

Amen. Aren't you glad the battle belongs to the Lord? Please be seated. The battle belongs to the Lord is an appropriate song. It would have been okay to introduce marriage last week, but it's also good for the sermon today on raising children.

We're in a battle for the heart and souls of our children today and all the children God has placed around us. I say a battle because there are 3 full time enemies working against us and working against our children. Number 1 is Satan, Who desires for children to worship Him, desires them to be destroyed and to spending eternity apart from God. The second enemy is the world. The world's at work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week trying to Squeeze and mold our children into their sinful lifestyle.

They're trying to attract them, to addict them to things that They pull them away from God and poison their hearts and their minds. And the third enemy is themselves. Our children are born with a nature that drives them to sin and sometimes our children are their own worst enemy. My mom, tells me a lot of stories about when I Was little and most of them were before I had a memory. And, she said I was very creative one time as a as a baby.

I was in my crib and and I decided that I apparently wanted to paint, and I used my dirty diaper like Bob Ross uses acrylic paint. I painted my bed, I painted my sheets, I painted the wall, and I painted myself. And apparently, when she found me she took time to take a picture, because it was in my baby album. I can barely change a dirty diaper. I cannot imagine cleaning that up, cleaning up after a baby like me.

Our children are like cute, tiny, rebellious pagans living in our home. And sometimes it can get messy. God has given us the task to raise them in such a way that they become followers of Jesus Christ. So we have our work cut out for us because There's all these things working against us, but praise God, He is working for us. Our marching orders from God are to raise our children to know Him.

Ephesus was a rough place to raise children. It was full of idolatrous worship everywhere you looked. The culture was Completely set against God. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? We're gonna turn to Ephesus.

We're gonna be in chapter 6. We're gonna be in Ephesians and if you would would you please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. Ephesians chapter 6 verse 1. Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. Honor your father and mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise. If you honor your father and mother things will go well for you and you will have a long life on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather bring them up with the discipline and instruction That comes from the Lord. Let's pray together.

Father, you know the state of our country. You know the state of our own homes. The state of the world, we need you. And so Father, we ask for your instructions for our own rebellious hearts. We ask for your instructions for our children, for the parents in this room, and for all those listening with us.

We ask so that you would be honored and glorified in our lives. So teach us this morning Through your word and through your Spirit, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you. Please be seated.

After watching a news report about Crime in the big cities. A husband was shaking his head, and if you watch the news very long you're probably shaking your head too. And he said, Honey, where did our generation go wrong? And she said, we had kids. Everywhere we look we see division.

Everywhere we look we see rebellion, we see anger And it's all over. It's everywhere. It's not just sometimes in our own homes. It's on the streets. It's on TV.

It's everywhere we look. Society has tried self esteem coaching. It's tried setting high standards. They've tried setting low standards. They've Pride setting no standards.

They give everybody a trophy, they give nobody a trophy. They tried more education, they tried less education, They tried sex education. They've tried no education and it's pretty obvious that none of it is working. When all else fails, What? Read the instructions.

Right? That's why we are here in Ephesians because everything else has failed. Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord for this is the right Thing to do. God has already just gotten through speaking to husbands and wives and now He's speaking to children. Now, I will tell you this was probably a shock.

It was read in the church and it was read out loud, this letter from Paul that God had inspired, and it was probably read out loud to the to the congregation. And there is a very, very little that is addressed in public in the Hebrew culture to children. And so when they heard children, I'm sure their ears perked up because nobody talked to the children back then. Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord for this is the right thing to do. Obey your parents.

Now, obey your parents. Of course, we can all understand that does not mean if you're parents, like some of my family, extended family. In the mafia that doesn't mean you have to go hold up a truck. Okay. This doesn't mean you after break the law or that you accept abuse.

He is speaking of the normal order of God's design. Children are under the authority of their parents. Period. God gave some reasons. 1st, because you belong to the Lord.

