



17-08 Good Shepherding-Part 1

Tending to the Spiritual Needs of Your Family

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If you had to throw together a resume this afternoon, I'd assume you'd obviously list all the businesses and companies you've been a part of, or perhaps you have that section where you would also include some of the organizations, or the societies, the unions, the clubs that you've been apart of and there's a lot of things you can be a part of in terms of organizations.

But if you think about it there's only a handful, just a few, that you could say I'm a part of an organization that God has established. That is a unique thing. And you think through what those are you can start first of all with understanding, if you're here this morning, you're part of Compass Bible Church, then you're a part of a church and the church of course is something that was designed by God, founded by Christ, put together by the Spirit and his direction in terms of what he said it must be and what it looks like and what it's sine qua non is and all the things that are a part of what a church is.

There is the church and you're a part of it, that's a big thing. I would hope you'd put that on your resume at some point.

You're also part of a country, a human government. We call it a human government, we're supposed to submit to these human governments, are really human governments that were set up. They're only human in the sense that they are involving human leaders. But God says he's constructed that.

And so he's the architect of national boundaries and governments and so to be a good citizen, to be a good member of a church, those are certainly important but there is one more which really is the beginning of God's design for what he said you should be a part of and what you can be a part of and what you could participate in.

And that as being a member of a family. That came first in time and in many ways its first in preeminence in the scripture. We didn't start with the church and then build nations and then build families. We started with families built nations and then God said I'm going establish my church. That is an interesting way to look at it particularly when you sit around saying I want to be a good and Godly member of a church. I hope that that would be your ambition or to be a good and Godly member of society and that would be a good ambition as well.

But when you think of those things you need to think of what the Bible says regarding your desire to be that it really all starts in whether or not you're being that in your home. Let me put it this way when Paul wrote to Timothy about people trying to be good citizens in their communities in caring for people in their communities or looking out for other people in society he said, well, here's how he put it, let those people first learn to show godliness in their households, in their homes. Or if you say I want to be a good and Godly person in the church he says two chapters earlier if someone doesn't know how to manage his own household, well then how in the world is going to care for God's church. You can't have a good influential effect on a church or even a society, the Bible says, unless you're practicing all of those things in your home. And in that sense your home becomes a primary test of any claims of your Christianity. And in some ways our critics have it right. If Christianity doesn't work in your home then they can say how in the world do you expect this to work outside of the home if you can't make it work in your home. The way you care for those people in your family certainly is an indicator of how you care. It shows us something about your heart. The kind of influence you have over people in any other arena of life really should be

measured by how much influence you're having for good in your own household.

Our series as you see they're printed on the cover of your bulletin is about good shepherding. Three weeks on that and then one week about the good shepherd on Resurrection Sunday morning. Shepherding. Shepherding of course is a process, it's an activity of a shepherd who's taking care of a flock. Of course if you take it literally it's a flock of sheep. And if you say well I don't feel like a shepherd, I don't have the title of shepherd, I'm not a shepherd, well you are really and God has given you the example of what it is to be a shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd and we're starting this a bit backwards by saying if that's the case there are ways in which I should reflect and live out that good shepherding in my life and first and foremost ought to be the kind of influence and effect you have as a shepherd in your home. You know I'm not just talking to dads here. I'm talking to every member of the family. You can be a 13 year old listening to this message and you have an influence in that home and in some sense you have a shepherding effect on that home. Shepherding.

Very important for us to recognize that and the first flock that should be of concern to you or those people that share your mailing address. So I don't look at a passage of scripture that's about someone's mailing address, a household, a domicile, one place where a group of people live. Two different characters in that home are addressed in Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 1 through 4, that's children and fathers. And if you say well I'm not a father or I was a father with children in my home but now I'm not, I'm an empty nester or I'm single and living with roommates. You may say this doesn't apply to me but it does apply to you. As a matter of fact, if you can't live your godliness out even as a single person with a roommate in an apartment in this county then really what kind of Christianity do you have?

I mean if you can't work there then is it really going to work in your small group or in your church or in your ministry or in your company or in our country? So these principles that we derive from these four verses this morning should be the motivation for us to look to apply it to everyone living in our home. And if you're living alone I do think that's important for us to think through even that and why that is and I know there are circumstances where we can't avoid that. But even the beginning of the Bible it speaks to the fact that we are communal people. We're created to be in some kind of relational context domestically and that's certainly should be our ambition one way or another. Whether it's through the bounds of marriage and children or even if that's just two or three people living together sharing rent and working to do what God would have us do in our most personal relationships in a home. Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 1 through 4. Follow along as I read. Three out of four verses are directed to children but you'll see they have a great implication for how we think about our homes and how we are engaging as people in tending to the needs and shepherding the needs of those around us. Verse 1, children, follow along as they read it for you in the English Standard Version. "Obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." Then he starts quoting Exodus Chapter 20 which is the Ten Commandments and he says "honor your father and your mother."

Parenthetically he adds this is the first commandment with a promise in the decalogue, in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.

Fourteen hundred and some odd years before Christ's birth. Here were these rules given as they came out of Egypt and they were heading into the Promised Land with a 40 year detour. And here he said here's the rules you're to live by and one of them was how you relate to the people that gave you birth and brought you into this world. And he says you know when God gave that command about mothers and fathers and you respecting them and honoring them he added a promise to that and here he continues the quote in verse 3. I want you to do that so that it may go well with you and

that you may live long in the land. Now of course the context is they're going into Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey so to speak, poetically speaking, a great land will be a great place for you to raise your families. And when you go there if you want it to go well with you, want to live long there, you want to have an enduring, you know, heritage there, then you need to keep this rule and it really starts with your family and your relationship to your parents. Now of course even the people there that stood at the foot of Mount Sinai most of them are adults and the honoring was certainly more than just little children obeying their parents. It went into many more applications than just that. But in this context after talking about marriage, if you glance up in Ephesians Chapter 5, he now speaks to the children first. And he says, well one of the applications for little children in a home, even teenagers in a home, is that they obey their parents. And then he speaks to parents, specifically to fathers. Talking about shepherding, clearly there's a responsibility laid on the shoulder of the head of the household, the father, and the fathers are addressed in this church and they are not told to do something but initially told not to do something. Fathers do NOT provoke your children to anger, which I hope you would recognize that you don't want a home that is characterized by anger. That's not a pleasant thing to characterize your home and so that makes sense. It's funny how it's such a prominent thing in these instructions to fathers, we'll look at that and as to why in a minute. But then he gives the positive exhortation, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. If you've been here for some of our child dedication times that we have periodically in our church, you know I quote this often, the disciplined instruction in the Lord.

