

Provoking Parents
"Provoking our Children to Love the Truth"
Proverbs 2:1-6

Introduction:

1. The word "provoke" can carry a positive or a negative connotation.
 - The word "provoke" means "to call into action, to move, to stir up."
2. As parents, we are provoking our children, either positively or negatively.
 - **Ephesians 6:4** - we are provoking our children to be angry and rebellious children.
 - **Hebrews 10:24** - or we are provoking our children to love and good works.
3. Do you desire that your children grow up to love God, respect the things of God, live godly lives that honor the Lord? I can assure you, it will not happen by accident.
4. As parents, you must have an intentional, Biblical strategy for raising up children that love the Lord and that live godly lives. **Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4**
5. God wants Christian parents to be proactive, not reactive. If you wait until your children get into trouble to begin implementing Biblical principles, it may be too late.
6. We live in a world that specializes in telling lies to our children. Children are inundated with false and destructive ideas constantly. There is only one way to overcome this.
7. Parents must provoke their children to love the truth of God's Word. We must develop in our children a hunger and desire for truth.

What happens when parents provoke their children to love the Bible?

1. As parents intentionally strive to get God's Word in their children, notice in our text that there is a three-fold progression that takes place: **Proverbs 2**
 - Their children have a teachable spirit to receive truth. vs. 1-2
 - It is the idea of parents spoon-feeding children and saying, "Here you go, you need this, now listen." This must begin young.
Illustration: You make them eat their veggies as you spoon-feed them.
 - Next, their children develop a desire for truth. vs. 3
 - It is the idea of a child saying, "I want more; can I have more?"
Illustration: They develop an appetite for their veggies.
 - Next, their children seek truth for themselves. vs. 4
 - It is the idea, "Let me dig for this truth and get it for myself."
Illustration: They become teens or adults and get their veggies for themselves.
2. Parents, do you know what happens when you instill in your children a love for God's truth? Look at verse 5. Notice the conditional word "then." In other words, if the conditions of verses 1-4 are met, here is what happens:
 - First, your children will understand what it is to have a healthy respect and reverence for the Lord. Without the truth of God, children will not appreciate the Lord and all that He has done on our behalf through Christ.
 - Second, your children will acquire the knowledge of God. Without the knowledge of God's Word, they have no knowledge of God.

3. Parents, your children have souls and spirits inside their bodies that desperately need the knowledge of God. So many children today are growing up in spiritual ignorance. (**Proverbs 19:2**) - We feed their bodies, but what about their souls and spirits?

Why is it so crucial that parents provoke their children to love the Bible?

1. Parents - without God's Word your children have absolutely no way to gain godly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. vs. 6
2. What is the result? This text lays it out clearly. Without God's Word, your children:
 - Will pick the wrong friends. - vs. 11-13, 20
 - Will take sin lightly. - vs. 14
 - Will live a life of dishonesty. - vs. 15
 - Will continually make bad decisions. - vs. 16-19
3. So many times, kids get involved with the wrong kind of people and become involved in destructive things, and parents ask themselves, "Why did they do that?"
4. It is because the children lack wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. If they are ignorant of God's truth, how can they make good decisions? They cannot and will not.
5. But notice what happens when God's Word gets inside your children - vs. 9-11
Psalm 119:1-3 - This is God's preventive principle. It is the key to preventing adolescent rebellion. **Psalm 119:9, 11** - Get them in the Word - the younger the better!
6. We can teach our children how to play ball, ride a bike, play a video game, get an education, cook, clean their rooms, etc. but if we do not store up spiritual truth in them, what have we accomplished? Are we preparing them for life?

How do parents provoke their children to love the Bible?

1. Some of you may be thinking, "Yes, I agree, my children need to know God's truth, but that is why I take them to church."
2. Unfortunately, your children are out there in a Satan-controlled world for hours upon hours each week, and you certainly don't think that an hour or two at church will overcome that.
3. Parents, do you want your children to turn out godly, and love the Lord? The surest way to insure this is to see that your children are in God's Word every day. You must develop in them the habit of going to God's Word each and every day. Send them on a treasure hunt each day. vs. 4-6
4. Habits are developed through repetitive actions. A parent may say, "Make them read God's Word? I think we should read the Bible because we want to, not because we have to." Do you make them brush their teeth, do their homework, take a bath, put on underwear, eat their food, etc?
 - Then why wouldn't we see to it that our children adopt a spiritual habit that will have a positive impact for the rest of their lives?
5. Let me provide a few practical tips:
 - Start early. (If they can't read, you read it to them.)
 - Plan their reading.
 - Younger kids - one verse in the morning and one at night.
 - Increase the goal appropriately with age.
 - Provide positive incentive.

