

## SERMON

Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

1 Timothy 4:12

### *“Our Gift to America”*

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

#### HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA

1. America turns 242 years old this Wednesday;
2. We live in a difficult day.
3. The gift America needs is you.

#### YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Don’t let anyone look down on you. How can you stop what other’s think about you? You can’t. So, what is Paul saying? Don’t accept the judgements of others on your life as authoritative. Don’t let the small minds of others silence your voice.

#### SET AN EXAMPLE

1. On the one hand, no one wants to live in a fishbowl.
2. On the other hand, we understand that the old adage – “do what I say, not what I do” is inauthentic, and never works.
3. People are watching you.
  - a. They want to know that your life matches your lips;
  - b. They desperately want to know that Jesus is real, and that he makes a difference in our lives.
  - c. People need to see a sermon, before they hear one. Billy Graham reminded us: "We are the Bibles the world is reading; we are the creeds the world is needing; we are the sermons the world is heeding."
4. Inauthentic faith is -
  - a. the religious leaders (Priest & Levite) who pass by a robbed and beaten man lying on the side of the road (Luke 10: 25-37);
  - b. the High Priest who uses religion as a power base, turning the Temple into a marketplace (Matthew 21);
  - c. the older brother who stands outside the father’s house incensed that God would let a prodigal in (Luke 15);

- d. the scribes & Pharisees who publically humiliated a woman in order to test, trick, and to trap Jesus Christ (John 8)
- 5. I am who I am today, because I saw people model Jesus for me, time & time again.
- 6. This past week, I learned of inappropriate behavior from some religious people, and how it impacted a friend of mine who was demoted, then lost his job. I have watched that friend respond with dignity and grace, without anger, as he looks for a new place to work. His faith works, even in difficult days.

### IN SPEECH

1. *Words have power* – Be careful with them
2. *Speak the truth in love.* When you attempt to love without being truthful, you don't help, and people lose trust in you. When you speak the truth without love, your words become harsh and critical.
3. *Be kind and encouraging* with your words
4. *Don't Curse* - Don't debase yourself by cursing;

- a. Never use your words to demean another person;

Craig Groeschel, in Toxic Faith, tells of swinging on the school playground with the most beautiful girl in the school, so he decided to swing higher and faster. He was imagining himself as a Don Juan, when she said "You're profile is ugly." When he asked her what a profile was, she responded, "and you're stupid too."

- b. Always use your words to build someone up.

Scott came to see Craig Groeschel, and he was struggling with self-worth. Toxic self-talk flowed from him "like sewage through a busted dam." "I'm not good at anything. No one loves me. I'll never get married. I'm a total failure," and on it went. Scott didn't want to live anymore. Craig was a young pastor at the time, and he wasn't sure what to do, so he asked God for wisdom, and was prompted with an idea. Scott, right now, you are going to give me a 100 reasons you have to live."

Scott stared blankly as the pastor wrote out 100 numbers on a blank sheet of paper. What's reason #1. "I told you I don't have any reasons to live. Not backing down, Scott told him "I'm a pretty good writer." He wrote newsletters for his company. # 2? "I'm pretty funny." #3. People tell me that I look like Robert Redford." Craig wrote in the slot, "You're very funny," and he got a smile from Scott. Before long, Scott got into the exercise. He actually did have many positive things in his life. His sister looked up to him. He served Thanksgiving dinner to the homeless each year. He sponsored a Compassion International child in Chile. They got to 100 reasons. Scott was encouraged, and the pastor helped him get connected to a trained counselor, and lost touch with Scott.

12 years later, Scott was visiting his old church and came up to Craig after the service to introduce his wife and children. He tried to thank the pastor for their time together, but

couldn't get the words out, because of the tears. He reached into his pocket, pulled out his wallet and presented a tattered sheet of paper with 100 reasons why he should live. He'd carried it with him all these years as a reminder. He handed the sheet to Craig, and said "I don't need this anymore." God has written hundreds of more reasons on my heart." (Craig Groeschel: Soul Detox, 66-8).

5. You can change your world by planting seeds of love with your words. "You look nice today." I love it when you're here." And so much more.
6. **Point people to Jesus** – be prepared in season and out of season. Don't just talk about the weather or sports.

#### IN CONDUCT

1. **Integrity** – means wholeness, integrated, so that your words and your actions matter. This means that you tell the truth. You keep your promises, and who you are at home is the same person you are in public. Your walk and your talk match.
2. **Don't be self-centered** – thinking that the world always revolves around you. Listen to people. Ask God to help you generally care about someone else.
3. **Be humble**, not thinking of yourself more highly than you should. Proud and boasting people are insufferable.
4. **Be kind to others** – especially those who have little power in this life – like checkout people in grocery stores or waiters and waitresses
5. **Turn the other cheek** - When someone harms you, Turn the Other Cheek – Power isn't your major weapon.
6. Be someone who continues to learn and grow.
7. **Always point the way to Jesus** – Let your light so shine.
8. **We are to be holy** in all our behavior. Your benchmark is Christ- conduct yourselves worthy of Christ.
9. **You must act differently than the world**

#### IN LOVE –

1. **Love is the power and the motivation** for the life of the believer. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then love people unconditionally.
2. You can be gifted and extraordinarily talented, but without love, you are just a loud noise; "Look at me." "Look at me." Like the creaking of a rusty gate.
3. You can be religious in the extreme, but without love, you are bankrupt, nothing more than a flamboyant preacher raising money for a multimillion dollar plane.
4. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but

rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trust, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.

