



## **Theme – PG: Parental Guidance Needed**

### ***“PG – Positive Discipline, Kindness, and Growth”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, April 29-30, 2023, at Summit Church, Durango

**VIDEO      PG Sermon Bumper**

**SLIDE      “PG – Positive Discipline, Kindness and Growth”**

Today we continue in a series of sermons for anyone who is investing in the lives of the next generation, whether it be your own child, a grandchild, a grown child, a nephew or niece, or anyone that is in need of guidance. I remind you that Jesus did not have any children of his own and yet on several occasions in the gospels invited children to come and sit with him so he could bless them. I would suggest to you that each of us is called to care for those who are younger and in the next generation and that is one of the values of our church.

We started off this series talking about grace, the unmerited, underserved love of God and how we might model that in our relationships. The big idea is that our kids focus not just on what we say, or what we do, but WHO WE ARE. Last week, Tanner did a great job going deeper with that idea, helping us understand how practicing patience helps us experience and share God’s grace with each other and our children. Patience affects who we are and then that spills over into what we do.

Today’s big idea is that who we are affects what we say, and our

words do matter. What can be challenging is that the English language can be hard to grasp sometimes. These past two weekends have been a time for us to celebrate and encourage us as a congregation to remember the children in the world who are in need and how we can support them through Compassion International. This can be a great opportunity for each of us to see the world with bigger eyes and hearts, caring for kids whether we have kids of our own or not. It's an easy way to make a huge difference in the life of a child, and one of the things you get to do is develop a relationship with the child you sponsor through letters. We have a child we sponsor, and we get letters from them, as do many of you, and I really appreciated these funny stories of sponsors who have gotten letters from their children.

#### **VIDEO      Compassion**

The words we use in the letters allow us to connect and I would suggest to you that one of the most important parts of parenting is staying connected to your kids, no matter how young or old they might be. Indeed, this is true in all our relationships, including our relationship with God. It's why Jesus boiled down all the laws and words of the Bible into the two most important ones.

#### **SLIDE              Love God (fly in)**

**Love Others**

**Love Yourself**

These commandments point to the big idea and Biblical truth that I hope we can hear today. I don't care what parenting model you think is best and I don't care how many books we read, when a relationship is broken, discipline doesn't work. When a relationship is broken, people get stuck. When a relationship is broken, we don't learn or grow from that relationship, other than learning what we DON'T want from life!

#### **SLIDE              When a relationship is broken, we get stuck.**

This idea is imbedded in just about every story that Jesus tells and

every teaching that he gives his followers. There are stories about loving others, serving others, and not judging, because Jesus understood that when the relationship with God or each other or within us is broken, we get stuck. The apostle Paul puts this in the affirmative when he tells us in Romans 2:4 these words.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>4</sup> Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?**

Remember that sin is separation from us and God, or us and others, or inside of us. It describes a relationship that is broken. There is this amazing truth that it is God's kindness, tolerance, and patience that is intended to turn us around and take us in a new direction. While this series is about parenting, the truth is that Jesus never talked directly about parenting, but he laid the foundation and the framework for ALL human relationships and how we can find meaning, purpose, and joy in our marriages, with our kids, our friendships, and any other place where two or more are gathered. It's why Jesus said, "Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there," because we are meant to be Christ to each other and see the spark of the divine in each other, and this includes our children. It's why Jesus gave us a new commandment that we find in all the Gospels and summed up beautifully in John 13.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>34</sup> So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."**

The Apostle Paul then fleshes out what this love looks like when life gets hard, and we are under pressure. We began last week with these words from 1 Corinthians 13, and we only did one word,

patience, because if we are honest, many of our relationships fall apart right there! But let's continue.

## **BIBLE**

<sup>4</sup> **Love is patient and kind.**

Kindness is often seen as weak, but the opposite is actually true. Unkindness often happens because of a lack of strength and self-control. When we are unkind it is because something else has control of us. Being unkind often happens because of a lack of self-awareness. People who are unkind often don't even know they are being rude or mean spirited. I love how pastor Andy Stanley defines kindness.

**SLIDE      “Kindness is loaning someone your strength, rather than reminding them of their weakness.”    –Andy Stanley**

Every day the world we live in makes us doubt ourselves. When we fail, when we fall, when we don't measure up, we fall into a pit and we need people in our lives who will side with us and not against us, loaning us their strength.

