

## Dads, Don't Provoke, Build Hearts of Hope

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### Colossians 3:21

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NKJ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

BGT Οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἐρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμώσιν.

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#### REVIEW

Therefore, if then you were raised with Christ,

- Be Seeking the Above Things (Col 3:1)
- Be Thinking the Above Things (Col 3:2)
- Put to Death Sinful Motivations (Col 3:5-7) (slay utterly)
- Put Off Sinful Actions (Col 3:8-10)

Instead, Put On the Seven Articles of Clothing that a Believer is Commanded to Wear

1. Put on "Tender Mercies" by Choosing to See and Feel the Needs of Others
2. Put on "Kindness" by Choosing to Benefit Others as You Seek to Meet Their Needs
3. Put on "Humility" by Choosing to Consider Yourself to Be a Servant to Others
4. Put on "Meekness" by Choosing to Approach Others with Gentleness and Consideration
5. Put on "Longsuffering" by Choosing to Give People Time and Grace to Grow
6. Put on "Bearing with One Another" by Choosing to Put Up with the Faults of Others
7. Put on "Forgiving One Another" by Choosing to Release Others from Their Sin Debts

Three Essential Components to Christian Maturity

1. Be Clothed with the Love of God
2. Be Umpired by the Peace of Christ
3. Be Immersed in Thankfulness to God

The Word of God Should Live in You

The Word of God Should Grow You

As believers, we have been placed into the Body of Christ. On an ongoing basis, GOD PRESENTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR US TO GROW by crossing our paths with people to whom we can show "Tender Mercy" or "Kindness" or "Longsuffering," some even right here in our local body.

Do Everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus Name reflects character

Col 3:17 "And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

**Even, or maybe Especially, in Our Close God-Given Relationships, we should Uphold the Name of Jesus by Doing everything in His character**

Though we all stand equal in Christ (Col 3:11), we still have various roles in the relationships in which God has placed us: wife to husband, husband to wife, children to parents, fathers to children, and bondservants to masters.

#### I. FATHERS, DON'T PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN

Col 3:21 "Fathers, do not provoke your children..."

"Provoke" ἐρεθίζετε *erethizo* means "to arouse \_\_\_\_\_, excite \_\_\_\_\_, or kindle \_\_\_\_\_."

The word is only used twice in the NT, once in a positive sense and here in Col 3:21 in a negative.

Positively, the word means "to incite \_\_\_\_\_, or stimulate \_\_\_\_\_," and is found in **2 Corinthians 9:2**.

**2 Cor 9:2** "for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority." [TO GIVE]

<sup>BGT</sup> **2 Cor 9:2** οἶδα γὰρ τὴν προθυμίαν ὑμῶν ἣν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καυχῶμαι Μακεδόσιν, ὅτι Ἀχαΐα παρεσκεύασται ἀπὸ πέρυσι, καὶ τὸ ὑμῶν ζῆλος ἠρέθισεν τοὺς πλείονας.

Negatively, the word means “to provoke, irritate, embitter, to be quarrelsome, make resentful, arouse to anger.”

#### A. DON'T CONTINUALLY FIGHT WITH YOUR CHILDREN.

The word is found in the Greek OT:

**Deut 21:20** "And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and **rebellious**; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.'" Marah in the Heb

In this verse the roles are reversed and the child is the one always fighting. However, applying the same meaning to **Col 3:21**, we can see that it could be the father who is the one always fighting.

Does your child only hear your bitter, argumentative voice? Learn from the seven letters to the churches in **Rev 2,3**, where Jesus Christ begins each with words of praise before words of criticism.

#### B. DON'T KEEP PICKING ON YOUR CHILDREN.

**Prov 25:23** “The north wind brings forth rain, And a **backbiting** tongue an angry countenance.”

“Backbiting” means “to attack the character or reputation of someone.”

Here, the provoking brings forth (lit., “causes to be born”) a mad face.

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU ARE PROVOKING YOUR CHILD? Look at his or her face.

Maybe it's true that all dads love to tease. Is it possible to go too far?

In English, “provoke” means “to anger, exasperate, or vex.” Lit., “to call forth” from *pro*, “for” and *vox*, which is akin to “voice.” (Thus, “evoke” is “to call up” and “invoke” is “to call upon.”) To provoke is to call forth “feelings or activities” of anger or bitterness.

Dads once again are connected with bitterness. Don't be bitter against your wives (v. 19) and don't make your kids bitter (v. 21).

