

Christ-Centered Family

Colossians 3:20-21 - NCBC, Oct 25, 2015

Main Point: **A Christ-centered family pictures God's gospel relationship with His family.**

- Children, do not rebel, but obey and honor your parents. (v. 20, Ephesians 6:1-3)
 - In everything
 - To please the Lord
- Parents, do not provoke, but discipline and instruct your children. (v. 21, Ephesians 6:4)
 - To prevent discouragement
 - To bring them up in the Lord

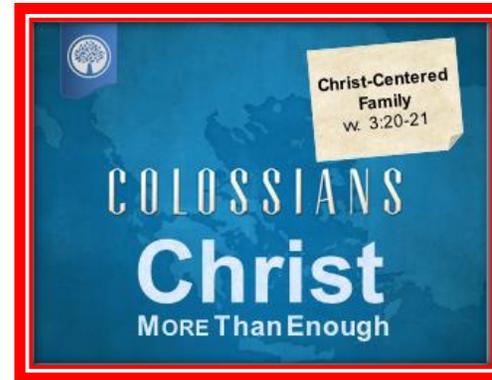
Application: **Redeem the realities of your family in God's gospel.**

- Repent of any "shifting hope" from God's gospel
- Imitate God's gospel relationship with His family in your own family relationships

Opening Announcements:

Fall Festival Opportunities – sign up in commons area

Operation Christmas Child Video & Announcement – Renee Huschen



<< Speak O Lord >>

Let's now continue our worship by reading from God's Word. Please open your Bible to **Colossians chapter 3.**

If you do not have a Bible with you today, we'd love to give you one. Please catch the attention of the ushers as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible to use this morning. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

Our text this morning from Colossians 3 is found on page **984** of the Bibles we've handed out. So please stand with me now in honor of God's Word as I read our text for us from **Colossians 3:20-21**, reading from the **English Standard Version**:

Colossians 3:20-21 *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

This is the word of God. You may be seated.

This morning we humbly approach the topic of the Christ-centered family. The topic of parent-child relationships is a sensitive topic, and one that is fraught with both pride and guilty despair. Every single one of us are children. Some of us are parents. And all of us are in a family.... An imperfect and sin-infected family.

But the good news this morning is that God is the perfect Father. Christ is more than enough for us. God's Spirit is with us so that our family realities can be redeemed! So let's pray that God would give us humble hearts to receive His gospel truth this morning – so that our family would be transformed by the power of His love.

Let's Pray.

"If parenting was going to be easy, it never would have started with something called labor."

"Shouting to make your children obey is like using the horn to steer your car, and you get about the same results."

"Adolescence is the age when children try to bring up their parents." Or how about this one... "Adolescence is the age at which children stop asking questions because they know all the answers."

Such is the wisdom of **Dave "AndyChaps" Anderson** on his weekly "The Funnies" email.¹ And these quotes are funny mostly because they are so true!

But praise God! Scripture shades parent-child relationships with a bit more delight. Consider **Psalm 127:3-5**:

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Scripture compares children to "olive shoots" or expressions of growth and fruitfulness.² According to the teaching of Scripture, wise children bring gladness and joy to their parents,³ and godly children return honor towards their parents all the days of their lives.⁴

But today, more than ever, the family is despised and devalued by our society. Children are seen as **liabilities** – **obstacles** to personal ambitions and vocational pursuits. Involved and caring parents are seen as fuddy-duddy joy-killers – training wheels to be cast off at the first possible opportunity. In a society that cares more about the killing of wild game than young babies... we

¹ <http://www.kentcrockett.com/cgi-bin/illustrations/index.cgi?topic=Child-Rearing>, accessed 10/22/15

² Psalm 128:3

³ Proverbs 10:1

⁴ 1 Timothy 5:4

need our minds to be renewed with the saving power of Jesus and His perspective on the family.

After all – God created the family. The family was the first societal institution that God created, and **any society that rejects God’s design for the institution of the family necessarily undermines the foundation for all social institutions.**

And so this morning we open our Bibles to Colossians 3, and we again find practical, relevant, help and hope for how we should think about a Christ-centered family. **A new man will make a new home.**

This morning we learn that



a Christ-centered family pictures God’s gospel relationship with His family.

