



Christian Parenting-Part 2

The Need for a Godly Launch Pad

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Well there is no GPS for space ships. Or so one article put it when it was writing about the challenges of modern space exploration. There's no GPS for spaceships. You see if you are going to try and aim your rocket at some rendezvous point out in space, like say the International Space Center, you can't be sitting in the cockpit and just pull up your Waze app and punch in the destination and find your way there. There's no convenient way to do that. Now I know there is this thing called the Deep Space Network that consists of a bunch of terrestrial towers, radio towers in Spain, Australia and California but it is far from the technology and the precision that you get when you just pull up the GPS on the dashboard of your car. It is very difficult when it comes to shooting rockets if you're aiming at the moon or you're aiming at a satellite, trying to get to space station or some distant planet, I mean the timing and the precision of your aiming and the speed and the trajectory of what you're doing on that launch pad is absolutely critical. You've heard the phrase "missed it by a mile?" Well if you're off on the launch pad at the launching of some kind of rocket you're going to miss it by a whole lot more than a mile. Case in point, NASA, not too many years ago, put together a big project, a \$125M orbiter. It was called the Mars Climate Orbiter and they shot it in the wrong direction. Now, they were just off by a little bit.

The guys here at JPL in Pasadena, they had gotten the data from the Denver Lockheed engineers and unfortunately there was a little snafu. You can read about it and all, how they read that data and all of a sudden when they shot that thing up in the sky. They were just a little bit off on their calculations. And the Mars Climate Orbiter is poorly named because it's nowhere near Mars. It's floating somewhere in the outer recesses of the cold vacuum of interplanetary space. They really have no idea where it's at at this point. It's lost.

Aiming. You better be sure that you aim things in the right direction particularly valuable things like \$125M satellite.

Well, your children and your grandchildren and all the children who are packed into these rooms down the hall and across the parking lot are far more valuable than a Mars Climate Orbiter. They are precious cargo that God gives us a resource that's far more valuable than anything we could ever possess and these lives are very critical in God's eyes and as we started last time we were together and looking at the art of aiming our children, it is critical that the launching pad be pointed in the right direction. The launching pad, of course, is our homes. If you have a child that you were raising and he's still in your home and she's still in your home, you have an opportunity to direct those lives and thankfully there is a lot of data that has been sent to us that we dare not misread or misunderstand or take lightly and not triple check our calculations and preparations because we cannot afford to misread these instructions about the course of our own children. So today I want to give you a refresher course by looking at four passages together this morning. You'll see them there printed on your worship packet worksheet. I'd love to go through these one at a time to build together a quick look at some of the data of the New Testament about what's so important about these homes that launch kids. Now, if you're already done with the phase of your life where your kids were in your home, don't fall asleep, don't play some kind of game on your phone right now.

I'd love for you to pay attention because your concern, your prayerful concern, your prayer list should all be impacted by what we hear this morning from God's Word. A sampling of some of the instructions that you ought to be very concerned that every kid that grows up in our church or, if you got a bigger heart than that, every kid that grows up in every Bible teaching church around this

world, it needs a foundation like the one we're going to describe here this morning. So take your Bibles and firstly let's turn to Romans Chapter 11, we'll just look at one verse. I rarely pop into a passage and try to make any significant point just by looking at a single verse. I love the context and getting the context. But if you know anything about your Bibles, you'll know that Romans Chapter 9 through Chapter 11 is filled with some very rich, deep, theological truths about the eschatological plan God has for Israel and the Gentiles and the church and where things are moving and how this all works and what about, you know, the promises to Abraham. All of this is very deep and very interesting and very heady in many ways theologically and in the middle of all that, or actually I should say, near the end of all of that, the apostle Paul, guided by the Spirit, breaks out in what we call linguistically a doxological statement. He comes out with a statement of glory and praise, that's what the Greek word "doxa" means, glory, in praising God because thinking of all these things that God is doing, managing all these big plans for nations and organizations like the church, he stands back and says this guided by the Spirit, verse number 36 and you'll see the superlative words in this particular phrase that remind us it applies to much more than just the eschatological plans for the nation of Israel.

It certainly applies to everything that you come in contact with everyday including your own kids or your grandkids or the kids down the hallway in this building right here. It says, "For from him," look at it with me, Romans 11:36, "and through him and to him are," here's the superlative, "all things," all things. "To him be glory," here's another superlative, this is going to be a statement of truth for all time. It is timeless. This is to be "forever."

For from him are all things and through him are all things and to him are all things and to him ought to be, here's the goal, "Glory forever." "For from him," that's a statement of origin. Right? We know all things come from him, if you think about your kids, that's the topic on the table, those children, we can think of several passages, they are a gift from God. If God does not grant them, if God does not give them, Psalm 127, they are something that God gives to your family. That is something you should stand back and say, God has given us these children. All things are from him. Just like the nation of Israel, just like the Gentile, just like the church, just like all that it is in the immediate context of this passage. And all things are through him. That's a statement of sustaining power. God is often said, as Paul said in Acts 17 to the Athenian professors, none of us exist were it not for the sustaining work of God. In him we live and move and have our being. Colossians says, in him, Christ, all things hold together, everything is sustained through him. And if you go in and wake up a kid this morning and drag him off to church, his eyes open, if her eyes open and she wakes up, the Bible says, that is the sustaining work of God. God is the one keeping that person alive. God sustains all things. All things are through him.

Now those things are indicative, they're true, they're always true. Now here's a statement of intention on God's part, "and all things are to him." All things are to him. The whole point and purpose of all things is to be, as the last phrase says, to the glory of God. Glory, doxa, the concept of importance, of significance. Everything is about God's significance. Everything is about casting a spotlight on God's greatness. As self-centered as that sounds, he's the uniquely qualified one for all things to be about. It's not egotistical, it's just right. It's the Greek word "teleios." It is what it ought to be, that God is the center of all things because he is uniquely qualified to be the center of all things. All things came from him, all things are sustained through him and all things find their purpose and their design to him. To what? To his glory. This is what I call number one and it is the fundamental starting point for every launching pad that wants to launch a kid in the right direction. It should be that we should have God-centered homes. Number one, if you don't have one let's get to building one. We need to build a God-centered home. Now, I know that's a catch phrase. I understand that's often used without definition. But what I mean by that is that you need to rightly calibrate your home so that you are centered on, focused on, aimed at God's purposes. What God

wants is what we want. I'm aligning my focus, my thoughts, my purpose to God.

