

# Psalms 127:3-4

September 1, 2019

Lord, we are so thankful today that because of what You did, we have the hope that we have. Without You, Lord, there would be no hope. We would be lost without Christ for all of eternity. Lord, help us never forget that that is the real reason why You brought us together as a church. The real reason we are here today is because You have a job for us to do. Lord, part of that job, probably the most important part of that job, is training up and teaching our children according to the Word of God.

Help us, Father, to always look at our children and see them as God sees them. Help us as parents to take the Word of God, the things that we talk about. Lord, we just pray, Father, that You will help us be better parents. Help us to be better husbands and wives. Help us as family units to be better, Lord, and for everybody to really pull together and to do everything that we need to do in these last days.

Lord, we are so thankful today that You will just take the Word of God and that You will help us to understand it a little bit better. Lord, we are building every week toward a goal, toward an end. That end, Lord, is to be able to sit down as families with their children and lay out a vision for them. Every week we talk about something else that they need to understand, that at the end of the day, it all gets incorporated into a lifestyle where these children really begin to understand that a life with God is everything that they need to have in life.

So we hold these little ones up to You today, Lord, as I hold the parents up, and I ask You, Lord, to help them understand the great principles. Help them to do in each case. Lord, I know each individual situation is different, but Lord, help them to do whatever situation they find themselves in. Give them the grace and the courage to exercise the truth, to do what they have to do to ensure, Father, that those children, which are Your heritage, not ours, are everything that You want us to be. We thank You now. We praise You, Lord, and we ask You to take this time and to use it for Your honor and glory. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

## I. Appreciation and Acceptance

Today we are going to begin to look at, hopefully we are going to get both of these done today. I think we probably will. We are in good shape on time. We are going to look at two more aspects: appreciation and acceptance. These two, even though they are separate principles, they certainly go hand in hand together to really help you understand another great truth in training up your child and teaching your child. Each one of them, and this is why we are going to look at them separately, each one of them has their individual characteristics that together they form that great truth and really become a good tool, like I said, in training and teaching your child exactly what they need.

The last couple of weeks we have been focused, if you remember, on the six absolute principles of parenting. Six things that when combined with the vision, combined with the concepts of grace and truth, combined with the aspect of correct thinking, correct treatment, correct teaching, and correct testimony, really begin to help your child go through those four transitional stages

that they are going to go through. We talked about the discipline stage, the relationship stage, the fellowship stage, bringing them right up to the responsibility stage.

We have looked at a number of verses, two verses that I gave you, and I gave them to you really in reverse order, and I gave them to you on separate weeks. But in reality, there are two verses that go hand in hand together. They are found one after the other in the Bible. The first verse we talked about was in Psalms 127:4. Remember I talked about where the Bible says,

*Psalms 127:4*

*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.*

And I showed you that you and I, as parents, are responsible for where our children go in life as far as getting them ready for life. Then last week I gave you really verse 3, which says that:

*Psalms 127:3*

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

We talked about how your children are really not yours. God has a plan for your family, much like He has a plan for you. Within that plan that He has for you and your family, obviously your children are part of that. As you build them together and work with them, and really begin to put those things into their lives, you are going to find where these principles really begin to take a hold, and you are going to find that your family is going to become an effective ministry that God wants. He wants this church not just full of ministers, but He wants this church full of families that minister. He wants everybody in your family to be actively involved.

I have been in the Bible for almost 40 years. Never one time have I ever found a place in the Bible where God ever recognized or accepted a child of God that was not involved in ministry. It is part of the process of taking that responsibility. So when you put those two verses together, you basically have a great principle that says:

*Psalms 127:3-4*

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

*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.*

And we see now about shaping the will and developing your child's spirit by providing for them the vision. We define the vision now as giving your child an understanding of a life with God, really having them grow up not knowing any other alternative, helping them when they get to school, by the time they get into all of the things that they are going to have to face up against, that evil day, so to speak, that they firmly now understand that the only real vision that they have, the only lifestyle they know, the only thing they are accustomed to, is a life with God and your family with all the security and all of the things that go along with that. Those things are absolutely key, and you provide that through the vision.

If you notice now, every week we are building. I suspect when we are done, we will take the last Sunday and we are going to correlate everything that we have talked about, and we are building

toward a goal, and I am going to help you all accomplish that goal. That is why I told you up to this point, you do not want to have a meeting with your children. You just want to keep the status quo, so to speak, that you keep doing what you are doing, correct the things that you are finding out that you are doing wrong. We do not want to make a grand entry here into your child's life yet, so we have everything that we need to have, and we put it together from there.

## II. The Concept of Appreciation

Today we are going to talk about the concept of appreciation. This is a vitally important aspect in training up and bringing your children. Let me ask you this: Have you ever caught your child doing something wrong? I think that every parent can safely say yes. The Bible says in the book of Proverbs 20:11 that:

*Proverbs 20:11*

*Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*

We have all caught our children doing things that are wrong, and you are going to always catch your child doing things that are wrong because that is just the way that it is. But let me ask you this: Have you ever caught your child doing something right? You see, we have a tendency as parents only to point out, only to recognize in their life just the things that they are doing wrong. We only point out their mistakes. We just show them their failures.

Many times I have seen parents make a terrible mistake. A terrible mistake is that they are so out of control in their own lives that when their child does something wrong, and I am the first one that can tell you, your children, or even your grandchildren, can drive you up the wall. Everybody has their bad days. We all have them, and your children have them. Of course, your children have less control over their bad days than you and I should have over our bad days, but even as that, many of God's people have no control over their bad days.

But you do not always just want to focus on the things that they did wrong. It is absolutely necessary for your child to understand that he is appreciated for the things he does right, and not just pointed out the things that he did wrong. Many times I have heard parents call their child stupid. Many times I have seen them in their anger because they do not know how to deal with it, or they are frustrated with it, that they will belittle the child and tell them, "You will never amount to anything," or "You are an idiot," or "You are stupid," or "You are dumb." Those kinds of words should never come out of your mouth when it comes to your children. You will do more damage to them with that kind of talk than you ever could do by turning them over to somebody else that could mentally or emotionally abuse them. That is a terrible thing to do.

One of the traits you want to build with your child, and also build into your child, is to mold into his spirit the fact that he or she is absolutely invaluable to you. You want to get that child to understand that you could not be a successful family without that child. I talked to a lady last week that was having some struggles with her child, and the child is in a situation where the child is just, in fact, the mother's analogy of it was incredible. She said, "With my daughter, the bottle is never half full, it is always half empty." You see, the way you look at things in life, and

she has always looked at a negative thought, and she thinks she is stupid, and she thinks she is not pretty, and she thinks she does not do things well.

