

Proverbs 22:6

Sunday 10/14/2007

Father, we thank and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for all that You do for us and for all that You have given us. We ask You now, Lord, in a very special way, that You would be with us today. We thank You, Lord, for the Word of God, for its truth, for its power. We pray now, Lord, that You will help us today talk about and talk through these things that we need to deal with. We love You. We just thank You and praise You now for all that You do. In Jesus' name.

Lord, never let us forget these little children that are so important to us, in our church and in our families. We just ask You, Lord, in a special way that You touch the hearts of parents and touch the hearts of our children. Always let this church be focused toward them, Lord, as the next and future generations as Jesus carries His coming. Lord, we love You. Thank you now. We ask all these things in Your precious name. Amen.

Today, we have come to the point where we have been through a lot in our parenting classes and covered a lot of material. Today, we are going to talk about, as far as I am concerned, and I am sure you as a parent, probably the most important day in your life as a parent, outside maybe the day that you got saved yourself. Without question, it certainly is the reason why we have been doing our child training classes and talking about the power of parenting, showing you how to apply biblical principles. Really, it all comes down to the day of salvation in your child's life.

Today, I want to talk about that. I do not know how far we will get today. I do not have any real plan to finish all of this today; it just depends on what we get caught up in. This is something that we certainly do not want to rush. We thoroughly have to understand some of these things. Yet, at the same time, I think there is a lot of powerful information in here for you, even if you do not have any children. Again, I keep going back to the parallels between you as a parent and your children, and then the parallel of you and I as a Christian being God's son and God's child.

I. The Two Most Important Days

Last week, very briefly, I mentioned two days in your child's life. I think these two days are probably the most important days in your child's life. One of them is absolutely guaranteed; the other one has no guarantee. Of course, the first one is the evil day.

Remember all the way back when we started this series, I talked about Daniel 1, how Daniel was such an incredible picture of what your child faces. It is also an incredible picture of what you and I face as a child of God in facing the world. Here is Daniel, who is probably maybe 12 or 13 or 14 years old. He is certainly just a young guy. He has been taken captive as the nation of Israel began their 70 years of captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

We now see that Daniel has been ripped from his family, ripped from his religion, ripped from every social thing that he understood and knew as an Old Testament Jew. Now he is thrust into the middle of one of the most ungodly kingdoms or world empires and societies that the world has ever seen. You would have to look a long time and look a long way to find something that

was more wicked than Babylon. Babylon, in every fabric of its society, was an absolute mess when it comes to the depravity and the ungodliness that was going on.

We find within Daniel 1 how Daniel was thrown up against this. Remember I compared it with over there in the book of Ephesians when it talks about the evil day, and we do all to stand in that evil day. I showed you how the evil day in your child's life is going to be the day where you as a parent basically have relinquished direct control of them. That can happen as early as five or six years old when they go to school. Before that point, you had complete control. You could watch what they read. You could watch what they watched on television. You could watch who they associated with.

Once they leave the protection of your home, and it is something as innocent and as basic as kindergarten, they are many times faced with the alternatives of life that are going to impact them one way or the other. For many of them, maybe not all, but for many of them, that evil day has now come upon them. They are now faced with issues that Mom and Dad are not there to guide them through like you were before that point. That is why we have really talked about how important the first five years are in your child's life, that you get those things ingrained.

There is no question about the fact that the evil day is the day that is guaranteed. None of your children will sidestep that day. I know that parents do a lot of things to try to offset that day, and most of the things they do are not biblical. Most of the things they do only add more confusion. But the truth of the matter is that day is guaranteed in your child's life. There is going to be a day when your child has to face this world.

The second one is not guaranteed, and that is the day of salvation in your child's life. Not every child is guaranteed to go to heaven, not because of God's grace and not God's mercy. Truly, the Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish. The problem is not God; the problem is parents.

II. The Tragedy of Unsaved Children

It is inconceivable to me to even imagine how a parent can get saved. Even though it is somewhat inconceivable to me, I understand how it happens. I can understand how an unsaved parent is so caught up in everything in this world that there is no God, no Bible, no church, no nothing. I can understand that. But what over the years has been absolutely inconceivable to me is to even imagine how a parent can get saved themselves and then allow their child to step out into eternity without knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. If you think that does not happen more times than you could count every day, you do not know much about human nature.

In my life in the ministry, there are two absolutely tragic stories that are unparalleled. I do not know what two things I got involved in could be more tragic to me. Even though I was not directly involved, I had to be there and deal with it. I will not bore you with the first one, but the second one, to me, aligns with Christian parents allowing their children to step out of eternity and go to hell.

A number of years ago, I held a Bible study on Thursday night that drew quite a few people, a couple hundred, maybe three or four hundred people at its peak. At the end of that Bible study, I always gave an invitation, and we always talked about getting saved. For about six months, this man would come in. He would come in after the Bible study started. He would sit in the back. Back then, it was a large gymnasium with just tables, tables, tables. So he was sitting probably half again as far back as you are. He would come in late for Bible study, carry a Bible with him, sit down, and listen to what I had to say.

Every night that I gave the invitation, he would raise his hand that he was not saved. Then, when I would come to the point where I offered a space for salvation, he would put his head down on the table, visibly moved and shaken. Then he would get up and walk out of the Bible study.

He came every Thursday night. After about six months, I became very concerned. He always came in late, so I could not talk to him before the study, and he left early, so I could not catch him afterward. One night, I was so concerned about this situation that I had somebody else come up and give the invitation and close out in prayer. I slipped out to catch him. I waited for him by the doors, and when he got up to leave, I asked him—I did not even know his name, but he knew who I was—I asked him, "Could I talk to you for just a moment?" He was very willing; he was weeping, but he was broken and more than glad to talk to me.

So we went into my office, and I said, "You know what? I apologize. Please forgive me for doing this the way I did it, but I just needed to know what the deal is here. I have watched you raise your hand every night at the end of Bible study, and I have watched you visibly be moved, many times weeping, as you leave Bible study. Why is it?" I was thinking there was something in his life that he did not want to give up, or some sin in his life, or he thought he had done something terrible that God could not forgive him—the normal run-of-the-mill stuff that you can deal with in about 30 seconds with an open Bible.

