

Fatherhood—A High Calling

Al Pittman, senior pastor of Calvary Worship Center, Colorado Springs, CO



Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. COLOSSIANS 3:20-21

In his letter to the Colossian church, Paul stresses the importance of a father's involvement in the life of his child.

"Children, obey your parents." This is a commandment of submission, like that between a husband and wife, for the protection and edification of the child. The Sixth Commandment, in Deuteronomy 5:16, declares: **"Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you."**

Children who dishonor their parents will, according to the Commandment, shorten their days on earth, and face all manner of unnecessary problems.

The Hebrew word for "well" means "a beautiful sound" or "happy, successful, and right." Obedience produces a beautiful sound, grants happiness and success, and brings a child into a right, harmonious relationship with his or her parents. Proverbs 10:1 says, **"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother."**

"Fathers, do not provoke your children." Rearing children is indeed a responsibility shared by both parents, but Paul targets fathers here. Why? I believe it is because Paul understood the true meaning of Proverbs 17:6: **"Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father."**

Here, the Hebrew word for "glory" means "ornamental beauty, honor, and majesty." Fathers have been given to their children by God as an adornment. Yet today we have a generation of kids who have no such covering—who feel valueless and thus find it easy to devalue life.

God places a high priority upon the father's role. The responsibility of impressing upon children a sense of what God is like—caring, protective, firm, and loving—is given to fathers.

A pastor related this story:

It has been said that, "a child is not likely to find a father in God unless he finds something of God in his father." Recently, I asked the preschool class in our Sunday school to draw a picture of God. I intended to use them as an illustration for my Sunday sermon. Toward the end of class, the children were excited to show me their work. They came up with rainbows and men with big hands. Finally, my daughter showed me her picture: a man with a suit and tie on. "I don't know what God looks like," she said, "so I just drew my daddy instead." What an awesome responsibility (Is America Committing Suicide? by Austin Sorenson).

That's why Paul declares, **"Do not provoke your children."** The word "provoke" means "to excite, or stimulate in a bad sense, to nag as a habit." Such approaches only discourage our children. We are to correct our children, but we are to use even times of discipline as opportunities to instruct and encourage, through the Word of God.

The father-child relationship is a reflection of God's desire to have a relationship with mankind, the crown of His creation. Jesus did not come to "provoke" us, but to "promote" us. In John 3:17-18, He says, **"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."**

As C. S. Lewis once wrote: "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God" (*Mere Christianity*). Sin has

alienated us from God, making us spiritual orphans. However, through the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven and brought under the glory, honor, and majesty of our heavenly Father—no matter how far we have fallen away from Him.

In "The Whisper Test," Mary Ann Bird shares this personal story:

I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl

The father-child relationship is a reflection of God's desire to have a relationship with mankind, the crown of His creation.

with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lop-sided teeth, and garbled speech. ... I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me. There was, however, a teacher in the second grade that we all adored—Mrs. Leonard was her name. She was short, round, happy—a sparkling lady. Annually we had a hearing test. ... Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back—things like "The sky is blue" or "Do you have new shoes?" I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth. They were seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, "I wish you were my little girl."

God says to every person deformed by sin, "I wish you were my son" or "I wish you were my daughter." With the faith of an obedient child, despite the deformity of our sin, we can become a child of God and never be fatherless again. Our God, after all, is a "Father to the fatherless." ✚