



## [Ephesians 6:4](#)

(4) And fathers, do not provoke your children; but bring them up in *the* nurture and admonition of *the* Lord.

*A Faithful Version*

In [Ephesians 6:4](#), Paul directly addresses fathers. Connecting it to [Colossians 3:21](#) will give us a broader view of what Paul is addressing: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." Mothers can also have this problem, but fathers are by nature far more likely to commit this child-training error. This verse is more clearly rendered, "Do not embitter or exasperate your children lest they become discouraged." The words "to anger," as in the King James Version, are not in the Greek text. The apostle is encouraging parents not to do things to their children like being overbearing, constantly finding fault, and nagging. The final phrase indicates, ". . . for fear that the child will become listless, moody, or sullen."

Paul appeals to parents to train their children thoughtfully, so that their children's characters and personalities are formed without self-esteem being destroyed. He allows for correction, but at the same time he urges [patience](#) with the children's inexperience. Correction should never be revenge. It must be given for the child's good but always within measure to the infraction.

His directive in [Ephesians 6:4](#) is stronger; it could easily be translated, "Do not enrage your children to anger." Discouragement, growing from exasperation, tends to lead a person to give up. By contrast, enraging inclines a person to fight back stubbornly. Neither is good, but the anger is the worse of the two.

The words translated as "provoke" and "wrath" are exactly the same word in Greek. The verse can legitimately be rendered as, "Do not enrage your children to enragement." We might say, "Do not arouse your children to rage." Overall, Paul is teaching us not to promote an angry mood or disposition in our children. Doing so may boomerang on us because children will eventually reflect the disposition of the parents. Firmness in

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correction is fine, but men, especially, must be careful about their temperament when they give correction. Paul is talking about injustice, [favoritism](#), over-correction, neglect, and physical cruelty in correction.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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