

## Parents and Children (The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord)

Ephesians 6:1-4

# 30 in our series from Paul's letter to the Ephesians

September 8, 2013

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### Message

For most of August, we took a break from our study of Ephesians so we could preach about the parable from Luke 16 and then 15. We preached about the steward of unrighteousness and the eternal habitations, and we preached about the prodigal son, or more accurately the prodigal father, who loved with all His *ousian* and *bios*. And now, back in Ephesians Paul talks about fathers, mothers, and children.

Ephesians 6:1-4

*Children obey [hearken to, listen to] your parents in the Lord, for this is right [righteous, just.] "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),...*

Paul is quoting from the Ten Commandments, and this is the fifth. God told the Israelites that they would live long in the Promised Land, if they honored their fathers and mothers.

*"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise,) that it may go well [good] with you and that you may live long in the land [literally: on the earth.]*

"On the earth..." what a bizarre thing for Paul to write!

Because this is the guy that also wrote, "to die is gain...my desire is to depart and be with Christ...our citizenship is in heaven.

And if you do honor your parents, for health and real estate on earth, aren't you just using them like the two evil sons were doing in the story of the prodigal son?

And what about *evil* fathers? Should we honor fathers like this:

Clip from *Star Wars*

Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker are engaged in battle. Darth Vader cuts off Luke Skywalker's hand & Luke falls. Darth Vader stands over him as Luke holds on for his life.]

Darth Vader: *There is no escape. Don't make me destroy you. Join me and I will complete your training.*

Luke Skywalker: *I'll never join you.*

Darth Vader: *If you only knew the power of the dark side. Obi Wan never told you what happened to your father.*

Luke Skywalker: *He told me enough. He told me you killed him.*

Darth Vader: *No I am your father.*

Luke Skywalker: *No. No...no....*

This sermon

is an excuse to wear this t-shirt. [Peter points to his T-shirt which says: "Who's Your Daddy" and has a picture of Darth Vader on it.]

But seriously, what if Darth Vader was your father? Would you have to honor him?

Well, Paul addresses children...and now he addresses fathers:

Ephesians 6:4

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger [literally: to wrath]..."*

In Romans 4:15 he wrote, *"The Law worketh wrath (worketh anger)"*

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*

"Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord..."

Question #1 What is the "discipline and instruction of the Lord?"

Question #2 Does it work?

So #1 What is "the discipline and instruction of the Lord?"

The first thing that pops into my mind is a bunch of books.

[Peter starts picking up books from several stacks of books sitting on the communion table.]

I brought some from my library:

*The Way They Should go—Correcting Children Correctly.*

*How to Raise Your Children for Christ.*

So, I think of books and Christian Education curriculum, and family values, and principles, and techniques, and lists, and laws. There is real value in all of that, but when I think of the discipline and instruction of the Lord as a to do list, I start to get kind of angry.

So, does it "work?" Well it works... anger. Does it "work?"

When I was a youth pastor, I discovered that the kids in Christian school were not always more Christian than the kids in public school...as if you can come to know math with a math curriculum... but you can't come to know Jesus with a "Jesus curriculum." You can't get an A in "loving your neighbors" by competing with your neighbors for that A.

So, does it work? Well...NO.

And I grew up in the church and knew lots of pastors' kids, Christian authors' kids, the "experts" kids, and does their expertise work? No, not really.

And then I thought of my own kids. I have great kids, but does all this knowledge of good and evil work? Well, they've struggled with church, and they do have some anger. And I often feel like a failure, as a parent. There's this verse in 1 Timothy 3 that talks about qualifications for church leaders, that they must *"manage their household well, having their children in subjection—submission,"* and I've wondered: "Should I quit because my kids aren't always in submission?"

Then I've wondered: "Should God quit because you're His child and you're not entirely submissive?" And remember we're reading Ephesians. In Ephesians 4:6 Paul wrote that God is "Father of all;" that includes guys like Hitler and Saul of Tarsus (chief of sinners)

So does it work?

In the Old Testament God gave a list called the law, and no, it didn't work, but it did work wrath. In fact, when the Father came in Jesus the Christ, the children crucified the Father. They did not seem to be in subjection to the Father. It was more like the Father subjected Himself to them. So, if they were being subjected, it was a strange sort of subjection.

Question #1 What is "the discipline and instruction of the Lord?"

Question #2 Does it work?