A God-centered home. God is the hub. You say, "Well, yeah, we're trying that but the kids sure are demanding and you know they are kind of cute and grandma and grandpa say they're the cutest kids in the world and so, you know, they demand a lot of our attention. And it really seems practically, I have to admit, that really a lot of things have to, you know, kind of revolve around them. So, you know, I'd like to theoretically be committed to a God-centered home but practically speaking, you know, there are lot of things Johnny needs, a lot of things Susie needs and so we focus on that." So, this is what's called a child-centered home and the world's all about that because they don't understand that all things are from him, through him and to him, so most families are really focused on their kids for a lot of reasons. It's not always grandpa's fault. But I tell you, there's a lot of focus it seems on the fact that these kids are so adorable and we love them so much we really want this to be for their good, for their happiness, for their fulfillment, and when it comes to this god thing, yeah I'll check that box at church and say, yeah it is kind of theoretically for that, but practically, the decisions we make are for the happiness, the good, the prosperity and the advancement of my kids. That's called a kid-centered home and that's unbiblical. And if you say, "Well, it's just practically necessary. How about we have two purposes? We'll purpose to serve God and it's about him, but will also purpose to really be about the welfare of Johnny and Susie." Well, if you do that, you're doing something in your mind that is absolutely impossible in practice. Jesus put it this way and we studied it not long ago in Luke 16:13. He says, "You cannot serve two masters." And in this concept it's about what is this for? Who calls the shots here? What is the purpose? As you calibrate your thoughts as to the purpose, the focus, the meaning of things, is this for this, letter A, or is it for this, letter B? You can't have two hubs. No wheel can have two hubs. Everything has got to focus and rotate around something. And in that passage it says, if you don't understand that, think of that concept of a wheel or think practically in the decisions that you make, it's going to come down to, eventually, A versus B. He says you'll "either hate the one," in some situations and you'll "love the other." That may be an extreme way to put it, let's soften it a little bit. Next phrase, Jesus said, or you'll "be devoted," you'll show loyalty to the one and then you'll "despise" or you'll think less of "the other." You're going to have a problem and you better make a decision outright and just say, listen, if I'm a Christian and my calling is to live for God and I get married, now my marriage is for God, if I have kids, now my kids are for God, this home needs to be, under this roof, the whole purpose of this Christian family is to understand that we are from God, we are sustained through God and then our purpose, this is something I can get involved in, in my volition and my decisions, is for the purpose of God. So I am here to live for him. We're here to please him. We're here for the advancement of whatever his agenda is. That's a decision you need to make, just like Joshua did when he stood there and he said, you know what, you can serve the gods of the Amorites and the gods of your fathers across the river, "But as for," what did he say, "me and my house, were going to serve the Lord." And that's more than just buying a plaque in the bookstore and putting it up in the entryway of your house. This needs to be something you are praying regularly. It needs to be something you think about and you say, listen, if I just default I'm going to default to, most people do, at least in the younger years of their kids lives, and for today's world it's right on into their teenage and sometimes even their college years, most people default to having a child-centered house, which means they evaluate decisions, expenditures, things about their time, their vacations, their recreation, around what the kids want, about what they think is going to advance the good and the welfare of those kids. It's all about kids. Kids are number one. You've got to make a decision like Joshua and a resolve and make it as firmly as he did and then you need to say and maybe look in the mirror and just repeat it to yourself. Man, you could serve a lot of things, you could serve your kids, you could serve your job, you could serve any kinds of gods that are out there, but as for me and my house we're going to make this as a firm decision and resolve in my heart. And if you and your wife, you and your husband can say this together, how much more powerful a resolution it will be. As for me and my house we're going to serve the Lord.

Now you got to go about a lot of things in your life and if you can't see the connection between having a mind that is calibrated to serve God and all the things you have to do. You have to go to work, you have to weed the yard, you have to, you know, change the oil in your car. You have to do a lot of things. But the Bible says even if you're eating and drinking and fueling your own body, you ought to be able to do it, now I'm quoting First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 31, you ought to be able to do it for the glory of God. There ought to be something in your mind that says even if I have to eat, even as I fill out my tax forms, even if I have to go shopping for food, the point of this household is we're here to serve God.

That can be a life redirecting decision on the part of parents. And I tell you what, you want to direct your kids in the right direction? I want them to look back on their home and say, "You know what, I grew up in a God-centered home." That's what you want your kids to grow up saying. It will put them on the right path.

Now you've already seen that I got a 4-point message and that scared you because you know how I preach. Let me add some dread to your heart right now. I've got four sub-points here under number one and it gets worse because I have four sub-points for every one of these four points this morning. I say that, not to tell you we'll be here all afternoon, but to tell you that I understand that and I going to do my best to get through this swiftly. Ready? Four quick implications of having a God-centered home. "A" let's go "A" "B" "C" and "D." Ready?

Number one. Then we need to remind ourselves it's not about us. There needs to be a constant reminder in my life, letter "A" that "This Family Is Not About Us." I want my kids to understand from the earliest of ages it's not about you. We don't make decisions based on you. We don't make decisions based on me. We don't make decisions based on whether or not it's going to be best for you. We don't make decisions on whether or not it is going to be best for me. We make decisions under this roof as to whether or not we think ultimately this will please the Lord, if this will be something that will advance his purpose. We calibrate our thoughts and say the focus in this home is on God, therefore we understand it's about him. You want two words that will show whether or not you've got a God-centered home as it relates to that implication? Here are two words for you: "humility" and "contentment." Humility and contentment. To the extent that you see those virtues coming out of this resolve then you'll start to say, I'm on track. Why? Because humility is the concept that really it's not about me. There's not a sense like, "Well, I didn't get what I wanted this summer. I don't get what I want in this decision." There will be a lot less of that. There'll be a humility about the fact that we are servants of the Lord. In this house we've chosen to serve the Lord so servants don't always get what they want. And secondly, if that's the case, there'll be contentment. There'll be much more contentment in your house in a God-centered home than a child-centered home and a guarantee your kids will be much more content in a God-centered home than a child-centered home. And how counter intuitive is that? Are you following this? Some people want their kids to be content. They may not use that word, satisfied and happy. They will be less happy in a God-centered home, less content and satisfied in a God... I mean less content in a child-centered than a God-centered home. And that's a mouthful of words that I probably lost you on because I lost myself in the middle of that. I said it wrong. But you got it, right? See? Just read my thoughts, don't read my words, apparently.