I think about the times I messed up when I was younger and how often my parents simply said they were disappointed, and they were pretty confident I could figure things out. I wish I had done this better with my kids, but I have seen many great parents do a couple of things when it comes to loaning kids their strength. I think of great places where I have worked and my supervisor or my boss has done something similar. People honored me by assuming I was smart enough to figure things out and that is something that we struggle with I think in today's world when it comes to our kids.

We inadvertently tell our children and others that they are not capable of taking care of themselves when we rescue them from every problem or struggle. I think about how my mother let me handle applying to college and then meeting with advisors and how grateful I was during school that I was the one in charge of my education and had

to follow through and people believed I could do it. Once again, I wish I followed this advice better than I'm giving it, but as I look back, I wish I would have had a clear understanding of how powerful that is to loan someone your strength by believing in them.

One other thing in this area I wish I had known earlier but have come to appreciate as I have seen other great parents do it is not assuming my kids will mess up by telling them the consequences ahead of time. Feel free to disagree with me and I'm certainly not up here to tell us how we can be perfect parents, but announcing a punishment ahead of time basically is telling them that we expect them to mess up. This ends up siding against our children because we are telling them that we not only are worried about them messing up but we are anticipating there will be problems.

I have seen it work much better when we expect the best and then act shocked when there is a mix up or a mistake or a failure.

I remember being called by a student in my youth ministry after they had been in a car accident to come and be with them at the scene. They were afraid to call their parents because they knew they would get yelled at, and they weren't even the ones driving. It was so interesting to watch the kids' reactions when a parent showed up and, sure enough, they yelled and were angry and telling their student what a screw up they were and how now they would be grounded for the rest of their lives.

Then, another parent arrived. They hugged their child and expressed gratitude that they were unharmed. They simply said something like, "Wow, this is terrible and I'm sure it's very difficult. I'm sure there will be consequences and we'll get through it together." You could see them take the side of their student and honor the full weight of what would happen in the future and be confident that their student would get through it. One stood up taller and the other shrunk and recoiled.

As we get older in particular, we always want to know what the consequences will be if we get in trouble, and the best parental response I have seen is to act surprised and to not be sure until you've had some time to think about it. I've seen great parents simply be surprised by their student's behavior and act shocked that they were even in trouble, while still taking it very seriously and assuring them that there would be consequences and they would work through it together. Great parents would often leave their students hanging for a while and almost drag it out.

The key is to side with our children and with others before we discipline or worry about punishment or consequences, because as followers of Jesus, we understand that God did this for us. While we we're broken and had done things that are sinful, Christ sided with us and died for us, which is the point of the cross. The cross is meant to wash over us in those moments of brokenness to help us recognize that God made us to love us, and God created us for relationship and God sided with us before our brokenness.

**SLIDE                      God sided with us first.**

**BIBLE**

**<sup>8</sup> But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.**

God loaned us strength through the cross and did for us that we couldn't do for ourselves. There is a question begged in this idea of loaning someone our strength and that is thinking ahead of time about our go to response when someone messes up. What is our go to response when we sense weakness or failure in others, and in our children? Do they feel as if we have sided with them, or do they feel that we have sided against them, and they end up wanting to push us away. Our children typically already know where and when they have failed. Most of us don't need to be reminded of our failures because we know them. The weight of our words is huge upon our children.

Language matters — especially in the heat of a moment.

When a child is misbehaving or throwing a tantrum, it's easy to blurt out whatever you think might get them to calm down and behave. But certain common phrases could “inadvertently shame” that child and cause lasting damage to their self-esteem, says Dr. Tovah Klein, a child psychologist and author of the book “How Toddlers Thrive.”

When we are shamed by our parents, the people whose love and opinions matter the most, our confidence and motivation dry up, [research shows](#). That makes us less likely to try new things and take on new challenges, traits we need to succeed later in life. Here are five common phrases we should avoid, and what we can say instead, according to Klein. Most of the time, we absolutely don't mean to shame our kids. It can take the form of an exaggerated sigh or eye-roll, and a snarky comment like:

**SLIDE      5 toxic phrases** (have each fly in)

- **“So, you're in a bad mood, again. You're always in a bad mood.”**
- **“Why do you always get upset when this happens?”**
- **“Did you have to do that [negative behavior] again?”**
- **“That's ridiculous!”**
- **“You're overreacting.”**

I know when I have used these statements it is when I'm frustrated. Maybe the kids are fighting with each other and not paying attention to a word you say. Or they suddenly pretend they don't hear your requests or refuse to do something they usually don't mind doing. Our kids might often be really sweet, but then their very human side shows up! They don't want to go out to dinner with Grandma and Grandpa tonight, and they have their own ideas of how to spend the evening. We can easily say one of these phrases and we inadvertently cause our kids to wonder if something is permanently wrong with them. There are a few things we can do when this happens.