I tried to tell her, I said, "You know what? You have just got to stay with reinforcing those values." Then along with that, the child then gets her own little signature, and when she gets into trouble, she will use that as a cover, and it comes in a complicated little deal. But you have got to be able as a parent to be smarter than your child. Like the lady said, she says, "When my daughter does not want to deal with something, she will simply say, 'I cannot remember.'" Then when you say, "Oh, you can remember," the daughter then comes back and says, "Oh, can you read my mind?" Then she says, she always becomes like a little defense attorney, where she just knows she begins to argue with you over the thing and to avoid the issue.

I said, "In these cases, you have got to completely stay with the Bible." When your child tells you that you cannot understand because you cannot read their mind, do not get flustered by that. Come back and say, "You know what, I do not have to read your mind. The Bible reads your mind, and the Bible says whatever you have in your heart comes out in your actions. So I do not have to read your mind by your act." You never allow, you will always take her back to the Bible. Basically, you are beginning to form in that child's mind that up against the Bible, you are in a no-win situation. The Bible is always going to come out ahead, no matter what we think.

I gave you the verse in Job 9:4, a great verse that says:

*Job 9:4*

*He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?*

Your child needs to learn that there is no prospering in life without God. You may think you do, and you may think you are, and you may think you are happy, but you know what, you are not. At the end of the day, you are going to lose everything, and it is going to be an absolute shambles. But you have got to begin to understand, and I told this lady, "You have got to keep reinforcing. You have got to develop a sense of who he is in your family, that that child is absolutely invaluable to you."

Here again, and I told you this, I told you when we started this, the parallels here between dealing with adults, which some of you are going to do and some of you are already doing, and your children is almost the same. They are just on different levels. You have heard me say many, many times in building a church that really, to me, the key of building a successful church and building it is, you have heard me say this lots of times, building it one person at a time, or one couple at a time, or one family at a time. There is no mass evangelism when it comes to building churches today. I am not sure it ever worked, but it certainly would not work today. The key to building a church, the key to building people, is to take them and look at them one at a time.

I found in dealing with God's people, many times they are like little children in one aspect: they have both been beat up. The little children have been beat up by their parents. Many times Christians have been beat up by the churches they have went to, or the other Christians they have been around. I had a person one time, and this was about four or five years ago, I was witnessing

to a guy and his girlfriend. It was very typical that they were pretty worldly. But it sparked my attention that they had some little glimmer of light in there about the Bible. I deduced from just talking with them that at some point they had probably went to church. But I could tell at this point they were very, very turned off toward church.

So I asked them. I said, "You know what," I said, and I did not tell them I was a pastor, but I began to talk with them and I began to ask them questions. I said, "You seem to have a pretty good knowledge about the Bible." I said, "Where did you go? What did you get?" He said, "Well, I went to church," and she said, "Yeah, me too, all through our life." Then we quit going when we were about 18 or 19 years old. The scenario started to come in. I know exactly what I am dealing with here. I said to him, and I think his answer, though shocking, was one of the greatest answers I ever heard in my life why a person did not come to church. You talk about here is a man who, and they were both saved as far as I can tell. You talk about a Christian way out in left field, but yet having more wisdom than people that are trying to teach him the Bible.

When I asked him why they quit going to church, they both looked at each other and the guy said, "Well, you know what, we have been on the street now for about 15 years and we have been, I will tell you, we are out in the world. But," he said, "you know why we do not go to church?" He said, "We have come to the conclusion that most pastors and most churches are just like the pimps we meet down on the street." I thought to myself, and I got thinking about it, and before I could go any farther, she chimed in and said, "Yeah, all they want you around for is for you to make money for them, and then when they are done with you, they throw you out and you do not have anything to do with you anymore."

When I walked away from that, I thought, "You know what, that is probably one of the best analogies I ever heard about most pastors and most churches." Because the tragedy of it is, and even though at this stage of their life, you were not going to turn their ideas around, but the bottom line is, what they are saying is basically true. Most churches just want you for what they can get from you. The only difference is they do not wear the purple hats and drive the liver skin Cadillac, but it is all basically the same. He stands up there presenting himself and you work for him, you do everything, but when you need something, he is not going to have time to deal with you.

It is a terrible thing, and I thought to myself as I drove away from that couple, I thought to myself, "Wow." Now that is one of the tragedy of tragedies that I have ever met in my Christian life. That is exactly what is wrong with Christianity today, and it is too bad that those kids got caught up in it. But you know what? Many times these people, like this couple, they have given up on church. They do not trust any pastors. If there are any true victims in life, as far as I am concerned, and I am not one of these guys that likes the victim status, but if there are any true victims in this world, it is people like that who are victims of pastors and churches. It breaks my heart, but it is so true.

Yet at the same time, and if you ever get into on the upper levels of dealing with people, you are going to find people like this. Some of you had a bad attitude toward church. Some of you had a bad attitude toward the Bible, pastors, whatever the case. When I first met you, and yet there is a

key in turning it around, and it is the same key for your children as it is for adults. I want you to see these parallels because you are going to use these same principles.

You are going to find out, first of all, you have got to get that person. I do not care if they are saved or lost. You have got to get that person to, first of all, see themselves as God sees them. That is the first thing that you have got to do. You have got to get that person to see themselves as God sees them, not like they see themselves, not like everybody else sees them. The second thing you have got to do, and probably this is really the first thing you have to do, is you have to see them as God sees them. You have to see them in their struggle. You cannot just write them off because of the fact that they do not dress the way you think they are to dress. They do not talk the way you think they ought to talk. Or maybe they say some derogatory things against God or the Bible or church, or maybe even you.

You have always got to try to see the potential that is in people and get past the problems that have stopped them. You have got to begin to develop that sense of who you are in Christ in their life. How He views you, not how you or somebody else views yourself. I always try to appreciate the good in people when I get a chance to work with them. I say it many, many times. I do not care where you have come from. I do not care what you have done. I do not care what you have been into. That means absolutely has no relevance to me other than what you want to do with your life at this particular point in time. You have to focus on that.

I think the thing that is probably the most discouraging thing in the ministry, and I know everybody has their own discouraging things that bother them, I think the thing that bothers me more in the ministry than any other single thing is the waste I see of people's lives and the potential they have. When you begin to see people as God sees them, you see, I can look at some of you and I look at you in some of the things that are wrong about you. Yet I see those things in the light if you just turn it around and take that same kind of energy, that same kind of dedication, take that same kind of whatever and turn it toward God instead of what you are turning it to. Why? You would be the greatest Christian since the Apostle Paul.