He began to tell me one of the most tragic, unbelievable stories. There is hardly a time in my life when I do not have an answer for you about whatever you throw at me, but on this particular day, I did not know what to do or say. To this day, I still have nightmares about this situation. I wake up in a cold sweat; it bothers me to this day.

He told me the story. He said, "Preacher, you want to know why I will not get saved?" He said, "Five or six years ago, I met a young girl, and I loved this girl, and she loved me, and we got married. We began our life together. We both had good jobs. Somebody at work began to witness to her and tell her about church, the Bible. She came home to me and she said, 'Let's go to church.' She said, 'My friends go to a church.' In fact, it was our church back then. She said, 'Why don't we go to church together? I really think we need to have that in our relationship and in our marriage.'"

He said, "No, I do not need church. I do not want God. I do not need anything about God." This went on for almost three years, where she tried to get him to come to church, tried to get him to go. She was not going to go without him, but she basically begged him and asked him to come to church because she needed God in their marriage.

One night, they were coming home from an event they were at, and they were in a very tragic car accident, and his wife was killed in that accident. As far as we know, as he was telling me the story, his little wife stepped out into eternity without Christ, without God. He told me, "Preacher," he said, "I know as well as I am standing here talking to you that my wife, who wanted to come to church, is in hell." Tears began to well up in his eyes and stream down his face. "She wanted to come to church. She begged me to come to church. She wanted God in her life, but she was not going to go without me."

He said, "I want you to know, Preacher, that my wife, whom I love with all of my heart, would have done anything for, because of my indifference, died and went to hell." Then his tears really began to flow. He said, "If you think, Preacher, that I am going to get saved and go to heaven when I know my wife is in hell, I just cannot do that." He then got up and walked out of my office. I never saw that guy again. I never had any more contact with him than that.

That night, I was so visibly shaken that it was inconceivable for me to think about a situation where a man who knows he is going to hell, who knows now that salvation is the way, who knows now enough to get saved, but simply will not get saved because of the fact that, because of his indifference, his wife died and is spending eternity in the lake of fire. He was not willing to go to heaven without her, and he was going to the lake of fire as of that time. I do not know what has happened since then. That was the most tragic story I think I have, or one of the two most tragic stories I have ever heard in my life.

I cannot conceive of that. There was a situation where I could not put myself into his position. Normally, in dealing with people, if you want to really empathize with them, you have to put yourself into where they are at. You have to feel what they are going through and try to really get into their lives and help them and be there. I did not know what to do in that particular situation. Just as that was inconceivable to me, I stand here before you today and I say, I still do not understand that. I do not. That is just a terrible thing.

I cannot imagine some of God's people, parents, getting saved themselves and then getting so caught up in their own life and their own world and all that they have, that they get the free ticket to heaven, but their children die and spend an eternity in the lake of fire.

Now, I know that when it talks about children going to hell in a lake of fire, let me explain that. Obviously, I do not want you to get the idea that if your kid is four, five, six, eight, or nine years old, that when they die, they go to hell. We know that. We know that there is a period of time that God covers them. But what we do know is if you do not get your child saved during that period of time, by the time they are 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18, I guarantee you there are some other situations you will have to deal with.

You remember the second message in our series? You remember how I talked about that great sermon, and before we really got into all the teaching, I wanted to really lay the groundwork. It was the morning where this room was filled with parents on their knees asking God to really intervene in their lives and help them be good parents. I preached that morning a message based around the lives of two men. The title of that sermon was simply, "Before We Ever Get Into This,

Why Your Child Will Probably Wind Up in Hell and Burning Eternity in a Lake of Fire." It was a very hard message.

III. Biblical Examples of Parental Failure

I built it around two men in the Bible: one was Lot, the other one was a man by the name of Jephthah back there in Judges. I showed you how Lot represents a man whose pleasures of this world—in both cases, these men were saved men in the sense of relationship with God. The Bible talks about Lot; it says "righteous Lot," but righteous Lot's problem was what a lot of God's people's problems are: he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

Lot was a man who, in the modern sense that we talk about it today, was a Christian man. If we want to put him into a New Testament context, he was a man that was a picture of a Christian man or woman, but they have gotten into the world and have absolutely destroyed everything in their own life, as much as everything in the lives of their children. We know from that story, as we talked about that day, that when Sodom and Gomorrah were burned up and the judgment of God fell down and destroyed that city, Lot's children, other than the two daughters who went with him, his sons-in-law, and all of his family burned in the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah. That is a picture of a saved man, an absolutely saved person, who loses their whole family to the lake of fire.

We do not have time to get into the doctrinal issue of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the whole picture is a picture of a saved man who loses his family in the lake of fire, other than his wife and his two daughters. But even the remnant of his family are so absolutely messed up with the world that his wife, even though she got out of Sodom, could not forget Sodom, and she turned into a pillar of salt as she looked back. His own two daughters, when they were in a cave, wound up getting him drunk and having sex with their own father, producing two races that gave Israel problems. His family is an absolute mess, and yet in the New Testament context, he is a picture of you and me as a saved individual.

The second man was Jephthah. While Lot is a picture of a saved man who was vexed and filthy in the world with all of the things the world has to offer, Jephthah is just the opposite. He is a picture of a saved man, and he would not think about going down to a place like Sodom and Gomorrah. He would not think about all of the filthy stuff that Lot was involved in. When the homosexuals showed up at Lot's door back there in Genesis 19 and knocked on the door, when he went out, he called them brethren. He fit right into Sodom. Not Jephthah.

Jephthah is the other guy in the book of Judges. Jephthah is the guy who is a church deacon. He is a Sunday school teacher. Jephthah is a picture of a Christian who is so proud and so absolutely into himself and so out of touch with the reality of God that because of his own selfishness and his own arrogance, he loses his own daughter.

Jephthah is one of these guys that shoots off his mouth. He is a big-time guy. He is into all the political things that go on in Israel, and he is an exact picture of what you find in most Baptist churches. I told you the story a while back about a certain church in our area. They had a

tremendous problem. The pastor did not do some things right, and the church, which was running probably around 2,500 people, suddenly lost about 1,500 people, maybe 1,000 people.

