

“Family Matters - raising children (and grandchildren)”

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6; 1 Samuel 1

Graphics: house, family, home

Big Truth: Families are important to God, to our communities, to our church, and to us. No matter in what stage you find yourself, family matters are vital to our lives. Sometimes we struggle with our families, but they are still family. Home building allows us to weather any storms for today and tomorrow. Raising children and grandchildren in the faith is our main task. Family finances point our hearts and lives to God’s kingdom work. Discipling our families makes new and stringer disciples of Jesus. Making transitions well leads to peace and joy, as God leads us to new places.

Focus Phrase: Raising children starts long before they are born and requires intentional sacrifice and Kingdom focus.

1. Introduction

A. PRAY!

- B. Adrian Rogers said, “Children are truly a blessing from God. Unfortunately, they don’t come with an instruction manual. But there’s no better place to find advice on parenting than the Word of God, which reveals a heavenly Father who loves us and calls us His children. It contains great examples of godly parents. It gives direct instructions on how to parent, and it is filled with many principles we can apply as we strive to be the best parents we can be.”
- C. Now, there’s more to being a parent or grandparent than raising children, of course, but raising children is the main task of parenting, by definition.
- D. Stacy and I have raised/are raising (?) two children of our own and we feel like we’ve had a part of walking with parents and grandparents to raise many children in the church through our ministry. I agree with Adrian Rogers... raising children is not easy because they don’t come with an instruction manual.
- E. And each one of them is different. Our son Benjamin is a left-brained, laid-back, thinker who always wanted to know, lead, and build. He’s an engineer and ministry leader. Our daughter Abby is probably more right-brained and is super smart, witty, creative, funny, and sees the beauty in everything. She’s an artist and leads children’s ministry at her church. They are both serving the Lord, along with their spouses.
- F. Raising them to be followers of Jesus was about trying to understand their differences from each other, and from US, as parents. And, doing our best to love, teach, discipline, model, and provide for their needs, all while pointing them to Jesus and His love for them.
- G. It would’ve been GREAT if they came with a specific instruction manual, but they didn’t. And, we learned as we went, just like every parent with us today. Yet, raising children actually starts long before they’re born, and each one of

us, no matter how young or old, can begin to understand how God wants us to raise our children and grandchildren even before they are born, and after they are here.

- H. If you're taking notes, write this down: **Raising children starts before they are born and requires intentional sacrifice and Kingdom focus.**
- I. This is Week 2 of our Family Matters series. Last week, we heard Jesus' words about home building...about building our lives and our families on the solid rock of Jesus. I was SO encouraged by the messages I received after worship from those who listed out their family members, prayed for them, and then let them know we prayed for them. And I know that simply doing that doesn't automatically create healthy and whole families - we're broken people - but keep praying for them and loving them and inviting them to be loved. God will keep building homes and families when we offer them to Him.
- J. This week, we're shifting to **raising children**. And I include grandchildren in that as well, and nieces and nephews, and kids here at church. Any young people in our lives.
- K. Let's open our bibles to a story that might be new to you. It's the story of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and her husband Elkanah. Samuel became the leader of the nation of Israel in the 11th century BC. This is a story about a mother and father who presented themselves and their desire to have a child before the Lord, even before Samuel was born, and trusted in God's providence after he was.
- L. 1 Samuel 1 tells the story. Let me summarize the first part of this story while you're finding it in your bible.
 - i. 1 Samuel begins by introducing us to Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had many children from Elkanah. Hannah did not.
 - ii. Elkanah loved both of his wives, but had a very special soft spot for Hannah because God had, "closed her womb" it says in 1 Samuel 1:5.
 - iii. Every year, Elkanah took his family to the town of Shiloh, to make sacrifices and worship the Lord together as a family. After the animal sacrifices, the family would eat the meat together. Elkanah would always give Hannah a double portion of food because he loved her, says scripture.
 - iv. Peninnah, however, mocked and provoked Hannah because she didn't have any children. This went on year after year. And year after year, Hannah would weep because of the fact that she didn't have children, and that her 'rival' Peninnah, it says in verse 6, would provoke her.
- M. Let's pick up the story in verse 8...this is a long portion of scripture today, so let's lean into it and listen and follow along in our bibles.

