

I. Introduction to Camp and Parenting Vision

Tomorrow we head to camp. As I have already said, the level of excitement around here is quite incredible. It always is. I think there is even more this year because every year our church moves up to another level with the leadership, with the people who come to our church who really want to learn the Bible. I really think a lot of us moving up to levels has to do with the quality of the young men and the young ladies that we have in our church. I can never be more proud of them.

It is the reason why I decided to do camp this year. Normally, we always have somebody come in. We have had the dean from Dr. Ruckman's church down there for the last couple of years, and he did a phenomenal job. Our own guys did it the first year, and they did a great job. But our church has grown. Our church has matured. I have put a lot of things into play without ever telling anybody about it, and then watching it from a distance. When we get to a point, then I know that there is the next level we need to go to where I need to get my involvement in it. That does not mean because I am preaching this year that I will preach next year. I have got some great ideas about next year that do not include me. But I think that certainly this year it is time for me to unfold some things that I have been watching for a while.

You will remember and know that for the last three weeks I have really put our attention on parenting. I told you my purpose was that I did not want camp just to be like most of all the other camps that people go to with their kids where the kids come back and they have a great time, and God does some things, but the parents have never been prepared for that. So they come back and say, "Boy, that is wonderful. Great, praise the Lord," or they just move on with life, and everything is lost. I really want to change that this year.

I have told you from day one that I will do everything I can next week for our kids. But I also understand being in this business a while, and I will not go through my rodeo thing again. My back was out for all last week over that. But I know no matter what I say or what I do, you always instinctively have some parents who just will not do what they need to do. I understand that.

A number of years ago, I forget which president it was in his campaign, what he wanted to do, he came up with the idea that no child would be left behind. I agree with that. I do not think we should ever leave our children behind. I think the tragedy in most churches is the fact that so much goes on, and the pastor who wants to build a church with a lot of people so he can have a big church so he can raise lots of money does not focus on the kids. Of course, that has never been what we want here.

We have a girl coming to camp. I will just tell you this story. I will not give any details of names or anything. But her parents were attending a very, very large church in Lee's Summit that had their camp coming up. Their camp cost \$400 a kid to go to camp. They are going to Tahiti, I guess. I do not know where you go to camp that costs \$400. Our camp cost \$100. That costs us probably \$175 per kid or what, I do not know what all to do. But we pay it because I am not

going to put the parents under that kind of burden. The church, you come here, you tithe here, you are part of the ministry here. We are here to help you. First of all, charging \$400 to go to camp, I do not know where that comes in at. But anyway, I guess when you have that kind of a big church that you have the abundance of things, you just do things like that.

Her daughter did not want to go to camp because she did not know anybody. It was very sterile, very dissident. Mackenzie is friends with her, my granddaughter. She told her about our camp. The mom said, "Well, could she go to camp with you instead of going over there?" We said, "Absolutely." So she called the church and wanted to know and tell them that my daughter cannot come to camp there. I do not know if she told her all the reasons why or not. But she basically said, "We are not going to go to camp." They would not give her her money back. So our church is paying for that kid to go to camp. I am not going to have that. I am not going to have that parent pay \$400 in a church, rip her off, and then want to come to another camp to pay another \$100. This is the thing that Christians do. It just blows my mind.

I look at those parents, and they are good parents. I understand that there is going to be some real differences made this week. Making a little investment in that little girl's life is probably one of the best things that we could ever do. But most churches do not look at it that way. Most parents, many times, do not look at it this way. I know that coming back from camp, most of you will be right on target when we get back. You have been praying with your child. You have been taking the messages and taking the notes and putting it all in place, talking to your husband or your wife and getting it all together. I understand that.

But I realize also that there will be some who will just not follow up on what God does next week, and your child will just, as always, come back, be excited for a couple of weeks, then it will all get swallowed back up in a very short time. Unfortunately, as hard as it is to believe, there simply will be parents who just will not do anything to allow their children or whatever God does in their life to alter their lifestyle or their agenda of what they want to do. This is the reality of Christianity today. This is the Laodicean church age at its best. I want to give not only here with everything that I do, do I want to give you the best chance I can by giving you the Bible and everything I know how to do, but I want to give our children the best chance. They deserve it.

After camp, just like building a church, not a whole lot of difference, you just take the people God gives you and you work with what you have, and you begin to build and take those things. That is the reality of what you have got to do. So you take what God gives you, and you do the work, and you build them as best you can with what you can.