A guy that I know in the ministry has a church out here on the other side of Lee's Summit. The guy that was leading the pack at the other church went to my friend's church, and he said this: "Look, I have 400 people, and I will bring those 400 people into your church overnight with all of their tithes and all of their money, and you will grow from a church of 400 to 800 overnight with all the benefits that come with it. I only have two conditions: condition number one is that you put me on staff and you make me part of the 'leadership cadre' here. The other one is that you do not ever preach out of the King James Bible, and that book becomes a non-issue here." Of course, the pastor, with the sound of money running in his mind, said, "Absolutely," and overnight, gained that group of people and all the benefits that come with it, up until the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Anyway, that is beside the point. That is a Jephthah.

- A Jephthah is somebody that will come to you and bring to you a deal you cannot refuse.
- A Jephthah is always working the angles.
- A Jephthah cares nothing about the things of God or the Word of God.
- Jephthah only cares about what is in it for him.
- He is in it for the political power.
- He is in it for standing in front of people and watching them and teaching them.
- He does not really teach them because he wants to give them anything; he teaches them because he wants them to look at him and how great he is.
- He is always working the angles.

In the process, Jephthah lost his own daughter in a silly, stupid concept that befalls many, many people with their children who are saved people. I am telling you, and yet the tragedy of that is most of us, even though it was only about eight short weeks ago, most of us do not even remember those messages anymore.

There are three days in your Bible that you better pay attention to:

1. The day of your salvation.
2. The day of Jesus Christ (that is the rapture of the church).
3. The day of the Lord (which we know as the second coming of Christ).

If you wanted to put your life or your children's life on a graph or a chart, you could just take a chart and put a straight line across. It would be a very simple chart. You put "the day of Jesus Christ" over here. You put "the day of their birth" over here. And you put "the day of salvation" somewhere in the middle.

Everything from the time they are born to the day of salvation is in preparation for that day they get saved. Everything from the day of salvation to the day of Jesus Christ, the rapture of the church, gets them ready for the Judgment Seat of Christ and facing God based on what they have done with their lives. This works for your own life; it works for your children's life. It gives you a visual. It is not much of a visual, but you know what I am talking about. From point A, their

birth, to the first day, which is the day of salvation, everything you do in that child's life is to bring them to that day and get them ready for that day.

From that day of salvation to the day of Jesus Christ, the rapture of the church, everything you do from that point to this point gets them ready for the Judgment Seat of Christ and facing God based on what they have done with their lives. It is very simple.

As a parent, you have two basic responsibilities:

4. Get them ready for the day of salvation. That is what we are talking about through these lessons.
5. Once they hit the day of salvation, which is the point that we are going to talk about today, then for the rest of their lives, you build on what you have already done and you get them ready as best you can, because I know there comes a point where they are on their own and they have to make their own decisions. But if you have done the work that you needed to do, then you get them ready for meeting Christ at the rapture of the church, where they have to stand at the day of Jesus Christ, which is the Judgment Seat of Christ, where they are given account for what they have done.

It is very simple and basic if you just follow that little outline.

IV. The Parent's Sole Responsibility

I said all that as an introduction to say this: the responsibility of winning your child to Christ is yours as a parent, and yours alone. It is nobody else's responsibility. God designed this for you and your spouse when you enter into marriage.

We have a lot of empty seats here this morning because a lot of kids are sick. Then you always have the ones who just found a better deal today, but that is beside the point. The bottom line is this: this is how the devil works, and it never ceases to amaze me, but this is the way it is. Of all the messages that we have preached, just like I told you in life, you are getting your child ready for that day. Everything we have done in the sermon so far has been to bring us up to what we have to talk about today. What a great day for half the kids in our church to get sick to keep the parents out! Oh, yes, and I understand you can go back and get it on CD, but you lose something in the context when you do that. But that is just the way it is. I am telling you, if you ever get into the ministry, those are the things you just have to roll with the punches with.

The responsibility of winning your child to Christ is absolutely yours and yours alone. It is not mine. It is not your grandparents'. It is yours. This is the way God designed it. God designed that you and your wife would enter into a unity in the Bible called marriage. Let me just say to you that I do not care what the world does with it or what the world thinks about it; marriage was only designed for Christians.

This place is rented out probably every weekend, a couple times a week, for marriages. June and May are the popular months for marriages; everybody gets married. The bottom line is this: God gave the institution of marriage. Marriage was not something that society conceived in their mind and said, "You know what? We ought to have a marriage. We ought to get something now

that unifies all this and puts it down legally." That was not society's idea. The first marriage is found in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 with Adam and Eve.

Marriage was something designed by God for the purpose of giving unity, to bring about in God's timing a unified body—the body of Christ—and to show the relationship between you and me and Christ in the husband and wife relationship. It is not for unsaved people. I care less whether they are unsaved or not, but God cares even less because God does not recognize the marriage of unsaved people, as marriage was not given to them. A lot of times we do not understand those things. We think marriage is just a nice thing in society. I will say it one more time: marriage was designed by God for God's people.

It was in marriage that the program God wanted to have existed, by which we would give honor and glory to God through the conception of children. You and your spouse conceive your children. You give birth to those children. You feed those children. You nurture them. You train and sustain them through their life. It is because that is the way God designed it to do.

Remember, we talked about Psalms 127:3-4, where it said:

Psalms 127:3

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

We talked about how children are the ongoing process that God wants you and I to do. The unending process of having children, raising them up, winning them to Christ, and then the legacy and the heritage of God going on. That is a lot like the way a church operates. I will not be pastor here forever. If the Lord tarries His coming, or if I get too old to preach or I die, somebody else is going to have to take this thing over. That is the process by which God designed it. God never designed anybody to live forever. It is a natural process. As a pastor, you build into the church your replacements and the leadership so that when that day comes, the church is strong enough that everybody follows through with it, and the process never ends.

It is the same process in your individual life. This is what Paul said to Timothy when he said, "The same things that I am committing to you, you take and commit to faithful men." It is an undying process. It is an undying process in my relationship one-on-one with you. I invest my life into your life. You invest it into somebody else's life, and the process continues. It is the process of this church as a body. We train leaders. We put people in positions of leadership. God raises men and women up who can take leadership responsibility, and the process continues on. But at the bottom of that great big pile that I just described is the family unit, and the only way the other two work is for the family unit to operate in the same mindset. You as husbands and wives have to see the responsibility of the family, of training your children through that undying process, keeping before them the understanding that your family is a heritage of the Lord, and that is the ongoing process that you have to follow and go through.

