

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key Verse: Judges 2:6-13

“How to Win the War for Your Children”

The father of five children had won a toy at a raffle. He called his kids together to ask which of them should have the present. "Who is the most obedient?" he asked. "Who never talks back to mother? Who does everything she says?" Five small voices answered in unison. "Okay, dad, you get the toy."

Despite that joke, today is the day that we honor fathers. This day in June is set aside for us to honor the fathers in this country. But we are to honor our fathers, not because it's a holiday, not because it's a tradition, not because there are sales going on all over the country, but because God said so.

In fact, he said so very specifically. The Bible tells us in **Ephesians 6:1-3**, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

Notice that it doesn't say, honor only good moms and dads. It doesn't say, honor them if you like them. It doesn't say, honor only those who give you stuff. It says, "honor your father and mother." And so, today, we ought to honor all fathers.

But I want to speak directly to the dads here today. And if you're not a dad, don't check out, because we all need to hear this. You see, we are involved in a war today, and the battleground is not in Iraq or Afghanistan. The battleground is in our homes. And what's at stake is not our land, our property, our freedoms. It's more important than that. **What's at stake are our children.**

And believe me—**it's a war**, it's an important war, and in this country, we are losing the battle. Children are turning from the faith in record numbers. It's as if as soon as they leave home and go to college they leave the church.

This is what statistics show. An organization called Youth Transition Network (YTN) revealed these findings a few years back:

"An Assemblies of God study showed a loss of 66% of their students within one year of high school graduation."

"A Southern Baptist transition project estimates an 82% loss of youth within one year of high school graduation."

"Fifty to eighty percent of high school students walk away."

This is true all over this country. Children in record numbers are turning from God.

But it's nothing new. It's the same as been happening over the course of time. I want to tell you a brief Biblical story this morning that's going to be our guide for the remaining time we have today—and I'll be brief. It's found in the book of Judges in the Old Testament. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges. In your Bibles on the table it's found on page _____.

Let me give you a little background here today. The nation of Israel had just marched into the Promised Land, and they were settling into the land. Now, it wasn't a complete victory, because when they went in, they didn't always follow what God desired, and instead of conquering all of it, they instead settled into some of it. And just before what we're going to look at, they were instructed that they didn't do what God desired, and they repented of it. With that in mind, let's read this important passage this morning.

“After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to his own inheritance. 7 The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel. 8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. 9 And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heresa in the hill country of

Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. 10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. 11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. 12 They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger 13 because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.”

Once Joshua and his generation passed away, when they were all dead, the next generation turned their back on God and worshiped the gods of the peoples around them. Today, in 2012, they don't wait for mom and dad to pass on. They turn away immediately, and worship the god of television. They worship the god of fashion. They worship the god of convenience. They worship the god of this world. They worship the world. What is the world?

1 John 2:16 tells us, *“For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world.”* (NLT)

Then, there's another passage, in **Romans 1:28-32**, that closely parallels what is going on today in America. Let's look at that together.

“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and

depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.” (NIV)

Do you realize we live in a culture that approves of turning its back on God? From court cases to TV to popular movies, it's okay to make fun of religion, because it's not important, it's not relevant. It worked for mom and dad, but it's not for me.

Well, can I tell you this morning, dads, you are at the front lines. This is a war, and we are called to be a part. This morning, I want to give you your marching orders to tackle this important task of saving the children, and we are going to look briefly at a few steps that will help us to do so. How can we win the war? May I offer three suggestions this morning.

We can win the war for our children

1. With Our Words.

Deuteronomy 6: 6-7 *“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children.”*

You need to talk to your children. Be involved in their lives. Tell them about God, and tell them about the Bible. You can read Bible stories to them and the best time to start is when they are small.

A study was done recently to determine the amount of interaction between fathers and their small children. First, the fathers were asked to estimate the amount of time they spent each day communicating with their child. The average answer was about fifteen to twenty minutes. Next, microphones were attached to the father so that each interaction could be recorded. The results of this study were shocking: The average amount of time spent by these middle-class fathers with their small children was thirty-seven seconds per day. Their direct interaction was limited to 2.7 encounters daily, lasting ten to fifteen seconds each!

Look back at Deuteronomy 6 again with me. Can that be accomplished in 37 seconds a day? Do you want to know how much time the culture has with your children? 37 seconds does not come close to meeting the job. Communicate with your children; and if you're going to do so, tell them about God and about the Bible.

Communication is a very important thing. It's important in any relationship. For a relationship to thrive there must be communication. So, it helps a lot in adult relationships, but it helps a lot more for children. Children need our assurance and approval. If we don't give it to them when they're small

they're going to get it from their peers or from others when they grow up. And usually, what they get is not what they need and they end up in trouble.

My dad is not a communicative person. He is quiet. Most of the time he wants to keep to himself. I can't recall a time when he praised me for something I'd done well. So, I grew up wondering if he ever appreciated me or loved me or was proud of me. I hungered for his encouraging words.

Then, when I was in fourth year college, a friend of mine approached me and said, "Hey, I was hanging out with your dad the other night at your uncle's birthday party. There were a few folks around. And boy, you should hear how your dad talked about you. He's just so proud of you. He talked of your achievements and all."

I realized that my dad had been telling others what he couldn't tell me. He's a typical Filipino. And my perception of him changed. I just wished I'd learned it earlier then I could have graduated summa cum laude instead of "sumasabit". That's Filipino for "barely passing".

The thing is, don't be frugal with your words to your children. Tell them directly how you appreciate them and love them and how proud you are about them. It helps to build their self-esteem when they hear it straight from you.

