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SPEAKER

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The Power Behind Christian Family

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Colossians 3:20-21



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It is great to see you as always. If you have in your hand a Bible and if you want to look with me the third chapter of Colossians. If you're new with us, we're in a series, we're just walking through the book. It's about being rooted in Christ and how the gospel can take roots in our heart, and as a result of that, our lives actually became very, very healthy and strong, but also fruitful because of the roots that are in such good soil.

It is really good to see you. I know that as will be the case in each of our services today, maybe for several weeks to come, that we have a... There's a lot of different emotions in the room about what's happening in the world. There's some of you who are really relieved and there's some of you who are really troubled. There's some of you who are really happy and some of you who are really sad.

There's some of you who in your heart, you wonder if things are fair, if there was integrity in the process, and for others you believe that it was so. And the fact is four years ago when this happened and this Sunday after that election, folks came up to me who were both really happy with the outcome as well as really sad with the outcome and they were a little concerned that either I didn't celebrate with them or I didn't mourn with those who were so sad.

I talked about Jesus that Sunday. And it's interesting four years have passed and now I know that those people who were really sad are now really happy, and those people who were really happy are really sad. And this morning I'm going to talk about Jesus again because he's the king. And so that's not to say that if you are troubled that we don't care, it's that the ultimate way that we can care for you is to point you to the refuge of all of life, and that is Jesus Christ.

For those of us who are in this room who have any age on us whatsoever, you're going to... those of you who are younger you're seeing everything that's happening. You're going to find something through life and it's this, you simply cannot put your trust in men to be the savior of the world. They simply cannot do it, men, women, people of this earth. And so I would encourage you to put your hope and your trust in Jesus Christ.

The book that we're studying says that Jesus is the head of all rule and authority, and so we look to him. I would encourage all of us to pray for the process and to pray for our leaders, whoever they are, that God would help them, that God would heal them, that God would save them if they don't know Christ is savior and Lord.

And so I hope today that you'll be encouraged as you walk out with a fresh picture of what we can do in our circle of influence, in particular, in our families, in order to contribute to the health of our society and culture. Let me also remind you that God created the world at peace. It wasn't like this at one point in time, it was at peace.

It's sort of like a pond where all the fishermen and all the fishing lines, they never crossed one another, they never got tangled up. It wasn't until we sinned that the lines crossed. It wasn't until we sinned that various people's emotions looking at the same thing could be so distorted and so different from one another. It wasn't until we sinned against God that we brought with it the absence of peace among men.

And this is what happens, you see, is that when our lines get crossed and we feel selfish is we start pulling and yanking. And any time that we're pulling and yanking on somebody's line and their life that may view things differently than we do and all of a sudden they get angry, it causes a tremendous amount of strife. It causes enormous amount of anxiety and anger.

And it can be so in a friendship, it can be so in a marriage, it can be so in a family, it can be so in a culture, in a nation and even in the world. God looked down upon all the brokenness that our sin had caused among one another. And in an act of sheer love, instead of cutting the line and saying, "Let's just start over," the Bible says that he made a promise that he was going to send a rescuer.

In the fullness of time, we're told that God made good on his promise by sending his son Jesus Christ, who came to this earth. In Colossians chapter 1 verse 20 tells us exactly what he did, he made peace by the blood of his cross. After living without sin, he went to that cross in order to pay for my sin and your sin and everyone's sin, that all who would look to him and believe after he rose from the dead that we would be saved, that the greatest enemy that stands in front of all of us is death.

It's the greatest anxiety of life. It stands before us that one day you are not going to be on this earth and you don't know what it's going to be like exactly and the process that you have to go through in order to die. That whole thing is terrifying. And there's one champion over death in the history of the world.

And what Paul has in mind here and what he is so concerned about and what he's writing about ultimately is he's grieved deep within his soul and this is why. It's because the one champion over death that everybody needs is not seen as relevant by everyone in the world. He's not seen as consequential, he's not seen as important.

And a vast majority of people in his time as well as in ours are living as though Jesus Christ just doesn't matter. He's like a distant star in the galaxy that just has no impact on our everyday life. And this is true even today. We're told today by our social scientists that the youngest folks in our whole culture, generation Z, if you're 23 or under, you fall into that generation, we're told that this generation is more postchristian than any generation since we've been tracking it in our nation.