Well, I was thinking about this last Tuesday in my office at my house, thinking about books, lists, laws, my kids, and my failures, and having to preach a sermon on the topic, and I was getting angry. And as I was doing this, a thunderstorm grew right over our house. Lightning started crashing, and I felt like a tingling, and I thought: "Go ahead God. Just smite me, because this is all too hard!" Just about then, a spark jumped from my finger to the computer, there was a brilliant flash of light and a tremendous crash, then silence, and I thought: "Well, I'm still here...so...whatever."

A few minutes later, I heard Susan yelling, "Peter...come here!" From our back deck, looking down, we saw this...



That is the house behind us and BELOW us...on fire!

I was looking at this house on fire. Then, I looked up to the right and there was this rainbow...all across the sky. You know the rainbow is the sign of the covenant.



I took these photos on my phone because I thought: "How bizarre: That was literally fire from Heaven, and a perfect rainbow above, and the rainbow is the sign of the covenant of Grace."

I went to bed asking: "What is the discipline and instruction of the Lord?" and I woke up at 3:00am thinking: "Hey it's not a list...or laws. "Reality is the discipline of the Lord, and His Word is instruction."

And there is a covenant rainbow of Grace over the whole thing!

Ephesians 1:4 *"We were chosen in Christ BEFORE the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him."*

Ephesians 1:11 *"He accomplishes all things, according to the counsel of His will."*

Reality is always in subjection to God; even our unreality is subject to His Reality.

Ephesians 4:6 *"He is the Father of all."*

Ephesians 5:1 We are to *"imitate him as beloved children."*

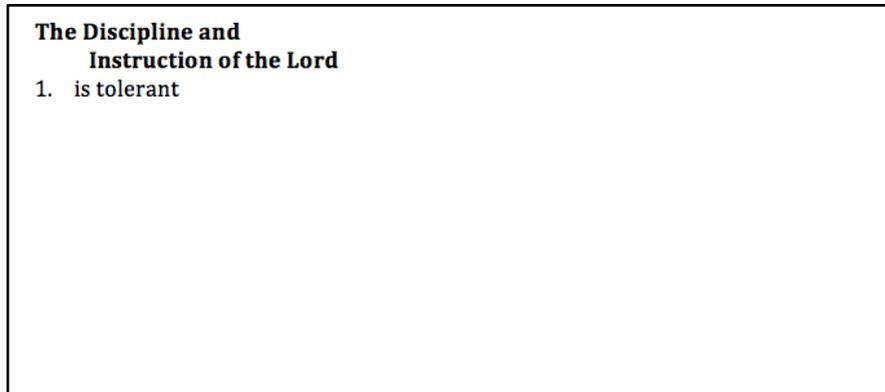
So what's the problem? We don't trust that we are children in need of growing up. Instead, we think that we are adults that have already grown up. But Jesus said we must become like children to enter the Kingdom. So maybe God disciplines.

Well, the reality in which you exist is His discipline, and into that reality He speaks instruction; He speaks His Word. So your whole life is like the classroom, and His Word is instruction within that classroom. His Word became flesh, and His name is Jesus. So parents, to ask: "What is the discipline and instruction of the Lord?" is to ask: "How does the Lord discipline and instruct me?" And to ask: "Does it work?" is NOT to ask: "Has it worked?" but: "Will it work?" For it must still be working; we're children.

So what is “the discipline and instruction of the Lord?”  
When I ask the question in this way, I’m a bit surprised by the answer:

## The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord

Number 1: Profoundly tolerant.



If we are all His children, He tolerates some pretty bad behavior. I mean...why does He allow us to sin?” Have you ever thought about that? His tolerance is what we all complain about the most: “Lord why do you allow evil in the world? Lord why do you allow us in your world?” See, I’m really not amazed that God smote some ancient Egyptians or even Ananias and Saphira. I’m amazed that He hasn’t smitten us!

According to Paul, God is in complete control, and yet He sure doesn’t seem very controlling. He’s tolerant, and that’s very unsafe. He doesn’t protect us...from ourselves. I mean what sort of father lets his son take his livelihood and squander it in a far country? What sort of father puts his naked children in a garden with an evil talking snake and a tree that produces death before they know what’s good and what’s evil? And...according to Deuteronomy, we’re each born into that reality.

