

God's Design For Family

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Tim Nicholls

[0 : 00] Let me lead us in prayer again as we come to God's word. Our Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for the wonderful privilege that it is to belong to your family, to call you our Heavenly Father.

And so we pray now as we consider your precious word, that you'd help me to preach it faithfully and help us to bring glory to you as we live out your will as children and parents.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I think our family life is one of the true tests of transformation of the gospel.

Family life is one of the true tests of how much we have been transformed by the gospel. I think the family is the place where we're free to be ourselves, to be who we really are.

And so how we act as children, how we act as parents reveals a lot about who we really are as people, what we value in life, what we think is important or not, what we're really living for.

[1 : 10] And so if you're a parent this morning, what do you want for your children? What do you consider makes a good parent or a bad parent? And as a child of your parents, what do you want your parents to be like?

How do you relate to your parents? I think these kind of questions, or others like them, reveal a lot about how much we've grasped the gospel of Jesus Christ and allowed it to transform our lives from within.

And I think it's safe to say that outside the church, family life is very often dysfunctional. Last year, France passed a law that allowed single women and lesbian or gay couples to conceive children through IVF and become legal parents of the child.

I think a law like that shows the moral poverty of the West as it turns its back on Christianity. No longer is it considered important in France for a child to have a mother and a father, indeed to have two parents at all.

Around the world, birth rates are declining as people choose their careers over family. Career is a very good example of this, with the population shrinking rapidly because of such a low birth rate.

[2 : 32] Because as all parents know, having children is costly. Having children is challenging, isn't it? Having children takes up your time.

Having children limits your freedom to do what you want. And so people choose cars and careers and comfort over children.

But, if we've understood the gospel, our family life will be radically different from the world around us. As we live according to God's will, our families can be a glorious testimony of the gospel to a world that is full of broken families.

Today we're going to focus on Ephesians 6, 1-4, but let's set the passage in its context. Ephesians is a book that's all about God's gracious plan to unite all things under the rule of King Jesus.

The headline verse is chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. We read there that God has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and on earth.

[3 : 45] So God is bringing all things under the rule of Jesus. And as we read on in Ephesians, we see that this grand plan for the fullness of time, it centers on God's church, the body of Christ, the household of God.

We've been adopted as God's children. He is now our heavenly father. And Ephesians 3, verse 10 tells us that God's eternal purpose, that he's working out, saving and transforming a global church, is so that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

And so chapter 3, verse 21, God will be glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations. So God intends to be glorified through his family, through his church, as he saves us and transforms us to be his people in this world.

So this letter of Ephesians, it comes in two parts. The first part, chapters 1 to 3, what God has done for us in the gospel. And then chapters 4 to 6, how we are to respond, how we are to live lives worthy of the calling we've received as God's children.

And in chapter 5, Paul has just explained that a key aspect of a spirit-filled life is that we will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[5 : 16] We are to recognize the order that God has put over our relationships and live in willing submission. And that is a sign of the Holy Spirit filling our lives and changing our hearts.

As husbands love their wives, as Christ loved the church, as wives submit to their husbands, as the church submits to Christ, as children submit to their parents and fathers discipline their children and slaves obey their masters and so on.

Well, there we see the Spirit's work in our lives, transforming us in response to the gospel. And so all this shows us that the family is a very important arena in which we serve the Lord Jesus Christ. God is concerned that we honour him, that we serve him, not just out there in the world, not just here in the church as we gather, but in the everyday life of the family.

As we live out the gospel in our families, we shine forth God's glory to the watching world, indeed to the heavenly beings, to the glory of God.

[6 : 29] I hope that vision for the family and for the church excites you now to consider with me how we can glorify God in our families.

Well, let's begin. First point this morning, God's word to children. God's word to children. And notice Paul addresses children directly here in verses 1 to 3.

It reminds us that children matter to God. It reminds us that children are a vital part of the church.

Paul assumes, actually, that the children are still here with their parents as the letter is read.

You see, children are not a nuisance or a distraction. They don't belong only out there in the Sunday school or upstairs there in the cry room. They belong here with all of us.

