

Lesson 13 – Colossians 3:20-21

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Review/Introduction

The apostle Paul has detailed person and work of Christ and His supremacy and sufficiency for salvation and sanctification in chapters one and two of Colossians. Union with Christ is the doctrinal prerequisite to walking with Christ. Chapters three and four then address how the believer is to walk in light of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency. Here is where Paul exhorts the Colossians (and us) to strive in the power of the Spirit to walk in our position; to live out in practice what we already are in Christ.

Living a consistently God glorifying life is only possible through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in one's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you. As the believer repents of all known sin (Eph 4:30), bows before God in complete submission (1 Thess 5:19), and is immersed in the word (Col 3:16), they will be filled with the Spirit and will therefore exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit (letting the words of Christ to richly dwell within you) produces manifold blessings – observable, tangible supernatural words, worship, reactions, and fulfilling of relational roles in one's life. In the marriage relationship, Spirit-filling will be manifested in the wife submitting to her husband and the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church.

Today we begin to look at the parent-child relationship.

Biblical Examples of Negative Parenting Styles

The Scriptures give precepts and principles for parents, but also give examples of parenting styles, particularly negative styles. Let's look at some of them.

The Permissive Parent

For an example of a permissive parent, we look at the account of Eli the priest from 1 Samuel 2. We could also look at the account of Samson and his parents (Judges 13-16).

Eli's sons took by force the best sacrificial meat before it was offered to the Lord (1 Sam 2:12-17) and they sexually exploited the women at the Tabernacle where the Israelites came to worship (1 Sam 2:22).

¹²**Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the Lord** ¹³and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." ¹⁶If the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "**No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force.**" ¹⁷**Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord.** (1 Sam 2:12-17)

²²Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. (1 Sam 2:22)

Eli told his sons that they should not do this but took no action to actually stop them from continuing in their evil behavior (1 Sam 2:23-25).

²³He said to them, “Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? ²⁴No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord’s people circulating. ²⁵If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death. (1 Sam 2:23-25)

God judged Eli severely for his permissive parenting because he honored his sons more than he honored God (1 Sam 2:29).

²⁷Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Did I *not* indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt *in bondage* to Pharaoh’s house? ²⁸Did I *not* choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I *not* give to the house of your father all the fire *offerings* of the sons of Israel? ²⁹**Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded *in My dwelling*, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?’** (1 Sam 2:27-29)

Some characteristics of permissive parenting:

1. Equates firmness/discipline with meanness, therefore, does not like discipline.
2. Gives few boundaries and inconsistently enforces the ones they give.
3. Gives verbal reprimands (or threats) but takes little action to correct sinful behavior.
4. Succumbs to the manipulation and whims of the child.

❖ **Are you permissive? Do you follow up your words with actions?**

The Uninvolved Parent

David is an example of an uninvolved and permissive parent. David had at least 6 wives and as many as 19 sons in addition to daughters. He spent much time away in battle and in ruling the kingdom. He was busy, but that does not mean he had to be uninvolved in the lives of his children. However, the Biblical accounts indicate he was not involved with respect to discipline and instruction of his children.

David refused to become involved in justice for his daughter Tamar after she was raped by her brother Amnon.

²⁰Then Absalom her brother said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart.” So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom’s house. ²¹**Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry.** ²²But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar. (2 Sam 13:20-22)

Absalom spent the next two years hating and plotting vengeance against his brother. It appears that David was concerned about Absalom killing Amnon but did nothing about it (2 Sam 13:26-27). Absalom eventually plotted and through deception killed Amnon.

³²Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, responded, "Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar. (2 Sam 13:32)

Absalom then fled to Geshur for three years. Apparently, David was actually grateful that Absalom dealt with Amnon, which is strange since Absalom committed murder, not justice.

³⁸So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years. ³⁹*The heart of King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead. (2 Sam 13:38-39)*

Even after David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, David refused to meet with him to resolve the issues and never saw Absalom for another two years.

²⁸Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face. (2 Sam 14:28)

David's failure to become involved in the life of his children ultimately resulted in Absalom conspiring to take the kingdom from God's anointed by subterfuge (2 Sam 15).

