

Parenting

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Preacher: Andrew Midgett

[0 : 0 0] And now, Mr. Andrew Midgett is coming to preach with us today. It's a good thing Alex is being sweet this morning.

I'd like to welcome everyone this morning and add my word of welcome to those expressed by Freddie, at our service. And if this is your first Sunday with us, we're so glad that you've spent time with us.

We do realize it takes a lot of courage to walk into a strange place. And so you made it through, and that's good. And we're glad to have you here this morning and hope to have a chance to meet you after the service. It's also just a great honor to continue in our series entitled Fruitful. In this series, we have kind of looked at different areas of the Christian life that we might be doing very well in or maybe not so well. We've looked at marriage. We've looked at being single. We've looked at retirement. We've looked at, yeah, a lot of different things. And so I do think that, you know, being specific in some of these areas like this can sometimes help us a lot. And so I do think, you know, it's not an expository series where you would take the book to the Bible and you go through the book sequentially every week. This is more of kind of, you know, message it or tailored for just personal areas for you to consider this morning. And so this morning we get to look at what it means to be a parent. That is right. This sermon is on parenting this morning. And before I even get started, you need to understand that I am no way in saying I'm good at this. I am in no way saying that I have all the answers to what it means to be a parent. In fact, I would never look at you and say, if you would just do things like I do things, it'll all work out because that is a dangerous place to go. But I do, I do feel like that, you know, it is an opportunity to look at how, you know, how we parent and what we're doing with our kids. Now, some of you are older and I get that just like I am. My kids are grown basically. And so there's some of you in the room whose kids are already out the house. And so I still want you to lean in a little bit because this does speak to us about how we raised our kids and maybe some regrets. And so we'll be talking about that later on in our sermon. I am the father of four daughters, the oldest being 35, the youngest 24.

And so I know a little about what it means to be a dad, but I do think that God's word speaks even better than I can. And so, you know, God, the father knows for sure more about parenting than I ever know.

And so this morning we want to look at some tensions that come up first before we even look at our sermon. We just want to kind of run to some tensions that are already there. So first of all, I would simply want to address the idea of those who could have children, but they decide they don't want to have children. And that is a tension. We live at a time in our nation where the millennials and generations X, Z, Y, Z, all that, they are having less of a desire to parent kids. They don't want to raise kids. They don't want to do a lot of things. They don't want to buy houses. They don't want to do a whole lot. And so in our culture right now, our numbers in this country are going down as far as population because people don't want to have kids. Now there's some reasons behind that. It could be we lived up in, we live in a very jacked up sinful age. And so there is a fear of trying to raise kids in that kind of environment. Another reason is that, you know, they're just not into the commitment that it takes to be a good parent and to raise kids. There is a commitment in the life of a mother and father that is there. And their idea is I'm not ready for that kind of commitment.

[4 : 08] I want you to lean in if that is you this morning. If in your mind, you're already saying, I don't want kids. Don't care about kids. Don't know. I don't want them. I want you to lean in this morning because you might change your mind as you go on in life. My oldest daughter, Sarah is 35.

And for years, Sarah has said, I don't want kids. And she just says, I just do not want the burden of having kids. And so it's been kind of interesting how she has, her mind has changed a little bit.

Her friends, her older friends that she knows up and around are starting to have kids. Her sisters, Hannah and Rebecca have had kids. And all of a sudden you can see Sarah thinking, well, you know, it may not be such a bad idea to have kids. And so I think her and John are thinking about, you know, this because Sarah's 35 and she knew if she's going to have kids, she better get busy.

But she right now, she's just thinking it through. And so if you're thinking, I don't want kids, you might change your mind. Your mind might change as you go through life. Another stress, another tension that has risen is for those who desire, the desire to have kids is there, but you can't. You've tried and you failed and you cannot have children. And that is a very real stress. Last week, here leading worship, there's a young man, Blake Burroughs from Frontline Church in Fayetteville. Blake and his wife, Marissa, have been trying to have kids for years. And the hurt and the disappointment and the struggle of their life is real. And he was talking about it at our advanced conference about 10 days ago, and he just started crying. Why? Because the desire is there.

There is that great desire. And because they cannot, there's pain. So you've got this desire to raise kids and have kids of your own, but there's a pain because you can't. Now, one thing I would say to you, if that is you this morning, is that not having children is not a curse. It's not like God is cursing you by not allowing you to have kids. You know, it's very interesting in scripture.

[6 : 28] There are examples all through the Old Testament where people desired to have children and could not. And it's very interesting to me that scripture does not run away from that kind of pain.

