

Homegrown

Blueprint: God's Design for the Family

Ephesians 6:1-4

It's good to be back on this first day of the week at Hardin Baptist Church. We paused our Ephesians study for a look at Palm Sunday and then Resurrection Sunday, but this morning we are going to be back in the book of Ephesians. So if you brought your bibles, go ahead and open to Ephesians chapter 6. If you'll remember before Palm Sunday, Kory had brought two messages for us from Ephesians 5:22-33 about the wife and her role in the family, then he talked to us husbands about our role in the family. This morning, we're going to continue that little miniseries on the family. This morning, we're going to be talking about parenting. Let me just encourage you, if you're a parent here this morning and you only attend the 9:15 service with your family and you have children, next Sunday (I know your children love First Fruits Farm, I know they love the Youth) would you bring them with you in the worship service if your children normally go to Sunday School. Next Sunday we are going to finish this talk about family by Bro Ricky talking to children. I want to explain to your child what their role is in the family so that they fully understand why you're doing what you're doing. Would you consider that? I know they're going to kick, scream, and not like it because Bro Ricky can't compete with the Farm. I realize that, I know I'm not as great as Nick is in the Youth, but please, next Sunday, bribe them, whatever you have to do, put your authority down, but please if you don't mind, if you're only going to attend one service next week, please make sure you bring your children to the preaching service next Sunday.

Hey guys, I know you know today is April 8th, but guess what next Sunday is? April 15th, wow. If you're a citizen of the United States of America, you have to, especially if you're a resident of Kentucky, love April 15th. I love April 15th. I know I don't have to tell you what that day is, everybody knows; it's the frost date in Kentucky, amen. That's right! April 15th is the

frost date in Kentucky, which means after April 15th, we will have no snow, we will have no freezing weather; we will have no frost. After Sunday, it's actually time, it's ok, for those of us who love to garden, to actually set out our tomatoes because we don't have to worry about frost. I know there's probably not a one of us in here who have this mindset: Oh man, winter is almost over, and now I'm going to have to switch from eating store bought tomatoes that's been grown thousands of miles away, shipped here green, artificially turned red, and now I'm going to have to start eating those old homegrown tomatoes. Please tell me there's no one in here thinking like that. In Western Kentucky, I mean we grow the greatest tomatoes known to the world. I've been all over the world, and there's not a tomato like our tomatoes. If you are like me, you are tickled to death that next Sunday is April 15th and weather permitting, we're going to get to, for the first time, take those tomato plants out of those little containers and put them in our garden. I've just got to be honest with you; I love my first tomato harvest. I love it when somebody shares a tomato with me if they have a tomato before I have a tomato. As a matter of fact, my favorite day of the summer is when I can go out to the garden, pick a Jetstar tomato, just ripe, slice it and put it on my bacon sandwich, and start the day off with a bacon tomato sandwich. Then to end that day, if it's a perfect day, to be able to be grilling on the patio on my Big Green Egg, fresh ground beef that we've raised on our farm, grill it to perfection, go out to the garden one more time, and pick a tomato about the size of the burger. If it's a Jetstar, you slice it opposite of the core (you can actually go $\frac{3}{4}$ into the tomato before you ever hit the core) and put about three big, juicy, ripe slices on that perfect, grilled burger, then salt it just right. Then you take a mustard and smother it all over the tomato. Take your bun off of the grill that you just freshly grilled to perfection and put that together, and when you bite into it, the mustard and the tomato juice just runs down your cheek and gets on your beard, amen! That's a perfect end to a day.

