

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF FATHERHOOD

FATHERHOOD'S "DO NOTS"

The “do not” is perfectly clear, because it literally means, “*do not provoke your children to anger so they begin to seethe with resentment and irritation.*” The *New English Bible* captures the idea very well: “**You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment.**” The directness and simplicity of this “do not” invites us to do some honest thinking about the ways we goad our children to exasperation.

Irritability

We have all seen it — and perhaps done it! The father walks in the door after a pressured day, preoccupied, with brow furrowed. His three-year-old comes running to him, but Dad is busy unburdening himself to his wife. “Just a moment, Jimmy.” Jimmy tugs at his father’s trousers — no response. He tugs again! His father explodes, picks him up, and swats him hard for being “**rude.**” Only the Lord knows how many children “**lose heart**” because their fathers have “**hard days.**”

Life is sometimes like the cartoon where the boss is grouchy toward a worker; his employee, in turn, comes home and is irritable with the children; his son then kicks the dog; the dog runs down the street and bites the first person he sees — the boss!

We fathers must never let our pressures drive us into this unhappy cycle. The costs are too high!

*Some say you treat your fellow man
on the level.*

*But when you are home with the wife and kids,
are you mean as the Devil?*

Your kids know!

Inconsistency

Few things will exasperate a child more than inconsistency. Pity the horse that has a rider who gives it mixed signals, digging his heels into its side and pulling the reins at the same time. Pity the child even more who has the rules changed by a capricious father, and who is always exasperated because of the conflicting messages he receives.

Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

Fathers, you may forgive yourself by saying, “I’m so busy ... Memory isn’t my thing ... I’m just a spontaneous person!” But your children will not.

Be consistent. *Never ever* make a promise to your children you do not keep! Do any unfulfilled promises come to mind? Horseback riding that never happened? Trips to the ice cream store or the ballpark? *You* may forget, but you have a little boy or girl who will remember it eighty years from now.

Favoritism

One of the most exasperating and damning sins a father can commit against his children is favoritism. I say this despite being the last one who would suggest you should treat all your children alike. Some children need more discipline, some need more independence. Some need more structure, some need less. Some need more holding than others. Some need more encouragement. But no child should be favored over another.

Favoritism was the damning sin of Isaac, who favored Esau over Jacob. Ironically, it was also the damning sin of Jacob, who favored Joseph over his brothers. Like favoring father, like rejected son! How crushing, how disheartening to know that you are less favored — less loved.

Men, the great “**do not**” of fatherhood is, “**Do not exasperate your children**” — and life tells us what the resulting “**do not**s” of this are:

- Do not be critical.
- Do not be over strict.
- Do not be irritable.
- Do not be inconsistent.
- Do not show favoritism.

God has created our children with their hearts turned toward ours. Our power is awesome! We must take God’s Word to heart.