It talks about Sarah, Abraham's wife. She was barren until she was up in her nineties. Now, God did a miraculous thing and allowed her to have a son, but that was all God's doing.

And so we see this Hannah in first Samuel died, that was dying to have a kid and could not have one and just poured out her heart before God. You see, scripture doesn't run from those kinds of pains.

It kind of meets it right head on and it declares it to us. And so just know that God understands where you are this morning. And if you desire to have a children and you can't so far, just, you know, pray about it. And I would ask you to pray for Blake and Marissa. I know the desires of their heart. And so just lift them up in prayer. And if you know anybody like that, just pray that God would do a mighty work. The third one is this, to have the assumption in your mind that perfect parenting makes perfect kids. Now that is a, that ain't true. I'm telling you, there is no truth in that. It really brings on us a sense of guilt when we consider that I have to be perfect for my kids to be perfect because we know that we've made mistakes. We all make mistakes as a parent. And so just let me put your heart at ease for the, in this one area real quick. And I would just say that there is no such thing as a perfect parent.

And there is no such thing as a perfect child. They just don't exist. Now, how's that for an encouragement this morning? I mean, that's a good encouragement. You can't be perfect as a parent and your children will never be perfect. But that's the truth.

[8 : 24] Now, a lot of what I've said so far this morning is based on being a father for 35 years and raising four daughters. But I will say this to you this morning that the, any success that I, that Sally and I have had in our lives as parents has nothing to do with us, has everything to do with God's grace in our lives. God has poured out his grace on us in spite of us as parents. And so I would just simply say that to you. I know as a father that I have been very rough and tough with my daughters. I would tell you that Sally has smoothed those edges a little bit as my wife. She has been, you know, has done a great job of smoothing, smoothing out those rough edges that I have. But it's really God. God is the one who, who, who blessed us with kids and has also worked in the lives of our daughters. And so I would just simply say, I'm again, I'm not coming from a position of strength. I'm saying that I'm as weak as anybody else, but God is super strong in this area. And so some things just for you to consider this morning about children. Number one is this, children are a blessing from God. Now I know that they don't always feel that way. I know that for a fact. There's times in your life where you would think, why did I do this in the first place? What, why have I done this? What made us think that this was going to be fun? And so we don't always think that our children are a blessing. At times we are stressed out as parents. We are very stressed out and our children dominate our lives. They really do. We go from being footloose and fancy free when you don't have kids and you can go and you can do, and you can have, and have all the experiences.

But when you have a child, what happens? Your life stops and you are focused on them and them alone. And it's, and your life goes from being, you know, having a lot of momentum to all of a sudden stopping.

And so that can be very difficult for us. Taking that all into consideration, this idea that we don't always think they are a blessing. Scripture does say that they are. As Psalm 127, three says it this way, behold, behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward. The fruit of the womb, a reward. That's how God views children. That word heritage means a special or individual possession, an allotted portion. And so if you have children this morning, the way God looks at it is that he is giving you a heritage and a portion. And it is a blessing from his hand. In fact, in that Psalm, it says, blessed is the one whose quiver is full of them because they're like arrows.

And so God says the way he views it, they are a gift to us. Now in the ancient Near East, boys were always the biggest thing that parents wanted. A father wanted sons.

And the reason is because the birth of a son did two things. It guaranteed the continuation of the family line, but it also guaranteed the continuation of the family business. If they were farmers, the boys could take it over. If they were sheep herders, they could do the same. Boys kind of continued the line of the family. And that's why in Psalm 127, it says, if you have a bunch of boys, a bunch of sons, and you have a quiver full, you're blessed. Well, yeah, because the line in the family was going to continue. But at the end of the Psalm, where I just read that they're, you know, in heritage, it talks about girls as well. And so it doesn't matter whether you have boys or girls or a combination of the two, they are a blessing from God. Now, that's a good thing, right? Here's the bad news.

[12 : 40] Our ability to speak into our kids, the gifting of a child is only for a season. Do you understand what I'm saying? Our time frame for being parents is very, very short. It is very short. Our ability to train our children is only for a specific period in their lives. And truthfully and honestly, by the time that they are teenagers, they listen and respond more to their contemporaries and more to those around them than they do us. There is a growing up and a almost moving away from families. There is that natural tendency to do that. Now, this doesn't remove our responsibility as parents to train up our children.