Just like we learned last week – a Christ-centered marriage pictures Christ’s relationship with God and His church... so likewise when you add children to the mix –

family is also an illustration of God’s adoption love for us. As family members sacrificially lay down their lives for one another with compassion, humility, and peace – they become a living demonstration of God’s family for the watching world to see.

Let’s remind ourselves of our context this morning. Verses 20-21 come *after* verses 18-19. A husband’s love for his wife – refusing to live bitterly towards his wife with harshness, and the wife’s submission to her husband – seeking to make him as successful as possible for the glory of God – these mutual attitudes of love and respect are the foundation for all Christ-centered parenting and child-raising.

I appreciate Diane Sollee’s quote here, “They say it takes a village to raise a child. That may be the case, but the truth is it takes a lot of solid, stable marriages to create a village.”

So parents – one of the greatest gifts you can give to your children is a Christ-centered marriage. Of course this doesn’t mean that single parents or young widows can’t fulfill God’s design for the home – for in fact Biblical principles that we will learn this morning are life-giving to every one of us who heed their joyful truth.

So let’s begin with verse 20, where children are taught



Not to rebel, but to obey and honor your parents. (v. 20, Ephesians 6:1-3)

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

And again this week we need to look at the parallel passage in **Ephesians 6:1-3**... which states,

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

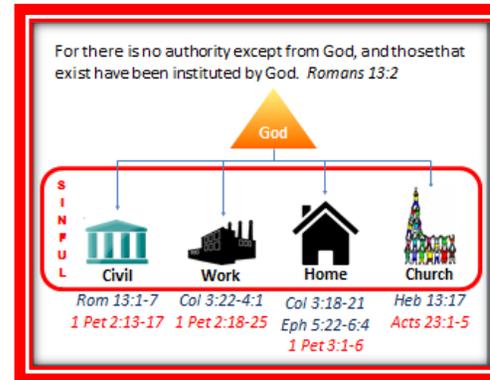
Children – if you are still living in our parent’s home and under their authority – God commands you to obey your parents. The present tense of the verb means continually, repeatedly, to obey.

Obedience is the simple process of hearing, understanding, and responding in compliance to your

authority. Picture a trained police dog with its partner. That’s a picture of obedience.

But perhaps some might be bold enough to question the wisdom of God’s Word this morning. My dad is never there. My mom is a hypocrite. My parents are not Christians... so certainly I shouldn’t obey them in everything right?

Well, I’m glad you asked. Remember what we discussed last week on God’s view of authority from Romans 13?



God delegates his perfect and sovereign authority to sinful and fickle authorities – for there is no authority that exists except those that have been instituted by God.

The only Biblical limit placed on a child’s obedience is when a parent would demand that you sin against God Himself.⁵ Our authorities own personal sin is never a biblical excuse for our failure to submit or obey – for a

⁵ Luke 12:51-53, 14:26

child's obedience to their parents is tied to their obedience to God Himself. Children this is important – **your relationship with God is directly tied to your responsiveness to your parents.**

In other words, when a child rebels against his parents, God looks at this rebellion as if it was against Himself. It's an attempt revolt in His kingdom! Young people – every time you disobey your parents you're raising your fist in God's face... Hmm. This is much bigger than just a relationship between a parent and a child, isn't it?

God has given you the parents that you have. So we could draw God's delegation of authority this way as well:



In **1 Corinthians 11:3**, God teaches us that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. So the functional delegation of authority does not mean a distinction in essence... for wives are called to submit to husbands in the same way that Christ Himself submits to God.

Our text in Colossians therefore commands,

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Children – just as God made you dominion-keepers over Rover and Kit-Cat – so likewise you please God by obeying your parents.