This reflects Jesus' teaching, doesn't it? Luke 18. Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

[7 : 28] There are some denominations where one is only really considered a believer when they grow up to a certain age and make a public declaration of faith and receive adult baptism.

I'm not sure if that's the belief here. I certainly have many friends in such churches that I greatly respect. But here we're reminded, I think, that children and youth are valuable members of the church, regardless of their age.

Well, what does God say to children? Well, maybe the children have all gone out to Sunday school here, so I'm going to say to you as the parents, what you need to do after this when you get home is get the recording off Facebook or YouTube and play this portion back to them, right, because I want them to hear this.

But if you are a child and you're still here, maybe you can wave at me, or you're up there in the cry room, or maybe you're there on the TV and you're watching at home, do listen right now.

If you are a child, this is what God says to you. It's there in verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

[8 : 41] So are you a child? This passage says, listen to your mama and baba. It says, do what they say. Listen to your mommy and your daddy because you love Jesus.

Maybe you're a teenager here today. This passage says to you, obey your parents. Respect their authority. And do it not because they're always right, because sometimes they won't be, or not because they're always fair.

Do it because you love Jesus. Do the chores. Do your homework. Observe the curfew. Willingly and joyfully obey your parents, because you love Jesus.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Paul says it's godly, it pleases God, when you do what your parents say.

Remember how Jesus did that, submitted to his parents, when they brought him back from the temple, in Luke chapter 2. We should do the same. And notice it says here, children, obey your parents in the Lord.

[9 : 57] In other words, obey your parents, because you love Jesus. That means that if your parents ask you to do something, that Jesus doesn't like, well then you shouldn't listen to them.

If your parents tell you to steal, or to lie, or to cheat on your exam, or something like that, well you shouldn't listen to that. Or if they tell you, don't love Jesus, don't follow Jesus, don't read the Bible, well, don't listen to that.

Always put Jesus first. But always remember, that your parents' job, is to teach you, to follow Jesus. And so almost all the time, loving Jesus means, obeying your parents.

It means doing what they say, even if you don't like it. There's another very similar verse, in Colossians 3. It says, children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

This is how you can glorify God as a child. Love and obey your parents, because you love Jesus.

Okay, now the children can keep listening in, the youth can keep listening in, but now I'm especially addressing all of us, once again.

[11 : 14] And at this point, I want to clarify, what we mean by children here. I mean, in one sense, we're always children of our parents, sons and daughters, and so on. But there does seem to be something, that's very wrong, about a grown man, maybe married with children, obeying everything, that their parents say.

Right? And so I think it's clear here, that by children, Paul means, those who are still being brought up, those who are still living, under the authority, and protection of their parents.

We see in verse 4, it says, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up, in the discipline, and instruction, of the Lord. And we see something similar, back in Ephesians 4, verse 13 to 15, where Paul says, that growing to mature manhood, as a church, means that, we will no longer be, children.

And so the goal of parenting, is that children grow up, that they become, mature adults. And I take it, when they do that, they are no longer, children.

And therefore, they're no longer required, to obey everything, that their parents, say. But while we are children, while we live under the authority, and protection of our parents, it's God's expectation, we obey our parents.

[12 : 38] Now, whilst obeying our parents, may end when we grow up, honouring our parents, doesn't. And that's in verse 2. It says, honour your father, and mother.

And normally, the way that we honour our parents, is by, obeying them. But it's not the only way, that we honour them, is it? We honour our parents, by embracing their teaching.

We honour our parents, by accepting their discipline. We honour our parents, by seeking their advice. We honour our parents, by not talking back to them, in a rude way.

We honour our parents, by speaking well of them, to others. We honour our parents, by living a godly life, that honours the family name. We honour our parents, by caring for them, in their old age, and so on, much more besides.

And so, whilst obedience, is especially for children, honouring parents, never expires, whether you're young, whether you're old, whether you're, you know, 65, and your parents are 90, you're still called, to honour, your parents.

[13 : 47] And Paul tells us, why we should honour our parents, in verse 2. It says, honour your father, and your mother. This is the first commandment, with a promise, that it may go well with you, that you may live long, in the land.