- A chart with stars on the refrigerator
- Special treat at the end of the week
- Enforce the policy.
 - Keep them accountable - "Did you do your Bible reading last night?"
 - As long as children live under your roof, the basic policy of the household is, "We are going to the Word of God every day."
- Be an example.
 - If you are not in God's Word daily, you need to begin right away.

In Conclusion:

1. God in His grace and love has communicated with sinful man. He has given us wisdom by giving us His Word. He has not left us in darkness.
2. He sent His Son to this earth to make it possible for us, as sinners, to be reconciled to Him.
3. As wonderful as all this is, if your children are ignorant of God's truth, it does them no good.
4. The greatest gift you could ever give your children is not the latest video game system, a new car at 16, braces for their teeth, or a college education. The greatest gift is for you to develop in them the habit of seeking God's Word each day!

Provoking Parents "Provoking our Children to Embrace Righteousness"

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2. As parents, we are provoking our children, either positively or negatively.
 - **Ephesians 6:4** - are we provoking our children to be angry and rebellious children?
 - **Hebrews 10:24** - or are we provoking our children to love and good works?
3. Do you desire your child to grow up and love God, respect the things of God, live a godly life that honors the Lord? I can assure you, it will not happen by accident.
 - Many parents are hoping that their kid will turn out alright. They are just trying to get their kid thru childhood and teen years and keep them out of any serious trouble.
 - How sad! **Illustration:** Super Bowl - the coach says, "Our goal for this game is to simply keep any of our players from getting injured."
4. As a parent, you must have an intentional, Biblical strategy for raising up a child that loves the Lord and that lives a godly life. **Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4**
5. God wants the Christian parent to be proactive, not reactive. If you wait until your child gets into trouble to begin implementing Biblical principles, it may be too late.
6. We live in a world today in which Satan is trying so hard to completely blur any line between right and wrong. They teach children today situational ethics that is rooted in a humanistic world view. They teach that there are no moral absolutes, but rather they teach amorality (there is no right and wrong).
7. Yet, notice what that Bible says in **Psalm 11:7**. God is righteous, loves righteousness, and takes notice of a righteous person.
8. How do we define right and wrong? God's Word is the definition of righteousness (**Psalm 119:172**). There **are**, in fact, moral absolutes because God's Word defines right and wrong.
9. Parents, it is vital that we instill in our children the principle of righteousness, and teach them to embrace righteousness, as defined by God's Word. Why is this so crucial?
 - Because doing right brings peace. **Psalm 37:37**
 - Because doing right brings God's strength. **Psalm 37:39**
 - Because doing right brings joy. **Psalm 32:11**
 - Because doing right brings life. **Proverbs 11:19, 12:28, 21:21**
 - Because doing right brings reward. **Proverbs 11:18**
10. Is there any parent who doesn't desire these things for his or her children? Then we must teach our children to obey God and always do right as defined by His Word. When we instill this habit of doing right in them, other areas of training and spiritual development will follow more easily. For example:
 - **Ephesians 6:1** says, "*for this is right.*" When children have learned to accept the concept of righteousness, it only makes sense to obey their parents. Why? It's right!

- They have no problem reading their Bible each day. Why? It's right, therefore we do it. Stay morally and sexually pure, respect authority, go to church, listen to the right kind of music, etc.

How do parents instill the concept of righteousness in their children?

First, teach righteousness as a precept.

