



Christian Parenting- Part 3 The Call for Bold Leadership Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well this morning we wrap up a short three-part series on Christian parenting. Perhaps you're in the middle of that right now, you've got kids in your home and this series has been particularly relevant for you and what you're going through. But if not, I assume that every single person in the room has people in their life who they care about who are in the middle of raising kids and have them in their home. It is after all the most important discipleship assignment any human being could have, to have little lives, young lives, brought into their home where they have the task of discipling them to know and to follow Christ. And it seems like former generations, perhaps, had a better perspective on this. At least the breadth of everyone in that congregation had a more focused attention on those homes even if they did not have children in their homes. I know we don't practice the liturgy of assigning godparents to children when they're born into the church. Perhaps because it was so closely associated with the misguided practice and custom of infant baptism. And yet with the absence of that in evangelical churches like ours perhaps we're missing something of importance about the shared responsibility we all have in helping to see that next generation come to faith in Christ and to be able to follow him. Take the Anglican Church for instance, the Church of England, that when someone was born to a family in their congregation they would assign godparents. Now these are adults who are not having these children living in their homes and yet they take on the responsibility in four primary ways.

The tradition of the church was you would, number one, commit yourself to pray for those children. They're not your kids, they don't live in your home but you're going to take a kind of prayer concern upon yourself as though they were in your home and you're going to pray that they would come to faith and that they would come to a place of understanding what it is to follow Jesus Christ in their life. Then they use another word that you as an adult, though you don't physically have those children in your home, that you would draw them, that's the verb they use, by your own example to be able to practice the things that Christ would want us to practice in their lives. Then it says, thirdly, that you ought to provide a kind of care, in practical ways where you're doing things in their life that will model and encourage the things that Christ would want to build into their character, the values of Christianity. And then, fourthly, to help them in practical ways and I love this verbiage, I'll quote it verbatim, to take their place, these children that are not yours, "To take their place in the life and worship of Christ's Church." And see, that's how we started the series three weeks ago. We're concerned about a whole another generation taking their place in Christ's Church, that they would take the baton in a darkening culture to stand strong and courageously and faithfully to the word of Christ and to do in their generation what we are called to do in ours.

And so this has a great relevance to all of us in the church and I hope that even without the liturgy in a church like ours, without that kind of liturgy, you would still have, in your heart, adopted some children that are not yours. You have a spiritual sense of adoption to say, there are individual children who I pray for, whether you're long past that child rearing season of your life, that you'd move beyond your kids and your grandkids and your nieces and nephews, and that you would really start to pray specifically, that you start to draw people by your example, that would try to counsel them and help them and encourage them and be to them what they need as an older, wiser person on this planet to lead them and direct them to Christ. And our church is certainly a target-rich environment when it comes to adopting spiritual children. We have record numbers and I mean that literally in terms of this particular point, this particular week, in the history of our church. We have more people who have signed up for our Thursday night kids program than we've ever had, record



numbers. Our Friday night junior high ministry started with the largest numbers we've ever had in launching that ministry. Our fifth-sixth grade ministry, our high school ministry, our children's nurseries, I mean we are full of children. There are probably somewhere between, I don't know, 2,400 and 2,600 children who call this church their home.

And if you just take the formularies of the high churches when they said, listen, we know how many adults we need in terms of godparents and parents to direct these kids, they would assign five adults per child. Now, just think about the need here. I mean just think about that. If we're pushing somewhere near 3,000 people in this church who fill this campus all week long, who call this their church home, I mean many of them, obviously, are just forced to be here because their parents bring them here, how many adults just to have that sense of concern that the church had, the forefathers had about raising those kids. I mean all of us would have to adopt four or five or six kids just to keep track and just to give that kind of interest and prayer support and concern for these kids who are facing kinds of temptations. And, you know, if the olden days use to assign 5 adults per kid, how many adults do we need praying for this generation in this world. You read the headlines. You know what's going on in this world. I mean we've got to pull together. Now again I'm just saying that because if you're sitting back saying, "Well, this isn't a series for me, I'll be glad when it's over. Get back to Luke. We'll move on." Listen, this is for you. It needs to be engraved into the fabric of the culture of the church no matter if you're never going to have a child, even if it doesn't relate to your future kids or your kids right now, man, we need to learn these things. There's no better passage, as we wrap our series, then to go to Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 1 through 4. A classic text on what should be going on within the walls of these homes that are raising children. And this is what we need to care about, this is what we need to be praying for, this is the kind of thing you ought to be aiding parents and praying for children to see what's going on in this passage happen in their lives. So call up this text, pull it out. If you didn't bring a Bible and you don't have an app on your phone, go under the seat there, there's a Bible there, turn to Ephesians Chapter 6 verses 1 through 4 and let's look at this classic passage that bridges the testaments together. Now, think about this. Here's a passage where Paul's going to address the little children in the homes being parented and he's going to go all the way back to the exodus of Moses to quote the Pentateuch. And to quote specifically the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, and say, listen, this is very important that we understand what's going on in this parenting process. He addresses the children, which I'm not here speaking in junior church this morning, so we're going to try to glean what we can as parents or as people concerned about parenting. We're going to look at that from a parent's perspective and then we're going to look at the direct, specific instructions to the parents. Take a look at these four verses with me as I read them. Ephesians Chapter 6 verse 1. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Verse 2. Quotes now, "Honor your father and mother." Unquote, parenthetical statement. Paul now is saying, under the guidance of the Spirit, "Hey, this is the first commandment with a promise." Here's a promise appended to a commandment that's actually there on the tablets, this is so important. And what is the promise? "That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Now he turns to the fathers, which really represents parents, but dad's taking the lead in this. "Don't provoke your children to anger but bring them up..." now two words that are critical, we talk about it a lot around here. Certainly whenever I address our parents, I talk about these two words, "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Two aspects of the kind of parenting that we ought to engage in.

Let's start at the beginning, make five observations. That's two weeks in a row I'll give you a five-point message. You should get an award for that. Ten points in two weeks. That's too much. And this has 20 sub-points per point... No, I'm just kidding. I overwhelmed you last week.

