

Colossians 3:20–21—Parenting Advice from Paul and Ben Sira

The letters to Ephesians and Colossians offer the apostle Paul’s advice to children and fathers regarding discipline and obedience. This counsel makes for interesting comparison with the much longer advice offered to fathers by the second-century-BCE teacher Ben Sira, whose words are presented in the deuterocanonical book of Sirach (part of what Protestant Christians call the Apocrypha).

| Ephesians 6:1–4 | Colossians 3:20–21 | Sirach 30:1–13 |
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| <p>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise: “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”</p> <p>And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.</p> | <p>Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.</p> | <p>He who loves his son will whip him often, so that he may rejoice at the way he turns out. He who disciplines his son will profit by him, and will boast of him among acquaintances. He who teaches his son will make his enemies envious, and will glory in him among his friends. When the father dies he will not seem to be dead, for he has left behind him one like himself, whom in his life he looked upon with joy and at death, without grief. He has left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one to repay the kindness of his friends.</p> <p>Whoever spoils his son will bind up his wounds, and will suffer heartache at every cry. An unbroken horse turns out stubborn, and an unchecked son turns out</p> |

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| | | <p>headstrong. Pamper a child, and he will terrorize you; play with him, and he will grieve you. Do not laugh with him, or you will have sorrow with him, and in the end you will gnash your teeth. Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors. Bow down his neck in his youth, and beat his sides while he is young, or else he will become stubborn and disobey you, and you will have sorrow of soul from him. Discipline your son and make his yoke heavy, so that you may not be offended by his shamelessness.</p> |
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