So both the command here, and the reason, they come from, the Ten Commandments. But what does Paul mean here, by the first commandment, with a promise? Is he saying, that this is the first, of the Ten Commandments, that has a promise, attached to it?

You know, a promise that your life, will go well? Or is he saying, that the command here, to honour your parents, is really related, to the first commandment, which is to, have no other gods, before him.

I think both, explanations make sense, I'm not sure, it's easy to pick, between the two, and both of them, are certainly true. The basic point, being made here, is this, honouring our parents, is a very important part, of worshipping God.

Honouring our parents, is a very important part, worshipping God. This is what John Stott, writes in his commentary, he says this, at least during our childhood, our parents represent God to us, and mediate to us, both his authority, and his love.

[15:05] We are to honour them, that is, acknowledge their God-given authority, and so give them, not only our obedience, but our love, and respect, as well.

And I think that's why, a failure to honour parents, carries such an extreme penalty, in the Old Testament. For example, Leviticus 20, verse 9, it says, anyone who curses, his father or his mother, shall surely, be put to death.

He has cursed, his father, or his mother, his blood is, upon him. So it's a capital, offence, to curse your parents.

And all this tells us, that God really cares, that children honour, and obey, their parents. But it is interesting, isn't it, that Paul doesn't quote, those threats, from the Old Testament, to motivate us. He could have done that, couldn't he? But he doesn't do that. Instead, he points to God's promise, in verse 3, that it may go well with you, that you may live long, in the land.

[16:11] And here we're reminded, once again, in the book of Ephesians, it's grace, that motivates, obedience. Not guilt. It's grace, that encourages us, to live out, a godly life.

In the Old Testament, prosperity, and long life, were tied to living, in the promised land. Ephesians 1, has explained, that our promised land, is in heaven.

We await, a heavenly inheritance, from our heavenly father. We will be with God, in his presence there, enjoying not only, the spiritual blessings, we have now, but his physical blessings too.

And so, Paul is reminding us here, of God's promise. Honouring, obeying our parents, in response to God's grace, is the path, to life, and blessing, both in this life, and in the life, to come.

And so, our parents, especially, especially if they are Christians, are a precious, blessing, that we should never, take for granted. And I, maybe I suggest, after the service today, why not honour your parents, by saying, I thank God, for giving you to me, as my parents.

[17:27] Thank you for loving, me. That would be such, a God honouring thing, to do. Well, in verse 4, Paul now turns, to fathers. And we're at the second point here, God's word, to fathers.

God's word, to fathers. And notice the command, in verse 4, is given, specifically, to fathers. Now, of course, both parents, have a responsibility, to parent, and discipline, the child.

A mother, is very, very important. Timothy, was Paul's partner, in mission. We know that his father, was a Greek, but his mother, was a Jew.

And in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, Paul commends, his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois, for their part, in nurturing, Timothy's faith.

Proverbs also expects, that both parents, are involved, in bringing, children up. Proverbs 1, Hear my son, your father's instruction, forsake not, your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland, for your head, and pendants, for your neck.

[18:30] So both parents, are involved. Mothers are very important too. Very important. But here in Ephesians 6, Paul specifically, addresses, fathers.

There's a Greek word, for parents. Paul used it in verse 1. Obey your parents. But here, he addresses, fathers only. Why is that?

Well it's because, God's design, is that fathers, are the head of the family. Fathers are the head, of the family. We see that in Ephesians 5, verse 23. It says, The husband is the head, of the wife, even as Christ, is the head, of the church.

And that, that headship, of the husband, in the family, reflects the ultimate, headship, of God the father, over the church family. And back in chapter 3, verse 14, we read, This, for this reason, I bow my knees, before the father, from whom every family, or if you look at the footnote there, it says, from whom all fatherhood, in heaven, and on earth, is named.

So fathers, are the head, of the biological family, because God, is the head, of the great family, the church. And so, as spiritual leaders, of families, fathers, must take that responsibility, very seriously.

[19:57] Indeed. So what is God's word, to fathers? I think, of all the things, that Paul could say, to fathers, at this point, verse 4, is probably not, what we're expecting.

Verse 4 says this, Fathers, do not provoke, your children, to anger. Don't provoke, your children, to anger. Paul assumes, children will obey, their parents.