Verse 1, "Children, obey your parents." Now, it's like, "Obviously, OK. That's how it should be." I



just think it's so great that in God's wisdom knowing that here he's going to, through the Apostle Paul, penned this eternal statement regarding children that he would add these last four words, "for this is right." Now, I think a lot of generations would go, "Yeah, of course. Kids should obey their parents." But to say, "this is right." If there is ever a time we need to put that in lights and make sure people understand, listen, it's the right thing for kids to obey their parents, it's now. Now I know it may be a very obvious statement but please jot it down as the first point this morning. Kids, you need to know this, obeying their parents is right. Hold back your applause. That is so important for you to understand that when kids obey their parents, it's right. Now why would you have to say that Pastor Mike? Well, here's why. The society doesn't think this is true. As a matter of fact, just get out there and get a little taste of this free thinking that's out there about our kids being like young plants and they just need to flourish and express themselves and go and do what they do and let them be whoever they want to be. Doesn't matter how weird, perverse, foolish it is, let them be it. Let them be it. Whatever their inklings are, whatever they're inclinations are, you stand back and stand in awe of your children just becoming whatever they want to become. I don't have to talk about gender issues here, talk about anything. Talk about the parent. And I've seen it walking into homes where children literally are writing on the wall and I sit there with my jaw dropping down to my belt buckle and they're, "Well, you know, we want them to express themselves a little bit and all that."

The Bible would say, children should obey their parents, and if parents are wise I think you don't want your kids writing on the walls in the dining room. That should be clear and obvious. I know that you're gonna have to paint that, clean that... What are you letting your kid... "Well, I want them to express themselves."

I hope you're past that. I hope you recognize that the concept of children, and I know this is what they don't like, being subservient to parents, parents are the authority, I know the moderns don't like this. "I mean why should they... They're their own person. Let them be, children's rights advocates."

I understand this isn't sitting well with the real free thinkers in the academy but I hope you're past that. But you sit here in church and you understand that when it comes to this issue there are people saying it, within the church, that it's not right. And here's what they'll say and tell me if you haven't heard this. "You know when parents want to set down a bunch of rules and have their kids obey them, all you're doing is creating a little legalist, that's all you're doing. You're creating Pharisees. But really we should be doing is caring about their hearts."

Now, you understand, unless it's your first time here, I really care about regeneration and the doctrine of regeneration and your heart being turned from stone into flesh, Ezekiel 36, I understand the new covenant, that's what I want. But for people to write books, as they often do, under the banner of grace, "You know what you should do? Just, you know, just work on their heart and try and massage that to the Gospel and the grace and, you know, but I don't want to lay down a lot of rules and expect them to obey, because it wouldn't be sincere and that's like the Pharisees and it's just conformity and so, you know, I'm not into the whole thing, that's legalistic home. I don't want to be about rules, you know."

Listen, when your son is beating on your daughter and you walk in the room, I don't think it's time for a lecture about their heart or their feelings or sincerity. I think it's time to lay down the law that it's time to stop beating your sister. I don't care how he feels about it.

The rules apply whether you feel it or not. A parent is evaluated by whether or not he or she, now note this, keeps their kids in control. Is that your opinion? Here it is, First Timothy Chapter 3 verses 4 and 5. A person can't even lead in the church if, here are the words, "He cannot manage his own

household and keep his kids," that's the verb there, "have his kids kept with all dignity in submission to him."

That sounds like external conformity to me. You're darn right it is. It's external conformity. We'll deal with the issues of the heart. We're going to talk about the Gospel, we want spiritual development, that's how we started the series. Did we not start that way? We are aiming at regeneration. We want them to become new creatures in Christ. But in the meantime, and I deal with this in this book that, you know, has been all the talk here this last week and I do hope that it's helpful, and some of you started to read it, we talk about the fact that it is very appropriate for you, and you're not creating a legalist and you're not creating a Pharisee and you're not doing injurious harm to their spiritual development, to tell your kids I want you to obey and it doesn't matter where your hearts at, you obey your parents. This text says, "Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Do it. Your parents are an authority figure and you obey them. Not only does it speak to the spirituality of a leader and you can't even think that you have a claim to being a good Christian if you can't keep your kids, with all dignity, in submission to the parental authority. But Proverbs Chapter 20 verse 11 says, "Even a child makes himself known by his acts by whether his conduct is pure and upright."

There's something about the budding character, not the spirituality, of a child whether or not he can do the right thing and obey his parents and have conduct that's in submission to the authorities and rules of his life. For a kid to sit there and grow up in a family that claims the banner of the Gospel is the most important thing and all about grace, and if it's about grace it's not about rules then because that's law and legalism, you know you're setting up something that has no connection with the Biblical parenting principles of the book of Proverbs or anything related to the standard of what it means to be a godly person in the New Testament. You see, my little infant comes out and his heart is not right before God, they are fallen, we dealt with this in the first week. When it comes down to it, from the very beginning, I want that kid to learn to obey the dictates and the requirements of the parents because we are looking out for their best interest. And I need you to understand it's not about grace. When I take them to the DMV to get their license, since I had that little experience last week we talked about, do I want to give them grace and give them a sense of freedom and liberty when they're going about getting that license to drive their car? I hope your kid is a little legalist when it comes to driving. I really hope that, for my sake and my kid's sake, as they drive down the highway, it's very important that whether they feel like it or not they don't text while they drive. It's very important that you come to a full stop. It's very important that you don't speed. Those things are important for general public safety just like in your home. General public safety comes down to whether or not you are going to be a parent that sets the rules down and your kids, appropriately with the pleasure of God, obey you. If you say don't touch and reach up to the stove when that pot is boiling, kids need to learn to obey whether they feel like it or not. If they're playing with scissors and then think they might stick them in the outlet and they think well this will be fun. I'm not going to sit there and coach them about a shepherding heart moment. I'm going to say, "This is wrong. Don't do it."

Now we're going to deal with the development of your spiritual needs and we're going to get to the gospel. Now, I'm going to preach the Gospel from the time they're infants to them, but I do understand this, it has nothing to do with regeneration when it comes to a child obeying his parents. You do it and you require it and this is right before God. There's a lot of theological pushback on this and there's a lot of cultural pushback on this.

Now I should say, and I'll get into this a little bit more as we work through this passage, but there is that phrase there, three-word qualifier, "in the Lord." Your parents are to be obeyed in the Lord.

That means this is not about you being the boss that's dictating little slaves in your home. This is about you being a steward of someone else's property. These kids are property of God and I'm there being very careful about the rules I lay down. I want to make sure they are for good, they're right, they reflect righteousness and it's not just about my pleasure, my convenience. My rules for my kids should be in light of the ultimate law giver and judge and that's not me, that's God. Therefore when it comes my parenting I want to be very careful about this authority because people, sometimes, when they learn they have authority, they get a real big head really fast and they want to dictate in a way that goes beyond the boundaries of what God intended by allowing you to be in a position of authority over your kids.

But you are, if you're a parent, in the position of authority over your kids and this proper arrangement of authority of parents being in charge and kids being subservient to them, being submissive to them, being kept under control by the rules, is perfectly right, it's exactly what pleases God. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." We need that now more than ever.