In fact, a recent poll that went out, I believe it was just six months ago, two people in this generation, which obviously would be the older parts of it. And you're not going to ask a two year old about their faith, right? But they ask them and for the first time, 35% of the youngest generation in our country answered in what's

called the NAA or the NAA group.

Now, it was actually three different groups. N stands for none. Meaning that when a college student is asked, what is your faith? What do you believe? What's the most constant? And they just say I have no religious belief. I haven't thought about it, I haven't really given it much consideration. Or I simply don't know. It's just not a big part of my life. The first A in NAA, none, the second is atheist. This is where I've thought about it and I don't believe there's a God.

And the second A is agnostic, which means, I don't know if there's a God and I don't think we'll ever be able to actually find out this side of whatever it is on the other side of death. And what that means is in the youngest generation, which is the highest percentage ever polled, 35% would say not only is God irrelevant to life, but as a result of that, Jesus Christ who's the one champion over heaven, who's the one champion over earth, who's the champion over death, who's the savior of the world, they look at him and they consider him irrelevant.

In that generation it has bested the previous generations by double in the number of people who actually went from none to atheist. And actually what that means is that there's some who have actually thought about it long enough to actually conclude, you know what... I need to say, as opposed to the millennials, there is twice as many people in generation Z that says, I do not believe that there's a God.

Now, that's a stunning reality where we're at. And ultimately, even though the book of Colossians, there's not a single verse that says, this is why I'm writing, it's to show the world that Jesus Christ is relevant, that you would magnify him with your life. That is precisely what he has in his mind.

He's looking around the Roman Empire of the time. And in this case, these believers in a town, and he's saying the people in your town, they do not understand that Jesus Christ is the only hope that they have not only in this life, but the world to come. And so in chapter one, he gives this vivid description of the majesty and the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

And then he gets to chapter 2 in verse 6, and he's writing to the church and this is what he says to them. He says, "Listen, as you receive Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him." You see, this church, just like churches today in our city, was plagued with a problem, and that is that it became a melting pot of people living in their own neighborhoods, living and shopping in the same places, in the same marketplace and they're looking at other people now from other cultures who have other systems of belief, other philosophies, other understandings of who God is and not everybody's life is a disaster.

And so the church in Colossae is asking the question and they're saying, "Look, we believe in Jesus and he's our main guy. But what if we created this super soil among all the best parts of everybody's faith in order to create one soil that we would actually be able to reach our full potential as spiritual beings?" And so Paul

comes in and goes, “No, no, no.” He goes, “There is one Christ. As you received him, walk in him.”

And then he moves on and in verse 9 and 10, this is what he says. He goes, “For in him, Christ, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” That means that all of who God is is wrapped up in one person’s body and it’s Jesus Christ. And then he says something remarkable. He says, “And for those of you who have trusted in Jesus Christ, his spirit now lives within you.” He says, “And you have been filled in him.”

What that means is this. If you know Jesus Christ as your savior and Lord, you do not need more power, you do not need more Christ. What it means is that you need to learn how to appropriate Christ and the full demonstration of God’s power that already resides within your heart. And so in chapter 3, he teaches us and this church had to do so.

We looked in verse 1 and 2, and what we saw there is he says, look, if you’ve been raised with Christ, that means if you have trusted in Jesus Christ, seek the things that are above. And we looked at the word seek, it means prioritize. It’s the word of the heart, it’s the verb of the heart. And he says, “And then set your minds on things that are above.” This is the verb of the mind.

In other words, he says, look, if you want to learn how to appropriate all the power, all the spiritual power that’s available to you in Jesus Christ, the first thing you have to identify is what has your heart and what has your mind. What do you want most in life and what do you think about most in life? And if you want to appropriate the full power of God in your life and reach your full capacity as a person that’s been created in the image of God, you need to set your heart, you need to want Christ more than anything and you need to think about him more than anything.

Well, then he goes on and he says, now, if you’re actually thinking about him a lot, what you’re going to find is there’s going to be a problem when you look in the mirror. You’re going to look at him and you’re going to see this picture of wisdom and love and then you’re going to look at your life and how you just spoke to your wife, your husband, or to your children, or to your parents, or to your boss, or to your employers and all these kinds of things and you go, “Well, that doesn’t look a whole lot like Jesus.”

And so then we looked at a section and what we found here is this. He goes, look, you have to put off the old self with its practices and to put on the new self. And so we looked at this for, I think, two weeks where there’s a life of repentance, where when we see things in our life that do not look like Christ, we put those off and then all of a sudden what we’re able to do then is to put on the new life that we have in Christ.