These are two very important words that speak to the responsibility parents have as they have children in their home and we'll briefly look at that. But my job is not just to think about you in the middle of the throes of parenting young children although if you are this all directly applies to you. But it's stepping back and recognizing that I have to immediately look at my family or whatever it is in that context in terms of my life at home. I need to make sure that I'm living out a godly life there but not just for myself but I'm having what the title of this series suggests and that is the kind of positive influence that a shepherd would have in a flock, whether I have a position of authority in that place or not. If you look at this set of verses you'll see this is distinctively Christian. I just want to point that out. Children obey your parents in the Lord. If you look at the end of this I'm supposed to bring my children up it says in the instruction, last phrase of verse 4, in the instruction of the Lord. And in the middle of this, in verses 2 and 3, he's quoting commandments from the Bible in the Old Testament about how I'm supposed to do it. So I got biblical commands, I've got a reference to obeying in the Lord, I got a reference to instructing of the Lord and I realize that's not the kind of message you're going to hand to your non-Christian neighbor and say you want some, you know, good tips, five steps to having a better family, here, listen to this message by Pastor Mike. You're probably not going to say that because it's not really going to be all that much of interest to them because this is not a passage about how to have a better family. At least not a better family in terms of what's common in our society.

It's a passage about having a distinctively Christian family. One where children recognize their obedience in the sphere of the Lord, recognizing what the Lord wants for them and as parents instructing them and disciplining them within the context of what the Lord says.

And in the middle of all that, obeying and responding to the commandments of the Lord. I mean this is all about a Christian home. And if you sit here today listening to me preach and you say I am a Christian, I put my trust in Christ, I've repented of my sins. Well then this is a message to you about making sure that where you live is distinctly Christian. You may say well I'm the only Christian in the place where I live. That may be the case, it doesn't matter. First Corinthians Chapter 7 says as a Christian you bring in a relationship with the living God into that home and because of

that you have a distinctively Christian home even though you may be out numbered in terms of the influence in your house. You as a Christian, one plus God in that place certainly makes a majority in terms of what God is wanting to, able to and willing to do through you. You can be a shepherd in one way or another in your house. But this is all about Christian influence. This is all about Christ being the focus. This is all about you, as I think about shepherding, aiming or directing people that way. So number one on your outline if you want to summarize all these four verses just in terms of what this could do in terms of application for all of us we need to aim your family at the Lord and that is your responsibility even if you're a 15 year old and you're the only Christian in your home. You have a responsibility to say because I'm a Christian, I've just brought Christ into this home and as a Christian with Christ in this home I want everyone else to recognize him. I want them to look to him. I want them to know him. I want them to love him. I want them to learn about him and I want them eventually to serve him.

That's should be your desire. Number one, aim your family at the Lord. Jot this reference down and just remember I won't turn you there unless you're really quick with your Bible. Jeremiah Chapter 31. If you're a Sunday School graduate I hope that's an asterisk chapter for you.

Oh yeah I know that chapter. That's the chapter where in the Old Testament God promises Ephraim and Judah, the northern tribes and the southern tribes, that one day all of this will be reassembled and God would then fulfill a promise that wasn't like the old promise.

It wasn't a nation among nations. He is now going to make everyone, not just part of the nation, but everyone is going to serve and know the Lord and he says this: I make a new covenant with you. Not like the old covenant, this is a new covenant. One I'm going to put my law within you. I'm to write it on your hearts. I'll be your God, you'll be my people. And here, I want you to note this carefully, verse 34, no longer, no longer shall one teach his neighbor or each his brother or, in our context, any parent his children saying "know the Lord." You won't have to say that. Why? For they should all know me. From the least of them, the youngest, the smallest, the most uninfluential, to the greatest of them, the most powerful, the richest. They're all going to know me for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more. Now think about this for a second. Here is a time when God says one day I'm going to fulfill my promises to the people of Israel and everyone in this nation, not some of them, they will all know me because their sins will be forgiven.

But in the meantime, I guess, if you want to invert this, until we get to the fulfillment of this, though we've tasted something of what this will be if we think through the new covenant promises of the spirit and a changed heart. You may have that changed heart but you live among the people that may not have a changed heart or even if your heart is changed maybe you're pursuing Christ and giving attention to Christ that everyone else in your family is not.

For now we have to say to our loved ones, our family, our brothers, his neighbor, know the Lord. Know the Lord. What does that mean? I want your sins to be forgiven.

I want you to have the relationship with God that I have.

Let's just think this through I don't want to overthink this but when it comes down to what your job should be, if you bring Christ into your home, just to think of this in terms of illustration, and you've got people going about their business doing their thing, you got someone in that room watching TV, someone in that room making a sandwich for himself, someone over there taking a nap, someone over there reading a book and you brought Christ into the front room of your home. Your job is to get those people to pay some attention to Christ. Your job is to get their attention and



their focus on Christ. And the most important thing you want from them is to get their sins forgiven.

We talked about that last week in terms of there's going to be a time when it's too late. I guess what I'm saying is we need to concern ourselves with the evangelizing our home.

And as you know from the preaching from this platform just because someone says I believe in God, or just because someone says well I occasionally read the Bible, just because someone says I go to church does not mean they're saved. I just want to make sure that in your heart, ultimately, if you sit here today knowing I am a Christian and I know that my sins are forgiven and I know that I'm saved. Look at the people under your roof and say in your heart I want them to know the Lord. I want them to be saved.

Evangelistically, concern yourself for the well-being of your family.

I mean that's fundamental, that's first and foremost. Then of course in the middle of this passage he starts quoting commands. So it's more than people knowing the Lord it's people obeying the Lord.

I mean once people know the Lord and they have their sins forgiven the whole thing that put Christ on a cross that we need forgiveness, we want to start living now to where we're not doing those things anymore. And all the sins of commission, things we've done wrong, and all the sins of omission, things we didn't do but should have done, we need to minimize our sin and that means we're going to start walking this walk of sanctification trying to obey the Lord and that's why we want to do as it says there in verse number 1, we want to do what's right. We want to make sure that what we're doing is the right thing. We want our kids doing the right thing. We want them keeping the commandments of God.

So if I bring Christ into my home and I may be the only Christian in my house I still want to see as many people as possible know the Lord, love the Lord, obey the Lord, serve the Lord and I want to get their attention on Christ. Turn with me, if you would, to a passage in Matthew Chapter 10. The reason this is not going to be a sermon well-received by most people, even churchgoers in South Orange County California as they listen to this message or you're listening on the radio from some other place in the country, if this is an average American place in which we live, you're not going to like this. Because as soon as I say your job is to lead people to know Christ, to love Christ, to serve Christ, to obey Christ, we immediately recognize not everyone my family is going to be all that hot on that. Even if they know Christ I'm not sure everyone is really zealous about obeying Christ or serving Christ.

