



## **Christian Parenting- Part 1 The Urgency of Biblical Goals Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well I got to tell you it is really good to be back at Compass Bible Church. Really good. My favorite church in all the world, did you know that? It's my favorite church in all the world. And to tell you that after getting some time to be in other churches to speak elsewhere, to travel, it is something that always brings me back with a great excitement and enthusiasm about the good that God is doing in this church. I get really excited about the future of Compass Bible Church when I get out there and kind of get that perspective from the outside and I realize that we've really been poised for some great things in the future. I know our best days at Compass Bible Church are ahead and I'm excited about the good things that God is doing to impact lives. I mean, this particular church, I recognize, has really got great potential to see lives affected for God's glory in a way that I just don't see God blessing in some other places. What a fantastic opportunity we have. And you may say, some of you, well how can you say that and be so optimistic when, you know, you're always telling us the world is falling apart. Well I'm telling you the world is falling apart because the world is falling apart. But, I'll tell you God has given some very specific and powerful promises to his church. You know that right? Some amazing promises to his church and he says there will be a triumphant church, a remnant that is faithful, that is fruitful and that is triumphant. And when I think about this particular church, I've seen God's good providential hand upon this church and I recognize there are good days ahead. I'm very excited and optimistic.

Now I recognize this when it comes to the triumphant promise to the church we have a responsibility in that. Primarily, if I'm going to boil it down, it's into us being faithful to the truth that's once for all been delivered to the saints. We've got to stay focused on that. We have to be faithful to the truth that has been delivered once for all to the saints. We need to also be faithful and focused on the Great Commission. We can't lose sight of our task, our mission to make disciples of all the nations starting right here in our neighborhood, in our backyard. And then, of course, I think we're going need, more than ever, a fidelity to and a commitment to being undaunted regardless of how dark or how difficult our culture may be. In our darkening world we have to stay courageous and say, we don't care what may happen we're going to stay faithful to the truth and we're going to stay on track for the mission of reaching people for Christ. I mean those are the kinds of commitments that, if we can grab on to those and stay faithful to those, I think we'll see some incredible things happen. Now, we often talk about that and all of its implications. And I recognize that we do that so often with a kind of an immediate concern for our own lives and our peers and so we should.

But you do know that if Christ's return is not scheduled for our lifetime, if you understand that your lifetime is not going to be the lifetime of Christ's return, although we should expect it and we pray for it and we say Maranatha. But if it's not then we need to not just think about this year, next year and two years from now. You better start thinking about 40 years from now. You better start thinking about the Church of Jesus Christ and Compass Bible Church frankly, 60 years from now and 80 years from now. We've got to start thinking beyond our lives and we got to think about, very practically, about the next generation and that's where we can touch the future in a very practical way. You've got to be committed to the fact that there is a replacement generation of Christians that you and I are going to be responsible for leaving behind. We're going to pass them the baton. We have to think about that. And that's why I think we've taken a very important and wise break from our study in Luke and we've said, let's take three weeks here at the beginning of our year, so to speak, our preaching year at least and say, let us think about Christian parenting. Which, by the way, if you lean back at that point and you go, "Well, that's not for me, you know, I don't have any

kids," or "My parenting season has long since passed," we need to stop thinking that way. Because all of us have a responsibility in this church with the future that God has given us to take a very keen interest in what's going to happen with the next generation of people who are going to take our place, that replacement generation of Christians. We need to be thinking about how we can hand this off to them in a way that leaves them with the kind of focus on the Great Commission, the kind of fidelity to the truth once for all delivered to the saints and to a kind of courage having it equipped with a kind of undaunting, unflinching, a kind of indomitable courage to face whatever happens in this culture because you and I know it's getting dark and it's getting darker by the year. It used to be by the decade, but now by the year we see our culture degenerating. So we're going to talk about this for the next three weeks. And as you think about the challenge that we have, I want you to see, as we watch the promises of the forecast of the Bible continue to come true in the way that our culture is degenerating, as we move toward the end of time, you need to recognize that what we need more than ever is an urgent call to think about the next generation. I want us to think in that way by having you turn to the book of First Samuel. In First Samuel, we won't spend all of our time here, that's why it's not printed on your worksheet, but I want to give you a taste for a period in Biblical history that is as dark as any other.

As a matter of fact, if you want to identify with a period in Biblical history when the things that you're reading on your web pages and on your news feeds look a lot like what was going on in Israel's history, then turn at some point to the book of First Samuel, at least the first couple of chapters. This is the dawning of a new generation where God is saying, we're going to pull this thing back. We're going to stave this dark increase this, the gates of hell, if you will, and we're going to see the kinds of things happening that I want to see happen in a generation after, check this out, 350 years of a real dark spiral.

Note this now, if you want to think through the Biblical history, which we're doing on Thursday nights real soon, I want you to think about the fact that after the exodus we had the conquest. This is a great time of victory for Israel in terms of them seeing the fruition of the promises to Israel. They're going into the Promised Land. And that book, the little book of Joshua, it lasts for about 30 years of history, it covers 30 years of chronological history. The next book we enter into in the timeline is Judges. Judges is a 350 year dark tunnel that continues in one generation to the next, getting darker and darker and darker. And then the light's going to dawn in the book of First Samuel. And there's going to be a kid in that story, the namesake of the book, Samuel, that God works through to see some good things happen after a very, very dark and degenerate culture. I want to show you how bad it had gotten. Look at this passage, if you would with me, in Chapter 2. First Samuel Chapter 2. When the culture degenerates, it's always going to affect the people that wear the name of God. The people that claim to be on God's team are going to be affected. You're never going to have the culture degenerate without the church degenerating and that has certainly happened when it comes to the people of God and the leaders in Israel in Chapter 2. Take a look at verse 12 as we are just about to be done with this dark period in Israel's history.