But when he addresses, fathers, he doesn't command, the forceful exercise, of that fatherly authority, to get the children, to respect me, and do what I want.

No. He encourages, the gentle restraint, of that authority. Just like in marriage, husbands never, forcefully, impose, their headship, on their wives.

They don't demand, you must submit to me, because I am the head of the family. No, not at all. They lead the family, by sacrificially, loving, their wives, laying down, their lives for them. [21 : 07] So Paul says, to fathers here, take care, that you don't be harsh, in your parenting. William Barclay, he draws out, how counter-cultural, this is, compared to the Roman culture, of the day.

He writes this, A Roman father, had absolute authority, absolute power, over his family. He could sell them as slaves, he could make them work, in his fields, even in chains, he could take the law, into his own hands, for the law was, in his own hands, and punish, as he liked, he could even inflict, the death penalty, on his child.

Now I hope, that we're horrified, as we read that, the abuse, of fatherly authority, in the first century, as we should be, profoundly disturbed, by domestic violence, and sexual abuse, when it happens, in the family, today.

That is not, what Christian fathers, are to be like. Christian fathers, are to be like, the heavenly father. They are to be nurturing, loving, patient, caring, servant hearted, other person centred. I think as fathers, and I speak as a father, to you, that we need to, hear this warning, very often. Fathers, do not provoke, your children, to anger.

[22 : 42] It's so easy to do, isn't it? To be too impatient, to be too strict, too inconsistent, making our children angry, because of our unwise, and inconsistent, use of our authority.

I know my failings, in this, all too well. What about you? I think some fathers, are so forceful, so intimidating, so inflexible, so harsh, so distant, so angry, that it causes deep hurts, to their children, and it alienates their children, not only from their fathers, but perhaps, also, from God.

I don't know, what your relationship, with your father, is like, whether he was a loving, gentle man, or a distant, and angry one. But ministering, to young adults, over the years, I've frequently observed, the disastrous, impact, of absent, angry, and sometimes, abusive fathers.

It can be very damaging, even into our adult years. Good parents, will do more, than simply, commanding their children, what they must do.

With no explanation, no discussion, do it because I'm dad. An authoritarian approach, to parenting, it may get outward conformity, because of fear, but it will rarely, win the hearts of children, or truly change them, in the long term.

[24 : 19] They'll comply, while they have to, while they're under your roof. But one day, when they have a choice, they'll withdraw, or leave.

Maybe not just your home, but possibly, the church as well. Because, the way that they've been parented, is nothing like, God the Father, whom they profess, to follow.

Fathers, do not provoke, your children, to anger. The parallel passage, in Colossians 3, verse 21, puts it slightly differently.

It says, fathers, do not provoke, your children, lest they become discouraged. So what, what embitters, what enrages, what discourages, children?

Well, when we're unfair, or when we're inconsistent, or when we're overly strict, or when we're forceful, and dominating, when we're harsh, and critical, when we withhold, our love, or we make it, conditional, on how well they perform.

[25 : 24] when we have favourite children, when we put our children down, to boost our own ego, we could go on, couldn't we? Fathers, do not provoke, your children, to anger.

Or there's a great danger, they'll become distant from you, and distant, from the Lord. Now thankfully here, we don't just have a warning to heed, that we've got a great encouragement, to embrace.

Again verse 4, fathers do not provoke, your children to anger, but bring them up, in the discipline, and instruction, of the Lord. It's very interesting, the Bible says very little, actually, directly on the topic, of parenting.

The entire book of Ephesians, six chapters, it has just this one verse, addressed. Of course there are plenty, of things in the Bible, that we can apply, to parenting, and the best of parenting books, will do that.

But I think one of the most difficult, things for parents, is sifting through, all those books, about family, and parenting, that are out there. They each have their own stories, their own approaches, perhaps even their own science, to back it up, and so on.

[26 : 35] I remember reading them, when I first became, a parent, and one book says, you should sleep, you should sleep train your child, by letting them cry. And then you read another book, and it says, you should, when you're training your child, to sleep, you should never let them cry, or you'll hurt them permanently.