I mean I don't think people in my house are ready to really love the Lord their God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. That's just not where we're at. So if you want me to do that it's kind of like what they say in my office and that is we don't like you always talking about Christ and always evangelizing people and always trying to talk to people about the Bible and God because we don't want you cramming your religion down our throats. And now you're telling us that's the commission we should have in our house and evangelistic concern, a concern about them loving, obeying and serving Christ. That may cause conflict. Jesus is a realist. This is not a sermon about you picturing the Norman Rockwell picture with a verse over the top of it saying this is the happy Christian family here. Here are ten steps to get there. It's going to be a struggle because we have in our society and we have in our culture and we have resident within our flesh things that are going to fight that.

So we know this. If we're going to get people to pay attention to Christ, to get to know Christ, to



love Christ, to serve Christ, to obey Christ, it will be a spiritual battle.

It will be a cultural battle, it'll be a battle for ideas, it will be a battle for scheduling and priority and attention. Therefore it's going to create some conflict. And Jesus said I don't want you to have any illusions about it being a picture perfect home. No Christian family is a picture perfect home. If they look to seem to be the more perfect family than the next family, I guarantee you it was a hard fought battle to get there. Matthew Chapter 10 verse 34. "Do not think that I've come to bring peace on the earth." This is in red letters, is it not? If you have a red letter Bible. That's Christ speaking and I'm thinking someone needs to send him a Christmas card and remind him that is why you came to bring peace on earth. Isn't it? No, I didn't come to bring peace on earth. By the way that passage is often misquoted. It doesn't say he was born to bring peace on earth. He came to bring peace on earth to those among whom he is pleased. So guess what, he's not pleased with everyone. His favor doesn't rest on everyone. What does that mean? That means some people in this world he's going to rest his favor on and other people, that they're all living among, are not and therefore, guess what that creates, conflict. There's going to be hostility. And as he said in John they hated me they're going to hate you. We reference that last week. So there's going to be some division here.

I didn't come to bring peace, bottom of a verse 34, I came to bring a sword, that's an instrument of division. "For I've come to set," well you don't mean in my family? "I come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A person's enemy will be those of his own household." Look at verse 36, "a person's enemies will be those of his own household" Now, if you go after church to our bookstore and try and find a plaque with that verse on it to hang in your hallway, you won't find it. We've asked the distributors they're just not sending those out to us. But maybe you need a reminder this morning for all that we do to try to polish up this Christian view of what a Christian home is all about... Christianity after all is a focus on the family, right?

It's all about us having strong families and family radio and family this. And I understand the family's important. That's the whole premise of this sermon. Your family is important and how you function there is important. But I'm already telling you the ingredients for conflict I've just given you and that is direct people to the Lord.

Have your children do the things that are in the Lord. Give them commands from the Lord, instruct them in the Lord, be about the Lord's instruction and the Lord's business. And that's going to create some conflict and there's going to be some pushback and you can choose to reduce everything in your home to the lowest common denominator.

I want you to think about this. Listen, I know I should be zealously serving the Lord but if serving the Lord means this night that night means we can't do this soccer and we can't do that club sport and we can't go to this recital or be a part of that thing or you know it's going to be... then let's just find where everyone's happy.

Let's just make sure everyone's satisfied. If you're going to reduce it to the lowest common denominator to where you and your influence, your recommendations, your direction, depending on who you are in the family, or it may be your requirements in the family, you're going to reduce it to where everyone is all peachy and fine with that? I guarantee you will not fulfill what God is asking us to do as shepherds in our home whether you're the under shepherd or whether you are the chief shepherd of your home.

You're not going to make everybody happy if you choose to please the Lord which is exactly how

he pits this here in verse 37. Let's talk about your loyalty and your love, whoever loves father or mother more than me he says then you don't get it then. You're not on my team. You're not worthy of me.

Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. I send off my kid to college, pay his tuition, pay part of his tuition. He's there, doesn't want to go to church, doesn't want to... Listen, you know what? Junior is busy getting smart so he can have this great career. And yet I know the instruction of the Lord is to not forsake the assembling yourselves together. I guess right now if I really tried to enforce that and I try to play some kind of power move with my check that I'm sending every semester, well then I'm going to have conflict. Well you're right you don't have to make a decision about whether you're directing your family and any influence you have to the Lord or whether you're just standing back saying well really I love peace and my home more than I love God and his direction and his responsibilities and instructions to me.

You have to make some choices here. Do you love your kids more than you love God? Do you love your parents more than you love God? Are you committed to them being happy or God being pleased? Do you care more about what they think of you as a zealot and a Jesus freak? Or do you care more about what Jesus thinks about my life and his assessment of my values and priorities?

Well that may be hard. Well you're right. You want to talk about an image of hard. They had this in their mind when Jesus said, verse 38, "whoever does not take up his cross and follow me."

And by the way how did Jesus deal with his family?

Oh, he was all about having peace in his family. He was all about being on the same page.

But if they chose not to put God at the center of their agenda then he was willing to say, well, I guess, who are my brothers and my mother and my sisters? It's those who do the will of God.

Well, that doesn't sound very unifying. That doesn't sound very, you know, Christian and family to me. Well, if Christianity to you means everything is peachy and fine and everybody's happy then you don't understand Christianity. Christianity going to create some conflicts and if you want to distinctively Christian home which is your responsibility if you are a Christian, it's going to mean that you're going to say I know for the sake of my responsibility as a Christian father, a Christian mother, a Christian teenager, a Christian child, is to do all I can to point people to Christ.

I want them to know the Lord. I want them to love the Lord. I want them to serve the Lord. I want them to obey the Lord. That's what this passage is all about. That may create some conflict.

That's a cross to bear. That makes my domestic responsibilities in my house harder than the non-Christian across the street.

He can have peace a lot easier than I can because he's not trying to please the commander who died on the cross for his sins.

If you want to find life where everybody's at peace, he says you may find that but you can lose your real life, verse 39. Whoever finds his life's going to lose it, whoever loses his life for my sake, if you're willing for some bumps and some rough road ahead because you're going to say, no, I'm serious about being in church, I'm serious about serving the Lord, I'm serious about the gospel, I'm serious about the Bible, I'm serious about prayer time in our family. If you are willing to say this is

my priority, it may be tough.

Now if you're picturing because I've said all of that some kind of person jamming his religion down people's throats, I just want to tell you I can give you two references on this, First Peter Chapter 3 and First Corinthians Chapter 7. Those are just two examples specifically about domestic situations where in that family there is conflict because of Christianity and in both passages there's a real sense of strategy and diplomacy and kindness and love.

But that doesn't mean that we stop having the priority of pleasing Christ as either a wife or a child or a husband.

I'm going to stay firm to my commitment, which is I'm all about pointing people to Christ.

I'm all about saying to my neighbors and my brother and my parents and my children, know the Lord, serve the Lord, obey the Lord. I'm ready to instruct them in the Lord.

Keep aiming people at the Lord whether it causes conflict or not. Do it with diplomacy, do it with kindness, do it strategically.

