

## **Series: Family Matters**

### **# Your Poster Child**

**Ephesians 6:1-3; John 1:1-5;14-17**

**Introduction:** Just when you think you have heard it all, and then you read this from BBC news in India. **“Rather than being grateful for his opportunity in life, Raphael Samuel is suing his parents for bringing him into the world without his consent. The twenty-seven-year-old man from Mumbai, claims his parents were selfish and “had me for their joy and their pleasure.” He explained, “I want everyone in India and the world to realize one thing, that they are born without their consent. I want them to understand they do not owe their parents anything.”**

He also stated, **“If we are born without our consent, we should be maintained for our life. We should be paid by our parents to live.”**

I don't think he has a very good chance in court, because both of his parents are attorneys. (BBC.com/news/world-asia-india-47154287)

By the way, I love his mother's response. She said, **“I must admire my son's temerity (nerve) to want to take his parents to court knowing both of us are lawyers. And if Raphael could come up with a rational explanation as to how we could have sought his consent to be born, I will accept my fault.”**

I wish Raphael could hear the message that I am delivering today, because it goes to the very heart of his concern. We are in a series called **“Family Matters.”** We have been dealing with the various parts of the traditional family, but today we are going to talk about children.

I read about a young pastor. He had just gotten married, and everything was good. It was the honeymoon of the church, honeymoon for him and his wife. He was going to preach a sermon on parenting.

He didn't have any kids, and he called the sermon Ten Commandments to Raise Perfect Children. And then he had his first child. He preached on parenting again. He called it Ten Suggestions to Raise Godly Children. Then he had his second child. And when it came time to preach on parenting again, he talked about Ten Hints on Raising Kids. Then he had his third child. He entitled his next parenting message, Help Me, Jesus!

Parenting isn't for cowards. And it is a difficult assignment to have a good and godly marriage and raise good and godly kids.

I've entitled today's message: **Your Poster Child.**

The term - Poster Child...was first used in 1938. It means:

1: a child with a particular illness or disability whose picture is on posters to raise money to help children who have the same illness or disability:

2: a person having a public image that is identified with something (such as a cause)

Everybody in this room who is a parent or who might be one someday wants to raise children who are healthy and confident and vibrant, full of life, godly and who is Your Poster Child of a Christian. We all want that.

But we live in a day when we get bombarded with so much advice, and much of it seems to push parents to go to one of two extremes. Parents tend either to go for hyper-control where they want to put their kids in a bubble and protect them from reality and culture; or they tend to just let the kids run wild and go with the flow of currents trends.

I remember hearing the story of a dad of a newborn, maybe a 3-month-old infant, who said "When our baby cries, we never go into his room. We go in there when we say it's time to go, not when he wants us to come, because if you start catering to their whining now, you reinforce their manipulative behavior. His is a cry of an egocentric, sinful narcissist, and we've got to break his will." This is a 3-month-old, crying infant, and that's what his dad said.

On the other hand, I remember hearing about a 10-year-old boy who got mad about something and started screaming at an adult who was not one of his parents. He was screaming, "I hate you."

His parents didn't respond, didn't say a word, didn't do a thing. After he left, there was an embarrassed silence in the room. And then his mom said, "You know, I was so repressed and controlled as a child, and I am so glad Junior is learning to express his feelings of rage and hostility. I would never want to damage his psyche by shaming his frail ego."

I've seen families where children were never allowed to watch TV. And then they go over to their friend's houses and watch TV like little zombies. I've seen other families where everybody in the family has his or her own TV, computer, and smartphone by the time they're 6 years old... free control.

### **What we need is biblical, balanced wisdom that gives us the framework to raise Poster Children that reflect Jesus.**

As parents your goal should involve a three-fold strategy. We want to move our kids from **parent control** (which is when they're little) to **self-control**, (as they grow up) to **God control** (young adults).

**In other words, we want to train and move our kids from dependence upon us to dependence upon God.**

Our goal in training our kids is not **compliance, conformity, or control**. We don't want them to be intimidated or so eager to please that they go through life hollow and empty inside because they've only learned how to make their parents, and other authority figures in their life happy, instead of having a strong emotional and spiritual character.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Psychologists have begun to speak of what is perhaps the largest mental health problem in our day. It is not depression or anxiety, at least not at clinical levels. **It is FTT - failure to thrive, or some would call languishing.**

**Languishing is the condition of someone who may be able to function but has lost a sense of hope and meaning. Languishing is not the presence of mental illness; it is the absence of mental and emotional vitality.**

In ancient lists of deadly sins, it was called **acedia**—weariness of soul and inability to delight in life.

