

Sermon for Sunday, June 15, 1975, by Andrew A. Jumper, D. D., Pastor  
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"DAD'S GIFT TO THE FATHER"

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Text: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

Since today is Father's Day, I would like for us to spend our time together this morning thinking about some of the things that the Bible says to us about fathers. As we begin, let me remind you again of the context of our scripture for this morning. St. Paul has just finished saying that the Christian is one who is filled with the Spirit. The Christian is one who is overflowing with the inner awareness of God's presence in his heart. Then immediately, St. Paul goes on to talk about the family. I think St. Paul was doing this deliberately in connecting these two things. The reason is simple. If Christianity doesn't work in the home, then it doesn't work at all. The home is the testing ground for all of us who claim Christ. If our religion flunks that test, it will not pass the grade anywhere else.

The first thing I would call to your attention in our scripture for this morning is God's order for the home. The Bible says, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands." Now, that tells us that the husband is to be the leader of the home. Now there are several things we should note that this passage does not mean. First, it doesn't mean the wife is inferior. The Bible tells us that Jesus submitted himself to the will of the Father, but that doesn't make him inferior--He is still very God of very God. As a matter of fact, St. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:28 that men and women are totally equal--totally equal. He writes, "there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." On the day of Pentecost, when Peter stood up to preach that first sermon after the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples, he said that the Spirit was to be poured out equally on men and women. He said, "And on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit." (Acts 2:17) So as persons and especially as Christians, husbands and wives are equal. The difference then, is one of function, not of equality. We are not dealing with superiority and inferiority, we are dealing with role, we are dealing with the function. It is man's function to be the leader in the home. That's God's order for the home--not man's, but God's order.

A second thing that this passage does not mean is that the man makes all of the decisions without reference to anyone. It means instead that the man must bear the responsibility for the decisions. Many wives have great talents and abilities. If a man fails to take advantage of the knowledge or the ability or the expertise that his wife brings to the home, he would be very foolish indeed. So this passage doesn't mean that the man makes all the decisions autocratically, without reference to his wife or even to his children. It does mean that he must bear the responsibility for the decision. That's God's order for the home. Now, third, tied to that is another thing that this passage doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that the man is always right. Part of the problem in many homes is that the wife or the children don't want to permit the husband the luxury of a mistake. But if a man is to be the head of the home, he has to be responsible for the decisions. He is not perfect, he is not omniscient, he does not know everything, and he is going to make mistakes.

The family has to accept that he is responsible for the decisions and sometimes he will be wrong. Fourthly, this passage does not mean that headship is dictatorship. Lots of men are running around today beating their chests and saying, "I'm the head of this house!" The very fact that he has to say it probably means that he isn't. The man is the head of the home in the same way that Jesus is the head of the church. The Bible says that Jesus loved the church and gave himself up for her. His is a giving headship, and that is the sort of headship that a man has over his family.

So the first thing we learn from our scripture is that man is the leader in the home. That's God's order for the home. I'll be frank with you, as I counsel with families under stress and crisis, families that do not follow God's order are the ones with the most serious difficulties. Now, the second thing that we learn from verse 25 of the fifth chapter is this: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church..." So the second thing we learn about God's order for the home is that the man is to be a lover. First, he is a leader. Second, he is a lover. Now, that means much more than just sexual love, although that certainly is included. St. Paul says that a man has this kind of responsibility to his wife. But it means much more than just that. It means that a man is to love his family as Jesus loves the church. If I want to know how Jesus loves the church, I have to ask myself, "Well, what is the Church like? Does the church ever make any mistakes? Does the church ever fail? Does the church have hypocrites in it? Does the church have people who are lukewarm and halfhearted? Does the church have people in it who fall down on responsibility, who don't carry through?" You know very well it does. Yet, the Bible tells us that in spite of these imperfections, Jesus loves the church. In spite of its failures, in spite of its shortcomings, Jesus loves the church. And praise God that he does love an inadequate and imperfect church. When, then, is a man to love his wife and his family? Is he to love his family when they are loveable or when his wife does something well, or when she looks especially attractive? Is he to love his children when they do well in school or when they are successful in achieving some goal? No, love is not given because one earns it or deserves it. God's order for the family is that man, who is the head of the family, is to be a lover--one who loves regardless of whether it is deserved or not. St. John once wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loves us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins." And then he adds, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." That's the kind of love that a man is to have for his family--auncaused love that reaches out to embrace his loved ones.