It never ceases to amaze me. As every parent knows, parenting presents some incredible challenges. As a parent, basically from the time they are born until they are on their own, you basically go through every trial with them. You go through their sicknesses. You go through their little heartaches. You are the one that stays up late at night or all night when they have a high

fever and end up taking them to the emergency room at 2 o'clock in the morning. You are the one that puts up with them and takes care of them when they have the mumps, the chickenpox, or pink eye. You are the one that has to wipe their little noses when they have a cold or a sore throat, hold them and rock them when they do not want to play with their favorite toys. They have that lethargic attitude that all they want to do is sit and be held. You are the one that does that.

You are the one that goes through the baby teeth. You are the one that goes through the emergency room with the broken arms and the stitches in the head or the skinned knees, or in time, as they grow up, the broken hearts, the disappointments, the things that happen in their life, the challenges of life, the joys, the disappointments, the ups and the downs. It is you as the parent that, by design, that is your job. You will be on hand for every major event and every minor event in their lives.

You will be at every T-ball game, or at least you will try to be. You will be the one that cheers them on. I remember when we had a little soccer league, where we got the little kids last year or the year before last to play soccer. They were out there, and parents were lined up, and that whole place was filled with a bunch of little kids and parents cheering on the kids. Some of those kids did not even know which way to kick the soccer ball. Some of those kids were on our team; they would just stand by and watch the guy go. Our team made more points for the other teams than all the other teams. Who cared? We were out there cheering like idiots. We were yelling and screaming. A real test of our faith was that they were so early in the morning. I mean, they were like 4 a.m. I do not know why it had to be so early on Saturday morning, but you were there. You were there, and you were cheering and yelling and screaming, and you brought out all the strength. It got cold toward the end, and we would all bundle up, and the kids were out there. Some of them were just standing around. The game was down here, and they were over here picking flowers. But you were there. You were there. You were there.

They get a little older and play basketball or volleyball. They get in Little League. When they get into school, they get into their band concerts. Oh, the first day of school! My goodness, a lot of us experienced that this year. When you get in there, the first thing you do when you take them to school, you sign up to be president of the PTA. Then you get in the booster club. You get into all kinds of high school and all kinds of graduation. The whole thing. You just involve yourself. Why? Because it is your child. It is your child.

When they finally graduate, if they ever do, you as the parent will yell the loudest when they walk across that stage. On the day they get married, you as the parent will be the proudest people. I have never, in all the years—and I have done more marriages than I can ever think about doing. To me, marriages and funerals are much the same, so it is hard for me to separate them out and remember; I just lump them all together. But I have done more marriages than probably I like to remember.

Some of you in here, Jan and John Hill, I married you. How many years ago was that? Ten. Yes, that is right. You guys lived together for 30 years before you got married. I remember that. How many years ago? Thirty years. Woo! Anyone else? They married longer than that, but I did not

marry you guys. That was right after World War I; I was not around then. Thirty years. Now, I want to tell you something. How many have I married in here since that time? Anyone else over here? How long have you guys been married? Twelve years? Well, now that is what I am talking about. How long for you guys? Twenty? All right, we are coming. There has been a lot of water under the bridge in 30 years. A lot of people have married in 30 years.

But I do not think in 30 years of marriage, or all the times I have done weddings, I do not think ever in one time—you know how the tradition is that the dad walks the bride down and gives her away? Unless the dad was passed away and somebody else did it, I do not think there was ever a time in all my ministry of all the marriages—and funerals, if you do not walk anybody down, you will walk them out. But anyway, there are a lot of similarities. You are dead going in and dead coming out.

Anyway, I do not think in all those years, Roy, you have probably done a lot of weddings over there. I do not think you have ever had anybody that you married where the dad asked somebody else to walk her down. He always does it. It is not like, "Well, this is my insurance guy who made the investment; you walk her down." No, that does not happen. You do not say, "Well, you know what? You have been my best friend; you walk my daughter down." No, no, no. You would not trade that privilege for anything in the world. Why? Why is that? Because you are the father. That is your job. That is your responsibility. You would no more think of giving that over to somebody else than giving it to a stranger. You will walk her down that aisle.

In every facet of their lives, you would not think of letting someone else take the preeminence in it and take your place, except—and this is where it gets really inconceivable for me—except in the place of salvation. You would not miss anything in their lives. You would not let anybody else walk them down, take the credit for their graduation, or do all of those things. You would not let anybody else take your place, except the most important.

If there is any proof, if you need any proof that there is a devil out there in this world, I am about to give it to you. You would not give up that role in any facet of life except the facet of the day of their salvation, and then you are willing to let somebody else take care of that child's salvation. I want to say this to you on the authority of the Word of God this morning and many, many years in the ministry: the world is absolutely chock full of men and women who had parents that were the best you could ask for, who were everything in their life, but because of their own selfishness—like a Jephthah or a Lot, or even just a good unsaved man or woman—that child wound up in a lake of fire as an adult because that day of salvation was lost.

You have heard me say many, many times that my biggest issue with most of the churches today and most of the pastors is that they do not really care about you. They want you to come, they want you to tithe, they want all of your money, they want everything you have for them, they want you to do everything for them. But if you have one little problem in your life, one marital glitch, or a problem with your child, or something that you need to know, you go to talk to the pastor, if you can get in to talk to the pastor, he will say, "I do not do that. I do not counsel. I do not do this. That is not my deal." They will subcontract you out to somebody else because the

churches today want your body, they want your money, but they really do not want anything to do with you. You have heard me talk about that many, many times.

Well, let me just say something to you: parents do the exact same thing with their children. Hence, the parallels between ministry and people with your children as parents. You will find that parents will farm their kids out to Christian schools. They will let a Sunday school teacher. They will let a worker on Wednesday night do the job. They will let somebody else get into that child's world that has, as far as I am concerned, absolutely no business being in that child's world when it comes to that day of salvation.

