

The Lion Cage: Parenting

Family Circus #3 – Pastor Gary Combs – 8/4/24 – Ephesians 6:1-4

INTRO: Good morning church! We are continuing our sermon series called, “Family Circus.” We’re calling it “Family Circus” because although we all hope for the perfect family, what we end up with is more like a crazy, chaotic circus! Here’s what we’re covering in this 5-week series (If you missed one, you can watch it online):

July 21 - The Circus: Family

August 11 - The Tight Rope: Singleness

July 28 - The Flying Trapeze: Marriage

August 18 - The Safety Net: Grandparents

August 4 - The Lion Cage: Parenting

We’ve been learning over these past weeks that rather than aiming for having a perfect family, it is better to aim at having a blessed family, a family, a marriage, and children that live under God’s blessing! Speaking of children, our sermon today is about parenting your children in the Lord.

ILL: Take a look at this “The Family Circus” cartoon. This cartoon needs no caption. Every parent here could write their own. Parents, do you feel like all you ever do is clean up one mess after another? Like your kids are making another mess before you’ve finished cleaning up the first one? That’s why parenting can be like being in a lion cage— you can’t turn your back for even a minute!



Need: Having a sense of humor is important in parenting. Because parenting is hard. Parenting is like treading water and then being handed some cats (Take a moment and picture that)! The truth is, parents today are worried. They’re worried about their child’s health: obesity, drug abuse, bullying, internet safety, teen pregnancy, gender dysphoria, depression, teen suicide... They’re worried about their education: public, private or home school? College? So, a lot of parenting today is worry-driven, or fear driven. Parents today feel overwhelmed and underprepared. Either because they came from a dysfunctional family themselves or because they have no foundational biblical understanding, they feel lost in their role. So, many are just winging it.

Trans: How about you? What’s your parenting approach? Where did you learn how to be a mom or dad? Was it from your parents? From friends or a “How-to” book? Or are you just winging it? Don’t you wish your kids came with an owner’s manual? Whether you buy a lawn mower or an automobile, they all come with an owner’s manual. But when you leave the hospital with that baby, you’re on your own! But you don’t have to be. Because actually God has given us His “owner’s manual” for raising kids.

BODY: In the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he told them how to parent their children in the Lord. We can follow God’s Word for parenting our children in the Lord. How? The text gives four steps for parenting our children in the Lord.

Today’s text: Ephesians 6:1-4 (ESV) ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

HOW TO PARENT CHILDREN IN THE LORD:

1. Give them the right standard to obey.

EXP: (1) Circle the words “obey” and “right” in v.1. There is a right and wrong. God’s Word is the standard.

“**Children’** (1) (τέκνα, *tekna*) – a dependent child of either sex.

“**Obey**” (1) (ὑπακούετε, *hupakouete*, Pres Act Imp) – Literally, “under hearing.” To obey. Obeys a parent’s instruction or command. This implies that the parents are giving them something to follow or obey.

“**Right’** (1) (δίκαιος, *dikaïos*) – right, just. Properly, “approved by God” (J. Thayer). There is a right and wrong that children must learn to obey. And it is their parents job to teach them. Besides this, it is only “right” (“appropriate, acceptable”) for children to obey parents. Even animals teach their offspring to obey.

“**In the Lord’** (1) – Parental authority comes from God. Children who disobey their parents, disobey God.

The Lion Cage: Parenting

Family Circus #3 – Pastor Gary Combs – 8/4/24 – Ephesians 6:1-4

ARG: What right standard should we teach them to obey? God's Word! How? Diligently and daily.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NKJV) And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Obedience is not something you should want from your child, but for your child. Listen to this quote from Carey Nieuwhof's article, "How to Raise Obedient Kids— For all the wrong Reasons":

"If you discipline with the motivation of wanting obedience for your child, rather than from your child, you parent with the end in mind. You realize that one day (soon) you're not going to be there. Your control will be non-existent, and they'll have to make all the decisions for themselves.

Making the shift from "from" to "for" and you'll see some changes:

- Obedience will no longer be something you want from them to get rid of the problem they're causing you, it will be something you want for them because of the problem they're causing themselves and others.
- Obedience will no longer be something you want from them to make a problem go away, it will be something you want for them to help them solve a problem themselves.
- Obedience will no longer be something you want from them to make you look good in front of others, it will be something you want for them to navigate relationships skillfully and humbly."

Ultimately, our motivation for teaching obedience should be because it pleases the Lord.

Colossians 3:20 (ESV) Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

ILL: Worldly methods used by parents in an attempt to obtain obedience:

- **Bribing** "Come to mommy and I'll give you a sucker."
- **Threatening** "If you don't pick up your toys, I'm going to throw them in the garbage!"
- **Emotional appeal** "After all I do for you, this is how you repay me?"
- **Environment** If you can reach it, it's yours.
- **Reasoning** "But Sweetie, your hotdog will get cold if you don't come to eat now."
- **Yelling** "How many times do I have to scream at you?"
- **Countdown** "I'm going to count to three, and then you better get over here."
- **Teapot** "I've had all I can take... now you're going to get it."

APP: A book that we often recommend to parents (especially moms) to help with teaching obedience is Ginger Plowman's book, *Don't Make Me Count to Three*. It challenges parents to stop using worldly methods and shows how to use God's Word instead.



Children are not born obedient. They are little sinners. Give them a standard of right and wrong. Be motivated to get obedience for them. Give them the Bible as your standard. Show them how to read the Word and hear from God themselves. Obeying parents prepares children to obey God.