Well, God lets Adam and Eve eat...and then run away and hide. What sort of father allows his children to run away? Even when we sin...we run away...from The Way, The Truth, and The Life; we run away.

I remember one crazy day when Elizabeth was about three, she decided that she knew the good, and that I did not. And so at one point she yelled, “I don’t need a daddy. I don’t want a daddy,” and I said, “Ok” and I let her run away...at least a bit. I mean I didn’t talk to her, didn’t look at her. After a bit, I think she felt forsaken, but of course I hadn’t forsaken her, she felt unloved, but I hadn’t stopped loving her. I just stopped expressing my love to her. But that night...I did let her come with me to the store. I remember we got in the car, and it was totally silent. We sat there and then I looked at her, and she just fell apart. She literally threw herself upon me sobbing: “I want a daddy! I want a daddy! I want MY DADDY!”

And this is something to ponder:  
She had to *not* want a daddy...to really want her daddy.

Well, that wasn't the last time she ran away. Anytime we sin, we run away. And God tolerates our sin. If Paul is right, He even consigns us to it. God tolerates, even expects and arranges for our failures. And so, it seems to me that ...

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b> 1. is tolerant	<b>We're failing our children if we</b> 1. don't allow them to fail
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You're failing your children if you don't allow them to fail.

God's discipline is tolerant...and yet truthful.

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b> 1. is tolerant 2. is truthful	<b>We're failing our children if we</b> 1. don't allow them to fail
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You see...tolerance of sinners is NOT a lie about sin. God speaks truth to His children in their disobedience.

He says, "No liar will inherit my kingdom of truth." "No greedy person will be at home in my house." God tolerates sin for a time, but not for eternity, which means, we're all going to be changed, because we're all greedy, and we all are party to a lie.

Every night Elizabeth used to pray: "Dear God thank you that I know everything in the world," and I'd think: "Yikes, the truth will burn. It may have been the same day that she decided that she didn't want a daddy, but on this one occasion, Elizabeth said to me, "Daddy,

killer whales live in lakes, don't they?" I swallowed hard and said, "No honey they don't." She said, "Yes they do." I said, "No they don't." She said, "I'm right," and with my silence I said, "NO, you're awesome, and you're wrong; killer whales do not live in lakes." Then she said, "Well, I'm calling Poppy (that was my dad.) I'm calling Poppy; he's been a pastor longer than you. She called, I silently prayed: "God allow Dad to resist her cuteness and tell her the truth." Thank God he did, but then there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. Elizabeth didn't want a daddy or granddaddy...and yet...she did...

To hang on to a lie is to choose to be alone, imprisoned in darkness.

So God speaks truth into our lies, and it cuts us.

Jesus said Peter, "*Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven, and upon this rock I will build my church...*"

He looks at Peter and calls him a rock.

Then, just a moment later, in response to Peter, he said, "Get behind me Satan." He sees the good and He sees the darkness.

So God speaks truth into our darkness, and it cuts the good from the evil.

So God speaks truth into our lies, and it burns the evil exposing the good.

God spoke the Law but more than law about truth.

He speaks Himself. He is Truth, and Jesus is Truth incarnate.

Even though we run away,

He runs away with us.

He won't leave us or forsake us.

He has descended into the darkness with us.

His name is "Emmanuel," it means "God with us."

He is with us in Jesus-God incarnate.

When we used to discipline Coleman, we'd send him to the green couch...and I'd often go with him, and we'd sit there in silence, like Elizabeth and I sat in the car until she broke down sobbing: "I want a Daddy."

So God's discipline is tolerant but truthful, and His instruction is truth incarnate.

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b>	<b>We're failing our children if we</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. is tolerant</li><li>2. is truthful</li><li>3. is incarnate</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. don't allow them to fail</li></ol>

So we're failing our kids...

<p><b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. is tolerant</li> <li>2. is truthful</li> <li>3. is incarnate</li> </ol>	<p><b>We're failing our children if we</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. don't allow them to fail</li> <li>2. protect them from the Truth</li> <li>3. don't enter their world</li> <li>4. treat them each the same</li> </ol>
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if we don't let them fail—if we protect them from the Truth and if we don't enter their worlds. And we're failing them if we treat each one just the same. God's discipline is individual and unique.

