



Theme – PG: Parental Guidance Needed

“PG – Love That Shapes Hearts”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, May 6-7, 2023, at Summit Church, Durango

VIDEO PG Sermon Bumper

SLIDE “PG – Love That Shapes Hearts”

Shortly after we adopted our kids, I realized I needed to trade in my old Toyota 4 runner for something a bit newer and that both my wife and I could drive because she wasn't comfortable driving a stick shift. Those of you who are unsure what a stick shift is, which was also called a manual transmission, you may have to go Google that later! My mom was getting rid of her Subaru Outback and so I arranged to buy that from her so she could get herself a new Prius as she wanted one of the new hybrids to save on gas money. She had bought the Outback for when my grandparents lived with her but they had both passed on and so it was time for something different for her. My son Thomas and I flew out to California and then drove the car back here to Durango over the summer. We stopped at the ocean on the way home and it's still one of my favorite memories with him.

GRAPHIC Jeff and Thomas at the ocean

This weekend is the 7th anniversary of his death and so I found myself thinking a lot about him as I was preparing this message today. One of the things that happened shortly after we got back to Durango is

that Thomas took a storage tub full of Legos on that trip and as we were unloading, he placed it on top of the hood of this relatively new Subaru. He made several cool objects with them as they were a collection of a variety of Lego kits. He was excited to show them off to me and so he dragged the tub along the top of the hood of the car and, unbeknownst to him what would happen, there was sand on the bottom of that tub and it put deep scratches in that remained until I sold the car a number of years later.

I was a bit perturbed by it and if it had been several years earlier, I might have even yelled, but I was slowly learning as a parent that my stuff was not as important as I thought it was. Early in my marriage I placed a high value on getting a certain car or having certain things and it really is amazing that my wife stayed married to me given what a knucklehead I was. My sense is that we all struggle with this at times if we are honest, sometimes prioritizing our stuff ahead of people, especially the people that are the most important in our lives.

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 any young person that needs 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.

If you've missed any of these messages, you can find all of them as videos and podcasts on our website and our app. 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. Tanner then 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.

Last week's big idea was that who we are affects what we say, and our words matter. If we are a parent, our words can weigh like an 800-pound gorilla on our kids without us even realizing it. We talked about how our words can cause relationships to break and 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. It's why Jesus gave us a new commandment that we find in all the Gospels and summed up beautifully in John 13.

BIBLE

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

This all-encompassing command contains the key to not only parenting but all our relationships. The Apostle Paul then fleshes out what this love looks like when life gets hard, and we are under pressure. Paul is attempting to clarify what it looks like to love like Jesus loved as he writes to the people of Corinth in the 1st century. Remember that he is writing this letter because clearly people are not doing these things and they need some direction and instruction on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 13 contains powerful words and we focused on the first five words the past two

weeks.

BIBLE

⁴ **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. We learned this about kindness.

SLIDE Kindness is loaning someone your strength, rather than reminding them of their weakness.

Paul goes on in the next few words.

BIBLE

Love is not jealous or boastful or proud⁵ or rude.

Love allows others to shine. Love is not threatened by someone else's success. This scripture reminds us of a 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. This led us to the big idea from last week's message which is that the purpose of discipline should be to restore broken relationships and not simply to get people to behave or do what we want them to do.

SLIDE The goal of discipline should be restoration.

We learned that at the heart of every mistake is really a damaged relationship and what we really want is not just children that behave themselves and not just people that do what we want them to do, but restoration of broken relationships. The whole reason that God came in

the person of Jesus and went to the cross and gave his life was to restore our relationship with God, with each other, and with ourselves. Paul tries to help us understand this idea more fully when he uses these words next.

BIBLE

[Love] does not demand its own way.

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. Love, at its core, is not selfish. Paul then takes it one step further as he makes a connection with our inability to love and the thing that I think gets in the way of most of our relationships if we are honest.

BIBLE

[Love] is not irritable.