Well, then what he does, and this is where we’re at right now. And you’re like, “Where’s he going with all this?” We’re only going to look at two verses today. It’s about the family. Well, but what he wants to do is to frame what I just did, he said, “Now let’s talk about three different areas of life where you spend most of your time and let’s apply this to those areas.”

And the hope of applying them to those areas is this is, is that the people that are observing that area of your life, that they would come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is relevant, that he has changed the way you're living. And not only changed the way that you're living, but when I look at the way you do those things, that looks like a trade up instead of a trade down.

That if that's what it looks like to follow Jesus Christ, if that's what a marriage can look like, if that's what a family can look like, if that's what it means to handle your responsibilities and tiers of authority in the marketplace, if that's what it looks like, then that looks appealing to me. That looks like something I should look into. This is what he has in mind.

And so he talks about three different areas: marriage, so we talked about last week, family, which we'll do today and then next week, which will pique your interest. I know some of you just said, "Just do it now. Let's just go there now," right? He's going to talk about something that's happening in the Roman Empire in a significant way, and that was the presence of masters and slaves in the home and in the marketplace. So we'll talk about that one next week.

But today we're talking about verse 20 and 21, and this is what he says, children obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. So let me pray. Father, I pray for us as the church family, not only as we respond to the events of our day, but as we respond to these words and we think about our own life, our children, our parents, and how we have behaved and are behaving.

I pray father, that you would give us faith and hope, Lord, to be able to live and treat people in our families in such a way that people will conclude that you are relevant to life, that you have the power to change how people live, that you have the power to change how people love and think. I pray for those in the room who feel already defeated as parents, who look back upon their parenting days, maybe even regretting the fact that maybe one of their adult children doesn't even want to relate to them so much these days. I pray that you would give them comfort.

I pray for those who are concerned, who are conflicted as parents, Lord, that you would give wisdom and understanding and hope. I pray for children in the room and at home who may already feel discouraged, who may already have a disposition of anger towards their father and mother. I pray God that you would heal. And in doing so, God, our hope is not just that you would heal our homes for our sake, but you would heal our homes for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ as people observe us and know that we belong to you. So would you help us now? I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

The first thing I want you to see, which is really, it's a truth I'm going to bring up next week. So if you miss it this week, you're like, "He's going to talk about it again." Maybe I won't take such great notes this week, is God empowers everyone with the decision to magnify Christ. And this is a pretty remarkable thing because

of what's happening in the day.

Now, one of the things you have to understand in order to interpret the Bible is what's taking place in that culture, to those people who are receiving this letter for the very first time. Because Paul, the author, is writing to a people who are experiencing something, and it's just healthy to know what that something is. Well, in the Roman Empire, you don't need a Bible to know this.

And so it's in the Bible, but it's also... and there's lots of literature about the Roman Empire, husbands in the context of marriage, fathers in the context of the family and masters in the context of the marketplace held all the cards of authority. They were the decision makers. And subsequently, wives and kids and bond servants, as they call them here in verse 22, they carried no card of authority.

When it came to the home, everything and everyone was the father's property. Now, you don't even like to hear that word property, but that's exactly what the Roman Empire believed. That's how they treated things, that's what the law said. It wasn't just that the head of the household is the man, it's that the man had property and that property was not only his wife or wives, but also all of his children and all of the goods within the home. This is how they believed at the time.

And this is the world that Jesus entered into, where he died. He was in the Roman Empire. And this is the world that Paul was planting churches and was writing letters. This is what they were experiencing. This was the culture of the day. A father had so much authority within the home that if he decided that he didn't want his children to live in the home anymore, he could either remove them either by killing them or just telling them to leave in terms of what we would call...

I actually read this yesterday, it's just stunning. A father could actually, after a child had been born, could look at the child and make a determination at that point in time, they used the word property, do I want this to be part of my property or not? This was the Roman Empire. These believers were saved. They were living in this and all of a sudden they were saved and now Paul is trying to give them clarity how to live within this context.

And what you find when you open up the Bible, this is troubling to some of us. And yet, if you understand why you're like, "Okay, I think I get that." But neither Paul nor Jesus took direct aim at the evil institutions or the good institutions that had been perverted and twisted by evil when they were on the earth. It's so hard for us to imagine, but when he was on the earth, we don't have any record of Jesus standing up and condemning slavery outright, abortion outright.