Another example of David's un-involvement, was when he was old and his son Abonijah attempted to make himself king and David refused to discipline him.

⁵Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. **His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?"** And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom. (1 Kings 1:5-6)

Some characteristics of uninvolved parenting:

1. Has little to no involvement with the children.
2. Has few expectations put on the children.
3. Has no meaningful communication with the children.
4. Places other activities above involvement with the children.

❖ **Are you involved in the lives of your children?**

The Over-Protective Parent

The over protective parent is full of fear and insecurity and therefore attempts to control circumstances over which truly only God is in control. This is a manifestation of ungodly fear and is unreasonable and irrational in light of our relationship with Christ and is not rooted in an abiding trust in God. Worry has been called misplaced, ungodly concern about provision, performance, or reputation (see for example Matt 6:25-34; 10:19; Luke 10:41; 12:11; 12:22-32). Worry dwells on and is preoccupied with some fear. Worry weighs down the heart and chokes out the Word of God.

²⁵**Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad. (Prov 12:25)**

³⁴"Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; (Luke 21:34)

²²"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, **this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.** (Matt 13:22 see also Mark 4:19 and Luke 8:14)

God is faithful, fulfilling every promise. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. God is sovereign. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. Nothing takes Him by surprise. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11). In working all things for His own glory, God causes all things to work together for the sanctifying good of His children.

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (Rom 8:28-29)

In light of these truths, we should never worry. When we worry, we are not taking God at His word, we are not trusting Him. In essence, we are calling Him a liar.

The over-protective parent is a helicopter parent, they hover over their children to ensure they are safe and fully cared for (from their anxious perspective). Examples of parents who allowed their children freedom by trusting in God are Elkanah and Hannah with Samuel (1 Sam 1-2), Jesse with David (1 Sam 16:11), and Joseph and Mary with Jesus (Luke 2:41-52).

Some characteristics of over protective parenting:

1. Places age inappropriate limitations on activities and circumstances to protect the child from imagined harm (physical, emotional, or spiritual harm).
2. Arranges the family's activities to ensure the child is "safe".
3. Constantly communicates with the child about the dangers of the world.
4. Fails to give the child the freedom to make mistakes and therefore grow in wisdom.

❖ Are you over protective?

The Authoritarian Parent

A Biblical example of an authoritarian parent is King Saul. Saul was an angry, threatening, and vindictive man.

³⁰Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?" ³¹For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die." ³²But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" ³³Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. (1 Sam 20:30-33)

Some characteristics of authoritarian parenting:

1. Rules the children with an “iron fist”.
2. Is overly strict and uses anger, yelling, threats, and harsh discipline to maintain control.
3. Is “orders” not “rules” oriented with little or no explanation.
4. Is focused on behavior manipulation and not heart level change.

❖ **Are you focused on behavior through manipulation or heart level change through Biblical character?**

Permissive, uninvolved, over-protective, or authoritarian parents provoke their children to anger. But godly parents are to be the nurturer of their children. We will see that in today’s study.

First Things First

It is interesting that in the both of Paul’s passages that speak to marriage and parenting together (Eph 5:18-6:4; Col 3:16-21), he starts with marriage, then moves to the child’s responsibility, then to parenting. The marriage relationship is primary in families, not children. Fulfilling your marriage roles does several things for your parenting:

1. It provides your children a demonstration of true saving faith.
2. It establishes security in the home.
3. It builds unity in the marriage which is essential for God honoring parenting.

❖ **Do you view a God honoring marriage a crucial element of God honoring parenting?**

Husbands

- Love your wife like Christ loves the church (initiating, sacrificial, humble, volitional, unconditional, committed, forgiving, nourishing and cherishing, and practical).

²⁵Husbands, **love your wives**, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ... ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ... ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:25, 28-29, 33)

¹⁹Husbands, **love your wives and do not be embittered against them.** (Col 3:19)

- Live with your wife in an understanding way (with knowledge); view her as valuable and precious; show her honor.

⁷You husbands in the same way, **live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker**, since she is a woman; and **show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life**, so that your prayers will not be hindered. (1 Pet 3:7)

- Lead like Christ – as a servant-leader (shepherding, gentle and humble, submitted to God’s will, by example, as a servant, selfless, team leader, motivating, managing well)

²³**For the husband is the head of the wife**, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. (Eph 5:23)

Wives

- Submit to your husband as to the Lord.