Now, if you're like me, you know there are four seasons in the life of a tomato. There is transplanting season, staking season, cultivating season, and my favorite, harvest season. If you have your bibles this morning, let's stand together and open to Ephesians chapter 6. Have I made anybody hungry this morning? Amen! I hope you're hungry for God's Word, because

this morning we're not going to talk about homegrown tomatoes. We are going to talk about homegrown kids. Can I be totally honest with you? In all my years of doing this, homegrown kids are just the best. They're better than school-grown kids. They're even better than church-grown kids. Homegrown kids are the best. This morning, I want to encourage us as parents. You say hold it Bro Ricky; I needed this sermon twenty years ago. I understand, but I still need you to listen, even if you don't have kids at home. Why? Because hopefully you still have an influence in the life of your kids who are raising your grandkids, or you have an influence on your grandkids who will one day be raising your great-grandkids. Some of you work with some young couples who are just starting out this thing called parenting. There will be days when he or she is going to come in and be so frustrated. I want you to listen this morning. I want you to store the truths of this sermon. If you need to tweak it a little bit to fit your situation, I understand, but I really believe with all of my heart that homegrown kids are the best. We, in the church, want to be influencing society about rearing kids. Because when you take a homegrown kid and then supplement what's happening at home with a good education and a good church education, opportunity to serve the Lord, it just doesn't get any better than that. It's like having Miracle Grow kids. Let's see what Ephesians chapter 6 says. We're going to flip this and read verses 1-4, but we're actually going to talk about verses 1-3 next week because you are going to bring your children. Please, don't wimp out on me next week and not come because I'm going to be preaching to children. Our society needs to hear what the Word of God says to children. Please bring your child to church next Sunday to hear Bro Ricky.

Scripture

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

(Prayer)

Father, we pray that You add Your blessings to the reading of this Your Word. Hold us attentive this morning. Bring back to my mind the truths that You've let us live out as a father, but also what we've gained and gleaned from Your Word, because we've tried to parent biblically and spiritually and in a godly manner. Father, anoint me to speak. Anoint our congregation to hear. Father, we ask You this every week and we mean it with all of our heart, do not let us be speakers and hearers only, but help us be doers of Your Word. It's in Your precious Son's name we pray. Amen.

Just as there are four seasons in the life of a tomato, I think there are four seasons to parenting. The first season of parenting is what I call the transplanting season. It's that season where our child has grown in the womb of its mother, either our wife, or possibly we're adopting. That's cool. Possibly, we're going to be a foster parent. That is so cool. There's a child that we're going to get to rear, we're going to get to provide a home for, that's growing in a womb for about nine months, and then that day comes when that child is born and that child gets transplanted from that protective womb of the mother for nine months into a garden that will influence that child for the rest of its life, and that's my family, and that's your family. Did you catch that? Your family is the soil. Your family is the garden of your child. Just as I understand that when I plant a tomato in my garden that it is eastside soil, it is clay soil; when Kiki and Kory were born to us, we were the garden, we were the soil that God was going to use to rear them into the persons He wanted them to be. You have that privilege, and I have that privilege through natural birth, through adoption, through being a foster parent.

Here is what I realize; we joke on the eastside of Calloway County that our soil's not as good as westside soil, but we can still grow some pretty good crops. Yeah, we may have to fertilize or substitute some things just a little bit differently than they do on the westside. Have you ever thought about your garden? Have you ever thought about your soil that you provide for your children? Have you ever done a soil sample? When is the last time you really looked at the family environment that you're providing for your kids? I mean if you're a first time parent, the relationship you have with

your spouse is going to be the soil. That's going to be the garden. If there is an older sibling, or two or three older siblings, the relationship that you have with your spouse and the relationship you have with those children, and the relationship those children have with each other, is going to be the soil for that baby of the family, so to speak, that fourth, fifth, or sixth child, whatever it is. How are you with your wife? Honestly. Can I just make this observation? If it's not good between you and her and it's affecting you, how do you think it's not going to affect the children? Your relationship is the soil. I pray you want your kids to have the best soil they can have, amen.

Now, I want to say this; here's why we need to have a good relationship with our spouse before we ever have children. Now if a child is already on the way, we can't send it back, ok. Because let me tell you what's going to happen, it's going to sound terrible, but children disrupt family. When Kiki came along, for the first time my wife was now her mother. Can I be honest with all of you guys? I felt like I had lost my wife because she's now a mother. I'm trying to be a husband, but I'm also a dad now and Kiki just disrupted things, if I can say that, and about the time we got that settled, we had another disruption. See, now not only was mine and Celisa's life disrupted again, our relationship with Kiki was disrupted. So here's what you need to understand, in the transplanting stage, which is normally birth to two, you better make sure you understand it is a 100% investment. You're not going to get by with 50/50. You're not going to get by with 80/20. You're not going to get by with 90/10. It's a 100% investment in your family, in the relationship you have with your spouse, because that's the foundational element in the garden. That's the fertility of the garden. Let me tell you what's going to happen during this phase. For roughly two years, you're going to be doing everything for your kid that your kid can't do for themselves, which is everything; two years. Wow!

