



from the desk of

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Don't Exasperate Them

⁴ *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)*

According to Dictionary.com, “exasperate” has as its root terms like “to make rough,” “provoke,” “harsh.” Nothing positive to be sure.

According to the Bible Background Commentary, child rearing methods back in Paul’s day often reflected that....

.....children were often taught through beating, which was standard in child rearing and education; fathers were considered responsible for their education.¹ Paul is among the minority of ancient writers who seem to disapprove of excessive discipline.

In today’s world things are a bit switched, that while many families do have both parents involved in raising their children, it could be argued that mothers bear the brunt of the load of rearing the children.

Today, as then, there are different ways parents raise children, and each has different results. Generally speaking, there are four strains of parenting (the following is a summary from WebMd):

An authoritarian parent has clear expectations and consequences, but shows little affection toward his or her child. The parent may say things like, “because I’m the Mommy, that’s why.” This is a less effective form of parenting.

A permissive parent shows lots of affection toward his or her child but provides little discipline. This is a less effective form of parenting.

An uninvolved parent shows few demands, has low responsiveness to and little communication with the child. While these parents fulfill the child's basic needs, they are generally detached from their child's life.

An authoritative parent has clear expectations and consequences and is affectionate toward his or her child. The authoritative parent allows for flexibility and collaborative problem solving with the child when dealing with behavioral challenges. This is the most effective form of parenting.

Now some comments on these types of parenting.

Most of us end up being a blend of each of these. There are simply times when you need to resort to “because I’m the mommy/daddy, that’s why.” There are times when your child may be putting themselves in danger and there isn’t time to have a long discussion about why running into the street is a poor choice. We all do the best we can, and while we might have a predominant parenting style, we might tend to float between styles. I would suggest that we need to be more intentional about our parenting. Following is how things generally end up with these parenting styles:

Authoritarian parenting styles generally lead to children who are obedient and proficient, but they rank lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem.

Authoritative parenting styles tend to result in children who are happy, capable and successful.

Permissive parenting often results in children who rank low in happiness and self-regulation. These children are more likely to experience problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school.

Uninvolved parenting styles rank lowest across all life domains. These children tend to lack self-control, have low self-esteem and are less competent than their peers. (<https://www.verywell.com/parenting-styles-2795072>)

So in the end “not provoking our children to anger” seems to be best met by authoritative parenting. This is also the one that takes the most intentional effort.

So what to do? Look at the descriptions above (and nearly all parenting education courses are in agreement with these). Where to you fit? What can you do?

Effective parenting is intentional. Maybe your parents were great role models for this. You've got a good start. In some cases your family of origin wasn't so great an example. Then make changes. In the end it'll be less frustrating for all concerned!

Need further help with specific needs? I'm only an email away! (dcerandy@blcbcs.org).

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ⁱ Which is probably why Paul directs his attention here to "fathers."