

Happy promotion Sunday. If you are new, that means we have some new little ones in here. And some 5th graders have graduated to the youth group – weird for some of us parents – life is a mist, time flies, redeem the days, you’re going to die soon, hell is hot, eternity is long, Jesus is Lord. / Kids – all of you – I am so glad you are in here. This church values you deeply.

Here at SS, we intentionally include children in “big church.” We know this is different from most churches. But, something you’ll hear a lot around here: we are about historic Christian practice. And more important than history is Scripture, where we see the pattern of families together in corporate worship. All through the Bible, OT and NT, children are with their parents – not off in their own room.

We have a lot of kiddos in this church. I think there are like 15 glowing pregnant ladies right now. We average 45 youth in S.S., 55 in preschool and 60 in elementary. Including kids, we average 522 in attendance recently. So, of that 522, 160 of them are young people. Praise God. All that is great, a sign of health. Calvin said that a sign of a healthy church is one that has men that sing and crying babies. By God’s grace we have both, but men – sing even louder. Fill this room.

So, kids are here intentionally – not because we lack kids ministry volunteers. Though, we do lack kids ministry volunteers. Specifically, we need more help for Midweek with various roles: helpers, teachers, games. We could use 4 more for nursery. Reach out to Stephen or Ashley or the office if you are game. We kick off on 8/20 and provide a meal at 5:15 pm then the program is 6-7:20: It’s a great opportunity. If you struggle with evangelism, serve in kids ministry. You have a captive room to teach the gospel.

Today I want to follow in the footsteps in one of my mentors, JE: greatest pastor-theologian America has ever produced. He would often preach to the children. So, kids this sermon is for you specifically. Adults you’re welcome to come along for the ride.

Meet me in **Eph 6:1-4** for our Scripture reading [920]. / First, again, notice that God desires to have you in the gathering. Ephesians is a letter written to the local church at Ephesus. And kids were in there. God acknowledges your presence. Not only that! He addresses you specifically. How kind of our God, right!? He wants to speak to your little ears. / Kids, I want to share with you 9 Ways to Honor God as Child

1. Trust Jesus – this is the main thing. You hear all the time about how glorious Jesus Christ is. Rightly so! He is. Meek, majestic, all powerful yet gentle and lowly, all authority yet loves children. King of Kings and Lord of Lords. **Col 1:15-19**. You know what all that means? Jesus is God. He is trustworthy.

Listen kids, *you* must have personal faith in him. What I mean is it is not enough that your parents believe in Jesus. Or your grandparents. You must too. / Many of you do trust Jesus. You believe he is King. You have for as long as you remember. Praise God. Keep believing. Keep trusting. Keep turning to him and away from sin and self. You will do that your whole life. Keep growing!

A goal is to have a boring testimony. You know what I mean? Sometimes you hear these testimonies where the person went wild, got involved in all kinds of sin and craziness and then God radically saved

them out of that mess. Praise God that he saves wild sinners. But he also saves ordinary sinners. Well-behaved and respectful sinners. You don't want to go live in the world. You don't want a season of rebellion. You want a boring testimony. Here is an example of a boring but beautiful testimony: I was raised going to church: Sunday school, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. I don't remember a time when I didn't believe that Jesus was Lord and Savior. My parents and Sunday School teachers taught me that and I've always believed that. As I aged, I increasingly made my faith my own and started turning from sin and loving Jesus more. So, I am not real sure at what age God saved me. I just know I trust him and love him and want to live my whole life for him." / Kids, just like you don't remember meeting your father for the first time, because he was always there. Same with your heavenly father. Trust Jesus and keep trusting Jesus.

