



“Parentocracy”

Ephesians 6:1-4; Proverbs 22:6

Idea: Parents are responsible for their children, setting the standards and parameters for the home.

Intro: Mark Twain once said, “When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.” I can remember feeling much the same way about my dad at the age of fifteen, but it was amazing how adulthood quickly opened my eyes to how right he was. Anyone over twenty-one with kids probably has had a similar experience and agrees with me. So, Twain’s words are much more than just a humorous quote. They are profound truth.

Even so, both parents and their children feel this struggle, and it often leads parents to strive to be accepted and seen as a friend by their children. In many ways this desire is understandable because no one wants to live in a war zone. So, parents wave the proverbial white flag and surrender their authority in attempt to preserve peace in the home. However, chaos rather than peace is what is produced.

Parenting is hard. It is not for the faint-of-heart. Its difficulty leads parents to choose friendship and passivity over leadership and intentionality. This weekend, as a church we are focusing on the biblical role of parenting, which has been under attack since Genesis 4. The Enemy and his worldly system wars against the family (1 Pet 5:8). Recognizing this, we understand that the parent-child relationship is not a socially constructed tool as some would have us believe today. Quite the opposite, it is the basis for the first institution created by God; therefore, it is not up for debate. As Albert Mohler has said, “The Creator of the universe crafted the parent-child relationship as an institution for human good and flourishing; it promotes love, relationships, and societal peace.” For this reason, it must not be reduced or removed. Instead, it should be embraced. It is a sacred relationship, grounded in an ontological truth, and enshrined in the creational order.

Too many parents, however, do not recognize the war that is being waged against their home. The shift in values and standards is subtle. Much like the experiment of a frog in a pan of cool water on a stove, parents fail to sense the heat as it rises. Their eyes only open to the reality of their situation, if they open at all, after the damage is done and their children are estranged from mom and dad’s worldview. The gradual drift in moral and spiritual standards eventually destroys families.

As a church, we affirm God’s design for the family. We believe that design is for both mom and dad to be in the home in a loving and committed marriage. It is in this context that children are given a beautiful picture of the gospel as Ephesians 5:32 teaches. We also believe God’s design is for children to be raised “*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Eph 6:4). Christian parents ought to love, protect, teach, and correct their children. These two areas are largely where the war is waged. So, if you are single parent, please do not be discouraged today. While, your home situation may not be ideal, God excels where it seems the odds are stacked against you. Likewise, if you feel like a failure because your kids seem to rule the home rather than you, then please understand that it is never too late to take back your rightful authority and establish a new order. It will not be easy, and it will not happen without conflict. You can, however, take back your rightful authority in the home. In fact, you must take it back.

Mom and dad, your home is not a democracy. Little Johnnie and little Susie do not and should not get a vote on what decisions are made. They are not protected by a Bill of Rights. The 4th and 10th amendments to the Constitution do not apply to them in the home. You should feel the freedom to regularly check what is on their phones, in their rooms, and going on in their personal lives. You should feel this freedom because God has

given you the authority to shepherd your children. Therefore, as parents, you are leading a mom-tatorship and a dad-tatorship. You are in control of your children for their good and well-being. So, as we focus on the biblical role of parenting, I want to speak on a parentocracy. Parents, you are responsible for your children, setting the standards and parameters for your home.

Read Ephesians 6:1-4.

Inquiry: The Apostle Paul explains to the believers in Ephesus what the gospel is and how they are to walk it out to see it transform every facet of their lives. As those who have received the gospel through faith, they now have the capacity to be like God. They are no longer spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-5). Now, in Christ, they have been raised to new life, so they are commanded to imitate God (Eph 5:1). This redeemed life, they are to live out and reproduce in their children. Similar to Moses' instruction to Israel (Deut 11:19-21), Paul commands Ephesian parents to bring up children in the Lord by living out the gospel in front of them. These words are as true today as they were when penned. So, there are four features of a parentocracy for us to see and implement in our homes today.

1. As the parent, you are the leader in the home.

In many ways, the function of parents is to stand in the gap between children and God while the children are too young to have a full and mature relationship with Him themselves. Parents are God's stewards and His proxy authority in the lives of their children. For this reason, Paul commands children to obey their "*parents in everything*" (Col 3:20). They are to honor them, holding them in the highest regard and respect (Eph 6:2). It is telling that when God first introduced His written Law in the form of the Ten Commandments, the first law concerning human relationships was this command to "*honor your father and your mother*" (Ex 20:12). This command came with a promise of longevity of life. It is also the only commandment among the ten that directly relates to the family because it is enough.

Mom and dad, I want you to recognize and own this truth for yourselves. As the parent, you are the leader in your home. These words give you that position and authority. It is not bestowed on anyone else. The state is not the leader in your home. The culture is not the leader in your home. Your family and friends are not the leaders in your home. Your children are definitely not the leaders in your home. We dare not put the prisoners in charge of the prison. Mom and dad, you are the leader in your home. Some of you need to hear that today and step into it. You have, long ago, passively taken a backseat in the home. As a result, the kids are running the show.

Every child here today who is living under the roof of mom and dad needs to hear and heed the words from Paul today. His words are directed toward you. They are a warning and an encouragement. You would be wise to obey your parents in all things. These words also inform parents that leadership is your biblical duty in the home, so step into it.