Once you get into the mindset that you look at people and you see them as God sees them, and you do not really, you understand that the problems or the issues are all superficial. They are not the real person. They are a person that is caught up in the world or because they are unsaved. You can see how many times I have said to myself, "If I could just get that guy to see the Bible and God the way that he needs to see it. If I could just get that gal to take the determination she had for doing wrong and put it into a focus for doing right." Wow. In the ministry, many times those things do not come to pass. Many times those things never really come to fruition and it becomes a tragedy. You have to be able to get God's people to see who they are in Christ, and you have to begin to get your child to see who they are in Christ. The way you do that is by appreciation.

- Focusing on the things that are good in their lives.
- Focusing on the potential that you see.
- Do not allow somebody to tell you they are worthless.
- Do not allow somebody to tell you that they cannot do this or this or that.

You have got to focus on the good that is there and you develop what you see in them that is good through appreciation. You remember a number of months ago, it has been a while now, I took you through probably as far as I am concerned, one of the greatest single studies that you will use a lot in biblical counseling. I use it. I have at any given time, I probably have four or five people working through this. Remember I taught you a series on the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved. Remember that? Remember we talked about how that when you got saved you became, you got a new nature. When you got saved you got new affections. When you got saved you got a new citizenship. When you got saved you now were seated in heavenly places instead of down at the corner bar. Now when you are saved you got a new attitude. When you got saved, now that you are saved you became an ambassador for Christ, not an ambassador of the world. When you got saved your conversation changed. In those seven things really is where you are now at in Christ.

Your child in time needs to come to the same point where they see they are not just a member of your family. They have got to be appreciated and made to understand who they are. In many of your lives, and this is not a sham or some ploy or some gimmick to get you to come to church, but in your life and my life, the greatest thing that you have had and I have had in a relationship is when you have come in, is that I have taken you no matter where you have come from. I never held one thing you ever did against you and I only ever focused on the good and developed what was right and appreciated you for who you were and then took you from that point on.

The problem most churches, most pastors want to stand at the top of the spiritual staircase, look down at all the people that are at the bottom of the spiritual staircase and then scream and yell at them, "Get up here where I am at," see? That is all you ever hear on Sunday. "Get where I am at. Get here, get up here. Get where all these people are. Get rid of this, get rid of that." I am not saying you do not have to get rid of those things, but I am saying the real way to get people where you want them to be is not to stand at the top of your golden spiritual staircase and yell at them down there, but come off of your throne, walk down those steps, put your arm around them and walk them up one step at a time. But you see, that is too much work. That is too much investment of time. But that is what it takes to build a church and in the same token, in the same parallel, that is what it takes. That is what it takes for you to build your child into your family. They have to see and understand that they are appreciated.

I try to get people to understand that God appreciates and loves them much more than I do. I never let myself get caught in between me and God because He is the one that really loves them. I love them, but I love them because I have been commanded to love them and God has changed my heart for the ministry to love them. But there is one that loves you this morning as much as I love you. There is one that loves you much more than I ever possibly could. You see, your children need to understand the same concept, the exact same concept. Christ died for you. You alone. Last week I kidded you a little bit about God did not write the Bible to you. He wrote it to me. Well, you can take that same position when it comes to Christ dying on the cross. That is what it means when we talk about a personal Savior. He is personally you because as far as you are concerned, He did not die for anybody else, even though we know that He did for God's will of the world. But it is a personal thing for you. That is how important you are to God. That is

why it is so absolutely essential that through the aspect of appreciation, you build those into your child.

### III. The Four Transitional Stages

In fact, to take it one step further, and you need to see these parallels because when you get into counseling and you get in working with people's lives, even today with what you are doing, you are going to use these things all the time. It is not like you have got to learn a million different things when you start to deal with people. You just learn the basic traits and you just put them on different levels. If you have not seen this yet, if you have not made the obvious connection, let me just tell you something. The same four transitional stages that your child goes through: the discipline, the relationship, the fellowship, and responsibility. Hey, they are the same. They are the same four transitions I bring you through spiritually.

I told you when you start to deal with your child in those early ages, you teach them the discipline concept. They do not learn because they know everything about life. They learn through association. But as they grow, you build into their life the relationship stage and then the fellowship stage. What happens at a time he is 15 or 16 years old? Hey, let me tell you something. You should not have to tell your child that the grass needs mowed if that is your job. If he has errands or things he does around the house, chores, that is what the word is. If he has chores he does around the house, you should not have to remind him 17 times a week to take the trash out. If you have done your work and your job and he has come to the place where he now is responsible, he is going to feel part of the family. In fact, it is going to make him feel terrible if you do his job because he realizes all you do and he is part of the team. So therefore, that is his job. When he sees the grass is long, he says, "I need to cut the grass." When he sees the trash is bagged up, "That is my job. I need to get to take it out."

Now, you do not send your kid to grass-cutting school and garbage taking out classes to get them to do that. When you build them through appreciation into your family and they understand they are part of a team, when they grow through those stages, if you have done your job and done what you needed to do, they now take more responsibility. You have less restrictions on them instead of putting more on them. You do not have to tell them when to be home at night. They know now because all they have had in their life is a vision of God and what God wants to be. They know they are part of God's family. They see mom and dad ministering. They want to minister and they know that it is a team concept within their family. That is what you have got to get to. That is the same thing I do.

We talked about the discipline stage. Do you know where the word discipline comes from? It comes from the word disciple. Did you ever see that? The word discipline comes from the word disciple. When Christ made His disciples, or when we talk about being a disciple of somebody, when we talk about being a disciple of Christ, what we are saying is that we have decided to follow this man and His teachings. Therefore, because I am His disciple, I have disciplined myself to His teaching. See how that thing works? That is all it is.

I was down at St. Joe's Hospital here a couple of years ago. I forget what I was doing. I got a cup of coffee, sat down to drink. I must have been visiting somebody. I just do not have a hospital. I went down there and I sat down there and I heard two guys talking and they were from two different things. I guess they were still in medical school or doing their interim or whatever. They were talking and the guy said, "What do you do?" He says, "Well, I am in the radio, whatever." The other guy said, "Well, I am into this, this, this." The guy said, "Oh, really? What discipline are you studying?" Now, when he said that, he meant there are various different aspects of that particular work. He felt he was going to get in and he called an individual field as a discipline. You hear it a lot with philosophy. You will say, "Well, I am a philosopher." "Oh, really? What discipline?" In other words, what philosopher have you disciplined yourself to, to get his ideas of philosophy? Well, when you and I became a disciple, we became, should have become disciplined to the one that, and His teachings. So you and I, if you are saved this morning, we should be a disciple. A disciple is somebody who disciplines. We have discipleship lessons. What? Can or nine, can lessons you go through. You know what it does? It teaches you the basic fundamental concepts of the Bible. You know what it does? It teaches you the basic discipline of what the Bible teaches that we ought to be. That is what it is. It is all that it is.