First Samuel Chapter 2 verse 12, it speaks of the priest and the sons of the priest. His name was Eli. Here's the description of the first family of the spiritual leadership of the country, "they are worthless men." So you have the most religious, spiritual, insightful, wise, sagacious leader of the people of God and his kids are worthless. Now, Dad isn't much better. I mean, there's not a lot of commentary on his life but if you watch what he does and the decisions that he makes he's not a very godly leader.

And so it was that you have the leaders of this country, at least the spiritual leaders of this country, who should be light, who should rebuking, should be exhorting, should be motivating, compelling them to righteous behavior, who was compromised and his kids were compromised.

Now, here's the real concern, underline this, "They did not know the Lord." I'm not sure Eli knew much of the Lord either but when it came to his kids, here you have people who didn't know the Lord. You think, "Well yeah, they probably turned away from the ministry life and they went in to be some other career, you know, maybe they were soldiers." No, these were priests. They just happened to be the sons of the priest, Eli, and they were worthless as they went about their religious duties. Now you'll get into this, by the way, and it's good for me to touch on First Samuel because both the men's Bible study and the women's Bible study this year are going to go into detail throughout the whole book of First Samuel. I encourage you to get involved in those Bible studies throughout the week. So they can explain all the details of this to you. I'm just jumping in real quick to show you that the customs of the priest, verse 13, with the people were that when a man came and offered sacrifice the priest servant would come and the meat was boiling with a three pronged fork in his hand. He would thrust it, verse 14 says, into the pan, the kettle, the cauldron or the pot. And all that the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh, this was the worship center, to all the Israelites who came there. Now you would have to know a little bit, which I'm sure the teachers at the men's and women's Bibles will teach you, as to how this was suppose to work. The priest and the priest's family did have a share in the sacrifices but not like this.

They were basically making sure that they stack the deck in their favor so that they were always seeing ministry as a way for financial and material gain. And this was the kind of greed and the compromise where they didn't care about the rules of Leviticus, they didn't care about the requirements in Exodus regarding the sacrifices, they were just concerned about making sure they were comfortable and had a lot in their freezer, their meat freezer, if you will, because they were going to take stuff out and stored it away and be able to have the kind of bank account they wanted. Verse 15, "Moreover before the fat was burned the priest servants would come and say to the man who is sacrificing, 'Give meat for the priest to roast for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw.'" Verse 16, "and if the man said to him, 'Let them burn the fat first and then take as much as you wish,' he would say, 'No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.'"

Now I'm not sure many people said that because there weren't very many godly people that cared about Scripture and the truth anyway. But those who did, and let's just say it happened that someone with a pang of conscience says, "Now wait a minute, this is a gift to God and you're stealing from it." They would say, "It doesn't matter. We're going to beat you up and take it by force if you don't turn it over." This was horrible. And the Bible says in verse 17, "The sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord." Now, as we will learn in a second, the sin of Dad was pretty bad too. But the sin of the sons was even worse "for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt." They had reached an all time low in terms of their sin. If ever there was a time for a new generation to step up that was committed to the Lord, that was going to be a light in the darkness, it was now.

Let me just say this if you're taking notes, I know this is just a general observation but I want you to write the whole phrase down. Number 1 on your outline if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, jot this down. Number 1, you need to know, when it comes to this topic that we are entering into in the next three weeks, "Now Is The Time." Now is the time. We're at a time of all time has got to be, at least in America, an all time low for us in terms of not only the church, go look at the bestselling books on the Christian bestselling list. I mean they're filled with not only heresy that's subtle but a kind of complete blasphemy as it relates to the gospel, to repentance, to the issues of holiness. We've got an all time low, not only in the cockpit of the spiritual leadership of our country that claims to be Christian, but look at what's going on in the hostile environment against Christianity. Think about that. I used to do college ministry back in the day and I worked at a church and I worked with some college campus ministries that did a good job on these campuses

and I felt like they were partners with me. That stuff, in this day, is harder than ever. You've got secular universities running Christian ministries off their campus. You've got professors, one in Florida, who was known and maybe you read about this in the paper, who would take his Christian students and he would have a picture of Jesus, he would put it on the ground and he would make the Christian students in class stand up and stomp on a picture of Jesus Christ. You've got these abortion mills that are looking at places like Christian crisis pregnancy centers, running them out of business.

You've got Christian adoption centers that have always been good at placing children in Christian homes being pushed out of business in our day because they're not willing to conform to the mores of this culture. You've got the number one intellectual, most respected intellectual of our generation, I would argue, Richard Dawkins, saying that if you're a Christian home schooler you're engaged in child abuse and it needs to be outlawed. These are the voices that people hail as the most important people in our society. You've got that fire captain in Atlanta who was terminated in his job because he wrote some material for his Sunday school class that the culture of his city did not approve. You had a Marine, a female Marine, who put a verse above her desk and was court martialed for it. I mean I could go on and on, the things that are going on in our country hostile to Christianity and therefore Christian leaders who want to make sure that they're celebrities in the Christian culture are taking all the truths that are hard-edged, anything that might offend and they're extracting it from their theology and selling their bestselling Christian books. It's time for us to recognize that if you're ever going to raise up a generation that comes after us that's going to take these seats from us when we're gone, we need some Samuels, we need some people who are going to hear the voice of God, respond appropriately to Scripture and live undaunted in a dark society. They need to be able to hold steadfastly to the truth that was once for all delivered to the saints and if there's ever a time for it, now is the time.