Children you belong to God and so, Excuse me. As a person who belongs to God, you give yourself to him. You submit. Every person who follows Jesus is called to obey Jesus no matter what. Every child is called to, excuse me, Obey their parents, no matter what.

I told you we had an enemy and he just crawled in my throat. We're also called to obey the authorities God's placed over us. God said and obey your parents because you belong to me. And then he said it's the right thing to do. No child begins life knowing more than their parents Not one of us wakes up going, well mom and dad it's a good thing I'm here.

Matter of fact when we first wake up we can't even talk. We can't communicate except by screaming and sometimes looking cute which is why we get to stick around. Then he said, obey because it's his design. This is the right thing to do. And then he said because he loves them.

Children obey because you belong to the Lord. Obey because it's right. Obey because God command, commands it. And then he says, I don't just want your outward obedience. I don't just want you looking like you're obeying but you're not okay inside because everybody's seen that.

You'll do what you have to do so that you don't get punished, but you're not doing it for the right reasons. And so He goes to verse 2, Honor your father And mother, this is the first commandment with a promise. If you honor your father and mother, things will go well for you and you will have a long life on the earth. I don't know about you, but if I disobeyed and did not honor my father, my life would have been shorter and I wouldn't have things would not have gone well for me on the earth. There are some earthly authorities that can shorten our lives.

Honor your father and mother and he said this is the first Commandment with a promise. It is the first commandment that applies to parents and so He is sitting here going, this is the 5th commandment and He said, This command has a promise attached to it that when you obey, when you honor your father and your mother, Then you have God working on your behalf. Honor your father and mother means not just obedience, it means with respect and with love. That is real honor. So when we honor our father and mother, then we show them respect and love and we pursue that inside and outside.

We don't just act right, we do it for the right reasons. To obey God and honor them. Action and attitude. And then God reminds us that when we obey, we are covered with His protection and His promises. When we disobey, And many of you've been there.

I've been there. When you disobey, you are on your own to experience the lesson and the consequences. My parents Allowed me to buy an air rifle when I was a kid, and they gave me strict instructions on how to use it and where to use it and and then I always had to wear eye protection. I thought it was kind of stupid, because I was shooting that way. Why in the world did I need eye protection?

Until one day I hung my target in front of a concrete wall. And I I wore glasses and I shot and that BB, I had a one of those Daisy pump guns and so It would, it would really scream. It shot

through the target, bounced back and smashed my lens in my right eye. If, I was very grateful The glass didn't go in, but if my glass wouldn't have been there, I would have been one eyed Jack today. When we obey our Father and Mother, we live longer.

Life goes better. Why? Not just because God is gonna protect us, but because we don't do Silly things that endanger us for no reason. Disobedience to parents is not just rebellion against your parents. It is also rebellion against God.

And so when we disobey you might fool your parents but you will never fool God. Fathers do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. This applies to everyone, anyone who raises a child, not just fathers, it applies To mothers, grandparents, anyone who is involved in raising a child, do not provoke your children to anger. That doesn't mean that we have Keep them happy all the time. What it means is we do not lead by anger.

We don't lead by violence. We don't lead by volume. We don't lead by ridicule or sarcasm or emotional outbursts because those things antagonize Nazar children. They provoke them so that they have an emotional reaction. We don't use our position to abuse our children.

That is provocation that results in an angry and rebellious spirit, and it begins a cycle of dysfunction. My father was raised that way and I didn't understand why my father was so messed up until his funeral when my uncle took me aside and said, I just want you to know. My father, finally, he dealt with depression all his life and he finally, he tried to kill himself several times, finally did. And at his funeral, my uncle said, I just, you need to know this. He said, your dad, every day when he came home, He got sent to his room and every day when your grandpa came home, he spanked him.

He said, every single day with a ping pong paddle or a belt. He could do nothing right. Your dad grew up with nothing but pain. That helps me understand, but it also Started a cycle of dysfunction because he wasn't raised the right way. He had a rebellious Spirit.