Your kids, when you choose to have a child-centered home purposing to chase their happiness, you will develop someone who knows nothing of contentment. You will feed it as it says in Ecclesiastes. The more you feed that, "I just want make you happy. I just want to satisfy you," you'll drive that hunger. There will be less contentment. I want contented kids who can live without the latest this or the best that or the fastest this and therefore, that means having a God-centered home



gives them that sense that we are servants, it's not about us, it's about God and therefore they learn to be content with what they have. Eventually they learn the secret of contentment having a lot or having a little. We don't chase happiness in our home, we chase the pursuit of the fulfillment of our purpose and our purpose is to please God.

Letter "B". We'll "Remember Often That God Is Great." We'll remind ourselves often that it's not about us and we'll remember often that God is great. If I understand that all things are from him and all things are through him and therefore all things are to be to him, those first two points remind me that my life should be filled with, here's two words that characterize this one, "thanksgiving" and "worship." My home will be characterized by those two things. At least a lot more than a child-centered home or a mom and dad-centered home or a money-centered home or career-centered home or an education-centered home. My home would be a God-centered home if I resolve to say, I am all about God, not about me and I realize the greatness of God because he gives us every good and perfect gift. Everything we have for our enjoyment has been given from his hand. I don't live another day without his active, sustaining power. He gives me life and breath and everything else. There'll be a lot of thanksgiving, a lot of thanksgiving. When we bow our knees to pray at night or when we sit there around the table and we pray as a family, you know what, you're going to hear a lot of "Thanks for this" and "God, thanks for that." And while we may not have, you know, the Von Trapp family singers and we're not all breaking out in hymns of praise around the house, we'll recognize this, there's a lot of real gratitude and expressions of thanksgiving to God that are in essence worship and praise. So what we want is a house that's characterized by those things because we remember often that God is great.

Letter "C". If my life is all about God then "I Will Want To Know Him Better." We as a family will want to know God better, Letter "C". A God-centered home is not only humble and content, they know it's not about them. Not only do they thank God a lot and worship God a lot because they know God is great, all things come from him and all things are sustained through him, but they recognize this: this great God that I'm supposed to be living for, I'd like to know him better. You want two words for that? I think you already know them. "Bible" and "prayer."

My family's going to be characterized by more Bible and more prayer than a family that is not God-centered because I want to know this God who we are called to live for. Not only do I want to know the one who's giving me all these things that I have, but I certainly want to know who he is and what his will is. Therefore, we're going to study the Bible in our house and there is going to be a lot of prayer in our house because I can't really complete that relational connection with God unless, as the psalmist put it, "I'm pouring out my heart to God in prayer."

So we're going to want to do a lot of praying, not just for the means of thanksgiving but just in the process of getting to know personally this God of the Bible. And you can't know the God who is without knowing the God who has revealed himself in the pages of Scripture, that means I'm going to know God's Word.

Letter "D". "We're Going To Want To Serve This God Better." We're going to want to serve this God better. It's not just about knowing him, it's about serving him. If the purpose is, not just to know that we're from him and through him, maintained, but we're also for the purpose of living for his glory. I want to make that count. I can't do anything about the "from him" part, can't do anything really about the "through him" part, he's going to sustain me or not sustain me, but I can do something in my life, humanly speaking, about the "to him" part. So I would like to know how I can glorify him in specific ways. Now, I should be able to glorify him when I eat and drink. Right? From changing the oil on the car, it doesn't matter. I should be able to glorify him but not the way I can, very effectively and efficiently, if I choose the things that I'm doing. What can I do that will



most effectively and efficiently glorify him? You know what that's going to lead to? Two big words in the Bible, "evangelism" and "discipleship." You'll see a lot of that. We'll want to share the gospel with people because I know he's all about that, his desire is to see people saved. And he, not only wants us to be all about the great commission, the first half of it, making disciples, he wants us to be teaching others to obey all that God commanded. That's called discipleship. We want to see people taught the principles and precepts of God's Word.

Building a God-centered home. You want eight words that describe it? Humility, contentment, thanksgiving and worship, prayer and Bible study, evangelism and discipleship. Those are words that will come out of a mindset that says, it's not about us, God is great, I want to know him better and I'd like to serve him better.

All that stems from a fundamental, philosophical, theological foundation that all things are from him, all things are through him and all things are to him.

Number two. Matthew Chapter 19. Turn there with me. There's no way I can talk about the launching pad without talking about something that I know is going to make some of you very uncomfortable. I apologize for your discomfort but I cannot avoid this topic if I'm going to talk about launching our children in the right direction. Matthew Chapter 19. The topic on the table is something that may surprise you moderns because you may think that this whole problem, an epidemic of divorce, is a new phenomenon. It is not. It was an ancient phenomenon, it was going on all the time. People made romantic and covenantal vows to one another and decided at some point, because it was weakened, it was impaired, because they weren't happy, they wanted to have a dissolution of those vows, that's called divorce. It's been going on, not only since Jesus' day as we'll read in this passage, since Moses' day and it's been going on before that. But when Moses gave the law about marriage and has revealed information about the origins of mankind and the crafting of men and women to engage in this thing called marriage, here is this concern as they're trying to trap Jesus. Now there's a whole counter-narrative here going on about them trying to trap him in all of this. But the question is on the table and we learn a lot about Jesus' response to what he thinks of the weakening, the impairment, the damage, the dissolution of marital vows. Here's what he says. Start in verse 3, Pharisees came up him to test him. And again we could preach on that another time but there's an answer they're looking for, they want to trap him.

But they ask a legitimate question nevertheless. "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" Now, you can glance down to verse 7, and they're going to come back with Moses' command in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, Deuteronomy and Exodus. They know what's in there and they're going to try to trap him. Now they know it's not the ideal, but they're also knowing there is that stipulation in the Law about divorce. So, what's he going to do? Well, he's going to talk about the ideal and he's going to strenuously, strenuously affirm the permanence of marriage. He says, "Have you not read," verse 4, "that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female." How binary of you to say such things in a day of gender fluidity. I know people think Jesus didn't talk about gender. He was very clear about the binary nature of gender.

Nevertheless, he says, now quoting Genesis 2:24 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife." Now this is English that we're reading translated from the Greek New Testament. This was a quotation from the Hebrew Old Testament in the Hebrew vocabulary, you can take your Bible software and click on all these verbs and nouns in this passage and the verbs in particular are the strongest ones we can find for leaving and cleaving. And cleaving is what's on the table here. When it comes to divorce that's a dissolution of a vow, that's a dissolution of a covenantal commitment. And here he says, what we are called for as binary genders, male and female, come together in marriage and to be "held fast" is the way the English translates that Greek



phrase, "and the two," here's the mind-blowing part, "shall become one flesh."