Some of you are asking about being baptized. Praise God. That shows God is at work in your life. But baptism is not something to rush into. You want to make sure you understand the gospel, and understand what baptism is, what communion is, what it means to be a church member because baptism is into the local church. We have a lot of college students that wish they had waited longer to be baptized. Waited till they had matured some. Waited till they could count the cost more. Jesus tells us not to rush into following him. **Luke 14:25-32.** / Most importantly, trust Jesus:

2. Grasp Grace – Know that it is by the grace of God that we are saved. **Eph 2:8-10.** Grace means you don't earn it by being good. / Childhood, in good homes, involves *lots* of rules. And many of you have very good parents and good parents are strict parents. Parents who say no a lot and have clear boundaries. Parents that love their children will discipline them. Children need rules and need to obey their parents. *But* a danger is that you think this whole thing is about rule-keeping. There are rules. Commandments and laws, but God's love does not depend on how well you obey. That would be by works not by grace. Commandments are not the engine but the train tracks. We need train tracks but grace is the engine gets us going.

God loves you. You are going to have bad days. You are going to sin against God. You are going to mess up at school. You are going to disappoint your parents. You are going to because you are a sinner. As we all are. Welcome to the Christian faith. But here's what you have to remember and remind yourself and preach to yourself: 1 Tim 1:15: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Jesus Christ came to save sinners by grace through faith. / Your identity is to be in Christ. **Col 3:1-4.**

3. Obey Your Parents. Kids if I had to boil down the whole thing for you: trust Jesus, love God, love others, obey your parents. Simple. Not easy but simple. Eph 6:1: children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. The main way to honor God as kids is to obey your parents. God calls you to obey them and God calls them to discipline you. If they didn't, they would not be honoring God. / You need to know this: they spank you because they love you. In fact, if they didn't spank you, God says they would hate you. Prov 13:24: "Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them" (NIV).

Sometimes teacher may tell you not to listen to your parents. Sometimes doctors. That's bologna. Run the other way. Little friends, some of us almost destroyed our lives by not doing what our parents told us. So many people have this story. Obey your parents.

4. Love your neighbor. In Matt 22, Jesus said the great commandment is to love God with all you are and a second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. / Particularly for those of you with siblings: Again, God's call on your life is simple. Again, not easy but simple. The main way you will follow the Lord is trust Jesus, obey your parents, and love your siblings. That is 90% of your Christian life until you leave the nest. / "as yourself" do to them what you would want them to do to you. Golden rule. Eph 4:29: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." This week, work on this: make it your aim to build them up. God will give grace to them through your words. What a privilege and responsibility.

5. Deny Yourself. Listen to Jesus' invitation: if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. A tendency of youth is to be selfish. I'll tell you a secret: that's a tendency for us adults as well. Jesus first call was to deny yourself. Mrs. White often says work on JOY: Jesus, then others, then self. Deny yourself and serve others.

6. Seek Wisdom. Listen to Prov 4:7: "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." Get wisdom. Wisdom is living skillfully in the fear of God. It is knowing the right things but also how to live them out. / A really easy way to seek wisdom is to absorb the Proverbs. There are 31 Proverbs so make a habit to read the Proverb of the day. Today would be Prov 10.

Start those kind of good habits now. Tolstoy said the second half of a person's life consists of the habits they acquired during the first half of their lives. What you are doing now will affect the kind of adult you become. So, seek wisdom. God wants to speak to you through His Word. And right now, your brains are spongy. Take advantage. They get crusty once you get my age and beyond. Can I get a witness? You all can memorize a verse a day and now it takes my 9 days for a verse. / Seek wisdom and avoid the opposite of wisdom: foolishness and listen kids, most of what you will find on screens is foolishness not wisdom. Garbage in garbage out.

[As you think about gaining wisdom, especially you older kids, begin thinking about marriage early. Don't date early. Dating is for marriage. If you are not getting real close to being ready for marriage, you are not ready to date. Three times the Bible says do not awaken love until the appropriate time. Dads, lead out here. Lead, love, provide, *protect*. Young people, many of you will be schooled for 12 years, some 16, some 20, I went for 35 (think I'm done – Alicia says so) We need to have 5 graduations before Daddy has another one. But you know what is so much more important? Being a wife, mother, husband, father.

