



## The Prodigal Father

*Ephesians 6:4 -- And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

*Proverbs 17:6 -- Grandchildren are the crown of old men, and the glory of sons is their fathers.*

### Introduction

1. The word “prodigal” means “squanderer, waster, user of one’s means, and finally reckless extravagance.” The parable of the prodigal son is a tragic story of wastefulness that is sin, bringing with it fearful consequences.
2. Our concern, though, is not about the prodigal son back then, but about the many prodigal fathers of today, fathers who also are wayward in their duties to their children, like Eli was to his sons, Nadab and Abihu; or like David was with Absalom. Such fathers waste their substance, squander their influence and opportunities, or sacrifice their glorious position of “fatherhood” by neglect and careless and indifferent living.

### A. The Responsibility & Obligation of Fatherhood

1. A man is to be, in the image of God, an honorable father to his family.

*Ephesians 5:22-24 -- Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

*Ephesians 6:1 -- Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

2. He must be a provider for his household, although this implies more than just bringing home the bread.

*1 Timothy 5:8 -- But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.*

3. He has the responsibility of nurturing and admonishing (Ephesians 6:4 - KJV). “This is the whole training and education which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonition, now reproof and punishment.” -- Thayer

4. Concerning education:

*Proverbs 22:6 -- Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*Deuteronomy 6:6-9 -- And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; 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. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

5. Concerning reproof and punishment: Modern day thinkers say this stifles initiative, creates frustration and makes a child sadistic. However, discipline is essential. It produces response toward authority, whereas, laxity paves the way for crime and misbehavior, or general disrespect for order in society. It makes a well-ordered family and family affiliation. It is essential to the well-being of the child (according to God).
6. Roul Tunley (author of “Kids, Crime and Chaos”), after reviewing delinquency patterns in 20 nations said, “I never saw a delinquent who had a good, strong relationship with his father.” Those who know, blame parental indifference as an important contributing factor in the unusual behavior of present day youth. A little more parental discipline in the formative period teaches respect and right doing that stays with the child until maturity.

*Proverbs 23:13-14 -- Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.*

## B. Too Many Too Busy Prodigal Fathers

1. The power of a father's influence cannot be over-estimated.
2. David was a prodigal father who destroyed influence with his immoral conduct in his experience with Bathsheba. It had a direct influence on Amnon who ruined Tamar, his sister, for life.

*2 Samuel 13:1,14,19,22 -- Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her... However, he would not listen to her, since he was stronger than she... And Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her long-sleeved garment which was on her; and she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went... But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.*

3. The destiny of a child is not the responsibility of the church, the school, etc. It is the responsibility of the parents, especially the fathers.
4. As an illustration: At the state fair, a hog took the blue ribbon whose keeper was a small boy who was stunted by smoking and given to profanity. As a boy, he was the poorest specimen at the fair, yet the same man reared the boy and the hog! The father knew all about hogs, but little about raising a son!
5. Though they hold within their possession the power to make something great out of their children, the prodigal father wastes his opportunities and his responsibilities.
6. We should study our children, recognize their capabilities, and encourage them. Lose this opportunity and it will never be redeemed!
7. Eli was a man of position. But his life came to ruin, shame and the loss of the souls of his sons because he did not try to correct them.

*1 Samuel 3:11-14 -- And the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.*

8. Tomorrow is too late for our children are growing rapidly. Some day they will leave and you will never have enjoyed them or even known them.
9. Scientific study shows that the ten greatest fears were: money, security, health, politics, etc. But not one expressed concern over their children.
10. A preacher once talked to a young man about to be executed, and asked if he was ashamed of the reproach he had brought upon his father. The young man replied: "When I would go to my father and ask him something, he would say, run away lad, I am busy. My father was busy writing his treatise on the law of trusts. Well, he finished his book all right, and here I am."
11. Prodigal fathers squander their love. Louis Poeter, director of Juvenile relations in Savannah, Georgia, once said: "Children do not need perfect parents, but they do need warm, human, understanding parents." Children need to feel wanted, loved and valued. Mental illness and spiritual depravity often springs from a feeling of not being wanted.
12. It is better, as a father, to make a life rather than a living, to set right examples, to spend time in training our children. It is time well spent with them. It is the model they will have in training their own.