The fact that it's short-lived and that they may move away from what we're saying to them. In fact, scripture gives us a very pointed instruction in this matter, and it says this, Proverbs 22, 6, train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The picture of this proverb is the dedication of a child to the Lord. And so you get the child and you dedicate him to the Lord, or you dedicate her to the Lord. And then you make effort to morally train your child to follow God. That's what you're doing. It's a gift to you. It's a heritage to you.

You give it to the Lord and you say, I'm going to train it up. It might follow you in life. Now, you need to understand something. This does not mean that you get the guaranteed outcome that you're looking for. It is not a promise of a guaranteed outcome. Most people look at that verse that said, if I do my part, A, this is going to happen, B, boom. That is not what the verse is saying. In fact, you know, the desired outcome is all up to the sovereignty of God in calling our children and bringing them into faith. That is a God thing. It is not so much a parent thing. We can point the way, but God is the one who saves. God is the one who calls. God is the one who does all these things. And so it's not a promised outcome. You're always held captive by the sovereignty of God. However, God's sovereignty doesn't mean that God is way distant, you know, to your children. He's not way out there in the distant and just kind of stirring the mix. That's not what it means because

Jesus loved children. And he told everybody to let the children come to him. He says this in Luke 18, 16, let the children come to me and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

[15 : 44] You see, it is childlike faith that really saves all of us. Our faith as parents needs to be just like a child's faith. It needs to be just like a child. But just remember that the window of time that you are dealing with is very short. It's just very short and it goes by so quickly. And I think that is why a ministry like One Harbor's Children Ministry is such a benefit to you as parents. We have an opportunity as parents to guide our children. That is the fact each day you are around them more, you have a chance to do certain things for them. But One Harbor's Ministry in Children's Church does the same thing.

It's not a fun time and it's not about playing games. It is about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. And that pays great dividends in the life of kids when they continually hear every Sunday just how great Jesus is. If they hear it out of your mouth, yes. If they hear it out of somebody's mouth, yes. Let that happen. Because our time to speak into them won't last forever and they will move on in their lives.

Now hopefully this raises some questions in your mind. And you're sitting here thinking, all right, so there are blessings from God. I get that. My time with them is very limited. I get that. So what am I supposed to do? How are we to deal with the children that God gives us? This heritage that he has given us?

Well, the first thing you have to do, I believe, and I think one of the most important things is when necessary, discipline your children. Now, I know what you're thinking. Oh, no, he didn't. He's not going to talk about whooping your children, is he? I mean, and look, don't go home today and look at your son or daughter and say, Mr. Andrew said I could whoop your tail. I've got complete and honest, I can do it. And I'm free of any kind of guilt. I am not saying that. I'm really not. I'm not saying that. I do think that discipline is a way, is a way of restraining our children. In 1 Samuel chapter 1, as it begins to open up about, you know, Hannah desiring to have a child, Eli, who was the priest at that time, had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. And it says that in 1 Samuel 1 and 2 and 3, that he did not restrain his sons. His sons were wicked, and they were sinning against God and against man. And it says that Eli failed them because he would not restrain them. And so I want you to kind of keep that picture in your mind. Now, I know that discipline is a way for us to train up our children to understand what obedience is. This is what obedience is. This is what obedience is not. And here's what happens when you do not obey. That is a good thing. And so understand that it's not so much what you do, is that you're training them up. You're trying to give them instruction so that they understand.

There is something very important for us, though, and that is this, that God does the same thing to us. God disciplines us as parents. As followers of his, he disciplines us.

[19 : 28] Hebrews 12, 6 says it this way, The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastises every son he receives.

And so God, in his love for us, chastises us. He does this. And so it stands to reason if God is going to deal with us in this matter, and if he's going to discipline us, I think it stands to reason we should discipline our children. And not harshly, and not in anger, but in love, because that's what it says. The Lord disciplines the one that he loves. If you love your children, then just discipline them.

Now look, there are many ways you can do this. When they're little, you can take away things, take their toys away, take their phones away when they're playing with them. I mean, there's things that you can do. You can remove things from them. As they get older, you can ground them.

We grounded our daughter Hannah for a whole summer, the longest summer of my life. I said, Lord, this is never going to end. And she was grounded, and they couldn't go anywhere. She could go to work. She could come home. And that was it. And so it was like we were all in prison because Hannah couldn't do anything. And so you can do that. You can take things away from them that make it really hurt just a little bit, you know? And so it's not about spanking as much as it is about being wise and shrewd in how you deal with your kids and disciplining them. I think sometimes loss of freedoms sometimes speak more than a spanking on the butt. Serious. I think a loss of freedoms sometimes does more than a spanking will because they get over to spanking and go on by their business.