²²**Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. (Eph 5:22-24)

¹⁸**Wives, be subject to your husbands,** as is fitting in the Lord. (Col 3:18)

- Be devoted to your husband; cultivate a fondness for him.

³Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴**so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands,** to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (Titus 2:3-5)

¹⁰An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹²**She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.** (Prov 31:10-12)

- Be devoted to domestic affairs (the family/home).

⁴so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, **workers at home,** kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (Titus 2:4-5)

❖ **Christian husband and wife, how are you doing? Do you have first things first?**

Life in the all-sufficient Christ – Parent/Child Relationships (3:20-21)

1. Children (3:20)

²⁰Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (ESV)

Children are to obey their parents. “Obey” means to hearken, to give respectful attention. It includes the idea of listening attentively, stillness, or attention. It should be noted that in the context of walking in the Spirit, this obedience comes from the heart that is surrendered to Christ and His word with a view to honoring Him. This is a pattern or lifestyle.

“Obey” is different than “submit”. There is a different relationship between the husband and wife than between parents and children. Parents and children can be friends also, but the primary relationship is that of parent-child not friend-friend since the children are commanded to obey their parents.

Children obeying their parents is “well pleasing to the Lord”. “Well-pleasing” means something which is well approved, eminently satisfactory, or extra-ordinarily pleasing.

There is something implied in the spousal relationship here as well. The parents are authoritarians. They are not dictators, but the parents’ role is that of an authority in a child’s life, not a friend. Parents are responsible to teach their children to obey.

Also, parents are to be unified. Children are to obey “parents”; not just “father” and not just “mother”. It is important for parents to be united; to have consistency in what they are teaching their children. There is no division in the parenting styles, rules, or expectations. The parents are unified.

A question that is often asked is, “At what age are children no longer required to obey their parents?” We do not believe this to be an age, but a state. When children are grown and live independent of their parents, the relationship changes and children are no longer under their parents’ authority. At all times believing children are to “honor” their parents.

²**Honor your father and mother** (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. (Eph 6:2-3)

Parenting changes when children live independent of their parents. The relationship is that of mentoring not authority.

❖ Are you and your spouse united in your parenting?

2. Fathers (Parents) (3:21)

²¹Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (ESV)

The Spirit through Paul wants parents to be encouragers of their children by providing the negative prohibition. This is seen in the parallel passage in Ephesians 6 as well.

⁴Fathers, **do not provoke your children to anger**, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)

The Greek word for “father” is plural in both passages. This is usually the word for the male head of the family but can also be used to refer to “parents” (Heb 11:23).

The father is most likely in view here as the head of the family, but the mother’s role in exasperating the children should not be ignored either. “Provoke” in Ephesians 6:4 means to stimulate one to the point of a brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured and not allowed to die. “Exasperate” here in Colossians means to excite the anger of or to cause irritation or annoyance. Both of these words are in the present tense meaning that parents are to take care to not be continually doing this to their children.

❖ Do you nag and nit-pick your children?

The result in children of parents who provoke/exasperate is that they may “lose heart”. “Lose heart” is literally “without passion, desire, or spirit” and means to become disheartened to the point of losing motivation, to be dispirited, to be broken in spirit, or to feel like giving up.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul used positive parenting examples when talking about spiritual care, a positive contrast of the negative “provoke” or “exasperate”.

⁷**But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.** ⁸Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thess 2:7-8)

¹⁰You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹just as **you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,** ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thess 2:10-12)

❖ **Are you gentle, exhorting, encouraging, and imploring or are you angry and exasperating?**

Paul was vague concerning the exact ways parents can exasperate their children. Though Scripture does give those negative parenting styles we looked at earlier. The application of this command is left to the parents as they walk in the Spirit. One thing we do know is that children can become angry at their parents for many reasons. A child who is angry because he/she does not want to obey their parents is not provoked/exasperated.

However, wise, godly teachers of God's word can provide some insight. MacArthur gives several ways that parents can provoke or exasperate their children (adapted from the MacArthur NT Commentaries of Ephesians and Colossians).