"The two shall become one flesh." They are no longer two but one flesh. He's trying to emphasize the fact here that though there may be two individuals that seem to, just follow my silly example, are two lives existing in two separate file folders, those file folders now are replaced with one file folder and those two lives merged together in something God now sees as a unit.

And slips it right back into the annals of humanity. Here now is a married couple. You may not even invited God to your wedding. I don't know. Doesn't matter.

The Bible says it very clearly here, "What therefore God joined together..." I know you thought it was the Orange County clerk or the courthouse or the clergy or the judge or the captain of the ship you were on or, you know, Elvis at the marriage chapel in Vegas or whatever you thought was joining you together, it was God. God does this. Your decision, you pulled the form, someone signed it, you had witnesses. The Bible says God was involved in that. Two file folders, now into one, one file folder. Those two lives, one unit. "What God has joined together, let man not separate." And he said to him, when they said, the Pharisees rather, "Why did Moses then command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away." There is a stipulation in the Law about divorce. Why that?

Jesus said, verse number 8, "Because I knew you'd get tired or your spouse and you might have irreconcilable differences and so I thought you might want an upgrade. So that's why God gave you that option." No! He didn't see this as a good thing. He saw it as something indicative of a very bad thing. He calls it the "hardness of your heart." We couldn't fix this, we couldn't repair it, we couldn't have reconciliation, we couldn't have forgiveness, we couldn't see lives changed. The hardness of your hearts, that's why Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. "But, from the beginning it was not so." God made the point at the beginning. This relationship is not to be dissolved.

I know I gave you one passage but you've got to jot this one down next door to it. Malachi Chapter 2. My point here this morning is to talk about the launching pad, which clearly is a foundational, relational core: husband, wife, marriage. It is the launching pad for children. "Well, where does children fit into this? This passage says nothing about children." You're right. Malachi Chapter 2. Let me read for your verses 14 and 15. Malachi 2:14-15. It says, "The Lord is a witness between you and the wife of your youth." How is that? "To whom you have been faithless. Though she is your companion and your wife by covenant." Again, God sees himself as part of the equation when you stood there and made a covenantal vow to someone and he's standing as a witness. I know he wasn't in your groomsmen or your bridesmaid party, but he was there as a witness and he was there sanctioning this relationship, two file folders, one file folder, one new unit. He was making that happen and he now stands as a witness. He stood up in your wedding party. "Did he not make them one?" There it is again. "Didn't he make them one," listen to this, "with a portion of the Spirit," capital "S", "in the union?" God then mixed his Spirit in that, even if you are a non-Christian, even if you eloped, God took his Spirit and said, "Great. Here's a covenantal vow in marriage. Male, female, together, marriage. Now, I've now had my Spirit mixed in there. Now this file folder is no longer two, it's one, the contents of that human thing. We've made a family here. We have a new relationship.

Here's the telling thing in this passage as it relates to our topic this morning, and what was the one God, in other words we have one God, what's his purpose in all? What was he seeking? In other words, why is he so big on the permanence of marriage? Two words, "godly offspring." That's mind-blowing. Godly offspring. He needed a launching pad for the next generation and instead of just having kids pop out of the ground like a turnip, right? Without having them fall off a tree like



an orange, not having them crawl out of your ear at night and creating babies independently of anyone. He said two people together in a covenantal relationship through the biology of this thing called sex, we're going to have a child drop into this relationship and in this context that God designed from the beginning this will be the foundational context in which, what comes up? Godly offspring. They're going to have a track to run on because a faithful husband and a faithful wife are committed to the permanence of their relationship.

Therefore, "Guard yourselves," he says to the individuals listening to this for the first time in the fourth century before Christ. "In your spirit guard yourself and let none of you," none of you, "be faithless to the wife of your youth." "Well, that was the problem. I was really young, I didn't know what I was doing and she's really changed." God says I know you were young and stupid. Right? But you made a covenant and the Spirit was there and you didn't invite him but God officiated it, God was the witness to it, God was the one making you one. That relationship is important for the sake of your children.

Now I know elsewhere we see it's important for a lot of other reasons, big theological reasons like a pattern of Christ in the church. I understand all of that. But in this passage, two words why all this "permanence?" Why all this "union?" Why "two become one?" Godly offspring.

Number two, you need to "Invest In A Strong Marriage." Number two, you need to invest in a strong marriage. It is so critically important. Now I preach to a generation that is not a lot different than the first generation or the fifteenth century before Christ when people were divorcing their spouse because they couldn't stand it anymore. And here I am talking about raising children in the middle of a series on that. And I'm looking out of the eyes of people that I know, many of you, are divorced, have been divorced, you're a single parent, you're a blended family, you've got step parents. I understand that's where you're at. So let me make the first implication in these four sub-points, Letter "A" directed to you. OK? For broken or blended families, let me say this, broken and blended families. You better work over time to strengthen your home. You better work over time to strengthen your launching pad.

See, when things go wrong that are critically important for the direction of your children, much like Apollo 13, there's a movie to watch tonight. Go home and watch that afresh. When things go wrong and you're trying to get yourself to a particular destination, you'd better work overtime, more sweat, more creativity, more hard work. You were just sitting back checking off a list. You now have to go to work to do what you can. Get the duct tape out and start doing what you can to make the best of that broken situation.

Now, God can do great things even in the midst of that. I've been blessed, parents married over 50 years, stability of a home, faithful parents, that's awesome. My wife came from a very different environment. And when I met her, as some of you know, when she was 15 years old, we went through high school and we dated in college, we got married.

I know what it's like to look into the eyes of my wife and know her background and hear many things about that background where she was, even when I knew her as a high schooler, bouncing back and forth from two locations, having two addresses, step mom, step dad. All the struggles of, you know, joint custody and shared custody and visitation. I know all of that and I can tell you this, even though I have a fantastic and wonderful wife, the kinds of things that have been established in her life have happened in spite of the negativity of a broken home. And it may feel like in broken and shattered home or a blended family that you're trying to raise kids with one hand tied behind your back because look at all the dynamics of how hard it is with one biological parent and one step parent in the home. And look at the problems of visitation and look at that other jerky ex-spouse of

mine that's messing everything up and I do good for three days and then they get him. Or I do good for a week and then he gets them on the weekend and messes it up. I know it's hard but you better work overtime. Think duct tape. Not to put it over the mouth of your ex, but think duct tape to rebuild what you have. You may have your kids for three days or two days a week in your home. You better do the best you can.

