

Tough Faith Fights for Family
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We’re in a sermon series entitled Tough Faith for Tough Times. Last week I preached about how Tough Faith is Fighting Faith.

Since today is Father’s Day, I felt led to preach on Tough Faith Fights for Family. Now - if you’re not a father – don’t think you can just tune me out. Even though I’m mainly directing this to fathers – in can help everyone immensely in the area of family and relationships.

The fight of your life is not the fight for your career, your finances or your health. The fight of your life is the fight for your family.

We have an enemy whose goal is to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to steal our children, kill our marriages and destroy our families. Everything he does is geared towards dividing our families and leading our children astray. All it takes for him to succeed is for us to do nothing! All it takes for you to lose your marriage and family is to do nothing!

Most fathers would not intentionally hurt their families. But many are unintentionally hurting them... by doing nothing! Most men would die for their families. But many miss the bigger challenge of living for them!

My goal today is that you will go out of here today equipped to do something. Ready to fight for the life of your marriage, your family, your children! And I firmly believe if you do God’s will God’s way you will get God’s results! You can win this battle!

One of the godliest kings in the Old Testament was Hezekiah. Yet, Hezekiah did not pass on a godly heritage to his son, Manasseh, who became the worst, most evil king in the history of Israel. I wanted to know more about how it happened that a godly generation was followed by such an evil generation. I discovered that in 2 Kings 20 – the prophet Isaiah told Hezekiah to get his house in order because he was going to die. 2 Kings 20:2-3 says:

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

God heard his prayer and told Isaiah to go back with this message in 2 Kings 20:5-7

I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will heal you... I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria.

Then Isaiah said, "Bring a lump of pressed figs." So they brought it and applied it to his infected skin, and he recovered.

So Hezekiah was healed by God – using medicine.

I still wanted to know how such a godly man had such an evil son. I was amazed at what I found. In 2 Kings 20:16-18 the prophet Isaiah said to Hezekiah,

Hear the word of the Lord: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Wow! That's a tough word to hear about your own flesh and blood. But here's what happened next in verse 19.

"The word of the Lord you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?"

Now wait a minute. When Hezekiah was told he would die, he cried for himself. But when he was told his children would be carried away, he did not shed a tear.

When Hezekiah was told he would die, he prayed to the Lord. But when he was told his children would be made slaves, he uttered not a word. Hezekiah was very concerned for himself, but he did not care his sons would be made eunuchs, which meant they would have no children of their own.

In other words, Hezekiah fought for his life – but not for his family.
He cared for himself, but not for his kids.
He prayed for himself, but not for his family.

Hezekiah showed no care for his family.
Hezekiah offered no prayer for his family.
Hezekiah was not there for his family.

He did not care that his children were taken away as long as he got to stay.
He did not care that his children were slaves as long as he was free.
He did not care that his children were at war as long as he had peace.
He did not care that his children had no future as long as he had a future.
Hezekiah showed absolutely no concern for his children or the generations that followed him!

That was a recipe for disaster! He did not fight for his family and that's how he lost them! And if you do not fight for your family you will lose them!

I want us to learn from this bad dad of the Bible. We can learn from his example how NOT to parent our children!

Here's three things we must do to fight for our families:
 We must show that we care for them.
 We must choose to be there for them.
 We must offer up prayer for them.
 That's how tough faith wins the fight for our families!

1- To win the fight for our family – we must show we care for them.

How do we do that? By telling them and showing them we love them! What we say to our children is vitally important. Proverbs 18:21 says:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Are your words consistently building your children up or tearing them down? Are you speaking life or death to them? Blessing or curses? Children need to hear words of life and blessing from us.

Our Father God is the best example of this. In Matthew 3:17, when Jesus was baptized in water, the Holy Spirit came upon Him and His Father spoke from heaven saying:

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Jesus was about to enter into His ministry and He needed two things:
 The power of the Holy Spirit and the spoken blessing of the Father.

The Father told the Son, "I love you and I'm proud of you." That's the basic message your children need to hear from you, "I love you and I'm proud of you." Say that after me – "I love you" – "I'm proud of you." See, you can do it.

Married folks – your fundamental mission in life is to make sure your spouse knows you love them. Parent – your fundamental mission in life is to make sure your children know you love them. You do that by telling them and you do that by showing them. Say it and show it. Walk it and talk it. You can't say it too much or too often.

Jesus gave us a great example of how we should interact with our children in Mark 10:13-16.

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

We see three specific things Jesus did for children to show He cared:

- 1- He valued them
- 2- He took them in His arms – He was affectionate – hugged them
- 3- He laid hands on them and blessed them

A biblical blessing involves spoken words that value of the person being blessed and encourage their prophetic destiny.

My wife has specific phrases for every grandchild that she has taught them since the time they could understand. One says – “I’m the apple of God’s eye” – Another – “God knit me together in my mother’s womb” and another “God has a special plan for my life.”

You may think that’s no big deal, but I believe our grandchildren will remember these words for the rest of their lives. And what would you rather have ringing in their ears – “I’m stupid and I’ll never amount to anything” or “I’m special and God has a special plan for my life”?

Spend time thinking of different ways to speak and show your love to your family. When we do this – our spouses and our children are secure in our love. We all blow it at times, but the wounds aren’t as deep and the forgiveness is not hard to give when we are secure in our love.

Parents, I want to give you some relief today: you don’t have to be perfect. We’ve all blown it with our children. I’ve blown it. We’ve got to know that none of us are perfect. There are no perfect parents.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:8 that *love covers a multitude of sins*.