And as a result, he spent the rest of his short life trying to heal the wounds that had been caused by his raising. So parents, we are not to provoke Our children, that means we need to be available. We need to be available for our kids. Isaiah 4110 says, don't be afraid for I'm with you. Don't be discouraged for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. This is God, our Father's example for us. Don't be afraid. I'm with you.

We need to be there with our children. We need to follow the example of God in in their lives. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will hold you up when you need it.

God lets us know He's with us. Praise God. We are never alone, but we need to let our children know that we are also with them. One of the greatest causes of teen rebellion today is absent fathers from the home. That does not mean that just a single mom raising a child.

Fathers can be absent from the home even when they're in the home. Fathers can be absent from the home in their hearts. Fathers can be absent from the home with your attention. Many women do an incredible job of trying to fill both roles, but I will tell you God designed it to be led by a father. Be consistent.

If we're gonna lead our children, we need to be consistent. It means we need to set clear boundaries and stick to them so everybody understands what to expect. Your children may not appreciate it in the moment, but they will appreciate it later. When our youngest Decided it was time for him to start earning a little money and he wanted to start mowing the yard. Took him outside, filled up the lawnmower, Set the height on the mower and I said, okay.

Now let me show. He said, I don't need you to show me. I've got it. Okay. Here you go.

I said, it needs to look nice when you're done. He said, I've got it. 30 minutes later he came back in the house. He said, okay. I'm done.

I said, well let's go take a look. We went and took a look and it looked like he'd he'd he'd done it blindfolded. There was there was grass sticking up all over the place. I said, well, you you kind of missed a few spots, I'm all over more than anywhere else, and so I said, let's do this again. Let me show you.

He said, No. I don't need you to show me. I've got it. Okay. I didn't get mad.

I just, Okay. So this is yours to do, and he went again, he came back and said, okay, come look at it again. I said, well, It's still not done. And he said, Okay. I said, You want me to He said, Yes, please.

Show me how to do it. And so I showed him how to put one wheel Inside the track of the other wheel so that he didn't miss any spots. Later, a couple of years later, he went to work at Chick Fil A. And he said, man, he said, you know, they're all complimenting me on my work ethic. He said, I do everything right the first time, And he said, I just want you to know that's all because of you.

He said, this job is easy after working for you. Mission accomplished. Be consistent. Help them to understand what's expected and and stick to it because you're not just trying to make it through a day. We're not just trying to make it through a year.

We're trying to help them become men and women who follow Jesus for a life in time. If rules are broken, be consistent with the consequences. Don't discipline from anger. Wait until you can handle it and pray about it and make sure that it is responded to properly. And the next one is be encouraging.

1st Thessalonians 5:11 says, so encourage each other And build each other up just as you are already doing. Hearts thrive on encouragement, And the opposite's true. I guarantee you you have an outfit that is probably your favorite outfit because somebody walked up to you and said, man, you look really good in that outfit. You're like, new favorite shirt? You know, new favorite dress.

I'm, that becomes the one, if I need to feel good about the way I look I'm gonna put that one on because somebody said something. Your children need to know there are things about them that are special. Build them up. Remember the enemy's already working to tear them down. So it is our job to help them build up.

Praise them often and sincerely and in front of people. Be loving. God is loving. He is always seeking to show us his love. So we need to seek to show our children our love.

Hug your children. Hold your children. Remember God's mercy for you is new every morning. Our mercy for our children needs to be new every morning. Children, your mercy for your parents needs to be new every morning.

We need to give each other a chance to start over again. Show your children love by the way you speak and the way you act because I'm gonna tell you something. If you don't, someone else will. If you don't show them love by the way you speak and act, they will find love or what they think is love somewhere else. Love them in actions and words, so there's no doubt in their minds that they're loved.

They may not always agree with your decisions, but don't let them doubt your love. There are no perfect parents. Follow Jesus. Do your best. Trust Him with the rest.