But you've got to do it. If you bring Christ in your home and you're trying to get people to pay attention to the most important person in the universe, and you want his help, you want him to have a sanctifying influence in your house, well then maybe I can tell you instead of backing off to instead ramp it up. Let me give you this verse. I think you know it, it's the great commission in Matthew Chapter 28 verse 20. After all the statements about making disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, well verse 20 says this, "and teaching them to obey everything that I commanded." Now I know we're talking about the mission field and know we're talking about our neighbors, I know we're talking about church ministry to non-Christians. But let's start in our homes because every bit of that biblical responsibility starts in the home. And if I want to make disciples in my home the next step is to teach them to obey everything that Christ commanded. And the next verse, here is a conjunction in the middle of that, "And behold I am with you always even to the end of the age." Now I know God is omnipresent. I know Christ has perception everywhere but Christ is giving a sense of closeness with those who are willing to take the responsibility of disciple-making, specifically of teaching those around them to obey all that Christ commanded and saying I'm going to be with you in that. You bring Christ into your home because you're a Christian there, maybe you're surrounded by Christians and you're getting serious about what God's instructions say in the Bible, God is ready to step up and be the strong support in your home. Talk about one plus God being the majority, he is ready to be the majority in your home. If you could just get serious and I say step it up don't back it down and teaching people around you to observe all that Christ commanded.

Exactly what Paul is calling for here which is the Spirit of God calling for this in our homes versus 1 through 4 Ephesians Chapter 6. It means to be about the Lord, it means to be in the Lord and it means to be called to obey the Lord.

I mean how Christ centered really is your home? Point them to Christ. Aim them at the Lord.

Your job is to be an influence to have and help people get right with the Living God, to know the Lord, to love the Lord, to serve the Lord, to obey the Lord. And by the way this isn't just so that God can get around, you know, looking at people saying, oh look at all those, you know, dutiful minions there serving me... Before we leave this point I guess, verse 3, that it may go well with you

and you may live long in the land. That it may go well with you that you may live long in the land. That it may go well with you and you may live long in the land. What's the point? Even back there in 1445 B.C. God was giving commands to them because he knew this would be good for you. This is good for you inherently and it's good for you because I bless those who obey my word. And if you say I'm committed in my home, whether I'm the wife, the father, the child, the teenager, to doing all I can to have an influence to point people to Christ, to get them to obey Christ.

To see what I can do diplomatically, prayerfully, carefully to direct them to Christ. The Bible says any success there will make their lives better, make it harder I understand, but they'll gain their life, they'll find their life, it'll go well with them. Verse 4, "fathers do not provoke your children to anger." Let's just start with that. Verse 4, letter A.

The first thing that is said to parents here, which I just want to tell you should be understood under the house, under the roof, at that address, everyone should be concerned with this: not provoking not stirring up, not fanning into flames any of this anger in our home.

Now I've got to be careful with that because in Chapter 4 of Ephesians it says there is an anger that's appropriate. There is a righteous anger that should never lead you to sin. Be angry, that's a command.

Yet sin not, don't sin. So I understand there is a place for anger but rarely the kind of anger that we're talking about when the voices get raised and the yelling starts in the house and the anger and the frustration and the conflict and the arguments.

When we think about a home being domestically peaceful in terms of the attitudes, the words, the things that are going on there, the Bible saying, listen, what you need to do is you need to attenuate that, you need to mitigate that, you need to lessen the force of it, least the destructive force of anger needs to be lessened. Number two on your outline, let's attenuate the anger in your home. That's the goal. And of course to parents directly and immediately, parents need to do things, even though they're trying to get their children to obey the Lord, by doing what the Bible says, they need to be careful that how they do it doesn't stir them, irritate them, exasperate them to anger.

Now I can't always guarantee that because if I'm going to say no these are the rules, here's what we're going to do. As a dad I can do that. Even as a teenager say, well, listen here's really my priorities here, it's this not that, because God has gotten hold of my life and I need to live for him. It may cause some conflict because there's going to be differences of opinion. But you need to understand that as far as it depends on us we ought to live at peace with everyone under our roof. Most of the anger in our home is not constructive, it's destructive. By the way I just quoted a verse I'd like you to look at in context.

Romans Chapter 12 verse 18. I'd love for you to look at this passage even though you'll look at this passage and say well this is about a church and the relationships within the church. If you really know the book of Romans you'll know that there's conflict between Jewish background Christians and Gentile Christians and they're having conflict about all kinds of things. By Chapter 14, two chapters later, they're arguing about issues of food, dietary laws, kosher laws, what day are we going to worship, is this day is sacred or not. And so he's dealing with all the conflict within the church but he's also dealing with Christians in a church in Rome where the emperor is not all that hot on Christianity so they're incurring suffering from the outside. So there's a lot of conflict in the church. And you're going to look at these verses and say well this isn't for the home, this is not some kind of domestic code and yet it applies. As a matter of fact, you can't respond this way to the

government or you can't respond this way in the church unless you learn to respond this way in your house.

So let's start there. Verse 18. Read it. "If possible so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all." Now, Jesus didn't come to bring peace he came to bring a sword. And in many cases there's going to be division because you stand firmly on the truth of God. But it's possible, so far as it depends on you, without compromise, without backing down on truth, if you can make this somehow a peaceful, tranquil situation do it, live peaceably. Now the conflict that's in view, it really starts up in verse 14. It's the kind of conflict when you get dinged by someone's malicious words, their disparaging words, their demeaning words and persecution here, I just say that because we're looking at blessing and cursing in the bottom of verse 14, and maybe the persecution is even more than that. But in the world I need to learn, verse 14, to bless those who persecute me and to bless those who are cursing me. Bless don't curse. Don't revile. Not evil for evil. Drop down to verse 17, repay no one evil for evil and give thought to what is honorable in the sight of all. So I need to learn this, when I'm provoked in a world of provocation, in a church a provocation, in a home where there is provocation, I need to mitigate, I need to attenuate, I need to turn down the temperature in my home, by learning this very unnatural response. When I'm provoked I going to learn to bless instead of curse.

I'm going to learn to gently respond as Proverbs says because that gentle response really can attenuate the wrath, it really can turn down the volume on the wrath. It's interesting how it can do something to overcome anger in my home when I just learn to respond peacefully to that, because I always say it takes two people to have a good argument, doesn't it? Now I know in homes you can have an argument with one person who is, you know, going off the handle and the other one's not. But if you really want to make a good fight make sure both parties are involved and both parties are angry and both parties are lobbing their hand grenades at each other. Then you'll have a good fight.

It'll last for a long time, there will be a lot more damage. Hard to have a good argument with just one person who is angry.