1. By overprotection or never allowing children age-appropriate liberty and enforcing overly strict rules. The parents do not trust their child. Nothing the child does earns their parents trust and the child can begin to despair and believe their behavior is irrelevant which can lead to rebellion.

❖ **Do you provide your children with age-appropriate freedom?**

2. By showing favoritism or comparing the child unfavorably to siblings or other children. A Biblical example is Jacob with Joseph.

❖ **Are you careful to not show favoritism?**

3. By depreciating their worth or insensitivity to your child's problems. Many children are convinced that what they do and feel is not important. Parents who do not listen to their children can move them to be discouraged.

❖ **Do you provide show your children that you value what they think and say?**

4. By perfectionism or setting unrealistic goals or pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds; by never rewarding them, or never letting them feel they have succeeded. Nothing is enough, so children never get full approval.

❖ **Are you encouraging your children by awarding small successes?**

5. By failing to show affection. Parents need to communicate love verbally and physically. This would include not being available or having time for other things, but not your children and not keeping promises.

❖ **Do you show your children that they are loved, even when they sin?**

6. By not providing for their needs. By providing necessities, parents show their respect and concern for their children.

❖ **Do you provide for you children's needs (not necessarily wants)?**

7. By lack of standards (the opposite of overprotection). This is a failure to discipline or to discipline inconsistently. These children are left to their own and cannot handle that freedom and begin to feel insecure and unloved.

❖ **Do you set boundaries for your children, expect obedience, and discipline appropriately?**

8. By criticism without praise. This child learns to condemn himself and to find fault with others. Parents should seek to create in the home a positive, constructive environment.

❖ **Do you provide constructive criticism or always fault-finding?**

9. By neglect or indifference. The result is rebellion (David and Absalom).

❖ **Are you involved in your children's lives?**

10. By excessive discipline. This is the parent who abuses his children verbally, emotionally, or physically.

❖ **Do you discipline in anger?**

11. By hypocrisy. By being different at home than you are with other people.

❖ **Do you have a church face and a home face?**

Fathers (and mothers) who are walking in the Spirit are not exasperating their children (not provoking them to anger). They are instead encouraging and nurturing their children.

An additional contrast to exasperating is that of nurturer found in Ephesians 6:4.

⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** (Eph 6:4)

“But” in the Greek is a contrast word. The opposite of “provoking to anger” is “bring them up”.

“Bring them up” means to provide adequate nourishment, to nurture. It is a present imperative calling for this to be the parents’ lifestyle or habitual practice.

“Discipline” means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity. It is a broad term, signifying whatever parents do to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them develop and mature as they ought. It includes the idea of correction for wrongdoing. It is the overall training of children.

“Instruction” means putting in the mind and implies the teaching of the Lord's ways through His Word. It is any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.

It is important to understand that it is not enough to “not provoke”, parents must also put on the positive of nurturing their children.

❖ **Are you nurturing your children or do you leave that to electronics?**

Conclusion

Parenting is not easy, yet with the Lord's strength it is possible to parent in a way that honors Him. Parenting must be accomplished as an outflow of walking in the Spirit – both on the child's side and on the parent's side. Neither the father nor the mother will be able parent in a way that glorifies God unless they choose to bow before God and His word.

Additional Study

Read Ephesians 5:18-6:4 and Colossians 3:16-21.

Where does the power to fulfill God's pattern for marriage and family come from?

List the ways in which you fulfill God's plan for marriage and family?

List the ways in which you do not fulfill God's plan for marriage and family?

When you are not fulfilling God's plan for your marriage and family, what are you doing instead and what are you hoping to accomplish? What is that called?

Read through the "one-anothers" below and then note how you might live this out to your children.

- Love one another (John 3:16; 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 John 4:11-12; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8)
- Forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; Matt 18:21-22)
- Build up one another (Rom 14:19)
- Give preference to one another (Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10b)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; Heb 10:24-25)
- Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
- Edify one another (1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:29)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
- Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10a)
- Be affectionate to one another (1 Pet 5:14)
- Confess sins to and pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)
- Live harmoniously with one another (Rom 15:15; 1 Thess 5:13b)
- Show tolerance for one another (Eph 4:2)
- Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)