Bring them up in the discipline and instruction That comes from the Lord. Instead of pushing them to anger, God said, lead them to Jesus. Discipline instruction that comes from the Lord is the way we're supposed to raise him. And some people are like at this point, they're like, oh, hold on. You know, Pastor, That's, I have a better idea.

You don't understand. I've I've talked to a child psychologist And God, you know what you're talking about, that Bible stuff is kind of old fashioned and that discipline, You know, the discipline is needed if you build up a child's self esteem. That's hogwash. A whole generation was raised on that non in sense. God said bring them up in the instruction and discipline of the Lord.

Our children are born lost And they're on their way to hell, and it's our job to halt that onward rush and set their feet on the narrow path to heaven. There is no greater task that you and I have than to raise our children to be followers of Christ. Oh Pastor, that's indoctrination. I would never want them to choose for my children. They need to be able to choose for themselves.

Every time I hear a parent say that it makes me want to ask a few questions. Do you let your child choose what to eat? Do you let them play with guns? Do you can they join a gang? Can

your children wander around town and go wherever they want, whenever they want and they'll say no.

Why not? Because it's dangerous. Hell's dangerous. Burning forever apart from God is Fairly dangerous. Why in the world would we want our kids to not eat chocolate cake, but we want to let them wander around Aimlessly hoping one day they make a decision.

God said, no. That is not the way we do this. You raise them in the Instruction and discipline that comes from God. Home is the primary place where the children should learn the Bible and God has given us the task of helping them find him. The Duke of, Windsor said one time when he visited the United States, he said in the United It states, everything is controlled by switches except the children.

Some modern psychologists oppose the old fashioned The idea of discipline. Many modern educators also follow that philosophy. If you discipline them, you might warp their characters. Now I wanna just take a quick poll. Now this is gonna be for all the adults in the room because I don't want the kids It's complaining.

How many of you were spanked as a child? How many of you are grateful that you got spanked as a child? K. I think that's on about right about a 100%. Nobody appreciates abuse.

Nobody wanted abuse and abuse is completely wrong, But for those of us who were corrected, why do we appreciate the correction? Because it set our feet on a better path. We learned. We grew. If we love our children, we need to keep them from the harm that comes from a rebellion And wrong decisions.

Hebrews 12:6 says this, for the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes Each one he accepts as his child. When you and I trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, then it's God's job to discipline us when we need it And he is really good at it. It's easy to set firm rules about not playing in the street because we all know why we don't play in the street. Now to a little child it looks like the street's empty. They don't understand that in a little while a car is gonna come roaring by.

They don't understand the danger and so we set boundaries and rules for them. But I will tell you it's not much more dangerous on the Internet than it is in the street. As a matter of fact, the Internet can sometimes be more dangerous than playing in the street. We don't make any rules about one thing while we make Firm rules about the other. We need to be consistent in our discipline.

It's not easy disciplining children, But if we don't discipline our children, then it leaves them to wander and be in danger. And if I don't discipline my children, then the goes to me when they're harmed. For those who have trouble with that and still struggling, listen to what God says in Proverbs 13:24. Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their children. Those who love their children care enough to discipline them.

It's not my words, these are the words God spoke. In other words, if you don't discipline your children, God Said, it is the same as hating them because you're gonna let them go their own way, which will have consequences for the rest of their lives. Again, he is not talking about abuse. He is talking about proper, loving, godly discipline in their lives. And the Bible records The sad result of parents who did not give godly discipline.

The Bible records all these people and one of my favorite Examples is Eli, the priest of God in the temple all the time, with his sons in the temple all the time. The ultimate pastor's kids. And Eli's sons were terribly evil. They took advantage of women in the in the temple. They stole from people who brought Offerings and they stole from the Lord and and one day God told the little boy Samuel that he was going to judge Eli.

If something didn't Change that Eli was gonna be punished, his sons would be punished. Samuel passed that message on to Eli, but Eli didn't listen because Eli was a priest of the Lord. He stayed doing right what he was doing and his sons continued to do what they were doing until one day his sons both died in rebellion against the Lord. And I want to tell you something. The Bible gives us no indication they were saved.