<p><b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. is tolerant</li> <li>2. is truthful</li> <li>3. is incarnate</li> <li>4. is individual and unique</li> </ol>	<p><b>We're failing our children if we</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. don't allow them to fail</li> <li>2. protect them from the Truth</li> <li>3. don't enter their world</li> <li>4. treat them each the same</li> </ol>
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You know, I really think that I love each of my four children the same amount, but I don't treat any two just the same.

I don't think I can even remember spanking Jon, my oldest. I'd just look at him; that was discipline enough.

Coleman is my youngest, and I honestly used to wonder if he had any nerve endings in his behind. I'd spank him, and he'd just look at me and smile as if to say, "Are you done? Can we go play now?" And he had this dirt eating addiction. I'd say, "Coleman have you been eating dirt?" He'd look at me with those big beautiful eyes, and dirt just caked on his lips and say, "No Daddy."

One day, we'll see that all sin is like Coleman eating dirt. So what should be the punishment for eating dirt? "Unless you stop eating dirt, I'm gonna make you eat dirt." Isn't eating dirt its own punishment?"

If I made Becky eat dirt and spanked her like I spanked Coleman, it would've been abuse.

When Elizabeth was little, on several occasions, she was so strong willed and so out of control that I literally had to lie on top of her until she passed out and fell asleep. I'd be utterly traumatized, lie awake all night, thinking "she's going to hate me," but in the morning, she'd be her bubbly self and say, "It's Daddy!!" like I was her favorite person in the world.

Have you ever wondered why God wrote one story with Jacob and another with Esau? Why He treated Saul in one fashion and David in another? Why He said one thing to Peter, another to Matthew, and another to Judas?

Maybe one needed to spend time in the outer darkness, weeping and gnashing his teeth for an age, before he could come home.

Maybe another needed to squander his father's property in a far country.

Maybe another needed to deny Jesus three times, suffer His gaze, and then weep bitterly, in order to come home.

Maybe God disciplines each one uniquely, yet loves each one exactly the same amount. And how much is that? It's with all His substance and all His life.

In other words, He gives all of Himself to each of His children.

In other words, Jesus died for all and for each.

So each child has a unique story of his or her Father's Love, and maybe that story defines each child.

To us it looks messy, but it's the manifold Grace that brings color to the eternal habitations.

LAW is predictable - It makes everyone just the same.

LOVE makes each person unique - but it's very messy.

Years ago, while Elizabeth was in grade school, she ran away with her neighborhood friend, and the police found them on 285 and brought them home. The whole incident was rather humorous and touching, and so I spoke of it in a sermon, which made her furious. For the next few years, she ran away in spirit. A couple years ago, I asked her permission to talk about that time, and she said I could. I don't think I've ever felt so helpless or life has felt so messy as it did that time.

At one point, because of something she said to a counselor, she had to spend some days away in a facility. One day, Susan was praying, and she just cried out: "Jesus what are you doing?" and she heard Jesus answer, "I'm saving her."

Salvation is messy.

The Lord's discipline is messy, and we're failing our children if we refuse to get messy.

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b>	<b>We're failing our children if we</b>
1. is tolerant	1. don't allow them to fail
2. is truthful	2. protect them from the Truth
3. is incarnate	3. don't enter their world
4. is individual and unique	4. treat them each the same
5. is messy	5. won't get messy

And the Lord's discipline is sacrificial.

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b>	<b>We're failing our children if we</b>
1. is tolerant	1. don't allow them to fail
2. is truthful	2. protect them from the Truth
3. is incarnate	3. don't enter their world
4. is individual and unique	4. treat them each the same
5. is messy	5. won't get messy
6. is sacrificial and passionate	6. won't feel their pain

When Elizabeth was away, it felt like I was away.

When I spanked Coleman, it felt like I was getting spanked.

When I discipline my kids, I feel disciplined. Parents say that...but Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of these you do to me." So maybe whatever He does to the least of these, He does to Himself?

Karl Barth points out that the phrase "of the Lord" in verse 4 is in the genitive case and can be a subjective genitive or objective genitive. So "discipline of the Lord" can mean the discipline with which the Lord disciplines or the discipline with which the Lord *is* disciplined, and it must mean both.

Isaiah said it five hundred years before we saw it. "*The Lord has laid on him (the Lord) the iniquity of us all*" "*Upon him was the chastisement (the discipline) that brought us peace.*"

Paul writes, "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.*" When the children see that the Father bears their discipline, their hearts are healed and they come home. The crucifixion of Christ is not what the Father needed to love us but what we needed to love our Father.

