

DOCTRINE OF PARENTING-5 (Virtue)

Ephesians 6:1-2, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

1. In verse 2 above we have “that it may be well with you.” “Be” is from the Greek *ginomai* which means to become something that one was not. The concept is of children going from a natural state of rebellion and arrogance (lack of virtue) to a new state of virtue. “Well” is the adverb *eu* and refers to blessings associated with virtue and humility based on orientation to authority.
2. This passage is not just teaching spiritual principles like the importance of Bible doctrine and fellowship with God. This passage is teaching the importance of virtue. Children are to gain the virtues of humility and patience through obedience irrespective of whether they are in fellowship or not. Virtue deals with character rather than whether one is in fellowship at any given moment and the fruit that is a result of that fellowship at a given time.
3. The only hope for any new generation (as far gaining virtue through orientation to laws of divine establishment) is the parents, not any public education system. The parents are the ones who are to inculcate virtue in their children as well as teach spiritual skills. The home is the training ground for the next generation. Parents with virtue who inculcate virtue into their children are the only hope for our country. Apart from gaining virtue, children will become filled with vices, as we see in these latter days:

2 Timothy 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

4. It is important to understand virtue as well as the spiritual life. A young person who only learns of spiritual techniques but not virtue is not going to be able to stay in fellowship due to problems in character. Likewise, the young person who understands and attains virtue, but does not know how to live the spiritual life will only produce human good. He may grow up with integrity, but without the Holy Spirit and the spiritual life, he will end up making some temporal good his god.
 - a. Virtue has to do with a person's general character: honesty, integrity, generosity, capacity for others, good attitude, control over emotions, humility, not vindictive, happy, and enjoys the life of the mind (is not sensate, bored, and does not think garbage all of the time).
 - b. Spirituality is the power of the Holy Spirit giving insight and strength to a believer at any given time. When a believer is in fellowship, God gives the believer insight and power for divine good. If the believer stays in fellowship for any length of time, he will gain integrity, especially when he remains in fellowship through the trials of life.
 - c. It is possible for a believer to understand Bible doctrine and how to confess his sins in order to regain fellowship, but still lack basic virtue and character. However, such a believer will not be able to stay in fellowship very long. The result is that the believer spends most of his time confessing his sins due to his corrupt (virtueless) soul.
 - d. Being filled with the Spirit at a given moment and therefore having good motives and producing divine good at that moment is one thing, e.g. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, Galatians 5:22. However, to possess love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faith, humility, self-control as a consistent character trait is something else. It is one thing to be loving only because you happen to be in fellowship, it is quite different from being a loving person through virtue that has been formed in one's character because of life in the Spirit and orientation to the good through genuine humility.
 - e. The objective is for the young person to become virtuous through establishment principles and spirituality. A virtuous child is going to be able to stay in fellowship a lot longer than a child without virtue who may listen to doctrine and regularly confess his sins. Both are very important. The phrase "may be well with you" speaks of children who grow up with integrity in their overall consistent character and are living the spiritual life, which further edifies and enhances their character.

- f. A virtuous young person will have the character not to be legalistic or a gossip regardless if he is in fellowship or not. Of course, being out of fellowship will bring other problems. The point here is that there is a quality about a virtuous person's character that translates into distaste for certain salacious activity. A person with integrity will be oriented to the good life, even if that good life is mere relative or human good (cf., Socrates, Plato). A person with integrity is a good, honest person even if that person is not a believer and whose good is relative and will be the basis for indictment at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:13).
- g. The virtuous young person will recognize the privacy and property of others. They have a genuine desire not to disrespect or steal from others. This desire is present whether they are in fellowship with God or not. They are not thieves regardless of their spiritual status at any given time.
- h. A young person who does not have integrity will be prone to use Bible doctrine as a license for their own vices and licentiousness. Bible doctrine will not become a means of advance in grace and virtue, but a vehicle of fulfilling their vices and later confessing them.
- i. Young people need to guard themselves against sexual temptations if they hope to be virtuous and avoid a *character* of immorality and evil. What a person exposes himself to will be played in the theatre of his mind.

