

You Cannot Contract This Out: Raising Them in the Lord

Ephesians 6:1-4

Key Thoughts

1. **Children are commanded, not invited.** Wives were given submission, a voluntary placing of yourself under authority. Children are not given that option. They are already under their parents' authority, and the reason Paul gives is simply that it is right. The power to do it in a hard home is the same Spirit of Ephesians 5:18, and if the skill is missing, James 1:5 says ask for it.
2. **There is exactly one boundary, and it is narrow.** An instruction that violates the Word of God can be refused with a clear conscience, as Peter and the apostles did in Acts 5:29. Homework, chores, a clean room, and a confiscated phone are not that boundary.
3. **Honor is a value word, not a feeling and not obedience.** It is the same word used for the thirty pieces of silver, for the money from Ananias's land, and for the fifty thousand pieces the Ephesians themselves counted in Acts 19:19. To honor is to assign your parents worth and to spend time, talent, and treasure accordingly, whether the city is watching or not, and whether they can remember it or not. Obedience ends at Genesis 2:24. Honor never does.
4. **The promise is a path, not immunity.** Paul writes "that it may be well with you" from a prison cell, having already survived the beatings and shipwrecks of 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. Live as God intends you to live, and you will have the best life possible before you step into eternity.
5. **Fathers carry the training, and it cannot be contracted out.** Provocation without purpose is what Paul forbids. God Himself provokes with purpose. Training implies correction, which Hebrews 12:5-11 shows is exactly how God treats His own sons. Admonition is instruction with a target, aimed at changing course. A school and a club are tools, not substitutes.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul gives wives a voluntary word and gives children a command. Why does that difference matter, and what does it settle about a child's place in the home?
2. Read Acts 5:29. The apostles refused an order and then accepted the punishment for it. What separates a real "we ought to obey God rather than men" moment from simply not wanting to take out the trash?
3. The word behind "honor" is a price word: thirty pieces of silver, the money from Ananias's land, the fifty thousand counted in Acts 19:19. If honor means assigning worth, what does that look like in time, talent, and treasure for an adult child this month?
4. Paul wrote "that it may be well with you" after the beatings and shipwrecks of 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, from a prison cell. How does that change what Ephesians 6:3 is actually promising?
5. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. God corrects the sons He receives, and it is never joyful at the time. What does that teach a father about the difference between correction that has purpose and provocation that does not?
6. Personal: Deuteronomy 6:7 says to talk of these words when you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Name one ordinary part of your week where that is not happening yet. What is the one thing you will change before next Sunday?

Applications

1. **Open the book and open your mouth to God.** You cannot teach your children what you do not know, so study rather than skim this week. And talk to the Father of fathers about how to father, and to the God who understands what it takes to mother.
2. **Take the hour back.** Pew Research found the average American father spends about an hour a day with his children, and roughly three minutes of it on education. Pick one slot you already have, a drive, a dinner, a bedtime, and put God in it out loud. Then find out what your kids are actually doing in AWANA this week and work it with them at home.
3. **Make one honor call.** Adult children, name one parent and do one concrete thing this week that assigns them worth, especially if they cannot record it, repay it, or remember it.

Closing Prayer

Father, You are the God who commands and the God who supplies. Thank You that You did not hand us a standard for our homes and then walk away from us. Teach our children to obey, not because they are small, but because You said it is right. Give courage to every child in a home that is hard, and give them the Spirit's power to do what they cannot do on their own. Teach those of us who are grown to honor, to assign our parents real worth with our time, our talent, and our treasure, long after obedience has ended. Forgive us, fathers especially, for provoking without purpose, and for handing off the training You assigned to us. Make us people who study Your Word before we teach it, who correct the way You correct, and who aim our children at Christ. May our children be raised in Your ways and stand as lights in a world that is desperate for a Savior. In Jesus' name, amen.