**Topic: Obeying Parents**

**Bible Passage: Ephesians 6:1-3**

**Activity: This Means War!**

Supplies: 2 umbrellas, sheet of paper or construction paper for each preteen

This game is similar to dodge ball, but there is only one target. Each team will select 1 team member to be their target. The rest of the team will try to throw paper balls at the other team’s target while also trying to protect their own team’s target.

Divide preteens into two equal groups and place the groups on opposite sides of the room. Give each preteen a sheet of paper and instruct them to crumple it into a ball. (If you have a large space, you may wish to use construction paper. These balls will travel further than regular paper.) Have each team select a team member to be their target. Give each “target” an umbrella to use as a shield. On your command, each team will begin throwing the paper balls at the other team’s target. The round ends when a paper ball hits either target. Allow teams to pick a new team member to be the target in each round. Play several rounds and declare a winning team.

**After the activity, say**: Some of you are fierce warriors! I’m just glad those were paper balls and not something more lethal! For those of you that were targets, how did the umbrella help protect you? (Pause for responses)

If you had the umbrella to protect you, then why did you still get hit? What happened? (Pause for responses) Most of the hits that I saw happened because the “target” stepped outside the umbrella’s protection.

Today, we’re going to talk about parents. The Bible has a lot to say about your relationship with your parents. I don’t know about you, but I didn’t always get along with my parents. I sometimes felt like my parents made rules just to steal all the fun out of my life.

When you think of the rules, boundaries, and punishments that your parents give you, do you think of love? Probably not, but love is why parents give you all that.

If you have a Bible, open it up to the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is in the New Testament. It’s after Galatians and right before Philippians. Will someone stand and read Ephesians 6:1-3 for us?

*Have a preteen stand and read the verses. Be sure to repeat the verses after for emphasis.*

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.*

This is a really important verse for you. Some of you might not think the Bible ever speaks directly to you, but this verse is speaking to 9, 10, 11, 12-year olds! It says, “Obey Your Parents!”

That might sound like a bummer to you, but the next few words shows us why this is not a bummer. The verse says, “Obey you parents in the Lord, for this is right.” What do you think “in the Lord, for this is right” means? (Pause for responses)

This is a reminder that God has placed your parents in authority over you. When we show obedience to our parents, we are showing obedience to God. This is “right” because it is what God has always commanded us to do. He has always called us to show obedience to Him.

But doesn’t it still feel like a bummer? Does you feel like Merida in the movie clip? Why can’t my parents just let me be free? Why do my parents have to make so many rules and steal all the fun? Listen closely to verse 2 and 3,

2“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment **with a promise— 3“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.** (*Emphasis added)*

The Bible says that obeying our parents comes with a promise, and we all know how good God is at keeping His promises. God wants you to show obedience to your parents so that “you may enjoy long life on the earth.” That’s His promise!

See, it’s not such a bummer to follow rules when you realize that God has something bigger and better in store for you! God is has given you parents to protect you and train you for the life and the plans that He has for you.

Let me illustrate this for you.

*Call two preteen volunteers to the stage. Have each volunteer stand under an open umbrella. Have two buckets on stage—one filled with water and the other filled with confetti.*

Your parents are kind of like these umbrellas. God has placed parents over you for your good. Your parents set rules and boundaries to protect you. You might not like those rules very much, but that doesn’t change the fact that they’re good for you and that God wants you to obey them.

***Hold up the bucket of water. Flick a few drops of water at the audience to show that the bucket is full of actual water. As you discuss the next paragraph, discreetly put down the bucket of water and pick up the bucket of confetti.***

I’ve also got a few buckets of water here on stage with me. We all know that umbrella’s are made to keep the water off of you. [Name of Volunteer #1] is obedient. She had decided to honor her mother and father by showing them obedience. She is staying inside the boundaries they have created for her. So, if I were to pour this water on [name of volunteer #1], she would be completely protected because she is staying under their “umbrella” of protection.

*Move to Volunteer #2, while holding the bucket of confetti.*

[Name of Volunteer #2], on the other hand, is not so obedient. His parents have set rules for him, but he decides not to obey. No matter what his parents do, [name of volunteer #2] keep disobeying and stepping outside the boundaries that his parents have set.

*Take the umbrella from Volunteer #2 and hold the bucket of confetti over their head. As you say the following paragraph, continue to taunt and flirt with dumping the bucket of water on the volunteer’s head. Build up suspense for the audience and the volunteer.*

[Name of Volunteer #2] is no longer under the “umbrella” of protection that his parents have offered him. So, what would happen if I were to dump this bucket of water on him? Would he be protected?

The point we’re trying to make is that we need to obey our parents so that we can experience the life that God has for us. When we stay under their “umbrella” of protection, we are protected against many of the things that can trip us up in life. But when we disobey, we step outside that “umbrella.” When we’re outside that umbrella, bad things can happen…

*Dump bucket of confetti on volunteer’s head. After the commotion, pray and dismiss preteens to small groups.*

Let’s pray and then head to small groups to discuss this some more.

**Small Group**

**Discuss the following questions as a small group:**

* What does is mean to “obey your parents in the Lord?”
* How would you define the word “honor?” What does it mean to “honor” your father and mother?
* What is the promise that God makes with this commandment? How does His promise make you feel about rules, boundaries, and your parents?
* What rules are the hardest for you to accept and obey from your parents? Why do you think you have a hard time with these rules?
* Why doesn’t God just let you be free and leave home when you’re 5?
* What rules or boundaries have protected you in your life? Give examples of how you saw a rule be helpful.
* Knowing what you know now, do you see rules and boundaries from your parents as *love?*

**Small Group Activity**

*Supplies: small drink umbrellas (drink umbrellas can be found in party supply stores or online)*

Give each preteen a small drink umbrella as a reminder of the “umbrella” of protection that God has given them. Remind them that God has placed their parents in authority, and we are to obey them so that we can experience long life on the earth.

As preteens hold the umbrellas, lead a prayer to ask God for help in showing obedience to parents. Pray for strength and wisdom for each preteen. Ask God to help them learn to appreciate the boundaries set by their parents so that it will be easier to show obedience.