To obey is a stronger word in Colossians 3:20 than the word “submit” used earlier for wives. And you see the strength of it by the phrase, “obey your parents *in everything.*”

Children, do not rebel, but **obey** and **honor** your parents (v. 20, Eph. 6:1-3)

- In everything
- To please the Lord

Children are to obey their parents in everything – not just in those things that please them. So when your parents ask you to make your bed and do chores, obey them in everything. When your parents ask you to be home at a certain time, will you obey them in everything?

Here's biblical truth— foolishness and rebellion are built into the heart of children⁶, and so God graciously provides parents to instruct, discipline and bring their children up in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Children – your parents are a gift to you. Until you leave the authority of your father and mother and cleave to your spouse in marriage... your parents are your familial authority.

So obey them. In everything. Even as you mature toward independence, seek to honor and respect and acknowledge your parents in everything. For **this pleases the Lord**.

I want to direct your attention here to that important phrase in Colossians 3, “*for this pleases the Lord.*”

When God sees young children living in obedience with their parents, it brings Him great joy. But we must remember, obedience is a matter of the heart – not just outward behavior, right?

Pastor Bill Bright tells the story⁷ of a mother who was driving to school one day, and her youngest child was standing in the seat beside her. Realizing the danger, she said to him, "Sit down, dear, I may have to stop suddenly and you'll be thrown against the windshield."

"No!" the little boy refused.

⁶ Prov 22:15

⁷ <http://www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/insights-from-bill-bright/standing-up-while-sitting-down-june-20.html>

"Please sit down, dear, I don't want you to get hurt," the mother insisted.

"No!" came the stubborn reply.

Finally, she reached over and pulled him down. He sat there silently for a moment, then said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

How often we respond to authority that way. We submit to it on the outside, but inside we're saying, "I resent it."

So the kind of obedience that is pleasing to God is the kind that comes from our hearts. The obedience that is produced by faith in Christ, and as a response to Christ.

Children – is that the honest desire of your heart this morning? Because truly – this is a God-given desire. Our natural flesh loves ourselves, and always will pursue disobedience to our parents.⁸ Only the resurrection power of Christ inside of us is strong enough to free us from our self-centered living. So have you repented from your self-reliance? Have you found that Christ is really all, and in all to you? Have you received Christ Jesus as your Lord? You are not able to please God with your relationship towards your parents apart from connecting to God's grace by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now let's consider what a Christ-centered family looks like from the parent's perspective.

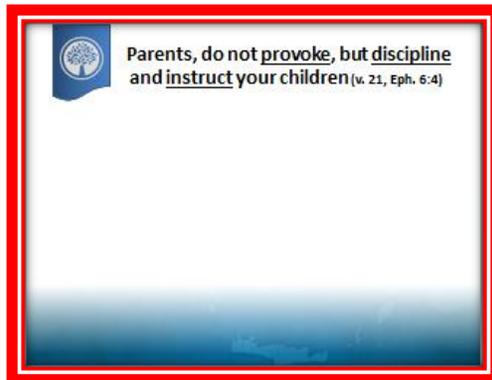
⁸ 2 Tim 3:1-2ff

Verse 21 says,

Fathers, [or this could rightly be translated parents – for the focus is on both Dads and Moms here]⁹ do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

And Ephesians 6:4 gives the same command, from the positive side,

Fathers, [parents], do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.



And so we learn that a Christ-centered family pictures God's gospel relationship with His family as

Parents do not provoke, but rather discipline and instruct their children. (v. 21, Ephesians 6:4)

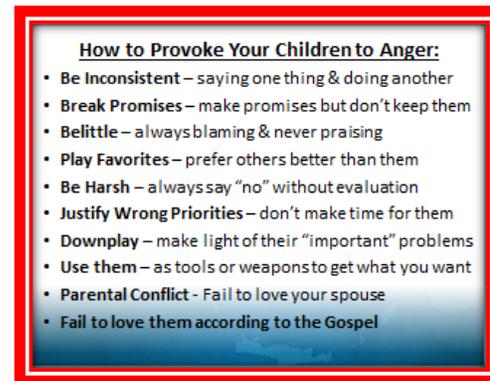
Colossians 3:21 and Ephesians 6:4 are both convicting in their clarity: *Parents – do not provoke your children to*

⁹ C.f. Heb 11:23 where the same word refers to both parents.

anger. Do not exasperate or irritate or nag your children. To not use your God-given authority to embitter your children, or cause them to become resentful.