Number two, verse 2 and 3. He now quotes the Old Testament. If it's not already there in your reference Bible, make sure you put it in the margin. This comes from Exodus Chapter 20. This is the giving of the Ten Commandments. Right in the middle of this you've got this change from commands about God to commands about each other and he starts with parents and he says, "Honor your father and mother." And he adds this commentary, "This is the first commandment with a promise." The English Standard Version puts it in parenthetical set of parentheses, that's helpful. And then he picks up the quote, "That it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." That's a good reminder of my relationship with my parents, but if you know anything about the context of this, they've come out of Egypt and they're there being led by Moses and they have been given this law on Mt. Sinai and he stands up and he reads it and he gives it to a bunch of kids in junior church. No, he gives it to a bunch of adults and he tells adults to honor. Now you can see the verb, "honor" is different than the verb in verse 1, "obey." Honor, certainly the initial application of honor when it was given in 1445 B.C. in the desert of Sinai, that command was given to adult children of aging parents as they were going to travel through the desert to say, you need to honor your father and mother. If you asked anyone in the crowd what exactly would that mean? That means what it always means in an ancient, Near Eastern context, to honor them is not only to give them respect but to give them respect, as the Bible says, in tangible ways. We don't love just in word but we love in deed. And therefore it became very obvious, and it's all throughout the Scripture, that I am to, even in New Testament times, take the responsibility of caring for my aging parents. That's a sign of respect, that's a sign of honor.

Now, that's a little different to now talk to children, verse 1, but Paul's theology here is obviously, you know when God said the relationship you have with your parents is special and therefore you ought to honor them and what you do and if you're an adult person with an aging parent who doesn't have social security as they didn't then the old covenant, they don't have means to take care of themselves, you better take care of them. And if you do, it'll go well with you and you'll live long in the land. What land? The land of Canaan into which you're going. That's the contextual box in which this passage fits. And yet Paul says, that overarching umbrella principle of honoring your parents, hey, little kids, here's how you start honoring your parents, you obey your parents. And that's the right thing. So he's now under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. God is breathing out truth now in the New Testament saying, "Listen, let's take that one command that was given generally to adults about honoring aging parents and say, here's how you start that. Little kids need to learn to obey their parents."

Now, I think the emphasis here, as it's very clear by the parenthetical statement, isn't that, hey, it says obey your parents and the Old Testament. No, it's his honor your parents in the Old Testament, that's different, different context, different audience. The principle though, telescopically, moves from honor to obey if I'm talking to a little child. But the emphasis here is clear by the parenthetical statement is, you know what, God promised something when you do that. Look at what he promised to those adult children of aging parents, he said, you know, if you take care your parents and honor them that way, it'll go well with you and you'll live long in the land. Now those kids who are hearing this in the church in Ephesus, they weren't on a traveling journey to go to a new land. They are growing up in Ephesus. Who knows, they've lived their whole life in Ephesus. What are you talking about? I'm just showing, Paul says, the principle of, hey kids, if you honor in this way by obeying your parents because you're under their authority then something good is going to happen because God rewards people who do this in their relationship with their parents. For adults, care for them, it will go well with you. For kids, obey your parents, it'll go well with you.

Let's just distill it this way. Number 2. We need to believe that God will reward obedient children. God will reward obedient children. If I tell my kids, it's time to go to bed, lay down in bed, don't get up, don't come out. If you need me and it's an emergency then scream, but I don't want you walking out of your room. And that kid learns to lay there and not get out of that bed. The Bible says, that God is a rewarder of people who honor their parents or children, specifically in this context, who obey their parents. And God will honor a child and will do good to a child and will bless a child who learns to obey mom and dad. If mom says, "Hey, it's time for dinner. Get off the couch. Come on, sit down for dinner." And that kid responds without you threatening to count to ten, right, without you having to tell him 15 times. That was kind of funny? Anyway. Fifteen times. You know what, God says, "I'm looking at that kid who responded to a mom's call to come to dinner and I take that as something that pleases me, it's right and I'm going to respond well to that child." If you tell your kid, "You know what, it's time for you to be home, I want you home at 11 o'clock," and you're talking to teenagers, "I need you here. This is your curfew, you've got school tomorrow." Whatever it is and that kid gets home at 10:59, God says, "That's the right thing to do, you obey the authority of your parents, it'll go well with you." God is a rewarder of kids who obey their parents. It's a good thing to please the Lord, is it not? A couple of passages on this: Proverbs 11:18, "One who sows righteousness gets a sure reward."

And you know what's righteous when it relates to your little kids, whether they're infants, toddlers or grade schoolers or teenagers, if they obey your authority and do what you say, they will surely reap a reward. Psalm 58:11. Even people will see that. Mankind will say, the audience looking on will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous. Surely there is a God who judges the earth." Look at God doing things that you can't otherwise explain in that person's life because they did what God asked. And when it comes to little children, do you know what God asks? One primary command, "Obey your parents, this is right, and I'll reward you."

Now, let's talk about this. Jot this one down, if you would, taking notes this morning and I wish that you would, Proverbs Chapter 16 verse 32. Here's one way obedient children, who learn what it is to submit to the authority of their parents, are blessed by God, they're rewarded by God. Here's what they get. They get restraint in their own heart and self-control. What good is that?

Here's what the Bible says, "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit is better than one who takes a city." Now it would be one thing if you could be hailed as someone who can look at a city and as some crazy Rambo type, you could take that city singlehandedly. What kind of amazing person is that? Well, the highest accolades in that kind of warring society, that kind of warrior, you know better than that warrior is a person who has feelings

and impulses and chooses to say, "No" to those to do what's right, restrains himself. Anger is one of those obvious things. It may be that the kid is doing something, watching the show, does not want to come to dinner right now, but instead of getting angry, instead of being belligerent, instead of being stubborn, gets up, lays down whatever he's working on, walks to the kitchen table and sits down with a compliant disposition to the authority of his mom.

The Bible says what he's learning right there in that is a reward to his future. It is better if he can say "no" to his impulses and desires for the sake of what is right, that will bless him throughout his life.

You know what you want in your children? Self-control. Few things are more important than that. You know how they learn that? By you giving them rules and them keeping those rules. You telling them listen, I want you to come to me and they come to you and they learn to do that the very first time you say it.