I get to parent with two hands, so to speak. You may be parenting with one. You are just going to have to work harder. Picture that Apollo 13. You're going to have to work because everything hangs on the direction and your responsibility of directing them on the right path. Things are broken here in the cockpit. Do your best. Let's make it stable. I don't care if you're working on spouse number five. Can we make this one work? Let's make this one work. Do you still got kids in your home? Let's do the best we can to establish a foundation in their lives. Broken and blended families work over time to strengthen your home.

Letter "B". Let's make these real short. Two words apiece. Letter "B". There ought to be in your home "Marital Preeminence." Number two, Letter "B", marital preeminence. What does that mean? That means the relationship in your home between husband and wife should be the most valued relationship in the house. And again, that's why I tell you this is what kids need, the permanence and preeminence of marriage. The preeminence of marriage means that your kid intuitively understands that your relationship with your spouse is more important than your relationship with him or her. Did you catch that? That's heresy to the rest of the world. And when they ditch their spouse because they can't take it anymore, they get down on one knee, they look into Junior's eyes and they say, "Listen, I know I hate your dad now." OK? Of course you don't say it that way, you've got better words but that's what you are feeling. "But I sure love you. And I know mommy and daddy aren't going to live together anymore, but I'll always be your mom or I'll always be your dad." That rings hollow in the heart of a kid. I understand you got to do the best you can. And if you from a broken or blended home, do the best you can. Let's help each other. Let's let grandparents step in. If you want a story I don't have time for it. But even my own wife's bringing up, her trajectory, her launch was more affected by her grandparents than her parents. I can just say that outright without creating a lot of problems with my in-laws in this sermon, let me just say, the grandparents were key and you would be sitting here saying, "Ouch, ouch, this hurts because my kids, my grown kids are divorced, my grandkids are growing up in a broken or blended house, you can be a big part of the solution to that stability and that strengthening of the platform for your kids.

But if you're married, even if it's your third or fourth wife, which I hope it's not, but if you're like, I hope, like with me, you've have the wife of your youth, I want you to make it clear in the eyes and minds of Johnny and Susie that your relationship with your spouse is the preeminent relationship under that roof. So important.

Letter "C". "Marital Priority." That may sound like I'm saying the same thing in a different way. I mean something different here. Marital preeminence means that my kid knows I love mommy more than I love you. And I've said it to them many, many times. I love mommy more than I love you. Now I love you, I think you're pretty cool but I love your mommy a lot more. This is the preeminent relationship under this roof. But secondly, I want you to know that the priority is mommy. I want you to know that my priority, let's think that in terms of valuing relationship, let's think in terms of investing myself, my investment in my spouse is a higher priority than my investment in my kids. Again, heresy to the non-Christian who doesn't understand that all things are from him, through him and to him. But for Christians this should make perfect sense. A God-centered home recognizes that my priority is with him. Now, I know kids are demanding, they take a lot of time. But if my kid understands that mommy gets no time in dad's life or daddy gets no time in mom's life because their time is all invested in me, not only do they think they're the center of the world and it is all about



them, but they soon recognize something that chips away at the foundational security they need as little kids.

To understand that really, when it comes down to it, I'm more than happy, and I'll just say this outright, to miss my kid's little league game, which I know, again, is sacrilegious and blasphemy for a lot of Orange County parents, because I haven't had a date night with my wife this week and we're going to Cheesecake Factory and I hope your game goes well, and if you break an arm call me, but we're going out to dinner. Ask my kids about that. I did not make every game, I didn't go to every recital, I didn't go to every concert and sometimes not only for ministry sake but basically because I haven't had time with your mom.

I've said it many times when my kids were little and they would come to me crying and have that separation anxiety and I'm going on my date and I know they couldn't understand much but I take their little crying, snotty, little face and I'd say, "Listen, I know you don't want me going out with your mommy tonight for another date night this week but here's the thing, I want you to have this same unpleasant encounter with my grandchildren as you take your wife on date night when they don't want you to go." I need them to realize that what's more important and most important in terms of their priority is their spouse. That sounds counterintuitive. How in the world can you create just the right environment for my kid in my home. It is the right thing. It is the biblical thing. It is the godly thing. My spouse comes before my kids in preeminence and priority. And lastly, I just need to say one thing about this that we started with. It's all about marital permanence, marital permanence. Preeminence, priority, and permanence. I want my marriage in every way in my kid's minds to know mommy and daddy are going the duration. We are going to be together. As the Scripture says, one day I'm headed for a divorce with my children, am I not? They're supposed to leave and cleave to their own new family. But one thing I'm not in any way predicted to do on the timeline of my marriage is to sever with my wife. Therefore, this is the permanent relationship, this is a temporary relationship. And if you're gonna report me to child protective services because you think he neglected his kid he didn't go to the recitals and, man, he really demeaned the relationship, I guarantee you, this is the best climate in which to raise your kids. It's not about neglect. It's not about not caring for and nurturing your children. It's about them realizing that when it comes down to it, I'm shooting you off like an arrow but I still got my arm around your mom and we're going the distance, "'Til Death Do Us Part." If you can create that perspective, even if you've already gone through a round or two and not done so well in the past, let's make this one work, strengthen your marriage. If it's cracked or broken, let's fortify the launching pad.

Number three. Hebrews 10. You got to "Utilize God's Church." You know Hebrews 10. I wrote down verses 24 and 25 as a reference but maybe I should add verse 23 because really it sets it up. Verse 23 says this, "We ought to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." You want a phrase that helps transfer over to this analogy of staying on a trajectory, on a track that we're supposed to be on. I want my faith, I want my commitment and my hope to stay without wavering. I want to stay right on course, I want to stay out of the ditches. How do I do that? Verses 24 and 25. I got to be involved in the church. I got "to stir up one another to love and good deeds, I need to not neglect meeting together, as some do," he sadly says, "but I've got to encourage one another, all the more as you see the Day approaching." Now if I need that in my Christian life and all the more as the competing forces of culture are trying to kick me off line of my godliness and the trajectory of my spiritual growth, what about my kids? Do they need that? Absolutely.

Iron sharpens iron. I need my kids around peers, not just brothers and sisters, not just moms and dads. But they need to be around a whole community of people who are called to walk on the same track they're called on. They need the church. Utilize the church. When it comes down to it, few things should be more important than for you recognizing early on in your parenting that what your



kids need is an active involvement in the church. This is critical.

You couldn't watch what was going on at Cape Canaveral, remember all the launches we've seen in our day? Cape Canaveral, they're shooting off this thing, all the focus is there. But I guarantee you, you're not going to watch that for more than five minutes without hearing about Houston, Houston, Houston, Houston. See, halfway across the country was a set of tactical engineers and all these Jet Propulsion guys and all these navigators and everyone was there and all of this going on. Halfway across the country was the tactical planning and support to what was going on on the launch pad. Critically important.

