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Sergeant or Personal Trainer?
Ephesians 6:4

In the early 1970's one of the most popular TV shows starred Jim Nabors played the overly enthusiastically, naive and terrifyingly optimistic Private first class...Gomer Pyle. Opposite him playing a very moody, serious and often angry was his sergeant. Good ole' Sergeant Carter. Now Carter was only happy when others were sad. His inability to get Pyle down was very frustrating for him. Carter delighted in barking orders, making the troops suffer and hup to. If they did not respond loudly enough with the appropriate "Yes Sir!" He would admonish them "I can't hear you!"

Now Pyle was not always the brightest guy. He often took Carters commands too literally, but you can't beat the guys desire to please his Sergeant. No matter how poorly Sergeant Carter treated Pyle, old Private First Class Gomer Pyle would be back smiling and saying "Surprise, Surprise, Surprise." He looked to Carter as a father figure, just like a child thirsty for the approval and attention of a father, Pyle looked to this Sergeant. Watching these two we realize that Sergeant Carter had as much to learn about life as Gomer did. Pyle desperately needed to be more skilled in life and grow up, mature. Carter needed desperately to learn how to better treat others. He needed some people skills. The relationship reminds me almost of a father and a son.

I'm going to be speaking this morning primarily to fathers. It seems many of us have a little Sergeant Carter in all of us. We get easily frustrated and then depressed when we blow it, and then we get overly excited about our role of leader in the home and decide we need to be dictator's that strut around the house and bark out commands, looking for the correct response, and loud enough. Do you ever get that way sometimes Dad's? Kids' you can be honest...does dad?

Boy, I sure do sometimes. It especially hits me when I'm tired. Or I've had a bad day. A few too rough conversation. Not very productive. I come home and my angry guns are loaded for bear. It's been rainy all day the kids have been cooped up with mom who's ready to scream.

Then they do that irritating little kid thing. Something in childishness gets broken. Play dough in my bed. Writing on the wall. Something, and the volcano begins to erupt. The voice gets louder and louder. I ask questions I don't want them to answer and then when they do I say something, I ask what was that? I can't hearrrrr Youuuu! Dad's, We all have a little sergeant in us. And unlike Gomer Pyle, our kids don't always respond with an eternal smile. Dad's sometimes we exasperate our kids, we provoke them to anger. We don't want to but sometimes we do. How can we become less of a sergeant and more of a personal trainer in the way we discipline and instruct our children. That is my challenge this morning. Retooling our minds, our actions. Move towards being less of a sergeant and more of a personal trainer of your kids.

Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6:4. The first half of Ephesians chapters 1-3 are filled with doctrine, the second half is packed with the practical. Were going to be tickling in the second practical half of the book this morning. The key verse in Ephesians is found in 5:18 Be filled with the holy Spirit. Verse 21 Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. The author Paul then goes on to explain how the spirit filled life should work it's way into our relationships. First the marriage relationship, then the Parent-child relationship, and then the employee-boss relationship. This morning we will look at the second of those. Specifically the relationship a spirit filled father is to have with his child. Read with me Ephesians 6 verse 4. (READ)

And..Father's don't provoke your children to anger. And..That Greek word Kai closely links it to the previous verse dealing with children's need for obedience based on their love for the Lord. That "And" link closely links the children's obedience to a fathers need to discipline "in the Lord" without sinful provocation. Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord" but fathers be very careful that you are not provoking them to sinful anger.