Keep your finger here if you would and turn with me to Second Timothy Chapter 3. We're going to come right back to First Samuel but I want you to remember what the Bible says about the end of this particular period that we're in, the Last Days. I know it's a whole epic between the coming of Christ the first time and the second coming of Christ called the return of Christ, the whole time is the Last Days. But it's going to, within that period of Last Days, there's going to be an increasing problem. There will be things moving from bad to worse. Look at verse 1, understand this, that in the Last Days, this is Second Timothy 3 verse 1, there will come times of difficulty. Now it was difficult from the beginning. But here are the things that will characterize the general culture in which the church will have to function and hand the baton from one generation to the next. "People will be lovers of self." That used to be something you would be ashamed to admit. Now it's something that everyone is writing books on. "Lovers of money." That used to be something too you wouldn't want to let people know you're all in it for the money. Now it's a good thing. Matter of fact, it's a great motivation. "Proud, arrogant, abusive." Just scan through social media and look at people bringing up any issues of importance and see if these words don't apply. "Disobedient to parents." Spend a little time at a restaurant or the line at Costco, you'll see this in full view. "Ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit." There's certainly a theme here. "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

What about the spiritual class? What about the Eli's and his sons, "Having the appearance of godliness but denying its power." Now see, the power of Christianity is the power as it was stated from the book of Ezekiel to take the heart of stone that lives for itself, as Second Corinthians 5 says, and to turn it into a heart of flesh that now beats in sync with a desire to love and serve God. That's the power of the transformed life, new creatures in Christ, the old goes away of living for ourselves and all these kinds of things, even with a Christian jersey over it. It's a new life beating from the

inside as it says in Ezekiel to be moved by God's spirit to keep his precepts. That's the power that's lacking in a lot of Christianity today. We want the label, we want to think there's someone there who's going to help us, who's on our team and thinks like we do, we'll call him Jesus, we'll call him God, but it denies the power of a transformed, changed life. The Bible says here, bottom of verse 5, "Avoid such people."

You've got to find yourself a place that is committed to the Word of God, the truth once for all delivered to the saints, that's focused on the Great Commission reaching people for Christ. And it's going to be undaunted by a darkening culture, a degenerate culture and you need to say, I need to align myself with that group. And then, if Christ doesn't come back in our lifetime, and we got a plan like he's not, we're going to live like he is, but we're going to plan like he's not. And we're going to focus on the fact that we've got to think beyond this generation. And you've got to start thinking about the people who are down the hall in our nurseries, who are across the parking lot in our kid's classrooms, who are going to meet the next hour, our teenagers, in their respective rooms and say we've got to get ready to hand off this ministry, this life called Christianity, to them. Are they going to be ready to face what's coming down the pike here as it relates to our culture?

You kept your finger in First Samuel. I want to show you that Eli knew, drop down to verse 22 of First Samuel 2. He knew that what his sons were doing was wrong and he probably knew, as he laid in bed at night, that what he was doing was wrong, though a lot of his sins were not detailed, we see one right here. He seems to be doing something that seems positive. But "as he kept hearing," there's an interesting way to put it, this wasn't news to him. He was very old but he kept hearing, I mean, throughout his adult life I'm sure with his kids he heard all kinds of things about his sons. But as "he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all of Israel and how they," now notice this, "they lay with the women who are serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting." The tent of meeting was the worship center. They're hanging out by the donut table so that they can have illicit sexual relationships with people. Think about that. These are the spiritual leaders of the country. Not only are they treating with contempt the sacrifices, that's called blasphemy, taking something important to God and making it not important to me. "I know the rules of the Bible say that but I don't really care about that. I want to fit in, I want to have fun. It's all about me." And now, instead when you make the top of the list, they're engaging in illicit relationships with just whoever shows up at tent of meeting here, the servants of the church. And so he's frustrated with that. He knows it's wrong. And so, he's going to have a conversation after he's kept hearing this, in verse 22. Now in verse 23, he says, "Why do you do such things? For I hear your evil dealings with all the people. No my sons; it is not a good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad." "You're hurting our reputation. People are talking. You really should stop that."

Now you'd applaud that, I think, if you just read that without any insight or any pondering or stepping back and thinking about it, but God wasn't fooled by that. He wasn't fooled by a dad who was going to look at the next generation and say, "I don't like what they're doing and it's really not good. As a matter of fact I'm going to talk to them about it. You shouldn't do that. It's not good. Do you know what people are saying about us because you're doing that?"

Look across the page at Chapter 3. You know the story in the context. It's taught to us in Sunday school. Remember the Sunday school story about Samuel hearing the voice of God there. He's a little kid, he's growing up here in the worship center in Shiloh. And, you know, he's getting put back to bed. And, no, it's not me and Eli finely says, "Hey, if you hear this voice again say, 'You know I'm your servant and I'm listening, I'm ready to take your message.'" Well this is what the message was. Most people can tell the story but they don't know what the message was. They soon forgot that. Verse 10, when you see him before the Lord, the Lord is saying, "Samuel! Samuel!" He says fine, "Speak, for your servant hears." Eli had told him to say that. Then the Lord said to Samuel,

"Behold, I'm about to do a thing in Israel to which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle." What is that? Why, you got some big news for me, verse 12. "On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house," his family, his lineage, his descendants, "from beginning to end." I'm going to do it all. "I will declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever." I'm done with him. "For the iniquity that he knew," not only did he know, you could put an asterisk next to that in the margins, and he talked to them about. "Because his sons were blaspheming God." But here's the real problem. "He did not restrain them." Here is Eli, who talked to them, saw the problem, knew it was an issue, but he didn't really do anything that had any muscle attached to it that restrained the evil of that next generation and, particularly him as a dad, his own children.