The opposite should be, every now and then, thought about, Proverbs 29:15, a book filled with wisdom for parenting. Proverbs 29:15 says, "A child left to himself," in other words he does whatever he wants, "brings shame to his mother." Don't you sense that when you're at the line at some place and some mom has to call her child 15 times and he doesn't respond and then she looks at you with these eyebrows like, "You know, all kids..." Dude. It's a shame. I'm ashamed. You should be ashamed. I pity you, because your child has no self-control, does not respond to your call to do what is right. Children learn restraint and self-control. Not only that, they live without a lot of regrets. You know if your kid can't do what you ask when they're toddlers, they won't do what you ask when they're grade schoolers, they won't do what you ask when they're junior-highers, they won't do what you ask when they're high schoolers and, you know, what they start doing, increasingly as time goes on, compounds the kinds of scars and regrets they will carry for the rest of their lives. And you don't think that was in the background of the Apostle Paul as he wrote young Timothy? If you can't read between the lines and start to see his longing for his pedigree, Timothy's that is, who starts his letter in First Timothy Chapter 1 and says stuff like this about himself, "You know what, I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor, I was an insolent opponent of Christ." Oh yeah, we always get quickly to the last part of that, "but I was shown mercy, I receive mercy from God and isn't that great, the worst of all sinners." And we all say, that's great, you know, amazing grace, saved a wretch like him.

But he writes to Timothy and he says, "You know what? Man, you got that sincere faith that was in your mother and your grandmother. You've known," as it says in Second Timothy 3, "from childhood the sacred writings which were able to make you wise unto salvation."

Paul carried a lot of scars around. Did he celebrate the fact that grace covered his greatest sins? Absolutely. Is he an example of those who believed? Sure. But if you don't think he looked at Timothy and thought, "That would be a better lot, wouldn't it? How great it would be not to look back and see myself, in my mind's eye, doing all those things that brought guilt to my life, that brought shame to, really, ultimately God and the economy of righteousness. Man, it would be great to be more like Timothy."

Timothy was not born a Christian. He had to be converted. He had an internal change, but he learned compliance and obedience and the Scripture through Lois and Eunice and his godly parents allowed him to grow up without a lot of the scars and regrets. Wouldn't you like your kids not to think about, I don't know, their first sexual encounter in the back of some car? Wouldn't it be nice to not have that experience? Maybe actually to have that first sexual encounter in a bed, at a hotel, on

the night of their wedding. Wouldn't that...? I mean, it would be nice. That would be good instead of thinking about all the people who they bedded down in high school and college. That would be good. I'd like to give my kids that. You know how I can give them that? Expecting them to come to the dinner table when I ask them to the first time I tell them. Being able to enforce in their lives a kind of self-control and restraint that would allow my kids to know that when I ask you to do this, even if you don't feel like it, I'm expecting obedience. This is right and God will reward it.

You can attach to that a clear conscience. There are so many passages on a clear conscience, how great it is. I think of this statement, Acts 24:16. "I always take great pains to have a clear conscience before God and men." Well that starts as a child. I'm so thankful for those that I see grow up in this church who don't have a testimony like you hear at those dramatic youth rallies where they get up there and they tell all these horrible things and I know it seems for a great night to tell those kids, "Isn't it great, look at this horrible person who became a Christian." That's great. But I don't want to be invited to be giving my testimony if the testimony that really works in those settings is only, you know, "I was the worst, I was awful, I did this and did that." It would be great to be more like Timothy. Yeah, "I was lost, I was a sinner but, you know what, I learned the Scripture, I learned to obey my parents and then at some point God got a hold of my heart and he changed me from the inside out." It's the kind of testimony I'd like to have. This is the kind of testimony I'd like my kids to have.

Believe God will reward obedient kids just like he said to the adult children of aging parents in the desert. Honor your father and mother and I'll do something good for you. That it may go well with you. It will go well with your kids if you can teach them to obey you.

"All right. Well, I'm in a really bear down on my kids. I'm going to start making it so obvious, I'm going to be so serious about obedience. I'm going to start roaring at my house so they obey me." Verse 4, that's not how it works. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." Anger begets anger by the way. If you've learned that your response to disobedience is irritation, frustration, erratic explosive behavior, it doesn't really work. There are a lot of ways to exasperate and provoke your children to anger. But we're not looking for that. The kind of parenting I've been trying to advocate for the last three weeks is a more bold, a more intentional, a more purposeful, a stronger kind of parenting. It's not soft, it's not wishy washy, it's not timid, it's not afraid. That's what we need, a stronger parental authority in our homes. I'm talking about boldness. Number 3. I'm not talking about you being an unreasonable, reactionary, kind of explosive parent. That's not what I want. That's not what the Bible wants.

Number 3. Be bold, not unreasonable. And there are a lot of unreasonable parents who think, "OK, I've got to whip my kids into shape" and they become very unreasonable in how they try to apply that authority in their homes. We need to be done with that, we need be done with it. I want you to be a disciplinarian. I want you to be consistent. I do not want you to be a dictator.

Listen to this verse. It's worth jotting down. Proverbs Chapter 28 verse 16. "A ruler who lacks understanding..." This is good, listen to every word, "A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor. But he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days." Now, wait a minute. Cruel oppressor and hatred, those seem to be connected. Those seem to be concepts that would fit together. No, here's a guy who hates the wrong but he's not a cruel oppressor. The lack of understanding is I hate the sin and now here's my response, I'm going to cruelly oppressed my children. That's not how it works. You can be a disciplinarian without being an angry dictator and you should learn that, a consistency. You need to be firm but not explosive. As James Chapter 1 would say, I think I put on your discussion questions for your small group on the back of the

worksheet this morning for you, you can come and discuss this passage and ponder and meditate on this text. But when it comes to your parenting you should know this, as it says in James 1:19 and 20. You should be "quick to hear," take in a lot of data, and "slow to speak," slow in your response, and "slow to anger." Why? Because anger, it "does not produce the righteousness of God." At least man's anger doesn't. And that's what it says, "For the anger man does not produce the righteousness of God." I want you to be firm and not explosive, disciplinarian not a dictator. Here's a passage you should really spend some time in. I don't think I put this on your worksheet this week. I put it on there a lot because I love the 103rd Psalm, but Psalm 103 speaks about God's parental authority over us. You think he's about holiness? Yes. Do you think he's a disciplinarian? Yes, read Hebrews Chapter 12. But he is also a father who has compassion on his children. Now it starts with the fact that he gets angry over sin and it says that in verse 9, he gets angry. But he doesn't always chide. And he doesn't hold his anger forever.

No, he deals with us like a father. As a matter of fact, the next verse, in verse 10, there's not always a proportional response even. Something that should cause a lot of anger from your parent, it's not proportional. He doesn't reward us according to our sins. He doesn't deal with us or repay us according to our iniquities.

It doesn't mean he overlooks sin. Is he a disciplinarian? We started with Eli, he did not restrain his kids. God is a disciplinarian to Eli because he should have been an obedient parent and he wasn't.