Languishing is the opposite of flourishing, and it was the fear of Henry David Thoreau that "when I came to die, [I would] discover that I had not lived."

Writer and artist Gordan Mackenzie tells of visiting children in kindergarten and asking them, "Who is an artist?" Every hand shoots up. This decreases to half the class by third grade. By the time the students are twelve years old, only a few hands go up. Over time many find that becoming who they were meant to be is too hard or it takes too long.

This is important in our parenting, because we will most likely overreact if we see our kids languishing, because maybe we've been under involved. We make the mistake of thinking; you know I was a kid once; I know how to be a parent.

That's like saying I had surgery once; therefore, I can perform one. Just because you can make money doesn't mean you can manage it wisely. Just because you can make a kid doesn't mean you can mold them correctly. We need help.

Fortunately for all of us God has given us His word and there are some very insightful lessons in helping us deal with our kids.

**In Ephesians 6, Paul is not just talking about children to grown-ups, he is talking to children.**

**Let's read verses 1-3; "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." (NIV) **Let's PRAY****

There are three things kids must do.

## **I. Obey Your Parents**

Parents, the first lesson you begin to teach your children from the time they are born is the lesson of obedience. As you know, children do not come out of the womb obedient; they come out of the womb disobedient.

Now Mom and Dad teaching your children obedience and the way you teach them changes at the different stages of their life. There were two moms that were at different phases of life, and they were discussing children.

As they watched their children play one of the mothers said, **“You know it is so ironic that we spend the first twelve months teaching our kids to walk and talk and the next twelve years telling them to sit down and be quiet.”**

I would like to remind you that even the Son of God was obedient to his earthly mom and dad. We read this in Luke 2:51, **“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.”** (NIV)

Paul gives one simple reason why children should be obedient to their parents. **“... for this is right.”** (Ephesians 6:1, NIV)

It is just the right thing to do. Now that takes us back to our parents. It is your job to teach your children the difference between right and wrong and to teach your children to do right, act right, and think right.

Now some might ask, “What if my parents are not Christians?” If they don’t ask you to do anything ungodly or unbiblical it is even more important that you obey your parents, so you can be a godly witness to them.

You are not just obeying the person who is your mom and dad. You are obeying their position as your mom and dad, and you are obeying God. Be right by obeying your parents.

## **II. Honor Your Parents**

The result of obeying your parents is you honor your parents.

**“Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise.”** (Ephesians 6:2, NIV)

There is a difference between obeying your parents and honoring your parents. **Obedience is an action you do on the outside. Honor is an attitude you have on the inside.**

“To honor” means to respect. You see, when you obey your parents if you do it grudgingly, griping, complaining, moaning, and back talking, you may be outwardly obeying them, but you are not honoring them.

You can’t honor your parents without obeying them, but you can obey them without honoring them. It is one thing to disobey your parents. It is another thing to disrespect them.

**By the way, you never outgrow or get too old to honor your parents.**

The verb “to honor” is in the present tense which refers to an action that never stops. My kids have reached the stage in their life where they are no longer obligated to obey me, but they still are required by God to honor me and their mother. Obedience stops but honor does not.

There are two stages in honoring your parents. In stage one, you honor them by obeying them in doing what they tell you to do with the right spirit and a submissive heart. In stage two, you honor your parents not by doing what they tell you to do, but doing what they need you to do.

You take care of them. You call them. You check in on them. You do for them what they can no longer do for themselves. By the way, they shouldn’t have to beg you or trick you into doing it.

**STORY:** It was just before Thanksgiving and an elderly man in California called his son, David, who lived in New York. He said, “Son, I hate to tell you this over the phone, but I am leaving your mother. Forty-three years of misery is enough, and I am out. He was shocked and just began peppering his dad with questions and asking what could be done to heal things.

Finally, the dad just cut him off and said, “Son, we don’t need to talk about this anymore. If you don’t mind call your sister in Chicago and tell her what is happening. I don’t want to tell her.” He did call his sister and about five minutes later the dad’s phone rang, and it was his daughter. She said, “Dad, don’t you do anything until we get there.

David and I have talked, and we are both going to be there tomorrow night and we will be bringing the kids.” The dad said, “Okay. See you tomorrow.” He hung

up the phone, turned to his wife and said, "All right. They are coming for Thanksgiving."