Now I know it seems like most of the action in parenting is between the four walls of your house when you've got kids there under your roof, that's where the parenting takes place, you're right. But there's a building, halfway across town for you, that gives tactical support, strategic input to what's going on in your home. You have to take advantage of this thing. If you neglect the church, and arrogantly as some people do with home churching and all these other ridiculous trends of modern Christianity, if you neglect the church, this entity that is described and constructed and architected by God in the Bible, you're really turning your nose up at most of the New Testament because it is given within the context of the church being the functional community by which the household gets its support and encouragement.

It is like a brace, it is the "parakaleo" that word I've told you so many times about, it's the a coming along side and being that supplemental support for keeping your kids and your life on track.

Four things. Letter "A". Utilize God's church. Letter "A". Make sure your "Kids Are Being Impacted By The Church." Make sure your kids are being impacted by the church. If your kids are in your Christian God-centered home they need to understand that they need to come to church and make sure that church is having an effect on their Christian life, or their pre-Christian life if they're not saved. You need to make sure that you are having them involved in enough programs and enough of the ministries in that church and the events, that they're having an impact, it's influencing them. Houston has to influence Cape Canaveral, it has to.

But unlike Cape Canaveral and the Houston example, there's something in church that is very different than just coming to get and to feed and nourish someone's knowledge of God for their progress toward salvation or sanctification. They need to learn, as Jesus did, to not just come to be served but to serve. Letter "B". You need to make sure "Your Kids Are Impacting The Church." "Impacted? My kid is just little." Great. If your kid can walk and carry something he can in some way utilize his effort and his energy to help the church, to impact the church for good. I mean, I hope I've been a good example, from the time my kids were little, I mean if they could move a chair, if they could hand out a bulletin, if they could do something, you're here to serve. Like we talked about last week, the value of Christ was not just to come to be served, it's to serve. That's true greatness. I want them to learn that process. There's a whole community of people that exist outside of the walls of this house and we need to go and regularly do something to impact them for good.

Letter "C". Two words, "Require It." Require it. Require it. Require. Require it. Do you know that word? Require it. Require it. A conversation I have all the time with parents, are you ready for this?

Parent: "Pastor Mike. My tween or my pre-teen or my teenager, doesn't want to go to church anymore."

Pastor Mike: "Make them."



Parent: "I can't make them. I've tried. They won't go."

Pastor Mike: "What would you do if your kid refused to go to school?"

Parent: "I'd make them."

When I have that conversation, which I've had my whole ministry, I understand there's a categorical, definitional error in their thinking, that is filtered from mom and dad to child and the child recognizes, "I can't say to my parents, I'm done with school." Because if your junior higher comes and says, "I'm done with school," your sixth grader comes and says, "I'm done with school." If they say, "There are a lot of cliques at school. I'm done with school. It's not fun anymore for me. I'm done with school." The kid knows that in your mind the category of importance in their thinking has been derived from you, either directly or indirectly, and they understand they're going to be made. Now they don't know what that means because I hope many of you haven't had to drag your kid by the nape of the neck to school and drop them off and go, "There, you went to school today." But they think it might come to that. And your kids believe you would probably do something like that because in your mind the categorical necessity of school is way up here. Churches is down here. If you've taught your kids that the church has to be about fun, recreation and entertainment, you've made a huge mistake. Because as soon as it's not fun, entertaining or recreating for them, they're going to go, "I'm not going to go there anymore." My kid comes home and says, "There are a lot of cliques in in junior high, I'm not going anymore." I'm going to say, "I don't care." But if they come from church and say, "There are a lot of cliques there, don't like it, don't fit in." You go, "Well, OK, well I can't really make you." No. If they're eating out of your refrigerator, if they're sleeping on sheets that you wash, if they're going into your pantry and eating your cornflakes, they are required to be impacted by the church and to impact the church for good. It's required. Make them. Make them. "Oh, they're really going to be a sad, you know, bump on the log." They may be that way at school too. You have a very dark and very negative child that you're raising. But I'll bet, come Monday morning, they'll be in school. You've got to convince your kids this is important.

I can prove this to you. Look up any of my kids. I've got one in high school, I've got two in college. Call them, e-mail them, message them this week. Say, "Hey, I want to know, in your house, if you had to ask your dad about missing church or missing school, which would you rather talk to him about?" Right? "Which would be a harder conversation for you to have?" Ask them. "Really?" Yeah. I mean I wasn't a pushover about them missing school. "Well, I'm sure they didn't take school seriously if that's how you took it." No, they took things seriously enough. They got great grades, good grades, maybe better than your kid, I don't know. They did all right. But when it came to church, it's non-negotiable.

Now I'm saying this, there are times, of course, they got something, it's special, it's odd, it's unique. Sometimes they miss school and sometimes they miss church. But you ask them, which one was so prioritized in your home? Which one was harder to ask for? "Dad, I don't know, if I do this I won't be able to go to school that day" or "You know, if I do this I won't be able to go to church this weekend." You ask them which one was harder. And I'm just saying, because in my home, the categorical importance of church was right up here.

And everything else was down here. That's a God-centered home. The church-focused and ministry-minded, and that's what you and I need to direct our kids in the right path. And I'm trying to hold myself up as any great example. I mean, I'm sure in many ways you don't want to be like me and my parenting. I know your kids don't want you to be like me in your parenting. But I guarantee you this, the expectation was, "You're going to church and you're going to be a part of it." I don't care if your kid is 7, 12 or 17. Require them to participate.

Number four. This one maybe even harder for your parents. Letter "D". "Diligently Pursue Their Best Friendships Here." Diligently pursue their best friendships at church. Now I know at school you get a bigger pool, a lot more people. On their on their soccer team, a lot more people their age with their interest. You can definitely find a "cliquing" kind of best friend there easier than you can with a smaller pool of people at church. Now we want to have a big church, there's a lot of good advantages that. One them is your kids have a bigger pool of peers and best friends. I understand that and that's a good thing. But it's still smaller than a lot of what they deal with. And you know at church, they live all the way across town or two cities away and you know at school everyone lives in the same area. It will be harder for you to try to pursue diligently their best friendships at church. It'll be harder. And I'm not trying to say there's only angels in our youth group or in our kids program. I know they're not all angels. But I can say this, if iron sharpens iron, that people who they relationally are rubbing up against in all their discussions, their context, their texting, their conversations, it's either going to be shaping them to be more conformed to the world or it's going to shape them to be at least more in the interest and context of what it means to be a Christian, at least in the context of Christianity.