1. In other words, teach it directly - over and over again. Tell children, "We always do what's right." Do they always do right? No, but at a young age they begin to be predisposed to that conviction.
2. Make it a topic of family discussion. Pick a verse and read and discuss it.
Psalm 11:7; Romans 6:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:34
3. Children, by their very nature, tend to do what they do because they want to or do not want to. They tend to be motivated by what is fun or not fun. Though this is as natural as the old nature that they were born with, we need to instill in them a higher way of living.
 - Rather than doing what they want to do, we must teach children to do what they ought to do - to do what is right.
4. Virtually every child has said, "Oh mom, I don't want to." We need to teach our children that this is not the issue. If it is right, then that settles it. "But dad, this isn't fun." That is not the issue. If it is right, then we do it.
5. So much of our modern culture is based upon the fun motive. Fun is not wrong, but a philosophy of life based upon having fun is not only shallow, but also very dangerous.
6. If parents reinforce the fun principle in adolescence, it can lead to tragic results.
7. We must root the principle of righteousness into the lives of our children long before they reach the crucial teenage years. Righteousness is said to be a "*buckler*" and "*shield*." It will keep them out of so much trouble.

Second, apply the principle of righteousness.

1. Talk without action means very little. If you teach your children that we always do right, but then don't insist upon it in their daily lives, your teaching will mean little.
2. You have to back up your words with action. When they want to disobey, you must insist upon obedience. Why? Because it is right. **Colossians 3:20**
3. They want to listen to the wrong kind of music, watch the wrong kind of movies, display the wrong attitudes, play instead of do their homework, you simply say, "No way." Why? It is not right.
4. There must be daily application of the principle of righteousness in our children's lives. Any child can understand the basic Bible precept of righteousness (right and wrong).

Third, teach righteousness by example.

1. You have heard it said, "More is caught than taught." What we do speaks louder than what we say. Our walk talks louder than our talk. **2 Timothy 1:5**
2. Inconsistency on the part of the parent will do more to breed rebellion than virtually any other thing. Children can spot hypocrisy a mile away.

3. But a consistent example will do more to reinforce what we say than anything else.
4. But if your life is not consistent with what you teach, you are sowing the seeds of rebellion and they will grow.

Fourth, teach righteousness early and long.

1. When they are able to understand speech, begin to instill the principle of righteousness. Continue this through the teen years until they leave the nest. **2 Timothy 3:15**
2. This will provide a foundation that will serve your child well his or her entire life. **Matthew 7:24-27**

Provoking Parents "Teaching our Children to Live Lives of Surrender" – Part 1

Introduction:

1. The word "provoke" can carry a positive or a negative connotation.
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 - **Ephesians 6:4** - we are provoking our children to be angry and rebellious children.
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3. Do you desire your child to grow up and love God, respect the things of God, live a godly life that honors the Lord? I can assure you, it will not happen by accident.
4. As a parent, you must have an intentional, Biblical strategy for raising up a child that loves the Lord and that lives a godly life. **Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4**
5. God wants the Christian parent to be proactive, not reactive. If you wait until your child gets into trouble to begin implementing Biblical principles, it may be too late.
6. According to **Romans 6:12-13**, there are two ways we can live our life:
 - We can obey the lusts of our flesh and do wrong.
 - We can surrender our bodies to God and do what is right.
7. In **Romans 6:11** the word "*reckon*" means "to make up your mind." So each day we make up our minds as to whether or not we will live in self-will or obey God and do His will.
8. The key to that decision is the surrender of **our** will to God. As I surrender and yield to Him, I do what is **right** rather than what I **feel** like doing. Many people have developed a habit of following the desires of their bodies. If it feels good, do it.
9. The concept of surrendering our wills to God should begin early in childhood and must be instilled by the parents.
10. The word "*temperance*" in the Bible carries this idea of giving up our wants and carnal desires and yielding ourselves to do what God would have us to do. **1 Corinthians 9:25; Galatians 5:23** - We say, "He lost his temper." He lost his temperance - control.
11. Shallow Christians do what they **want** to do; spiritual Christians have temperance and they do what God would have them do (doesn't matter how hard or uncomfortable, what everyone else is doing, what I gain or lose).
12. Parents, it is our job to instill temperance in our children and teach them to live a life of surrender to God's indwelling Holy Spirit. This is what leads to godly character.

What are the obstacles that parents face in instilling temperance in their children?

First, the law of sin that dwells in your child's flesh.

