

The Christian Family in Biblical Perspective
Seven Essentials in the Christian Family – Essential #5
Parenting With Purpose And A Promise
Placing Arrows In The Hand Of The Diving Warrior
Ephesians 5:21 – 6:4
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June 7, 2009 – Morning Sermon

We have looked at the Christian family in terms of the sanctity of marriage, the husband and the wife relationship and now we are going to look at the children God grants to a marriage in this study. This is our fifth essential which is raising our children with a promise and a purpose. The whole text is printed here but we will focus on Ephesians 6:1-4 for this essential.

Ephesians 5:21-6:4 says, **21** *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.* **22** *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* **23** *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* **24** *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* **25** *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* **26** *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* **27** *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* **28** *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* **29** *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,* **30** *because we are members of his body.* **31** *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* **32** *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* **33** *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.* **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.*

The grass withers and the flower fades. This is the Word of our God and it abides forever; by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

The year was 1871. A well known business man in Chicago had a year that would totally change his life and ultimately have an effect on yours and mine. He was a real estate magnet, a wealthy man. He had five children, 4 girls and a boy and a lovely wife. 1871 was the year of the Chicago fires. The windy city fanned the flames and about 80 percent of the city was destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people were homeless. It was a time of destitution. This man lost it all and in the same year his one and only little boy died of scarlet fever. That drove him from religion to a relationship with Christ. He had been religious but a depth of a relationship with Christ was established that was so unbelievable powerful that it transformed his life and his whole family. He became apart of what people know today as Moody Memorial Church. He actually became a close friend of D. L. Moody and Ira Sanki. He supported a lot of their ministries and particularly the evangelism ministries became dear to his heart years later.

In 1873 Mr. Moody and Mr. Sanki went to Europe for an extended evangelistic tour and he decided he would combine both vacation for his wife and his daughters and himself with support for this evangelistic tour. So he traveled from Chicago to New York but while there some pressing business came upon him so he personally had to stay behind. He went ahead and put his wife and daughters on a French liner, called the Ville Du Havre. As he put them on the French liner, they were off. He finished up his business in New York. The liner was headed across the Atlantic and on just this side of Europe, in the middle of the night, in a storm, ran into a Steamer. In less than 2 hours the liner went down. There were 273 passengers and 226 drowned, 47 left. His wife's name was Anna. His daughters' names were Teneta, Annie, Bessie, and Maggie. All four girls died in that sinking. The mother was found on a piece of wreckage unconscious and was saved. She was taken back to Wales and arrived there utterly devastated. She sent a cable gram back across the Atlantic with only two words addressed to her husband. The two words were "Saved alone."

I want to share with you what happened to this man who had led his family to Christ out of adversity and now not just the boy but all four of the girls were now gone with a cable gram saying, "Saved alone." Before I tell you this I want to share with you the essence of this study about our children.

(Ephesians 5:21 says we were supposed to submit to one another in reverence for Christ and then Paul says if you're going to be filled with the Spirit, submitting to one another in the reverence of the Lord, I want to show you how to do that. Husbands you do that by loving your wife sacrificially and leading her as a servant. Wives you do that by submitting, respecting and completing your husband. Then both of you are now engaged in this marriage relationship and now all of a sudden in Ephesians 5 we found out something about marriage we did not know before. We found out that marriage is a temporary institution designed for our benefit according to creation but it's ultimate purpose was to reveal for us the relationship of eternity that we have in Christ.

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one (Ephesians 5:31, Genesis 2:24), consequently they are no longer two but one. Then what did Paul say in Ephesians 5? He said, "This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and His church." One plus one equals one. It's not that God looked at marriage and said, "Boy what a wonderful illustration of My saving relationship." No! What we learn from Ephesians 5 is that this temporary institution has a permanent purpose and that is to reveal to us the depth and intimacy of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Our Groom who pursued His bride to death and redemption is risen and will bring all home that belong to Him and just as marriage is one plus one equals one so is that marriage, one plus one equals one and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, no divorce. It is a permanent relationship, secured by Christ.)

