

GREATER THAN: Jesus is Greater Than Family Challenges **Ephesians 6:1-4ⁱ**

FAMILY DEDICATION:

Thank you, Candye! We are so excited to celebrate alongside these families in our church that are dedicating themselves to raise their children to know and love Jesus. Scripture teaches in Deuteronomy 6 that parents are to be the primary spiritual educators of the home and God entrusts us as parents to raise our children in The Lord.

A celebration like family dedication is something that is Biblical. We read in 1 Samuel how Hannah dedicated Samuel to The Lord. She says in a prayer, "I prayed for this child and The Lord granted me what I asked. Therefore, I give him to The Lord. For his whole life, he will be given to The Lord." Isn't that an awesome prayer?

We also know that Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the temple as a baby. Scripture said they went to the temple for the purpose of dedicating Jesus to The Lord. So, that's what these families come to do, to dedicate, to give, their children to The Lord.

But church family, this isn't just something for these parents. The reason they stand here before the Lord and His Church is because we, the Church, are also making a commitment today. We are committing to join them by prayerfully supporting them, loving them and serving to help disciple them. Family dedication is a very sweet celebration for a church family. It is a two-way celebration and commitment.

So, with that understanding, parents, do you commit to raising your children in the nurture and admonition of The Lord by teaching them about God's great love and plan for their life? If this is your promise, state we will.

And church family, do you commit to coming alongside these parents, lifting them up in prayer, making yourself available to assist them, and to invest in their children as well? If this is your promise, state we will.

There you have it. Allow me to pray over these families this morning. [Pray]. Let's give these parents a hand of praise this morning...

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you. To those of you that are guests, we say a very special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited you are with us today. On behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you here today.

We would love the opportunity to be able to connect with you. You can help us with that in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area. We have a gift we'd like to give you there. Again, we look forward to connecting with you.

MOTHER'S DAY:

Today is Mother's Day. So, we want to be sure to say a special Happy Mother's Day to you this morning. We are grateful for you. If you are a mom or soon to be mom, we want to celebrate you this morning. Would you please stand? We applaud you. Please remain standing for just a moment.

We want you to know how much you are loved. We love you. We are thankful for the gift that you are to your family. The blessing you are to our church. And know that The Lord is using you in a powerful way in the life of your family. I know many things you do go unnoticed and are underappreciated by guys like me who have zero clue. But today we honor you. And we acknowledge that one day a year is not enough to thank you for all you do. But please know that you are valued. Church Family let's give our moms one more round of applause this morning.

In case you haven't noticed, we have specialty muffins on the table in the Lobby area that we want you to have. We choose muffins today because we would be muffin without you, mom. So, in your honor, we invite you to take a muffin this morning.

I also want to acknowledge that Mother's Day can also be a challenging day for some. For the child that is missing their momma because she gone to be with Jesus or the mother that's missing their child for the same reason. There are

also those that are praying to be a mother. So, I know amid the celebration there may also be some tears. But I want you to know this morning that you are prayed for. We love and appreciate you. So, what I want to do this morning is take a moment and pray over every heart. Would you join me in praying this morning?

[PRAY]. Thank you for that church family.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Well, we are in the middle of a teaching series we have entitled, “Greater Than.” We are taking a look at several different circumstances that are common to our lives and looking at the truth that Jesus is greater than whatever we might face.

So far, we have examined that Jesus is greater than the grave, He is greater than worry and anxiety, and that Jesus is greater than our grief. Today’s message is entitled, “Greater Than Family Challenges.”

You know, we live in a world where there is much that seems to challenge and threaten the family unit. It seems to be increasingly difficult to raise godly children in this day and age. Our jobs are demanding, cultural influence is mounting, friends are distracting, divorce, events, schedules, and non-biblical worldviews all seem to take aim at the family. The family has always been the foundation of society, from the creation of the world. Therefore, the attack on the family is an attack on society. And as believers in Jesus, we must commit to doing all we can to building healthy families and raising godly kids. That’s what the families earlier were doing during family dedication.

So, today, Mother’s Day, I thought was an appropriate day to talk about the fact that Jesus is greater than those challenges that face our families. And when we seek to put Him first, we can be successful in our assignment to build strong, biblical families. Today, I want to zero in on raising godly kids.

So, take your bibles and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6. We are going to take a look at the first 4 verses as we consider 3 keys to building a godly family.

BACKGROUND:

Now, before we get to those keys, allow me to set up the context of Ephesians 6. Remember that when Paul was writing these letters, he did not do so with

the chapters and verses that we have today. Those were added later so as to assist in the study of Scripture. Ephesians was a letter written to the church in Ephesus.