2 Timothy 2:22 Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- 5. God lays out a road map for every person in the first Psalm—the way of the blessed man (good souled) and the way of the wicked (bad souled).
 - a. The good life for the good souled.

Psalm 1:1-5 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

- b. The wicked life for the bad souled.

Psalm 1:4-5 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

6. Before parents can inculcate integrity in their children, they must possess integrity in their own souls. One cannot give what one does not have. For parents to try to teach honesty, integrity, and spirituality to their children while they are gossips, cheaters, and reject Bible doctrine will be seen for what it is: hypocrisy, fake! To teach values requires having values. Due to rejection of doctrine all across this country, parents are no longer able to impart instruction in virtue or spirituality, let alone spiritual virtue.
 - a. How can parents teach spiritual virtues if they do not know them or possess them?
 - b. How can parents discipline their children fairly if they do not have virtue themselves?
 - c. How can parents teach their children grace if they do not understand grace?
 - d. How can parents teach their children the importance of Bible doctrine if it is not important to them?
 - e. How can parents teach their children that the world is not what it is all about, when they are chasing the world from sunup to sundown?
 - f. How can parents teach their children the importance of controlling emotions if they lose control of their emotions and yell at them? Children often do irritating things. When a parent handles his child emotionally, then the child will be prone to do the same when he faces frustrations.
 - g. How can parents teach the love of God if they do not understand His love?
 - h. How can parents teach their children the grace of God if they are not gracious?
 - i. How can parents teach their children the importance of submitting to unfair authority if they complain about their boss's unfairness?
 - j. How can parents teach their children the dangers of mental attitude sins and sins of the tongue if they are always manifesting such sins? Parents who cannot control their own mental attitude sins or sins of the tongue are not capable of raising their children properly. They must learn to get control of their emotions and their mental attitudes. Raising children is not for the faint of heart. Mental attitude sins are the greatest enemy of the human race. They destroy marriages and children. With mental attitude sins, the parents never treat each other or the children in justice or grace. Emotions are the greatest cause of most mental attitude sins:
 - k. How can parents teach their children divine norms and standards if they do not know what they are, and the only values they have are those of kosmos diabolicus?

1. How can parents teach their children the importance of being just/virtuous if they are unjust?
7. Moral virtues are what form one's moral character. Christian virtues are to be grounded in God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and in the divine norms and standards of the Word of God. Believers should be the most virtuous people in the world. For we not only have the instruction book on morality, the Bible, but the highest good, namely God, and the power of the Holy Spirit who is always attempting to bring virtue in the lives of the believer through His work of sanctification.
8. **Ephesians 6:4 "And, fathers, do not PROVOKE your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."**
 - a. The word "provoke" means to arouse to anger by unfair and unjust treatment. The idea is of exasperation.
 - b. This passage should be a warning to any parent who is tempted to think that just because a child should submit to unfair authority (which has the potential to make the child better), that he should then be unjust to the child to train the child in unfairness. What a perverted way of thinking! Be unjust on purpose to teach a lesson?
 - c. Provoking children usually takes place by being unfair, inconsistent, lacking understanding, yelling at them, disrespecting them, making them feel guilty, punishing them unfairly, and taking out personal frustrations on them.
 - d. Parents exasperate children when they abuse them physically, abuse them psychologically (by humiliating them and failing to treat them with respect), neglect them, don't try to understand them, expect too much from them, withhold love unless they perform, and refuse to admit their own mistakes and shortcomings.
 - e. Provoking children is often done by legalistic parents who are always preaching to the children and scolding them for enjoying legitimate forms of entertainment. All children need to understand the importance of Bible doctrine. However, they do not need to be preached to all of the time about certain interests the children might have that are not specifically Christian.

