

OUR CHILDREN: Their Future

Proverbs 22:6

Pastor Bonita Wood

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This morning I want to start by showing you a few pictures of some kids.
Tell me if you can identify them.

(show pictures of: Mark Eickhoff, Dan Glover and Bonita Wood)

(or: Ben Lilly, Chris Drye, Bob Hussong, Dan Glover and Bonita Wood)

Now I want to know if you can guess what each of these children had in common besides the fact that we all serve here at Tipp City Church.

We all grew up in church.

We each had someone or many someones who recognized that we were spiritual beings in a spiritual war and they cared enough about our futures to fight for truth. They stood in the gap for us and took up the **Battle Cry**.

Let me share with you what that battle cry might have sounded like.

(You can find it on the back of your sermon notes.)

I Minister to Children

I am a minister. I minister to the largest mission field in the world. I minister to children.

My calling is sure, my challenge is big, my vision is clear. My desire is strong. My influence is eternal. My impact is critical. My values are solid. My faith is tough. My mission is urgent. My purpose is unmistakable. My direction is forward. My heart is genuine. My strength is supernatural. My reward is promised and my God is real.

In a world of cynicism, I offer hope. In a world of confusion, I offer truth. In a world of immorality, I offer values. In a world of neglect, I offer attention. In a world of abuse, I offer safety. In a world of ridicule, I offer affirmation. In a world of division, I offer reconciliation. In a world of bitterness, I offer forgiveness. In a world of sin, I offer salvation. In a world of hate, I offer God's love.

I refuse to be dismayed, disengaged, disgruntled, discouraged, or distracted. Neither will I look back, stand back, fall back, go back, or sit back. I do not need applause, flattery, adulation, prestige, stature, or veneration. I do not have time for business as usual, mediocre standards, small thinking, outdated methods, or normal expectations, average results, ordinary ideas, petty disputes, or low vision. I will not give up, give in, bail out, lie down, turn over, quit or surrender.

I will pray when things look bad. I will pray when things look good. I will move forward when others stand still. I will trust God when obstacles arise. I will work when the task is overwhelming. I will get up when I fall down. My calling is to reach sons and daughters for God. It is too serious to be taken lightly, too urgent to be postponed, too vital to be ignored, too relevant to be overlooked, too significant to be trivialized, too eternal to be fleeting, and too passionate to be quenched.

I know my mission. I know my challenge. I also know my imitations, my weaknesses, my fears, and my problems. And I know my God.

Let others get the praise. Let the church get the blessing. Let God get the

glory.

I am a minister. I minister to children. This is who I am. This is what I do.

When we are that serious about training our children in the ways of God, Satan trembles.

Proverbs 22:6 in the New International Version states: *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Your bibles (in the pews – on the tables) which are the New Living Translation say it this way: *Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.*

Both translations are saying the same thing.

To **train** or to **teach** means you need to be **dedicated** or **intentional** about what you are doing.

You need what every good general in a war knows you need.

A Plan of Action.

An

intentional, thought out, plan of action.

Train a child.

Then Proverbs points out that if you are intentional in your training and teaching, your child will choose the right way or path.

If you read the book of Proverbs, you will notice that it repeatedly points out that there are only two ways or paths a child can go –

*The way of the righteous and the wise or
the way of the wicked and the fool.*

You see Proverbs recognizes that we are in a spiritual battle.

Either God and the truth win or Satan and his lies win.

Proverbs points out what every good general understands:

If you want to win a war, you must control the battlefield.

I want to suggest to you today that the battlefield is found in the very same place today as it was in the day of Proverbs –

the battlefield is found in the minds, hearts, and souls of our children.

“I want you to close your eyes for just a moment and imagine yourself as Satan.

I know this is a horrible thought and I’ll bet you never imagined yourself being asked to do that – but I want you to for just a moment.

As Satan – the prince or the general of darkness – your soul aim, your driving motivation is to destroy God.

So you want to hit God where He is most vulnerable – his weakest spot.

And where would that be – His love of His people.

What better way to get at God than through his beloved human creations.

And how can you inflict the maximum possible pain upon God?

Win over his beloved children at the earliest possible moment.

That way they will lead unrighteous, unholy lives for their entire lifetimes.

Win them early and the job is all but finished.”

Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions. George Barna . p50

You can open your eyes now.