#### C. DON'T INCESSANTLY BOSS YOUR CHILDREN ONLY FOR YOUR BENEFIT.

**Phil 2:3** “Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit...”

Provoking seems to be something dads are prone to do. The command here in **Col 3:21** is a present active prohibition, which indicates that we are to stop doing a current action. Dads, stop provoking your children! In the previous verse in **Col**, the children were told to obey their parents in all things. Because of the order of the verses, this verse seems to be directed at dads not to overdo that verse, not to take advantage. Continual commands *solely for the father's enjoyment or comfort* will certainly cause anger and bitterness. If dad's orders are only for himself, he surely isn't modeling the behavior of the new man, one who exhibits “tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (v. 12).

#### D. DON'T BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO THE POINT OF ANGER.

There can be no doubt that the word is used negatively here when the parallel in **Ephesians 6:4** is considered: **Eph 6:4** “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath...”

“Provoke to wrath” is not the same word as in **Col 3:21**. Here the word is *παροργίζετε* *parorgizete*, which means “to cause someone to become quite angry.” Lit., to bring “alongside wrath.” “Wrath” translates *orge*, which is defined as “a vigorous upsurge of one's nature against someone or something” (Frei), and most commonly refers to the wrath of God in the NT. The only other occurrence of *παροργίζετε* is:

**Rom 10:19** “But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation, I will **move** you to **anger** by a foolish nation.’”

## II. FATHERS, DON'T TAKE THE HEART OUT OF YOUR CHILDREN

**Col 3:21** “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

The verse indicates that dads can so provoke their children that they become discouraged. To encourage someone is to pour courage into him. “Courage” is the “quality that enables a person to face difficulty with firmness” and is lit., “pertaining to the heart,” the Latin stem “cour” being related to the Greek “car,” from *cardia*, “heart.” To discourage someone is to take the heart out of him, to dishearten him.

“Discouraged” in Col 3:21 is ἀθυμέω *athumeo* which means “to feel like giving \_\_\_ up, lack motivation \_\_\_” (Frei).

The *a-* equals *un-* in English, and *thumos* comes from a stem that means what “is moved or moves” and may denote such things as “desire, impulse, spirit, anger, disposition” (TDNT).

It is used of the prodigal son’s hunger in Luke 15:16, Jesus longing to share the Passover with His disciples in Luke 22:15, and Paul’s desire to depart and be with Christ in Phil 1:23, though also used negatively in the NT of lust and of anger. One word that might capture all of its meanings is passion.

Fathers can so provoke their children that the heart is taken right out of them, they lose all passion—they become *a- pathetic*, and couldn’t care less. From the context, we might say they could even become apathetic toward obeying and the things of God altogether.

### III. FATHERS, DO FEED INSTRUCTION AND RIGHT THINKING TO YOUR CHILDREN.

**Eph 6:4** “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

When God tells us to put off certain behavior (“Don’t provoke to the point of discouragement”), He often tells us to put on something in its place. In order to find that here, we must go to the parallel in **Eph 6:4**.

“Bring them up” ἐκτρέφω *ektrepheo* means “to nourish, feed” and is only found here and in

**Eph 5:29** “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes** and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.” Put off provoking, but put on feeding them, nourishing them. Don’t tear them down, but build them up with the following things.

#### A. DO BUILD STRUCTURE INTO YOUR CHILDREN’S LIVES.

“Training” παιδεία *paideia* means “to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior” (L-N).

The word carries the positive meaning of “instruction,” lit., “building structure into”

**2 Tim 3:16** “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction** in righteousness,”

And the negative meaning of chastening, which builds to a positive result.

**Heb 12:11** “Now no **chastening** seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

#### B. DO PLACE RIGHT THINKING INTO YOUR CHILDREN’S MINDS.

“Admonition” νουθεσία *nouthesia* means, lit., “to put in the mind.”

**1 Cor 10:11** “Now all these things happened to them [the children of Israel] as examples, and they were written for our **admonition**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

The examples of Scripture—the stories, characters, and verses—are the very things we need to be feeding our kids, placing them into their minds so that the Holy Spirit may bring them up at the right time.

**John 14:26** “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

Fathers, are you constantly arguing with your children, provoking them to anger? Do they only hear your bitter voice? Have their hearts turned apathetic and indifferent to the things of God?

God tells us to stop provoking and He wouldn’t tell us that without giving us the power to stop.

Are you instead looking to build up your kids, feeding them on God’s Word, letting them know that God is for them, and that you are, too?