

# Character Development of Children

An individual's character is one of the unseen forces that guide our thoughts and actions, making character development an important area of focus for parents. We hope our children develop into men and women who are diligent, courageous, faithful, responsible, sacrificial, respectful and so on. While all character traits would be good to review, focusing on three underlying ingredients from *Eph. 6:4* can position parents to positively impact our children's character development. Without these ingredients, playing a positive role in our children's character development may be hindered.

*Ephesians 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:  
but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

## RELATIONSHIP

The apostle Paul warns fathers and anyone in the parenting role to be careful not to provoke anger in our children. It is natural to use force or control when interacting with someone who is smaller or less powerful. While this might bring the desired outcome short-term, it tends to breed anger when force is the primary method the stronger uses to rule the weaker. Parents should be aware that while their power and adult position are important, it can promote wrath in a child if it is the primary relationship mode (or method) of parenting. Instead, we are to put on Christ and walk in love. (*Ephesians 5:1*) As we reflect Christ's example and how he relates to us, we are better positioned to develop a healthy relationship to more effectively impact the growth and development of our children.

## WISDOM

So, what does it mean for a parent to have a positive relationship with a child? How do you know if you are doing what Paul speaks against in *Ephesians 6:4*? Does this mean a child should never experience anger because of their parent's actions? These questions bring us to the second ingredient for helping our children develop good character – wisdom. Parents need wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit and our church community to discern and speak into the many parenting questions that arise.

*"Bring a child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"*

*"Bring a child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* means to use our words and actions to help them see and trust that what God says is good, is in fact good. Parents are not just trying to help children become decent humans as defined by the broader culture. Our calling is much higher. As believers we are called to bring children up in the Lord and help them grow and reflect what God says is good character.

## PURPOSE

As a parent, I often find myself missing my more important responsibilities in exchange for the pressing issues that arise in the moment. Amid the many roles and responsibilities of life, survival often seems like the default mode. When living our best, we shift from survival into purposeful parenting driven by a desire to raise our children in a way that puts them in a position to become flourishing adults. Becoming a flourishing adult might be one way to describe someone who has given their lives to the rule and reign of Christ. We are to help our children to this end, by developing in them an awareness of their need for Christ and evidence of his goodness. This can be a challenge in a broken world where it is much easier to see and conform to the brokenness all around. Living as a follower of Christ requires purposeful effort that is directed by the Holy Spirit.

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## CONCLUSION

Parents - we will not always know what to do and often will not know how to specifically assess many actions we take. What we can know is the Lord is with us, and he is for us. Seek the wisdom that is from above and interact with your child in a way that fosters healthy connection. Parents have been given this role and responsibility. The Lord has good works for parents to carry out (*Eph. 2:10*), and it pleases the Lord and aligns with his instruction when we purposefully engage life, seek his wisdom, and grow a loving relationship with our children. In doing so, we positively impact the character of our children for the Lord.