And so it is that sometimes I'm going to have conflict in my home but I know that when there's a gentle answer it does turn away wrath and it certainly turns down and attenuates the volume of anger and frustration. If I want to, verse 16, live in harmony with one another, that's a great phrase there, just to cherry pick a few of these phrases that relate to that peaceable goal in my home, I need to seek to have that by learning not to have those responses that are natural. Counter intuitive responses, kindness, gentleness, low volumes when there's high volume.

Now I know you're not going to want to apply this in your home. It seems hyperbolas and it certainly can apply if I'm thinking of Nero the Emperor. But verse 19, let's try and think of the ways in which we sometimes do want to retaliate in our house and the Bible says just like I said don't repay evil for evil, verse 17. Don't curse people when they're cursing you, verse 14, bless them instead. It says in verse 19 never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God.

Some people are saying now you're talking, right? You mean if I step back God will zap them? Maybe.

Perhaps. What I want you to do is to realize there is a viewing that takes place. Look at verse 17 again.

When you don't return evil for evil you need to be giving thought to what's honorable in the sight of

everyone. And the most important everyone is every ONE, God, the ultimate one. Because if I said, right now, during the church service we're installing closed circuit cameras in your home and next week we're going to go through all that tape, we're going to put up on the big screens next Sunday morning, we're going to look at all the conflicts you have and we got great microphones place throughout your home too. We want to hear every word that said and we want to watch when your unreasonable teenager or your unreasonable parents or your unreasonable spouse does something to crank up the volume and crank up the anger. We're going to watch your responses. Now if you knew you were being taped and next Sunday we're going to watch all that, I bet you'd say I'm going to do what's honorable in the sight of all. Well in this passage it says there's someone watching who doesn't just sit there passively and discuss what you did.

He's an active participant. Matter of fact, you've invited him into your home, the Lord himself. And he says, you know what it's mine to repay. If someone's being unjust to you, if they're depriving you, if they're angry toward you, if they're hostile, they're not kind, whatever they're not doing, whatever they are doing, God says I'll look at that, I'll take that personally. I often said one of the best marital bits of advice I can give you is that the God of the universe, who's also my wife's father, is watching how I treat his daughter. That's very helpful to me to say I want to respond to my wife even when I think she's unreasonable to make sure that I realize I want to do what's honorable here, not just in the sight of my church watching my reactions to provocation but what about how the father views it? Because I know one thing if I don't treat his daughter well even when she's having a bad day, I can cross a line where I make him, as it says in First Thessalonians Chapter 4, the one who brings vengeance on his own children.

I'm not talking about retributive judgment, I'm not talking about the Lake of Fire, I'm talking about the God who talks to Christians and says God is the avenger and all these things.

I don't want God taking vengeance on me because I can't learn to control my temper. Attenuate the anger in your home if you really want to aim people at Christ, one thing that has to be out of the equation is this short temper, this yelling, this argument. And if you really have been wronged the Bible says God is paying close attention to what goes on in your house. Let him be the disciplinarian.

Let him be the one who settles the score. Your job is to love them and love from your perspective to every member of your family is keeping no record of wrongs.

That's the goal. Let God keep track if some track needs to be kept. He can discipline your spouse. He can discipline your parents. He can discipline your children in terms of you taking something personally. We'll talk about discipline the appropriate discipline of parents. But all this anger needs to be turned down. Take a look at verse 20.

To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry feed him. If he's thirsty give him something to drink. Now, few people read this verse and think of domestic relationships. Although once you think of it you may want this printed, you know, over the stove or on the refrigerator in your house. I hope not, but I'll bet there's times you think the members of your family are really mean to you and not fair and being overbearing or you've got reasons to be frustrated at them and to retaliate. But the Bible says, listen, you ought to serve them. They're hungry, you ought to feed them, they're thirsty, you ought to give them something to drink. That by the way is followed by this phrase: "for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head" and that makes people scratch their head when they hear about burning coals, they say what in the world are you talking about? There's been three primary interpretations of this text. I rarely do this to you, but because this is one that confounds so many

people.

I guess I'll give you some big thinkers on all three sides of this. Augustine, for instance, early in the church said this about this passage: when it comes to this passage what happens when you're kind to those that are mean to you, is eventually they get embarrassed by the way they're treating you. And so I'll call that view Burning Shame. People are ashamed when you're kind to them and that has happened to you I'm sure, right? You've been really mean to someone you've said something mean they respond kindly, sincerely kind, and you felt bad that you treated them bad to start with, and that may be what's going on here. A shame, a burning shame.

Chrysostom, who thought perhaps, I hate to say this, I mean they are up in heaven right now but let them figure that out, but I think John Chrysostom often thinks more texturally and biblically than maybe the theological thinking Augustine. And so when it comes to John Chrysostom, early in the church, he said of this passage, this is not burning shame, this is not embarrassment, but this is really, when it comes down to it, what the context seems to be providing and even the quote from the Old Testament here seems to be indicating, and that is that God will judge them. In other words, you're concerned about getting even, God will get even with your enemies.

Now domestically that may not help you a lot, particularly if you're married to a Christian or you've got Christian parents or Christian children.

But at least in terms of discipline it may be the fact that burning coals, that doesn't sound like a friendly thing, doesn't sound like shampooing my hair, you know, at the barbershop or whatever, this is painful and so it may be, as Chrysostom said, this is the burning judgment of God. Modern commentators like to say, well this isn't either of those because it's such a weird passage it makes people scratch their head there must be some local knowledge that we don't have and so the commentators go out looking for local knowledge and in ancient Near East there was a ritual that they've discovered from Egypt in particular where there was a ritual where people put burning coals on their head in a ceremony that showed that they were penitent over something. And so they thought well maybe in that basket on their head with the burning coals and this kind of sign of being penitent. Hey, maybe that's what it is, that it's a sign of their repentance and so the Romans probably would have known that, these commentators say that.

So maybe that's what this is. Maybe. Either way, maybe just to sell commentaries they come up with that stuff, but either way the idea is that we can see these happening. I mean I find Biblical examples for all of these.

When Elijah, for instance, had the Syrians, those pestering neighbors from the north that were giving him all kinds of trouble, Elijah came and took those adversaries and sat them down and fed them bread and fed them water. He fed his enemies and then you know what they felt embarrassed and they pulled back. There was some shame in that or even shame in Saul when he was chasing David, remember that? He's out chasing David, he's a fugitive, David is a future king. He is in God's mind the king then but Saul is going after him and Saul at some point like every king, everyone has to go to the bathroom at some point, he goes in the cave to go to the bathroom the very cave that David is hiding in.

Can you imagine that? Stinky scene that you're envisioning in there. And so the king is relieving himself, the Bible says, and David has a chance to kill him and his friends tucked in the darkness of the cave said kill him, kill him. He said no. He took his dagger he cut off the corner of the king's robe. The king was all done as he was holding his breath and the king got out went down into the

valley. David comes out of the cave with a part of the king's robe and he says to all the bodyguards, hey guys, good job here Secret Service.