Are you guys ready for that? Now I want to make sure you understand this; hopefully this season is only going to be two years because one day they're going to be able to do what you're now doing for them that they can't do for themselves. So you're just going to do what you're doing for them as long as they can't do it for themselves. But the moment they can

do it for themselves, you're going to quit doing it for them. Does that make sense? Now I want to tell you something about your child. At first, and I'm not a psychologist, but at first your child is going to know they have needs. To let you know they have a need that's not being met, they're going to go into a state of what's called unhappiness. When they're unhappy, what they're saying to you is my need is not being met. I need you to meet my need because I can't meet my need for me, and they let you know they're unhappy. We parents now have the responsibility of making our child that's unhappy, happy. So we try to meet that need to make them happy and we meet that need because they can't meet their need on their own. But let me tell you something that happens, this really happens, I really believe it. Somewhere about ten or eleven months, or fourteen or fifteen months, and I don't know if they know this is really happening to them, but they begin to throw in, not just needs, but some wants. I'm not sure if they can understand the difference between their needs and their wants, but now as a parent, I know they are not really needing that. I know they just want that, but they've already learned to use the card of unhappiness. So now, they're playing that card of unhappiness all the time. And because for the first year in their life I have made them happy whenever they were unhappy, they now don't want to live in a state of unhappiness. They want to live in a state of happiness, so they expect me or Celisa to do whatever they want us to do for them, and we do because they can't do it for themselves. Whoa.

Every young parent needs to ask themselves this question; how long do you want to keep doing for your kid what they first can't do for themselves, but now could do? It's kind of cute the first six or seven months. You know, changing diapers, fixing bottles, holding them, picking up the stuff they strew in the bedroom, picking up all the slobber, cleaning up the mess, so to speak. Do you want to be doing that when they're eighteen? Do you want to be doing that when they're forty? Do you want to be doing that when they're sixty? I know of parents that still are, and still do because they made the goal of parenting to make my child happy. That's not the goal of parenting. The goal of parenting is not to make your child happy; the goal of parenting is to make your child holy, set apart, different. If you'll parent from the perspective of holiness and start when they're

little, it'll change the way you parent. Tell me you understand this. If you don't get this as a parent, you are going to try to make your kid happy the rest of their life, and they'll play that unhappy card on you the rest of their life. So here's what I would do if I was re-parenting, I would never parent from the perspective of what do I want my kid to be. I would parent from the perspective of who do I want my kid to be, and I would emphasize identity, not behavior, who they are, not what they do. Because if we parent from the perspective of behavior, we are trying to regulate conduct, but you can't regulate conduct without character, so we need to build character. I really wish we in this church would quit asking kids, what do you want to be when you grow up? We condition kids for performance. We condition kids to find fulfillment in what they do rather than in who they are. Therefore, we're living in an age where you parents are driving yourselves crazy trying to fill your kids with activity and give them things to do because they can't be happy without going, or doing, or belonging, or...am I not right? Now please hear me; if we parent from the perspective of happiness, one day they're going to think something is going to bring them happiness that's going to be unholy, and then we are going to be on a road we wish they had never been down. But if we will pursue holiness, it will eventually bring about the blessing and the benefit of true happiness. But you can't get it the other way. Does that make sense? So moms and dads, grandparents, great-grandparents, when we see an infant, when we see a toddler, let's pray that the parents are 100% fully invested, amen.