And so you get very confused, and you get very anxious. Am I doing the right thing, as a parent? Am I going to mess up, because my child is crying, when I'm trying to put them to sleep, and so on? Now I recommend these books. If you're not sure, where to start, I think there's some up the back, here's a few of my favourites, Ted Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, Paul Tripp, *Parenting, 14 Gospel Principles*, or Tim Kimmel, *Grace Based Parenting*.

They're great books. I'm sure Pastor Brian, could get you a copy, if you want. But as helpful, as all of those books are, it's easy for all that, to cloud the single, main point, that the Bible makes, whenever it talks, about parenting.

And it's the point of this verse. We are to bring up our children, in the knowledge, and instruction, of the Lord. That's the goal of parenting. Bring them up to know Jesus, to love the Lord.

[27 : 59] That's right at the heart, of the Old Testament law. We read it right at the start, of the service, in Deuteronomy 6. Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might.

And the very next verse, directed to parents. These words I command you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them, diligently to your children. Talk of them, when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise.

You shall bind them, as a sign on your hand. They shall be as frontlets, between your eyes. You shall write them, on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates. Fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, are almost representative, of a child's experience, of God.

A child thinks, that God is like, their earthly father, and mother. The father, the parent, is the primary, teacher, and model, for the child.

And this is the heart, of Christian parenting. To teach the child, to love the Lord. Fathers, don't provoke your children, to anger. Bring them up, in the discipline, and instruction, of the Lord.

[29 : 15] That's our primary goal, as parents. To help our children, to know Jesus, to love Jesus, to follow Jesus, to grow in maturity, to be like Jesus.

I think when it comes, to parenting, it's so easy, to be caught up, on all the worldly stuff, that we miss, this main point, of what it's really, all about.

And we spend, so much time, worrying, and planning, about our children's education. You know, what school, should I get them into, and so on. Taking them, to tuition classes.

Or making sure, that they learn, the languages. You know, to have a good life, they really must be able, to speak English, and Chinese, you know, Mandarin, and Hokkien, BM, and Iban, everything, right?

We think, well, we need to develop, their hobbies. They need to play sports. They need to learn, to swim. They need to play piano, and guitar, and all those things.

[30 : 16] We want, as parents, to give our children, the best life, that we can. And so, we work really hard, to earn the money, for it, so they can have, a nice house, to live in, lots of clothes, lots of fun toys, to play with.

And of course, we mean, well, it's driven by love, and they're all good things, to want for a child. But, such an approach, to parenting, is not distinctly, Christian at all, is it?

Because, is that not exactly, the same, as what our non-Christian, friends, neighbours, are doing, in their lives? How is our family, any different?

And the problem is, the Bible just really, isn't concerned, about any of those things. It doesn't matter, whether they can, play the piano or not, or how many languages, they can speak, or how many A stars, they get in their A levels.

Doesn't matter, in the end. Those things, can distract us, from what matters the most, that our children know, and love, the Lord Jesus.

[31 : 25] Jesus. That's all that matters, in the end. They know Jesus, and love Jesus. Praise God. So what does it mean, to bring them up, in the discipline, and instruction, of the Lord?

Discipline means, we need to actively, teach them, the right way to go. We need to correct them, when they're going astray, and put them back, on the right path. We need to form, their character.

Discipline, is an essential part, of discipleship. They come from, the same word. It's a loving thing, to do. We read this, in Hebrews chapter 12.

My son, do not regard lightly, the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary, when reproved by him. The Lord disciplines, the one he loves, and chastises, every son, whom he receives.

A few verses later, he continues, besides this, we have had earthly fathers, who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more, be subject to the father of spirits, and live?

[32 : 30] For they disciplined us, for a short time, as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us, for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful, rather than pleasant, but later, it yields, the peaceful fruit, of righteousness, for those who have, been trained by it.

In other words, we can't just leave our children, to make up their own minds, about what their life, is going to be like. Allow them to live how they want, allow them to believe, what they want, decide when they grow up, whether they want Jesus or not.

No, we have a goal in parenting, and we must actively, encourage them, to go in that direction, towards Jesus. Because the world, is not going to teach, our children about Jesus, or to live his way.