*You should obey and honor your parents, and thirdly...*

### **III. Love Your Parents**

Now there are three words we need to go back to and pick up in verse one. Listen to it again. "Children, obey your parents ***in the Lord...***" (Eph. 6:1, NIV)

What do those three words mean? In another passage, Paul put it this way. ***"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."*** (Colossians 3:20, NIV)

This means that when you obey your parents, you're obeying God. When you honor your parents, you honor God.

I spent the first years of my ministry as a Youth and Children's pastor and I've observed basically two kinds of parents. There are parents who raise their kids by looking at current societal trends.

Then there are parents who listen to scripture. They don't take their cues from the modern family. They take their cues from ancient scripture. They teach their kids to take a stand for what is right, to speak up for what is right and to live their life by God's word, not the opinion of others or of cultural trends.

Just so you know, even the godliest parents sometimes have children that turn out not so good. On the other hand, I've seen parents that are not godly and have no interest in Christianity have some amazing, godly children.

Let me just say, no parent should feel like a failure or feel guilty if they can honestly look in the mirror and say I did my best to be a good, godly parent, if your children aren't living up to that expectation...YET.

I say yet, because Proverbs 22:6 says, ***"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."***

A man once argued with the English poet, Samuel Coleridge about the importance of parents instructing their children in spiritual matters. The man said, ***"I just don't think parents' ought to indoctrinate their children into their***

***religion. They ought to give their children the freedom to make their own choices."***

Coleridge didn't say a word, but instead invited the man to his backyard to go look at his garden. When the man walked outside, he said, "This is not a garden. It is just a patch of overgrown weeds."

Coleridge said, **"Well, it used to be a garden, but I decided to give it the freedom to become whatever it chose without any interference from me."**

Mom and Dad, it is your job to be godly parents. Children, it is your job to be godly children...to obey, honor, and love your parents.

**There are two encouragements I want to give you that will help every single person in this room, every child, every mother, every father, every husband, every wife, every grandparent, every great-grandparent, two encouragements from the Word of God.**

**Encouragement number one: Everyone faces family problems.**

Sometimes you can come to church, and you think we're the only ones that are struggling in our marriage. We're the only ones struggling with our kids. You go on Facebook, social media, and you see all these happy marriages and happy couples and the happy family, and you just say, "They look so perfect."

You compare it to your own life, and say, "Well, I'm not perfect, and we're not perfect, and we have troubles and problems, and we're really not supposed to have that because we are Christians, right?"

Jesus said, "These things I've spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation." That's where we live, in the world. And you're going to have tribulation and pressures and problems and troubles. "But take courage; I have overcome the world."

Job said, **"Man who is born of woman is short-lived and full of trouble."** So, why do we have so many troubles?

Well, because the very best of us is imperfect. The Bible says in Romans 3, verse 10, **"There is none righteous; not even one."**



Not you. Not your spouse. Not your kids. Not your parents. Not your pastor. There is none righteous; not even one. The only One who was righteous was the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was nailed to a cross.

Jesus, in John chapter 3, is talking to Nicodemus, a religious teacher. He's a moral man. He's the cream of the crop, the best of the best.

And Jesus looks at him, and says, "You must be born again. If you're not born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of God."

The very best Christian faces trials and temptations. The apostle Paul, you could argue was an incredible Christian, yet he describes himself as "the chief of sinners."

You're going to have trouble in the Christian life. And the very best marriages and families will have struggles and problems and difficulties.

Voddie Baucham preached a message one time he called Who is the Viper in the Diaper? That's your little baby, a sinner. Two sinners get married, they have baby sinners.

You read in Scripture the very first family, what did they have? Difficulty. Do you know what Adam and Eve did after they got kicked out of the Garden of Eden. They started raising Cain, and later Cain kills his brother Abel. No one there to lobby for gun control because he didn't kill him with a gun.

Abraham's family. He's got a blended family, with many difficulties, because Sarah couldn't wait on the promised child and has Hagar get pregnant. Sarah doesn't like Hagar, and she doesn't like Ishmael, and there are problems.

You get to Isaac's family, and mommy likes Jacob, and daddy likes Esau. Later in Jacob's family, their brothers sell Joseph into slavery, problems.

David was a man after God's own heart, but his family was messed up...big time. His own son tried to kill him. Everyone faces problems in marriage and the family.