SLIDE

irritable or easily angered = “easily stirred up”

The word irritable often is translated as angry and it comes from a Greek cooking word that means, **“to stir something up.”** Do your kids or your spouse or the people you work with or anyone in your family or people in your neighborhood or people driving on the road in a way that makes you crazy ever get you stirred up? I like to cook and when you're cooking something in a pot, you want to be sure that you are mixing everything together by bringing all the stuff that has settled on the bottom into the rest of the pot. You often must work at it to get everything mixed up really well so that your soup or your sauce or Stew or whatever it is you're cooking gets mixed up properly. Do you know how all the salad toppings fall to the bottom of the salad and you want to keep mixing them up, so you get all the good stuff? That's the idea.

This applies to us as humans because the idea is that nothing is being added to the pot or to the salad, it's just being stirred up. I know we don't want to hear this, but when it comes to our relationship with our kids or our spouse or anyone in our family or people at work or anyone that seems to irritate us, they are not typically adding anything to us from the outside. They are simply stirring up and bringing to the surface what is already inside of us, often feelings and emotions that we have never expressed, or we have stuffed way down inside and we hope no one will ever see. The people closest to us do it better than anyone else.

So, what is it that is inside of us that gets stirred up so easily and can become anger or irritation? Paul just told us, and it's our inherent desire to be selfish and have things done our way. Let's be honest, all of us feel like the world would be a much better place if everyone would simply do what we want them to do, correct? We each have a desire to have our own way, and when it comes to parenting, we want kids to do what we want them to do, and when they don't, we get stirred up and irritable and angry.

The truth is that no one makes any of us angry. We must choose to be angry as a response to what someone has done, and often what people do stirs us up and brings that anger to the surface. Have you ever gotten angry about something and wondered where that anger came from when whatever it is that happened really isn't that big of a deal? Having our emotions stirred up is inevitable because we all have things that we haven't dealt with in our lives.

I was visiting with someone recently who told me they kept getting angry at their children over silly things and they realized it was because they were angry at how they were treated by their parents, which was cruel and unfair when they were younger. They didn't even realize how their upbringing was now affecting the way they parented their children, but it seemed like everything their kids would do stirred up inside of them what was already there and now their task is to claim

that, so they don't take it out on their children or the people they love the most.

It's important to remember that every relationship we have, especially the ones with our children, brings emotions to the surface. Relationships are emotional because we care and because we are mostly selfish, and we want our way in just about every relationship. This is a great place to remember that it's important to be willing and able to talk to our kids about the emotional part of life, and not try to hide those emotions from our children to protect them. We end up sending them a message that emotions and feelings are not okay and as a result they stuff them, and they end up with things they get stirred up easily and not understanding what to do with them. A prominent child psychologist put it this way.

SLIDE “It is scarier for a child to have a parent who is struggling and doesn't talk about it, versus a parent that is struggling and is willing to talk about it.”

This holds true in our marriages and in our workplaces and once again in every relationship we might have. When we are struggling and we are not willing to open up and be honest about it, thinking that hiding it or stuffing it is the best solution, it inevitably will get stirred up and the people in our lives who love us the most will be able to feel it percolating under the surface. Kids, in particular, are very intuitive, and This is why on the very first week of this series I talked about who we are is more important than what we say or what we do, because our kids will pick up on it.

When we are willing to be honest about those emotions which are under the surface, in age-appropriate ways of course, we model for them what it means to be an emotionally mature adult so they can then learn to express those feelings in ways that are helpful and not hurtful. We tell our children that it's OK to feel and express our emotions, which is important because eventually someone is going to come along

and stir those feelings and emotions up inside of them. When that happens, they need to understand what's going on inside of them and what is going on inside of you.

One of the reasons this is so critical is that at some point in life, if we live long enough and if we outlive our children, they will be parenting us. If we haven't learned how to deal with the things that get stirred up inside of us, they eventually will come back to bite us as we age and need care. There is a passage that speaks directly to this in the book attributed to the brother of Jesus, James. It may be some of the most practical wisdom and relationship advice you will ever hear and provide perspective on why each of us gets stirred up so easily. James asks a question and then answers it for us to prod us into thinking deeper about this idea. In James 4 we are reminded that while it might be easy to point the finger at someone else when there is conflict or when we are irritated, we might need to look somewhere else.