2. As the parent, you set the rules in the home.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. – Eph 6:1

Mom and dad, your children should obey what you tell them to do and not do. God has entrusted you, as His steward and proxy, with this right and responsibility. Therefore, you define the standards of what is right and wrong. You are the leader in this space. You are the leader in this primary relationship. Therefore, you set the rules. The state, culture, family, or friends are not responsible for setting the rules. You alone are responsible for setting the rules because you are the leader. You have God's authority.

Obviously, you will get pushback from your children. When you lay out rules and parameters that are different from those your children's friends have, then your kids are not going to be excited about them. Expect the rolling of eyes, stomping of feet, outbursts, and slamming of doors. As fallen and sinful human beings, children want to have things their way, but God has placed you in their lives for their good. By setting the rules and holding the line you serve as their protector. Kids do not know what they do not know. You, however, have lived longer and experienced much more than them, so you know what they do not know. You know what is right and good. You know what is dangerous and damaging.

Hey children, did you hear these words of Paul? They are directed toward you. You would be wise to follow them by obeying your parents. Mom and dad, did you hear these words? They describe your role as the authority in the home, being one of setting the rules and holding the line through discipline. Have you set the standards and parameters of your home? Do your children know the family's policy for social media, phones, tablets, gaming systems, friends, romantic relationships, cars, extracurricular activities, church involvement, and clothing choices? Mom and dad, if you do not set the rules, then someone else will. This is your biblical duty, so step into it.

3. As the parent, you coach the children in the home.

Mom and dad, Paul instructs you to bring up your children *"in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"* (Eph 6:4). Solomon says it this way in Proverbs 22:6, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."* In both verses, we see the concept of coaching. To *"bring up"* and *"train up"* means that children need to grow, develop, and mature. Now, our children will naturally grow, develop, and mature. We have no control over the process, but we can influence it. The truth is, if we do not influence it, then someone else will. Our responsibility is to coach, influence, and teach.

Both verses also imply a dichotomy of influences. In other words, they suggest the idea of a right way and a wrong way. Parents are to bring up their children *"in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* They are to *"train up a child in the way he should go."* These verses ought to warn us of the danger of worldly influences in our children's lives and the priority of God's Word. They ought to encourage us to lean into our duty of being the primary influencers in our children's lives. However, the first part of Ephesians 6:4 cautions us to not provoke them to anger. Many times, well-meaning Christian parents create resentment in their children through their overprotection. Helicopter parents smother their children by restricting where they can go and what they can do. Their lack of trust and continual questioning of their kids' judgment creates a barrier in the parent-child relationship. Children need careful guidance and certain restrictions, but they are individual human beings in their own right and must learn to make decisions on their own, proportionate to their age and maturity. Their wills can be guided, but they cannot be controlled.

So, mom and dad are you coaching the children entrusted to you? Are you instructing them in the things of God? Do you teach them how to read the Bible, how to pray, how to serve others, how to share the gospel, how to be generous, how to love, how to say no to sin, and how to work hard? Your children need to hear you instruct them on how to do these things well. They need to hear you tell them what not to do. They also need to see you model them in your life. They need to see you walking in holiness and running from sinful things. They need to know where the boundaries are and experience correction when a boundary is crossed. Coaching is largely instruction, modeling, and correcting.

Parenting is coaching, and you cannot coach someone up where you have not first gone. Charles Spurgeon, commenting on Proverbs 22:6 said, "Train up a child in the way he should go but make sure you go that way too." Similarly, Billy Sunday said, "To train up a child in the way he should go you must go that way yourself." This leads us to a fourth feature of parentocracy.

4. As the parent, you submit to the Lord in the home.

In Ephesians 6:4, parents are to bring up children in the “*discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” Mom and dad, your parenting should be incarnational. In other words, your instruction and discipline ought to come from the overflow of your walk with Jesus. You cannot point a child to Jesus if you do not know Jesus. You cannot teach a child to flee sin if you have not turned from it yourself. You cannot live holy before your children if you have not first been made holy by the blood of Christ. You cannot make a disciple of your children if you are not first a disciple yourself.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. – Eph 5:1

If we as parents want to rightly lead our homes, set the rules in our homes, and coach the children in our homes, then we must first submit ourselves to the Lord in our homes. We must make sure we go the way we want our kids to go. We must first have our own faith in Christ before we can give one away.

Parenting is not easy. The struggle is real, and it often feels more like a warzone. To preserve peace, parents become passive or domineering. Both are poor parenting. Rather than falling into either of those ruts, Christian parents ought to submit themselves to the Lord by leaning into their biblical responsibilities and praying like crazy. Parents should work hard in raising their children like it all depends on them and pray hard like it all depends on God.

Conclusion: Mom and dad, God has given you the most special and pivotal responsibility you could ever want. He has entrusted you with shaping the future. Your children are world-changers. In one way or another, they will change their world. The question is whether they will change it for the good or for the bad. You are responsible for setting the standards and parameters for the home, so lead, protect, and coach your children to Jesus. Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Model before them what you want to see in them. Speak the gospel into them, and call Christian maturity up in them.