Point Number One. Dad's Don't be a Sergeant! I do not think that this first sentence in verse 4 was placed here on accident. Paul knew that we dad's are prone to let the Sergeant Carter in us come out and get the best of our children. Here's a negative command for us guys. Stop provoking your kids. Avoid those attitudes, words, actions those hot buttons that cause them to get frustrated and angry. Be careful not to

overdisciplining. Don't be excessive, severe. Don't publicly humiliate you child. Stop your inconsistent threatening and repeating. Don't spew out punishments that you will never follow through on, or should never follow through on. "I'm going to ground you for a year!" You'll not talk on that phone until your 18!" Fathers don't nit-pick. Don't harp on the petty rules. Don't play favorites with the kids. Stop the condemnation, the guilt trips and constant nagging. We dads' know the buttons that goad them into anger.. Don't do it. They only are a source of discouragement, frustration and anger. Father's do not provoke you children to sinful anger. That's the way of the world. You are not a sergeant. You are not a dictator. That's the way the Roman society operated. The Roman idea of fatherhood was absolute power Patria Potestas. Dionysius writes that Roman law gave full power to the Fathers over his sons. He could do anything, if he thought it was best for them to be put in prison, whipped, put in chains, or even put to death. This was true even if the son was a grown adult in public office. The father was one who decided if the baby born should live or die, or if an unwanted daughter should be sold or killed. The mother had no legal power, because it was the father who was held accountable for his children. In Roman lands the fathers powers ended at death. In Greece the power ended around age 60 and was handed off to the eldest son. Paul's writings were radical for it time. Fathers do not provoke your children to anger. Be subject to one another in the fear of the Lord. It is important that though the father is placed in the role as the servant leader of the home, that power is not absolute. It must be guarded against worldly abuse.

Dad's we need to control ourselves to move away from a Sergeant. What does a sergeant do best? He is very quick to point out the wrong stuff. Very detail oriented. He cares little to the purpose, little about the heart of the private. He just wants them to do their job and do it right. Sergeants are focused on the gaps. They look only at what's missing...not the whole picture. That focus can lead to a real frustration for our kids. When we look at our kids and are more concerned with what's missing and how they need to get their, they perceive this as performance based love. That performance based love can produce anger and frustration and also a lack of security. Dad only loves me when I do

well. When I'm winning he's cheering when I'm not He gives me the silent treatment. Dad's that is a sergeant! Catch you child doing something right. Bobb Biehl said, "Until we have a significant person love us unconditionally, we will struggle with self-acceptance and performance." Dad's God has placed us in that significant position to give our kids a great start. Dad's don't be a sergeant! Stop the cycle. Don't pass on to your kids what was modeled to you by your dad. You be the one who breaks the cycle of performance based love and gap focused thinking. Provoking your kids to needless anger erodes respect for you. It weakens your leadership in the home. Paul states right up front in talking to fathers, Don't provoke your children to anger. It's never too late to stop. The time is now stop being a sergeant

So if we are going to work on being less of a sergeant, we are going to need to replace it. We keep on failing in the wrong things because we fail to do the right things. Most fathers don't want to provoke their kids to sinful anger. We want to stop. How can we become less gap focused more love focused. Paul here encourages us fathers to move in Spirit filled living in our relationships with our kids. Replace the bad with the good. Don't be angry BUT, contrast. Be a personal trainer of your kids. Bring them up...Let's stop right their. Bring them up. That word. Ektrephete is the exact same word used in 5:29 nourish. To bring up is to nourish, provide nutrition, love, cherish. Now remember Paul would probably not say these things we need to be doing if they came naturally to us. They don't it's tough. It takes work. But the payoff is great. It's worth it because we prove we are filled with the spirit.

Point 1 under personal trainer. A personal trainer dad is one who leads the way. Here we are encouraged to bring. That word is not send. It's bring. Dad's you are not going to be the personal trainer your child needs if you tell him all the rights things to do and then do not do it yourself. If you send them to church and sit at home watching TV you are not bringing them up. If you send them to read the bible and do not read with them or model reading your bible. You are not bringing but sending. Children do as we are not as we say. One who brings, takes along. The one who is bringing is the leader showing the way. He is the initiator. The one brought is the responder. The one bringing is modeling. Dad's do your kids see you growing? Do they at least see your

attempts to grow in maturity in the Lord? How can we give to them something we ourselves do not possess? Guys lets starts by a decision to be the leader that God calls us to be. We aren't perfect. None of us have arrived. Inherit in that word Bring is a process. It's not a light switch we can turn off and on. We all struggle, but which way are you heading? More towards a godly model or away from it? More a personal trainer or more a sergeant?

