

One BRMC Small Group Study

The Attentive Father

Leader's Guide

Please note that this study guide accompanies the pulpit sermon on 21 June 2020. The suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study.

Scripture Passage:
Ephesians 6:1-4

Context:

We celebrated Father's Day on 21 June 2020 and on this occasion, our church continues to explore what it means to disciple future generations. Last month (on the occasion of Mother's Day), we explored what it might mean to give ourselves to prayer, to be a good model, and to give our children to the Lord. In the study this week, we explore what it might mean for us, in a fathering role, to disciple another relative - our children, our family members (nephews, nieces, etc) - and those whom the Lord might impress on us to disciple. We also explore the important roles that we might play in and through our small groups.

Introductory

1. What are the key "not to do" responsibilities set out in Ephesians 6:4? Have there been instances where you have done the "not to do"? What lesson can you learn from those events?
 - Thayer's Lexicon definition of the Greek word *pater*, translated in Ephesians 6:4 as "father", suggests it has been applied also to parents and those in a fathering role, such as teachers and elders in the community.
 - Read with Ephesians 5:21 and the theme of the "household code" (Ephesians 5:21-6:9), the application of the principle not to provoke to anger can be applied to any relationship in the family of God's household. However, in this verse, there is also a particular focus on those who are parents, fathers or in a fathering role, which includes grandparents, teachers, and elders in the community.
 - This is also of particular importance because it relates to the second part of the verse – the "to do" element (which is addressed in Q2 below).
 - The key element expressed in Ephesians 6:4 is not to provoke children to anger, or in other translations "to exasperate", or elsewhere in the Bible, "to discourage".
 - There are many ways that a parent or one in a fathering role can provoke a child to anger, exasperation or discouragement. The words we speak, whether directed at them or at someone else (such as a sibling or friend) could provoke to anger. Behaviour, directed at them or at someone else, could also similarly provoke a child to anger.
 - This is an opportunity for your group to share about their experiences and the lessons that might be learned.

- **For youth and young adult small groups:** the second part of the question may not be as relevant to ask, and leaders could ask members to share on times where they have felt 'exasperated' by their fathers, and what lessons they learnt from their experiences.
 - This is an opportunity for your group to share about their experiences and the lessons that might be learned.
2. What are the key "to do" responsibilities set out in Ephesians 6:4? Can you describe these responsibilities? Are there examples of how these responsibilities have been lived out in your family, small group family or the church family?
- The key element here is to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - This is an opportunity for your group to share about what it means to bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In the NIV the terms used are "training and instruction", in the NKJV it is "training and admonition".
 - For some, this may mean teaching children about the bible, for others it may be the spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading the bible, meditation, and service to build up the body of Christ.
 - In the Father's Day message, Pastor Jeremy raised three points about how we can live out the principles that flow from Ephesians 6:4 :
 - a) Pay attention to our children
 - b) Pay attention to their spiritual nurture
 - c) Pay attention to our marriages
 - As a church family, we are a community being transformed in Christ, we must, therefore, seek to live out Ephesian 6:4 in our homes, yet, we must also, as a community seek to live it out as a body of Christ. For example, the way we treat and care for the children who come to our church; how much priority and emphasis we place on discipling them and nurturing their spiritual walk with God; and how we prioritise family-life amongst the many activities that we do.
 - **For youth and young adult small groups:** This question could be used as a time for members to think about the good that their fathers have done in their lives.
 - In addition, as a small group family, we also have a role. Perhaps you could widen the discussion to include such possibilities, and discuss them in relation to the questions below...

Reflection

3. What changes in your attitude or behaviour do you think is necessary to live out the prescription in Ephesians 6:4?
- Whether you are a father, a parent, a grandparent, a person who has a fathering role or a young person, the responsibilities set out in Ephesians 6:4 are applicable in your own family-unit, your small group family and the wider body of Christ family.
 - This is an opportunity to reflect individually and as a group on the heart-issue. Not to provoke, but instead to bring up training and instruction in the Lord.

- This question is meant to get members to reflect honestly on what is important to them and also their position of obedience towards God. It can also help small group members to get to know each other on a deeper level.
 - In his sermon, Pastor Jeremy raised some difficult issues for parents, such as placing spiritual nurturing before academic pursuits – is this a topic that can be raised for discussion in your group?
4. As a small group, have you been able to bear each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2) to help each other live out Ephesians 6:4? How can we all participate in discipling our children?
- This is an opportunity to reflect on what role the small group family should take in being accountable towards one another. Is the group a safe place to share about times when we have provoked our children to anger? Do we, as a small group, help to bring up our children by training and admonishing them in the Lord?
 - **For youth and young adult small groups:** do you believe you have a role in helping our church live out the prescription in Ephesians 6:4? What role can your small group play in encouraging each other to serve others in this regard? Perhaps you can think of ways to avoid provoking your fellow small group members but instead encourage one another to be more like Christ in love.

Application

5. Whether we are a biological parent to children or not, what steps can we take to live out or encourage others to live out Ephesians 6:4? Perhaps we can use the 3 areas of an attentive parent suggested by Pastor Jeremy:
- (a) How can we pay (more) attention to our children?
- Can we commit to listen to our children; get to know them better; pay attention to their ambitions and desires, their hopes and dreams?
 - How can we as a small group help one another in this regard? For example, if a parent appears to not be listening to their child, can we, humbly, gently, respectfully intercede for the child? Do we have a relationship with each other in the small group to be able to speak into each other's lives?
- (b) How can we pay (more) attention to their spiritual nurture?
- Should this begin with ourselves, within our own spiritual walk with God? Can we encourage them and practice spiritual disciplines with them? Can we commit to family prayer-time; family devotions; or since at this time we are not able to meet physically for service, can we participate in the OneBRMC service together?
 - How can we as a small group help one another in this regard? Are we willing to gather and host the OneBRMC service so that the entire small group and their families can worship together? Are we willing to host an inter-generational small group that

includes young children so that young children can also be disciplined in the small group setting as a family with other families?

(c) How can we pay (more) attention to our marriages?

- Can we build up our marriage according to the “household code”, submitting to one another in love? How do we strengthen our marriages with Christ as our head? Are we willing to model this to our children?
- How can we as a small group help one another in this regard? Can we consider babysitting for our young families so that husband and wife could have a date-night? Can we commit to serve in Church School (with children and youth) and share the burden with other teachers in discipling parents together with their children, guiding where necessary in gentleness and in love?
- There are so many ways we can apply the “household code” and Ephesians 6:4 in our lives, whether we are the parent or not. As a family unit, as a small group family and as a church family, let us continue to find ways to encourage and serve each other in love.

Prayer

6. Write out a prayer for yourself based on what you have heard and learned from this session.

(a) What is in your heart for yourself?

- Perhaps you have the desire to live out Ephesians 6:4:

“Gracious Father, thank you for this conviction in my heart that I must not provoke my child to anger and that I must bring up my child in the discipline and training of the Lord. Help me Father, guide me Holy Spirit, as I submit to You and seek Your ways every day of my life. Amen.”

(b) What is in your heart for others?

- Perhaps you want to help others but you don’t know how:

“Loving Father, help me to be more like You in Your love and grace, give Your heart of Your children. Grant me wisdom, sensitivity and love that I may serve You in my service of others to help bring up the children in our community in the discipline and training of the Lord. Please grant me opportunities and the courage to enter these opportunities by the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

- It is always useful to collate these prayers and to refer to them for thanksgiving and sharing next week.