

# Parenting Freedom

*Family Night – Wednesday, September 4, 2024*

## **Recap:**

- Parenting is a holy calling.
- Your children do not belong to you... they belong to God and you serve as His ambassador.
- You're going to fail and it's going to be OK.
- Be a humble parent, not a "perfect parent".

## **The Big Picture: Love and Limits**

- Children need our love to know their value.
- Children need our limits to know their place in the world.
- Three problematic parenting styles:
  - Permissive – Leans on love at the expense of limits
  - Authoritarian – Leans on limits at the expense of love
  - Absent – No love and no limits
- Two parent homes typically have a love parent and a limits parent who need to work together. (Baron von Trapp and Maria)
- Love and limits is how God parents His own children!

*"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." – Exodus 20:2-3*

## **How to Love Your Kids**

- Understanding their core questions (Do I matter? Does what I feel matter? Do you care that I'm hurting? Will you love me if...?)

## **Love is NOT**

- Coddling (making sure they are never unhappy) – This creates a sense of entitlement, not a feeling of love.
- Constant Praise – This creates a performance-based culture in the home that reinforces pride and shame.

## **Loving Infants**

- Nurture – attending to their needs. "I will be safe."
- Trust – bonding with them. "I will not be alone."
- Remember, good enough is good enough! Letting your children cry sometimes is not going to mess up their core bonding.

## **Loving Toddlers**

- Celebrate their new abilities. “I can do it myself!” (Extra credit: Reading!)
- Limit their abilities. “I have the power to hurt myself and others.”
- Hang in there! Your kids will eventually develop self-control.

## **Loving School-Age Children**

- Empower them to cope with life’s challenges. “I can be strong!”
  - This: “I’m here to help, but you can do this!”
  - Not this: “You’re weak and fragile and you need mommy and daddy to make sure you never struggle!”
- Empathy – help them navigate their big feelings. “My emotions matter!”
  - Kids DO what they FEEL. We want to help them develop the ability to feel something and not necessarily act on it.

## **Loving Teens**

- Loving teens is all about fostering healthy independence.
- Communication – Stop talking AT them and start talking WITH them.
- Embrace their separation! It’s difficult, but important. Why?
  - It feels profoundly loving to them. They want to be adults.
  - The alternative is failure to launch.
  - They will often make this harder if they need to. (Carjacking illustration)
  - Most of the battles we fight with teens are not worth it – music, dress, room, social life... try to stretch. Pick your battles. Embrace as much separation as possible.
- Why is this so difficult?
  - Fear, which makes us try to control them.
  - Sadness – letting them go is tough.
  - Love always costs us something.

## **When You Fail**

- You will not always speak your child’s love language.
- We are sinners. Fear, anger, and shame will often get the best of us.
- When it does, do the work of repentance. Humble yourself and repair.
- A major part of feeling safe and connected in a fallen world is forgiveness!

## **Grace**

- The key to consistent, patient, loving, and effective parenting is our belief in the grace of God.
- You’re a worse parent than you think you are, but God’s grace is better than you think it is!
- You also can’t do it alone, but you don’t have to. God is with you, and He never asks us to do something unless He also promises to provide what we need to do it!