Dear Christian parents – are you parenting like you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God? Or are you provoking your children to anger according to the old way of living?

What does this practically look like in the home? How do parents provoke or exasperate their children? And as we get specific here...please note that both Colossians 3:21 and Ephesians 6:4 speak of sinful patterns of this. A provoking parent is not a parent who says or does something once or a few times, and the child who does not like it becomes "wrathful." Rather, the command here is about habitual actions that over time have this provoking and exasperating effect on a child. These are not rare events, but ways of living in a provoked home.



So what parental patterns will drive your child to anger? Well, inconsistency. Or by promising your child that you

will be at their little league game, but time and time again staying late at the office until long after the game is done and over.

Or by belittling your child – disciplining them for childishness, rather than for disobedience. Always blaming them and never praising.

Or by being like Jacob – preferring one son over all the others – crushing the spirits of our children by playing favorites.

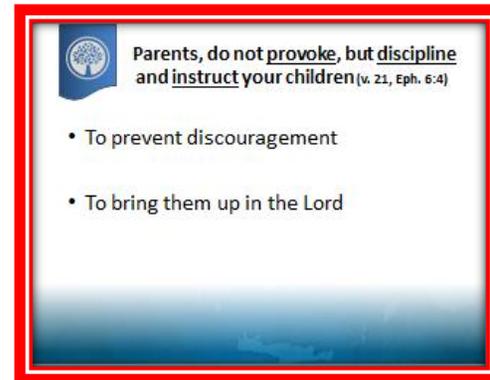
It's easy to provoke children to anger when you have a pattern of harshness, or parental conflict, or never making time for them, or failing to show or express affection for them.

You see parents who fail to listen to their children, or use their children as weapons against their spouse, or just plain to sacrificially love their children with the same love that God has poured out upon them in God's gospel... will provoke their children to anger, and cause them to lose heart.

It's very convicting to ponder all the ways that parents provoke children to anger. In fact, the back of your sermon notes page this morning lists 23 specific ways that parents can provoke their children to anger for your further prayerful consideration this week.

Col 3:21 emphasizes the negative result of such patterns in our homes. And we must pay careful attention as

parents, if we are **to prevent discouragement** of our children.



Lest they be discouraged means to give up, to lose heart, or to believe that they can never do anything right, and so give up trying. Children who live with provoking parents believe that it is useless to try to please their parents...for no matter what they do, it is always wrong.

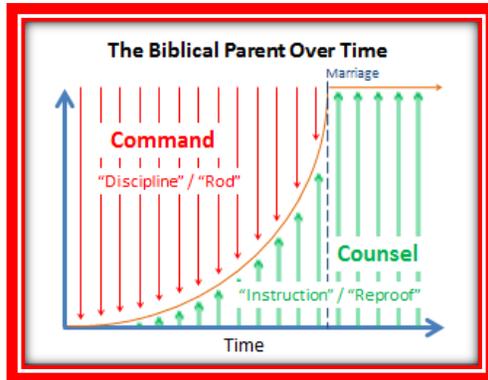
Parents – these provoking patterns are not the clothing of God's chosen, holy, and beloved children.

Rather, a parent who has been transformed by God's adoption will seek to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This is what we see in Ephesians 6:4... *Parents, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

A Christ-centered parent aims

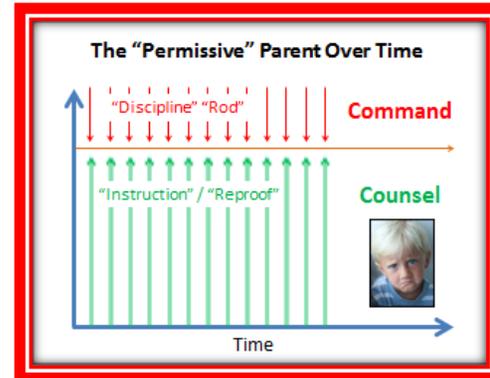
To bring their children up in the Lord.