You say, "Pastor this is not encouraging." It is in the sense that you need to know that you're not the only one having problems.

## **Second encouragement: Every Christian can employ the grace and truth of Jesus.**

John chapter 1 is an interesting passage for the family because it really doesn't have anything to do with the family until you look deeper, and it has everything to do with the family.

John starts off talking about Jesus. The first five verses say, ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”***

And then, verses 14 to 17 say, ***“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) 16Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.***

Who's he talking about? He's talking about the Word. Who is the Word? Jesus! "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory... the glory of the Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus wants us to build our families on grace and truth. How does the Lord deal with you and me? He deals with us in grace and truth. **Now, when you break those down, what is the difference?**

**TRUTH** is the foundation for everything. The Bible says the Kingdom is built on truth and justice. If you don't have truth, you don't have anything. Marriage is built on trust, and trust is built on truth.

Truth is like the bone structure of the human being. How do you do if you don't have any bones? Not well. You're just going to be a blob, right? Grace is the flesh on the bones. You need both, and they go together.

When we run into issues in marriage and family, issues with our kids, and people will say, "Well, you know, I love my kids. I want to support my kids. They're doing things that aren't right. But I love them.

What does the Bible say about that?" I Corinthians 13:6 says, "**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the TRUTH.**"

We love our kids, and we support our kids, but don't tip the scale and say, "We'll give them more grace than truth." No! It's got to be balanced.

But here's the reality for so many families in church: Grace is the often-forgotten counterpart of truth. We run our families with rules. As it says in John 1:17, "**For the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.**"

**Rules without relationship lead to rebellion. And relationship with rules leads to resentment.** And if you just have rules for your kids and rules for your home and it's not balanced, it's not going to work.

**GRACE without TRUTH *corrupts*. TRUTH without GRACE *condemns*.**

**GRACE without TRUTH leads to *licentiousness*. TRUTH without GRACE leads to *legalism*.**

Think about the Christian life this way: Jesus said it's a narrow road. "**Narrow is the way that leads to life...**" And as you walk the narrow road, you have ditches on either side of the narrow road. One ditch is the ditch of **legalism**, rules, law. You can easily fall into that ditch.

That's what the whole Book of Galatians is about. The Judaizers came in after Paul and told the people, "You got to keep the Law," and Paul says, "Hey, we're not under the Law. We're under grace.

We come to Christ by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, on the narrow road, one ditch is legalism, but the other ditch is **license**. That's just living however you want, doing whatever you want. It doesn't matter if you sin or mess up because you're covered by God's grace. That's not how it works.

**I think many parents, especially Christians, fall into the ditch of legalism in raising their kids. We do this and we don't do that.**

TRUTH is a person. ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*** The Bible calls the Holy Spirit the **Spirit of truth**. The Bible calls itself, from the lips of Jesus, ***"Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth."***

Jesus wants us to treat our family as He treats us, with truth, but also with grace. GRACE is such a big theme in the New Testament, USED 122 times, as **charis**. The Old Testament uses the word **chesed**, which is translated "lovingkindness."

There are four things about grace that you need to know.

1. Grace is God's love and kindness mixed together. It's the unmerited favor of God. It's what God gives undeserving sinners - GRACE.

Paul often says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace and peace...17 times...Never ever, ever do you read peace and grace. It's always grace and peace. You say, "Does that make a difference?" Yes! It makes a huge difference. **Because you can't know God's peace until you first experience God's grace.**

We are to stand in God's grace. We're to walk in God's grace.

2. Grace is not a license to sin. That's licentiousness.

The Bible says, Jude chapter 1:4, ***"For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."*** (NIV)

It's important, as you sit down as a husband and wife, and you're having children, and discuss, "What are going to be the rules of the house?"

Dr. Tim Kimmel wrote a book called Grace-Based Parenting. How do you raise your family, your marriage, and kids, and do it with grace?

Tim Kimmel in the book, talks about being at a hotel, and he was eating a leisurely breakfast. He sees this mom come in with her baby and her young

son. He's probably five or six years old. The kid sees the breakfast buffet, and it's amazing. The little kid, he'd never seen that before. And he saw all the pastries and all the fruit, and his eyes were so big. They sit down, and he's just so excited. And his mother said, "you're not getting any of that, you're going to get cornflakes."