So when you start with your children, that is where I start with you. That is why I like to encourage you to get disciplined if you have never been disciplined. It helps begin your disciple process of discipling yourself by learning what the Bible teaches. Well, once I bring you through that stage, then we get together in the Bible and you begin to see the relationship stage. Once you learn the discipline aspect of it, then you grow a little. Then you learn how to have a relationship with Christ. In other words, you learn who God is. You have heard me teach this at 1 Corinthians chapter 3, that the day you get saved, you lay the foundation. The rest of your life, you build on that foundation three things: gold, silver, precious stones. You have heard me, I have given you the illustrations a thousand times that that is a picture of your life. The foundation is the day you got saved. The moment you get saved, you build three things on that foundation.

1. Gold: Deity of Christ
2. Silver: Redemption of Christ
3. Precious Stones: People

The first thing you do is enter into the relationship stage. Gold, get to know who God is, His deity. Then the next thing, fellowship, bang, silver, the price of redemption, what He paid for your salvation. The next level, moving right through that thing, is you start to take that out and talk to other people. It is the same process. As you grow up through it in that relationship and the discipleship, that is where you come on Sunday morning, you come on Thursday night, we get together one on one. You really start to dive into the Bible and you really want to just not know the Bible. You want to know the author of the Bible. You want to really get to the point where you understand who God is and how this thing all goes together.

You know what? Just as your child, they should transition to get more responsibility in your family. As you grow spiritually in this church, you ought to be able to take more responsibility as we move through these stages of building people one at a time, families one at a time. But in both cases, whether it is your child or whether it is the, you know, into this church, you balance it

with grace and truth, which we have talked about. But the same four spiritual stages your child is going to go through, every one of you are going through right now in some different stage depending on where you are at with the Lord. But it is the same thing. Once you understand the process is the same, you can apply it to any circumstance. That is really what will make you not only a good parent, it will make you a good counselor when it starts dealing with people.

## IV. Church Growth and Ministry

In the last couple of weeks, you know, we got a great crowd this morning. Last week we were packed out, a week before we were packed out. I must have had over the last month, I must have had eight or nine people coming to me, worried about what we are going to do, that we are going to get to be too big of a church. It is based on, I remember one time on a Bible study, I took you back to 1 Samuel 22. I told you about a great story back there about David when he goes down to the cave of Adullam. Down there in the Bible says that all the people that are hurt and lame and brokenhearted and all that, God sends all those people to him. It winds up to be about 400 people. I told you that night, you know, probably the ideal situation of a church is somewhere around 400 or 500 people.

I do not think for a moment, at least I have never figured it out, and I have seen churches all of my life. We came out of a church that in its heyday back in Canton, Ohio was running 5,000 people. I left in 1976, and if you go back to that church today, they are probably running 1,800, see? See what happened when I left? Place went to dog, ma'am. But I grew up in that era, so I am somewhat of an authority on it. I grew up in the era where right up the street from Canton, Ohio was the Akron Baptist Temple. It ran 10,000 on Sunday school, long before Joel, whatever his name is, ever got the idea. I have seen all around this country the portion, the late 60s and the 70s, really all the way up into the 80s, about attendance. Churches got so big that they got so caught up with everything that all they wanted to do was have people come. They lost sight of what they were supposed to do with the people when they came.

It was a situation where when somebody came down and hit the altar and got saved, the pastor came over, slapped their back and said, "Bless God, you got saved, son. Now you need to get over there in a bus ministry." They would not disciple him, would not teach him anything about God or the Bible. They just threw him into the ministry. Then six months or eight months later, when he burned out and he fell apart or he lost his marriage, guess whose fault it is? It is his fault. See, churches were just like Nazi concentration camps. They worked you to death and then they threw you in the ovens. That is a terrible thing to say. That is almost as good as the pimp story. But that is true. That is exactly what we did. I was there. I saw it. I know. All of those churches today that were running the great gamut of people are now today barely running anybody. Because they did not follow their own principle. They wanted to reproduce. They wanted to get people saved. They wanted to get him in the church, but not because they were interested in doing anything with them. They wanted to brag about how many churches they had.

About that time, there was a man by the name of Elmer Towns. He is dead now. Elmer Towns was a great, was a great. I am not using the word great in a great way. He was a great among fundamentalists. He was a great, great, great motivator. He lived in, he was down with Baptist

Bible College in Springfield, Missouri. Back in the mid-70s, he wrote a book. The book was called \*The Ten Fastest Growing Sunday Schools in America\*. What Elmer Towns would do, you see, and what a job. He would tour all around the United States going to all these big churches, and he would blow smoke, you know, to everybody and tell them about how great they were. Then he was going to put a book that was going to be out to everybody, and he was going to pick the ten top Sunday Schools in America, put them in a book, and everybody would get to see how great the church was.

Well, I am telling you what. They got Sunday School campaigns. They came up with everything in the world to try to get people to come. They had lost the sight of what they were going to do with the people. They just wanted to get an Elmer Towns book. I remember that when you got picked, you got down there, and boy, Elmer Towns came in and he would have to get up in the Baptistry or somebody would be up in the back with a camera with one of those big wide-angle lenses and a pastor would stand down there and out the back would be just hundreds of people. A place packed out, and you would get your picture in Elmer Towns, \*Ten Top Sunday Schools of the United States\*. Oh, that was a big thing back then. It was so popular that about ten years later, he came out with a second book, \*The Second Greatest Ten Top Sunday Schools in America\*. That was a great success. About five years later than that, he came out with a third book. But he had to rename it, you know why? Because all the people that were coming to those churches were now gone. Those churches that were running great numbers back then were now running nothing. You could call roll call in a phone booth. So what he did on his third book when he did not have the people, he went around the country, he still needed money, he came around the country and he put a third book out that was \*The Ten Most Beautiful Sanctuaries in America\*. They fell for that, okay? That is the way the whole thing used to go.

Let me tell you something, and I do not know how you do it, I have never seen it. I do not think when a church gets to be a thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand, five thousand, I am not sure that you can pastor to that many people. I am not sure that is the way God ever intended it to be. I look at some of those churches out there, and to me, the church is their dairy farms. Everybody comes, gets milked in the morning, and then they send them back out. I do not see them as churches. Over the last couple of weeks, you know, we are kind of growing and moving along here, and getting close to 200, you know, and everybody, not everybody, but people come to me and they are saying, "Well, you know, what are we going to do?" I understand it. You know what? We have a great family here. I love the fact that, you know, and me personally, I do not want to do that either. I have contemplated over the years, because I knew this was coming sooner or later. I thought about it, and I thought some ways to, you know, I thought some ways to do that. My answer is very typical. I mean, I am not very, I am not political at all. I am very, I just, you know, I deal with things in black and white issues. Sometimes that gets me in trouble.