There are several interpretations of that passage, but one is that when we love someone, we don’t have to be perfect. They will know we love them even through we occasionally blow it. Love covers.

Sometimes we do it right, sometimes we don’t. Even so – our sons and daughters know if we really love them. When they know that, even they don’t expect us to be perfect.

This is no excuse to be a bad, lazy, selfish parent. We need to get it right more than we get it wrong. I just want to encourage you that you don’t have to be perfect to be a good parent. Just fight for your family by showing them you care!

2- To win the fight for our family – we must be there for them.

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that by the time American children are 6 years old, they have spent more time watching TV than they will spend talking to their dad over the course of their entire lifetime. Do you have any idea how much time the average father spends with his children every day? A study was done to determine that. First, the fathers were asked to estimate the amount of time they

spent each day with the child. The average answer was about 15 to 20 minutes.

In this study, microphones were attached to the father so that every interaction with each child could be recorded. The results were shocking: The average amount of time spent by fathers with their children was - READY? - 37 seconds per day. This is one reason I know you have what it takes to win this fight! You have time. You have more than 37 seconds per day per child.

I know you're busy – but we all have the same amount of time. To a child, love is spelled T-I-M-E. Don't buy into the myth of quality time over quantity time. Your child needs both. Some fathers are so busy with what they are doing FOR their families that they have no time to spend WITH their families.

Dads - you can do this. Carve out a little time for each child. Talk to them. Enter their world. Find out what they like to do and do it with them. The key to being there for your kids is doing what they like to do!

Having time alone with dad is a big deal for a child. Years ago a young girl in our church came up to me and said, "You'll never guess what I did this week." What? "I went on a date with my dad." I asked her what they did and she told me that they went to McDonalds and then shopping at Walmart so she could buy what she wanted. Dads – You can do this! It doesn't take a lot of time or money – just a little thought, time and love.

There were five kids in my family so there was not a lot of alone time with my dad. However, he did make time for me and me alone. Not just me AND all the other kids – that is important – but he took time for me alone. We would play catch. We would go hunting and fishing. I loved it when he would occasionally get me out of school early so we could go fishing.

I remember one time when we lived in Florida – my dad came and got me out of school early to go fishing in the Everglades. I never forget the little ole attendance lady in the office. She asked my dad, "Why are you taking Joey out of school early?" My dad said, "We're going fishing." The attendance lady got a condescending look on her face and said, "Well, Reverend, do you think that is an appropriate reason to take your son away from his education." My dad just looked at her and said, "Yes I certainly do. Joey's my son and I think it's important for us to spend time together. So sign him out."

My dad was my hero that day. Now get this – I was in the 3rd Grade – so that was over 50 years ago – but I still remember it to this day. Dad's you can do this! You have what it takes. Think of some way to show each of your children how special they are to you.

Take a little of your time and invest it in your children. To win the fight for your family – you must be there for them!

3- To win the fight for our family – we must cover them with prayer.

Deb and I started praying for our children before we even had any children. That's because we knew we were not smart enough or strong enough to raise our children without God's help.

I can tell you right now with total certainty that you will not win this fight for your family without prayer. James 4:2 says:

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

There are gifts from God we have not received because we haven't asked. There are battles we have not won because we haven't prayed. There is supernatural power we have not released because we have not prayed. Winning the fight for your family depends on tapping into the supernatural power of God through prayer.

I've learned that praying for our children is a life-long necessity! We must be persistent! Consider the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28. Her daughter was demon possessed so she cried out to the Lord for mercy.

Verse 23 says *Jesus did not answer a word*. Have you ever felt like God did not answer your prayer? What do you do? Well – here's what she did - she kept on asking. She asked so much that the disciples urged Jesus to send her away. But she kept asking. Verse 24 says:

But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

That would make most of us give up. That would cause some of us to turn on God. But what did she do?

Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

This woman loved her daughter so much that nothing stopped her from getting healing for her daughter. This woman didn't give up on her child. And neither should we. If we give up, we will not win the fight of our lives!

Nehemiah was a man who went to Jerusalem to help the people because the walls of the city were torn down and the enemy could come and go as he pleased. Some of our families are so broken that they enemy can come and go as he pleases.

When Nehemiah started rebuilding, all the enemies came against him. When we are building our families, the enemy will try to stop us too.

When enemies came against Jerusalem, Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 4:14

Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight *for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.*

Verse 17 says: *They did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other.*

We too have an awesome God – but we must build our families by working with one hand and warring with the other.

If you build anything great, it takes work and warfare.
It takes work and warfare to build a church.
It takes work and warfare to build a family.

Now, you might not know how to war for your family. You can start by saying this on a regular basis – “Devil, you can't have my family!”

Then, I encourage you to pray the Word of God. In Jeremiah 1:12, God says,

I am watching over My word to perform it.

The devil will try to tell you your child can never learn – but you speak the truth of Isaiah 54:13 *All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.*

The devil will try to tell you that you child will never get saved, but you speak the truth of Isaiah 49:25 where God said *I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save.*

The devil will try to tell you that you child will never be filled with the Spirit, but you speak the truth of Acts 2:38-39 *Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.*

The devil will try to tell you your child will never serve the Lord – but you speak the promise of Joshua 24:15 *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

I haven't seen it happen yet – it's not happening right now – it may not happen next week, next month or next year – but I'm not giving up!

I'll always care – I'll always be there – and I'll always be in prayer!

As for me and my house, WE WILL serve the Lord!