And his face just sunk. He said, "Mom, why can't I have the buffet?" She goes, "That's too much food." And the waitress said, "Well, ma'am, it's only \$1.50 more to get the buffet." She goes, "No, he doesn't want that. He's just going to have cereal." Well, he was just deflated. And then dad comes in, and dad gets in on the conversation. And he talks to his wife, and he says, "Honey, just let him have the buffet. We can afford it. I'll splurge, \$1.50." And so, he finally talked his wife into it, and the little boy got excited again.

He goes with his dad, and he gets a waffle with whipped cream and an omelet and Danish. And he comes to sit down, and he is so excited. And then the mother looks up from feeding the baby, and she said, "Why did you get all that food? You're never going to eat all that food. And you got whipped cream for your waffle. That's just crazy. Who even needs dessert for breakfast?"

And Tim said he just watched this little guy and saw all his excitement just drain away. And he said his heart broke for that kid. And he said: "If I could have talked to that woman, I would have said: was it really worth it to destroy your six-year-old's excitement at the breakfast buffet?

Was it worth it?" Everything she said was probably true, but it falls into the ditch of legalism. And you lose sight of what really matters? That's not a hill worth dying on. Let your kids live a little. Don't have such a short leash.

When you get the kite off the ground, the leash is tight. But then, you let out more line, and that's the goal of parenting. I let out more line so my kid can soar. I don't hold everything back. I don't rain on his or her parade constantly and say, "Well, I'm being a good parent." Grace says you decide by God's Spirit what's really important?

### 3. Grace is responding and confronting with love and kindness.

Do you remember how Jesus reacted to people. The woman caught in the act of adultery. How was He with her? Jesus wasn't beating her over the head with

Law. The crowd wanted to. "Moses says in the Law she should be stoned." He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to cast a stone."

Jesus was the only one there without sin. He could have cast a stone, but He didn't. He said to her, "Did no one condemn you?" "No one, Lord." "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."

It's not that Jesus was all grace and no truth. He was grace and truth. And we need to be both with our spouse, with our kids, with everyone. And we need to respond to them and confront them with love and kindness. Listen! We have big problems that kids are facing today, and parents must deal with big problems. Transgenderism is a thing that's sweeping the nation and hitting kids younger and younger.

How does a mom or a dad handle that? You handle that with the word of God. You say, "What does the bible say about it?" because we base our family on the word of God, and we can't go against what God says, because if you don't have truth, you don't have anything. If you have a child that says, "Well, I'm attracted to the same sex," well, what does God say about that? Because you must build your life on the truth. If you build on a lie, you're going to wreck and ruin your life.

You're never going to find peace and joy and contentment in life by going against what the Creator said and how He set it up. But you don't do that by beating them over the head with the Scripture.

You present the Bible to them. You say, "Let's look at what God has to say about this. Let's look at why this is wrong," and then go from there. And so, there, you respond to things in grace and love and kindness. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness; it rejoices in the truth.

You know, not every hill is worth dying on. The breakfast buffet is not a hill worth dying on. But when we're talking about major issues like gender dysphoria that can wreck and ruin your child's life, we can't ignore it, we respond, and confront it with grace and with truth.

4. **Grace involves forgiving and letting go.** That's how we know God's love. ***"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."***

How do you want God to treat you? You mess up, and we all do. You come to Him broken and humble and repentant. The shocking thing about the story of the prodigal son as Jesus is telling it, is that in the minds of the Pharisees, they're listening and thinking "Oh yeah, if you come back home after shaming the father, and wasting his inheritance, you can just leave.

There is no mercy. There is no grace. There is no forgiveness for you. And that's the way so many people are. But God's not like that.

When the father saw his son, He ran and he embraced him, and he kissed him, and he put a robe on his back and shoes on his feet and a ring on his finger, and said, ***"My son was dead, and he's come back again. He was lost and has been found."***

And that's the picture every single person needs to have etched in their mind. ***'The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'*** (Numbers 14:18, NIV)

And that's the way when you blow it, when I blow it, we know we can come back to the Lord, because we need His love, that is full of grace and truth.

There are probably some parents in this room that have a bad relationship with their son or daughter. There are problems on both sides. What's the solution? Grace and Truth! God's lovingkindness working in your heart, through your heart to that other person. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Jesus treats us with grace and truth.

If we tend to be more truth-oriented, we fall into the ditch of legalism, or if we're more grace-oriented, we fall into the ditch of license.

**We need to identify where we are, and say, "God, help me to walk in Your ways, to walk in the narrow path that is a path of grace and truth, and deal with my loved ones the way You, Lord, deal with me."**