Diligently pursue their best friendships here. I know they're going to click with this person or that person. But I guarantee you if that's the value you have, hopefully you can realize this, as Paul says in First Corinthians 15, "Bad company corrupts good morals." When it comes to who we want our kids and encourage our kids to connect with, it ought to be those people that at least their families share a commitment to a God-centered, church-focused, ministry-minded household.

Number four. Second Timothy Chapter 2 verse 3, for God-centered, church-focused, ministry-minded households, he gives us four pictures of what that looks like. Second Timothy Chapter 2 verses 3 through 5. Let's read these together real quick.

Verse 3, "Share in suffering as a," here comes, first one, "good soldier." So there's the first analogy. Verse 5, "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." Picture number two, an athlete. Verse 6. "It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share the crops." There's picture number three. So for a God-centered, church-focused, ministry-minded household, here is a picture of those, let's just say Christians in this context as he's talking to Timothy about the people he's governing, which is teenagers and families and kids and adults, we ought to see ourselves as soldiers, verse 3, athletes, verse 5, and farmers, hard-working farmers, verse 6.

These are things that can all be qualified and modified by verse 4. I know it said about the first one, the soldier, but you could say verse 4, look at it, about the athlete and the farmer. What does verse 4 say? "No soldier gets entangled," keyword, "in civilian pursuits." Why? Because he's not a civilian. "Since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." Now there's different aspects for athlete and farmer he's trying to highlight but that could be said of all of these and it's an emphasis here. Not only is the soldier going to bear through the hard times, he can't get entangled in other things. Just like, I guess if you're running track, you can't run by the bench and go, "Oh, there is my friend. I'm going to sit down and talk." You can't get entangled in other things. You can't as a hard-working farmer going, "Well, what I really want to do is fly remote control planes in summer. The field can wait. I got to do..." No. You got only so much time, the seasons, the daylight, you go out to the field and you farm that land and you work hard at it. None of them can afford to be distracted. And the key word is entangled.

Let me just summarize all of those in this and we'll tease out a little bit in the implications. Number four. You need to "Maintain Godly Priorities In Your Household." Maintain godly priorities. You cannot be entangled in things that take away from a God-centered, strong marriage, church-focused,

ministry-minded household.

Now you've got to do... I mean every Marine has to change the oil, every Marine has to get his cavities filled, every Marine has to, you know, do the things that everyone needs to do. But he can't get entangled in those because he's a Marine. He's out there trying to do something for his commanding officer. And in this context of the Roman soldier, you're here to please the Emperor, ultimately, and that's who you serve at the pleasure of and you do that. You can't sit there and become some, you know, expert at games or hobbies. You have to stay focused. Now, you're going to do some things that everyone else is going to do, you can even at a hobby, but you cannot get entangled in them.

Four implications, Letter "A". Let me just put it simply. "Keep First Things First." First things first. First things first.

My kids are going to be involved in sports and they were, they're going to be in music and they were, they're going to be in various teams and academics and music and fitness and working out. I understand it. They're going to have all those things but they cannot get entangled in them. The spiritual disciplines that are reflected in a household that's God-centered, with a strong marriage, ministry-minded, church-focused, those spiritual disciplines are going to be held as more important than every other discipline. Your gymnastics, your chess club, your baseball league, all these things, those are all going to be taken as a second tiered priority in your life. The disciplines for you to be a great soccer player are coming second to the discipline of you being involved in things that keep you spiritually on track.

Jesus put it this way, Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom." But what about these things? Well, "and all those things be added to you." In the context there, they are worried about all kinds of things, you're worried about all kinds of things. "I want my kid to be well-rounded, I want them to be well-read, I want them to do music, I want them to do drama, I want them to do photography, I want them to be great athletes, I want them to stay in shape, I want them to eat well, I want them to sleep well." All of that's true. But I tell you what's much, much more important is that their spiritual disciplines are in place and that means that their focus is on something that transcends what the rest of the world is concerned about.

Speaking of the rest of the world, Letter "B" "Don't Conform To The Culture." Godly priorities means your neighbors aren't going to have these priorities. Godly priorities mean their friends at school aren't going to have these priorities. You cannot conform to the culture. This world is not our home. And the world should not be creeping into your home. Oh, I know you have to interact with the world and as Paul said, you'd have to leave the world not to have some effect of the world and some interaction and intercourse with the world in terms of what you're learning or hearing or seeing or being exposed to. That's true. But we are in the world, as the old line says, but we are not to be of the world and you're of the world when you're reflecting all the priorities of the world.

Don't conform to the culture of the world, but be transformed, the Bible says, by the renewing of your mind. That gets back to a Letter "A". You've got to keep first things first, spiritual disciplines above all other disciplines.

Letter "C". Just like that athlete cannot be crowned unless he competes according to the rules, put it this way, "God's Rules Are Non-negotiable." God's rules, just like church attendance, non-negotiable. Giving. "Now, I really got a great gift from grandma and grandpa for Christmas. I'm going to put this all toward this..." "No, you've got to give..." I don't care what great thing you might get if you neglect God's commands. We keep God's commands. I think of that one phrase, the



greatest in the kingdom are those who know these commands, teach these commands and keep these commands. The least in the kingdom are those who disregard them or teach others to disregard them. God's laws are important. We're not saved by it, I understand that, but the athlete has to keep the rules.

Letter "D". Verse 6. The hard-working farmer. That image is always one related to evangelism. Let me just put it this way and I'll try to explain it. Letter "D". We got to "Live To See People Saved." That at some point needs to emerge as the heartbeat of your family. We want people to become Christians. I mean, I touched on it in the first point but now let me just say it. It ought to be the greatest joy of our family to see another person come to faith in Christ. Whether it's our kids, whether it's a sibling. Back to the prodigal son example, if your brother comes to Christ, it's the most exciting thing. If your classmate, your teammate comes to Christ. Nothing greater. We have a True North group here and you bring someone and they come to faith in Christ. Nothing greater than that. A hard-working farmer ought to be the first to share in the crops. That is exactly what Jesus was saying in John Chapter 4, the woman at the well story. He says, listen, there is nothing greater than that. He says, "Lift up your eyes," verse 35, "look at the harvest, there white unto harvest because already the one who reaps is receiving wages" right now. The joy of that "gathering fruit for eternal life so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together." The greatest benefit of an evangelist is seeing someone saved. A big part of our definition of living for the purpose of God, if we're made by God, sustained by God, the purpose is us being his ambassadors in they earth. Time for us to live to see people saved. And you can add the word urgently to that if you want. John 9, speaking of this work, he says we must work the works of him who sent me while it is still day, night is coming when no one can work.