But, you know, I thought a different idea. You know, I thought right down the street from me, there is an old busted-down motel, but the sign still up front has a no vacancy on it. We could put that no vacancy sign right under our sign out there. We hit enough people in here, put on a sign, "No Vacancy." You say, "I like that idea." I like the idea, just putting down 200 chairs, first come,

first serve. Get John and those guys out there and fill in some of those guys and put little things across there, say, "Lot is full." See? All kinds of ideas. I mean, I just, I think about it, you know, my favorite is, my favorite is, is, you know, we have what we call a new member's reception here. It is kind of sporadic because of what all things are going on. But we try to do at least three or four times a year, get all the people that have decided they are going to come to church and break them down into groups and have them over for dinner, you know, where you can spend the night together. If you have not got there yet, you will sooner or later.

But to me it is black and white. I remember back in the old Sunday school day, we used to sit around and I was just a lowly staff member back then, you know, and we used to sit around and had pastoral and all kinds of ideas about how we can get people to come. They had all kinds of other things. They had, oh, it was terrible. They had Grandparents Day, where you bring all your grandparents. They had a friend day, where you bring all your friends. They had, oh, they had a Heaven Sunday. We were sitting at a big thing and I said, "You know," I said to me, "How about Hell Sunday?" I think having Hell Sunday would be good. You know, but it would come if you had Hell Sunday, see. In other words, it had to be positive. Who does not love your grandparents? I mean, Grandparents Day. Oh, man, Heaven Day. Who does not want to go to Heaven? That was the stuff. I came up and I said, "I got one. Let us have Hell Day." I would better yet. "Let us have Enemy Day. Bring all your enemies." We would pack the place out. That was not appreciated much.

But I have always looked at things black and white. I will tell you, if you want to, I do not know that you could ever do this, but I would love to do it. We have a new members. We had to have a thing down the line after you are here three or four or five years and you continue to do not do anything. We had to have a non-member dinner. Bites over, say, "Did you enjoy that meal? Fine. Here is ten churches you can pick from next week. Would you go someplace else? We need your seat." You do not like that idea either? You know how mad you would make people? I love this. People would get so mad because they would not be able to come to church anymore that they do not like to come to anyhow. Now, what is wrong with that picture?

You know, in the world, we always have... You ever notice how we have different sayings down the line? When I was growing up, it was "telling it like it is." Remember that? When you are told it like it was, nobody wanted to hear it. You know what it is today? "Keeping it real." "I am keeping it real, man." All right, let us keep it real. Why would you get upset if you do not come to this church, do not do anything anyhow? Why call you "Lord, Lord," and not do the things that I say? I do not understand. Why somebody would get upset about something like that? Hey, and you know me. Hey, bottom line is this. I give you four or five years to figure it all out. I do not think you can come to church and it take you two years just to figure out what is going on, another year to figure out where you are at, another year to get it all put together, probably. I mean, I know something done quicker than that, but you know what? I do not know. I am not saying we have anybody here like that today. I do not take this personal. You know, I am not saying that, but I am just saying, if you want to keep your church from getting real big, you are, the bigger you get, the more deadwood you got. Now, you know, in my style of ministry, I understand, you know, I am not just a preacher. I am a chainsaw. I can cut up the deadwood

pretty quick. But I have never understood that. Why people would continue to want to come to a church and yet not be part of the church, not do anything in the church, and yet the bigger you get, you always got the small group that is always bearing the load of everybody else that does not want to do anything. Non-members dinner sounds good to me. No, I know you cannot do that. I would not do it. I do like Hell Sunday.

You know what the truth is? I will tell you the truth. The reason why we will never get to that point in my life, in our time, basically, I do not really, and those, I was kidding with those things, basically. I mean, some of them I like. I was kidding. I will tell you the one I really like. I could never do this. I had a friend of mine who was a preacher one time, and he was sick and tired with people that came to church, did not do anything. His church, he had Sunday morning service, and then he had Sunday school before it. He had people that would always, and this happens wherever any church you had, I have never been to church that did not do this, that the people came to Sunday school, and then they did not stay for church because, you know, they had their own little things they wanted to do, so it was kind of pick and choose. So they would come to Sunday school, and then he was sitting there, and he is getting ready to preach. There is nothing more, as a pastor, you guys have preached all this, there is nothing more disheartening to a pastor when you are all ready to go and you got the message from God, you want to just really encourage your people, and you stand up there and they are all leaving. Makes for a bad afternoon with your wife.

It is a situation where he got fed up with it, and he did not know what to do. So he got an idea, and I love this, I would never do this, I do not think I have enough guts to do this, but I think it is a brilliant deal. He got two of his deacons and he dressed them in devil outfits. He put them out in the parking lot right before Sunday school let out. As the people were sneaking out to go, the guy in the devil's suit goes up and says, "I am sure glad you did not stay for church this morning. Ha ha ha ha." I love that. Ha ha ha. Some old deacon sneaking out, you know, going to go to the ball game or somebody going out, you know, just because they did not want to stick around, and they still had a car, a big old guy with a pitchfork with a horn and a red suit on saying, "I am sure glad. Hey, I am sure glad you did not stay for church today. Way to go. Oh, there is Brother So-and-so. Hey, Brother So-and-so." Oh, I love that. I love it.

Truth of the matter is, and I share your feeling. I am not believing. I do not want to get big either. I really do not. There is no motive in it for me. I would stay at 200 for the rest of my life. You know what? I learned over the years, you know, that bottom line is, the preaching is too hot and the rapture is too close. If these guys, these big guys, if they really start preaching the truth and they really start laying it out, you would see Joel Osteen's church. If you give me Joel Osteen's pulpit for one month, I will bring him down to size. I will not have to say one mean thing other than the Bible. That would have to take care of his place. You could say that same thing wherever you go. You do not build a crowd today like that by preaching the truth. You build a crowd like that by telling people what they want to hear because it is not a church, it is a dairy farm. You just want to milk them. That is all.

You know what the real way to handle the problem is? The real way to handle the problem is the same way you deal with your children. Because you are going to face some of the same issues in

life of training them up to be leaders at responsibility and ministry. You know what it is? You reproduce yourself in men and women that they become like-minded when it comes to ministry. That is what you do. In both cases, your children and this church, and the parallels are the same. The key will always be giving people the vision of who they are in Christ Jesus. Building on their potential. Looking past their problems. The same principles I use to build you as individuals one at a time is the same principles you use to build your child one child at a time. You take those same concepts and you understand that it is important for them to understand appreciation. You let them know. It is all about that.