There's a kind of parenting from one generation to the next that may have some principles and platitudes in place. They may talk a little bit about what's right and wrong. But what we need in a generation like ours that looks a lot like the generation that started the book First Samuel is some bold, intentional, strong, determined leadership that's much more clear, not just about what needs to be done, but about how to get that done. There is a kind of effective leadership from one generation to the next that God is calling for. And now is the time.

The picture of what I'm here to talk about the next few weeks, which is primarily, I understand, at least most effectively given to those who still have their children in their home, whether they're two months old, two years old or even if they're 18 years old. But this really relates to all of us as a generation that looks ahead and says, if Christ doesn't come back in our lifetime we've got to get the next Compass Bible Church ready that's going to occupy this particular space and take the baton into the next generation beyond it. This is our calling, like arrows in the hands of a warrior. Now I'm quoting Psalm 127 verses 3 and 4, it says, that's what children are.

And the children that are given to us are like a warrior, not just someone taking target practice in the backyard, who's got a case, a quiver slung over his shoulder, a quiver full of children and pulls them out, directs them, aims them and shoots them, propels them into the next generation. That's the picture we all need to have because here's the good news. I go to a lot of places, I speak in a lot of places and, you know, often times I take a good look at what's going on in the kids ministry and there's not much going on there. And in a lot of places, I speak to a lot of churches with a lot of gray hair in it and no kids in the nursery.

And I think to myself, we've got an incredible opportunity, I don't care if you are a gray haired person who has long since given up on your parenting season of life, we've got hallways filled with children. We've got school aged kids across the parking lot. We've got teenagers who are all over this particular ministry and in it. And you and I have an opportunity to get involved in launching that particular generation into the future.

That's very important for us to see as a strategic concern and it ought to be a concern that is important to us, right, right now. Now's the time. And if ever there is a time for us to prepare this generation, it is right now.

Now, if you to hit the target as a warrior who is going to send kids into the next generation, you've got to aim at the right things and you've got to look past this life.

Two points, and I know they're very general, but they're very important. We'll untangle some of the implications of this in the next two messages during the next two weekends. But let me say this, as it relates to the two primary goals that you should have as a warrior shooting individuals who sit somehow, either under the roof of your house or they sit under the roof or auspices of this particular

ministry, what should my goals be for those individuals, I have two of them for you. And their most logical and they both come from Matthew Chapter 16 verse 26, you don't need to turn there because you have the verse memorized, I'm pretty sure you have it memorized, here it comes. Jesus asked this rhetorical question. "What would it profit a man if he gains the whole world and he forfeited his soul?"

Answer? What's the answer? Nothing. What would it profit a man, what good would it be for a person if he gained the whole world and he forfeited his soul? Now that's shorthand, of course, for him hearing these words at the end of his life. "Depart from me. I never knew you." Right? He'd lose his own soul.

He'd be led, as Jesus said often, who talked more about hell than any other personage in the Bible, he'd say, away from me into outer darkness. Go into that place that was created for the devil and his angels. "Depart from me, I never knew you." Now what would it profit a man, what good would it be for an individual to be raised up and have everything that would seem successful from the world's perspective. He profits the whole world. If you had the cutest kids, the smartest kids, the fastest kids, the most gifted kids, the best- educated kids, the best dressed kids. If you had the most experienced and well traveled kids. And on the last day they heard "depart from me I never knew you." If down the hallway we had a group of kids that became really the most worldly successful people that can be. They had great jobs, they were great contributors to the society, everyone respected them, they were the employee of the month every month they ever worked anywhere. What would it profit that person if at the end of time they said, "Sorry, I guess we're lost, our soul was lost." I mean it's obvious what this first goal is which is the second point on our outline, let's jot it down this way. You want to aim the right direction the next generation? Number 2. Goal Number 1, we need to "Aim At Real Conversion," real conversion. Unless you're brand new to the Bible you know that concept and that word. The doctrinal word is regeneration.

But conversion, if you think of that and you may say, "Well, I don't understand it. I don't have a Hindu kid or a Muslim kid, I have a Christian kid. He was raised in the church. I don't have to convert him." No one is birth into this world a Christian, you know that, right? There was a sermon I heard once called, "But I've always been a Christian." That's a joke, because I preached it. It has been the most broadcast, the most requested and the most copied, the most distributed message I've ever preached, "But I've always been a Christian." Which starts with the basic premise that we need to understand that no one is born a Christian. Right? It's in quotes. "But I've always been a Christian." You are bringing home from the hospital and raising in your home people that the Bible's very clear about their status. They need to be converted. They need to have a conversion experience. They need to be, in the doctrinal sense, regenerate. There needs to be something that happens, as I said Ezekiel promised, a changing of their heart. Not just a conformity of their behavior, which I'm all in favor of and so is the Bible. Children obey your parents. We should be having our children behave properly, speak properly, restrain evil in their lives. But what they really need is a converted heart. They need a transforming encounter with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the ultimate priority and that is the ultimate gain. I don't care how great your kid is, I don't care how smart he is, what college he goes to. It doesn't matter if in a hundred years he's not sitting around in the New Jerusalem and his name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Then, none of that mattered. Really, none of it mattered. Jesus said "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" As in Eli's day, the solution was right in front of his nose. So in our day, the solution is right in front of your nose. If you are really understanding what hangs in the balance about the kids in this church or the kids in your home, it's that you recognize that God's solution to the ultimate concern we should all have and that is the eternal destiny of the people who we look at on our patio today, eating those donut holes out there, is that their hearts are

converted.

