

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Hope-Giving Fathers

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Paul addresses “*Fathers*” to “*provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged*” (Colossians 3:21). Upon hearing the word “provoke,” many conscientious fathers default to Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 6:4. They automatically focus on their application of discipline. They must chasten and warn their children in the Lord, but it cannot be administered impulsively, erratically, or inconsistently. Such leads to provoked anger seething in the hearts of frustrated children.

Paul’s use of a different Greek word, “*erethizo*,” translated “provoke,” should broaden the thinking of the same conscientious father beyond discipline. This word is used to convey “motivation” in 2 Corinthians 9:2. The zeal of the Corinthians had “stirred up” or “provoked” the Macedonians regarding giving help to the poor saints in Judaea. Here, in Colossians 3:21, Paul takes the word a different direction, the provoking of discouragement. This broader term involves more in the life of fathers with their children than the application of corporal punishment.

What do fathers “do” if they “do not provoke their children to discouragement.” Discouraged children are “hopeless.” They are disheartened, seeing only bleak prospects in their future. They are

spiritless, no hope to energize their soul. Therefore, fathers who do not provoke their children to discouragement, give their offspring hope. With hope, children are happy and confident in their future.

Non-Christian fathers can instill hope in their children to secure their happiness and confidence for the future in money, education, careers, spouses, and health. But the father who follows the Lord knows that such focus on hope through materialistic lenses is short sighted and eternally harmful to children. The godly father exhorts and guides his children to hope in God.

The godly, who are rich in material possessions, also know they must not have “*their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Timothy 6:17). Therefore, godly fathers instill trust in God who blesses us with the enjoyable good things in life, instead of hoping in the enjoyed material things that can separate us eternally from God (cf. 1 Timothy 6:10). David reveals the greater happiness we can share with our children: “*Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they have when their grain and their new wine are increased*” (Psalm 4:7).

Godly fathers instill “God-confidence” in the hearts of their

children instead of “self-confidence.” Paul learned this reality in the depths of persecution. Paul said he and his companions were “*weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch we despaired even of life: yea we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead*” (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

Fathers, have you not avoided discouragement in your children when your children face adversity with the following confidence: “*Give us help against the adversary; for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for He it is that will tread down our adversaries*” (Psalm 61:11-12). God-confidence, not man-confidence!

Fathers can have “happy” children who still need to learn to rejoice in the Lord by first “mourning” for their sins. Godly fathers impress godly sorrow upon the hearts of their children. “*Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*” (James 4:9). Godly fathers offer the antidote for discouragement. They offer hope! Unlike fathers of this world, they instill in their children, by word and example, hope in God!