2. Scripture

A. READ 1 Samuel 1:8-28

- B. Three principles of raising children and grandchildren that are evident in this section are:
- i. **#1 - Family Worship** - They worshipped together, even before Hannah had children. Every year, they went to Shiloh to make sacrifices. Scholars believe that this was not one of the standard sacrifice days, but something this family chose to do because of their dedication to the Lord, and to each other, as a family.
 - ii. **#2 - Seeking God's Provision** - Hannah presented her request to the Lord, despite the circumstances and hardships. Hannah was dedicated to the God even though she was bitter and persecuted by Peninnah. She found her hope in the Lord. And God saw her dedication and love...and answered her prayer. And...
 - iii. **#3 - Knowing that Children are a Gift** - They dedicated Samuel to the Lord, like they promised. Samuel was later called by God to be a leader of a mighty nation of people who he called back to worship and service to God.
- C. Raising children starts before they're born and requires intentional sacrifice and Kingdom focus.
- D. Hannah would've had every right to be bitter and even give up on having children. She watched as Peninnah had several children, and she did not. She had to endure Peninnah's ridicule and mockery. Yet, Elkanah loved Hannah, and did his best to comfort and encourage her. I love that line where he asks, "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" Probably should've stopped when he was ahead.
- E. Yet, despite all that, Hannah kept praying and presenting herself before the Lord in order to ask for a son. God answered that prayer, which He didn't have to.
- F. In fact, Hannah put her trust in God's plan, no matter what the outcome, despite the fact that she so desperately wanted a son. In that process of trusting the Lord, she found hope merely in submitting to God's will.
- G. Parenting starts long before a woman is pregnant...long before a marriage. And, certainly, raising grandchildren along with parents starts long before they appear on the scene.
- H. It starts with worshiping the Lord and trusting Him with all things from an early age. It's about presenting ourselves and desires before the Lord, and listening intently to His will...having hope in God's plan for us. Praying for children that are to come and haven't yet.

- I. And then, if children DO come, remembering that they are on loan from God, must be dedicated back to God, and we'll be asked to release them to God's care, so that God can mould and shape them, with our help.
- J. Raising children is about intentional sacrifice and Kingdom focus.

3. Application

- A. In this story from 1 Samuel, and throughout the bible, we see these biblical parenting models and commands at work. Look at the stories of Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and Jesus, Eunice and Timothy.
- B. The Prodigal Son story is more about the father opening his loving arms to his wayward son than it is about the son, in many ways.
- C. Jesus' own care and love for children give us a solid picture of the way Jesus wants us to include children in our family faith development process.
- D. The goal of raising children is not so they behave in Wal-Mart. The goal of raising children in a Christian home is so each one will have every opportunity to be fully-devoted followers of Jesus.
- E. Proverbs 22:6 is a classic statement: "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray." "The right way" is the way of Jesus. Your job, parent and grandparent, is to love, teach, discipline, model, and provide for them, with every intent of raising children in The Right Way.
- F. But it's not something YOU invented...and once you release those young ones to the Lord, they must make those choices on their own.
- G. For those parents who are done raising children and who are maybe on to grandchildren and great-grandchildren, remember that you are not ultimately in control of what they decide to do after your influence starts to wane. You will sometimes feel like you've messed it up. You will sometimes experience rejection or wonder what you did wrong. Be careful to reflect on that, repent and reconcile where possible, but don't take on every decision of your grown children as your responsibility beyond what God is asking of you. Pray for and love on those grown children and their children to whatever extent you can and trust the rest to the Lord.
- H. Hannah gave Samuel up to be trained and nurtured in the faith traditions of the Temple because she made a promise to offer him in that special way to the Lord. We are called by God to be intentional about sacrificing all we can, and staying focused on the kingdom that God is ushering in.
- I. For some practical steps, here are five things that parents, grandparents, family members, and church folk are called to do to raise our next generations in Him. For each one, I have a quote and a few scripture references for you to digest:
 - i. #1 - **Love Your Children**