When you think about college, know that only 27% of college grads work in a field related to their major.¹ Your vocation may change many times, but if you are called to M, that will remain the same.

¹ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/08/02/new-data-track-graduates-six-popular-majors-through-their-first-three-jobs>

Learn, interview, watch, read – to prepare yourself early for marriage.² Listen to my Puritan guy Richard Baxter: “Think not that you are entering into a state of mere delight, lest it prove but a fool’s paradise for you. See that you be furnished with marriage strength and patience, for the duties and sufferings of a married state, before you venture into it . . . To marry without all this preparation, is as foolish as to go to sea without the necessary preparations for your voyage, or to go to war without armour or ammunition.”³ An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.]

7. Be very careful with peers. The Proverbs talk a lot about making the right friends. 1 Cor 15:33: bad company corrupts good character. / Every school has 3 teachers: teacher, curriculum, and last and certainly not least: peers. There is a fantastic book called *Thoughts for Young Men* by J.C. Ryle: “Believe me, the importance of this advice cannot be overstated. There is no telling the harm that is done by associating with godless companions and friends. The devil has few better helps in ruining a man’s soul. Grant him this help, and he cares little for all the armour with which you may be armed against him. Good education, early habits of morality, sermons, books, regular homes, letters of parents, all, he knows well, will avail you little if you cling to ungodly friends.”⁴

Courage

8. Guard your heart – What does that mean? Wear a bullet proof vest?! Eat Cheerios instead of Frosted Flakes? Probably some wisdom there, but no, I don’t mean protecting your physical heart. Prov 4:23: “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (NIV). In the Bible, the heart is a metaphor for the center of your person. All that you do flows from your heart. It’s the headquarters of motivation. You do what you do because your heart.

That’s important to know. So, for example if you get mad or sad – ask “what is going on in my heart?” Jesus gives us clean hearts, but we still must guard our heart. In the Bible, the heart and the mind overlap. Guard your heart and your mind. You need to know we are in a war.

Children, you have an enemy. We call him Satan, the enemy, the devil, the accuser. He’s a liar. Jesus says the devil is the father of lies in John 8. His native language is lying. That’s what he does. He wants you to believe lies. Kids, if the devil wants you to believe lies, how can he get them to you? There are lots of ways but one of the main ways the Serpent speaks today is through screens. They bring in lies, and they distort thinking about the self, tell you that image is all that matters, or that being liked by others is most important. And there is a lot of very harmful pictures and videos that are really bad for your developing brain.

Some of you don’t understand or won’t understand why your parents won’t give you a smartphone. It is because they love you and want to protect you from believing lies. Study after study after study after study has shown that smartphones are bad for children’s mental health. / Guard your heart.

² [not looks pig snout] Godliness wisdom discernment self-control self-aware loves God’s design industrious not lazy treat their parents with respect and love

³ Ayers, 221.

⁴ Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*, 50.

9. Value the local church. I know we say we go to church but church is not *this* building, but *these* people. The church is the bride of Christ. Jesus bought this people with his own precious blood. The church is extremely valuable to God so it should be valuable to us. Look forward to coming here. Keep your parents accountable to coming here. If they try to skip church for some extracurricular activity – tell them to get their priorities right. Remind them that there is a 0.01% chance of going pro in anything but 100% chance that you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Kids, when you come, be ready to hear from God's Word. Sit up with your Bible out. Take notes. Try to have one takeaway. Parents, on your way home ask them for one take away from the sermon / If you were born here at SSBC, and your parents are faithful, and they come to S.S. and Midweek, that's roughly 3 sermons or Bible lessons a week. Just think, by the time you graduate from H.S., you will have heard almost 3,000 teachings on the Bible.

Children, we love you, we are excited you are here, and we want to help you: trust Jesus, grasp grace, obey your parents, love your neighbor, deny yourself, seek wisdom, pick the right friends, guard your heart, and value the local church.

Benediction: Jude 24-25