1. In the Bible, the flesh is identified as being that part of you that is unregenerate and at enmity with God. In your flesh (and your child's) is said to dwell the law of sin. **Romans 7:23**

- To live after the flesh is to live a life apart from Christ's desires and Christ's power. To live after the flesh is to live a life that pleases **me**, not Christ.
 - To live after the flesh brings self-gratification, but leads to destruction.
Romans 8:6, 13
 - Several times the word "*lusts*" are associated with the word "*flesh*."
Galatians 5:16-17
2. So, the flesh operates on the basis of what it wants, what it likes, what it desires. It is self-oriented. The flesh seeks the path of least resistance and greatest enjoyment. Every one of us is born with this law of sin in our flesh (yes, your children too).
 - **Illustration:** Children are very naturally lazy. It is the path of least resistance. It is more self-gratifying to lay around in bed or play video games than to make your bed and mow the grass.
 - **Illustration:** Schoolwork - there is no immediate gratification, so the flesh bucks it.
 - **Illustration:** The flesh loves to drag out toys, but isn't too thrilled about picking up the mess afterwards, is it?
 3. What is the only thing that the flesh is fit for? **Galatians 5:24** - Death! Living after the flesh is death. Walking after the Spirit is life. **Galatians 5:25**
 4. But this concept must be instilled in children. We don't walk after the flesh and do what **we** want to do (it's death). We walk in the Spirit and do what **God** would have us to do.
 5. Parents - how do we feed the flesh of our children? Never tell them "No," never make them do anything they don't want to, do everything for them, etc.

Second, bad habits in the parents.

1. The reality is this - the reason why many kids live lives of self-indulgence with no temperance or discipline in their life is that they see it modeled in their parents.
2. The character of parents tends to be passed on to their children. **Illustration:** kings of Israel - it was rare that the son of an ungodly king would do right.
3. This is not genetic or biological. It is acquired habits and patterns of life that each generation tends to pick up from the previous one. **Ezekiel 2:3**
4. Here is the good news. We as parents can break the generational chain and lift our own level of spiritual surrender and spiritual temperance. Habits are not easy to change, but they **can** be changed through surrender to God's Holy Spirit.

Third, living life by the "fun" principle

1. This is when people live for the sake of fun and make decisions based upon what is fun and enjoyable for their flesh.
2. There is nothing wrong with fun, but God did not create us primarily to have fun. He created us to worship, serve, and glorify Him. This means two things:
 - It means work. **Ephesians 4:28**
 - It means seeking to please God rather than ourselves. **John 4:34;**
2 Corinthians 5:15
3. The flesh lives for entertainment and fun. I am not against fun, but we have created a culture and a generation that has essentially made "fun" their goal in life.

4. Children grow up playing with their small toys as toddlers, and as they grow up into adulthood the toys get bigger and more expensive. People earn a living so they can buy expensive toys and play with them on weekends.
5. In this way of life, whatever appeals to the flesh dictates their lifestyle and choices.
6. When parents allow and encourage their children to live lives by the fun principle, it greatly hinders the instilling of spiritual surrender and temperance into their children's lives.

In Conclusion:

1. What does it do for children when they have parents that instill temperance into their lives? How does it directly impact the children?
2. How does the Christian parent instill in their children the principle of denying their fleshly desires and living a life of surrender to Christ?
3. Come back tonight and we will answer all of these questions.

Provoking Parents **"Teaching our Children to Live Lives of Surrender" - Part 2**

Why is it so important that parents instill in their children the principles of surrender and temperance?

First, because it will give your child mental strength.

1. If children are to excel educationally, they must have disciplined minds. They must be able to pay attention and focus on what they ought to think upon.
2. Children without temperance will follow their natural desires to goof off, day dream, and misbehave.
3. The result? They get behind in their school work, it shows up in lower grades, they get discouraged, and decide that they do not like school.
4. If they have lived their lives by the fun principle and are used to making decisions based upon what they want to do or feel like doing, they may very well resist school. Why is this? Schoolwork is not fun.
5. Learning requires mental concentration which is wearying (**Ecclesiastes 12:12**). It is easier to stare out the window, be occupied with the person next to you, make faces at the person next to you, etc. What is the problem? The children have never been taught to discipline their minds to concentrate.
6. Did you know that God expects us to be disciplined in our minds?
2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 1:13
7. What keeps children from being disciplined in their minds? What brings a lack of temperance?
 - Parents encourage shallow habits of entertainment.
 - Large doses of TV place minds in neutral - just sit there and be entertained.
 - The word "muse" means "to think." When you put the prefix "a" before it, the "a" means "to negate, not." The word "amuse" essentially means "to not think." That is what an entire generation of children are doing.
 - Just sit and be entertained or amused. Children are conditioned to be mentally lazy and pursue only what entertains their minds. They have trouble buckling down and really concentrating. They are not used to the concept of disciplining their minds to do something they don't want to do.
 - Parents fail to take the initiative in training their children's minds.
 - It is up to parents to teach their children at a young age to pay attention mentally.
 - They must **teach** them to be temperate and controlled in their thinking processes. It doesn't come naturally. **Proverbs 22:15**