Fathers "Bring up" Notice it does not say mothers. We fathers are responsible to God for discipline. We are to discipline and often it seems we abdicate, give up that responsibility to our wives. We are responsible for the corrective training of our kids. Discipline where we also get the word. Disciple line. This is training that corrects and molds and sometimes also involves punishment. So often I hear the adults complaining about kids these days. They are so wild, so rebellious, so undisciplined much more than when we adults were kids. I question what has changed. Did your kids have a choice in which parents they would choose? Did they come in with more of a nature to sin than you did? True the children have a responsibility and choice to obey "in the Lord", but parents are responsible for the discipline of their child. Folks, the main reason the kids are the way they are today are because fathers have failed to discipline the kids in the Lord. We are not modeling, training and breaking their sinful selfish will. We must be an agent of God in their lives to break their sinful selfish will. A strong willed child that is molded and directed may turn out to be an ambitious, successful, and driven...but not Godly. To be Godly, any of us, we must first have our own selfish will broken. Do we fathers, allow our children to feed their selfish will? Do not equate discipline with breaking the wrong thing. I did not say break their spirit...I did not say to break their motivation. I said we need to assist God in breaking their selfish will. To discipline, disciple it means to become like someone. Disciples of Christ we want to become like him. Are you a model worth following?

Personal trainers are Dad's who lead the way and take responsibility for discipline of their children. Personal trainers are also responsible for instruction. There is an aspect of teaching isn't there? We are responsible to teach our children in the Lord. Teaching implies a strategic imparting of knowledge. Teaching is a process. Teaching

demands some strategic planning. What are your goals for teaching your children. Do you know what the teachers in Sunday School are teaching? Have you a plan to teach them the things of the Lord at home? If you want to teach your children you must think about how your going to do that. Shoot at nothing and be guaranteed you'll hit your goal every time. What if the teachers at school had the same planning for teaching your kids as you do? What if they just applied a shoot from the hip teaching style. I'd be in their office so fast it would make their head spin. You mean you don't have a plan of what your going to teach? Is this not convicting men? It can be overwhelming. But where are we going to start? We are responsible. What does God want me to teach my boys this year? What does god want you to teach your girls? The personal trainer father is one who disciplines and instructs in the Lord.

Is it worth it? You bet. It's an investment. What kind of return do you get watching TV with your kids?? Pretty low. What kind of return do you want on the time you spend with your kids?

It's also a spiritual ministry. It's done "in the Lord" By disciplining and instructing your kids you are fulfilling the great commission to go and make disciples.

Relationship. That's really number one isn't it. The dad's relationship with God must be #1 in order to pass that on to the kids and have a spirit filled relationship with them.

Maybe your not a sit down and lecture dad. That's great. Talk from life experience. Tell stories about how you made it through tough times and how the truth of the Bible is seen. connect life experience to the Bible. Show how it's relevant practical. Sit down and decide what truths your kids need to learn and then pray about the best way to teach them.

Do you tell them stories at night? I sometimes tell "Freddy" stories. Now Freddy is a little boy just about Nathaniels' age and for some reason he gets into some of the same stuff that Nathaniel does. I tell this story really about his day, but in the third person so we can talk about the right way to respond.

Are you fathers dating your daughters? How are they going to learn how a godly man should treat them on a date if you don't? They need to know that a godly man is more interested in her heart than her

body. Are we training our children? If not there are plenty of teachers out their ready to teach...but they won't be the things we want them to learn.

Father's don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up. Don't be dictator, be a discipler. Don't crush..challenge. Don't incite but excite. don't irritate. Irrigate and nourish. Don't spout mandates, but mold. Don't terrorize but train. Don't break them down but build them up. don't be a sergeant...be a personal trainer. Folks we must treat our kids as though we won't have them next year. We must train our kids as though they won't have us next year.