But when you start taking stuff away, it means business. Now, so discipline is a key. As a parent, if you're young this morning and you're planning on having kids, just discipline your kids. Raise them up.

[21 : 28] Give them to the Lord. You're training them up, okay? But another thing's very important that you must rejoice and sing over your children. You see, discipline without affirmation, when you discipline a child without affirming them breeds great discontentment. It breeds discontentment when you just discipline and you never build them up.

Our children, my children, your children, and my children are grown, but my children still need to be affirmed by me. And the reason is, is because words of consternation, words of anger, words said in ways that should not have been said to them when they were kids still ring in their ears. I am 65 years old, just turned 65, and I still hear some of the things my parents said to me when I was a kid. You need to rejoice over your kids. You need to sing over them.

You need to talk to them about your love for them. You need to express your pleasure in them. And really, interestingly enough, we emulate God in this. You know, God does that to us.

And will one day do that over us. In Zephaniah 3.17, it says this, The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness.

He will quiet you by his love. He will exult over you with loud singing. And this loud singing will make Taylor Swift look like a pipsqueak.

[23 : 23] I'm serious. Can you imagine God singing over you? I am pleased with you. I love you. I am excited for you.

When we do this for our children, we emulate what God is doing to us one day. Now, I know this is hard, especially for those who grew up with parents who were very strong-worded toward them.

You know, they spoke to you and didn't give you much room to wiggle, which is how my parents phrased me. My parents were young when they had us, and they didn't know any better, but my parents would just say, That's it. Enough. I mean, they were strong with us as kids.

And so this can be hard for us to love as we should. To sing over as we should can be very hard because we never experienced it. And so I would just encourage you this morning to try it out.

To sing blessings over your kids. But this is only one thing that can help. Another thing that really helps is this. To strive to consistently live out your faith in front of your kids, in front of your children.

[24 : 38] Live out your faith in front of your children. This is important because we cannot talk about Jesus and act like he does not exist.

Do you do realize as parents that your children can smell a phony from 100 miles away? You do realize that, don't you? They are a whole lot smarter than we give them credit for being.

Kids will sniff this out. Kids will sniff this out. And what this says to us is that we cannot hold them to a standard that we're not living up to.

I cannot ask my daughters to live a standard that I'm not even doing myself. In fact, the old saying goes, don't do what I do, do what I say.

That dog won't hunt. Kids will see that and they'll say, uh-uh. You know, you're saying don't do this, but you're doing it. It won't, it will not work.

[25 : 42] And so you want to try to live your lives consistently by the faith that you proclaim. Now, I am not saying that you can live perfectly.

I would never tell you that because it's impossible. What I am saying is let your lives be a picture of grace. Let your lives be a picture of who you've put your confidence in.

And our kids need to know this, that we are all in the same boat. All right? Children need to understand that they're just like you.

That's three, there's three things I think kids need to understand. First of all, that you and them are just alike. Sin nature is the same. They're just like us. Secondly, you know, we like the same things they like to do.

Those things that pull at them pull at us. We're all the same. And they never want to feel like you're looking down on them and that you're talking down to them as if they're failures.

[26 : 53] And I know some of you have heard that. As kids, you heard that. I've heard it. And so you want your children to understand, hey, we are all in the same boat together.

I'm trying to live my life in front of you in such a way that it glorifies God. And so I think this is important for you as a parent. It's important if you're going to talk about Jesus to try your best to live for him.

There's one more exhortation that I would give. And I got to hustle. And that is to pray for your children. Now, this is kind of obvious.

This is the final one, but it is kind of obvious that we should pray for our kids. You know, sometimes it's hard for us to do this because life kind of gets in the way.

You know, you wake up in the morning. You've got two or three kids in the house. All you're trying to do is survive the moment. You're trying to get them out of bed, get them ready for school, doing all those things. You're running like crazy.

[27 : 55] You're yelling at them. They're slow. You're, look, praying for them is the least one thing you're thinking about. You're not going, so I pray for them, all right? I want to take them out. That's what you do.

Life gets in the way. My wife, Sally, who is a, just a, is a, has been a stalwart in this. I have not so much. But Sally has, and Sally always had a grid that she would write out for the girls, and she would pray each day over them.

And she was not just praying for right then as they were kids. She was praying for them as they got older. And so Sally was looking down the road. And I think as parents, I would encourage you with this.

Look down the road at where they're going and just say, Lord God, guide them in this. Guide them in this. The book of Job gives us a great example of this in Job chapter 1.