9. Instead of provoking children, children are to be brought up in the nurture! and admonition of the Lord. The biblical outline on raising children is found in Deut. 6:1-7:

Deuteronomy 6:1 "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

- a. A good parent, a virtuous parent, desires to *hear* God's commandment and to understand Bible doctrine so well that they become "upon your hearts," a part of one's being. This learning can only come through regular study of God's Word, Bible doctrine, made clear through the Holy Spirit.
- b. A good parent, a virtuous parent, is intent on *obeying* God's decrees and commandments. If parents show no desire to obey God, the children will see it.
- c. A good parent, a virtuous parent, is loving. They love the Lord and give themselves to Him wholeheartedly—heart, soul, strength, and mind. Children are important but God comes first. The children are only with the parents temporarily. Parents do not exist primarily for their children. Parents exist first as individuals who love and serve God. If parents are given children, then raising them is part of their life's purpose, but this is not the only purpose. Many parents make a fatal mistake here in putting the children above the Lord. This not only is devastating for the parent, it is for the child as well.
- d. A good parent, a virtuous parent, teaches their children. There are four ways by which teaching is to be done according to the above passage:
 1. Diligently. God's Word, Bible doctrine, is to be taught diligently, not just once a week on Sunday.
 2. Repeatedly. Teaching is not a one-time effort.
 3. Naturally. When the parents sit, walk, lie, down, and rise up they are to look for teaching opportunities. Daily family devotions are valuable, but parents are to teach whenever the opportunity arises.

4. Personally. What one says is not usually as influential as what one does. When parents listen, obey, and love, they provide a model for children that reinforces what is being said in the home. Notice the words “in the home.” Peers and teachers are important, but the most significant teaching and child rearing occurs at home.

10. It takes virtuous parents to have the wisdom to teach their kids the importance of Bible doctrine over the details of life without destroying their natural desires for certain temporal goods found in the details of life. It is all a matter of priority. God is to be our greatest good and as long as He is our greatest good, then we will be balanced regarding all of the temporal goods of life. If He is not our greatest good, then we will make something else our greatest good and it will become our idol. We and our children need to learn the lesson of how to live well in our souls so we can live well and enjoy all of the creature comforts God has blessed us with without forgetting that they all come from His matchless grace.

Matthew 6:31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

11. Common causes of child-rearing problems throughout our nation.

- a. Neglect or Abuse of the Spiritual. On one end of the spectrum we have parental neglect in teaching children Bible doctrine. On the other end we have fanatical fundamentalism which crams *religion* down young throats, pictures God as stern and boring disciplinarian, and leaves no room to let young people ask questions. One form of spiritual abuse is when parents attempt to destroy their child's will in an attempt to get them to follow God and forget about his own will. The idea that man is to be a zombie with no will of his own before God with a “I don't care attitude” is less than human. Even Jesus Christ said, “not MY will, but Your will be done.” He did have a human will!
- b. Instability in the home. When parents do not have virtue, they cannot cope with stresses of life. This stress overflows to the children. This is one reason some young people run away from home. They get tired of all the stress of parents quarrelling. They get tired of being blamed for problems in the marriage or family. Instability at home often leads to a host of behavioral problems with children. Unstable homes tend to produce unstable children.
- c. Psychological abuse. This takes place when children are rejected subtly or overtly, nagged or criticized excessively, punished unrealistically (or not at all), disciplined inconsistently, humiliated persistently, shown love spasmodically (or never), or threatened periodically with abandonment. Psychological abuse comes in the forms of overprotection, overpermissiveness, overstrictness, and over meticulousness that can

arouse anxiety and create insecurity in children. Many times the psychological mistreatment is not deliberate. Many parents are simply poorly equipped to handle their little old sin natures—it takes real virtue to do the job correctly. Without Bible doctrine, the Holy Spirit, and a supportive spouse, childrearing can be an absolute nightmare.