Now, I want to say this. I am going to say a couple of things today, and I will tell you right now, we are not going to finish this today, but that is okay. These things need to be said. I have won children to Christ whose parents I associated with in the ministry or churches over the years. I have won children to Christ whose parents did not come to church. You find yourself in those situations, what are you going to do? But the truth of the matter is, I do not like being in those situations. I do not like it at all. I feel like I am not the right person. I may be the only person God has at that time, and God has called me off the bench, and I have got to deal with it, but I do not like it because I know—maybe some of you do not understand this—that the older you get in the Word of God, you will know where your limitations are.

I know where my limitations are. I know that when I have to win your child to Christ, though I may be able to do it, and though I may be in tune and perceptive enough with the Spirit of God to get the job done, I know that I am in a situation that God's first choice is not me. God's first choice is you. But because you have subcontracted your child out, because you are a Lot or a Jephthah, because of your own priorities, the job falls to me. I know this is true of many of you; you have found yourselves in that same scenario, in that same situation. It is a despicable thing to me, something that really bothers me.

I came to Kansas City in late 1975 or early 1976. I was not a pastor; I was a youth pastor. For three or four years, that was my job, and I worked with many teenagers during that time and beyond. In fact, he is not here today, but Steve Bracken Sr. was one of my counselors. When I first came to Kansas City, he was one of the counselors in my high school department. Steve Bracken Jr. was 12 years old. Nicky was not even born yet. I love the story: he took the kids to school, and the teacher or the other kids or somebody said, "Oh, you are the grandfather?" I took Mattie to school last week, and they thought I was the great-grandfather, so do not feel bad, Steve. But that is how far back it goes. I say that because Steve will remember this, even though he was 12 or 13, and Steve Sr. would have certainly remembered it.

The bottom line is this: the first year I was there, I found out I was in a mess. Churches back then were beginning to fall into an unbiblical mindset. It is incredible; it is something you had to live through. But they were in churches back then where they did not care about getting people saved. Well, they cared about getting people saved; they did not care about doing anything with them after they got saved. They had every conceivable gimmick and plan in play to get a crowd to come. This is back in the days where they had:

- Heaven Sunday

- Friend Day
- All those big days

This is back in the days where some pastors would ride a motorcycle or a go-kart down the aisle of their church; everybody would come and see it. This is where they would have sky-divers drop into the church parking lot after church—everything to get people to come. This is when most churches were running 50 or 60 buses. They were bringing kids in from everywhere, all because they could count them.

This is the time when across the country another church would challenge another church to a Sunday school contest. They would run 10 weeks. They would go back and forth, and the pastor that lost the Sunday school contest had to fly down and present a plaque to the guy that won. It was all about "let's go get them." We had a campaign one time that was called, and this is the kind of pressure they put on their people, it was called "God Against the Devil Campaign." The church had a goal. Every time they met that goal, every Sunday they met that goal, you were good and God won. Every time they did not meet the goal, you were bad and the devil won. I will never forget that. The devil beat us six Sundays running.

But that was the kind of pressure. The pastor would get up, and everything would be just to motivate, drive them, push them, get them to come. "We do not care what we do with them after they get here. We just want to count them, brag about them, beat this church over here, and if you get saved, you got lost in the process." Back then, when a man got saved, he got up from getting saved, and the pastor would come over and say, "Bless God, brother, you got saved, huh? You need to be in the bus ministry," and shift him right off to the ministry. No discipleship, no one-on-one, nobody saying, "Have you gotten over being a serial killer since you got saved?" Nobody cared. Nobody cared anymore. It was just, "They are saved, get them in and count them." Those people burned out. That is what I walked into the first time I was helping, working as a youth pastor.

I will never forget the first camp we had. Camps were a great thing. You got a bunch of kids together. You took them down to the Ozarks someplace. You got them away from the world, away from the parents, away from the church. Then you brought in some hellfire, damnation, brimstone preacher to just take the paint off the wall. I only knew one guy like that; his name was Mel Sabaca, my father in the Lord. He could strip the paint off the wall better than anybody in the world. Most of you know that.

So we came to have our first camp. The first night, Mel said to me when he prayed that night, "Brother, this is a hard camp. I could just feel those kids. Man, this is a tough camp." So we got on our knees and prayed. I am stupid. If I had been smart, I would have just let the thing go. No, no, no, no. I had to do what is right. So we kept praying. The second night he said, "Man, it is tough." The third night, in camps, the way it works, usually if the camp is going to break, it breaks on Wednesday night. I do not know what the psychology is behind that, but it did. Wednesday night, we must have had 25 kids get saved. Twenty kids the next night. It was unbelievable how many kids got saved.

Now, that is good, amen. Oh, no, it is not good. All those kids that got saved were kids of the deacons, the finance committee, the great leaders in the church, and one of the pastor's children. I was naive back then. I was praising the Lord. If I had been smart, I would have just gotten on a bus and gone back with Mel. Because I was thinking, "This thing is on its way. I can take those kids and turn them into a core. I have something to work with. I have been beating my head against the wall for six months. Now, I have the core of that class saved. They are on fire for God. They want to do something."

Brother, I was pumped. When we left, we were hugging. We were holding hands. Little groups were coming over and saying, "Pray, Brother Bob, that we can keep this going." We were praying. They were hugging. They were loving each other. They were all getting it together. I thought to myself, "Whoa, I have got this thing down. I am going to write a book. I am going to make a movie. I am going to be like Alexander the Great, the world's greatest youth evangelist, and show you how to get it done."

Boy, did my dreams come shattering down about four hours later when my phone started ringing. "What did you do to my kid? How embarrassing this is going to be! Don't you know who I am in this church? Don't you know that he was saved all along? You confused him!" I had one guy say, "You are trying to destroy my ministry!" I felt like saying, "No, no, no, no, no. You are doing a good enough job with that on your own." But I could not do that back then. I would not even say it now. I would just lay him out, but you cannot do that either.

The deacons and the Sunday school teachers, the leaders in the church, got saved. It was a real embarrassment. At the baptism, I had to baptize them, and I was looking out, and the wives were all in the choir. They were all sitting out there, and brother, I mean to tell you, I was getting some looks. Even some of the women were weeping, and they were not weeping because their kid got saved. They were weeping because their political position in that church was weakened because their child got saved. Some of those parents to this day hate my guts, and they hate my guts because the bottom line is, I got their child pulled from the lake of fire, and I had embarrassed them.