I could have cut your king's head off. And Saul was also ashamed and he said you've returned my anger and my hostility toward you with kindness and he did withdraw for a time at least, not permanently, but Saul was embarrassed and shamed. In that regard Augustan is right.

I can also turn to many examples of the enemies of God. First Thessalonians. There are so many other places where we see the burning judgment of God coming on enemies. Or in our case, if I'm married to a Christian and my wife's being unreasonable, seeing God's discipline on her. I have many examples of Christians being disciplined by God. First Corinthians is full of those examples. And then repentance. Maybe it is some kind of ritual. Maybe this is speaking of the fact when it says in verse 21 don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good, well that means people actually turn around. They change. Well, First Peter Chapter 3, I already mentioned that. A wife can by her kindness even see her husband won over and maybe that's a situation where he comes to repentance because of kindness. And I can quote Romans Chapter 2 verse 4 and say that's even God's strategy with us sometimes. I'm going to lead them to repentance by my kindness. So I can find examples in Scripture of all three of those.

But I know this, we're kind of avoiding the point by debating all the options of how we understand that one mysterious phrase. When it comes down to it I know what my job description is and that is when I feel wrong, be kind. When I feel like I'm unjustly treated, be kind. When I feel like the anger is ramping up on that side of it with my kid, with my parent, with my wife, with my husband, turn down the volume. Pull back. Learn to do the thing that is so hard to do and it's almost impossible and certainly for Christians it's hard. It is impossible to authentically do it and that is for you to control your anger.

The Bible says outburst of anger, that is just an evidence of the flesh at work, our fallen flesh. But the fruit of the Spirit, if you look at those lists next to that, at least in parity to that, the outburst of anger is now paired with the fruit of the Spirit and the particular fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

God can give you that. It's synergistic though. He expects you to work at this.

How are you doing on working on your temper, your anger? It may take you years to really have an obvious change in the way you respond to things in your home when your kids disappoint you, when your parents "make you mad." They don't make you mad, you choose to be mad in response to what they've done. When your spouse irritates you or frustrates you, how are you doing at anger management? How is your control of yourself? I gave you three Proverbs on the back of your outline when it dealt with our discussion questions talking about anger. Let me read two of them for you. Proverbs 15:18. I had that reference there for you, "a hot tempered man stirs up strife but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." Listen to that now. Hot tempered man stirs up strife. One thing I hope you don't want as a characteristic of your home is strife. I don't want that. Well, to the extent that you're a hothead you get more of that.

But he was slow to anger. Guess what he can do. He can dial back, he can attenuate the contention.

I don't want contention or strife or how about this one? Proverbs 14:29. "He who is slow to anger has great understanding but he who is hasty in his temper exalts folly." Now I've got three words I don't like here that I don't want characterizing my home, strife, contention and folly. And the Bible says what's hanging on those three things is how I'm doing at controlling my anger. How are you

doing it controlling your anger in your home? I bet that is the most tested area of your anger. You may have a hard time at work but I'll bet your family members have seen you angry more than your coworkers have. Am I right? And it comes down to you controlling that by living out your Christianity in your home by attenuating the anger, you're not stirring it up, you're not responding that way. You're not responding in that way even in our passage fathers don't provoke your children to anger, one way at least that parents think that they are justified in provoking their kids to anger is when their kids provoke them to anger and so all I'm telling you is whether it's being angry, expressing anger or stirring up anger, we've got to control our spirit. Now, here's one proverb I didn't put on the list but it's worth jotting down. Proverbs 16:32. This is important spiritual goal for your life, to control your anger.

Proverbs 16:32 says "whoever is slow to anger" that's the goal here "is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit," that's code for self-control, "is better than one who takes or captures a city." Now in those days it wasn't the soccer star, the baseball star or the musician or the Hollywood actors, those weren't the famed people in ancient world. It was the Davids of life who could capture a city, the skilled warriors, the generals, if you will, of the military. Those were the heroes of antiquity. And here he was in Proverbs giving us his divine wisdom saying you're better than the most famous and celebrated hailed person in your society if you can simply be slow to anger. Learn to manage your temper. This is an important spiritual goal in your life and I know it's hard. I'm going to make it even harder by having you look at one last passage before I leave this section and that is by giving you this picture of what God would expect from us in terms of our lives.

Ephesians Chapter 4 verse 29. Back to Ephesians. Go back two chapters when he says this: "let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth."

Like James says, my mouth, that's the most easily expressed avenue of my anger. As it says in James Chapter 1, it says we ought to be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Why?

Because the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. God has goals for my family: to point people to Christ, to love Christ, to serve Christ, to obey Christ. My anger isn't going to get it there. Now I know I'm going to be angry. If I'm a just and righteous person things are going to make me angry. But the context of James 1 is when my words are connected to that anger rarely do my outbursts of yelling do anything to promote the righteousness of God. Maybe the strategies, as Luther said, some of his best preaching was motivated by anger. What does that mean? A righteous anger can do a lot of good in terms of the strategies of what we do to counter evil in our home or in the world. But when it comes to my angry outbursts, the outburst of anger in view of Galatians 5, it's not much help. Not much help at all because it comes out as corrupting talk. Not as edifying talk, not as helpful talk. He says let's replace it with that. Ephesians 4:29, but only the words that should be coming out of my mouth are those for building up as fits the occasion, as appropriate for the occasion, that it may give grace, favor, help, spiritual advancement for those who hear. Why? Because just like it says in Romans Chapter 12, there's someone watching.

I know it says there, do what's honorable in the sight of all. Well a camera in your room is not needed. Why? Because the Spirit of God is there, perceptive of all things. Don't grieve him. He cares about what you're going to do in response to the people in your house this week. Don't grieve the Spirit by whom you were sealed you can't get out of it. You can't tell him to wait in the other room while you yell at your wife. He's there. He's sealed you for the day of redemption and what's he sensitive to, what is he grieved by. Here's the list.

It would be a good word study list for your homework. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor,

slander be put away from you along with all malice. There's a good list of things that we should seek to fight by having a long fuse, a control of our emotions. The ability to have a spirit that's under control. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice.

Instead I'm to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. It would be great if there were a period there but instead I'm reminded of my sin against God as God in Christ forgave you. Now if you're a Christian you sit here this morning even if you have non-Christians. If you're the only Christian in your home every family member is a non-Christian, I know this. They could never sin against you, they could never offend you, they could never grieve you anywhere close to the way you have grieved and offended a holy God. There's no way. You've been indebted to God far more than these people you feel like are now indebted to you because they've wronged you. The Bible's very clear on that when Jesus taught about the servant who had the debt, remember that? I don't care how much your fellow servant racks up sin against you, God has taken your sin. What does the Bible say? He's placed that on a cross like it was the crime of a criminal, which is Jesus in this case who was innocent. What's the charge? They couldn't come up with a real charge.