Proverbs 1: *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction"*

What this passage is saying is that don't let the schools be the only thing that instruct the children. Don't even let this church be the only thing that instructs your children. And, of course, I'm not putting down the teaching ministry of this church, but mom and dad, we are not responsible for raising your kids. We will help you, but when the Bible tells us to train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it—that's not to the church, that's to parents.

Dads, how are you doing with your words? Are you fighting? If we want to win the war for our children, we need to fight also

2. With Our Time.

Robert Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral, once said that he chose to fail so he could succeed. He said, "I chose to fail at golf, because I wanted to succeed as a father."

Though he loved golf immensely, he knew that he could never devote adequate time to his job, his hobby, and his family . . . so he gave up his hobby.

How are you doing with your time? We looked at **Deuteronomy 6**, but let's look again at verses 7 and following: "*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind*

them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Dads, do you want to know what is important in your life today? Look at your daytimer, your outlook calendar, your schedule, and where your time is devoted to, that's what is important. Unfortunately, many dads say that by their time, they love their jobs. They love their hobbies. They love their entertainment, their comfort. If you asked them if they loved their children, they would swear to you that they do. But their time doesn't match up.

And some of you have bought into the thinking of this world. I've got to keep working and working and working so I can provide for them the finer things of this world, and providing for family is important and biblical, but I think that we sometimes go beyond what is necessary.

I read about a little girl who drew a pretty picture. She went in her dad's office. Crawled on his lap. And said, "Daddy, come and see my picture."

And the dad said, "Not now, honey. Dad's busy."

About 10 minutes later, she came back again. Crawled on his lap. And said, "Daddy, will you come see my picture now?"

And the dad got frustrated. And said, "Can't you see I'm busy? Don't bother me right now. I'll come and look at your picture later. When I'm ready."

A couple of hours later, the dad came out. And he said to the daughter, "Can I see the picture now?" And the girl said, "Sure."

And it was a picture of her and her brother and her mom standing on the lawn. With the family dog. With big smiles. On a sunny day. But the dad noticed that he wasn't in the picture. And so the dad said, "That's a nice picture, sweetheart. But how come I'm not in the picture?"

And the girl said, "Because you're working in your office, daddy."

Time is a gift you give that you can never get back. You can give money, and always make more. You can give gifts, because you can always get new things anyway. But once time is given, it never comes back. Time reveals the priorities in your life.

We all know Dr. James Dobson. The venerable founder of the radio program Focus on the Family. He is one of the most influential Christians of our time.

James Dobson's father was a popular evangelist of their denomination in the 1940's. His schedule alternated between home and outside of the home every two weeks. He traveled extensively across the country and he was so popular that his calendar was full for the next four years.

One day while he was in a meeting in another state, his wife called. She told him about a difficult argument she had with then 16-year-old James Dobson and asked him to come home. Dobson, Sr. immediately left the meeting,

canceled his other meetings and flew home. After two days, he put up a “For Sale” sign outside their home. Then, in a few weeks he moved his family to another state. And there, realizing that his son would be in college in another two years, resigned as a traveling evangelist and took up pastoral ministry instead in a little church.

During those two years he devoted his time to just being with his son, fishing, hunting, and playing tennis. Dr. Dobson later writes, *“There was a closeness and a oneness that made me want to be like that man . . . that made me choose his values as my values, his dreams as my dreams, his God as my God.”* And he reveals that if his dad didn’t make that sacrifice he would have gone on a different path than the one he took eventually. So, to win the war for our children, we’ve got to fight with our words, fight with our time, and fight

3. With Our Lives.

Genesis 18:18-19 is a revealing passage and I want to remind you of what it says to us today. *“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just.”*

The way you live your life will be a direct reflection of how your children will grow up. There's a song called, "I want to be just like you." It goes like this—

VIDEO OF "I JUST WANT TO BE LIKE YOU" (verse and chorus only)

Our children are watching us. They're looking for a hero, a role model, someone they could imitate. It's kind of like this situation—A little boy was caught swearing like a sailor. "Young man, where did you learn to talk that way?" said the boy's mother. The boy looked at his father and said, "Well, Dad, should I tell her?"

Now, as fathers, we want to be good examples to our children. But is being good, good enough? We have to qualify that. You see, any dad can be a good dad to their children. You send them to the best schools, you're a good dad. You buy them what they need, you're a good dad. You attend their school activities, play with them, eat with them, you're a good dad. But even the head of some criminal gang can be a good dad to his children. What we need are not only good dads but godly dads as well.

Dads who know God, dads who impart God's word to their children, dads who are able to fight the war for their children in this chaotic and wicked generation.

The Bible tells us that out of the 40 kings who reigned in Israel and Judah after King Solomon, only four are mentioned as good kings. One of them is King Jehoshaphat. In **1 Kings 22:43**, this is what it says about him, *“In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.”*

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord because of what? Because of his father Asa and this what the **1 Kings 15:11** tells us about Asa, *“Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done...Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life.”*

Now, we may not be royalty but ordinary as we are, we can do an extraordinary thing for our children. And that is, committing our hearts fully to the Lord.

Dads, your lives have a deep impact on the lives of your children. So, what kind of example are you setting for your kids? Your words may say some things about you, but your life declares who you really are. Are you fighting the war with your lives?

There were these young boys debating whose father was the best. This discussion highlighted who their fathers knew. The first boy started the debate by claiming his father knew the mayor. He was soon topped by the second boy who said, "That’s nothing. My dad knows the governor." The third said, "My dad knows the senator." The stakes were getting pretty high,

and the eavesdropping father wondered what his young son would say about him. The little boy shot back, "So what! My dad knows God!"

Would your son say the same thing? May our children always be able to say, "My dad knows God!"

Let us pray...