Now in our marriages as God would bless us with children, what does this mean for us and how do we go about parenting? Please put down on your calendar June 14, 2009 at 6pm I will go over with you ten practices for parenting. I can't even come close to that in this study. So let's look in Ephesians 6:1-4 for this study and I want to at least outline this matter of Christian parenting which is parenting with a purpose and a promise. Parents, what is guiding you? What is your purpose in parenting your children? Is it to get them married, get them through college, or make sure they don't embarrass

you? What is your purpose? Christian parenting has a clear purpose and not only that, it has a promise. By the way, it also has some problems to overcome.

First of all, what does it mean for children out of reverence to Christ to submit to their parents? Ephesians 6:1- says, **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).* By the way, we just recognized the children who went through the catechism class and as you know in this class they learn the commandments and one of them today when they heard the sermon in the first service when they heard this verse, “The preacher is wrong. Honor your father and mother is not the first commandment, it’s the fifth commandment, doesn’t he know that?” The text is saying it’s the first commandment with a promise, so what is this telling us? Number one, what is the duty of children? It is two things; honor and obey. As a parent, I want to lead my children to honor their parents and obey. That will affect the way they relate to every other institution the rest of their life. I want to teach them how to honor and obey, that’s my calling as a parent. If I want to lead my children into that life of benevolence and good with promises then I want to lead them there. I don’t want to lead them to disobey or dishonor. I want to lead them to honor and obey. I want to lead them to do through that process to honor with the right attitude and to obey with the right action. Those are the two things I want to lead my children to do.

By the way, isn’t it amazing how the church today when we sense we are not having the impact we feel like to get the impact we question our methods, modify our message and anything that is offensive to people that they don’t want to hear we will take that out and hopefully after they come to church and sit for a while they will kind of get it anyway. Paul just doesn’t do that. They turned the world upside down in one generation. Paul is unbelievably countercultural. It is unbelievably countercultural in that pagan culture to tell a man to lay down his life for his wife. In that culture a wife existed for her husband. Men did not do that for their wives and much less raise their children. That was countercultural. Wives completing, submitting, and coming along side their husband was unheard of. Oh it was granted that wives were property but wives actually having a joint relationship with their husband and coming along side of them, was countercultural.

There are two more that is here in this text also. The first one is children obey your parents, plural. In a pagan culture, particularly boys, were not required to obey their mothers. That was countercultural. But Paul didn’t say, “If we tell people this they may not listen to us and come to Jesus.” Paul knew that the message was countercultural and so he was going to bring it to the culture. *Obey your parents in the Lord. Honor your father*, you would have found that almost in every culture but it didn’t stop there. What does the fifth commandment say? *Honor your father and your mother*. This was totally countercultural. In fact, mothers were there for the husband and for the children. In many of those cultures if the husband and the children died the wife would be put to death because she wasn’t of any use any more but here Paul brings us back to how God created and he brought the dignity back into the relationship of ‘honor your father’ as the fifth commandment says, ‘father and mother.’

So not only the duty of honoring and obeying but the second thing has to do with the limitation which is in the Lord. Children are like everyone else. They have a responsibility to submit to authority structures unless the authority structures bring us into direct disobedience with God’s revealed will. So there is the limitation and the exhortation. *Obey your parents in the Lord*. Have you noticed the sense of how Christ

centered and Gospel saturated this Christian family is? *Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Children obey your parents in the Lord.* This isn't technique. This isn't therapy. This is God's truth in Christ that sets men and women free for families that not simply survive but thrive because it's Truth that trumps technique and overcomes trials. Then it says to parents, *Parents, raise your children in the nurture and admonish of the Lord.* It is Christ centered and Gospel penetrated and permeated at every single point.