Second, because it will give your child emotional strength.

1. Temperance is a key to emotional strength and stability. Have you ever seen people under pressure "lose it?" They crash and fall apart emotionally. Just as a person can learn to discipline his mind to do what it ought to do, our spirit can discipline our emotions to be displayed properly.
2. God expects us to be in control of our emotions. **Proverbs 16:32, 25:28**

3. The word "temper" is commonly misunderstood. We might say, "That person has a temper," however, a more accurate statement would be, "That person easily **loses** his temper."
 - The English word "temper" is the root of the word "temperance" which means self-control or self-restraint. When a person loses his temper or temperance, he has, in fact, lost control of his emotions.
4. There is a great word in the Bible that is commonly misunderstood. The word is "meekness." People tend to associate this word with being weak or timid. But this is not what it means at all. It carries the idea of controlled strength or controlled emotions.
 - This may result in one seemingly being mild-mannered because he does not overtly react under pressure. In other words, he keeps his cool. He doesn't lose his temperance.
 - A person who is meek is someone who has his/her emotions disciplined. There is a time and place for various emotions, but those with temperance restrain their emotions until the appropriate time.
5. Emotional stability is necessary for a servant of God. **Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Timothy 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 3:2**
6. When people learn to discipline their emotions, they will have built emotional strength. As muscles that are often exercised become strong, the frequent control of our emotions by our spirit will lead to emotional strength and stability.
7. Therefore, parents need to help their children to develop emotional strength by not allowing them to display emotional outbursts. If not, this will lead to a pattern of emotional weakness.
 - **Illustration:** Have you ever seen an adult lose his temper, yell and scream, throw things, talk hatefully, and maybe even curse and swear? Guaranteed, he did it as a child and nobody restrained them.
 - **Illustration:** Ever see an adult get mad and pout when he doesn't get his way? Guaranteed, he did it as a child and nobody restrained him.
8. Parents, it is our job to instill the principles of surrender to God and temperance in the lives of our children. It will provide emotional strength.

Third, it will help your child to be organized and productive.

1. Whatever organizational ability a person possesses comes from the discipline that has been instilled in his life.
2. Organization is essentially thinking ahead. This requires disciplining ourselves to foresee future needs and problems.
3. The Bible has a word for this: diligent (**Proverbs 27:23**). When a person has been disciplined to be diligent and organized, several things happen:
 - He is successful in his work - **Proverbs 10:4, 13:4, 22:29**
 - He tends to rise to leadership - **Proverbs 12:24**
 - People have confidence in him - **2 Corinthians 8:22-23**
 - He grows spiritually - **2 Peter 1:5-8** (it all starts with diligence)
4. What are some areas of life that are affected by our diligence or lack of?
 - Neatness

- Punctuality (The word diligent literally means to be up early, prompt, and energetic - diligence means “very prompt.”)
 - Job performance
5. Parents that do not instill discipline in their children's lives are doing their children a great disservice because their children will lack organization and diligence.
 6. Here are some practical tips that will help parents to instill discipline in their children's lives:
 - Teach your children to accept and fulfill responsibility.
 - Instill in your children a strong work ethic.
 - Use fun as a reward for hard work, but not a way of life.
 - Limit their television intake and encourage them to use their minds (reading, learning, drawing, painting, coloring, doing crafts, etc.).
 - Never allow uncontrolled emotional outbursts and temper tantrums.
 - Insist that your children be tidy and neat and take care of their possessions. Do not tolerate sloppiness.
 - Help them to establish proper priorities in life.
 - Be an example to your children and always be punctual.