Caz McCaslin, the founder of UPWARD Sports ministries – our basketball and cheerleading ministry that we have here at the church – says it this way,

“It is a race to the heart of a child, and the first one there wins.”

He understands that we are in a spiritual battle and that you have to choose a side in war.

Either God and the truth win or Satan and his lies win.

Train a child in the way he should go.

So how do we go about fighting the battle and winning the war?

How do we **train a child**.

1) RECOGNIZE that we are at war.

Ephesians 6:12 in the Message bible puts it this way:

This is not an afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

“One of the greatest victories won by God's enemy, Satan, has been the ability to convince people – even most Christians – that there is no war being waged, so we might as well relax, feel good and enjoy life.”
(George Barna, p57)

Ephesians chapter 6 goes on to tell us to put on the full armor of God.

It talks about the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the spirit.

In essence it says – BE PREPARED, RECOGNIZE YOU ARE AT WAR.

However, since we don't go around wearing the armor of a soldier or carrying our swords, we forget we are soldiers at war with a common calling. We sometimes forget and start to just think of ourselves as a group who share a common calling.

There is a difference. Ask any soldier at war.

You see Soldiers pursue a common mission, not a common interest.

Soldiers dedicate their whole life, not just some free time.

Soldiers gather fellow warriors, not acquaintances.

Soldiers seize the day to make the battle count, they don't just pass time to make the day fun.

Soldiers consider preparation as crucial to staying alive, not just optional to stay involved.

Soldiers find courage indispensable, not unnecessary.

So let me ask you:

When you became a Christian did you enlist in the army?

Next we need to:

2) KNOW the enemy.

In 2 Corinthians 11:14, Paul says this, “Even Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light.”

In Second Corinthians, Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about false teachers, those people who pretend to love God and yet are only trying to trick you into sin.

And he points out to them that Satan himself, the king of deception, parades around in many different ways so we have to be on our toes, we have to know our enemy.

There is a war strategy manual called: *The Art of War* written by Sun Zhu and has been read by every military strategist for hundreds of years. In it he says, *“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.*

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

Friends, Satan is using every weapon he has available to him.

And he is NOT breaking down the doors of our houses to take over the battlefield, we are inviting him in. In fact we are paying him to come in and take over the hearts, minds and souls of our children.

Take a look at some of the shows your children are watching, listen to some of the lyrics to the songs your teens are singing, play a few of the video games your children are playing, look at the catalogs and in the stores at the clothes our children are wearing **and we are paying for all of this.**

WE need to Know our Enemy because he doesn't always look like the bad guy – sometimes he comes in disguised as an angel, a good guy.

That's why this third step is so crucial and must be [intentional](#).

3) DEVELOP and IMPLEMENT a PLAN OF ACTION

Train up a child in the way he should go. (Proverbs 22:6)

Say that with me: *Train up a child in the way he should go.*

The definition for **train** includes : discipline, educate, aim or point, coach, cause to grow, exercise in order to prepare.

In order to do this you must be INTENTIONAL

The media company VIACOM has a "cradle to the grave" Plan of Action.

It starts with Nickelodeon, then Nick Jr in order to train small children as to what is cool, what to like and what they should want to look like.

They introduce them to pop icons like Hannah Montana, the Jonas Brothers

Sound familiar.

Then they move them onto VH1 and MTV music videos, and on it goes.

Now understand I am not picking on VIACOM, I am just pointing out to you that they are **intentional** in winning over your children's' hearts, minds and souls. **In fact they profit from it. We are paying them.**

So we need to be just as intentional.

Parents that means we need to lovingly discipline, formally educate and instruct, offer experiences for our children to learn truths and principles, develop our relationships with our children, be involved.

God's plan is for families to lead in the provision of spiritual development for their children.

The church also has a vital role to fulfill and each one of you as members of the Body of Christ – the church –has a vital role as well.

Tipp City Church wants to be effective in coming alongside of parents and aiding all of you in fulfilling your God-given responsibility to raise spiritual champions.

In other words – WE ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO JOINING THE BATTLE WITH YOU.

We didn't just join in on the children's and youth ministry groups, we enlisted in the army as soldiers.

Last week my daughter Jennifer, my granddaughter Chloe and I were discussing this very issue as I was preparing for this sermon.