I will tell you what, it is an incredible thing. What a terrible thing it is, or it will be, to trade the soul of your child for your position in a church, for your career, for money, in some cases for drugs or booze, in some cases for a big boat or a cabin at the lake, or a new house, or a hot car. All of those things that are wrong, we put the emphasis on, and while we are doing that, the devil sneaks in the back door, either in Lot's case, and there was no question about Lot, or Jephthah's case, where he appears to have it all together, and what happened? The devil sneaks in the back door and destroys him.

Now I want to help you with that day, as your pastor and you as a parent. I have to say, I believe that 99% of you want to do what is right. I have no doubt in my mind about that. But I also know that in any crowd this size in the world today, you are going to find some people who just are not going to do what is right. Either they do not have the—you find, and I have never understood this, you find some people who are saved on the way to heaven, and they cannot put two steps in front of the other, walking for the Lord. They are here one Sunday, and then they are out for 10

more weeks. They come for a month, and then you do not see them for a year. It is almost like it is protracted, like there is a little scale in their pocket as they are going out. "Well, the graph says I was here today, I can come back now until, oh, let's see, December 28th." It is like you protracted it out.

The real truth of the matter is there are some of God's people that are so out of control with their own feelings, their own emotions, their own structure in Christ, that they cannot put two steps walking for God in the same path. They just cannot do it. You are going to have parents that do whatever you want to do. Unless you move in with them and spend the rest of your life with them, they are just not going to get it together. I do not understand why that is. They are saved. They have the same Holy Spirit of God. They have the same Word of God. The only answer has to be the fact that they have so many issues in their life that they are not working on themselves that they are just never going to get there.

V. Overcoming Obstacles to Child Salvation

When it comes to winning your child to Christ, there are three things that you have to overcome, and this is going to be your problem. I guarantee you, this is going to be your problem. You are going to face three issues, and you better understand these, and you better see how this thing works.

6. The first thing you have to overcome is a lack of faith. You have to overcome your lack of faith as a parent. You may be able to trust God for this or that. You may lose your job and trust God. You may trust God for everything. I am talking about in specifics with your children. If you ever want to see a parent fall flat on his face when it comes to faith, you watch a parent when it comes to his child. We are going to define this in just a little bit.
7. The second thing you have to overcome is your lack or your inability to discern your child or understand where your child is at. We have talked about this a lot. Parents come to the point where they just get oblivious. They are so busy doing their own thing, and there are a lot of things that you have to do as a parent. But your child kind of gets lost in the shuffle, and you have to have the ability, as we have talked about, to read your child and know all of those areas.
8. The third one is your lack of patience.

Now, let us talk about these for a minute here and look into these things. I want to be able to explain them to you. Along with that, I want you to remember some things about your child on that day of salvation and your child getting saved. First of all, I want you to know that there is a danger in being a bad parent, and there is a danger of being a good parent. It is like the Bible: you can get too much of the Bible, which is just as bad as not enough of the Bible. You have to find the balance. There are bad parents who make some terrible mistakes, and then there are really good parents who make other terrible mistakes that are in that category. We are going to explain it here.

You want to remember about your child's ability. Your child will get saved because that is what you want him to do.

- Your child basically will get saved to please you.
- Your child will get saved because they go to a Sunday school where there are good people who always teach them about the Bible, and everything they are doing is to help enhance for you to get to that day of salvation.
- Your child will get saved or want to come home and get saved and talk about getting saved because the Sunday school teacher talked about salvation today. So they are going to come home and they are going to say, "Mommy, I want to get saved."
- Your kids will get saved because they are scared. They will hear a sermon or they will hear something in Sunday school, and they will talk about hell or this or that, and they will be scared of that. They will come home and say, "I want to get saved."
- Kids will get saved because of the rapture. You will talk about the rapture or they will hear about the rapture. They do not necessarily teach that in the elementary division, but they will hear it around here. They will pick up the term. As a child, when they hear Mom and Dad say, "Boy, I wish the rapture would come today and we will be out of this place. We do not have to worry about all this stuff," that child hears that and they say, "Oh, Mom and Daddy are going to leave? I want to go too." These are things you have to understand and we have to define and you have to come to terms with.
- Kids will get saved because a friend gets saved. A brother or sister gets saved because they will see naturally that when somebody is saved, there is a lot of joy. There is a lot of tenderness. Mom and Dad are glad, and there is a lot of excitement around that child. So they will want that excitement too. So they will say, "Johnny did it. I am going to do it. My brother did it. My sister did it. I want to do it."
- Kids will get saved because of child evangelism. I just have to tell you this: there is a guy in town, and again, I would not mention his name, some of you would know him for sure, and I have known him for years. But there is a guy in town that specializes in child evangelism. I know this guy personally, known him for a number of years. Though I would not say his name, I feel like he ought to be on the pedophile list in the computer bank someplace, not because he is a child molester or a pedophile. He is not any of those. But in my mind, spiritually speaking, he is worse than that because what he does is preys on your children and gets big conversion results so he can get a paycheck.
- He will get kids saved three or four years old. It does not matter to him. It is a "kaching, kaching, kaching" to him. He has never been successful in ministry. He could not preach his way out of a wet paper bag with the end blown out. He could not ever do anything for God. He has failed in everything that he has ever done. So he has finally found something that he is kind of good at. So what he does is he goes around from church—he bases out of a church out in Lee's Summit someplace—and he goes around holding child evangelism where they get 200 kids together, and he tells a story, and he has all these little kids raising their hand, and then he leads them to Christ in mass. They go home saying, "Bless God, we had 58 kids saved today!" No, you probably had 58 kids that are going to be confused now. If somebody does not get in and undo what this child molester did, spiritually speaking, they are going to wind up in hell.

You do not deal with children in mass. Have you ever noticed there is no child evangelism in the Bible? Did that ever bother you? Have you ever known in the New Testament there is not one

recording of any child getting saved anywhere in the New Testament? Did that ever bother you? Did you ever look at that and then say to yourself, "Hmm, I wonder in the Bible where the child evangelism is? Hmm, I cannot think of one child in that Bible that ever got saved." My Bible says over in the book of Acts:

Acts 16:31

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

It comes through the father, not some child evangelist. But that is just me; I believe what it says. It is through the family. We used to say in the ministry when you were trying to reach a family: if you got the mom and the kids coming, you got half the family. If you got the dad coming and the mom and kids did not come, you had the whole family. You know why? Because in the Bible, Dad is the key. Dad is the key. You give me a dad that is plugged into the Lord or God, and I will show you how that whole family will come in if he does what is right and does it in time.