Back to First Timothy Chapter 3. You saw the forecast in the first few verses. It's going to be bad. But when it comes down to the solution I want to show you what it is. Verse 12 says, Second Timothy Chapter 3, if you desire to live godly in Christ Jesus you're going to be persecuted. So I know this, wanting the best for my kids, the best schools, the best clothes, the best whit, the fastest intellect, smartest, cutest, most clever, most talented, really, I don't know what that's going to look like in this life if I really get what I want and that is someone who is in tune with God and has his name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I do know it will come with, verse 12, persecution. Because he's going to be surrounded, as we launch these arrows into the next generation, surrounded with evil people and imposters that will go on from bad to worse. So I know the forecast is increasing clouds and showers, right? The winds of the storm are going to come. So I know it's going to be harder for them in this world. But here's what I want for the young people in this church and the kids in my family. It's the same thing the apostle Paul, who was now aging, said to this very young pastor named Timothy. He says, "I want you to continue," verse 14, "in what you've learned and have firmly believed." Now, there's something you need to learn and there's something you put your trust in, "knowing from whom you learned it." And it's not the apostle Paul. He's going to tell us who he learned it from in a second. "And how from childhood," from the beginning, thanks to your mother and grandmother, "you've been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able," underline this now, "to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." You know what I know is right in front of Eli's nose? He had access to it more than anyone else. The sacred writings.

You have access to it. The answer is, if you want to see your kids converted, which I know we can't ultimately control when it comes down to it, but if I'm going to aim them at conversion, if I'm going to aim them at salvation, if I'm going to aim them at a place where their hearts are turned from stone and dead to God, which all kids are, to being made alive to God and Christ, I need them to be acquainted from childhood with the sacred writings. How are you doing in that regard?

I know I've turned you to a lot of places already but I want you to see this one. I quote it all the time but as long as we're talking about the next generation and how we get them acquainted with the sacred writings, I want you to turn to Deuteronomy Chapter 6. Look at this passage afresh as though you've never read it before. You and I need to be committed to making sure that the people in our kids ministry, the people in our youth ministry and the people that you have any influence on and that includes, Lois and Eunice when I think of Timothy, not only parents but grandparents. Who, by the way, if you're a gray haired person, you're a grandparent, you have grandchildren, you can be some of the most influential agents in their lives to get at them acquainted with the sacred writings, which is the testimony of both my life and my wife's life, the instrumental activity of our grandparents in our lives. So don't lean back and think this sermon is for those who have kids in our kids program. We have to get them acquainted with the sacred Scriptures. The writings that God gave.

It starts with you, of course, you need to be well acquainted with it. Verse 5 Deuteronomy 6, you've got to start with a devotion and a passion and a love and a loyalty to the Lord your God. It's got to be so deep, it's got to be with all of your heart, the interior of your life, all of your soul. That's a way to speak comprehensively about the whole of everything that you are. And all your might, all that you do. I want to work hard to love God.

"Well, then I sit on a rock and I meditate?" No, you take the words that are commanded, the sacred writings, the ones that are now being sealed up here, the first five of them called the Pentateuch, he's now finishing this Pentateuch and he's saying, these words, God says, that are now commanded to you, they're to be on your heart, not just in your ears, get them in your life. So all of that is for us.



That's what we're doing here all the time, trying to disciple, to train, to get the Scripture in your life. Now, we've got a job to do because there's another generation we've got to concern ourselves with and we have to teach them these words that are commanded, the sacred writings, to them, the children, diligently. And a lot of people put up a Bible verse in their kitchen and think, "Well, you know, we got the Bible in our house." To diligently teach them to your children. So diligently that you have times where you sit there and discuss the Bible at length. The TV goes off, the conversation about sports and school goes away and we are talking about the sacred writings and what it has to say. The acquaintance with that from childhood is the thing, the agency, that makes you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ.

And then let it overflow. This isn't something you do between 8:00 and 8:30. This is something that comes out of you all the time as parents, as people of another generation talking to the next generation. "We talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up," when you're getting them up, when you're putting them to bed, when you're having a meal, when you're going from one place to the next, the scriptural principles and the teaching of the sacred writings that come out of your mouth. We talk about them. "You shall bind them as a sign on your hands and they shall be frontals between your eyes." There was only one time Jesus referred to the practice that grew out of this verse by the Jews. And he did that in Matthew 23 and he basically made it very clear they misunderstood this whole concept. The idea, and you may have heard of them, at least let's use in the Hebrew word, the "tefillin." The tefillin were the boxes that were made by the Jews, they put scriptural verses in and then they took leather straps and put them on the back of their hands, sometimes on their arms, sometimes on their bicep, but they would bind the Scripture to their hands and then they would put them around their head and bind them with leather straps to that box on the head. Have you seen Orthodox Jews, maybe at the Wailing Wall, do this? Just look it up on Google and you'll see it. The tefillin. Jesus calls them in Matthew 23 the phylacteries. Does that ring a bell Sunday school grads? The phylacteries? Phylacteries is not the word I might expect Jesus to use, maybe a transliteration of the Hebrew word, tefillin. He uses the word phylacteries, which if you do us word study on phylacteries, this is the word used as an amulet or a good luck charm that people would use in the Greco-Roman world.

He's saying you put boxes, and he's really condemning them in that passage in Matthew 23 saying, you've broadened your phylacteries. You want make sure nobody sees your phylacteries, your amulets, your good luck charms. They weren't really what were designed by this passage. This passage's context is to make sure that when people reached out and had interaction with other people, particularly in the context of a domestic life, Scripture is all over the place. "Here comes dad's hand. We're going to get some scriptural principles here. There's going to be some Bible teaching here. There's going to be something about the sacred writings in this conversation. He can't touch my life without Scripture being a part of it." The next line, verse 9, "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Have you been to Israel? Have you been to a Jewish part of the city? Have you've been in a hotel run by Jews? Have you had a Jewish friend here in our country who has invited you over to their house and you've gone through the door post and seen those little boxes, usually at an angle, that are there through the doorposts?