2. Show them the way of honor.

EXP: (2-3) Circle the word "honor." We're to show our kids how to honor us.

"Honor" (2) (τιμάω, *timao*, Pres Act Imp) – to revere, honor, highly esteem. Teach your children to honor you. Two steps: 1) Recognize their parent's God-given position, 2) Give them the honor due them. Also implies financial and physical support for elderly parents. Paul quoted the 5th commandment (Deut. 5:16).

"Go well... live long" – 2-part promise: a blessed life, and a long life. Those who don't honor their parents, grow up outside of God's blessing, this exposes them to sin and death in the world.

ARG: Teach them to honor you by loving them and honoring them.

Romans 12:10 (ESV) Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

The Lion Cage: Parenting

Family Circus #3 – Pastor Gary Combs – 8/4/24 – Ephesians 6:1-4

ILL: Establish a culture of love and honor in your home.

- Story of how I played with my sons like we were samarai bowing and saying “Yes, my father.”
- Story of insisting that my teenage daughter tell me she loved me before bedtime.

How does honor look?

- It obeys immediately, sweetly and completely.
- It respects parents in thought and deed.
- It addresses parents appropriately: “Dad, daddy, mom, mommy.”
- It answers parents politely: “Yes sir.” “No ma’am.”
- It cares for parents in their old age.

APP: Children are not born honoring their parents. It must be taught. It also must be caught. In other words, you must model it. We outgrow our dependence on our parents, no longer owing them obedience. But we never outgrow God’s law that commands us to “honor” them. Honoring parents prepares us for worshipping God.

3. Encourage them with sensitivity and consistency.

EXP: (4) Look at v.4. “Fathers, do not provoke...” What’s the opposite of provoke? Encourage.

“**Fathers**” (4) – Perhaps because fathers often struggle here. But more likely because fathers are to lead in the parenting effort. Therefore this instruction includes both parents.

“**Do not provoke**” (4) (παροργίζετε, *parorgizete*, Pres Act Imp) – to rouse to wrath, exasperate, anger. Do not drive them to anger, discouragement, frustration. This means that there is to be a balance to a parent’s authority. This balance comes from knowing a child’s nature and being consistent in your discipline.

ARG: What provokes children to anger?

- Fault-finding
- Not spending face-to-face time to build a close relationship
- Labeling (name calling: “Lazy, stupid, etc”) - Comparison - Inconsistency - Hypocrisy

Instead, we are to be careful not to discourage, but encourage them.

Colossians 3:21 (ESV) Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

ILL: Aim past the behavior to the heart of your child (Dr. Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*)

“Your child’s needs are far more profound than his aberrant behavior. His behavior does not just spring forth uncaused. His behavior reflects his heart. If you are to really help him, you must be concerned with the attitudes of the heart that drive his behavior. This understanding... makes the heart the issue, not just the behavior... Your concern is to unmask your child’s sin, helping him to understand how it reflects a heart that has strayed. That leads to the cross of Christ.”



APP: Be sensitive to your child’s personality and be consistent in your rules and discipline. Your job is not just good behavior. It’s to bring them up in the Lord. You have to aim at the heart.

4. Bring them up with discipline and instruction.

EXP: (4) Here’s the 4th imperative: Bring or train them up! How? With discipline and instruction.

“**Bring them up**” (4) (ἐκτρέφετε, *ektrepheite*, Pres Act Imp) – nourish up to maturity, nurture, rear, train. Parents should have the goal in mind to represent God’s authority to them until their child reaches the age where the role of authority shifts to God alone. (Like a tomato vine to a stake)

“**discipline**” (4) (παιδεία, *paideia*) – tutorage; i.e. education or training; by impl. disciplinary correction: chastening, chastisement, instruction, nurture. Bring them up through physical correction.

“**instruction**” (4) (νουθεσία, *nouthesia*) – calling attention to, i.e. (by impl.) mild rebuke or warning: admonition, counsel. “Warning through teaching.” (GK: nous – mind) – Bring them up through the mind.

The Lion Cage: Parenting

Family Circus #3 – Pastor Gary Combs – 8/4/24 – Ephesians 6:1-4

ARG: The Scripture instructs parents to “train up” their children.

Proverbs 22:6 (ESV) Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Don't fail at disciplining your children.

Proverbs 23:13-14 (NLT) Don't fail to correct your children. They won't die if you spank them. Physical discipline may well save them from death.

ILL: **Parenting myths vs. reality:** (From Chip Ingram's book, *Effective Parenting In A Defective World*)

Parenting Myth: Your goal is to make your kids happy.

Parenting Reality: Your goal is to make your kids holy— set apart for God.



APP: You are raising your child for the Lord. Raise up your child to believe and follow Christ. Use a balance of both discipline and instruction to train your child for the Lord.

- If you'd like more help with parenting, sign up for our “Parenting Munch and Learn” on August 24th at the Wilson campus on the Church Center App.
- If you'd like more help on how to share the gospel with your kids, check out our: “Good News Conversation Guide” by following this QR code or on our church website under “ministries/children”: <https://www.eastgate.church/ministries/children/sharing-the-gospel-with-kids/>



CONCLUSION: Parenting is a divine stewardship: **(Holding your hands out)** Holding God's hand and holding the child's until they hold God's hand themselves without you. Children are a gift from God, raising them is a divine calling. But we can't do it without the Lord's help. Depending on the power of the Spirit, will you...

1. Give your child the right standard to obey?
2. Show your child the way of honor?
3. Encourage your child with sensitivity and consistency?
4. Train your child with physical and verbal instruction?

Let's pray.