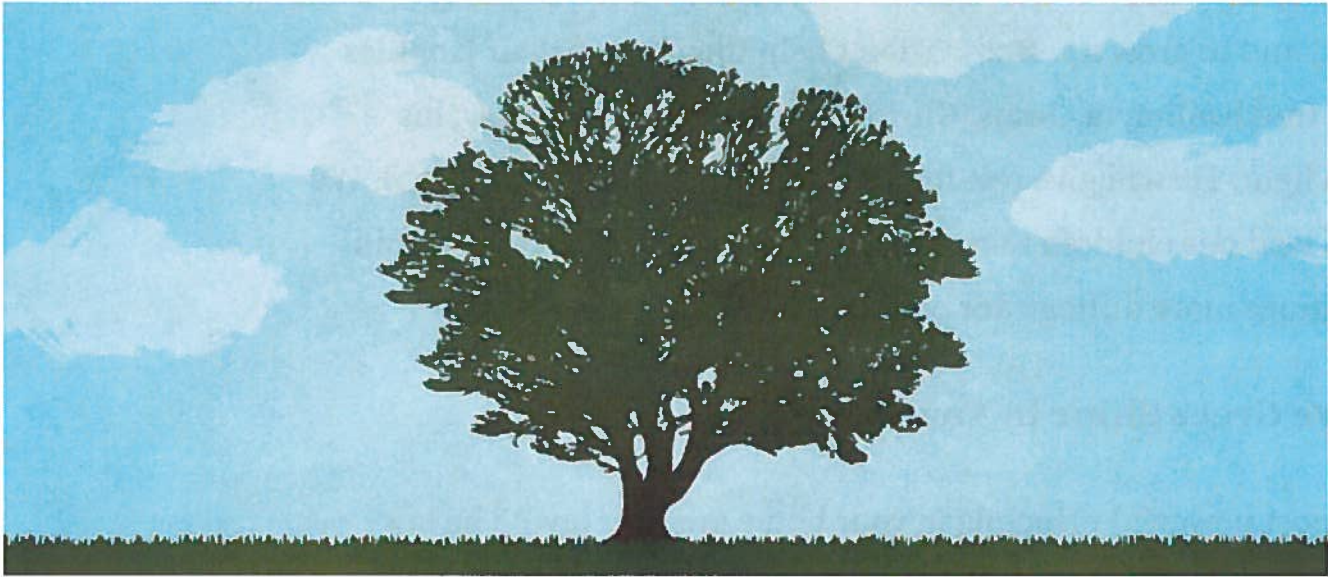


4 Goals to Pursue in Parenting

FROM WILLIAM BOEKESTEIN JUL 15, 2013 CATEGORY: ARTICLES



Near the end of Colossians 3 God speaks his will to people who play a role in six different relationships; Wives, husbands, children, fathers, bondservants, and masters. Only to fathers does God NOT speak a positive command. He simply says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” ([Col. 3:21](#)). Perhaps by doing so, God is accentuating the uniquely devastating problem of parental provocation. Still, [Ephesians 6:4](#) teaches us that there is a clear alternative to provocative parenting.

So, instead of provoking our children to wrath and discouragement how do we bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord?”

1. Make Jesus Central to Your Family Life

In some “Christian” families Christ is simply not central. Too often we emphasize our own righteousness or the righteousness we expect from our children. How is this ethic different from that in a non-Christian home? We sing, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and

righteousness.” Do we apply those words in our homes?

Christ-centered parenting also means explaining to our children how they can come to Christ. Too often we tell our children to respect us, to obey us, and to grow up. But we don't help them bring their troubles to, and find healing in, Jesus. Christ said that his yoke is easy; his burden light. He will give rest for our weary souls (Matt. 11:29-30). We need to lead our children to rest in Christ. God forbid that we would make things more difficult for our children than Jesus would.

2. Make Grace Shine in Your Family

Is the most powerful principle in your home grace or law? The law merely tells us what God's will is and that we must obey it. It is grace alone that teaches us how to please God.

William Hendriksen explains that “Fathers should create an atmosphere which will make obedience an easy and natural matter, namely, the atmosphere of love and confidence.” Our emphasis should be on the positive.

Imagine that on the first day of a new job your trainer gave you only negative instructions. “Don't ever be late to work, interrupt the boss during his meetings, use the phone for personal calls...” You would eventually wonder, “What AM I supposed to be doing? How do I do my job?” We often lead children to the same exasperation.

Gracious parenting especially applies to correction. Be sure that your children know that you love them *as they are*, not as you would like them to be. As a good rule of thumb, ask yourself, “What kind of correction is most helpful for me?”

3. Model Repentance before Your Kids

Many children are rarely shown what it looks like to seek forgiveness from others for their sins. We tell them to do it but we don't show them how. We tell them to "*apologize like you mean it.*" But we don't demonstrate what heart-felt sorrow for sin looks like. One way to model repentance is to seek our children's forgiveness, especially if our provocation has driven them away.

4. Listen to the Advice of Others

Effective parents seek counsel from their pastors and elders, their own parents, and even their own kids. They also take advantage of good books on parenting. Two great helps on spiritual parenting are *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp and *Parenting by God's Promises* by Joel Beeke.

Our children are a sacred trust. Our task is not so much to rule over them, as to lovingly, graciously, train them to fear God. If you have ever worked with concrete you know that you only have a few hours to work it into the proper shape before it becomes immovable. So it is with children. We have just a few years to help shape the spiritual impulses that will guide them through the rest of their lives. We must do all we can to avoid misshaping our children by provoking them to discouragement.