The "mezuzah" in Hebrew. The mezuzah. What they do is they take a little scroll, which by the way is what the word in Hebrew mezuzah mean, it means scroll. Take a little scroll of Scripture, usually with this particular passage in it, called the Shema, which is the Hebrew word for "Here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one." The word "hear" is Shema. Put that Shema, put that passage in that box and put it on the door post, which by the way is glued on, nailed on, taped on. And no one opens it and reads it. Matter of fact you can hear some rabbis today, go on YouTube and look for it, they are explaining it and some of them will even speak of it as an amulet. They don't use the word amulet, but they'll speak in terms of, "This is a box, we put Scripture and then the Lord keeps evil out of our

house." It's like a good luck charm. I'm not saying for everyone who has the practice of the mezuzah, but I am saying it has nothing to do with what God is talking about in this passage and Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 23. That's ridiculous. It's not about you wearing a symbol of the Word. It's not about you putting up something on your doorposts to keep the evil spirits out of your house. It's about making sure when someone walks through your gate or your door, you know what they're going to get, they're gonna hear some Scripture. There's going to be Biblical conversation that goes on. Because you know what I want in my home, if I've got kids in my house, I want the Biblical conversation to so saturate everything in that household that they're acquainted with the sacred writings from their childhood, which by the way, is the agency that makes one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

I want my kids saved. That is the most important thing. Nothing is more important than having their name written in the Lamb's Book of Life because what would it profit me if I had three kids who were well educated, who did everything well, everyone loved them, they were fantastic, had great jobs and made a ton of money, lived in a great house, had wonderful grandchildren for me. What if I had all of that and then at the end of life I walk into the New Jerusalem and they hear "depart from me into everlasting darkness." I'd think that would be a fail. Right? "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" What would a man give in exchange for his soul on that day?

Do you think my kids would exchange every advantage they had, high SAT scores, wonderful entrances into fantastic schools, great education, great fantastic jobs that they had? Do you think they would trade that all at that point? What would a person give in exchange for their soul on that day? They'd give everything. They give anything. But it'll be too late. From childhood they don't need to be hearing about your constant dreams that you want to live out through them so they can be successful and have cushy lives. Parents, stop with that nonsense! Time for you to talk about the most important thing of all. Is your name ever going to be written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Will you hear on that day, "Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" I don't care if they are the dumbest, ugliest, stupidest, least educated kids in Orange County. If they walk through the gates of the New Jerusalem because their faith is in Christ Jesus, because my home has been saturated with the sacred writings from their childhood, I'm a winner. I rejoice.

Aim at real conversion. Nothing could be more important than that. Nothing could be more important than that. And let me say this as though I had time. It's easy to be fooled, parents, that your kids are saved when they're not.

It is so easy to think your kids are safe. Any pro-Jesus moment you throw a party that their name has been written and the Lamb's Book of Life, be careful with that. As J.C. Philpot said so well, at least his son said of him, J.C. Philpot, famous preacher a couple hundred years ago, he was able to preach in such a way to his peers to say, you know, you recognize what real conversion is and some of you raise these children in homes that just because they make one move toward Christ you think that they are converted. Conversion comes from the interior change of their lives not the exterior conformity. That's the Mike Fabarez paraphrase. But to quote him in his son's words, "There was nothing my father mistrusted more than childhood piety." By early influence and example you can train up a child to be anything, a little patriot, a Catholic, a Calvinist, a Bolshevik. You can make him anything. But no power on earth can make him a child of God. And yet the next sentence his son writes about his dad, "But he took great care that we, his children, attended the preaching in the church and family prayers." He calls it the means of grace. We did everything that could possibly be done to be saturated with the truth of God's word so that maybe at some point, as God's grace is operative in our hearts, that acquaintance with the sacred writings leads to salvation in Christ. Be careful that just because your kid said, "Hey, I'm pro-Jesus" you've got to see that interior change, a

life that no longer lives for itself. That's a quotation from Scripture, Second Corinthians 5:15. But they live for him who died for them and rose again. Your kids, if they're not living in that direction, don't change your theology because you love your children and can't imagine them being told "depart from me, I never knew you." Do not change your theology simply because you can't handle thinking of your children going away from that place of blessing one day in the afterlife. Don't change your theology. Change your passion and your prayers and your pleading and your urgency as you interact with your children, even if they're 40 years old. Because nothing matters more than their conversion.

A lot of phoney's out there. Like that Indian. Do I have time for this illustration? In the 1970s, the most famous commercial of all time it's said, some people say is the greatest commercial ever made. That Indian in the canoe going down the stream, you old timers remember this, with all the junk in the stream and the factories and the smoke in the background and at the end he's crying, he's got his headdress on. Right? "People create pollution, people can solve it." Keep America Beautiful campaign. It was one of the most successful PSAs ever, Public Service Announcement ever in history and he was so amped up and made popular by that he was hardly ever seen, people will say, look him up, hardly ever seen without his garb on. Iron Eyes Cody was his name. He dressed in the full regalia of his Indian heritage. He went on TV, he got bits in movies, he did special appearances on television shows. His whole life, he just loved being the icon of the Native American. Till his sister came out and said, "You know my brother and I grew up in Louisiana, we're full-blooded Italians."

There are a lot of people who want to conform for whatever the positive reason is. The reason, by the way, usually runs out by the time they get to college. But the reasons for them to continue to fake this thing called Christianity should not deceive you parents. Because you'd be looking for an interior change, a heart change. A change that flows from the inside out. We pray for that, we wrestle in prayer for that. We plead with our kids, we surround them with the Word.