**SLIDE                    Take a step back and pause – practice patience.**

First, you can always take a step back before saying anything at all. As we talked about the first week in this series, ask yourself:

**“What’s going on with me, that I’m mad and disappointed in my child?”** Remember that all of us, children, and adults, are wired by God to go through a range of feelings. Some feelings are great, and others are challenging to work through. When we pause, we then have time to pick a response that shows some empathy until the bad mood inevitably passes.

**SLIDE                    What we can say instead (have them fly in)**

- **“You don’t want to do this right now. I get it. But we still have to go.”**
- **“If this is hard, I’m going to help you.”**
- **“I wish we could do that.”**
- **“You want to go outside? I get it. Unfortunately, we can’t right now.”**

Acknowledge and validate the disappointment before moving on and being firm about what needs to happen, letting them know you aren’t abandoning plans just because they’re momentarily in a bad mood. We don’t need to “over-talk.” A little empathy goes a long way.

In some situations, you can also practice “respectfully ignoring” a child who’s acting out, Klein adds: Rather than rejecting or dismissing the behavior, calmly wait for it to pass. Say something like, **“I’m just going to get our stuff ready. I’ll come back and get you in a moment.”**

If you do lose your temper and say something you regret, you’ll need to acknowledge your mistake to re-establish trust. I told you when we started this series that I asked my daughter to give me a list of the ways I had failed as a parent. She had a long list going, and one of the ones I remembered vividly, she did not. She was not even 5, didn’t have any language, either Ukrainian or English, and my wife and I were both exhausted and not getting enough sleep as the kids would often get up



in the night. I went to the computer and found her drawing all over our new flat computer screen with a ballpoint pen! It was only later I realized she probably thought that's how you got things to show up on the screen!

Out of frustration, I simply yelled and she immediately when and hid under the desk. I felt horrible and it took me a few minutes of sitting patiently in the chair before I could coax her out from the under the desk and into my lap. We just sat together for an hour or so and reconnected. Even though she could not understand my language, my actions certainly were shaming, and I had to do some work to restore the relationship.

I am constantly learning this truth, that kindness is about loaning my daughter my strength, and not reminding her of her weakness. Can we all agree that the world does a great job already of reminding us of our weaknesses? I want to constantly be reminding myself to have a go-to response that is biblical and faithful and sides with the other person, rather than yelling or reacting in a way that causes more damage and keeps me from being able to build up the other person.

### **SLIDE                      What is my go-to response?**

What the apostle Paul says next is critical in this text from 1 Corinthians because it gets at the heart of why we often have a hard time being patient and kind.

### **BIBLE**

**Love is not jealous or boastful or proud<sup>5</sup> or rude.**

Love allows others to shine. Love is not threatened by someone else's success. This scripture is reminding us of this powerful truth that if we don't feel good about ourselves then we have a very difficult time helping others to feel good about themselves, and that's especially true of our children. When we don't feel good about ourselves, we have a hard time celebrating others without pointing out something they could

have done better or should have done better. When we go into coaching mode without really celebrating a success, it is often because there is something going on inside of ourselves which we don't feel good about and we end up projecting it on our children, or the people we work with, or our spouse.

When we become jealous or boastful or proud, we then can easily move to being rude, which often shows up as sarcasm and can be especially painful. Sarcasm is often a reflection of my own insecurity is what I have realized as we often must follow it up with something like, "I was just kidding."

## **BIBLE**

**It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.**

At the heart of the relationships that we are asked to pursue as followers of Jesus is this idea of not only keeping from demanding our own way but also putting the other first. Jesus talks about the first being last and the last being first and how among us it should be different, and that we would serve each other. One of the ways we can do that is by serving together like getting a child from compassion international and talking about how we can serve others together. When we do this in our adult relationships, it bleeds over into the relationships with our children and those with whom we work and in every area of our lives.