What are the reasons children are to out of duty, honor and obey within the limitation and the exhortation in the Lord? There are three reasons. The first reason is because it is right. Natural law tells you its right for children to obey their parents. The second reason is it's a commandment. It's a revealed law. It's the fifth commandment. The third reason is it promises blessings upon life. Are there exceptions to this? There certainly is because we're in a fallen world. But by in large, when a family in God's common grace has order and ardor through an established marriage, parents who are raising their children in the Lord, and as the children respond with obedience things go well. In other words, that's the way God has built the benevolent goodness to society, through the family.

That's why our society today is in trouble. If you redefine the family or you remove parental responsibility and authority, you have removed yourself from that which God has promised goodness, blessing and long life in the land. This is what happens when you put the state over the child and not the parent. This is what happens when you take the cultural elite, the cultural shapers and put them in place of the parent or educators in place of the parent. Is there a place for educators? Yes. Is there a place for thinkers? Yes. Is there a place for the state? Yes, there's a place for all of that but their place is not in place of the parent where the child is to relate to the parent. There is where the goodness of God is promised. Does the state have certain vested interests? Yes all of that is true but it is to be one man, one woman, one life, with responsibility for their covenant children and those children are called to obey their parents. Their parents are their primary human relationship and that is what goodness is built upon throughout a society.

If that is the way children are to submit to their parents, how are parents to submit to their children in the reverence of Christ? Paul's first thing is a negative and that is do not provoke your children to anger. One may think does that mean I can't say anything that makes them mad? No. If you're going to be a parent get ready because they are going to get mad. In fact, if you want to be a parent will you please give up wanting to be their friend? At about age 25 to 30 two things will happen. One, they will be amazed at how smart you have gotten in the last couple of years. Two, they will come back and thank you and they'll be your friend. You're their parent, not their best friend, not their buddy. You are there to bring them up.

Do not provoke them to anger by exasperation. The word, provoke, means to exasperate. How would we exasperate our children? Number one, you do this when you are a drive by parent. I'll buy you something, I'll take you here, I'll do that but I'm not investing in your life. Drive by parenting exasperates children. The second thing that can do this is when you come into their life only when they are doing something wrong. You finally get frustrated and you say, "Okay I'm going to teach you a lesson now." All of a sudden you're the policeman that steps in at the last moment. No, you are much

more than that. A parent who doesn't exasperate their child to anger is one that is engaged with patience, purpose and consistency. They set not only direction, instruction, and discipline that creates boundaries but they are doing something that brings security. When you bring consistency and engagement as a parent, then you bring security into the relationship instead of exasperation of, what are they going to come up with next? This isn't parenting where we have children who exist merely to give us significance in life but we are there in the name of the Lord to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and we are engaged consistently, patiently and persistently. We are ready to affirm when we catch them doing what's right and we are ready to respond when we need to put the boundaries of discipline in place. I can't tell you how crucial that is.

Here is an illustration. I was a student pastor in Chattanooga, Tennessee and still in seminary. My son was 4 years old at the time. We had a new little church and we were renting from the Seventh Day Advents. It worked out great. They were there on Saturday and we had it on Sunday but they had a gravel parking lot. He's not here so this is a good time for me to share this. Don't tell him I used him as an illustration, okay? He was out there at 4 years of age throwing gravel against the church building. I went out and said to him, "Son, do not throw gravel. This is not our parking lot. This is not right and you're going to break a window and if you do that I'm going to have to discipline you." I went back in and I hear 'ping, ping, ping.' He did it again. He and his buddies were throwing more gravel. I went back out and said, "Son, if you do that again I'm going to have to discipline you when we get home!" I went back in and not only did I hear 'ping, ping, ping' but I heard crash, crash, crash as a rock came through the window. Now the rented facility had a broken window and my son was standing there at the window looking. I said to him, "Son, I'm going to have to discipline you when we get home."