And yet, it says this: he has compassion on his children the way a father has compassion on his children. So he shows compassion on those who fear him. Not those who are careless and don't give a rip about God's leadership. I mean we understand that you need compassion, particularly when your son looks you in the eye or your daughter looks in your eyes, "I know, I understood, I did wrong." Does that mean there are no consequences? No, there are consequences. But, here it is, verse 14, this is the key verse, Psalm 103:14. "He knows our frame," God does, he knows how we're made. "He remembers that we are dust." He knows our weaknesses. Now here's the thing, parents. You need to learn to be sympathetic without being permissive. Can you find that balance? I want to be sympathetic that my little child has a kind of childish immaturity that I'm trying to see driven out of his or her life. I want that, I want them to give up childish things. I want, as the Bible says, to have that folly, that foolishness that's bound up in the heart of a child, I want them to progressively see that go away. But I'm going to remember their frame. I'm even going to think back to when I was a kid and I'm going to recognize, you know what, it is hard to control yourself at the dinner table. It is difficult to put away your toy and run to mom on the first call. Those are hard things. I can be sympathetic but I'm not permissive. I don't give them a license to do whatever they want. But I understand their frame. Be firm. Be sympathetic. Don't be permissive. Don't be explosive.

And here's another one under this one. Talk about unreasonable. Something that exacerbate your child's frustration is you being erratic and not consistent. To be bold is to be consistent, to have that firm parenting where people in your household know how you're going to respond if "a" "b" and "c" takes place. I want my kids to anticipate my response and to really guess it well, because dad's consistent, mom's consistent. I don't want to be erratic. Now here's the thing, and this is ironic to me, the people that claim that we're creating little Pharisee's and little legalists by having rules in our homes and expecting, you know, strong leadership from mom and dad, they are the most erratic kinds of parents. Their kids are left guessing all the time. "I have no idea what mom and dad are going to do in response to this." They don't know, because it really depends, if they're not about a legislation, and it's true we should have rules and we should have consequences and we should consistently apply those with sympathy but not permissiveness, boldly and strongly without being

erratic, being a disciplinarian but not a dictator, but those people who say there should be none of that, you know how they respond? It's based on how they feel. They come, you know, in this situation, I don't know, now I feel this way. Their emotions lead their parenting. And when you see that and I see it often, it really leaves the kids scratching their head, "I don't really know." See, God is a consistent disciplinarian as Hebrews Chapter 12 says. We can count on him responding to our sin. He does it with the appropriate measured careful response. But I need to remember that those who despise these rules and consequences claiming it's all legalistic are the most erratic of all. Don't let your emotions, your moods, your feelings be the measure or the fuel for your response to their sin. It is very confusing for our children.

Number 4. Second part of verse 4. Here are the two words, and let's camp on these for the remainder of our time, "bring them of in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The discipline. Now if you've ever heard me teach on this text, I even quote it when I'm talking in our weekends when we have our child-parent dedication ceremony up here. It's as close to liturgy as we get in that regard. I will remind you that these words "discipline" and "instruction" have to do with the restraining of evil, that's the corrective part, that's the discipline and the cheering on or the prompting of good, that's the coaching, that's the directing part. I like to say, maybe because it rhymes, that discipline and instruction is the correcting and the directing.

And, as I like to say, and this is an oversimplification, but when kids are little, it is a lot of discipline, it is a lot of correction. And then in time, you start to see that transition and you start to see now, that by the time they're 8, 9, 10 years old, then we start to see a ton of direction. As a matter of fact, the first years are really when you have to be that disciplinarian who recognizes, I don't care how many times they reach for that thing that is wrong, I don't know how many times they talk back to them, we have to be consistent in our discipline, you will correct, correct, correct, correct, correct.

And then you will start to direct. It'll be really almost completely supplanted at a certain age where it's all about coaching. You'll find yourself directing them, but let's just talk about the correction part for a minute. What does that mean? That means I need to, let's put it this way, number 4, consistently, and I mean that clear and I know I didn't make you write that down, it's printed there for you, but you need to consistently correct sinful behavior. When you see something that is sinful, now I guess you could put under the banner, anything my kid doesn't do that I ask him to do is sinful because the command for them is singular, "Obey your parents." But you're supposed to be careful in the Lord, you're being careful not to over legislate your kid's life. But now you need to recognize, when they violate God's rules, which I hope are reflected in your rules, you need to be consistently, here's how I like put it, enforcing unpleasant consequences. That's the only way you can correct behavior with a child. And that is a broad way to put it. But let's talk about it, to enforce, consistently enforce unpleasant circumstances. The Bible is very clear on this. Here's how it starts in terms of principal, moral principle that you can see lived out in every area of life. Here it comes. "Do not be deceived," Galatians 6:7 says, "Don't be deceived. God is not mocked," so apparently he set up this principle, "for whatever one sows", they do "A", "they're going to reap" "B", there are consequences. Don't be deceived. Don't let anybody mock God in this. If you do this, this, and this, if God says it's wrong, there's going to be this, this, and this.

If you do right, surely there's a reward in righteousness. If you do "x" "y" and "y" there'll be "X" "Y" and "Z." God is a God who consistently enforces consequences. Now, that's a statement given to adults and that's true and they don't always come right away. But your sin will eventually find you out. There will be consequences. But when it comes to your kids in this little artificial reality that is created within your home, these little lives are dealing with such small things compared to

the big things they'll deal with when they're 30, 40 years old, you're trying to give them that sense of sowing and reaping. That if you keep these rules then this good will happen, if you violate these rules then these unpleasant consequences will take place. And that consistent sowing and reaping needs to be learned in their childhood and that means the best way to do it, just like God does with us as adults, is unpleasant, that's the word used in Hebrews Chapter 12 about God's discipline of us, needs to be consistently measured, carefully level-headedly enforced in their lives. And when they're very little, they don't even speak your language yet but there is a language they understand. It is a very basic fundamental language they understand from the very beginning of their lives. Matter of fact, prenatally they're learning this language.

"What?" God teaches them a lot prenatally. "Oh, he's getting weird now." No, no, no, no, listen, follow me. Prenatally God is teaching your child about sowing and reaping. Let's think about this. They have these budding little fingers that come out. They have this muscle that gets developed pretty quickly in their jaws, it starts to come together. They have this little flap of muscle in their mouth called a tongue. They have these little eyeballs that even with the eyelids over them, they're pretty sensitive. Even prenatally, if they were to go poke their eye, their brain gets a signal. "Ouch!" And you know what that means? Don't do that again. And you know what they soon learn? They're not going to do that again. Oh, they come out into the world, they start opening their eyes and looking around, and if they happen to do it again and the signal from their brain to their arm and their elbow and their muscle retracts and they poke their eye again, they go, "Oh yeah, don't do that anymore." Now, how did you teach your kids not to... I know a lot of you wrap them in, you know, bubble wrap and so, you know... Wrong! God's sowing and reaping principle gets them within just a matter of days to not do that. God put this little thing in their mouths called a tongue. And God says, "Listen, that's important that it stays in that state and so I had to make it soft for a lot of reasons, for you to talk, for you to taste, the taste buds. There's a lot I'm going to do with that little piece of meat there in the middle of your mouth. I've also given these gums." But thankfully God starts them with weapons that aren't quite as sharp as they eventually will be but if your infants ever gummed you, it hurts. And if they clamp down their strong little jaw muscles on that tongue, guess what, that tongue screams to the brain and the brain says "Ouch! Stop! Don't do that again." They come out with a pretty good sense of sowing and reaping to where they stop chewing on their tongue and they stop sticking their fingers in their eyes because there's an unpleasant consequence every time they do.