They couldn't come up with one so they said "King of the Jews." But what was really posted on the sign above his head according to Colossians is every sin you've ever committed listed in God's mind.

He says, OK I'm going to treat Jesus as though he is you and Jesus has done all these things that he didn't do. Then I'll remove them from you because of that finished work of Christ as the Old Testament says, Psalm 103, as far as the east is from the west. And he says you need to be more tenderhearted, more forgiving toward one another as God and Christ forgave you. You want to attenuate the anger, start thinking about how much you've offended God and how much he has forgiven you and then learn to bless when you're persecuted. Learn to bless with people curse you. Learn to live in harmony and live peaceably so far as it depends on you. Don't take revenge. Be kind.

You can overcome evil with good. Thirdly, bottom of verse 4, if this were a parenting series and I was only talking to people, say in our young couples group, we'd go we'd go off on this for a long time.

These two elements: discipline and instruction. If you've ever been here for a child dedication you know discipline and instruction, these are two words that I like to summarize with these rhyming words, correction and direction. The first one, chastisement, is translated, this discipline means someone's going to the ditch of sin and you're doing something as a parent to artificially involve some consequence that's painful so they will learn you don't want to be in that ditch. You get them out of sin by getting consequences in place for their rebellion and sin, and that teaches them they don't want to be in the ditch. And then direction here, instruction, is the word that used to coach someone down the path. So there's correction that's kind of a, almost feeling like a defensive play when they sin and then there's instruction or direction, coaching. It's kind of this proactive, here's the path you need to go on. Correction and direction. And since we're not here to preach on that, some of you are in the throes of parenting, go to Thrive this week, they're going to talk about that, our young couples group. We're going to respond to this sermon. But if you are, even if you can go and if you can't go you certainly need to read some of the books on the back of the worksheet that relate specifically to parenting. One by yours truly that I just finished up and put out with Moody Press on parenting boys. I know it says that, if you have all girls still don't pass it up because I think 85 percent of the book deals with just general parenting principles. But we need to learn to try to instill those consequences for rebellion and coach and encourage our children to walk down the

path of righteousness and, of course, my two books on the list are just suggestions. There are other better books I'm sure on that list but make sure you're getting something in your repertoire and in your mind so that you can discipline and instruct your children according to what the Bible says of the Lord.

But I guess contextually whether you're empty nesters, whether you're single people, whatever it is you need to recognize that you have a role in that home to have an influence to help people grow spiritually. That's the goal and that's the focus.

So real quickly let's just jot that down. Number 3, assists your family spiritual growth. As a shepherd, even if you're a 13 year old in your home, what can you do this week to help people walk down that path of the Lord, serve him, love him. We talked about goals in the first point. Now I'm talking about means and methods. The means and methods in parenting are these two categories of correction and direction, which if you fail to do that God isn't happy. It's like that story in first Samuel, remember when little boy Samuel was called by the Lord and Eli, there the priest, was not his dad but Eli was there and he kept running down the hall to say what did you say? Remember that story? And then, you know, oh, he realized it must be God prophetically trying to speak to Samuel. That wasn't happening at all and hadn't for a long time but the priest was, you know, at least wise enough to know this must be God, so tell this voice next time, Samuel, that you're there, you're a servant, you're ready to listen. So he goes back down he lays down and he hears from God and we love teach that one to our kids because it's so neat, such a young boy hears from God the beginning of his prophetic career and he does all these great things, writes part of the Bible. Yeah that's awesome. But no one seems to remember what God had to say. Why in the world did he keep waking up Samuel in the middle of the night? What was so important you had to tell little Samuel?

Do you remember what he told Samuel?

He told something to Samuel that in the morning when Eli said, so what did you hear?

Samuel was, you know, looking at the top of his toenails saying well... you don't want to know. Why? Because God showed up in the middle of the night to a little boy who was kind of the surrogate, he was kind of, you know, the orphan, the foster kid of Eli, watching Eli parent his own biological children. And God wanted to say to Samuel, don't learn from Eli's parenting because he's a bad parent.

Matter of fact he's such a bad parent that his two sons have sinned so much in a way that he did not seem to correct and direct these kids, that I am going to punish them. And he's past the point of no return. I am not going to in any way relent from this punishment. I am now going to punish Eli's family.

So I know you're living in that home but you should learn I'm not at all pleased with that home. And here's the line.

The boys had done something that he labeled blaspheme the Lord which really as it's described as they simply disregarded the rules of God.

And he says Eli has failed to restrain them.

I'm just telling you, you have to learn to restrain your children from going headlong into sin. And because we want peace with our kids we're not willing sometimes as parents to lay down the law.



Even as siblings in a home were not willing to stand up and risk the kind of loving kind of reputation we want by pointing out sin and saying you can't do that anymore.

We're not very good at coaching them on the narrow path. Certainly Eli wasn't and he paid dearly for it. Context, by the way, even if you do have kids in your home, the context of Ephesians is we've come off of more verses about marriage than we do about parenting.

We've got one verse on parenting. We've got verse after verse after verse on marriage one of the best things you can do to aid the spiritual growth of your children and your spouse is to have a strong marriage.

Let me just say that to you married people. Have a strong marriage. Invest in that.

It's supposed to according to the preceding verses be a picture of Christ in the church and the way that Christ is devoted to his bride, the church, ought to be the way the devotion of your family is and, by the way, you speak volumes to your children when you show the primacy and priority of your marriage over the relationship you have with them. You understand that right? When you have a strong marriage you do more for the value of the future of your children's lives than if you have a child-centered home like most people in your neighborhood. If you would just learn to recognize the platform on which children can thrive and certainly Christian children can grow up to love the Lord and be devoted to the Lord is to see a mom and dad that loves each other, and is committed to each other through thick and thin, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health.

Two words can maybe bring that to some very practical points of concern in your life. How about these two words: "Date Night." To start with something as simple as that.

You show the primacy and permanence of your marriage by investing in your relationship.

Are you willing to miss some little league games and some soccer games and some piano recitals because you're prioritizing your marriage over your children? It's funny how a previous generation had parents that didn't show up to all of our games but stayed married and faithful to one another who did better at raising children that were well-rounded particularly in the church than people that have today, child-centered homes but can't keep their relationships together. Not to mention it rings hollow in the mind of a little child when you kneel down and say to them, I know I'm divorcing your daddy. I know I'm no longer going to love your mother. I know I'm moving out of the house, but I still love you.

I'll never stop loving you.

That rings hollow in their hearts. Why? Because God has imprinted his conscience on them. The law of God has been written according to Romans 2 on their hearts and they understand this: the relations between parent and child is one that is supposed to be, here's the word, "azub." Azub in Hebrew is to forsake. They're supposed to leave and then cleave to a new relationship. And therefore the priority and preeminence and permanence is in marriage and the temporary nature of a connection of closeness and intimacy is between parent and child. Now we've reversed that in our culture.