When my father used to discipline me, I could see it in his eyes. It hurt him more than it hurt me, and when I would see it, my heart would come running home. The "discipline of the Lord" is sacrificial and passionate. And He didn't just sacrifice for *one*...but for *all*.

One day, when Elizabeth was about two, I took her to the park, and she learned to slide down the slide. She'd stand on top of the slide and say, "See, I do it! See, I do it!" and I'd say, "Yeah, you're awesome, you're amazing!" After a time, I sat down and just watched her mesmerized by the beauty and wonder of her mere existence. Soon a woman arrived with her two-year-old daughter and her daughter also started sliding down the slide, and she'd say, "You're awesome. You're amazing!" But when my daughter slid down the slide she said nothing. Soon Elizabeth was standing on top of the slide screaming at this woman: "See me! See I do it; I do it; see me!" and this woman wouldn't even look.

Maybe you've felt like little Elizabeth: "See me; see me!" and no one sees. Well, the Father sees. I saw, and I felt sorrow for my daughter and wrath on her behalf.

In fact, I remember fantasizing about picking up a 2x4 and smacking the woman in the head and yelling, "Look at my daughter, the world's greatest slide slider!"

I was just about to get up when this thought or voice or instruction entered my head and it said...

"Hey Peter, what if that woman is my daughter and you don't see her? What if I feel for her...just as you feel for Elizabeth? What if each and every child in those cardboard shacks, in Tijuana, is my child, and they cry: 'See me! See me, feed me!' and Peter you just don't see them? What if I'm Father of all?

Perhaps you should drop to your knees in gratitude  
- that I have taken your stripes and born your chastisement,  
- that I have turned my wrath upon myself, for you see Peter...  
you are my child as well!"

Do you understand? What do I do when Jon doesn't see Elizabeth or Elizabeth doesn't see Jon? What do I do with the anger? What does the Good Father, do with all the wrath? When one daughter won't feed another daughter? When one son murders another son? When all the children seek to take His own Life, the Father's Life?

What does the Good Father do?

He lets them...in other words He forgives them.

And when they see it...it changes them.

And according to Paul, God planned to let us take His life from the foundation of the world. We were: "*chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world.*" "...according to the purpose of Him who accomplishes all things according to the council of His will." "*He consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all.*"

Scripture teaches that ALL will "*look upon him whom they have pierced.*"

He is the Judgment;

He is the Discipline;

He is the Instruction;

He is the Word of the Father...

that does not return void...

but accomplishes the purpose for which He was sent.

The discipline of the Lord is purposeful.

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b>	<b>We're failing our children if we</b>
1. is tolerant	1. don't allow them to fail
2. is truthful	2. protect them from the Truth
3. is incarnate	3. don't enter their world
4. is individual and unique	4. treat them each the same
5. is messy	5. won't get messy
6. is sacrificial and passionate	6. won't feel their pain
7. is purposeful	7. discipline for discipline's sake

He doesn't discipline for discipline's sake. So He has no interest in endless torment. If we discipline our kids for discipline's sake, we're not just failing our kids, we're becoming Satanic.

Discipline has a purpose, and the purpose is FAITH.

<b>The Discipline and Instruction of the Lord</b>	<b>We're failing our children if we</b>
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6. is sacrificial and passionate	6. won't feel their pain
7. is purposeful	7. discipline for discipline's sake
8. produces faith	8. don't earn trust

"Children obey..." Paul tells us, it's the obedience of faith.

"this is righteousness..." Paul tells us faith is righteousness.

And what is faith?

Faith is not something we obtain by memorizing a list or obeying a law.

Faith is not something we get by taking the knowledge of good and evil....

Faith gets us when the Good finds us and knows us.

Faith has become a religious work in America,

And therefore a work that we do,

And so I wish we didn't use it. It ought to be translated as trust.

Faith...biblical faith, quite simply, is trust...

And you can't simply decide to trust.

The One you are to trust must create that trust in you.

They create trust by proving themselves trustworthy.

by writing a good story in your life...

by writing a gospel according to you.

You know, we were each born as trusting creatures. That's what I so loved in my little children...those big trusting eyes. Adam and Eve were created to trust, so they trusted God, and they trusted a serpent. And that's the problem with little children; they don't know who to trust, for they don't know who is good, what is good and what is evil.