I put him in the car, we got home, we ate lunch and I made the mistake of sitting in my chair where my Sabbath nap took over at that moment. Then I felt a tug and it was my son. He said, "Daddy wake up, you forgot to discipline me." Two thoughts went through my mind. One was I have raised an idiot. I can't imagine a time I would have done that when I was little but then came a second thought because then he looked at me and said, "Don't forget it's what you promised." He didn't like discipline any more than I did but I realized he wanted boundaries. He did want consistency. Do not exasperate your children.

The second way parents are to submit to their children is a positive and that is by bringing them *up* in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So what is the goal of our parenting? It is simple. I want to lead them to Christ so they have a mind for Christ, a heart for Christ and a soul for Christ. I want them to have a Christian lifestyle, a Christian life view and a Christian life love. I want them to meet Christ and when they meet Christ and it is well with their soul then my soul can rest as a parent. The issue is not how much money they are making or did they marry a trophy wife or a jackpot husband. The question is not did everybody get amazed because my kids were great athletes or because they were honor students. Do my children know the Lord? Have I raised them up in the nurture, the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

So what is essential five? Essential five is that as Christian parents, you and I have a commitment as believers, to evangelize and disciple our covenant children by being prayer intercessors, mentors and models in their life, bringing them to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You and I have this unbelievable challenge to bring our children to Christ and they don't want to come to Him. We need to pray. A day should not go by that you and I haven't hit our knees for our children. We also need to be a model and a mentor. We need to coach them to Christ.

Do you know what my great fear is for home school parents, for Christian school parents and for any Christian parents? My great fear is that we raise Pharisees and that is we keep telling them what Christians do without bringing them to Christ. We make sure they obey the religion rules without knowing the relationship of Christ. Then if they love Him they will keep His commandments. We need to evangelize our children. Bring them to Christ. Then instruct our children by being a model. If we don't love worship they won't love worship. If we don't love the Word of God they won't love the Word of God. They will pick up from you. Parenting actually works. Be a model. Be a mentor and instruct them. Teach them. Christianity is a relationship with Christ that comes from the Word of God not intuition so you have to bring God's Word into their life and bring them to God's Word.

This morning we had infant baptism and my frightening moment during that time is first of all the parents need to know that first vow. The first vow is do you believe your child is in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit? There are five facts you start with as a parent. Fact number one is your problem. What's my problem? It is my child is born dead in their sins. They have a sin record, they have a sin heart and I didn't get a child in neutral. There's a good piece to this though. It is that your child believes in God when they are born. You don't meet five year old atheists. You have to work at that. You have to study yourself into imbecility to be one. Professing to be wise they become fools the Scripture says. They know there is a God but they also want to be God. It's all about me. So when I say that vow I want to make sure the parent knows their child is in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. Your child was born dead as a sinner. They have a sin nature and a sin record so let's call upon the Lord because that's what you're starting with in that problem.

The good news is secondly you have a promise. The promise is God says, "I'll be a God to you and your children after you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." So yes, you start with your child lost as a sinner, in need of a Savior and by the way you also have adversaries. There is Satan who wants your child and to destroy your family. You have Satan's adversaries, the world, the flesh, the devil who are against you and this task that is God given, this privilege that is now there for you who have children. It's all aligned against you with these adversaries. Every piece of music, every novel written, every piece of curriculum, every painting ever done and everything has a life view it is trying to communicate. It's either to bring these boys and girls to Christ, to bring them up or to send them down. So there is nothing neutral out there. In the computer, on the television, in the CD, in the I-pod, nothing is neutral.

