

Ephesians 6:4 (Henry Short) 168531

The Christian Shepherd: 1997, "Fathers, Provoke Not Your Children" (6:4)

It says in Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Why does God say that to us who are dads? I think it's a common fault and failure that we have. Sometimes our children are frustrated by us because of these selfish hearts of ours. My little boy comes to me and says, "Daddy, will you fix my wagon?" I respond, "No, can't you see I've got to do something?" It's usually something that I want to do. They discern the selfishness of our hearts. I'm not saying that you always stop what you're doing to do what your child asks, but I'm saying that we've got selfish hearts, and we're prone to do our will. Because we are in that place of authority, we misuse it.

Sometimes we tell our children, "No." "Daddy, can we go fishing?" "No." It's Friday night and you come home tired. "Daddy, can we go fishing tomorrow?" "No. I've got to fix the garage," or something. I remember, as a young father, saying to my wife, "Honey, we'll have these things long after our children are gone." I think it's a very serious thing when we tell our children, "No." We should know that it's for their blessing, and not for our convenience that there is a real reason why we're saying, "No." There may be; the plumbing may have a big hole with water shooting all over everything, and your child says, "Dad, can we go fishing?" "No, Son, can't do it." But often our "no's" are because we don't want to be troubled.

I remember a brother telling us one time how he thought it was so strange that Elisha stretched himself upon the child (2 Kings 4:34). He said, "That's a strange thing a big man stretching himself on a child. But sometimes we have to stretch ourselves as fathers to get where our children are to bring warmth and life to them." We've got to consider their view of things. It's important. We know it may not be important to us what happened at school or what they want to do, but it is important to them, and, if we're going to gain their confidence, if we're going to gain their trust, we're going to have to get down to their level and think what it means to them when they ask us to do something. Oftentimes we just provoke them to wrath because we don't stretch ourselves we don't get down to how they're looking at a matter. We'll have things a long time after our children are gone, and things bring very little comfort to our hearts.

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