We don't have a chapter in any of Paul's writings where he decries the evils of all kinds of things that were institutionally unjust. Instead, what we find Jesus and Paul doing as well as Peter and other writers is that they took direct aim at the cause. They took direct aim at the source of the problem instead of the symptom of the problem, and that was the heart of man.

You see, if you can understand what would take place if an entire culture was transformed by the gospel, you would then see that you wouldn't have to condemn certain things. And the reason is because nobody would want to do those certain things. In other words, in America, we spend a tremendous amount of time decrying symptoms instead of sources.

You've heard all kinds of stuff and we'll continue hearing all kinds of stuff about things like pornography, abortion. You heard that a ton over the last eight months, abortion. And so we spend a tremendous amount of time, right? Lobbying and voting and trying to create policy in order to do certain things. But did you know what would do more so if no human beings wanted to actually go to websites and look at pornography, you wouldn't have to have a law that prevented it.

And not only that, when it comes to something that we think about so much, this idea of abortion, and let me just say, I always just move past this, but I know that if Providence is a representative sampling of America, and what that means is roughly a fourth of the women in this room right now have already had an abortion. And I want you to know that we love you, we care for you.

And you, maybe even more than I, would be able to explain maybe some of the heartache that after you've come to Christ and you've lived with Christ, you recognize that was not what I wish I would have done. And every single cycle of election and politics and policy, what we find is these same things coming up. And I can only imagine how much consternation that brings and yet this is the reality. And we would all acknowledge this.

We just don't ever want to talk about the source because we all want to talk about the symptom. But do you know what would fix the whole problem? It wouldn't be just if people didn't want to do that. Let me say what would fix the whole problem, is if people within our culture agreed with God as to who to have sex with and when. That if we, as a people actually went to God's word and say, "Okay, God, this is my whole life, it is in your hands. What do you want me to do with this part of my life?"

And suddenly we said, "This is what we do with our sexuality. We wait until we get married to one person and then we stay married to that person. And we love one another like Christ in the church." This is actually possible in a culture. I know we don't think it is, but it is because you have been saved and your mind has been reconstituted.

You see, if we could understand how much power we have in the gospel, that actually would address the source of the problems within our culture instead of the symptoms of the problems in our culture, this is what happen. We would begin to share the gospel more than we would be yelling about who we should vote for. We would recognize that if there is something that is so powerful that could actually reconstitute the heart to be in agreement with God about our sexuality, that the vast majority of the problems that we look at when it comes to abortion in terms of the laws, they would simply go away because it wouldn't be a need.

And so when you open the scriptures and you see these things, and they're addressing things in culture that we go, "How come he didn't just condemn the institution outright?" It's because he knows they're living in that institution. And what he's doing is he's taking the sharpest part of the ax and he's saying, "Let's take the gospel at this tree instead of the blunt end at that tree." And that's why you notice that when Paul wrote husbands, fathers and masters, what he was doing was re-orienting their understanding of the use of their authority with gospel love in order to magnify Jesus Christ.

And when he addressed wives, children and slaves are bond servants, he was making decision-makers out of people who were culturally forbidden to make decisions in order to magnify Jesus. Does that make sense what I'm saying? These wives, why tell them submit? That was the law. He could kill you if you didn't do that. Why tell children, obey your parents? If you didn't, your dad didn't like it, you're done.

Why would Paul take the time and the ink to write that to children? It's because he knew they were in a context that out of obligation, they said, "I don't have a choice in anything." But he says, you know what? I want to make you a decision-maker and this is how we're going to do that. If you can see what you have to do, and instead see it through the lens of unto the Lord, he's going to credit that as worship for all of eternity.

And there are those very things in those broken systems where you can actually live in such a way that propels health within your family. Ultimately, Jesus will be glorified even in the broken institution until he makes all things new and brings us to heaven. This is what he's doing. So let me encourage you Providence. Let's never lose sight of the culture-changing power in the gospel.

There are so many of us we look at these huge trees of injustice, and we think, "I am going to spend all my time voting and protesting." And look, I encourage you to vote. If you want to protest, I encourage you to protest. But listen, that tree is not going to fall down because of a vote. I encourage you to turn the ax around, the sharp end is the gospel. It can cut through anything because it cuts through the heart.