As this ministry grows, it is imperative that you continue to grow through those transitions. You give that to your child. You cannot stop here. You have got to always keep growing because you are part of our family. We have got a job to do. We need to have you to take responsibility for part of that job. Mom and dad cannot do it. We are not getting any younger. You need to help us. You need to pull together. We need to work as a team. There are things that we do. There are things that mom does. There are things that I do. There are things that you guys need to do. When that concept is built into them of responsibility, just like what I do with ministry, that is how you do it.

In July, we installed our first homegrown leadership. It was an exciting time for me. We put in our deacons. We ordained Ray and Don and his family. It was just really a good time. You know, I think the thing I like most about this church is that 99% of you do not know what it means to be a Baptist. You have not been tainted by the Baptist system yet. You just still think you come to church because you are supposed to love God. You just read the Bible because you believe the Bible is the Word of God. Nobody has got you into the system yet. You have not learned the politics of Baptists. You have not learned all the negative things that go on. All you know and all you understand is what you have grown up around since the day you came in here. That is the B-I-B-L-E. That is the book for me. You have got nothing but the Bible. In that sense, you are pure. I wish I could protect you from that outside stuff forever. But you know what? It is impossible. Just like you are not going to be able to do it with your child. You are going to grow your child up in that age of innocence. But that evil day is going to come in their life where they realize there are things out there that are going to bite them. The evil day in your life is going to come when, as a Christian, when you realize that all the people that you think are saved are not what they claim to be. It is a shock for some people. You know what? I really love that.

I believe the real key in time to, no matter how big we get, to me, the only real key is to train up, concede train up leaders. Strong men and women who understand the validity of ministry. That they understand that you have a responsibility you have to grow to. That responsibility is part of taking ministry and doing with it what God wants you to do. When we started our... I followed the same line. When we had our potential deacons, I had a meeting with them. They are all in here that were there that day. We had a meeting together. I took an hour and laid out in meticulous detail what it was going to take. It was not going to be just a position. It was a style of life they were going to have to adapt to. It was taking major responsibility of this ministry. I even taped it. In fact, as far as I am concerned, I am sure Scott got it over there. You can get a copy of it and listen to it if you want. If your goal down the line, which I hope it is, is to become

a leader in this church, you have got to get a head start on it. But I taped it and I gave each one of them a copy.

I told them, I said, "You know what? From this point on you cannot just live your life the way you want to live it anymore. Now you have responsibility." Just like before you have kids. Once you have kids, before you have kids, you can pretty much do whatever you want to do. Once you have those kids, life changes on planet earth. Everything now is different. You do not have the liberty to go and do what you want to do. Why? Because now you have responsibility to your family. When you become a leader in this church, now you have responsibility to the family. Kids just do whatever you want to do. You cannot get caught up in things that other people get caught up in. You have got to live above the circumstances. You have got to have the right attitude. Sometimes you have to deal with your friends and maybe they will not be your friends anymore because you have got to take a biblical stand versus a worldly stand. It is just like that. It is just that simple.

I had it recorded because I told them. They were there. They can witness it. I said, "Someplace down the line when you screw it up." I told them this. I said, "You know what? I am the most patient, long-suffering man in the world. I really am. I will put up with whatever you are going through for 20 years. I will always be there for you. You can stop and start a thousand times. It is okay with me. I will help you every time I can. I will never wear out with patience with you. I will always be long-suffering. I will always help you. I will always focus on the good in you until you become a leader in this church. Then you cross over. Now you then now pick up the responsibility of all this, just like your children should. You pick up this responsibility and you go with it from there."

I had it recorded because I said someplace down the line. I do not want to get into it. He says, she says, or I did not understand. We are going to... I am giving you a copy of this. You got two weeks to decide what you want to do because down the line, you do not hold up your end of the bargain. We are going to sit down together and play this CD. I am going to ask you, "What part of this did you not understand? What part of ministry did you not understand? Did I not make it clear? Were you not listening to the CD? What on there when I said about you not living like the world, not being part of the world system, not having one foot in and one foot out, what did you not understand about that?" To me, that is leadership. I do not cut you any slack. You are supposed to be where I am at. You are supposed to help me solve problems, not cause problems. That is the difference.

I am telling you, when we started our athletic ministry, I told them, I said, "You know what? Most churches that contemplate a softball ministry, here is what they want to do. They want to play softball and figure out how to minister. I want you to minister and figure out how to play softball." We get to the place that we lose what we are doing with our family because the big picture clouds it out. The game of life, so to speak. Just like in softball, when the game becomes everything and we lose sight of the ministry and your families, your job, your world, your problem become everything and you lose sight of that kid. That is the problem. Responsibility. You have to grow to the place. My job is to lead you through truth and growth that gets you to take a piece of this ministry. Seeing things, people, circumstances, life, problems from God's

standpoint, not your own. Your job as a parent is to bring your child to the same point. In both cases, you do it by appreciation. Taking young, raw people who just get saved, focusing on the good things in their life, walking down and helping them through every issue they have to go with, molding and building and bringing to the point where they can grow up through those four stages at some point, they take the responsibility stage. That is how this church is always going to meet whatever demand comes in that door. It sounds like a terrible thing. Two hundred of me. Two hundred of me of you and you reproducing myself and you that when you look at people, you see them just like I see them. When you look at the ministry, you see them just like I see them. You deal with every issue from the biblical standpoint of the Bible. It becomes a thing where you see the ministry because you have taken the responsibility and you have grown through the process. That is where your children need to come from. Not only are there going to be leaders in your life some day, there are going to be leaders in this church some day. They have to grow through that process to become everything that God wants them to become.

## V. Accepting People Where They Are

Accepting people where they are at. Walking them through truth. Accepting your children where they are at and loving them unconditionally. I am telling you, I will tell you this, and this is so true. I could not do what we do here in this church if it was not for some of you. Some of you have stood up and taken the responsibility so well. Every Sunday, every Thursday, with all that goes on, I am going to be very honest with you. I tell you this all the time. I never want you to know or not to know how appreciative I am with you and what you do. Because very frankly, a ministry is not built around one man. It does not matter how good a preacher he is or how good he teaches or how good he does not teach. It simply is based on him reproducing himself with people in the like-mindedness of ministry that they stand together and when he cannot be there, when he has got to be here or he has got to be over here or he is dealing with this, there is a whole host of men and women out there that do not have to think twice about it because the job is going to get done just as exactly as if he was going to do it himself. When I say exactly, I do not mean the same way. I mean with the same principles. You all have your different style. I am not looking to make robots. I am looking to make men and women who keep their own individuality but do everything they do but add book because the standards are the same. It is just learning where to apply them. You have got to understand that that is what it takes with your child and when you are building a church, accepting people where they are at. Of course, as I said, it is the same way with your children. You have got to say to them, "You know what? We just could not be the family we are if we did not have you with us. You are everything to us. You are everything that we could ever want in our family." Just like you build a ministry, you build that family.