I said both these goals that we want to just sketch out here need to come from Matthew 16. We got the first one from verse 26. Verse 27 in Matthew 16, you figure you know this one as well, it says, "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of the Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he's done." Let me read those together, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" That would be horrible. "What is a man going to give in exchange for his soul?" Well, everything and nothing because there's nothing you can give. "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels and the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he's done." Now you think, wow, I think about that, my soul, the future my soul, that must be referring to punishment in the Lake of Fire, and it certainly does. But Jesus talked more about the other side of that than any other person in the Scripture, and that is the fact that he's coming back to reward his saints. As the book of Revelation says, he's returning and it's time not only for the judgment of the sinners but the time for rewarding his saints according to their deeds. And I've already quoted Second Corinthians 5, let me quote it again. It starts with the concept of knowing that we all must appear before the Bema Seat of Christ. Knowing the fear of God, we're going to stand before him and give an account for all the deeds in our lives. To paint the picture that Paul paints in First Corinthians 3, our lives, from the time we place the foundation stone in place, as God graciously enables us to repent and believe, we have the foundation of Christ, and then on that we start building. My kids are building their Christian life from the time of genuine conversion and they start building. And they build with all varieties of things, decisions they make, investments they make, where they choose to go to school, what jobs they have, who they're going to marry. All those decisions are made, the big ones and the little ones and in that God looks at it from Heaven's perspective and says some of those decisions are gold, silver and precious stones. I love it. And some of them are wood, hay and straw. And the word

again is worthless.

And then there's going to be a day in which the quality of each person's work is going to be tested as though you took a house that was gold, silver, precious stones and wood, hay and straw and the rock foundation, Christ, and you blow torch the whole thing and whatever remains, then his reward will come to him. But all that other stuff is going to burn away. You can have a child that has not lost his soul. You can have a child that has a real relationship with Jesus Christ. But we are now directing them and aiming them into the future to build on that foundation in the decisions that they make so that at the end of time they stand before Christ and they are richly rewarded. And that means they are going to have to make a series of decisions that are going to invest in the right things that God highly values and not worry so much about giving their life, their time, their effort chasing all the things the world thinks are so important so that when they get there they have a house that's nothing but a lot of wood, hay and straw, because none of that's going to transfer, those dollars are not accepted on the other side. All that matters is, as Jesus put it, is storing up treasure in heaven. Get to work at that.

That's the second goal that I always have for my kids. I hope it's the goal you have for your kids. It should be the goal you have for every kid in our youth ministry. Every kid and our kids ministry, every child that grows up from our nursery.

Number 2, which is the third point, you need to "Aim At True Greatness." There's nothing I want more than my kids to be great. If that sounds overly ambitious, and it's really not in our day because people say that all the time, I'm not talking about this life, I'm talking about the next. Jesus was very clear about what real greatness was. And it really doesn't mesh very well with the values of this world. Real greatness. True greatness. I know many, many parents say, "I just want my kids to be happy." I think that's an ultimately ridiculous thing to say, you're aiming way too low when you say that, unless you add four words to it. You can add four words to it and it'll be great. I want my kids to be happy "in the New Jerusalem." Then we can salvage that. That's all I care about. Because in this world I know Jesus said, if you're going to please God you're going to be persecuted, you will have tribulation. But I want my kids to be great, I want them to be happy, I want them to have the most fantastic experience in the next life. That's the most important thing. I want the kids down the hall in our ministry right now being taught the foundational truth and being acquainted with sacred Scripture in our church, which we only get them for an hour or two a week, I want them to become acquainted with sacred Scripture and grow up to be great and happy in the New Jerusalem. It won't mean you're necessarily happier or great here. Matter of fact, Jesus said when they start to hate you, just remember they hated me first. No servant is greater than his master. I mean if they are that way to me they're going to be that way to you. What matters to me is if they're great in the kingdom.

In 1899 there was a little girl born named Mary Moody, Mary Moody in 1899. That was the fourth granddaughter of Dwight L. Moody. You know Dwight L. Moody, I hope, if not look him up. Very influential. Very effective servant of God. When he got news he was on the road traveling doing his thing, serving the Lord he got the news through a telegram that his fourth grandchild had been born and he wired this message back. This is the telegram from D.L. Moody on the birth of his fourth granddaughter. "Thankful for the news. May she become famous in the kingdom of heaven." That is the prayer of her grandfather.

Man, you're aiming way too low and you're way too short sighted if you just want your kids to be happy and have a good life. If what you mean by that is here. You need to envision, not only the last day of their life on this earth, which starts with the first goal, I want them to die with a hope in Christ, knowing where they're going. Then I want to picture the first day of eternity. I want to see them at the Bema Seat of Christ having praise heaped on them because they're highly valued in

God's eyes. I want them to hear this first, "Well done good and faithful servant." And then I want to hear that they are being richly rewarded with a rich welcome into the kingdom. And not everybody is going to get those things, you understand.

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." How do I do that? Let me just give you two real quick. This can be convicting for us in a world where we don't think much about our parenting as long as our kids are happy and not crying and screaming. How about this one? Jesus said, Matthew 20:26, "Whoever's going to be great among you." Ah, that's what I want for my kids. I want them to be great among the people of God, I want them to be great. Doesn't mean accolades, doesn't mean importance here, doesn't mean you get any fancy stuff here, it just means you're great in the economy, in the eyes of God. How do you do it? It says, "You have to be a servant." Be the servant of all. Let's just think about that. Saturating your kids with Scripture so that they come to faith in Christ. When you saturate them with the principles of Scripture, when they are saturated with the sacred writings of God, they are going to hear stuff like this, "You don't go to an event to be served. Jesus didn't. You go to an event to serve." Let's just think about that. When you pull up, let's just say it's a youth event here at the church. Do you pray in the car that they'll have a fantastic fun time or do you say I want them to be great in the kingdom. I'm going to start by impressing them with the values of real true greatness. And it starts by us recognize that we give, we expend, we spend and give our lives in service to other people. Luke 16:11. How you treat the resources of this world will determine how God invests in you with real resources in eternity. Right? If you're not faithful with the unrighteous temporal riches of this life he says, who's going to entrust you with true riches? So God is promising riches to people in the next life in varying degrees based on how they treat their resources here. So starting with the toys my little kid has and the toddlers in my home, I want to start by how you deal with your stuff is all about the testing that goes on in this life that will determine whether those decisions are wood, hay, straw or gold silver, precious stones.