II. Building a Family Vision Structure

Today, I want to talk about, and we have been talking about, giving your child, your family a vision. We have talked about it two weeks now. The first week we went over there in Proverbs and Habakkuk, and I really showed you what the vision really is, how it affects your family. Last week, you remember, I talked about the three most important days of your child's life and you having a vision, just simply three days: Day One, Day Two, and Day Three.

Now today, I want to show you the next level, and I want to show you how to build a structure in your family, a structure in your family of a vision. You basically do this two ways. It is not much different than dealing with people and helping people get to a working relationship with Christ. You do it by giving your children an outward vision, something that they see, and that leads and is based on the inward vision that you build into them. This is how you follow through with it.

Outwardly, your child sees the family and its commitment to Christ. The vision is made plain by Mom and Dad. They see it in action. It is not just talk. It is something that is viable, that they see every day of their life. It is a witness to them. They experience it firsthand in the consistency of Mom and Dad. Mom and Dad build for them a value system, which leads into a lifestyle. They see it through Mom and Dad's commitment, first of all, to each other, second of all, to the Lord Jesus, and then of course to the local New Testament church as the family gets established. The outward idea of the vision will always reinforce what you build as the inward vision. You must have both. It is just like Christianity. You are a Christian outwardly to other people based on what you have done with the Lord Jesus Christ inwardly between you and Him. It is the same system.

When I talk about the inward vision, now I am talking about a process of training those children from birth right up to their adulthood, bringing them full circle. We centered last week around three days, three incredibly important days that will change not only your life, but the life of your child. I told you that smart parenting is just understanding these three days, looking at these three days, and building toward these three days. It is just that simple. You remember those three days were the day they get saved, the day they get married, and then the day that they have a family. No other three days in your life will change your life totally and completely more than those three days.

Through that process, we develop our children. We build Christian character. The concept of character: you are not born with character. You are born with an old sin nature. You are not born with character. Character is something that is instilled in you. Character qualities are something that you are trained to have the right kind of Christian character, through training, through taking a child and developing it through that training, through a process of giving them a vision and building Christian character.

III. Five Key Areas of Child Development

You have five key areas that you must implement into the life through stages of growth and maturity of your child. Then you take these five stages, and each one builds on top of the other, and they actually interconnect to build different levels but are all tied together that the inward process is an inward understanding of the vision of what God wants for your child.

You do this, as we talked about in Habakkuk chapter 2, verses 1 through 3 the first week, you do this as a parent standing on your tower. A three-dimensional view of your child. Your watch care for your child. Watching them as they develop emotionally, physically, spiritually. Watching as they meet each one of these days and building the character of Christian quality into their life. Training them how to think. Training them how to look at circumstances. Training them how to look at every aspect of life.

Habakkuk 2:1-3

1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

These five levels of growth, very frankly, are exactly the same five I build in you when you come here and you get saved or you come here and you really start to grow and mature in your own spiritual growth. There is not a lot of difference between the two. For you who have been around here for any length of time, you know that in the Bible it talks about seven stages of your spiritual growth as a Christian.

Paul talks about over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 1 that when you get saved you are a baby in Christ and you need some help.

1 Corinthians 3:1

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

Then he talks about in 1 John chapter 2, verse 1 that as you mature a little bit, grow a little bit. You become, the Bible says, like a little child. You are still very small spiritually in your understanding.

1 John 2:1

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

In this stage here, in dealing with you, this is where you get discipline in your life. This is where you start to form patterns of discipline. We call it discipleship. Discipleship, the word disciple, comes from the word discipline. If you went to a college someplace and you were going to study philosophy or you were going to study medicine and you talked to another professional and you would say to them, "I am in medical school, I am in college and I am studying philosophy," they would ask you in a professional manner, "Oh really? That is great. What discipline are you studying?" They call it discipline because to be a good doctor, to be a philosopher, or to be whatever, you have to discipline yourself to a certain area. All doctors do not work in all areas. You have pediatricians, you have general practitioners, you have guys who specialize in lungs and hearts and heads and brains and no brains, and you have all of those different aspects. They discipline themselves to a certain field. When you first get saved and you are a baby Christian or you are a little child, you are setting up the pattern, the field of discipline, structure in your life.

Then Paul talks in Galatians about Galatians chapter 3, verse 26 about children, a little older.

Galatians 3:26

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

That is where in your own spiritual life you now have gotten through discipleship, you focused totally on the Lord Jesus Christ, and now you begin to understand and you have been to build a relationship with Him. You move on and you grow up a little bit.