## VI. The Concept of Acceptance

Now, let me talk to you very quickly here about acceptance. Self-esteem is very important, not only for your child, but going back to what we just talked about, for a Christian also. That is another thing that I do with people. I build, when you build who they are in Christ, you build up their self-esteem. Self-esteem is a bad word used today many times improperly. I am not talking

about building up your self-esteem for self. I am talking about building up your self-esteem for who you are in Christ, seeing what God wants to do with you in the right sense. Your child has to understand and has to have the feeling that they are a vital part of your life, your home, your ministry. Using the events that naturally happen in their lives, you can do it.

If you are just paying attention, your child is going to go through some things that are going to be hard for them as they go through these four stages. You know what? It is a time where you have got to look at every avenue out there. I look at everything in your life. When you come into me and sit down with me and you tell me about the problems in your life or maybe you have got yourself into, you know what? I immediately try to put the positive spin on it and okay, let us learn what we can learn from this. You know what? So you are going through this right now. All right? So you made some dumb mistakes to get there. Okay, who has not made dumb mistakes? I will tell you what. Learn from it, do what is right with it, apply the Bible, and then when you get down the line someplace and you get into this ministry and you take responsibility, you know what God is going to do? He is going to put you, somebody in your life, got the same problem you have got. Now because you have done what you needed to do, you did not beat yourself up, you focused on it and you helped me show you the good in it and then we move from there and you learn from it. I do not care what mistakes you make. I really do not. We all make mistakes. My desire is do you learn from your mistakes, not to make them again? That is the key. That is the key.

For many of you, you are going to have a great opportunity this next year. You know why? Because this last week, many of your children made the pilgrimage to school for the first time. It was black Wednesday at our house. For Steve, it was black Monday. Who else faced a black day this week? Now you know what? In our family, it is like the salmon spawning on the Colorado River. I do not know. Everybody goes back upstream. We have to go over there, Jamie and Danny's, an hour before school. There is 20 minutes of pictures. Two days before, Jamie is crying at the drop of a hat. Barb, grouchy and a snapping turtle. I am patient. I am loving. Long-suffering. You know why? Black Wednesday is coming. The day that that little Maddie goes off to school. It is tough. Got to go to Target and buy their backpack. Did you ever see a grown woman cry buying a backpack? Terrible. You are all laughing. If you have not been there yet, you will be the same way. I do not want to hear it.

You know, and I have got to say, you know, we go over there, and they are all over there, you know, and Danny, he is falling apart. He is not worth anything. Jamie is in there, Barb is in there, and I am the only rock in the family. I am doing what I can do, and they are over there crying and weeping and taking pictures, and I am over there doing what I can do. I am somewhere in the corner singing, "Where are you going, my little one, little one? Now is the hour that we must say goodbye." Oh, I am just, I am really helping out, you know. It is tough. See those little girls, the little dressers on, little shoulder bags, walking off to school, some strange teacher standing at the door, all the little kids in there, and you know, as well as I am standing here, that school is good for them, and this is part of the process of life, and it has to happen, but you know, it does not want to be a matter of weeks for somebody, your little girl comes home, or a little boy comes home, and something bad happens at school. Kids can be so cruel. Big kids can be cruel too, by

the way. But you know what, problems will arise, and this is where you have got to take acceptance and appreciation, and you take the bad things in life that happen, and you use them. You use them.

You know, your little girl is going to come home, and she is crying, and you say, "What is the matter, honey?" "Oh, Jenny was mean to me." "Well, who is Jenny?" "Well, she is some girl I like at school." "What happened?" "Well, Jenny said she did not want to be my friend no more, and Jenny this, Jenny that, she will not eat with me." You know what? It is an issue there that naturally comes up, and you have got to use it. You have got to use it. Your little girl comes home, a little boy comes home, he has a bad day, she has a bad day, broken heart, use that. You sit down with him, and you say, "You know what? I am sorry that Jenny did not love you. I am sorry that Jenny was not nice to you, but you know what? That is why God gave you this family. We are always going to love you. We are always going to accept you. You know what? There is not anything that you are ever going to do or say that we are not going to always love you and accept you. We may not be happy with what you do, but you know what? We love you."

You do not sit there and tell her how bad Jenny is. You simply say, "You know what? That Jenny did not have the mom and dad that loved God and the Bible like you do. You know what? When we start to pray at night, let us pray for Jenny. Let us just talk about her. You know what? Tell me about it. Tell me what happened. Tell me what... You know what? That is too bad. But you know what, honey? You can work through this by doing this. You know what? It does not matter what happened out there. All that matters is we love you, and you are always going to be part of our family, and it is always going to be just fine the way it is."

You know what you have got to teach her that? I will tell you what. Because at five when they go to school and they meet Jenny who is not very nice, you have got to begin to get through their little world that there is always going to be a Jenny in their world. It does not end with school. When she goes to high school and the girls do not like her there or they make fun of her. When she goes to college, when she goes to her first job and they snub her there, it is always going to be a Jenny in your life. You ask why you take what you have now, and you use acceptance, and you use appreciation, and you always, always, always let them know that they are the most important thing in your life.

Let me ask you a question. Does your child have the impression in their life that they are only a possession in your life? Do they look at the car, the dog, the cat, the parakeet? Do they look at the things you have in your life, and do they just think that they are on the same level with that? Do they know that they are the absolute number one thing in your life that if you lost everything else, it would not make any difference as long as you have them? Or do they understand that, like I said, they are the most important thing in your world?

You know, I have people when they come over, and same process, same parallel. I have people that will come up, and will sit up, and upstairs in my office, and we are talking about the Bible, and they will look at their watch, and they will say, "Well, I have got to go, I have taken too much of your time." I always say to them, "Hey, look, you know what, I have got an appointment in 20 minutes. You can stay here all that time. If you do not have any questions, let us just talk." I

want them to understand that they are a part of building one person at a time. Hey, let me tell you something. You were the most important person in my world at that time. I have canceled everything else. Oh, there is nothing else going to disturb us. You at that time that you have, at all times, were the most important thing in my world. When you leave there, if you get home and you have a problem, you call me. Well, it does not matter. It is never that I am too busy. It is never that, well, I have got a hectic schedule, that he is a busy pastor. Hey, look, if I do not take care of you, I do not have anybody to pastor. You as this church are the only people important in my world when it comes to your time with me in the Bible. That is the ministry. Obviously, my family goes into that priority above that, but I am talking about in the sense of ministry.