Secondly, after I transplant my little tomato in my garden, I will probably do it next week, may even do it at the end of this week if the weather permits, that little fellow is going to take to my soil and I will have all the things he needs there to grow and then he's going to get about this tall and he's going to look so pretty, and then I'm going to surprise him because I now know he's ready for what I call the staking season. Now, a stake on Bro Ricky's farm is this, because listen to this, I'm not settling for mediocre tomatoes. I want moderate sized, juicy, red Jetstar tomatoes. So because that's the goal, bacon sandwiches, grilled hamburgers with tomato and mustard, I mean this summer at three o'clock in the afternoon, instead of eating an apple or orange, I'm just going to eat a tomato with a little salt on it just like you would eat an apple. I love them that much. Here's

what I'm going to do; a stake in my garden is a six foot steel T-post. Does everybody know what that is? I'm going to take the post driver and put it over the stake, drive it down right into the life of my tomato plant. And then I'm going to take this fancy wire my wife buys and we're going to tie, bind, that plant to the pole. If that plant could talk, that plant would be kicking, screaming, yelling from the top of its lungs because I'm now regulating the way it's going to grow. Now here's what I know that I don't think my tomato plant knows. The nature of a tomato plant growing by itself, it will grow so tall, but it will get too big for its britches. It can't hold itself up because as it grows up it starts growing out, it doesn't stay balanced, it will fall over, and when it falls over it doesn't pick itself back up. It just keeps growing and it grows along the ground. The next thing you know there is no airflow. The next thing you know there's dirt on the vines; there's dirt on the tomato. The next thing you know there's disease, little rotten spots. The next thing you know my little tomatoes are rotting on the ground while they're trying to ripen, and it's horrible. One of the saddest sights I see is to drive down the road and see somebody gardening tomatoes without stakes in their plant. I want to go and ring the doorbell and say, "What are you doing; don't you know how to grow tomatoes?" That's what somebody needs to say in the life of us parents, to say, "What are you doing?" From about three to twelve, you better be putting some stakes in the life of your children.

Can I be totally honest with you? I don't just use a stake alone in my tomato patch. I've got wire cages that I slip down over that tomato plant and I force it to grow up. Do you know what my tomatoes will try to do? They will try to stick their leaves outside of that cage. That's ok for a day or so, but then I put them right back on the inside. Listen to me; you let it get around May, really hot, really fertile garden, good rain, and if I don't check my tomatoes for three days in a row, they will grow six or eight inches. Do you know what that tomato plant will be doing? It will be taking its head and sticking it out the side of that wire cage. If I wait too many days, I can't get it back in without breaking the plant. Parent, please hear me; you don't want to break your child, but you've got to keep them inside the boundaries.

Let me tell you when you know staking season starts. It's usually around two to three; we call them terrible twos on the farm. For the first time parents realize they lied to you at the hospital when they told you that you just had an angel born. You know realize you've got a little devil on your hands, amen! Headstrong, yeah. See, it starts out really cute. We're doing everything for them they can't do for themselves, and then one day you get ready to do something and they say, "I can do it." Your little heart gets so excited because they're growing up and they can now do it for themselves. But if you'll watch closely, they don't do it the way it's supposed to be done. They don't do it right; they do it wrong. Have you ever seen a two-year-old child put their shoes on correctly the first time? Why do they always want to put their right foot in the left shoe? Why do they want to put their head through the sleeve opening instead of the head opening? They do it all wrong, so see, you've got to understand that your child does not have the nature you have if you're a Christian. Your child, like you, was born in sin, separated from God; therefore, they have a nature to sin. So when your child starts to want to do things their way, yeah, they want to do it their way, not your way, not God's way. This is when you drive the stake. This is when you put the cage around them.