- a. Genny Monchamp said, “Show your children God’s love by loving them and others as Christ loves you. Be quick to forgive, don’t hold a grudge, look for what’s best, and speak gently into areas of their lives that need growth.”
 - b. Hannah loved Samuel with her whole heart! Mary loved Jesus with her whole heart! This love is a sacrificial love...the love of Jesus. Jesus said in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” You can substitute children in place of friends and you get a sense of the sacrifice of love you make for children and those around you in your family.
- ii. **#2 - Teach Your Children**
- a. “Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that Sunday School is intended to ease them of their personal duties. The first and most natural condition of things is for Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” That was from theologian Charles Haddon Spurgeon
 - b. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says “These words I am commanding you today must be kept in mind, and you must teach them to your children and speak of them as you sit in your house, as you walk along the road, as you lie down, and as you get up.”
 - c. Just like it’s not the public school’s responsibility alone to teach your children and grandchildren algebra, it’s not the church’s responsibility alone to raise your child in the faith. Teaching starts at home as you identify learning opportunities and take the time to teach children to love Jesus. School will help. Church will help. But it’s a team effort. “It takes a VILLAGE to raise a child,” goes the old adage.
- iii. **#3 - Discipline Your Children**
- a. Certainly the uncomfortable part of parenting...and something we won’t all agree on. But I’m not talking about spanking or not. We’re talking more about setting clear boundaries and expectations, and consequences on which to follow through.
 - b. Henry Blackaby wrote this: “God is interested in developing your character. At times He lets you proceed, but He will never let you go too far without discipline to bring you back. In your relationship with God, He may let you make a wrong decision. Then the Spirit of God causes you to recognize that it is not God’s will. He guides you back to the right path.”

- c. As parents and grandparents, loving and clear guidance allows children to learn and grow with boundaries so they don't get hurt, just like God gives to us all.
 - d. Hebrews 12:11 says, "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."
 - e. Let your discipline be loving and clear, not angry or reactive, parents. And, always, always, always, hug your child and remind them that you love them after you've had to discipline them...that's how God's love works in our lives.
- iv. **#4 - Model for Your Children**
- a. I'm not talking about walking the L.A. runway. I'm talking about letting them see you being the best follower of Jesus you currently are equipped to be. Be genuine. Have integrity. Be humble and honest. Admit when you're wrong. And laugh together. Hannah and Elkanah were modeling worship and prayer and provision long before Samuel was born.
 - b. This is a powerful quote by pastor and author Chuck Swindoll, "You want to mess up the minds of your children? Here's how – guaranteed! Rear them in a legalistic, tight context of external religion, where performance is more important than reality. Fake your faith. Sneak around and pretend your spirituality. Train your children to do the same. Embrace a long list of do's and don'ts publicly but hypocritically practice them privately... yet never own up to the fact that it's hypocrisy. Act one way but live another. And you can count on it – emotional and spiritual damage will occur." Ouch!
 - c. Titus 2:6-7 says, "Encourage young men to use good judgment. Always set an example by doing good things. When you teach, be an example of moral purity and dignity."
 - d. Children watch every move you make and will imitate the good ones as much as the bad ones. As they say in England, "Have a care, parent." And finally...
- v. **#5 - Provide for Your Children**
- a. This doesn't mean give your children and grandchildren (I'm looking at YOU grandparents) everything they want to spoil them. It's OK to give them what they need and lovingly provide for them. But, remember that providing for your children is not about money or things. It's about the whole package of security, wholeness, love, and safety.
 - b. The late Billy Graham said, "The family should be a closely-knit group. The home should be a self-contained shelter of security; a kind of school

where life's basic lessons are taught; and a kind of church where God is honored; a place where wholesome recreation and simple pleasures are enjoyed.”

- c. Philippians 4:19 reminds us, “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
- d. As God provides for you and your family, allow those blessings to flow into your children and grandchildren, yet without using those goods as leverage for anything. Teach children that all you provide comes from the Lord, through work and sacrifice, and must be used wisely for God in return.

4. Conclusion

- A. We don't hear anything about Hannah and Elkanah after this beginning part of the story, but we have a lot of the story of Samuel. Even in the short time that Samuel was with his parents, they were intentional about sacrificing for him and keeping their focus on God's kingdom.
- B. Your homework for this week is to list out the names of the children in your life. Maybe they are your own and still at home. Maybe they are grandchildren near and far. Or maybe nieces and nephews, children you are close to here at church.
- C. Find one way to love them, teach them, guide them, model for them, or provide for them. Or, find one way to do each of those things. It can be subtle and simple like telling them you love them, or doing a project together in person or over ZOOM.
- D. Whatever you do, intentionally sacrifice something, and make sure it points to the Kingdom of God in some way...to point that young person to the future with God IN it.
- E. Raising children starts long before they're born and requires intentional sacrifice and Kingdom focus.
- F. Let's PRAY!