Remember though you have a promise and you have allies. In the inner circle you have an immediate family and the power of the Gospel is at work in your home. The next circle is the extended family. At the infant baptism this morning we had this immediate family up here who vowed a commitment to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and then sitting out all around them is this extended church family. You also have the covenant family who are God's people and they are all out there. I tell people I was saved through a "drug" problem. My daddy and momma "drug" me to church every Sunday morning, every Sunday night and every Wednesday night. I thank the Lord that my daddy and momma didn't sit home and say, "Well, I wonder what church has the music we like." My daddy and mother went and found a church that preached the Word of God and they took me there. I'm so thankful they took me there because of my fifth grade Sunday school teacher, Miss Alison and what she taught me in Samuel in the moment of unbelievable depravity that I will not even come close to sharing with you in this study. In those moments of rebellion against God I can still hear Miss Alison and my grandmother, from Samuel that God could save me and bring me to Himself. I'm so glad my mom and dad didn't do drive by parenting and drive by church.

It's amazing how we will allow our children to get connected to all the adversaries out there and then we expect maybe two times a month to bring them in for a 45 minute Sunday school lesson that will hopefully undo the whole deal. No, it's God's Word in the home and I love it when we get to the third thing in the infant baptism. No it's not a Kodak moment. It really means something when you say, "I will raise my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I will bring God's Word into my home and I will bring my home underneath God's Word. I will be connected in order that those things that God has put in place by His promises will be in place in my life and my family."

The principle is this. When the Proverb says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he's old he won't depart from it" it's not a promise, that's a proverb. It's telling you that what you put in eventually comes out. GI, GO – Garbage In, Garbage Out. That works but how about this? Good In, Good Out. It is when I'm making these investments and God works through my parenting. If I am parenting them in the Lord and bringing them to the Lord He works through my parenting. So bring them with believing in God's promise – "I'll be a God to you and to your children." Bring your purpose. Every parent has the responsibility for Christian education. Bring your child to Christ and teach them the Word of God that they might know the God of the Word.

When I say Christian education I'm not talking about any one delivery system. I'm talking about what kind of school to put your child in – public, private, home school, Christian, etc. The Bible didn't lay out the delivery system. The Bible laid out the task. Fathers, raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. By the way, there is the second place he comes against it. Sons don't exist for dads. Father, you're there to raise your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That was not a message wanting to be received in that culture but Paul was making it as clear as he could.

Here are my final thoughts and I'll close in prayer. Please do not have a child centered home. Your child was born dead in their sins and the worst thing you can do is have a family centered home or a child centered home. You need to have a Christ centered home and your child needs to fit into the home, not the home around your child.

If you have a child centered home then you have played right into their sin nature because they think it is all about them to begin with. You can't have a child centered home and parents think that their children are the reason for their marital unity. Children are the result of your unity.

The first thing a father can do for his children is love their mother. Don't have a child centered home. Realize your children are not the reason for your unity but the result of your unity. Dad and mom raise your children that they might know the Lord and then we rest well. Bring them up from the valley of sin and death to mount Calvary in Christ. I love that word 'up.' Bring them up to the Lord! But you can't bring them if you haven't come there first. You can't take them where you haven't been. The first step is your commitment to Christ then parent with a promise. My God works through my family. Also, parent with a purpose where my child is brought to Christ.

The man's name was Horatio Spafford. He boarded the next liner to go meet his wife, who had cabled him two words – "Saved alone." When they came to the place where the liner, Ville Du Havre, had gone down the captain brought him up on the deck and he said to him, "There's where the French liner went down and your four daughters." Horatio Spafford went back to his room, got on his knees and wrote one thing. His children knew the Lord so he wrote, "It is well with my soul." His daughters didn't get married. They didn't have the opportunity for a great job. They didn't have any athletic trophies but they had Jesus and Jesus had them. Their dad was able to say, "It is well with my soul." He wrote a hymn from those words that we now sing. As he looked there and saw the sea billows roll, over the bodies of his children he was able to say, "It is well with my soul." Bring your children up to the Lord. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to be in this Your Word. Father, I thank You that we might exalt and glorify Christ and that we can give ourselves because of Your promise to work through us to the purpose of bringing our children, with discipline and instruction, with consistency and conviction, with compassion and clarity, to Christ. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.