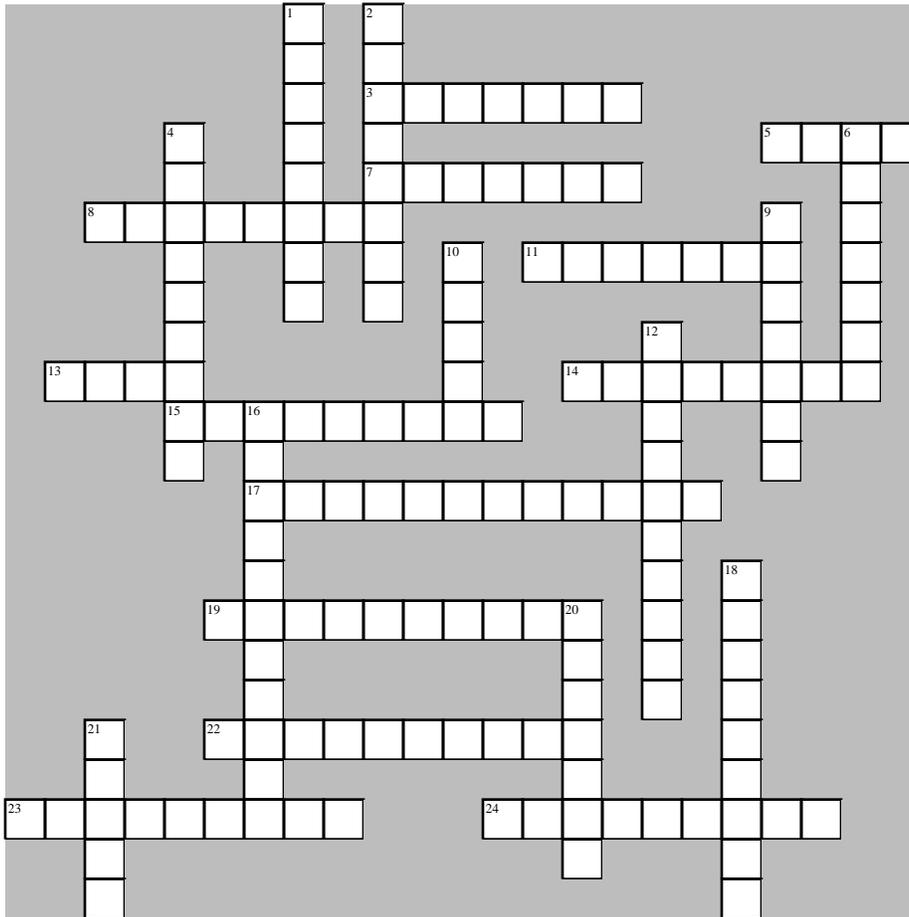
- d. Unmet needs. The basic needs for any child is spiritual instruction, security, acceptance, discipline, encouragement, and love. The spiritual instruction and love are the most important. If they are there, the other provisions will be taken care of. When children are deprived of spiritual instruction and love, maturation is hindered and problems frequently develop that can last through adulthood and into the grandchildren.

- 12. In the Bible, children are seen as gifts from God that can bring both joy and sorrow. Young people are to be loved, honored, and respected as persons; they are important to God and they are not to be harmed.
- 13. Children are given responsibilities to honor and respect parents, listen to them and be obedient. God promises them if they follow these guidelines, they will be blessed in all they do. They will be blessed in all they do primarily because they gain a blessed soul. Those who do not listen will lack virtue which corrupts the soul and destroys capacity for happiness (e.g., always bored). Without virtue any person becomes self-afflicted by a conscience that knows the soul is not what it should be. We are so wired that without virtue we create our own misery time and time again.
- 14. God's grace is always available to bring any person out of vice and bestow upon them a virtuous soul filled with capacity for life and others. God not only makes good souls out of bad ones, He makes fantastic souls for anyone who is willing.