But...when we begin to know good, we also know evil and lose the ability to trust, until God, who is Good, reveals that He is trustworthy on a cross. Then we know the Good and choose the Good in freedom, "*It is finished,*" we are finished in the image of God with trust.

What I am trying to say is that:

The discipline and instruction of the Lord is not law.

The discipline and instruction of the Lord is the *Lord*.

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6. is sacrificial and passionate	6. won't feel their pain
7. is purposeful	7. discipline for discipline's sake
8. produces faith	8. don't earn trust
9. is not a list, but the Lord not law, but gospel	

And He's writing a story in your life that produces trust, and that story is called the gospel of grace.

So to bring your children up in "*the instruction and discipline of the Lord*" is not to make them conform to some list but to be used by God to write a story of His Grace upon their heart. And you can't actively write that story of God's Grace, on your child's heart, unless you see that God is writing His story of Grace on your heart. In other words, you can't parent your children until you admit you're a child.

I've shared this before, but years ago, after Elizabeth came home from those days away, she gave me a letter that she wrote one night in the facility. In it she writes how much she wanted me to hold her, and then she writes about something she saw:

I was three-years-old again, and you were holding me, singing a song: "Rock-a-bye everything's going to be alright...rock-a-bye..." and then...Jesus is holding both of us singing: "Rock-a-bye everything's going to be alright...rock-a-bye..."

You see...it was just like Jesus had told Susan: "I'm saving her," but you see...He was also saving me. I felt her pain, and I felt responsible for the pain; Jesus felt all the pain and was saving us all. Then Elizabeth writes, "I'm ready for my punishment. Today, I looked in Mom's and your eyes and saw pain, and I knew I was responsible for the pain—your girl Elizabeth." "I'm ready for my punishment..." But you see...Love was already her punishment. It's the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

So does it work?

Yes. Love does not fail. Love wins.

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1. is tolerant	1. don't allow them to fail
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3. is incarnate	3. don't enter their world
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5. is messy	5. won't get messy
6. is sacrificial and passionate	6. won't feel their pain
7. is purposeful	7. discipline for discipline's sake
8. produces faith	8. don't earn trust
9. is not a list, but the Lord not law, but gospel	
10. wins	

The law produces wrath and brings death.

Love produces trust and gives birth to life.

Love does not fail.

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1. is tolerant	1. don't allow them to fail
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3. is incarnate	3. don't enter their world
4. is individual and unique	4. treat them each the same
5. is messy	5. won't get messy
6. is sacrificial and passionate	6. won't feel their pain
7. is purposeful	7. discipline for discipline's sake
8. produces faith	8. don't earn trust
9. is not a list, but the Lord not law, but gospel	9. don't trust that we are dearly beloved children
10. wins	10. and that although we fail, Love wins

So we're failing our children if we don't trust we are children and if we don't trust that although we fail...Love does not fail...Love wins. Love is our Father.

Kierkegaard writes:

The greatest danger for a child, where religion is concerned, is not that his father should be an unbeliever, not even his being a hypocrite. No, the danger lies in their being pious and God-

fearing, and in the child being convinced thereof, but that the child should nevertheless notice that deep within there lies a hidden, a terrible unrest. The danger is that the child is provoked to draw a conclusion about God, that God is not infinite love.

It's only when we see that we are beloved children that we can truly parent our children. And it's only when we see that our parents are beloved children that we can parent our parents, that is help write their story of grace, that is... we can even bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Paul wrote, "*Honor your father and mother that you may live long on the earth.*" Maybe our father and mother are our eternal inheritance, our eternal habitation in the new creation.

You know, if you can't forgive your father, you'll become like your father (unloving and ungracious). But when you see that God is your Father, you can forgive your earthly father. When you see that God is your daddy, you can love your earthly daddy. And the power of Love—God is far stronger than the power of the dark side. I know this is dorky, but maybe it's also true.

Clip from *Star Wars*

Luke Skywalker: *I feel the good in you...the conflict.*

Darth Vader: *There is no conflict.*

[Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader engage in a light saber fight in which Luke Skywalker over powers Darth Vader. Darth Vader falls to the ground disarmed.]

