

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! As the seasons continue to change, so do our lives, and what's going on in them. Just a few months ago we were sitting down being photographed for our new directory, and sooner or later we'll receive the final copies. Last year we had several weddings and this year—this summer, to be a little more precise—we're looking forward to several births and baptisms. School is wrapping up and we're getting ready to have some time off or to do more outdoor activities like sports, yard work, farming, and maybe even going on vacations. Even so, we look again at Luther's Table of Duties and the next pair of vocations in which we might find ourselves.



Luther only uses one book and one chapter to relate God's instruction for parents and children: Ephesians chapter six. To parents Luther cites verse four: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Small Catechism with Explanation, p. 38)." In good Luther-an fashion, then, you parents may ask "What does it mean to 'exasperate' our children?" Looking to the commentary notes of the ESV Study Bible, we find that in the ESV translation, it is "provoke" rather than "exasperate." On top of that, "provoke" may mean to "Move to anger or despair (p.2026)."

Does that mean, then, that parents should just let their children do whatever they please? No, it does not. We must first understand or remember that in New Testament times, children were not thought about much at all. It was not unheard of for fathers to have, as the

commentator puts it, “absolute power over their children.” For that reason, “Paul urges restraint in imitation of God (ESV Commentary notes, p.2026).” So then, how does God act with us, His dear children? With Law and Gospel.

The Lutheranism 101 book puts it this way: if one is content in their sin, then the Law must be applied to produce necessary guilt. But if one is troubled by their sin—or once the Law has done its work—then one should be quick to apply the healing message of the Gospel. This does not mean that children should not be taught that sins have consequences. They do. As we are well aware, if someone gives someone else a black eye, the black eye does not just go away when the Gospel has been applied to the one who gave it. Others have to live with the sin that has been committed. Once the Gospel has been applied, then we are called—and children should be taught to—live with one another in the Gospel, in the Light of Christ where sins are not hidden in the dark, but brought to the light so that Christ’s light might heal them. And then we live together in love. Whose love? Christ’s love, in Christ’s way.

To children, Luther cites Ephesians 6:1-3: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and your mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth (Small Catechism with Explanation, p.38).” I don’t know how many children read my articles, but for any of you who are reading this, I will give you an example I’ve often brought up in Adult Bible Class. My former supervisor, Pastor Fritsche (the one we’ve been praying for in the Dominican Republic who came and preached here a while back) would often sit down and talk with his kids when they were disobeying. He would ask them, “Are things going well for you?” To which they would reply “No.” And he would help them to see that things will generally go better for them if they obey their parents than by not. The same is true for you. Things will generally go

better for you to obey your parents than to not. (The ONLY valid reason to disobey would be if your parents ask you to sin—curfews and the like do not count.) You may not realize it yet, but your parents have been put over you by God and will someday have to answer to Him about how they treated you. It will go well with you to remember that and try to love and serve them as best as you can.

There's always more that can be said with these than I have space to include. Hopefully these thoughts are of benefit for you as children of your Heavenly Father, children of your own parents, and as you try to be parents in the love of Christ Jesus, crucified and risen for you and your children!

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh

from PASTOR EMRICK *of* ST. PETER:

MAY 21st, after our Saturday evening service, (7 p.m.) you are invited to an informational travelogue about the lands of Luther. Rev. Dr. James Wright will present. If you may have an interest in next year's trip to see the sites of Luther, please come. If you are not, but would like to see where some of the great events of our church's birth took place, please come. If you would just like a cookie, you are more than welcome. – Pastor Emrick, Saint Peter, Saint Peter