Chapter six, then, falls in line with what was started in chapter 4, Paul’s instruction regarding relationships. This section of Ephesians, chapters 4, 5, and 6, are referred to as the Christian Codes section.ⁱⁱ These are a set of rules, or codes, by which God desires Christians to operate in their relationships.

In Chapter 5, Paul zooms in on what are referred to as the Home Codes.ⁱⁱⁱ These codes teach God’s design for family relationships. The second half of chapter 5 deals with marriage and then the first verses of chapter 6 deals with parenting. These are the Home Codes.

While we are dealing with the subject matter of parenting this morning, it is important for you to study diligently the other teachings so as to build your family around biblical principles. So, this week, my challenge to you is to spend time studying those chapters and begin implementing them in your life.

MESSAGE:

With that background, let’s move quickly through the three keys to building a godly family. The first key is to...

1) Be Rooted in The Lord.

It is vitally important that Christian families find their foundation in God’s Word. Look with me at Ephesians 6:1-3. *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.”*

These verses reference the 5th Commandment. Paul is driving the reader back to the Ten Commandments. He is desiring the family be rooted in God’s Word.

The reason this is of utmost importance is because there are many philosophies and ideologies by which one can build a family. Traditional values and modern values. Biblical convictions and non-biblical convictions. Raise children in a bubble versus exposing them to the world. There are families that allow their children to determine boundaries and others that seek to instill boundaries. My point is if we seek to build a godly family, it must be rooted on biblical principles.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, taught about the importance of being rooted, grounded, on God's Word. Beginning in verse 24 of Matthew 7, Jesus says, ²*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

Both houses were subject to the conditions of major storms. The difference between the homes, however, was their foundations. Challenges will come. Your family will face difficulties. It is not a matter of if but of when. And when you face those challenges, to endure, you must be rooted in God's Holy Word.

Something that is interesting about foundations is that quality foundations require a lot of work and attention. There is the testing of the soil. Then the clearing of the soil. Erosion control, leveling, and excavation. All prior to setting up the forms to then pour the slab.^{iv}

Building a godly family on a firm foundation of biblical principles takes work. It doesn't just happen, and it doesn't happen overnight.

Now, before you get discouraged thinking, well my family is well underway, and we haven't put in the work to build so what's the point? Listen, it is never too late to lay a biblical foundation for your family.

I want to give you some practical ways you can build a strong biblical foundation for your family. 3 ways to root your family in The Lord. I want to take cues from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Let's read that together. *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall **talk of them when you sit** in your house, and **when you walk** by the way, and **when you lie down**, and **when you rise**. ⁸You shall **bind them as a sign** on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

A) Talk about God a lot.

It is God's desire that you talk about His commands with your children often. Find a reason to talk about God. “Isn't it awesome how God has provided for us? I prayed for something this week and God answered my prayer. Thank you, God for this meal. Look at creation, isn't God awesome?” These are all ways you can talk about God a lot. Secondly, ...

B) Display God's Word.

In Deuteronomy, God says to bind His Word as a sign. In other words, display it. He even tells us where to do that. On your hand, in places you see often, over your door, so forth and so on. When we keep The Lord's commands before us, we are constantly reminded of who He is and the command to pursue Him. Talk about God a lot, Display God's Word, and thirdly, ...

C) Redeem the Mundane.

The passage in Deuteronomy urges us to talk about God's commands when we are doing ordinary, mundane things. When you sit, when you walk, when you go to bed, and when you wake up. Redeem the mundane parts of life, the everyday of life, and leverage them for foundation building opportunities.

These are ways to be rooted in The Lord. That's the first key. The second key is...

2) Commit to Christ-like Leadership.

Look with me, back at Ephesians 6, at verse 4. *⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Paul turns his attention to fathers. That word that is translated as fathers can be translated as parents. However, “fathers,” is probably the best translation because of the context.^v In first century, Greco-Roman culture, fathers had legal control of children and often it resulted in harsh treatment, especially girls.^{vi} While Paul may be highlighting a father's role, because of the legal standing of the day, he still keeps both parents in mind.^{vii}

The urging here is to not provoke children to anger. There are many things that provoke children to anger. Being overbearing, showing favoritism, setting unrealistic expectations, withholding praise, never sacrificing for them, pushing them into adulthood too soon, harsh punishment, attempting to live your life through them, and verbal abuse.^{viii} Jesus never corrected his disciples this way. Instead, He led them. Commit to Christ-like leadership.^{ix}

Parents, in a day and time when our kids are surrounded by pressures, what they need is support, encouragement, good teaching, and boundaries. Let me give you a practical way to do this. **Catch your kids doing something good. What gets rewarded get repeated.**

Keys to building a godly family is be rooted in God's Word and commit to Christ-like leadership. Thirdly, ...

