

McCabe United Methodist Church
“Honoring Our Parents”*
Exodus 20:12 and I Timothy 1:5
11-25-12
Pastor Ray Baker

This is the final sermon in our series on parenting. In the first two weeks you heard Pastor Rick and I talk about our opportunity to be a blessing to our families and the importance of putting family first. Today we will take a glimpse at parenting issues during different times along the parenting journey.

A girl was learning her ABCs. When she had them memorized she asked her parents to listen. Mom and dad sat patiently on the couch as she began: abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvw.... She paused for a minute, and then tried again: abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvw....

Again she hesitated. A little frustration began to show on her face, but she tried one more time: abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvw...w...w...www.com.

Parenting is different today. It's different than when Sarah and I had our kids twenty (20) years ago and it's different than it was when my parents had me. The world has changed. Today's parents are facing similar issues, but the context is dramatically different.

Parenting is hard in any age, but the digital age is faster paced, media driven, and changing quicker than ever before. It is an extremely different context.

I think one of the most important things a parent can do is teach our kids to “Stop, Look, and Listen” before they cross the street. WE need to learn the same lesson. We need to learn about Sabbath.

The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word, Shabbat. In its original context it doesn't have a religious meaning. Simply stated it means to Stop. Sit down. Stop talking. Don't do anything. Shabbat gives a person time to: take a deep breath and look at their surroundings.

As people of faith we recognize we can be a better parent by taking time to “Stop, look, and listen.” Each of us needs to take a deep breath, look around...and realize we are in God's presence: here in this sanctuary, at home, at work, and at play. “Stop, look, and listen.”

When parents and children learn how to listen for God's presence they will understand the importance of our ministry called the family link. When we “know” we're in God's presence it's more important to share the stories of our lives, read and discuss scripture, pray, and bless each other.

Pastor Eugene Peterson has written many books, including a paraphrase of the Bible called: The Message. Listen to what he writes about the importance of Sabbath.

I don't see any way out of it: If we are going to honor (God) the Father, we must keep the Sabbath. We must stop running around long enough to see what (God) he has done and is doing. We must shut up long enough to hear what (God) he has said and is saying. All our ancestors agree that without silence and stillness there is no spirituality, no God-attentive, God-responsive life. (Perspectives, June-July 2000.)

When we live in a dynamic relationship with God our children are more likely grow in their faith. By teaching our kids to honor God they will also learn to honor their mother and father.

The art of parenting changes as the years go by. Eventually we enter into a time of life known as “the empty nest.” When the children leave the nest parents need to treat them differently, but we also need to treat each other differently.

For example, did you know one of the common times for a couple to have marital problems is when the kids leave the nest? When the nest is empty some parents wake up one morning and suddenly realize they are left at home...**with...him!** Or with...her!

Who are they? Do we still know them? Do we still like them? Do we still love them?

I believe it's important to treat each other with love during this transition, or any difficult transition. Do loving things for each other. Men...Buy her flowers, pick up your socks, and help out around the house. Women: offer him words of encouragement, let him buy a new power tool, and take him to see the new James Bond movie...even though you're not interested.

By doing nice things for each other and treating each other with love and honor, most couples make it through and find the love that was lost.

I've known a lot of wise people. Most of them are Grandparents. They have already raised their own children and made their own mistakes. The best thing is they learned from their experiences raising kids. Now they are ready to raise their grandchildren.

Our boys are lucky to have a surrogate grandma named Kate. She is a wonderful woman who in the early years of our marriage would take care of our kids so we could go on a date, or go to work when the kids were sick. She invited us to her house for holidays when we couldn't travel to see our families. She was, and is, always there for our family.

Mike and Steve had to work this weekend, so they couldn't make it home for Thanksgiving. The boys woke up early Thursday morning and drove to see Grandma Kate. They knew they had a home away from home.

One of Kate's most endearing qualities is that she will listen. This is an unusual quality, because she also loves to talk. She's one of those rare people who can do both. When you have something on your mind

she will take the time to listen and best of all SHE DOES NOT GIVE ADVICE. Instead, she lets you figure it out for yourself...unless you ask for help.

Stop and think about it.

Do any of you work on crossword puzzles? Most people want to work on a crossword puzzle by themselves. They want the challenge of figuring out each line. When someone volunteers the word they're looking for it can take away some of the fun. If the person working on the puzzle is stumped by a clue they may reach out and say: Can you help me with this one? Then they are ready to receive what you have to offer. (Adam Hamilton)

As we get older it's important to let our children go. Let them have their own lives. It's even more difficult, but important to let go of the worry. We have no control of what will happen to them, so we need to let them go while supporting them with our love. When this is difficult we need to take time for Sabbath and give them over to God. As the Apostle Paul writes:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Genesis 20:12 states we should honor our father and our mother. I whole heartedly agree with this commandment. I also believe we should honor all the saints of our lives...all the people who have helped us grow in our faith and become the people we are today.

A Southern Baptist preacher named Carlyle Marney, who used the metaphor of a house and balcony to speak of the saints of our lives.

Marney said a person's life, personality, and persona are like a house. A person's makeup is quite a complex structure. Some are fancy. Some are sophisticated. Some are simple and functional. Some are ostentatious. Some are modest. Each has a number of rooms: a formal parlor for greeting guests, a family room, bedroom, and kitchen. Marney said each of us has in the structure of our persona a basement where the plumbing is [located] and the trash is stored. NO need to spend your life down there, Marney used to say. Everybody has a basement. Come on up into the sunshine. Sometimes we act as if the plumbing and trash bin are all there is to us, Marney observed.

And if you come upstairs and step outside onto the lawn and look up, you will see that the house that is you has a spacious, gracious balcony. There are people up there on your balcony.

There are people in the rocking chairs on your balcony sipping iced tea or bourbon, depending on whether you are a Baptist or Presbyterian, Marney used to say. The people on your balcony are the strong, positive influences in your life...Your heroes and heroines...Your models and mentors. Your parents are

probably up there ... your grandparents...your old coach...your piano teacher. --John M. Buchanan, For All the Saints, Chicago, Ill., November 2, 1997.

Who are the saints of your lives? Have you taken time to honor them?

Today, we give honor to God by taking part in the Sabbath. By taking time to stop, look, and listen. Let's gather around the communion table and give honor to our God, to Jesus the Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.

*Based on a 2009 sermon series given by Church of the Resurrection.