Here's what you need to teach your child; that these boundaries are beneficial, that if they want to be free and be who they want to be and make right choices, just make choices inside the boundary and you are going to cheer for them. You're going to encourage them. You're going to say, right on! But when they step outside the boundary, there's got to be a consequence, and you teach them there's a consequence for stepping outside the boundary. Does that make sense? You do believe as adults that if you make wrong choices, there will be consequences, right? Have you ever notice how speeding tickets lowers our standard of living? You have to pay a \$200 speeding ticket; that hurts. You make a bad decision; that hurts. You do something silly as a husband; that hurts the husband/wife relationship. Right? So here's what happens when you make a wrong choice, as an adult you don't usually get by with it; it lowers your standard of living some way. So when we're parenting, here's what we've got to understand; when our children step outside the boundary, they've got to be penalized, and the penalty must lower they standard of living so that

they understand that if you don't grow the way you're supposed to grow and you grow wrong, it's going to lower your standard of living. Now, when you penalize them, here's what's going to happen; they are going to play the unhappy card. If you're a parent who believes you're supposed to make your kid happy because when you make your kid happy the stress goes away, and they quit doing whatever they are doing because you've made them happy again, you're going to be in big, big trouble because it's going to get more, and more, and more expensive, and more, and more time consuming to keep them happy when they become teenagers. Please tell me you're getting this.

Now, I want you to notice Scripture. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." I've read a lot of commentaries and they say this word, father, is used generally, like we use the word, men, to talk about people, generally. So therefore, this is talking about parents. I don't agree. Let me tell you why because next week when I talk to your children, the Bible is going to say, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Then the Bible is going to tell your children to "Honor your father and mother, for this is the first commandment with promise," and now he switches to fathers. Why didn't he just say parents? Why didn't he say father and mother, don't provoke your children to wrath? Because let me tell you the structure here, he's just told us that we're supposed to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God and not drunk with wine. We're supposed to walk in love, we're supposed to walk in light, and we're supposed to walk in wisdom. There's supposed to be a mutual submissiveness, one to each other, in the church of God, and then he gives us examples of submission. The wife submits to the husband because the husband is loving his wife like Christ loved the church. Then he tells the children to obey the parents. Then he's going to tell the workers to obey their masters. Now he zeroes in on the authority. Do you know who the authority in the home is? It's the dad. It's the father. You dads are the Rick Pitino's, the Nick Saban's; you're the John Calipari's. You're the head, head coach, so to speak. It stops with you. Sorry Louisville guy, you can't do what Rick Pitino tried to do and act like he didn't know what was going on. It stops with the head coach. Don't you dads give me this you don't know what's going on; it stops with you.

Because it stops with you, it ought to start with you. Got it? You're the spiritual leader of the home, and here's what the Bible is telling us dads; do not provoke negative reactions in your children by the way you parent them. Don't be an irritant to them. Train them in the way of the Lord, instruct them, inform them, invest with them, illustrate to them, and inspire them as children. I want to say something to you men; it is not your wife's responsibility to rear the children. It's yours. That doesn't mean that she doesn't help. She's the biggest helper you've got. She's the biggest support you've got, but it's still on you. I want to tell you something; if you're a husband who sacrificially loves your wife the way Christ loved the church, she's going to agree with you when it comes to how to rear the children. If she don't see that from you, if she sees you being self-centered and doing what's best for you all the time, she's going to disagree with the way you want to rear the children because she thinks you're putting you ahead of her, and therefore she thinks you're putting you ahead of the children. You show me a wife, who has a husband who's putting her ahead of himself, I'll show you a wife who will follow that husband, and I'll show you a wife who will follow that husband even when they disagree over how to rear the children. Why? Because she trusts in her husband as she trusts in God, amen.

Now, let's make sure we've got this picture. We're going to have to set some boundaries so that your kids grow the way they should grow. What should determine the boundaries that you've set is the way of the Lord. Men, you've got to be spiritual. Men, you've got to be pursuing your relationship with God. Men, you've got to be watching how God parents you, and then using that in the life of your children. Just as God sets boundaries in your life to keep you running in the right direction, you've got to set boundaries in the life of your children to keep them running in the right direction. You explain it to your children just like this. Hey, when we play football, we don't just let kids run everywhere they want to run! The coach says run that way, the referee says you can't run this way but just so far, then he blows the whistle and throws the flag, right? See mom and dad, we're not just coaches; we are referees.