3) Be Intentional.

Let's look, again, at verse 4 of Ephesians 6. *4Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* The phrase, "bring them up," demonstrates that building a godly family requires intentionality. It doesn't just happen on its own. Let's make a resolution that we are going to bring up our kids the way The Lord desires.

In this, the final phrase of verse 4, we see two ways we are intentional in bringing up our children. Discipline and instruction. Let's first look at...

A) Discipline.

The word for *discipline* here can be translated, training. We often confuse discipline with punishment.^x But what Paul is calling us to, here, is intentionally training our children to live the way Jesus calls us to live. Now, when we live outside the bounds by which The Lord has set up, there are consequences, even painful consequences. Discipline must, though, be the vehicle by which we navigate our children toward God's best for them.

The second way we are intentional with our children is...

B) Instruction.

Notice that Paul adds the phrase, "*of the Lord,*" to instruction. So, this instruction that we are called to be intentional is to be about The Lord. Our goal as parents is not for your kids to know about Jesus; the goal is for them to know Jesus.^{xi}

Here's the key. Being intentional requires a marrying of discipline and instruction.^{xii} For example, "discipline says, 'that's not acceptable,' instruction says, 'here's what God has for you.'"^{xiii} Do you see the intentionality in discipline and instruction.

Now, I feel as though it is important to say that the ability for a parent to do this well, discipline and instruction must be something we are committed to. We cannot pass down that which is not something we possess. Parents, set an example.

One commentary I read this week said it this way, "Children are asked to give back only that which their parents give them: respect and love within the framework of their commitment to Christ."^{xiv}

Mom and Dad, please know that what affects a child the most is not standards for perfection. It is not nagging for improvement. It is not even rewards and incentives. What impacts a child the most is an example to follow.^{xv} A parent that is one way on Sunday and another way on Monday will do more harm than good.

And listen, our kids are not looking for perfect role models. They understand that no one is perfect. But what they are looking for is an authentic follower of Jesus that is very aware of their sin and yet seeks repentance and life change that flows from their relationship with Jesus. Being intentional is to focus on discipline and instruction, but that must first be the descriptors of our lives.

3 keys to building a godly family: Be rooted in The Lord, Commit to Christ-like leadership, and be intentional

CONCLUSION: Invite the Band to come back up.

As we close our time together today, I want to invite the band to come back up and lead us.

If you are here today and you have never surrendered your life to Jesus, you need to today. We will have elders here at the front to visit with you about what it means to trust Jesus as Lord in your life.

Others of you are in need of prayer. Parenting is hard. You come this morning and allow us to pray with you and over you.

Still others of you just need to visit with someone about what is going on in your life. Our desire is to minister to you in this time of response.

Let's pray. You respond.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Word Books, Dallas, 1990; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1986; Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1996; Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, *Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos back into Order*, Lucid Books, Houston, 2016; Dr. Michael Youssef, "Setting The Example," Leading The Way podcast, accessed May 3, 2022:

<https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/leading-the-way/listen/setting-the-example-919099.html?ref=sm>; Dr.

Jack Graham, "A Song for the Family Parts 1 and 2," PowerPoint podcast, accessed May 2, 2022:

<https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/powerpoint/listen/a-song-for-the-family-736178.html>; Skip Heitzig, "Walking in Harmonious Relationships," Taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque, Wednesday, September 22, 2004; Connect Grow Multiply Podcast, "Episode #27: The Mom Episode," Green Acres Baptist Church, Tyler, TX, accessed via Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4EdGsPd1CIYeNbe0FnMQ6D?si=e07eede8b25940c8>.

ⁱⁱ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Word Books, Dallas, 1990, page 395.

ⁱⁱⁱ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1996, page 319.

^{iv} Stages of soil prep found in an article by Jessica Wiggins, "Build On A Solid Foundation: 5 Reasons Soil Needs Preparation," written June 13, 2019, accessed: <https://www.abbottsconstruction.com/build-on-a-solid-foundation-5-reasons-soil-needs-preparation/>

^v John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1986, page 316.

^{vi} Snodgrass, page 325.

^{vii} MacArthur, page 316.

^{viii} List inspired by MacArthur's list of 8 ways to provoke children.

^{ix} For practical ways to implement Christ-like leadership, see Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, *Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos back into Order*, Lucid Books, Houston, 2016. We have a copy in our church library.

^x Bales and Kaunitz, page 104.

^{xi} Ibid., page 105.

^{xii} Ibid.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Snodgrass, page 330.

^{xv} Inspired by Dr. Michael Youssef's sermon, "Setting The Example," Leading The Way podcast, accessed May 3, 2022: <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/leading-the-way/listen/setting-the-example-919099.html?ref=sm>;