Notice the command is to raise or train or bring up children with a balance of discipline and instruction. Perhaps it would be helpful to show how this balance of the rod and reproof looks over the course of a child's life.



To bring a child up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord means that the parent is employing a wise progressive balance between both command and counsel for the child. Of course when the child is very young, there is little reasoning or verbal instruction, but significant use of biblical discipline. But as the child continues to mature over time, the parent continues to shift away from authoritative command orientation to more of a relational counsel posture with the child. After the child leaves and cleaves in marriage, the parent no longer possesses any authority of command in that child's life. However, the honoring relationship continues with gospel-saturated counsel and instruction for the rest of their lives.

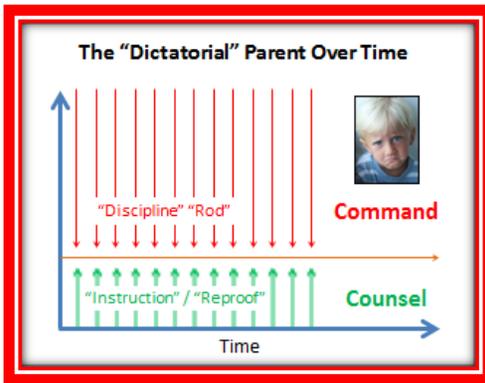
So if this is what a Christ-centered home looks like over time, how would you draw a chart of a home that provokes its children to anger?



Well how about the "Permissive" home. Here, the parents are so laid-back (or lazy?) that they offer very little discipline at all... the parent is rarely willing to bring any kind of consequences into the lives of their child.

This child-centered home tries to diminish any parent-child distinction. But parents who try to just be friends with their children only provoke them to anger.

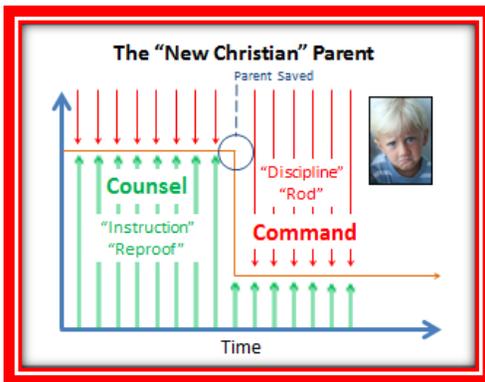
And likewise in the home of the "Parental Dictator":



In this home it's all about consequences and structural discipline. This home is very demanding and controlling – all about law, law, law.

In the dictatorial home, the parents are motivated by fear, and often find the children wildly indulging in their own suppressed desires as soon as the heavy parental controls are removed from their lives.

So then, what kind of a provoking home is represented by this diagram?



You guessed it... the New Christian parent. Here's the parent who gets saved while in the middle of parenting young children. As they grow in Christ, they become convicted about the biblical teaching for discipline, and overreact – only to the exasperation of their children.

But notice again in Ephesians 6:4,

Parents, do not provoke, but discipline and instruct your children (v. 21, Eph. 6:4)

- To prevent discouragement
- To bring them up in the Lord

A Christ-centered parent brings children up with both discipline and instruction in Jesus Christ. Not in the discipline and instruction of the law. Not in the discipline and instruction of the philosophies of the day. But in the discipline and instruction of Jesus Christ. In the discipline and instruction of God's Gospel.

Every discipline opportunity becomes an opportunity for the gospel. The key to biblical discipline is not the particular method that is used, but what effectively speaks to the child's heart.

Disciplining children in the Lord therefore involves love, the heart, and God's Word. And what greater instruction for children than learning to apply the truths of God's gospel into the "shoe leather" of daily life.

Every aspect of Christ-centered parenting must necessarily be tethered to the Gospel message – for that is the only way we can help our children find what they need in order to please the Lord.