But this idea, your kids will go in there, they will sit down. I do not know how many times I have had a couple of friends of mine that have a couple of little kids, and they are going to another church over in Kansas. He called me one night late, and he said, "Man," he said, and I told him ahead of time, "Don't put your kid in that program. That program, first of all, is not based on the King James Bible. That program is not a good program for your child. It is going to mess things up." "No, no, no, no, no. Don't listen to me. I do not know what I am talking about."

So four or five weeks later, he called me and said, "Bobby," he said, "I have a problem." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Well," he said, "my little girl and I, they were playing in this group thing that they had at church, and they had a thing afterwards. The guy that was leading the group, he asked how many kids wanted to be saved. Half the kids raised their hand." Now, these kids are probably four, five, or six years old. "How many want to be saved?" And the way he phrased it was, "How many want to go to heaven with Mommy and Daddy?" Well, who in the world does not want to go to heaven with Mom and Daddy? Who in the world? But you see, when you make your bucks off of your numbers, that is the kind of child molestation you employ, spiritually speaking. You have got to use the tricks to get the results because "no bucks, no Buck Rogers." You have got to have the results. The church just loves to get up and say, "Well, Brother So-and-so was here this week, and we had 500 of our kids now," and the place goes crazy. The parents go crazy because they are going, "Whoa, man, I am glad that is over. I do not have to worry about it now." And the devil sneaks right in the back door, my friend.

- Your kids will get saved because of Christian schools.
- Your kids will get saved to get a reward. I have known guys—and again, not mentioning any name this morning—I know guys that paid kids because they were in a Sunday school campaign. I knew a bus director one time that gave every kid that came to church 50 cents to ride his bus. It packed the buses out. I am telling you, you start to teach a kid that God is about financial rewards, you are going to have some problems.
- I see kids get saved because you and Mom and Dad talk about heaven, talk about hell, and they want to go.

Now, let me just say this: all of these things are reasons why your child might *think* they are saved, but if their salvation is based on one of these, they could die and go to hell.

I had a man one time come to me, and he said to me—he and his wife were having problems, and he was unsaved, she was saved. God was working in their life. This is the difference between somebody who knows what they are doing and somebody who does not. This is the difference of having discernment and discretion—not that I always have it, but in this case, I did—versus somebody who is just a bozo. This guy came in and made an appointment, and it had been going on now for a couple of weeks, and it was kind of shaky. Finally, he came in one night and he said, "Bob," he said, "I tell you what," he said, "I really appreciate coming to church. I appreciate what you have done." He said, "I want you to know," he said, "I want to get saved."

Now, we had been praying for him for a long time. His wife had been praying ceaselessly for him. Your first reaction would be, "Don't screw this up." Your first reaction should be, "Praise God, let's get him saved." Your first reaction should be, "Come on here, brother. Come on right down here, get on here." That is your first reaction. That was not my first reaction. My first reaction was, "Why do you want to get saved?" His answer was what I was looking for. He said, "I want to get saved because, Bob, I need to get my marriage put back together."

I said, "You know what, Tom? You do not get saved to put your marriage back together. You get saved because you are a sinner, and you have personal sin in your life that has nothing to do with your marriage. You may get saved tonight, and your marriage may never get back together. You may get saved tonight, and your marriage may get back together. That is another issue. You do not get saved to fix anything but your broken soul, and you have a personal sin debt before God that you need to get saved, whether your wife keeps the marriage together or not."

Now, you see the reaction to get the guy saved? Everybody is praying for him. Everybody wants him saved. He needs to be saved. What do you do? Jump on it. No, no, no, no. I would rather have you faced with the issue and say, "Well, then, no thanks," than to pretend that if you get saved, you can get saved and fix your marriage. I will tell you something: your marriage has nothing to do with it at that point. Salvation is not about you fixing anything in life. Salvation is about you as an individual having a personal sin debt. Now, it may be that you have got your marriage and your life and everything in a mess because you are not saved, but you do not come and get saved to God and say, "God, I am going to get saved so I can fix my marriage." God would say, "What about your sin?"

What we do so many times is because we are not diligent, we are not discerning, we are not understanding, and we are driven by results. I do not care. Our whole world, our whole society, and everything that we do is driven by results. In churches today, it is all about results. You have got to have so many saved. You have got to have this, you have got to have that. Parents, they do not want to deal with it. They are out of the Word of God themselves, and they are just like most churches. They will be in everything in their child's life, but when it comes to salvation, they will subcontract you out to one of these. It is a tragedy.

Sometimes those kids—I have dealt with many a kid that was so confused by the time he was 20 or 25 years old about who he is and if he is saved or not because he has been told all of his life

that he is, because of some stupid decision that he made that had nothing to do with salvation. I had one lady tell me one time, she said, "Well, I was saved when I was 4." I just looked at her and I thought to myself, "Well, praise the Lord, you are the miracle baby of the world."

I am not going to say that there is just an outside chance that a 4-year-old could be saved, but if that is true, if you get saved at 4, then you need to graduate from high school when you are 9 and college when you are 12. You better be way ahead of the game because an average 4-year-old does not comprehend the need for a personal Savior. I have seen it too many times, and I am trying to help you with this. This will give you a terrible false security, and it is a terrible thing. What happens is parents get so caught up and preoccupied, and they want their child saved so badly that they fail in these three things.

Let me tell you what the lack of faith is in your child. You have got to trust the promises of God. I have a little saying, but it is something that I live by. It is something that has gotten me through, because there are times in our Christian lives when the outcome is not very clear, and I do not really know how it is going to come out. To me, at that point, a little concept that I have always operated by for many, many years, and it is very simple and very basic, is simply this: I say to myself, "Bob, go with what you know to be true. Go with what you know works. Do not worry about what you cannot see. You have been around here for a while. Go with what you know is true. Get a hold of those promises of God and stay true to them."