I got my driver's license renewed this week. Hold your applause. It wasn't easy this time because, you know, you do it through mail. I thought the DMV had forgotten about me completely because every time I was asked to send it in, send it in and then I guess I hit the golden age or whatever and they go, "No, we got to see this guy can still function as a human being, we're calling him in."

So what did that mean? That meant I spent half my off day this week standing in line at the DMV. You say, "Well, you should have made an appointment." You know what? By the time I got that stinking notice that I had to go in, in person, and we called and said, "Listen, is there an appointment between now and my birthday." Nope. No appointments. No appointments. So I had to go in without the appointment, which means you stand in that line that snakes out the door, through the building and around the building and down along the back side of the building and somewhere into oblivion. And I started there on Monday. I'm surprised I'm not still there. And I was a little scared. And I thought, "I don't know." I knew the vision test was coming. "They're going to find out I'm blind, it's going to be terrible." Enough about me.

Standing in line, since none of you offered to stand in line with me, I was there by myself, just observing people. And of course I took me back to when I was a teenager because I saw a lot of teenagers there with their mom, with their dad. I mean they're just filled with trepidation and anticipation, excitement and fear and some of them are cramming for their test and someone would be in the kiosk there on the touchscreen taking their, you know, their written test. Others of them were covering one eye trying to read the chart that I was trying to memorize so that I wouldn't fail. And outside, especially, that's where the real fear is, where the cars are lined up, and Junior is out there and mom is shooed away and the guy with the clipboard comes up and I see him drive out. I saw dozens of those, let me assure you, standing in line, before I ever got in the building.

I thought to myself, well that's where our culture is, of course, I mean, it makes perfect sense. You drive this big vehicle down the road, we want to make sure you know the rules, we're going to make



sure you aren't blind, we're going to make sure that you are trained and can prove that you can do this well. I mean this is big, directing this big heavy car down the road. When those same teenagers in a matter of years have children and now are called to direct a life down this highway, there'll be no test, there'll be no written test, there will be no vision tests, they're will be no values test. They just, in our culture it's every man for himself. People just do whatever is right in their own eyes. Just I hope it works out for you. Whatever zeitgeist of our day is, you just kind of do the best, don't offend us, don't be a bigot, don't be narrow minded, don't be intolerant, I hope you do well with your kids. Unless, of course, you're a Christian. And if you're Christian, God has giving you a fat rulebook. Then it's time for us to look to that rule book that is full of instruction. If you don't know where to start, start the book of Proverbs and start reading what God has to say about parenting. And I know we've just scratched the surface about your home but let's start to understand what God's instructions are for us. That's what the series is about. And so there's no possible way we can deal with the scenarios that I'd love to deal with in detail.

I can tell you that I, like many other pastors and other generations and even in our generation, I've tried to distill some of those principles in written form in a book and of course you know about this book, many of you do, most of you do, but I just finished writing for Moody Press called "Raising Men, Not Boys." And it's coming up Tuesday is when it hits and drops or whatever you call it. Now, I'm not cool enough to say that. It comes out on Barnes and Noble and Amazon and all the other retailers. But Moody Press was gracious enough to send us thousands of them here to our church. And we're making it available this morning, two days ahead of its release date. And they'll be in the lobby and they'll be in the bookstore for sale. And if that freaks you out because you're seeing all the money changing going on in the lobby, and you want to have a Jesus moment and tip over the tables, you know, "Look at the commerce in the church!" Let me tell you that I've foregone the royalties on all these copies that they've sent to the church, the thousands of them here, I make not a single dime on the books if you buy one today. Our bookstore always sells every book there a dollar less than Amazon. We try to give you the best deals we possibly can because, guess what, the bookstore is not into making money, that's not the point of that. It's not, trust me, I see the balance sheet. I mean, it's ministry, is what it is. And I love the bookstore, I love it, but it's not making money, that's not the point. It's to get good resources in your hands. And the books here, they dropped well below the price that you're going to find anywhere else and today they're going to sell them, they chose to sell them for \$7.50. I don't make any money on these. It's a chance for you, I hope, to get some wisdom distilled in your hand that you can utilize for a generation that needs to talk about screen time, computers and all the things that we deal with in our generation. So I encourage you to buy not just one, \$7.50. You can buy two for \$15 and you can buy four for \$30. You could buy eight for \$60, right? There's no deal there but I just thought I keep going up on. But because we're not making money, because it's not about a profit, because it's not about anything that could happen to me, I just want to encourage you to get a few of these. If you want them personalize I'll be out there happy to personalize them to your friends, your neighbors or some Christians across the country that you know. But try and get a couple of these in your hand, if you would. I would love just to be able to tell Moody, "Hey, we got rid of all these copies that you sent us" because I do think this is important to get out there, current practical information. Now, it's got "boys" in the title and you say, "Well, all I have has is girls, I don't have any boys." Well, 75% of the material and principles in this book are going to deal with boys or girls. I mean there is certainly a part of it, maybe a fourth of it, maybe a fifth of it, that specifically deals with raising boys. But I encourage you get your hands on that. It's available, it's out there. I'll stay there as long as you keep wanting me to personalize any of those for you. All right? Terrible conclusion to the message but that's where it says I'm done.

So, let's pray. God, I know this is important stuff, the precious cargo we have in our homes, these valuable lives that we are directing can be overwhelming if we think about it. But you don't want us



to be overwhelmed, you just want us to be thoughtful. You want us to be godly, you want us to put first things first. So I pray that we would, pray we would take seriously our role and if we don't have kids in our home, much like that illustration, can we be part of the Houston project, trying to lend support? We need more of the people sitting right here in this auditorium volunteering to work with our children, our preschoolers, the nursery, the fifth-sixth grade ministry, our Narrow ministry, the junior high ministry, True North, the high school ministry, we need more people lending their wisdom to that. And even if people say, I'm not called to that, I'm not gifted to do that, I pray everybody in this room who doesn't have a kid under their roof would at least take in their heart, maybe even call our youth pastors and get a couple of key names that they can be praying for by name. And just start praying for this next generation. God we need them to be directed properly, we need them on the right path, on the right trajectory, we need the right calculation, we need to read the data carefully so that we do our very best to point them in the right direction.

God, we know ultimately their spiritual success is dependent on you but you give us responsibility, so help us, even as a church, take seriously the hundreds of students who are right here on this campus right now in these classrooms and these auditoriums for our junior-highers and high schoolers. Let us care about them and pray for them and do our best to raise godly men and godly women in this world.

In Jesus name, I pray. Amen