"I want you to learn to take your allowance, your stuff, your space, your effort, your energy, your talents and see that as an opportunity to reflect Christ's likeness in your life." I want to train them to think that way, even before they get saved, even before their hearts are converted, so that when their heart is converted, as we see so often in so many people who tell their story and I read their Christian biographies, the foundation was laid, their heart was changed and the equipment was all just right there, because their parents had taught them well as to how to serve the Lord. Aim at true greatness. There's nothing I want more than for my kids to be great in the kingdom of heaven. I want them to be happy, but in the New Jerusalem. That's the real concern I have.

Yesterday I saw that the Little League World Series was going on. That took me back to the days when my boys were playing little league and I remember what that was like. I can only imagine as I see the screen with all those parents and all those people and people screaming and yelling and, you know, banners and stuff and I think to myself what that must be like. And I know as my kids stepped into the batter's box when they were in little league, I mean really concern that I should have is not the concern I do have because I've got opinions and I want to yell from the stands what I want my kid to do, of course I want my kid to hit a homerun and all that kind of stuff. And kids in the dugout have a certain agenda for that player and people all over, the opposing team has concerns, but really the only concern that any little league player should have is what my coach would want me to do at this at bat. That's the only thing that really matters. And there are a lot of parents in the stands who are trying to cheer their kids on and, of course, parents are the most influential people in the lives of those kids and often times they're only concerned with their agenda when in reality, this may sound very detached, but my concern for my kids, as I yell to them in this game of life, is I want you to hear the voice of the coach. All I want to do is echo what the coach is saying to you. Because it really doesn't matter what the kids in the dugout say. It doesn't matter what your teammates say. It just matters that you're getting the message. It may be through a third

base coach but you better make sure that it's coming from the coach and that's all I want to do is echo what the coach is saying. You'd better have through the din and cacophony of noise as you go about your decisions as a youth, as a teen and into your adult life, you better be able to filter out every other voice but the voice of the coach.

My job is not get my kids just to obey me. It's to obey me in the Lord. It's to hear the voice of God so that I can train them. And they can hear the sacred Scriptures through everything I say and my counsel and my influence in their lives. Paul said, we make it our aim to please the Lord because we will one day stand before the judgment or Bema Seat, the raised elevated platform of Christ, and give an account for what we do in our bodies.

Filtering out that din of competing voices was obviously with the parents and the synagogues of four teenage boys. It must have impressed upon the lives of them as they were shot into one of the darkest cultures of the fifth century B.C. of Babylon run by Nebuchadnezzar. You know them as Shadrack, Meshack, Abednego and Daniel. Their Hebrew names Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, these were boys that were sent to a dark, dark culture, shot out of the quiver of families and churches, if you will, synagogues, that were casting them into one of the darkest generations that particular segment of history had ever seen. And when they got there, probably completely detached from any ongoing influence of their parents when they got there, they heard the voice of God. When the palace chef was saying, eat this food and it was sacrificed to idols and it was off the kosher list they said, you know what, I'm going to hear the voice of God. I'm going to be faithful to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to put it in New Testament terms, I know my mission here and I'm undaunted by the pressure of a dark culture. Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael could have the king himself breathing down their neck saying, you bow to my idols, with a cauldron in the background fired up to throw them in and they can look him in the eye and say, "We don't have to answer you concerning this matter. We don't have to. Because we know our God is able to save us from your hands. But even if he doesn't, we're not going to bow down to your idols, we're not going to serve your idols."

We need kids down the hallway, kids in your home, the grand kids that you have the pictures up at your house, we need those children to have real conversion experiences and then become great in the kingdom and you don't get that by fitting in, you don't get that by all the accolades that the world gives, you get that by being acquainted with the sacred Scriptures and having parents and adults in their lives that are passionate about communicating these things in daily, consistent, faithful ways.

Our future does look bright in our church because of the promises of God. Our jobs are to be faithful. Faithful for ourselves and faithful to prepare the next generation.

Let's pray. God, as we get this series started, a short series but an important one, I pray it would be a great, great boost for us to redouble our efforts on what's important. To say, here are some things I need to do that maybe I wasn't doing just in terms of exposing my kids to the truth of the Bible, talking more about what the Scripture says as it relates to our need for salvation. The horrible, horrible, egregious nature of sin and how it's an offense to a holy God. The riches of your rewards that are coming for those who trust you and serve you. The great thing it is to be famous in the kingdom of God by standing strong amid any opposition. Being able to stand with the greats who we should recognize and hail as people who were arrows in a culture as we would put it the New Testament, lights in a dark place, salt on an earth that desperately needed that restraining factor. That life that was willing to stand strong no matter the cost.

So God we pray for more of that to come from those who we touch, whether directly in our homes,



indirectly through the ministries of this church, these kids ministries that are so great and they're filled with kids this morning. So help us God to get excited about this and to put these things into practice as we get more details and specifics in the weeks to come, I just pray today we would set our hearts on the goals. And that we'd know that now is the time.

In Jesus name, amen.