They're not going to learn, in school, or tuition class, to love Jesus. They're not going to learn it, on the sporting field, or in the music class, if we don't teach them, about Jesus, in our home, in our church family.

They're not going, to follow Jesus at all. Not only, must we discipline them, guiding them in God's ways, but we're told, we must bring them up, in the instruction of the Lord, to know the gospel, and believe it, and to live it out.

[33 : 54] And of course, that means we need to first, know God's word for ourselves, isn't it? I mean, you can't teach, what you don't know yourself. I think some of us, feel very inadequate, to teach our children, about Jesus.

Perhaps because, our parents didn't teach us, or perhaps because, we became a Christian, much later in life. And so, when it comes to, guiding our children, or our grandchildren, we're at a loss. We don't really know, what to say. But we must learn, the gospel. We must go on, learning the gospel, if we're to pass it on, to the next, generation.

And so, we must make sure, that fathers don't outsource, this responsibility, to others. I think sometimes, fathers, pass the job, of discipleship, onto the mothers.

It can happen, in church leadership too, isn't it? The men can sit back, and let the women, do everything. Sometimes mothers, pass on the job, of discipleship, to the Sunday school teachers.

[34 : 58] Sometimes it's just, neglected, altogether, because we're too distracted, with our careers really. But the single, biggest influence, on a child, is their parents.

It's not the Sunday school, teacher's job, to teach the children, about Jesus. It's their parents' job. It's the father's job. And what parents, most need to pass on, to their children, is not money, or education, or a better life.

We need to pass on, the gospel, of Christ. And that means, we need to be intentional, and deliberate, doesn't it? We need to see, discipling our family, as our first, and our primary, responsibility, before any others.

I mean, you look on the bulletin, there'll be a whole lot of, you know, ministries, that you can sign up to here, small group ministries, Sunday school ministry, there's admin ministry, there's a lot of ministries, you can do in a church, isn't it?

I don't, I don't, think we have any, you know, be a parent, and teach your children, about Jesus ministry. But it's your first ministry, you know, that's your first, and primary ministry, in your family, to your parents, to your children.

[36 : 15] We need to be intentional, and prioritize it. How do you do it? I think it's not just about, having a devotion time, although that's, certainly a very good place, to start.

If you're not doing that already, set aside, a time, in your family, where every night, you will read the word of God, together. In our family, it's, after dinner, it's bath, Bible, and then bed.

For a few minutes, with each child, usually individually, I read an age-appropriate story, from a kid's Bible, to them. If you want more guidance, on how to do that, you can look on my YouTube channel, there's a seminar there, ministry at home, the how and why, of family discipleship.

I explain there, how to get started. What are some good kids' Bibles, to use? And all that. It's not complicated, at all. And it doesn't take long. But ultimately, that's just the beginning, isn't it? Deuteronomy 6, says it's all of life. It's when you're, when you're getting out, when you're going out. Discipleship happens, when you're eating meals. It happens, when you're playing games together. [37 : 23] It happens, when you're driving the car. If you're intentional about it. And that means, we need to spend time, with our children. Not just quality time, but quantity of time.

Parenting, can't be rushed. Quality conversations, can't be forced. It all takes, intentionality, and effort. You can't disciple your child, when you're at work.

You can't, encourage your grandchildren, to follow the Lord, when you never see them. You can't disciple your children, when you get home, and they're already in bed.

Or you're watching TV, instead of talking to them, playing with them. Research says, that many children, watch three to four hours, of TV a day.

But less than 15 minutes, in conversation, with their fathers. Three to four hours, television. Less than 15 minutes, talking to their children, talking to their parents.

[38 : 27] Fathers, do not provoke your children, to anger. Bring them up, in the discipline, and instruction, of the Lord. Well, as we come to an end, I just want to make, three final comments, really from the context, of Ephesians.

And the first is this, give your children, a good marriage. I don't mean find a marriage partner, for them. But I remain convinced, that the gospel itself, taught and lived, is the best thing, a parent, sorry, apart from showing, and teaching them, and modelling the gospel, to the children.