It went something like this:

I told Jenn - *You would never send Chloe to school and not follow up with her teachers to make sure she was learning. You wouldn't want her to just show up and be nice and quiet and feel like she was learning all you wanted her to know educationally without having some evaluation guidelines with the school and discussions with teachers. Yet that is what happens at church many times.*

Jennifer said - *we try to be pretty vigilant in asking Chloe about what she is learning at church. We go online to the Tipp City Church's website to see what Jack Spoerner has on there for her and help her with that as well.*

Chloe confirmed it – I think it kind of went like this - *mommy and daddy do ask me all the time* – with a roll of the eyes.

A roll of the eyes lets me know that mom and dad are on the right track.

So Jenn and I talked about – Wonder what it would look like to have a parent/teacher conference of sorts with the children's church teachers or leaders.

So I put that out there to Jack and Ben and said wonder what that would look like.

Here is what they said – *WE are all for it. How amazing and awesome would that be to have the parent's so involved in their children's spiritual growth that they want to check on what they are learning, maybe establish some evaluation tools, discuss it, be involved in it. Imagine the power of God that would be released in our schools, our community and even beyond if we all were so **purposefully concentrated** on the spiritual welfare of our children.*

So I want to encourage you parents to get with Jack and Ben and let's see what all we can do together.

In the beginning of this series, you got the chance to hear a little from the heart of our children ministries coordinator **Jack Spoerner**.

Our Youth coordinator and UPWARD sports ministry coordinator, Ben Lilly, didn't share with you this time,

But I assure you he is also fully enlisted in the war to ***train a child***.

Together with our lead pastor Dan Glover, they are all continuously working on our Plan of Action to help the children of our church become spiritually mature champions.

Children and students who know what they believe and why, whose values reflect biblical principles and whose moral and religious activity is indicative of lives that revolve around their faith.

They would love you to join in with them.

We want to start with the children we already have here.

But we are not content to stop there.

So we are also continuously developing and implementing ways to reach out to the children outside of our church and introduce them to the God of love.

There are lives, hearts and souls at stake for all eternity.

And we firmly believe that all children are our "sons and daughters."

So today we are going to give you the opportunity to enlist in the army and join the battle for our sons and daughters in a very practical way.

Up on the altar/stage you see cards spread out.

Each card contains the name of a child involved in our church in some manner. Whether they are in the nursery, All-Stars, KidRock, Youth, or Preschool.

In just a moment, we are going to offer you the opportunity to come forward and take a card.

As you do that you get to put the last step into practice immediately.

That step is:

4) PRAY

Although this step is listed last. It is also the first step, the last step and every step in between. The bible tells us to “*pray continuously.*”

While I was pregnant with each one of my 4 children, I prayed for them. When each of my children were born, I prayed for them.

Today my children are 23, 24, 28 and 30 and I continuously pray for them.

In fact if you have met my children you understand why I pray for them and you too may be praying for them – for which Kevin and I are truly grateful.

If we are intent on winning the war then we must PRAY.

This step is not optional.

Everyone can pray.

In fact let me be so bold as to say there is no reason why you shouldn't be praying.

When I first came to Tipp City Church, my granddaughter Chloe was 5 years old. Everyone in the church was so good to her. Two of the older women, Ruth Bowers and Betty Perry, would hug Chloe every time they saw her. One Wednesday night when Chloe came to church for the Wednesday night dinners we have, she told me she needed to go hug the ladies. I told her to leave them alone because they were talking with their friends. She looked me in the eye and told me very matter-of-factly, “*Grandma they love me. They told me they pray for me. So I need to go and hug them.*” Needless to say she went off to hug them.

Ruth and Betty – thank you for joining the battle and training a child.

Friends we are at war and it is a war we can and must win.

Before we get ready to sing our last song/As the band comes up on stage would you please turn your sermon notes over and join me in the Battle Cry.

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Let me encourage you and remind you to know the enemy, develop and implement your plan of action, let the church come alongside to help you develop your children into spiritual champions and pray, pray, pray.

It is a race to the heart and mind of a child – let's make sure God is the first one there and win the battle together.

Let's train up a child.

As we/the band sings - please come forward, take a card, kneel and pray at the altar for your child or go back to your seats and feel free to kneel there and pray. But please pray. After today, I want to invite you to put this card in your bible or on your refrigerator – some place where you will be reminded to pray for this son or daughter everyday for the next school year.