

Colossians 3:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Analysis

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Paul balances children's obedience with fathers' restraint. "Provoke not" (mē erethizete, μὴ ἐρεθίζετε) means don't irritate, embitter, or exasperate. Present imperative with negative: stop provoking. Fathers with absolute authority must exercise it wisely, not abusing power through harshness, inconsistency, favoritism, or unreasonable demands that crush spirits.

"Lest they be discouraged" (hina mē athymōsin, ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμῶσιν) indicates negative result: children lose heart, become despondent, lose motivation. Harsh, unreasonable parenting produces discouraged, resentful children. Fathers must balance discipline with encouragement, authority with love, correction with affirmation. Ephesians 6:4 adds positive: "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"—parenting aims at spiritual formation, not merely behavioral compliance.

Historical Context

Ancient paternal authority was often harsh and arbitrary. Unwanted infants were exposed (left to die); children received brutal discipline; favoritism was common. Paul's warning against provoking children to discouragement introduced compassionate parenting rare in ancient world. Christian fathers were to reflect heavenly Father's character—firm but loving, correcting but encouraging, just but

merciful. This humanized childhood while maintaining necessary parental authority and discipline.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you discipline children in ways that correct behavior without crushing spirit or producing bitterness?
2. What provokes children to discouragement—unrealistic expectations, inconsistent discipline, harsh criticism, comparative judgment?
3. How can you balance biblical correction and discipline with encouragement and affirmation that build up?

Interlinear Text

Οἱ	πατέρες	μὴ	ἐρεθίζετε	τὰ	τέκνα	ὑμῶν	ἵνα	μὴ
G3588	Fathers	not	provoke	G3588	children	your	G2443	not
	G3962	G3361	G2042		G5043	G5216		G3361

ἀθυμῶσιν

they be discouraged

G120

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 6:4 (Parallel theme): And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Psalms 103:13 (Parallel theme): Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Proverbs 3:12 (Parallel theme): For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

1 Thessalonians 2:11 (Parallel theme): As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

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