The best thing, that you can give your children, is a godly marriage example. As you love your spouse, in the ways Ephesians 5, talks about, as you submit to your spouse, in the way that it talks about, for wives.

All that creates, a safe, and secure environment, for children, to know the Lord, and to see, a loving model, of what the gospel, looks like.

Work on your marriage, it'll be good for your children. Secondly, bring your children up, in the church. We see throughout, the book of Ephesians, that God graciously, saves us, not only as individuals, but into the church.

[39 : 47] I wonder if you've heard, this proverb before, it takes a village, to raise a child. We might alter that, for our purpose, and say, it takes a church, to raise, a Christian.

It takes a church, to raise, a Christian. And so yes, we shouldn't diminish, the responsibility of parents, to teach their children. But parents, never do it alone.

Children, are to be brought up, in the community, of the church. The body grows, as we all speak, the truth of the gospel, in relationships, of love.

And so you may not be, a father, you may not be, a mother yourself, but you have, a very important role. Because those children, are part of this, gathering, the church, God's great family, and those children, they need you, to speak the truth, of the gospel, into their lives, to have it modeled, before them.

It takes a church, to raise, Christian, children. Get to know children. And what it looks, show them what it looks like, to love, Jesus.

[40 : 58] So yes, it's important, to send our children, to Sunday school, and youth group. It's important, that they have, Christian friends. It's important, that they talk, to Christian people, apart from their parents.

Bring up your children, in the church. And finally, remember, the sovereignty, and the grace, of God. I think, I've given a lot, of advice here, from God's word.

But as parents, I know, we are very mindful, of our failures. We feel inadequate, most of the time. Perhaps this talk, has made you feel, very guilty.

Shown a lot of areas, you need to work on. It's crucial, to remember, that these, precious children, that we have, in our family, in our church family, that we've been, entrusted to, ultimately, they belong to God.

Ultimately, they belong, to their heavenly father. We know, that we can't, save our children. They hardly listen, to us, most of the time, do they? Look, it's God, who predestines, and elects them.

[42 : 09] It's God, who saves them, by his grace. It's God, who will change them, by his Holy Spirit, that they, will live out, the good works, he has planned, for them.

And so, as parents, we trust God. We know, that our children's future, is ultimately, in his loving hands, and we can trust in him, and we can pray to him, for our children, that they will know, and follow, and love, the Lord Jesus.

Remember, the sovereignty of God, and remember, the grace of God. Never forget, Ephesians 2, verse 8, we're saved, by grace, through faith.

We don't get to heaven, by being wonderful parents, thank God. We don't get to heaven, by being obedient, and honorable children, praise God, for that too.

We're saved, by grace. God, our Father, chose to adopt us, even before we were born. God poured out, his grace upon us, even when we were dead, sinners.

[43 : 22] God's grace, saves us, and transforms us, to be, who he wants us, to be. So no matter, what the past is, no matter how you failed, rejoice in the grace of God.

You are a child of God. You are loved by him. And in the light of that, try again, to live his way. As Christians, it is a tremendous privilege, isn't it?

To belong to God's family, to call God, our Heavenly Father. And so, as those who have been, graciously, given, such amazing, blessings by him, let's live out, the gospel, in our everyday lives, as children, as parents.

And as we do that, our families, will become, a wonderful testimony, to the watching world, of the beauty, of the gospel.

It will draw people, to the Lord Jesus, as they see, how our families, are different. Because we belong, to God's family. To God be the glory.

[44 : 33] Well, let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we want to thank you, for calling us, to be part of, your great family, the church.

Thank you, that we can call you, our Father. However, our own fathers, have been, whether they have been, gentle, and loving fathers, or distant, and angry.

Lord, in you, we have, the perfect, Father. We belong, to the perfect, family. Lord, we thank you, for your, amazing grace, you have poured out, upon us.

And so, in response, to your love, help us to live, according to your order, as we honour, and obey, our parents, as we lovingly, discipline, our children.

Forgive us, where we have failed. Empower us, by your spirit, to live your way. We pray, that in our families, we may, bring forth, a glorious testimony, of your love, and grace, to this world.

[45 : 49] We pray this, in Jesus name. Amen.