His sons both died and went to hell in rebellion. Eli fell off the stool he was sitting on and broke his neck when he heard the news. That's sad to think that because a man would not follow the Word of God, but I wanna tell you something. The consequences of our failure to When our children can be painful, when we see the results in their lives. Will they appreciate it?

Absolutely not. Not for a while, but they will later just like all of us do right now. Remember losing it on a kid has never made a better child And it's never made a better parent. Consistent, loving, discipline gives assurance to our children. Here's a couple things to take home with us.

Number 1, let God lead. Let God lead you as you raise your children, as you love them, as you instruct them as you discipline them. Children, trust God. Obey your father and mother and honor them in everything you say and do, and trust God that he knows what he's doing. Parents, make the Word of God your guide for life And for parenting, follow Jesus.

If you ever been in the car with your parents and they get lost, then you get worried. You know, you you can start seeing them fight and bicker and and fuss and and you you don't relax. You're like, oh, my gosh. Where are we? What are we doing?

And kids can get worried when their parents don't know where they're going. But when your parents know where they're going and they're assured, then you kids can relax. So parents, you need to know where you're going first before you're ever going to lead your children there. Young boy came to Sunday school late. He walked in and his teacher knew he's usually on time and she said, is something wrong?



And he said, no. He said today my dad and me were going fishing, but he said my dad told me that I needed to go to church. And the teacher was like, Wow, that's that's impressive. And she said, Well, did your dad explain to you the good reasons why you needed to go to church? And She said, yeah.

He said he didn't have enough bait for both of us. Parents, if you don't go, If you don't see value in a relationship with the Lord, your children won't either. If you don't make church a priority, your children won't either. If you act like you're doing it because you have to, your kids are gonna be a step behind you paying attention. Get your Bible off the shelf.

Get it in your heart and get it in their hearts. The second thing is communicate clearly. Don't assume your children know what to do. We don't. We don't know what to do.

None of us do. Even if they don't agree, communicate Kate. Lovingly and clearly your encouragement and your expectations communicate the results of disobedience. Let them understand That when the consequences happen it's not because you wanted it to. It's not an emotional reaction.

It's what needs That happens so that they get back on the right path. Encourage, praise, motivate, far more than you criticize or discipline. If necessary to discipline, do it in private. Don't criticize your children in front of other people because it it harbors their Spirit. Do it in private.

Do it to bring them back, to restore them to a relationship with you and to a relationship with the Father. And children, You need to clearly communicate as well. Communicate respect and honor for your parents because that's what God asks you to do. Your parents are doing their best. Love them for that.

The third thing is remember what's at stake. Our work at par as parents is not just to control our children. When I was a youth pastor and they said, well, what's your what's your goal? My ultimate goal was not to have a great youth group. My ultimate goal was not to have fun or even have numbers.

My ultimate goal was When they got out of youth group, they would be fully committed followers of Jesus Christ for the rest of their lives. And so everything lined up with this. Everything in your life, in their lives need to line up with their eternal destiny. We're not just trying to control them so they don't embarrass with us. We're not just trying to keep them quiet, so they're not an inconvenience.

We're not just trying to turn out a Doctor or a lawyer. If we just turn out a doctor or lawyer, if we just turn out a productive member of society, if we turn out a child who's just good in public. But they miss Jesus, we've missed it all. Our relationship with God is given as a gift through faith and we need to help our children find that. God gave us His word and we need to use it.

Read it on your own, read it with Your children make family time in the word part of your regular routine. Teach them to pray. Model prayer for them. Children who are hesitant to pray grow up to be adults who are afraid to pray. Children, If you're in here adult children too, all of you are somebody's child, I want to tell you something.

You need to forgive your parents for their mistakes. You need to get over it. God has forgiven you. You need to forgiven you need to forgive them. Let it go.