Now let me give you fathers three ways or three levels on which you can express love to your family. If it will help, let me give these three ways in an anagram form using the word "SAT". First is "S" which stands for speak. We need to speak or to say our love for our family. I once counseled with a young girl of 16 who was in serious trouble. She had become sexually promiscuous and her family brought her to me. As we talked she told me the secret of why she did what she was doing. "When the boys are with me, they tell me they love me," she said. "In my heart, I know they really don't, but no one ever told me that before, and I like to hear it." Isn't that sad? "No one ever told me they loved me." Certainly her folks loved her, but they had failed to tell her so. Years ago, I came to a decision as I prayed one day that I would tell each of my children every day that God loved them and that I loved them. I began to go to them separately, taking a moment each day with each child and say to them, "God loves you and I love you." And as time went by, I would say to them, "Do you know what?" And they said "Yeah." And I said, "What?" They said, "You love me." I said, "How do you know?" They said, "You told me a million times."



Let me give you the fruit of some of that--I will tell it because she is off at a camp. I was talking to my oldest daughter, Kathy, who is just 17 yesterday. We were talking about the trouble that kids at school were having with their parents, and she was saying, "You know, my friends come to me and they talk about the problems with their parents and how they hate them and all of the trouble they have in the home...I just don't know what they are talking about." I asked her, "What do you think has made the difference in our family?" She said, "Well, you know, whatever happens, we always know you love us." Speaking your love.

Second is the letter "A". "A" stands for attitudes. Attitudes are forms of nonverbal communication. We convey how we feel inside by our outward attitude. If someone is angry or sad, gay or worried, they convey to us that inner attitude. If my wife is upset about something, all I have to do is walk in the door-- I know something has gone wrong without her saying a word. For our inner attitudes are conveyed to others by nonverbal communication. What sort of feelings are you communicating in the home? Your attitudes are conveying themselves with tremendous impact into the lives of those close to you. So, you convey love by your inner attitude. Now let me say this to you men: you need to convey love but love is the fruit of the Spirit. Love is not a gift; it is the fruit of the Spirit. You are able to have love when you are in a loving relationship with God. Love for others is the fruit of your relationship with the Lord. You can't really have a loving attitude unless you are in love with God.

A third level for expressing love is symbolized by the letter "T". "T" stands for touch. When a child is hurt, he wants to be physically petted and loved. When I was a pastor in Lubbock I had a doctor in my congregation from whom I learned a great deal. When he had a patient in the hospital, he knew that that patient, because he was ill and because he had to be in the hospital, was experiencing a certain amount of anxiety and concern about his health. When the doctor came to the patient's room, he would never leave without touching the patient. It would be a pat on the shoulder or a touch on the hand, but he always made physical contact. It gave reassurance, it gave confidence, it reinforced the doctor. And when he left the room, the patient always had a mental, emotional uplift, and he felt better. You see, there is something basic about the human touch. You watch two people in love--they want to touch each other, they can hardly keep their hands apart. My experience in counseling over the years is that the person who cannot remember being touched and loved by his parents is the person with the most emotional difficulties and problems. Now, some of you fathers may have trouble loosening up and demonstrating your affection, but let me urge you to do it. I try to touch every member of my family every day. I put my arm around them, I hold their hand, but I do something to communicate to them my love. So the father is the head of the home, and as such he should not only be a leader, but he should be a lover. Love can be expressed by speaking your love, by the attitude of love and by the touch of love.

The third thing that we find in our scripture for this morning about God's order for the home is that the man should be the spiritual teacher for the home. The man should be the spiritual teacher in the home. Our text for this morning says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Now, notice it doesn't say "Fathers and mothers," it doesn't say "Parents and grandparents," it doesn't say, "Wife or mother," it says father. "Father, bring your children up in the nurture and the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Now that phrase "do not provoke your children" used to bother me. I didn't understand it. But, as I have dealt with families over the