Can you see that? We love our kids more than we love our spouse. And let me just say this as biblically as I can, you need to love your spouse more than you love your kids. And that's heresy. I'm surprised rocks are not coming up on the platform right now. In modern Christianity that is



heresy. You do more for the good of your children by investing in the primacy and permanence of your marriage. "Well, I'm on my fifth marriage." Then make this one work, OK? Keep this one together. It's amazing how these people, they're coming in for their fifth marriage or saying would you marry me.

I said, well, we have to pre-marital. They say, "no, I don't need pre-marital, I've been married five times."

I've had that said more than once to me. And I say, well, usually we have, you know, a few months of this but I think you need a few years of this before we get into the next marriage. Assist your family's spiritual growth by having a strong marriage. Assist your family spiritual growth if you have kids in the home by being actively involved in correction and direction.

Hey kids, I guess I can't overlook this, if you happen to be a child living under the roof of your parents OBEY YOUR PARENTS in the Lord. This is right. That's good for you. It's the right thing you'll do well, it will go well with you. You live long in the land. What's the picture here? God expects you to obey your parents. "Well I just can't wait for my freedom." You're never going to get it. You're never going to get it. You're never going to get it. You're crazy, man. You're never going to be free from authority. You know that right? Never. "Oh, I can't wait to get out of my house." I understand that but you just can replace that authority with another set of authority figures in your life. "No, I'm going to be that, you know, the entrepreneur, I'm being my own boss."

Nobody is their own boss. Everyone is under authority.

"Well, I'm going to be the dictator of my own country." Great.

Other countries will point their missiles at you and you will be under the authority of your neighbors. Everyone is under authority. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords Jesus Christ is under the authority of his father. Think about that. So obey your parents because right now that's who you're called to obey in the Lord.

So if they want you to be, you know, the machine gunner for the bank robbery, come talk to us and we can get you out of that one. I understand. But in the Lord obey them and do what they say. And I know this isn't in the passage but it's all over the Bible. The most under utilized tools in the toolbox for a healthy and good and godly family is prayer. Are you praying for your family? And back to the cameras for a minute, the cameras we're installing in your house right now?

I just wonder when we play the tape back, how much of that time am I going to see you praying for your family. Praying. Not just for the goals, "I want perfect children, I want perfect marriage, I want perfect..." No no no. For the means to the end of a godly and good marriage and godly and good kids. The means to an end. You want to skip the means to get right to the end and hope God magically just makes this all happen. He wants you to invest in Bible study, he wants to invest in prayer time. You should be praying for your prayer time. Do you do that? You need to be praying for all the means that are going to get you that. You need to be praying for date night, you need be praying for the things that you do that help your children know that sin and the ditch of sin is harmful. You need be praying for your discipline, you need to be praying for your coaching. Pray.

Even if you're here or listening on the radio and you're a 12 year old and you're a Christian in your home, you have the arsenal of prayer to sit down with God as it says in James 5, the prayer of a righteous man is effectual, has great power and it's working. Pray for your family.



You say the word shepherd around here you probably, if you've been around the church at least, think of a pastor and someone seminary-educated, surrounded by books, the preacher guy.

But if you say the word shepherd in another part of the world they'll probably literally think, in some parts of the world at least, of a guy who watches sheep, literal sheep. The farmer's son or some guy out in the field. That's still going on in many places in the world. One such place, northeast about three and a half hours out of Madrid. Huesca is the name of this town.

They're in the papers in the United States a few months back because of a shepherd. And in that article and even in that title it didn't talk about a shepherd meaning a pastor.

We're not talking about a seminary educated guy, we're talking about the guy who's supposed to be watching the sheep.

They were in the paper in America and all over the place because it was such an interesting story about a shepherd who let his flock wander off into downtown Huesca and it created a real mess and everyone got really mad and traffic was snarled.

I mean here's a modern city in the 21st century and everything is brought to a halt in downtown because some shepherd let his sheep wander into the town square early in the morning. People were frustrated, they were calling their equivalent of 911, getting the authorities out and the cops show up and try and round up these sheep.

And of course they went out looking for the shepherd. Where's this bum right now? Now I've read the article but I quoted two words from the article. Here they are. When they found the shepherd he was, here it was, "peacefully slumbering." He'd fallen asleep.

He fell asleep, the whole fiasco played out for like hours and they come back and find the shepherd "peacefully slumbering."

If you don't have the kind of influence on your family to point them to the Lord, so helpful to attenuate the anger, to really actively prayerfully assist your family's spiritual growth, then you're asleep on the job. God expects you to be involved. It'll cause a real mess if you don't shepherd the people in your home even if you're not the chief shepherd in your home, get to work. Like all sermons we don't know if this sermon is any good until we have some time to see it play out in your life, so don't tell me at the door it was a good sermon because we don't know yet. But there is one good thing that could happen while we still sit here with a minute to go. And that is that you resolve yourself at the very outset of hearing a message like this to say, you know, I'm there. In the words of Joshua Chapter 24 that you're willing to declare in your own heart, you know what, I don't know what the people are doing across the street. I don't know what they're doing in another part of the world. But as for me and my house we're going to serve the Lord.

Even if you're the only Christian in that home that you would make that declaration. You could be a 15 year old Christian and you're the only Christian in your home, make the declaration in your heart, as for me and my house, now this is a big uphill battle, we're going to serve the Lord. And I'm going to have the influence that I can have and help to aid people, direct people toward spiritual growth, to knowing God, to serving God. I'm going to do the best I can. God plus one is the majority and he can get it done. But just before you leave make that determination. As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

Let's pray. God, there are a lot of wandering sheep in our culture. People that don't have a good foundation in their home and some of them not because there's not a Christian present representing Christ in the light of the Gospel in that home, it's just because that light is not shining very brightly. So I pray today at the outset of our series on shepherding we get serious about being the kind of influence in our home that we ought to be. To do all we can, not just to make peace. We want to live peaceably for sure. We don't want anger to rule in our homes. But we want to point people to Christ. We want them to love Christ. We want them to serve Christ, want them to know Christ. That may create some conflicts in our schedule and prioritying but God please help us to make some progress in this. Let this happened for us, I pray God, so that we might have stronger families in our church even for the single people living with a roommate. Let that address be a place that's filled with a mutual concern for people knowing Christ, loving Christ, serving Christ, obeying Christ. And let it not be said that this is a house full of consternation or anger or arguing or bitterness. Let it be a place where people are really trying to help each other grow spiritually. Make that a reality for our homes that it might spill over into our church because we can't have a strong church if we don't have a church made up of people in strong families. No matter where people have been, no matter what the setbacks have been, no matter what the failures have been in the past, I pray there'd be a lot of success this week as people resolve and then work to make their home a place where they serve the Lord. I pray all this in the authority of Christ. Amen.