Now why did God set that up? Because if you cross that line and you clamp down on your tongue and chew on it all afternoon or you keep sticking your finger in your eye, it will be injurious and damaging to your life. The things that I've created to do certain things like taste and speak will not be able to do that if you chew up your tongue. Those eyeballs that are designed for you to see, now they've got to be vulnerable and they're going to be there and they're going to be exposed. Now, I put some safety there but really your eyelid is no match for your finger. So, I'm going to have you recognize that if you want those eyes to work the way I designed them to, you can't destroy them by putting your fingers into your eyes. Therefore, God says, here's the rule and I put consequences. Now my kid knows nothing when they come out into this world about my rules, about God's moral rules. He knows the sowing and reaping in the biological realm. But now, for instance, I say things like they would never know before. They can twist and do whatever they want to their prenatally and they're fine, they're in a bean bag, and that's a bad way to put it, but there just... in a waterbed, is that better? And they're just, they're fine. But I bring them out into the real world and they're not in a cocoon and they're not in this water bag and they're now on things like changing tables that they could roll off and the floor is hard and that would be bad.

So we put them on the changing table and say, "OK, now it's time to change your stinking rotten

little diaper here and I want you to learn to do that without squirming around on that table. Because if you squirm around on that table you may drop to the ground and that would be bad. Now, you didn't have that as a problem prenatally but I need to teach you that and since I can't lecture to you in English or Latin or Greek or Hebrew, all I can do is try and make the point." And the point needs to be made by simply enforcing an unpleasant consequence if you are not still when you lay on your back and it's time to change your diaper. It's amazing how smart these kids are to not chew on their tongue or stick their finger in their eye.

And you know what, all it takes is a little consistent enforcement of an unpleasant consequence for doing what you tell them not to, which they don't see the problem in until the pain. This is something we need to start from the very beginning and the Bible's got a word for this and it's poorly translated, the Hebrew word is "shebet." You've heard me teach on this, you know the Hebrew word because I like to use the Hebrew word instead of the English word because how it's translated, people's brains explode when they hear the word. And it's translated how in English, Sunday school grads? "The rod." Now when you start reading passages about applying the rod to your child, right, not only liberals are going to go crazy, not only do people just freak out, Christians are going to go, "I'm embarrassed about that verse in the Bible." Do not be embarrassed about the verse that speaks about applying the rod to a little child. "Oh, I am. Just even you saying that in English." Here's what a rod is and I know you know the verse in Psalm 23, it speaks of the Lord being our shepherd. David says, "Your rod and your staff they comfort me." Smile at me if you've heard that before, right? "Rod and staff they comfort me." First of all I don't think a rod would comfort me, certainly if it's applied to me. Now, a lot of times we teach that passage about how the shepherd has two pieces of equipment that are very important and firm and strong and hard. The "staff" and we all can picture that, kind of the cartoon image of the staff, a long stick with the crook on the end. A lot of them didn't have a crook on the end, it was just a long stick, but that was their staff. Then they had a rod and most of us didn't even give a thought, I don't know what a rod is. A rod is a very, very small version of the staff, different Hebrew word, it's the word "shebet" and it was usually tucked in a shepherd into his belt. It was a little tiny stick. It was used for all kinds of things, for counting the sheep, it was used for a lot of things even in trying to redirect a lamb going in the wrong direction. They'd take out that rod and they would knock that rod on the nose of that sheep and sheep are some of the stupidest animals God created and yet, guess what? When they got rapped on the nose and their eyes started to water they learned, "Ouch, don't do that. I get it." And that little rod, the shebet, was used to redirect them. Now the Bible says, you know, that rod needs to be utilized to enforce some kind of unpleasant consequence on little children who know nothing else but the sowing and reaping of the physical world and you can start to redirect their moral behavior and their obedience to their parents, which is right, and I will bless.

That word is also used and translated sometimes in the context as a scepter. Sometimes we see in our English Bibles, the shebet is the scepter, the scepter, again you can picture that, is a little stick. Usually with a king it was, you know, it was bedecked with jewels and it was gold laden or whatever, at least that's how we envision it. But it was a little stick in their hand that they would use as an extension of their majesty. Shebet was also used as a tool in the kitchen that a preparer of a meal would use to crush cumin, and that's how it's used in the prophets. The shebet was that little tool in the kitchen, which is why, taking it as literally as we possibly can, we have that little tiny jar on the changing table with a little wooden stick in it, which is called a spoon or wooden spoon, it was our shebet. And all it would take is an application of that shebet to send a signal from their hind quarters up to their brain to get the same experience they had when they clamped down on their tongue or they stuck their finger in the eye. And they started to learn, "I guess while I'm sitting here staring at the ceiling in this little corner of the room, I'm not supposed to squirm around." And they learn it and it doesn't take long. "Well, I have a strong-willed child." Well, you may have to do it a



few more times than we had to do with our kids. But you know what you'll find? They'll learn obedience, they'll learn self-control, they'll learn restraint and they learn it quickly.

"I'm going to write child protective services. This is child abuse, CHILD ABUSE!" Chill out. California's pretty liberal. We don't live in Tennessee, am I right? You're not in Oklahoma right now, you know that. We're pretty free thinking here on the West Coast. Here is the Welfare and Institution Code of the California laws of our land, California. Division 2, Section on children, Part 1, Article 6, subcategory dependent children, they live in your home, Section... It is obviously a government document here, right, where you drill down several sections. Welfare Institution Code, Division 2, children, Part 1, Article 6, dependent children, Section 6. This is the section on child abuse, child abuse, which is what you think spanking is, right? Child abuse. OK? Here's what it says. "When it comes to child abuse, we want to make it very clear, we're dealing with," here's a quote now, "causing serious physical harm." Right? Now they go on, "Serious physical harm," I'm quoting now California legislators, "does not include reasonable age appropriate spanking," Duh-da-dun spanking, "to the buttocks where there is no evidence of serious physical harm." Let me read that again. This whole section about abusing children is all about "serious physical harm," causing children that. And it says, "serious physical harm does not include reasonable age appropriate spanking to the buttocks where there is no evidence of serious physical injury."