The gospel gets a hold of enough people in America. Let me tell you something. There's absolutely nothing that our current president and his administration, or the next president, whoever that is, and his administration will enact that a spiritual renewal cannot overcome. And so let's hold the ax correctly and use the sharpest part. It's been entrusted to us. The church has the most powerful thing on the earth in order to transform culture, Jesus Christ lives within our heart.

The second thing I want you to see is that God calls us to obey and honor our parents. It's interesting that he begins with children instead of parents. He starts each one with the person who in that cultural context was the weaker of the two, had less authority of the two. He starts and he goes, "All right, before I talk to dads and moms, children, let me talk to you."

Now, the word children here, there's two different words that he could have used. One is a word that speaks of authority, we usually translate it son or daughter. This is the word for a little child. This is the one who's dependent upon their parents. This is a smaller child living in the home. And he says, children obey your parents in everything.

And then notice that Paul took duty that was before them and added worship by saying, for this pleases the Lord. In other words, there's something that you can do that you already have to do, you already should do, but you can do it in such a way that actually people begin to magnify or to see that Jesus Christ is relevant to magnify him.

And so one way we show Christ is relevant is by obeying our parents when their decisions will not be ours. And all of us can imagine just how distinct it would be, how startling it would be if all the children in the world were all gathered together and there was one group of children and they just didn't rebel against their parents and they did not need counting or yelling or bribing in order to obey their parents.

We would all, as the people would go, what gives with those kids, why they're so different from all the other kids, all the other toddlers, all the other teenagers in the world? You see, and the reason that is maybe so startling is because as popular as rebellion is among humanity and children, the fact is we all don't like to see it.

I'm not just talking about see it in ourself or see it in our own families, but if you happen to be walking through a store and all of a sudden you see this meltdown between child and parent, it's uncomfortable, the watch, isn't it? It's just only natural when you see it, you're like, "That kid shouldn't be doing that." It's not right. And we know it's not right, and this is why.

The Bible says that he has actually written, that God has written when he created us, a law upon our heart that actually resembles the law that was written in stone. In Exodus chapter 20 verse 12, it says, honor your father and your mother. When we look at this word honor, it's a really interesting word. The word can also be translated, price or high price. And this is what he means by that.

Oftentimes we think honor means respect or esteem. It's really to show priority and a precedent for, and this is what I mean. Let's just say that you have the money and you go out and you buy a Ferrari, a new Ferrari, right? And it is nice, and it is expensive. Well, you happen to have an older vehicle as well. And it's more of a normal vehicle.

I don't want to shame anybody, but by actually saying a vehicle, let's just say it's a 15-year-old American made vehicle. And it's older, it's just kind of there. And so you have two vehicles now, you have that car and you have a brand new Ferrari, and you have space in your garage for one. In that moment you make your decision and you show priority to the higher price. And this is what he's talking about with parents.

We have all these relationships and all these people in the world and you have these parents. And it is our privilege to be able to honor that if only one fits into the house, if only one fits into the garage, you can say it that way, you can say, “You know what? There’s other people, but this is the one that actually receives the best treatment of my life. I’m going to show deference to my parents.”

Paul wrote another letter, which is a parallel to Colossians, it’s the book of Ephesians. And in Ephesians, this is what he says. It’s almost very similar. He says, children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. That’s kind of like our text in Colossians. And then he adds to it. He says, honor, your father and mother, that it may go well with you.

So he combines honor and obedience. And the reason he does is because honor is the umbrella and obedience is one application of how we honor at a particular season of our life, and that is that when we’re small children. So let’s talk just a few minutes about five different applications of how we can honor our parents even if you are older, even if your parents have already passed away. How do we honor our parents?

First, we should honor them by obeying them during childhood. If you’re a kid in the home dependent upon your parents, we honor the Lord by obeying our parents. In the rare exception, which there are exceptions on the earth, where a parent would actually command us or command you to sin. So kids, if your dad said, “Hey, I want you to go into the store and I want you to steal that candy bar for me,” right?

Well, now all of a sudden you have a problem because now all of a sudden you have God who says, do not steal and you have a parent that God says you need to obey that parent. So what do you do? Well, the Bible says that anytime a human being ask us to do something that God has forbidden, then we do not obey. And yet in that moment, you can still choose to honor.