Now listen to me; don't you husbands ever try to be the referee between your wife and your kid. You're not going to be head coach very long. You're not going to be refereeing very long. We referee in the life of our kids, and here's what I suggest. I suggest in your bedroom, on a date, in a motel room, no kids around, you sit down and decide with your wife what the rules, what the regulations, what the boundaries are going to be. Then you decide what the consequences are going to be when your kids step outside the boundaries. Don't do that in front of your kids. Don't ever fight in front of your kids over what we're doing with the kids. That will do more damage! Wives listen to me; if your husband's too harsh, you taking up for the kid and getting on him in front of the kid will do more damage than what he just did to the kid by being too harsh. If she's too lenient or he's too lenient, and you point that out in front of the kids, you'll do more damage than what being too lenient or too harsh is to the kids. Does that make sense?

Now, you make sure no means no. No doesn't mean maybe, we'll think about it, you can do it in two weeks, or you can continue doing what you're doing for thirty more minutes. No has got to mean no. The reason we've got an authority problem in our schools, the reason we've got an authority problem in our society is because we've got an authority problem in our homes. I saw something that happened to me yesterday at a cattle show that would've never happened when I was a kid because when an adult said something to a kid, no matter whose kid it was, that kid looked at that adult and said, "Yes, sir," and did what was said. A kid never exercised their right, and that's what's happened in our society. Does everybody understand my premise here?

Now I've got to hurry up, we've got two minutes. Listen, cultivating. Starting in preteen, about nine to teenage years, preteen teen, you've got to cultivate. On my farm, it's crabgrass. If I don't weed my garden, crabgrass will take my tomatoes. I'll still get some tomatoes, but it won't be what my tomatoes could be, so I have to weed. Parents, weed your garden. That's your child. Listen to me, everybody look, watch what you let your kids listen to musically. I can't believe some of you are letting your kids hear what they hear. I don't even believe you're hearing what you're

hearing. It's detrimental to your kids. There's an agenda by the world, the world uses music, the world uses TV, the world uses social media, the world uses video games, the world uses magazines, and the world uses friends. You need to get your hoe out and keep the weeds out of your kid's life, especially when they're about nine or ten to that early teenage years. They don't know how detrimental that is to them, because "everybody is doing it."

Then, suckers, oh wow. A sucker looks so good on a tomato plant because it makes that tomato plant look full, but if you don't keep the suckers off your tomato plant, you'll not have as good of tomatoes. Parents listen to me, in the day and age of which you're raising kids there are a lot of good things you're going to have to teach your kids to say no to. You can't play five sports and be on every traveling team, and go to every academic meet, be in every cheer competition, go to every school activity, and go to every church activity. You can't do it if you want your kid to grow up and be who they want to be, who they need to be, who God wants them to be. You've got to help them make decisions. One of the best things we ever did parenting was let our son race motocross. But when he raced motocross, because of what his goal was he had to make a choice. He was the point guard on the basketball team and he was the captain of the football team. He had to give both of those up, and he did, and he made it to professional motocross level. But to make it to the motocross level, he paid for most of the expenses because he had to work, and we made him work. The best thing we ever did for our son. Even when I would show up in California or Florida with him, out of his own money that he earned, he had to pay for daddy's expenses because daddy wasn't there on vacation, daddy was there to help him. Please tell me you get what I'm saying. The goal was never to make Kory happy; the goal was to make Kory holy, and the same with Kiki.

Now fourthly and closing, the last stage; harvest. You've got a child who's an adult, and while you're still daddy and you're momma, that's not the relationship now. The relationship now is that this is a fellow peer. This is another adult, you get to enjoy your kids for the rest of their life on an adult level, and it's absolutely amazing. As a matter of fact, I enjoy my

children more as adults than I did when they were my kids because they're really neat kids to hang out with. If we weren't related at all, I'd want to be friends with them. But when they're your kids, whoa, they give you some neat little people called grandkids. If you do it right, they bring you on the coaching staff and make you an assistant coach because they know when they drop the off at your house for two or three days and you get them all by themselves and they go do whatever they want to do, they know you're not going to undermine, change the philosophy, or run a new play. No, you're going to backup what they are teaching their children, and it's absolutely unbelievable. Homegrown kids are the best!