Here is the problem: you want your child saved. Your mistake is that you forget that God wants them saved more than you do. You forget that. God wants them saved more than you do. The parent is so in a hurry to get them saved that the moment the child runs in and says, "I want to be saved," they are saying, "Oh, praise God, I got this day past." A parent would never stop and say to that child, "You know what? I do not think so today." The very thought that you tell your child no when they want to get saved—what if they then turn into an atheist? What if they turn into an apostate? What if they go out of their kitchen after they ask and you said no? What if they go out and they become Charles Manson? Or they become some great communist leader? Or they become some great this or some great that? What are you going to do then? You go with what you know.

There is a series of questions you put that child through. You use the discernment, the understanding, the discretion to know if that child is where they need to be. You do not just jump in because the kid comes in and says, "I want to be saved." He could have heard somebody talking about it, and he may have the whole concept wrong. Are you going to sit down with that kid at five or six years old and explain to him the doctrine of salvation? You have got to be—and the reason why parents do is because they do not discern. They do not know where their child is at.

There is hardly one of you in this room, if you want to take the test and you come into my office and sit down and you say, "Bob, tell me where I am at spiritually as best you can." No, I am not going to be able to read your mind, but you do not have to read your mind because we have got a Book and the Spirit that already reads you. You show where you are at with the Word of God by your attitude toward the Word of God, by where you are at. It does not take a rocket scientist to

figure it out. You can sit down with somebody and say, "You know what? I think you are a really good person. I really love you, and I think you have a little potential, but you have some things in your life, and I do not know what they are, but they are keeping you from your potential. That is where you are at."

I can say to somebody else, "You know what? You are a great lady, and I really like you a lot, but you do not change from things in your life. You are going to be up and down, in and out, and grounded in circles, and your whole life is going to be spent chasing your tail because you do not have any stability in your life." I do not have to walk around and be a private investigator and follow you through life.

1 Corinthians 8:3

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Hebrews 4:13

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The Bible is a mirror. When you put it in, you reflect God's light. When you put it in, you reflect something else. It is not hard. It just comes back to the Book. You ought to be able to read your child and know where they are at and be absolutely in tune with that time, especially when you know they are coming into that time period that is getting close. You ought to be on them like Ugly, On, and Ape. You ought to be there and sticking with them in every aspect.

Lack of faith. The first thing to do in that situation is get nervous. Call your husband. "Johnny just called. He wants to get saved. What are we going to do? What are we going to do? What was that place in Romans? Maybe we ought to do that. Everybody, we have got to get it. If we do not get it now, maybe it will be too late. Tomorrow, he will forget all about it." If he forgets all about it tomorrow, then I tell you right now, he does not need to be saved yet. Kids come in with one idea today and another idea tomorrow. You want salvation? You want the same idea today, and they have it tomorrow, and they have it the next day, and they have it the next day. That kid's room is full of toys. He plays with those toys for a while, and he puts them down and forgets all about them. Do not let them do the same thing with salvation. But that is scary. That is scary because you do not want him to turn out and be an Einstein atheist. You are afraid that he walks out of the kitchen, and you do not get him saved right at that spot, that he is lost. "Oh, what happens if he dies in the bed tonight? What happens if he walks across the street and gets killed? What about his—" Hey, go with what you know. God wants him saved more than you do. That is the first problem we all have.

The second one is, we talked about it off and on all day today, lack of understanding and discernment. You do not know where they are at. Brother, when they get close to that time period, you stay with them. You do your work. You know now, and we are going to talk about next week how to read these things and how to get in there, but you know now. There are a number of things that your kid will come and say, "I want to be saved," that have nothing to do with being saved.

Then the third thing, the third problem we have, is a lack of patience. There are some things that have to be in place. We do not have time to get into this week. We are going to get into it next week. I am going to tell you what to look for. There are some things that have to be in place in your child's life before they are ready to be saved. You just do not jump at it the first time they come. That is exactly how the pedophile, in a spiritual sense, child evangelists operate. They take the innocence of your child and the stupidity of your child and the stupidity of the parents and the pastor and make a living off of sending your child to hell, and you pick up the tab. That is what happens. I have seen it all my life. I have seen them get a hundred kids in a circle, and that guy gets out there, and he mesmerizes them, and he is good with kids. Then sometime in line, he says, "Okay, everybody bow. Now," and he explained salvation. "How many want to get saved? Pray this prayer after me." And he said, "All right. Oh, there, everybody. We had 110 kids get saved today! Wow, isn't God good?" And the only thing dumber than him are the parents who allow their children in that kind of scenario. That is absolutely despicable when it comes to your child's soul. They will let anybody, anytime, anywhere.

I tell you what, when my kids were growing up, the elementary workers had standard orders from me: "If my child comes to you and says they want to get saved, you just ignore it. Tell me about it. I will deal with it. And God help the first person in this elementary that wants to put another notch on their pistol grip by winning my kid to Christ. It is not going to happen. That is my job, not yours." Sometimes we get caught in having to do it, but, brother, I do not like it. You have to understand the lack of faith, the lack of being able to discern and understand, and then the lack of patience. You just have to wait your child out. That is a hard thing to do because of our desire to get them saved. But you have got to come back to knowing, going with what you know. You know that God wants him saved. You know you have done everything in your life according to the Book. Wait it out. Make sure all the ingredients are right there. Do not just jump in because you are having a conversation using the right terminology. It is way beyond that.

Next week, we will talk about that. This week and next week are going to go hand in hand. We are going to take what we started today, we are going to build that into this thing, and I am going to walk you through the complete process. I am going to tell you the things you need to look for. I am going to tell you how to look for them. I am going to tell you exactly how you implement them when it comes down to that time. I am going to give you examples of this and how it works here, and I am going to show you every facet. I am going to take you to the definitive passage in the Bible that defines the three ingredients you have got to have to be saved. And your child has to have them. We will talk about it next week.

When we pray here, please do this: in the back, if you signed up for the Halloween deal, I need that by tomorrow morning. If you are going to bring your child, sign up for the Halloween deal, and also sign up if you signed up last week. If you do not sign up this week for the circuit riding thing, I have a meeting tonight with the team leaders, and I have got to get this organized. So please, if you do not sign up, you are not going to get on the team. So make sure you take care of that this morning, and just take time to do it. Let us have a word of prayer, and pray for Jan this week. Thank you for being here, and God bless you. Let us go to the Lord. Father, we thank and praise You for all You do for us. We love You.