

What's Not in Ephesians 6:4

The text says: "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

The state or government is not in Ephesians 6:4. Educational institutions cannot be counted on, especially for moral teaching. In fact, you had better be watchful because some schools may even promote the exact opposite of your values. Your child might be encouraged to reject God as the Creator, reject the counsel of Scripture and explore their sexuality, even to the extent of homosexual conduct. Keeping a pulse on your child's education is more important now than ever.

The local church is not in Ephesians 6:4. As important as local churches can be in assisting parents in this great responsibility, God never instructed a group of Christians to raise my children to know the Lord. He instead charges every father with that responsibility.

An institutional mindset about the church and her Bible classes is very easily developed. We may squawk, and rightfully so, at liberal churches usurping the parental role of providing entertainment for our children. On the other hand, if we depend completely on the local church to instruct our children in the Lord's way, have we not abdicated the responsibility God gave us to "the institution?"

How many examples could be cited of children who sat in Bible classes Sunday after Sunday and Wednesday after Wednesday who no longer serve the Lord? And of those examples, what percentage do you suppose received very little teaching in the home? How many of them heard very little positive being said about the brethren or about serving them? How many prayers were prayed besides mealtimes, if even then? (Whatever happened to families eating dinner together around a table instead of in front of a television?)

Bible classes should merely supplement the greater, daily, life-consistent, short-term work of parents in the home. Yes, it is short-term work. Eighteen years fly by seemingly in a moment. That means training children is an urgent work. The greatest spiritual influence is not the quality of their Bible classes or the talents of those who teach them, but the example and behavior of parents. The local church is no substitute for "...you shall teach them (God's word, His desires) diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Mom is not in Ephesians 6:4. Certainly, Mom can be an invaluable asset in rearing children to know the Lord. Timothy's mother and grandmother serve as a great example (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-17). If the father does not fulfill his God-given responsibility, then a mother who cares about the souls of her children must shoulder the responsibility. But our passage calls for leadership from the husband! He may employ the assistance of his helper, his godly wife, but the responsibility is ultimately his nonetheless.

Does a perception exist that Bible study is not manly? Do some think "That's woman's work?" The example of Jesus, the ultimate Man, dispels such a notion. Fathers, step up to the plate! Read the Bible with your kids. Present its treasures to them as just that ... a treasure-trove full of wisdom. Speak specifically of application. Warn them of potential dangers. Explain your trust in and love for God. Pray with them. Teach them to pray. Display contentment. Do not murmur. Rejoice. Paint a clear portrait of real manhood and womanhood (a biblical definition). Show them an honoring, self-sacrificing relationship between husband and wife.

Let them know that what you want for them more than anything (and I do mean anything) is for them to become Christians and to go to heaven when they die. Once they have obeyed the gospel of the Lord Jesus, further admonish them to live obediently, genuinely as Christians and to be an upstanding example for others to imitate.

What is the focus of your home? Dare you ask your children for the answer to that question? You might want to think about doing so for the sake of their souls' salvation and your own. These most precious souls need instruction in the good and right way before it is too late (cf. 1 Samuel 12:23).

- by Tony Mauck

Church or Social Club?

The church is not a social club. The church was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). The Son of God did not die for a social organization, but for a "spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). We are not a glorified social center in competition with country clubs and the YMCA. We are the church. We worship God *"in spirit and in truth"* (Jn. 4:24), not in food, fun, and frolic.

Let the YMCA be the YMCA. Let the Country Club be the Country Club. Let the boy scouts and girl scouts be the boy scouts and girl scouts. And please, let the church be the church!

by David McPherson

Teaching Our Kids the Things That Are Most Important

A survey by the University of Michigan (reported in *USA Today*) studied traits that mothers think are important to instill in their children. These values were contrasted from 1924 to recent times. Here are the results:

1924 - Independence (24%)
- Tolerance (6%)
- Loyalty to church (50%)
- Strict obedience (45%)

Today - Independence (75%)
- Tolerance (47%)
- Loyalty to church (22%)
- Strict obedience (17%)

The results of this survey, while not terribly surprising, are still quite disturbing. In 1924 children were taught to respect authority – that's what 'loyalty to church' and 'strict obedience' are all about. Today's parents have decided that independence ('do your own thing') and tolerance ('never criticize anyone else') are by far the most important things. Any wonder then that crime rates are soaring; drug and alcohol abuse are at all time highs; moral values are nearly non-existent?

God's Word commands us to train our children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), and to show our love for them by supplying appropriate discipline (Proverbs 13:24). Common sense, our own experiences, and even the statistics show us that God's way is the right way. Think!

- by Greg Gwin