BIBLE

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? ² You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. ³ And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

I tell you often that I preach sermons first to myself before I share them with you and this is an area where I have struggled my entire life, and especially in being a parent. One of the things I have learned about not just parenting but in all of my relationships is that when I find myself getting angry or irritated, I need to step back and tell myself this simple truth. "I am angry or irritated because I am not getting what I want. I want my child to do their best but they are not doing their best.

I want my child to be better at paying attention. I want my child to clean their room the way I want it cleaned. The reason I am so stirred up and I'm about to say something that will force me to apologize later is because I am not getting what I want. I need to admit it to myself, and I need to own it, otherwise it will get a hold of me and lead me to damage the people around me.”

When I can pause and say these things to myself, and I own my piece of the conflict puzzle, the temperature comes down and things are less stirred up and I am better at being a parent and a spouse and a coworker and a friend. James is correct in that fights and quarrels erupt when we are not getting what we want and when our motives are all wrong. When we aren't getting what we need or what we feel we deserve, we get stir it up. Our task is to own our piece of the conflict puzzle.

SLIDE **“I am not getting what I want.”**

An easy way to do this is to stop in the middle of any argument or disagreement or quarrel and say these simple words. “I need to be honest and share what part of the problem is in this moment. I am not getting what I want.” Let's practice and say those words together out loud. Will you do that with me? I'm not sure there's a more valuable relationship principle we can model and learn and teach in our families and in our marriages and in our workplaces and within our friendships. You might even learn to say this while you are driving, or in your prayers in the evening when you're frustrated about something that's happened during the day. If you get nothing else out of today's message, try to master being able to say this phrase and do it if at all possible, without whining!

When we model this for our children, we also help them understand what it is that will be behind most of their conflicts and quarrels. Behind every conflict is usually at least one or more people who is not getting their way. This is why the apostle Paul tells us that

love is not about me getting my way all the time.

BIBLE

[Love] does not demand its own way.

[Love] is not easily stirred up or angered.

Love recognizes what is going on and pays attention to what is happening inside of us before we worry about how everyone else is behaving. Last week we talked about the power of our words because when things are stirred up inside of us and we are angry and then we lash out at our children in particular, they typically don't have the emotional or intellectual capacity to understand that what we often are talking about isn't even what happened in a situation, but really, it's about us not getting our way. We often wouldn't dream about talking to another adult the way we talked to our kids sometimes. Although it seems more and more, we are talking to everyone in harsh tones, regardless of their age, because we just are not aware as a culture or as individuals of what is going on inside of us. We get stirred up easily and we lash out with our words because we only want, "what will give us pleasure."

It becomes very damaging when we say things out loud to our kids that most adults would respond with something like, **"What's wrong with you?"** Our children hear those same angry words and they think, **"What's wrong with me?"** When we continually talk to our children with angry words, they either become angry young people themselves, or they disconnect from us, and never want to have anything to do with us when we are older.

Are you easily stirred up? Are you able to admit that the stuff sticking to the bottom of the pot and the toppings that have fallen into the bottom of the salad we're already there? Are we willing to stop and acknowledge our piece of the conflict puzzle is that we aren't getting what we want? Mostly, what we want for our kids are good things, but the emotion and the anger behind them not always doing those good

things is more about us than it is about them. Are we willing to claim that, so we don't destroy our relationship with them? Good parenting and really being responsible in any relationship is about owning what is ours and not acting as if everything is everyone else's fault.

We talked also last week about the importance of learning how to restore a relationship by apologizing and one of the best things we can do as parents or as people in any relationship is apologize to our children when we have gotten stirred up and angry because of our own issues. One of the things I did get really good at as a parent was apologizing to my children. When we apologize to our children, we can use that moment to share with our children that we get stirred up and angry because we are not getting our way, and it will happen to them someday as well. We can then teach those most important to us that love is not self-seeking. Love is not easily angered. Love does not demand its own way.

BIBLE

[Love] keeps no record of being wronged.