#### IN FAITH -

1. *His life and love must be the fuel for our heart* - pray, read God's Word, then trust Him with all your heart. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God;
2. *Trust God more than men* - When Craig was ordained to the ministry, one of the deacons – who had a power struggle going on with the church pastor – told Craig that he wasn't cut out to be a pastor/minister. He drove home in tears, when God spoke to Him. Who are you going to trust, God says, Him or me. (Soul Detox).
3. My help comes from the Lord. Look to Him. Wait on Him.
4. I will trust the Lord in my trials.

#### IN PURITY

1. Love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength;
2. Love my neighbor as myself;
3. Unmixed love, unmasks Jesus.
4. Simply put, everything is about Him.

#### CONCLUSION

The parents of a second-grader at Emmanuel Christian School in Enid, Oklahoma, had asked their pastor, Dr. Wade Burleson, to be responsible for their son while they took a trip. The young boy got into trouble while at school. The details are not important. Basically, the student's behavior was disrespectful to a teacher, a secretary, and he'd been disruptive in class as well.

I was called to the office. The offender was still upset, so Dr. Glazier, the school principal, and Dr. Burleson sat him down and talked with him about what he'd done. After a while, he admitted that his actions were wrong.

The young man was given a choice. He could seek forgiveness of his teacher, the secretary, and his classmates, or he could receive a "swat" with a paddle, one for each offense (3). The pastor explained the concept behind the swat to the boy. "A swat causes a minor, temporary sting which illustrates how if you continue in the behavior that caused the swat, your actions will eventually lead to deeper and more permanent pain in your life. The second grader said he would seek forgiveness of his teacher and the secretary, but not from his classmates. The young man then had a meltdown. The pastor had to leave for a funeral, so they waited until he got back.

He called the headmaster on the way back. The pastor had decided to take the punishment. When he told the headmaster, there was silence on the other end of the line. Here is Wade's testimony:

When I arrived back at Emmanuel Christian School, I went to Dr. Glazier's office and found the boy sitting in his chair, much calmer than when I'd left an hour earlier.

I sat down and explained again that his disrespect to the teacher and the secretary and his disruption in the classroom harmed all involved, and it was his choice to seek forgiveness from all three people/parties or receive a swat for each offense.

He said the same thing he'd said earlier. He would seek forgiveness from his teacher and the secretary, but he was not going to seek forgiveness from his class.

I told him that was his choice. The punishment was fixed. He would receive one swat.

Then I called him by name and said:

"But I'm going to take the swat for you."

The young boy's tear-filled eyes got very big, and he looked at me as if he didn't comprehend. I explained:

"I'm asking Dr. Glazier to give me the paddle instead of you."

Dr. Glazier asked me, "Are you sure, Pastor Wade? Do you want to take the place of \_\_\_\_\_?"

I said that I did. The agreed-upon discipline would be carried out, but I desired to take the swat for the offender.

It had been a long time since I'd been in a principle's office to receive a swat. In fact, I could only recall one occasion during the 1960's and 1970's when I received a spanking with a paddle during my public school education.

I don't mind admitting my heart was racing just a tad.

The secretaries were seated outside the office in the reception area. Dr. Glazier's office door was closed, but there were windows with shades. Dr. Glazier pulled down the shades, asked me to stand, bend over his desk, and prepare to receive a swat.

Pastor Wade got a loud pop on his broad posterior.

And it did indeed sting.

When the shades were pulled up, I took the young man by the hand and led him through the reception area to go seek forgiveness of his teacher. The secretaries all thought the young boy had received the spanking. But the smile on the young man's face seemed incongruous with the event.

I listened to him as he spoke with his teacher and later the secretary. He was humble, took ownership of his disrespectful behavior, and sought their forgiveness.

As I walked boy back to rejoin his classmates, I asked him if he knew I loved him.

He said he did. He knew Pastor Wade loved him.

Why?

"Because you took my swat for me?"

Is there anybody else that loves you like that?

The boy shook his head no.

"Yes, there is," I told him. "God loves you so much He took your swats on the cross."

We had a little gospel talk, and I think the boy understood much better the love of God for him.

I was told that after the discipline in the headmaster's office, there'd come a remarkable change for the good in the boy's behavior for the rest of the school year.<sup>1</sup>

## INVITATION

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<sup>1</sup> Wade Burleson Blog. "He took My Place and in Love Bore Death's Sting."

<http://www.wadeburleson.org/2018/06/he-took-my-place-and-in-love-bore.html>. Accessed June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.