We serve others because Christ served us first, and this ties directly into the idea of how we discipline. We are invited to not be irritable and to not keep a record of whatever wrong that has happened and in doing that we restore broken relationships. Let me ask you a question. What do you think the point is of discipline when it comes to children or anyone else in our lives over which we have responsibility? When children do something, we don't want them to do or do something that is not responsible, the relationship we have with

them gets broken. If the real issue is a break in trust or a break in the relationship, what do we want the end result of discipline to be? **What are we trying to accomplish when we discipline?**

What I think happens for us in parenting is that we get so exhausted and tired, and we have so little time to stop and think, we don't reflect upon the point of discipline. All we really want is for our kids to do what we want them to do and do what they're told, correct? Let me suggest that if there isn't a goal to our discipline, then it's not really discipline at all, but just punishment. Discipline is meant to make a person better, which is why we all wish we were more disciplined when it comes to eating or exercise or some other thing that will help us grow or stop growing if that's our intention.

Punishment rarely makes anyone better, but simply makes us more careful so we don't get caught next time. **Punishment doesn't make us better, but it certainly can make us bitter.** The message of punishment is simply that if you don't obey then bad things will happen. Most punishment is just payback because we were inconvenienced or embarrassed and so now, we are going to make life harder on the other person.

**SLIDE      The goal of discipline should be restoration.**

If we are going to be followers of Jesus and live into this idea of love that Paul writes about, then the end result of discipline for us should be restoration of the relationship. The goal is for us to teach and learn how to restore relationships, and the earlier we start in life the better, because this idea of restoring a relationship is counterintuitive and must be taught and learned. We don't naturally figure this out, and I have a theory that the reason there is so much anger and polarization and vitriol and mass shootings and school violence in the world is because we haven't learned how to do restoration but instead, **we seek to punish people who disagree** with us or who don't do what we think they should be doing. This is exactly what Paul is arguing against in the

text in 1 Corinthians as he is writing it to a church that is in conflict constantly.

**SLIDE      “I don't know why you're so upset? I said I was sorry!”**

Have you ever said to someone, or has anyone ever said to you, **“I don't know why you're so upset? I said I was sorry!”** If we end up saying something like this, it most likely is because we have never learned the art of restoring a relationship. The implication is that simply saying we are sorry restores a relationship, and you and I both know this is not true. Saying we are sorry is a good beginning point but for some things it is simply insulting because it takes more than a few words to fix a broken relationship. We are basically saying to the other person that we think something is wrong with them because we said we were sorry, and everything is back to normal.

The irony is that instead of restoring relationships, many of the consequences we put in place for our kids actually makes things worse and push our kids farther away. We put kids in time out or we put them on restriction or take away their phone and we hope that the problem gets better but often it gets worse. The reason is because none of those things help restores relationships. Someone says something disrespectful to us and so we either take away privileges or our attention and then what happens to the relationship? It suffers even more, and no one grows or gets better. I heard a counselor once say that taking stuff away should be a last resort because no one ever gets better but instead they just work harder to not get caught next time.

**SLIDE      At the heart of every mistake is a damaged relationship.**

This is important in our marriages and in our workplace and with our kids and in every other relationship we have in life. At the heart of every mistake is a damaged relationship. Something hasn't just happened when we say something we wish we had said, or we do something we wish we hadn't done. A relationship gets damaged and until we recognize this we won't grow or get better or even change our

behavior. The goal should be to restore the relationship, or it's not really disciplined and its simply punishment we hope would lead to behavior modification.

I would suggest that we all need to be coached in the relational art of building a bridge when we have participated, even unknowingly, and taking it down to begin with. I know this is challenging to think through, but it is possible and not as complicated as we make it out to be. Most of us, not long after we learned to talk, were taught to apologize in some way. Apology is part of relationship restoration, but we sometimes forget an important component to a good apology.

**SLIDE                    “I am sorry.”**

First, we need to apologize in complete sentences. Just saying, “sorry,” is not a complete sentence and it is a sorry excuse for an apology because it often is done in a snide tone. We need to use the pronoun and we need to look people in the eye and speak like we mean it. We also need to understand and remember that when we have done something to break a relationship, we have taken something away from the other person. This is why we often say, **“I owe that person an apology.”** And, in most cases, we owe more than an apology. Let me suggest something else we need to learn to say, and we need to teach our children to say. We need to say out loud whatever we did that was wrong in order to clear the air.