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don

Parenting 5



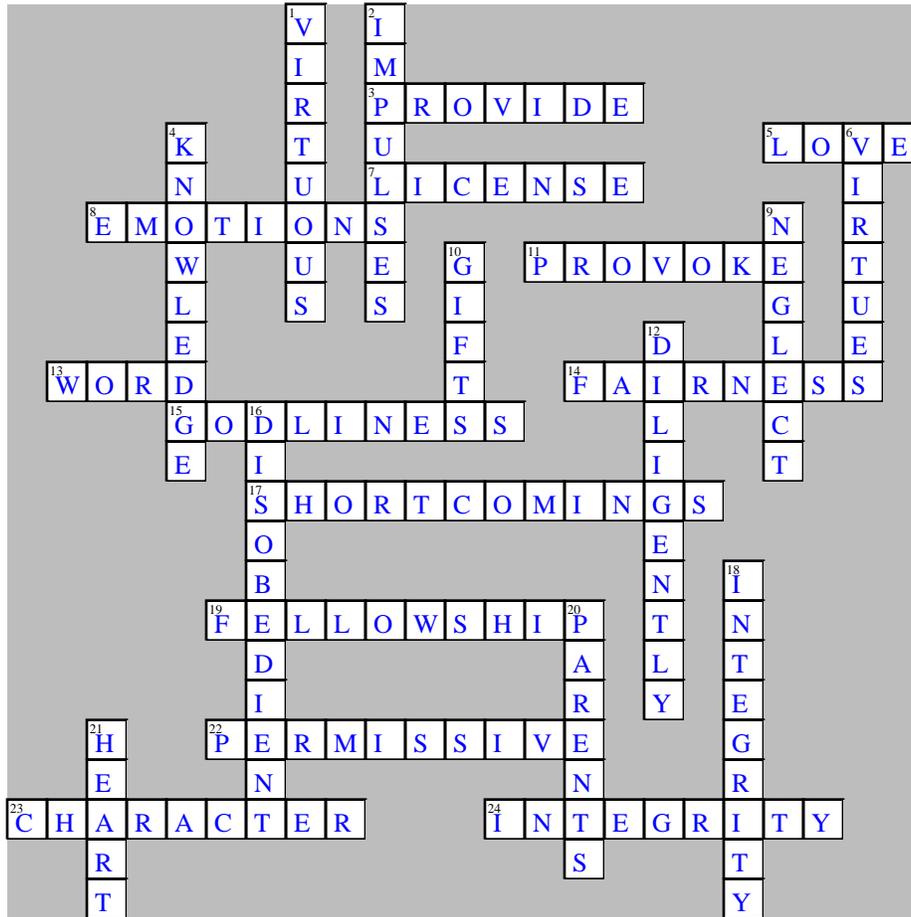
Across

- 3 God never asked for more than He will ____ .
- 5 Deut. 6:5 teaches that parents must first ____ the Lord.
- 7 Without integrity a believer tends to use grace and Bible doctrine as a ____ to sin instead of a means to grow in virtue.
- 8 The vice of being without self-control (2 Tim. 3:2) is the inability to control one's ____ .
- 11 Fathers are warned not to ____ their children to anger, Eph. 6:4.
- 13 In Psalm 1:1-2 there is a direct connection virtue/character (choice of friends) and really learning God's ____ .
- 14 Parents should always treat their children with ____ .
- 15 Those who are filled with vices in 2 Tim. 3:2-4 hold to a form of ____ .
- 17 God's grace is far greater than any of man's ____ .
- 19 Without virtue a person cannot stay in ____ very long.
- 22 A form of psychological child abuse is being overly strict or overly ____ .
- 23 A person's virtue is their ____ , not just how they may be at a given time.
- 24 A person with virtue has ____ and honesty.

Down

- 1 A person can be in fellowship at any given time and still not have a ____ character.
- 2 False teachers are able to captivate believers through various ____ , 2 Tim. 3:6.
- 4 A person filled with vices may be able to learn some doctrinal things, but they are precluded from real ____ of the truth, 2 Tim. 3:7.
- 6 The Holy Spirit imparts to the believer such ____ as self-control over their emotions and thought life (Gal. 5:22-23).
- 9 A form of spiritual child abuse is the ____ of teaching children Bible doctrine.
- 10 Children are ____ from God that bring joy and headaches.
- 12 Deut. 6:7 teaches that parents are to teach doctrine ____ to their children.
- 16 A sign of the wicked last days is when children are allowed to be ____ to parents, 2 Tim. 3:2.
- 18 Parents must have ____ before they can really inculcate it into their children.
- 20 The only hope for any upcoming generation.
- 21 Deut. 6:6 teaches that Bible doctrine is to be in the parent's ____ .

Parenting 5



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