Your child needs to understand that. They need to know that there is nothing that you will not stop when they need to talk to you. You do not let them interrupt you when you are talking to an adult, but at the same time, when you are sitting down watching television or you are watching something and they want your attention, they want to talk to you, you know what? Show how important they are. I do not care if it is the World Series. Turn the TV off. Listen to them. Give them your undivided attention because they want acceptance. They want to be able to know that they are appreciated. You have to get them to know that they are more important to you than any possession you have.

I know you need to discipline your child, and they need to suffer the consequences. But they also need to be praised for when they do what is right, and you develop an attitude that they would rather please you than disobey you. Your unconditional love in the form of appreciation and acceptance, what it really does is it builds a sense of stability, a sense of self-worth and purpose in their lives. They are valuable to you, that they are valuable to do for the work in the ministry. You may not always like what your child does. I promise you, your child does not always like what you do, and rightly so many times. But our children always need to know that we love them and appreciate them and accept them.

Even if it comes up to the point, God forbid that you have got to put them out of your home if that is what it takes at some point, wherever you are at. I am not suggesting you do that, and if you are ever contemplating that, I think you need to sit down and talk with somebody about it. There are some things you had better understand about that, but I am saying, never, no matter what you have got to do, do your child or with your child or to your child, they always want to understand that you are doing it in love because you have given them the vision.

I will tell you, I will tell you another problem, and I have dealt with this a lot, I have dealt with enough parents that separating those two can be hard. It really is. It takes correct thinking, it takes correct teaching. Some parents just have a hard time getting there. I am sure we have here this morning, it is probably today in the world that we live in, you could not get 50 people together that you do not have the number of people that have experienced this. I am sure there are people here today that came from very unloving homes. I am sure as you grew up that you were not the object that your parents loved. I am sure that as you grew up, you lived in a home that was very cold, very disciplined, very hard-line, and there was no display of affection. I mean, you knew your parents loved you, but their parents just could not or would not, or whatever the case, express you.

I grew up in a home like that. I grew up all my life, and you know what, it just had the reverse effect on me. I do not ever remember the time of my life when my mom ever told me she loved me. I do not remember the time when my dad ever told me that she loved me. I know they loved me. I look back now and I see all the sacrifices they made in life for me, and I understand that they loved me, they just could not express it. My mom and my dad had a bad marriage all of their lives every Christmas. I cannot remember Christmas. At the time I was a little kid, I was not worried about them getting a divorce. I used to watch them get in fights and knock my mom, knock my dad down and dad knock my mom down. It was terrible. I knew they loved me, and I knew they cared about me, but they just did not have the ability to express it.

When I made up my mind, when I got out of that house, you see, I could have went the other way, but somebody got a hold of me with the Bible. Somebody sat down with me and said, "Bob, you know what, you do not have to be that way. Just because they were that way, you are your own man in Christ. There are some great things I see in you. Now, Bob, are you going to let this destroy you or are you going to let this make you?" I decided, by my choice, I decided that it was going to make me. I tell you what, there was a day gone by that I do not tell my wife I love her a thousand times a day and my kids and my grandkids. I know some of you have a tough time with that. But as you grow, you are going to see that that just becomes part of it. You need to start by telling God you love Him a hundred times a day. That is where you start. You start by just telling God how much you love Him. Then sometime call your wife at two o'clock in the afternoon for no reason and then say, "Honey, I love you." Then call her back at three. Call her at four. I will tell you what, there are little things like that you can do, or just put your arm around her and give her a hug. There are little things you can do like that that can cost you a dime that is worth \$500 if you do not bother something. You know why? She does not care about those things. She just wants you. You know what? Your kids really do not care about the thing. They just want you. They only care about the things after they learn they are not going to get you. So they decide I will get the best deal, get something else. Your most prized possessions should be them. Their most prized possessions should be you. I know that that is a tough thing for some people. But you can build through that when you start building your relationship with God.

You know what? As a child of God, I am unconditionally accepted by God through Christ based on grace and truth. I am not accepted because I am a good person all the time. I am not. I am not accepted unconditionally because I am accepted unconditionally because the love of Christ sees no issue that stopped me from being His Son. I am God's Son no matter what I do. That does not give me a license to go out and do what I want to do because there are consequences for doing what I want to do. But I always know no matter where I am at, who I am in Him and I know how to get back. That is the key. That is the key. Your child needs to understand that too. God may not always approve of my life as a believer, but He always accepts and loves me and appreciates me as His Son.

You know what? When you come to your children, you want to be truthful with your child. You really do. You want to learn how to use these principles and you want to balance out the grace and the truth. You want to learn to be truthful with your child. You do not ever want to compromise that truth. But at the same time, you need to be able to use grace through

appreciation and acceptance that no matter what they do, they know that you always love them and accept them. That is really the key. You will build that stability in their lives, like I said last week, that they will never want to disappoint you. That they will always want to do what you want to do because of your relationship and in time as you grow through that process, you transfer that to God Himself. It is the balance of the two, authority and accountability with affection, appreciation, acceptance.

Next week we are going to talk about availability. When we are done with this lesson at the end, what I want to do in one whole group setting, because I want to show you how we are going to accomplish this. We are going to sit down, I am going to walk you through. We have got a number of things we want to go through yet. We want to talk about, we have got availability next week and that will cover the six. Then I want to deal, and this is not necessarily what we are going to do, I want to deal with dealing with your children in discipline. I want to talk about how to break a strong-willed child's will. We are going to talk about that. I want to talk about the difference between boys and girls and how you deal with that. I want to talk about some of you single parents that have to raise your children. We are going to deal with that issue. We are going to basically give you every piece of information that you need.

Then what we want to do is this. We want to come back and also I am going to tell you how to win your child to Christ. We are going to go through that session. What I want to do is I want to bring you to the point then at that last time where we sit down and when we leave here, everybody understands. Everybody understands now within the next two weeks, I am going to sit down with my child, children, whatever they are at, and we are going to begin to put this into play. We are going to begin to put a vision together. We are going to begin to work through this. My wife and I are going to talk through it. We are going to get a plan. We are going to get this. I have got another parenting group tomorrow night and then we will start round two of all the parenting groups. We will work through it and we will put together that when you leave here after all this stuff is done, because there has been a lot of material. What I want to do is condense it all down for you that last Sunday and okay, boys and girls, here is what we do. Here is how now you effectively put this into your child's life. Then hopefully those of you that are going to work in a counseling area, you are going to deal with people, you will have seen the parallel. That is why it takes such extensive time sometimes like today and other times where I show you the parallel. You have to see they are one and the same. Dealing with your children is the same way you deal with adults. It is just on a different level, but the principles are absolutely same. What works for your children will work with people, making them understand who they are in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away, all things become new. All right, let us pray. Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus.