisses") has a song on his *Shades of Grace* CD. It is entitled, "Man of his word." The song paints a picture of a family. At one point it talks about how it is late in the summer of 64 and a father and son are divided over the war. Now the point of the song is NOT to debate whether war is right or wrong. It is NOT to discuss why there is conflict in homes! But, I use it to point out that there often is conflict between parents and children. Why is that? I am convinced that in most cases it is because the child has not been raised in the instruction of the Lord! That conflict need not exist. Instead, we can have happy homes if we simply bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord!

"Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." I am convinced that if revival comes to this land of ours it will be intimately bound to the family structure! Our families are in such a state of

chaos that nothing short of God-sent revival will save this land! Parents, it is time we stood up and “played the **man**” as Lattimer said. The time for playing games as parents is over! It is time we were man enough and woman enough to stop provoking our children and instead bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord! I believe with all my heart if we would we will light such a candle, by God’s grace, in America, that it will NEVER be put out! But it all begins with our decision to be the man or woman of God that He calls us to be.