This is not natural, is it parents? Can I get a witness? No parent here would say that we've balanced the command and counsel priorities perfectly throughout the course of our children's time with us in our home. Every one of us fails at this.

And this then is where we find our final application for today's message. For today God is calling all of us to

A slide titled "Application" with a blue header and a red border. It contains the text "Redeem the realities of your family in God's gospel:" followed by two bullet points: "Repent of any living for yourself (Put off the old self with its practices)" and "Imitate God's relationship with His family (Put on the new & renewed self)".

Application

Redeem the realities of your family in God's gospel:

- Repent of any living for yourself (*Put off the old self with its practices*)
- Imitate God's relationship with His family (*Put on the new & renewed self*)

Redeem the realities of your family in God's gospel.

Some of us here today need to remember that no family here on earth is perfect... and our only hope for being a Christ-centered family member is found in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Guilt, shame, and fear are unable to rightly motivate Christ-centered family.

So children – the only way that you can be a child who pleases God is if you lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Christ, and follow in His steps by the power of His grace.

And parents – believe that Christ is more than enough for you. Cease from striving, and rest in His forgiveness for provoking your children to anger.

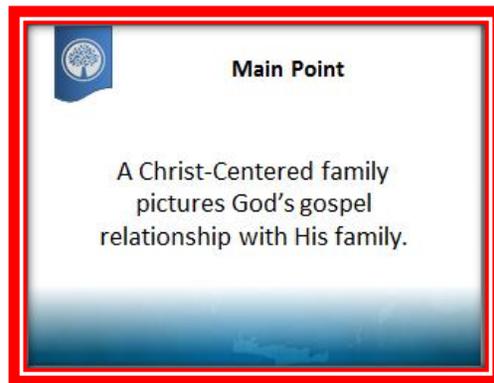
Repent of any self-centered living...put off all rebellion and provocation... either as a child or a parent. Acknowledge and admit to God if you have "shifted your hope" from the sufficiency of Christ and the power of His gospel for your own family. Stop looking to things on this earth to bring you satisfaction, identity, and purpose. Instead look to Christ alone ... and rejoice in how God has made you a part of His family through His adopting work of grace and mercy alone.

You see that's the entire point of God putting you in a family here on earth ... so that the world would have a picture of what it's like to be in a family – to be adopted by a good God and made joint-heirs together with Christ.

So pray loved ones. Ask God to work supernatural miracles in your family by the power of His Spirit as you

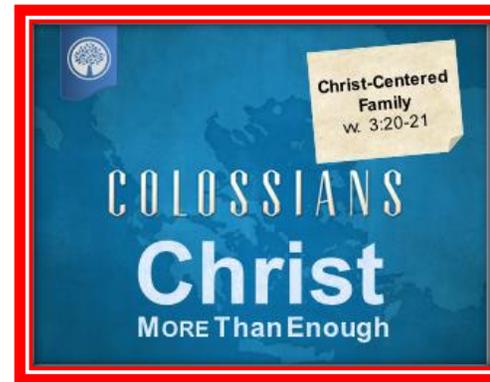
seek to **Imitate God's gospel relationship with His family in your own family relationships.**

At the end of the day, it all boils down to the Christ-like virtues of love mentioned in verses 12-17 of this chapter, doesn't it? Because after all, Christ is all, and in all. So it only makes sense that a Christ-centered family will picture God's gospel relationship with His redeemed.



So do you believe God knows best for your family this morning? Do you believe that God has the power to really change you, and your other family members? If so... would you be willing to committing this next week to fervent significant prayer for your family – for your own heart, and for your parents or children as well?

I believe God desires to answer the fervent prayers of humble hearts as they cry out to God for grace in their time of need. Will you commit to trusting God for the fruits of repentance and faith in your family this week?



Next week we will shift our focus from the household to the workplace. I'm very much looking forward to our study on how God's gospel transforms our work with grace, authority, and eternal reward. So keep reading through Colossians this week. And may God help us redeem the realities of our homes together this week!

Let's pray. **Closing prayer.**

Closing Song – <<Trust and Obey >>

Jude 24-25 *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*