So when you leave this sermon or you do your homework and even that one chapter I wrote in that book that we made available here last couple of weeks on discipline, I talk about quelling the rebellious heart of your child, go certainly to the footnotes, the end notes, I guess they put them at the end of the book, those end notes, and I put several studies in there about all the nonsense of our psychologically driven culture that would tell you that somehow if you apply physical pain in the form of spanking to your children you will create monsters and violence will beget violence. Spanking is not violence and it does not beget violence. As a matter of fact, the most violent kids I've ever had in my house or seen in this church, I guarantee you, have not been spanked. I know this firsthand with plenty of evidence, I've watched it happen in my home where kids who are not spanked have come up to my daughter, taken her by the hair and slammed her to the floor, as the parent sits back, very proudly that they don't spank their children. Now they're kind of embarrassed about what they just did to my kid. My kids never did that. And they were raised with spanking. "But, spanking is such a bad word." So if you go away here spanking your kids, someone says, "You spank your kids?" Yes. With the full sanction of the State of California, I spank my kids.

I once had a set of parents as husband wife sitting in my office. They were ballistic over my teaching on this topic. I took a chance, sometimes I do, I'm just at my wits end, I said, "Hey, you're concerned that this is child abuse, let me let me call the local sheriff. At that point where I was there was a police department, a local municipal police department, and I called them. Somebody at the desk answered the phone and I said, "Listen, I'm a pastor here in your town and I got a couple here and they're concerned that I'm teaching them to spank their kids and that is child abuse and it's illegal, you can't do it." The guy laughed and chuckled, big belly laugh. He said, "Oh, if only you would all spank your children they wouldn't end up here and we wouldn't have to deal with them." I said, "Ah, perfect. Say no more, say no more." You know that's one of those like checkmate moves in a counseling session.

I mean you can think it's child abuse but I can assure you this, it trains young hearts. And if you choose to forego the enforcement of unpleasant consequences in your life, the Bible says "You hate your child." Proverbs 13:24. "Whoever spares the rod," if you do not apply the shebet, you hate your kid. "But the one who loves his child is diligent," and there's the consistent part, "to discipline him." "Well, we believe in time outs." The only time out I believe in is you having a time out from

the anger that you might feel with your child's disobedience until you apply the shebet. There's the time out. Give yourself a time out, until you can approach that child with a calm, reasonable, loving disposition and say, "Because you disobeyed me you need to learn self-control and restraint. You earn so many swats." Not erratic, it shouldn't be based on your moods, it should be based on the infraction and certainly there's a hierarchy of infractions. Build that in your own life. Don't over legislate your home. Discipline your son while there is hope. And that's a reminder that this starts very young and it's done very young. By the time kids are in kindergarten or first grade, I mean, spankings were gone for the most part.

But discipline while they're young? "While there's still hope and do not set your heart on putting him to death." What's that mean? If you neglect it you're party to his death. Proverbs 23:13 talks about this concept of striking him with the shebet. And if you do, "He won't die." And that's not saying get him just to the point of the edge of his life, I know you think you're going to kill him but you're not going to kill him. That's not what's being said, the next verse clarifies it. If you use the shebet it says, "You will save his soul from Sheol." In other words, you will do something to redirect his life from the much bigger shebet, the shebet of God, which is much more like the staff than the rod. It's a lot worse. And I reminded my kids of that when they graduated from the wooden spoon because they were pretty tough kids, my boys. I created this nice birch paddle. I think I talk about this in the book. And when I had to go reach for it and as I keep it in the top of their bedroom for convenient access and I keep it up in their closet and I'd pull it out and often I'd remind them, "Just remember, I know you hate this thing and you hate what we're about to go through, but I'm doing it because God's paddle is a lot more painful than mine and I'm trying to spare you from Sheol. I'm trying to keep you in a place where you can control yourself and restrain yourself and be a man or woman of self-control and righteousness." And it doesn't last long and I said that. I learned this, I know you've heard me say this, many of you have been parroting things that I've taught, but there comes a point when I start giving my kid an option regarding the unpleasant consequences, because unpleasant consequences will continue as long as there's flagrant disobedience in my house.

But I'll start saying things, even when they're young, "Listen, I came home from work, mom said you earned five swats today and, with the boys especially, I mean, she gave up early on the discipline saying, "Dad needs to do this," you know, for a lot of reasons. You can ask me about that later. I think I deal with it in the book. And I would come home and take the kid in the bedroom and I'd say, "Listen, you earned five swats, mom says, and so it's time to face the music, here it comes. But before we do this, I just wondered if I gave you a choice here and I said I'd give these five swats or you miss dessert tonight and you can go to bed an hour early. I just wonder which would you choose?" And for a while, they were like, "Well, I'd rather go to bed early." Eventually it is, "You know, I'd just rather have those five swats." That's when I said, "OK." Next time there was no option. Right? Now, you go to bed early and you have no dessert. Why? Because it was more unpleasant for him.

It was worse for them to have those consequences and that's why clearly the spanking of the shebet, it morphs into something very different pretty early on. And yet, at the very beginning it starts and it's so helpful in training these young lives to be obedient to their parents because being obedient to your parents is right and God will honor it. It's not erratic, it's not uncontrolled, it's measured. Bring them up in the discipline of the Lord, lastly in the instruction of the Lord. Much of the latter years of parenting, when I have my kids in my home 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, of course you don't see them much after 13, but those years there are a lot of direction. Direction, direction, direction. And that direction here, as it says instruction, I use the word direction, it is the concept of pushing them toward godliness.

Number 5. Courageously pushed them toward godliness. Make sure they understand that you're going to push them in the direction of godliness. And again, if that sounds like you're creating a legalist, you've missed the point. You haven't been listening.

That's the goal of parents. I'm going to push them toward the gospel but I'm also going to push them toward the means of grace as Philpot said in that quote a couple of weeks back. The concept of them being... What is the means of grace, what do these Puritans mean by that? They mean this: that there are things where they're put right in the line of God's convicting work. Church. Right? Prayer, Bible study, reading the text, that puts them right in the line of fire. And I'm going to put them in that place. They're going to experience those things. That's why I said last week, there's no choice. Just like I'm going to force my kid to take a shower, force my kid to brush his teeth, I'm going to force them also to be involved in things that are defined in Scripture as godly, even though they're not Christians. Even from the youngest age, you are required to go to church, you're required to read the Bible, you are required to pray with us at the end of the night, you're required to do all these things because I'm putting you in the line of fire of the powerful and living active word of God.