Paul goes on and names another important element about love which is critical BECAUSE things get stirred up inside of us easily because we have a hard time letting things go. We hold on to them and they sit at the pot, and they get stirred up. What's ironic is that there is no win in reminding our children of their past failures, because they remember most of them just like we remember ours. I was reminded by a counselor once that at its core, keeping a record of being wronged is a power play. Reminding someone of some past transgression puts us in the driver's seat and over and above the other. Let's remember that forgiving and letting go is exactly what God does for us, which is why Paul continues with these words.

BIBLE

⁶ [Love] does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

Love does not delight in catching others doing the wrong thing, but instead rejoices when the truth wins out and then it celebrates the win. It is a very human thing to want to be right, and to point out to our children that we are right, and try to help them understand why we are right, but that is not love. How many times have you had said something like this to either your kids or someone that you love or someone that you think needs to fix their behavior, **“Well, the loving thing to do is to tell them why what they are doing is wrong and how it will lead to pain. The loving thing to do is to help them understand why we are right and they are wrong. The loving thing to do is to tell them the truth!”**

I want you to notice that this scripture does not say that, but says that love rejoices when the truth wins out. Love doesn't demand people hear the truth from us, which is usually about what we want if we're honest again. Love doesn't rejoice when there is injustice or hurt or brokenness, but it does rejoice when the glimmers of truth come shining through in unexpected ways that we can sometimes miss if we think our job is to point out the truth. Remember that it is the Holy Spirit's job to do the convicting and our job is to rejoice when the truth wins out.

I want to be clear that this doesn't mean we don't have boundaries or guidelines or guardrails that we hold for our children or in other areas of our lives. It doesn't mean that anything goes. What it does mean is something we learned last week, that love always sides with the offender and enters into the brokenness, rather than stands above and gloats or demands certain behavior to receive love. Love is about having a go to response like the one we talked about last week, and like many of you have emailed me about this week. **“Oh no! I'm so bummed for you! That stinks! But I'm here and we'll figure it out.”** Love is not about constantly reminding anyone, particularly our children, of their failures of the past.

BIBLE

⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Love always stands guard. Love defends. Love keeps bad things out and pushes away those things that cause harm. This can be especially challenging in today's world with everything that has to do with technology. It's why we are having a workshop on Friday night about how we can protect young eyes and I hope you will come and invite your friends and other families to join us. The new series we begin next week is about how we might navigate technology as people of faith. This idea of love never giving up is critical when it comes to navigating the online world because it is so challenging to keep up with everything that is going on. One of the things we'll talk about at the workshop is to start out with strong boundaries when it comes to technology and our children, and then loosen the grip slowly because it's much easier to ease up than it is to rein things back in.

It's also important to remember that parents are the ones who know when their kids are ready for certain freedoms. In today's world, freedom has very little to do with how old we are and much more to do with our maturity and what we're ready for. I think about the fact that in our state everyone who turns 15 gets a learner's permit to drive without having to do any testing, right? Don't we simply give everyone a learner's permit without them having to do anything? Of course, we don't, it's the job of parents to work with kids before they drive if they want to be able to do that before they turn 18. The same is true in every area of life so I encourage every parent to hold their ground in his loving a way as possible. It's OK for our kids to hate us for a season and I would suggest that if our kids are never upset with us, we're probably doing something wrong.

Listen carefully to these words. When we put boundaries and limits in place for our kids and they get angry, and we do so because we

genuinely care about them, it typically means that we care about our kids more than we care about having the approval of our kids. **What I have witnessed is that parents who seek the approval of their kids over and above what's best for their kids end up with neither approval nor what is best.**

We have a patch on the wall of our hallway that is the perfect size of a fist. I have never been able to perfectly repair it and that's okay because it's a reminder of what love sometimes looks like. Sometimes our love looks like the enemy to our children because love never gives up and always protects fiercely.