Job was a righteous man. He had sons and daughters. And it says this. His sons, Job's sons, used to go and hold a feast in their house, each one on his day.

[29 : 00] So on their birthday, they would have a feast. And they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them.

And he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them. For Job said, listen to what Job says. It may be that my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

Thus Job did continually. So Job continually lifted up his children before God. And he was worried that they would sin and fall away from him.

You see, this points to one of those beliefs that sometimes creeps in our hearts as parents. If we do the church things, quotations, all right, church things, then their lives will be golden from this end on.

If I take them to church, and if we do all these things, then everything's good. I grew up in a family where we went to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night.

[30 : 16] We had Bible studies in our house during the summer. During the summer. During the summer.

And I would look at my parents and say, what are we doing? I mean, it was crazy. In my parents' minds, they just knew.

They just knew that we were set up for success. They knew this. Until I rocked their world. I rocked my parents' world.

And I disowned everything they stood for. And I looked at God and said, I don't care about you either. I don't care.

And I went places my parents never thought I would go. And the only thing that was a salvation to me is that God would not let me go. He would not do it. Listen.

[31 : 13] Church things are good. They are good. But it doesn't mean your kid's life will be golden. You need to pray for your children. You need to strategically pray for them as the days are drawing near.

You need to do this. Even if it's in your car driving out of the road. Oh, God, please help my children. Even if it's that, do it. I would encourage you to do this.

So, how are we doing this morning? Now, some of you may be killing it. Man, I do all that kind of stuff. I'm good. I'm golden. I'm good. Don't worry about me.

Or some of you may be saying, oh, my goodness. I'm guilty as charged. The last thing I would want to do is saddle you with guilt.

That's the last thing I would do. To say, man, you ought to feel guilty. You're terrible parents. I would never do that. But I know what guilt feels like. Speaking for my wife and myself, I can honestly say that there are things that I wish that I could do over as a dad.

[32 : 26] I was very tough on my daughters. And they will tell you that. I was just very tough on them. And so, there's things that I think about.

And I remember just failures in my life. And I grieve. Even now, at this age, I still grieve about mistakes I made as a dad. And I just want you to know that, man, that's a real feeling.

Eddie Money, who is a rock theologian, had a song that spoke about this regret. Speaks about the regret of looking back and knowing that you messed up.

And the refrain goes like this. I want to go back and do it all over again. But I can't go back. I know. I want to go back.

Because I feel so much older. But I can't go back. I know. Yes, I want to go back. I can't.

[33 : 28] You want to go back. If you're an older parent, you can't. But what you can do, what you can do, is remember Romans 8.28.

It says this. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes.

Do you know this? Have you considered this? In all of your weaknesses and all your failures as a parent, just remember that God works it all out for his glory and his pleasure.

He does it. And we need to be constant in this. We need to keep this in our forefront instead of looking back behind us and saying, I wish I had done.

Regrets bring shame and guilt. Looking forward to what God can do brings hope. So, remember parents, you've been called to this.

[34 : 37] It is a divine calling to be a mom and a dad. You have been given a blessed heritage. Look at your children when you get home and remind yourself that they are a heritage that God has given me.

Remember that your time horizon is very short. Time will go by before you know it. It will be over. My youngest daughter, Rachel, is 24.

Will be 25 here pretty soon. Where did the days go? I can't remember the days. It goes by so fast.

Your time with them is very short. Discipline them in love, but discipline them if you have to. Rejoice over them.

Grab a hold of them. Sing to them. Tell them that you care. And look, guys, they need to hear this. They need to know more than anything else that no matter how bad they jack it up, that my mom and daddy still love me.

[35 : 44] You need to do this. Sing over them. And finally, pray for them. Because no matter how many mistakes we make, or even our children make, God's going to work it out according to his purposes.

And so hopefully this has been an encouragement to you. Let me pray for you. Lord God, we thank you much. We thank you, Father, that you are the great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know what it's like to be a dad. You know what it's like to be a mom. You know what it's like to love a child. You know what it's like to grieve for a child, Lord God.

You know all of these things. We thank you for who you are. And we thank you for your word that is not afraid to look at the pain of children. The mistakes that have been made, Lord God.

Your word opens it up, shows it to us, and you're not ashamed of us, Lord God. I pray for the parents in this room this morning that you would gird them up, encourage them. I pray for their kids that they would come to know you, Father.

[36 : 46] The one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. That they would know him. That you would do your divine work, the only you can do. Draw them, O Lord, into your kingdom.

We thank you much. And we pray for all these things in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.