Follow Jesus. Show them grace. Don't give Satan a foothold in your heart or mind, whether you're a young child or an old child. Don't give Satan a foothold in your heart or mind by harboring resentment or bitterness towards your parents or letting mistakes from the past define you. The last point this morning is pray.

Children, Pray for your parents. Pray with your parents. Pray over your parents. Parents, pray for your kids. Pray with them.

Pray over them. Remember you're never alone and God is always working. Frank believed in God, But he did not want Jesus running his life. He said, I wanted to run my own life, but I was miserable. As a teenager he had a father who was absent all the time, absent from the home.

He said even though his mother tried I ended up getting kicked out of school. They put me in alternative school and he got kicked out of alternative school. He said smoking, drinking and rebellion defined I tried to see how far I could stretch the rules before I got in trouble. I got my thrills and identity from challenging the system, but the more I tried to fill my life with things that Made me happy the more empty I felt inside. Despite the fact his father was in ministry, he knew that wouldn't get into heaven.

He said, I realized at 22. My parents were praying for me, but it took me until I was 22 years old to realize I'd come to the end of my rope. Sin was in charge, not me. He said, there was absolutely nothing I could do to overcome it and suddenly I had an overpowering conviction and I needed to get my life right with God. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.

My years of running and rebellion ended. It was finished. 22 years old Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham finally gave up his rebellion and turned to the Lord. Parents, I want to tell you something. It might not look like what you want it to look like, when you want it to look like it, But you do what God's given you to do and trust Him to do what He does and God will complete the work.

God knows what he's doing. Children, honor God. Trust in Jesus. Honor or obey your parents. Parents, Trust in God, obey Jesus, and lead your children to Him.

Would you bow your heads and close your eyes for just a moment? In this room, everybody in here is a child. Somebody's child, but you're also somebody God loves. And I want to tell you

something, your first priority is to know God, to be made right with God and your sin is in the way. So God sent Jesus, who died on the cross for your sin and rose again.

The Bible says that He did that to pay the price for your sin. He became a sacrifice for you. You need to put your trust and your faith in Jesus, and if you've never done that I'm gonna invite you to do that right now, while you and I pray together. Ask Jesus to forgive you, to put your trust and faith in Him and to turn from your life and follow Him the rest of your life. If you're willing to do that I'm gonna ask you right now to put your faith and trust in Him while we pray together right here.

Dear God, thank you for loving me. Would you please forgive me of what I have done wrong. I believe Jesus paid my price on the cross. Thank you for saving me. Help me to live for you all the days of my life until I stand before you face to face.

If you put your trust and faith in Jesus this morning, the Bible says you've been made new. You're saved. Now your task is to turn and follow Him as His child. And I want you to know that's an exciting journey and I'd love to help you with that. So I'm gonna ask you before you leave today, come find me.

Like everybody in here to look up for a moment. I know every person in this room is somebody's child. I don't know your relationship with your parents. I don't know where you are, but we all have a chance to start new today. Kids, you have a chance to start new with your parents.

Parents, you have a chance to start new with your kids And it's it's time. Here's the place. Start it now. So if your children are close, I'm gonna ask you just to put your hand on their shoulder. If your children are not close, then you just know where they are, like my kids are scattered across Texas.

So, right now I'm gonna be thinking of of my kids. Get your kids in your heart and your mind. Get your parents in your heart and your mind and let's ask God to to bless those relationships right now as we pray together. Father, What an incredible task you've given us to raise children, to love you, and to know you. We pray for your guidance and your provision as we do so.

Forgive us, Father, for all the ways we failed. Inspire us, Father, to do it correctly according to your word. Father, we know that our earthly parents did the best they could. In some cases they were they were not very good parents, You are the perfect parent and we thank you so much for that. Help us to forgive our parents for their mistakes.

Father, let us look past those and look to you, the one who's forgiven all our sin. And let us try to love them and show them your grace and your mercy. I pray that you would help us as we move forward from this place, that our relationship with our children and our parents would be something that honors and glorifies Jesus Christ. It's in His name we pray. Amen.