**SLIDE                    “I am sorry for...” (have next one fly in)**  
**“Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?”**

Most of us hate this part but it is essential for our children to learn this and for us to recognize that it takes more than just an apology to restore most broken relationships. It takes a willingness for us to sacrifice and do something for the other person, being willing to put them first, not demanding our own way, and instead giving ourselves away. When we take something from someone by our actions, we owe something back.

When we learn this for ourselves and when we teach this to our children, we lay the groundwork for biblical restoration. Well, I wish I knew all of this and was able to practice it when my kids were younger, it is unfortunately something I have had to learn over the years as a parent and I made a lot of mistakes in figuring this out. I was going to share with you a couple of examples from my own life but my daughter asked me not to bring her into this sermon too much, so let me share with you a couple of times I have seen parents do this brilliantly over the years as a pastor.

I remember a young man in my youth ministry who got into a fight at school with another boy and he was suspended for a few days. While his father appreciated that the school had stepped in, he really felt like his son needed to do something more and so he insisted that he invite the young man over to dinner at their house. The young man hated this and was so angry at his parents, but he relented mostly because he did respect his parents. He also had the young man use some of his own money from his paper route to buy the other boy a gift and by this time his blood was boiling! The father asked him to think about what the young man might like, and he asked him to spend a week thinking about it first by observing the other boy when they were back in school together, without being creepy about it!

As he looked at the other boy from the perspective of wanting to do something for him, he noticed something he had never paid attention to before and that is that the young man he had fought had very old and worn-out shoes. He bought a nice pair of Air Jordans after guessing at his size and when the young man came over for dinner he apologized and gave him issues and asked if he could do anything else to make things right. It was uncomfortable but that young man would tell me a few years later that it was the most valuable lesson he had learned all through high school, as he and the young man actually became friends.

There was another young man who was disrespectful to his

mother, saying some very hurtful words that caused the mother to cry, and he made his father furious. By the way, part of growing up is that we push against our parents sometimes, and that's OK, but then we have to figure out how to restore the relationship. This father was very smart, and he waited a while to calm down and thought about the kind of discipline he wanted to give his son. He thought about taking away the car or taking away his phone, but instead he made his son ask his mother out on a date.

The son did not like this idea as you can imagine, especially when the father told him that he was going to pay for it with his own money and he was going to buy his mother some flowers as well. The young man begrudgingly agreed, and it turned into a beautiful night between a mother and a son. The father didn't even have to ask his son to apologize. The mother would say later was one of the best nights of her life as they talked about what was really happening in the young man's life that made him lash out at his mother a week earlier. They did the work of restoring the relationship instead of doing things that would continually push each other away.

We can do this, and as followers of Jesus we can see it at the center of our faith. We have all fallen short and broken relationships with each other and with God, and what did God do? Did God punish us? No, because most of us have discovered that when we make a mistake or brokenness happens there is a built-in cost that weighs upon our hearts. So, God made the first move to restore us through the work that Jesus does on the cross, who then sends us out into our broken world to do the work of restoration of the relationships that we have broken because of our impatience and unkindness.

God has also given us the responsibility of teaching our children and modeling this behavior to others in our sphere of influence, what it means to restore what has been broken. So, I encourage you today to be willing to loan your strength rather than point out weakness. When you need to discipline your children, do so with the goal of restoring

the relationships that have been broken. And allow God's kindness to lead to your restoration as you remember God made you to love you, so you can share that with your children and the world.

**SLIDE                      Prayer**

*Gracious God, you know each one of us in this room and how we have fallen short. You know about the broken relationships in our lives, and you have done something to help begin restoring them. Help us to accept at the core of our being what you have done for us through Jesus Christ on the cross, connecting us to you, and to one another, and to ourselves. May that restoration change us and help us to model what it looks like to bring about healing in today's world. May we be generous in loaning our strength to those in need so that this world might become more like the Kingdom of God that you long for it to be. We pray these things through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.*



## **April 29-30 Order**

1. Ely welcomes people. ***Today's message focuses on the role of kindness in restoring our relationships.***
2. Two songs.
3. Jeff welcomes.
  - a. QR code.
  - b. Invite people to greet each other, however we are comfortable.
4. Announcement Video
5. Sermon and Prayer
6. One Song
7. Prayer and Lord's Prayer
8. Offering SLIDE and Focus (Easter Offering Update and Missions)
9. Care Ministers (If any are present)
10. Baptisms next week
11. Compassion table in the back
12. Closing Prayer