There’s a rebellious way to rebel and an honorable way to rebel or to disobey. You can say, “Dad, look, I want to respect you. I want to obey you. But to do that, I would have to disobey God. And I simply can’t do that. And so if it means that I’m going to receive a consequence, so I’m going to submit myself to that consequence. I want to honor you but I have to obey the Lord.”

I know that’s a rare case, but the fact is is that happens, and so we should speak to it. Generally speaking, though for many of us in the room, our parents on a day by day basis, do not command us to sin against God. And so therefore, we should honor them by obeying them. We should also honor our parents by including them.

You see, as we enter young adulthood and we get older, if our parents are wise, they will not give us commands to obey, but they will want to stay connected with our life and they will want to give advice because they care for us. We honor them by including them in our lives, in our families, in our plans, in our decisions, in our prayer points. And then we also honor them by listening to their advice.

Let me just encourage you to remember that even the lousy parents on the earth know a whole lot about life. There's something you can learn, even from them. Third, let's honor our parents by forgiving them. For those of you who are kids and not yet parents, you may think, "Man, when I get older, I am going to be such a better parent." And then you're going to find that you're going to fail your kids just like your parents have failed you.

Your parents are sinners, they need Jesus. And you've seen that. They can be uptight with you. They can be irritable. They can yell. They can get angry. They can sin. And sin hurts people. And that's why God tells us this, that one of the ways we magnify Jesus Christ and show him as relevant is we forgive other people, including our parents, the way that Jesus has forgiven us.

Doing so does not always re-establish or make all things new. But what it does do is it releases anger and it confers honor, adding hope to our future. And this is particularly true if you're somebody who has been deeply hurt by a parent and your parent has already passed away and you still have that unresolved bitterness and resentment, for your sake, I urge you to honor them by forgiving them.

Fourth, we should honor our parents by speaking highly of them. Most of us we've never met your parents. So the only way for us to think highly or lowly of your parents is by looking through the window of your words. And so let me encourage you to guard your words. If your parents happen to be abusive or just terrible, horrible people, find something, anything noble that you can say about them. They were made in the image of God, right? And then use that when you're asked to say something.

You don't have to belittle them. You don't have to disgrace them even if they are disgraceful. You can still choose to honor them. And then last is let's honor our parents by caring for them. As we grow up, our parents grow old. And as our parents grow old, they become very aware of their limitations. Let me encourage you, never mock your parents' limitations.

The wear and tear on their body is not something that you should mock for a lot of that wear and tear is there because they cared for you. It's interesting when we grow older like David, we don't want to be cast off. He said in Psalm 71 verse 9, he says, do not cast me off in the time of my old age. We don't want to be relegated to the other room, we want to be a part.

And so let me encourage us to demonstrate the gospel by caring for our parents, by protecting their essential dignity in particular, as they get older and need help, to protect their essential joys and to protect their essential needs. This is one way that we care for them. And in doing so, we honor the Lord. The third thing I want you to see is that God calls us to raise children that don't smolder with anger. God calls us to raise children that do not smolder with anger.

Now, it may surprise you that he doesn't include moms here. This actually is one of those things that I don't have all the answers for this, as to why he didn't say mom and dad. I also don't understand, of all the Paul's letters, I believe there's only two direct instructions given to parents by Paul and I'm going to show you both of them. They're almost identical and neither one of them says anything about moms.

Now, they go, "What about moms? How come they're not included?" It's not because they're not important. I think, first of all, don't forget the context. He's reorienting authority. In that culture as the head of the household, dad was everything. And so he's saying if we're going to re-establish the use of authority of gospel love we need to address you men.

I think perhaps another reason is because moms often do not need to be invited to the responsibility and partnership of parenting. They typically jumped right in as a parent. Oftentimes it's men who need to be invited to participate in parenting their children. And so he says, father, do not provoke, do not poke, do not irritate, exasperate your children, lest they become discouraged, lest they become solemn or angry.

In other words, we want to raise kids whose vision of God and godliness propels them to have hope and courage they would magnify Christ in the world. And in his parallel passage, notice what he says in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4, he says almost identical, fathers do not provoke your children to anger. This one was, lest they become discouraged, this one is anger. And the reality is the same.