And my goal is to see your heart saved. And so I'm aiming at regeneration, that's how we started this series, but I'm pushing you toward godliness, just like you pushed them to eat their veggies, you push them to do their homework, you push them to get out of bed in the morning, you're going to push them do all these other things as well. Because it is right. Why do you want them to wear the retainer anyway? "Well, you know, I figure it will be good in the end, you don't want to look like, you know, a Snaggletooth." OK. Same thing with the Bible, same thing with church, same things with service in the church. "Non-Christians?" Yes, non-Christians serving in the church as children. That's what we're talking about. We're not talking about teaching Bible studies. We're just talking about you picking up chairs or passing out stuff or doing something that is, eventually, the encounter that they're going to have with the Gospel of Christ. Courageously push them toward godliness. Expect a push back, by the way. Whenever you push someone toward godliness they have the world, the flesh and the devil fueling them to push back. Of course they're going to push back.

And the world's going to say, "This is absurd. You make them do all that religious stuff?" They're going to say that. And your Christian friends are going to think you're too demanding and they're going to say you're Nazis. Great. Let's see if your free-flowing parenting works out. I mean just think about discipline and instruction. There was a generation that trained their kids that way. And even though many of them never chose to follow Christ, think about this, what kind of generation did they produce? And then you got into the 70s and you had all this permissive parenting, and the 80s and the 90s and now it's craziness out there.

I mean, what's the fruit of that kind of parenting? We need to push our kids toward godliness even if they do not come to Christ. We will spare them so many heartaches in the common grace of a home that preaches Christ and preaches the gospel and encourages righteous behavior.

Let me say one last thing as it relates to pushing them toward godliness. You draw the target before you shoot the arrow. You always draw the target before you shoot the arrow. And you know what? If that kid flies errantly off to the corner of the barn's wall, don't go over there and redraw the target. Theologically, your kids are one of your biggest doctrinal tests of fidelity. Are you following what I'm saying here?



Where your kids end up, just because you love them, does not mean this is spiritual success. Christianity is not defined by your child's trajectory. Christianity is defined by Scripture. Godliness is as defined by the Bible. Therefore, you need to have the courage not to repaint the target. You need to be theologically resolute. You cannot define Christianity around your kids. There's nothing like errant kids to test your doctrinal fidelity. So be courageous in pushing them toward godliness, a godliness that is defined by Scripture. That's where we got all these doctrines of the carnal Christian and, you know, people who are Christians and saved, but the Lord isn't the Lord of their life. All this stuff that grew often out of parents that saw their wayward kids and somehow wanted to salvage in the peace of their own mind that my kids got to be alright, because they walked an aisle, prayed a prayer, threw a pine cone in the fire. Push them toward godliness and don't repaint the target. Theology is what matters ultimately.

The goal is regeneration. That's why I thought it would be good and it's appropriate for us to end this series with a celebration of the Lord's Supper. I'd like us to remember what the goal is. The goal is for them to get right with God. It's ultimately about our kids, it's about the kids down the hall in this church, coming to faith in Christ and having their sins forgiven. And the focus of that, of course, in Scripture is the death of Jesus Christ dying in our place. Christ has provided what our kids need. Christ has provided what you need. It's not about being an upstanding citizen, it's about regeneration, it's based on the finished work of Christ. The ushers are going to come down, if you're not a Christian, just hang in there, we're almost done, the lights are down, they'll be quiet music. We're almost going to land this thing. But if you are a Christian, you need to know this is a time for us to focus once again on the core issue of Christianity. That it's not about moral upstanding citizens, it is about regeneration, being right with God. So take those elements. It reminds us of the body of Christ, it reminds us of the blood of Christ. And because Christ died for us we can have our sins forgiven and your kids can grow to a place of maturation and conviction and faith and repentance and they can have the same. That's our prayer.

And that's a hard, hard thing for some of you who have tried to repaint the target around a wayward child, but pray for them right now. The power of prayer and the effectual prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much. It's not over yet. Let's see what God does with your kids. And if your kids are young, man, keep aiming them at godliness. Keep correcting that sinful behavior. Be a measured, loving, reasonable disciplinarian in your home. It'll certainly please the Lord and he will reward you.

Spend some time focusing on that. If there's any sin in your life that has not been confessed, if anything comes to mind confess your sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

And then we'll take these together as I come back up in about three minutes after everyone's been served and we'll remember the death of Christ together.

Jesus talked about doing this modified Passover celebrations, it's clearly a New Testament practice, but it is birthed out of the Old Testament Passover meal and it was a reminder. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." And of course, it was a picture of blood and flesh in the concept. Was one of us being clear about what we're here to do? We're here to be rightly related to the God that created us and it's only going to happen through the payment of your sins being somehow dealt with. And Christ came to be that. Just like that Old Testament sacrificial system spoke to, John could see Jesus the Messiah and know enough about Isaiah 53, at least to the governance of his words by the Spirit, to say, "Look, there's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Lambs were designed in that setting to be sacrificed as a picture of the innocent dying for the guilty. And so we here today



remind ourselves of the central feature of our Christianity, which is different than every other religion. Every other religion wants you to do this, do this, do this and you'll be right with God. And we say God has already done what is needed. What we need do is to trust in what's been done. It's not a mystical experience, this juice does not turn into a blood, the bread does not turn into flesh. "Well, he said this is my flesh." Yeah, he said I'm the door, too. But he doesn't have hinges or a doorknob. This is a picture that he's trying to give us relating to us the need to ingest the full righteousness of Christ. That's what we do, we want to be so connected with what Christ's life did and what his death meant, that my sin was seen as appended to the cross and his righteousness is now a part of me and I'm right because he is righteous. That is what this is all about. So I hope with thanksgiving and a renewed gratitude for what Christ has done for you and maybe a new passion to see the next generation come to grips with these elemental principles and truths of the Christian faith that you would, with thanksgiving, eat this bread and drink this cup. Let's do that together.

Let's pray. God, thank you very much for our time together as we sing one last song, may you lift our hearts up with thanksgiving and gratitude for what your son has done for us. May it motivate us to be much more intentional about the parenting that takes place in our homes, and if we're past that stage, that we'd be the kind of prayer support like the godparents of days gone by or even in those highly liturgical churches of people who are being assigned to the care and welfare, spiritually, of other children in the church. May we all have that sense, whether it's serving in the ministry of our kids programs, our youth programs or whether it's just really given ourselves to specific prayer for those who are growing up in our church. Help us God, we've got thousands, more than ever, here at this church. What a great day it is to take an interest in the next generation because we have so many young people in this church. We're grateful for that. Make us good stewards of their lives and do our best to point them to you.

In Jesus name.

Amen.