Darth Vader: (Laughter) [The Emperor looks on from a distance]

The Emperor: *Your hate has made you powerful. Now...fulfill your destiny and take your father's place at my side.*

[Luke Skywalker looks at his hand, at the damage he has caused his father... He then turns off his light saber]

Luke Skywalker: *Never. I am a Jedi, like my father before me.*

The Emperor: *Your feeble skills are no match for the power of the dark side.*

[The Emperor begins approaching Luke Skywalker. Lightning comes out of his fingers inflicting pain on Luke Skywalker. Darth Vader approaches the Emperor, picks him up and throws him down a pit. Darth Vader is lying down injured. He breathes heavily. Luke Skywalker runs over to assist him.]

Darth Vader: *Go my son. Leave me.*

Luke Skywalker: *No, you're coming with me. I'll not leave you. I've got to save you.*

Darth Vader: *You already have.*

[A new scene emerges: There is music, singing and dancing. Luke Sky Walker sees Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda in their glory. Anakin, formerly Darth Vader then appears with them.]

Yes! The eternal habitations!

Maybe you think: "That's just a silly movie," and "Peter you had a great dad...but / really had a horrid dad."

In April, I told you about a boy whose father surrendered to the dark side. He woke one night to the sound of screaming and ran downstairs to see his father drunk, waving a rifle around the kitchen yelling, "Where are them sons of bitches? I'm gonna kill 'em sons of bitches!" His mother hung on the stock of the rifle screaming: "NO...STOP! Don't shoot the children!" He only stopped when the police came and took him away.

In April, I told you that boy was my dad (the kindest man I've ever known). I told you that he was different than my grand dad because He came to trust his true Dad, God the Father, but what I didn't tell you was that my dad never told me that story. I heard it from my aunt. And whenever my dad spoke of his dad he'd say, "Oh Peter, my dad was a great man. You know, he lost three businesses, lived through the depression, fathered twelve children, and yes, he developed a drinking problem, but I loved him."

Before my dad died, he had a wonderful dream and dreamed of his dad (my granddad) in Heaven. He said, "Peter, I can't wait to see him." Heaven consisted of his dad, and mom, and brothers, and sisters, and I can't wait to see my granddad and dad, who taught me to trust my Father God.

Paul wrote: "*Honor your father and mother, it's the first commandment with a promise,*" and "*...bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*"

## **Communion**

What's the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

[Peter points to the communion table.]

This is the discipline and instruction of the Lord:

Paul wrote: "*God subjected all creation to futility and consigned all people to disobedience...*" And then at the darkest time, in the darkest of all places, at the right moment, the Word of God, in human flesh, took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you; take, eat; do this in remembrance of me." And in the same manner, after supper He took the cup saying, "This cup is the covenant, the eternal covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink it all of you, and do this in remembrance of me."

So, God the Father, is calling you to come home. But not just to come home, to be at home in His relentless love. And sure it cuts, sure it burns, but you can trust Him. Why can you trust Him? He has revealed His character. He has revealed His heart by hanging it on a tree for the love of you.

In Jesus' name, worship Him.

As you take communion, remember both the bread and wine are the love of God, which is also the judgment of God.

When you come to the table you are saying, "Father I want to come home, and I want you to change me." And He will. In Jesus' name, believe the gospel.

## **Benediction**

Father we thank you that you are our father and that you are good. And we thank you that the father of lies.... is just that. Not the father of people but of lies that infect people. So God, we renounce the lie and the father of lies. Say that with me, "We renounce the father of lies, and we renounce the lies."

And this must be the root of all lies, that you are untrustworthy. That's why we drink too much; that's why we have affairs; that's why we are greedy, why we hoard things to ourselves...it's because we believe

the lie. Thank you Lord God for exposing the lie, at the right time in the right way, both in history and in the history of our own hearts.

Thank you Lord God that you hung your heart on a tree for all the world to see, for all the children to see that you are trustworthy. We confess that we do not trust that you are trustworthy; we confess that we sin and lack faith, but we thank you that you place faith in our hearts. Thank you that you are a faithful Father and that you will accomplish all things in accordance with your will. When you said let us make mankind in our image you meant it, and you will do it, and we will come home.

So God, Thank you for who you are.  
Thank you for revealing your love to us in Christ Jesus.  
In His name, Amen.

As you go from here, just go knowing that there is this covenant rainbow, it's the covenant of grace that covers God's creation. Even if fire comes down from heaven upon you, even if the consuming fire surrounds you, even if it burns and cuts, remember that your God does not change. He is love and He loves you.

He will finish what He started because Jesus is the beginning and the end.  
Amen

*Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*