I want to remind us that there are no perfect parents, no perfect spouses, no perfect kids, no perfect families, because there are no perfect people. I would suggest you don't want perfect kids, or perfect parents, or a perfect spouse, or perfect friends, or perfect neighbor, or perfect co-workers, or perfect friends, because they would probably want nothing to do with our inevitable imperfections! I remember when I was serving in youth ministry and working with parents and students who are struggling having them wrestle with this question: Would you rather have perfect parents or perfect kids that were perfectly obedient and did exactly what they always wanted but didn't want to be with you because they were perfect and you were not, or would you rather have imperfect parents and imperfect kids with whom you had frustrations and conflict and struggles and difficult seasons, but actually wanted to be with in the end? **Which would you choose?**

SLIDE Do I want perfect people or genuine relationships that are deep and meaningful?

In the end, I think most of us would choose healthy relationships with our children as they become adults over perfection when it comes to behavior. What's profound and powerful is that we have a heavenly parent gave us the gift of free will AND made us to have a genuine and

meaningful relationship AND offer forgiveness ahead of time! How crazy is that? We have a heavenly parent that modeled for us not only what it means to be parents but how all our relationships can be most fulfilling. God made us relational beings, and God made us to love us. Do you believe this? Let's say it together out loud so maybe it will ring in our ears and flow across our lips and **shape our hearts**.

SLIDE God made me to love me.

God did this because God was pointing towards what God wanted most, which is healthy relationship with each one of us where we love God, love others, and love ourselves. I would suggest to you that this should be our guiding principle for us as we parent or invest in any of our relationships. I hope we can all parent, and work towards healthy adult relationships with our children and everyone in our family. I encourage us to have as our picture people in our family and sphere of influence who **want** to be together even when they don't **have** to be together.

The truth is that the only way our children will ever want our influence when they are older and on their own, as if they feel like we are on their side and we will love them no matter what. Once again, God does this for us, and it's a good parenting strategy especially when your kids are older. Even if you don't have that kind of relationship now with your adult children, you can start over by treating them differently, apologizing if needed, and getting clear over the things that are stirred up inside of you which have impacted your relationship with them. Be honest about not being able to parent perfectly because none of us can do that, and start from where you are, not keeping a record of all the wrongs from the past.

Apologies help restore relationships. Pride and stubbornness which says, "I am always right. I am your parent. I am in charge. I know what's best," cause damage and undermine any chance at a relationship and so I encourage you to let those things go. I assure you

that I have things at the bottom of my pot, the bottom of my salad bowl, which gets stirred up and I still make mistakes. I still go to my daughter and apologize when it's needed. What I have learned the hard way is that if I want a relationship with my daughter all the way into adulthood, I have to work on what it means to truly live out the ideals of love that Jesus lived out and the apostle Paul wrote about. I must work at being patient and kind and not irritable or resentful or keeping a record of wrongs or demanding my own way. That only happens when we commit to not giving up, not losing faith, holding onto hope, and enduring through every circumstance. This is what love does.

That brings me to the final words I want to leave you with in this series of sermons. I shared with you at the beginning of the message that this is the 7th anniversary of our son's death and one of the things that happens when you lose a child, which I think is similar to what happens when you're disconnected from your children in any way, is that you find yourself going back and realizing where you made mistakes and wishing you had done things differently. "What if I had done this? What if I had not done that? Would things be different?"

We all ask questions like that at different times in our lives. The place I have come to as a parent and as a pastor who has watched many of you wrestle with these questions is that these words from Paul apply first to God and then to us. The first letter of John reminds us of this truth when it comes to love and God.

BIBLE

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ ... for God is love.

If we take this text seriously, then that means the words from the apostle Paul can be read this way.

SLIDE

⁴ [God] is patient and kind. [God] is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. [God] does not demand God's own way. [God] is not irritable, and [God] keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ [God] does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ [God] never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

I pray each of us will discover that God in our parenting and in all our relationships. Let's pray...

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.

May 6-7 Order

1. Jenny welcomes people. ***Today's message focuses on an idea that love is meant to shape our hearts, and it should be what we want for our children and the next generation.***
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. Baptisms
9. Baptism Response from Congregation
10. Offering SLIDE and Focus (Protect Young Eyes)
11. Care Ministers (If any are present)
12. Closing Prayer