Now, he's not saying don't ever get them angry. I mean, I've caused anger among at least one of my sons, by saying, "Only five Oreos, only five." What he's warning against is parenting in a way that creates a settled anger or a disposition of resentment or discouragement. And how do we avoid that? Well, he tells us next. He says, but or instead bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

What is discipline? It's saying I am so for you that I'm willing to push or restrict as a reminder to you until you push or restrict yourself. In instruction says, I'm so for you which is why I'm going to take the time to listen and talk and reason with you. And the fact is, is kids need both. You see, if we only discipline our children, anger takes root. Restriction without relationship always sows the seeds of future rebellion.

And this is why when Moses told the men and women, the parents of Israel, this is how you should teach, notice what he says to them. He says this. He says, you shall teach them, that is the word of God, the instructions of God, diligently to your children. And you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise.

Now, what he's saying in these four words is you have to be present in order to do this. You have to be around at bedtime. You have to be around when they wake up in the morning, you have to be around when they're sitting on the chairs and when they're eating meals. You have to be around when it's time to take them to school or practice or to their games, you have to be present in their life.

But here's the other thing. If we only instruct, then kids feel that they must understand everything in order to obey anything, which is harmful to them, because wisdom just like physical muscles grows over time with training. Furthermore, to avoid settled anger there's one of the things you have to balance that he tells us. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 4, he says this, but bring them up.

Up is an important word. It's not just up, not meaning down, up means out. And this is really important, it's the goal is to get your kids ready to live for the glory of God outside of your house when you're no longer there, when you're not watching them and their every move, that's the goal. But you notice the word bring is a word of progression. You have to bring them. It means you have to walk with them. It's step-by-step, it's multiple steps in order to bring.

In other words, if you force kids into adulthood where they're screaming, "I'm just not ready. I'm four and you want me to act like I'm 24." Or if you ask young adults and force them to be children where they're saying, "I'm so ready to get out of here," then what happens is roots of anger begin to burrow. See, God wants us to give love and instruction and discipline in the hope of sending out fully devoted followers of Christ.

So let me encourage you with two last things then we're going to have the opportunity to see some baptisms this morning. First thing, let me encourage is let's consider the gospel as we instruct in discipline. It tells us as parents we need to discipline and instruct. And if we do so, then it'll avoid a settled anger in the hearts of our children.

In order to do that, I would encourage you to look at the gospel because within the gospel, there's at least three things that are so important in parenting. First, the gospel reminds us who to worship. I know that may sound crazy, but here's the deal. When you make an idol of yourself in your own comfort, your own reputation, we tend to over discipline because we don't want our kids to interrupt people's perception of how great we are.

And if we make an idol out of our children, then we tend to over instruct. And the reason that we do that is because... or under like we won't discipline, and the reason is because if they're our idol, our God, then we desperately need them to approve of us all the time. And so the gospel reminds us, hey, you're not God and neither are they. There's only one to worship.

But they also reminds us of sin and grace. You see, parents who only discipline, they emphasize sin and parents who only instruct they emphasize grace. But the gospel says that Jesus Christ died on that cross. And the reason is because sin is so real, but forgiveness to us is also surreal. And so there's the balance between the two.

And the last thing I want to encourage us is this is. It's maybe the most important thing that I say to parents and yet I'm not going to... hardly talk about it at all. It's, let's be happy in the gospel for the sake of our children. This becomes very important during weeks like this. You see, what we are before God is far more important than any parenting technique that we employ.

What I'm trying to say is this. Telling our kids to hope in God when they see our hoping in God wane during election cycles and market cycles becomes very confusing to their young hearts. You tell them to hope in God and then you see a state on the TV screen turn from one color to another and it leads you to throw the remote, they become very confused as to what hoping in God actually is.

And so we have the privilege imperfectly but persistently to lean on the gospel and to help our children to hope in God by guarding our hope in God, by us running to the one refuge of life, and that is Jesus Christ. So let me pray for us. Father in heaven, I ask that you would give us grace. I pray for those in the room today who have never trusted Christ as savior and Lord, would you open up their eyes to help them to see that you are real, that you are valuable, that you are everything?

We thank you, father, that in the gospel there's an invitation to believe. And if we believe that you make us your children, that you bring us into your family. You tell us that joining your family is the very first step to health in ours. And so God, I pray for those that are considering trusting Christ, Lord, that you would encourage them and remind them now.

And even now as we get to turn our attention and see people who have said that joining your family is the most important thing about their life as they're baptized, I pray father that you would encourage our hearts and encourage those that are considering what it would look like to follow Christ, that you would use this in that step and in their journey of faith. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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