1 John chapter 2, verse 10 talks about the next two spiritual levels in your life. He talks about young men and fathers.

1 John 2:10

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

The Bible says that in the book of Proverbs that the strength, the glory of young men is their strength. Young men can do a lot of things. You can go all day, you can play three ball games tomorrow, yesterday without worrying about it. You can do a lot of things because your glory is your strength. But you do not always have the smarts to go with the strength. So the Bible says the glory of a young man is his strength but the glory of an old man is his gray head. Those are the things that he has learned. So you begin to see that these next two levels are periods of spiritual growth where you begin to get some real power, strength in your life.

But the next level is fathers. You all know that is the day, the third day when you become a father, your life changes because what changes mostly is now you are totally responsible for other people. In your spiritual growth when you start out as a baby, a little child, children, come up to a young man, and in your spiritual growth when you take and hit that level of being a father, you know what you do? You start taking responsibility spiritually for other people around you. You start to disciple somebody else. You start to work with somebody else. Now your Christian life is not just about learning about God and doing all the things about God. You have gotten to a point now in your spiritual growth where you are giving it out to somebody else. You have built it inwardly. When you hit that responsibility stage of being a father, spiritually speaking, you take in other young Christians and you give out outwardly what you have built through the first three or four stages inwardly.

Then Paul talks about the fact, he talks about the elders and the aged, 1 Peter 5, Philemon chapter 1, verse 9.

1 Peter 5:1

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Philemon 1:9

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

This will be the ministry stage in full circle. This will be where now you are on a pastoral level. I will tell you, many of you here who have come through this very same process, many of you here today working with me and dealing with people, dealing with problems, dealing with heartache, dealing with marriages, dealing with kids, whatever it may be, I look at you on the same level as I am. Some of you do an incredible job working with people on this level. This will be the level you become a deacon. This will be a level you become an elder. This will be a level that you now will really help the pastor accomplish what he is trying to accomplish. But notice, you got there through a spiritual process of spiritual growth. Just as you do that in your life, your children will go through those same processes of spiritual growth. That is your final goal for them.

As a pastor, I stand my watch in this church to see that you get the thing that you need. Proverbs chapter 27, verse 23 is my mandate. It says to me:

Proverbs 27:23

23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

You are a herd. My job is to look well to you. My job is to stand on my tower and look at this church. My job is to see when God begins to do something in your life. My job is to keep you and help you and give you everything that you need. That is my job. My job is not just to walk around and say, "I am the pastor." My job is to stand on a tower and look at you in a three-dimensional format and watch what God does with you physically, spiritually, emotionally, and to help you get where God wants you to be. My job is to see what God is doing in your life and then get you what you need. That is your job as a parent with your children. That is your job, Dad, for your church, your family. Just like the day I decided to pastor a church, my life changed, and I do not have a lot of free time to do what I want to do anymore. When you take on the responsibility of being a father, Dad, your church now is number one. There are some things that you have to do.

IV. The Discipline Stage

Now let me talk about these five stages for your child. The first stage will be the discipline stage. These ages that I am going to give you are approximate. Every child is different, you know that. But this would start around six or seven or eight months and maybe go up to two or three, four years old. This is where you teach your child and begin to lay a foundation of what is right and what is wrong in their life. This is where you begin to teach them to respond the right way. This is where you begin to form in that early age of their life, a structure of discipline.

If your child ever got to learn a secondary language, which I think is a great thing to do, the easiest time, and many of you know this, the easiest time for your child who maybe is born in an English-speaking family or born in a Spanish family or a German family that speaks English, but their second language is German, and many times at home they will speak in their native language. The easiest time for a child to learn a second language is when he is a baby growing up in those first three or four years. You know that? They will pick it up just like that. Well, after you get to be 20, 25, 30, learning a language, and I know that some people have a natural ability

for learning another language, but that is not true in most cases. It is so true that the easiest way for a child to learn a second language is just to be in a family where they speak it, and in those early years he will just pick it up.

You know the best time to teach your child about the foundational structure of discipline, when they will really pick it up quick, is when they are young. Is when they are young. Try it when they are 12. Do not do it when they are young and try it when they are 16. No, no, it is the same concept. I always ask parents, "How many times do you want to tell your child not to do something? 10 times? Five times? Four times? Or one time?" Your children are a lot smarter than you think they are. By the pattern of the way that we do things as parents, they read us like a book. Mom will say, "Do not do that." They keep on doing it. Brother and sister. Mom will say, "I said do not do that." They keep on doing it. "I am not going to tell you again." They look at each other and said, "Open a little notebook. We got six more times." They read you.

How many times do you want to tell your child not to do something? You are in control of it. They are not. But parents lose control. They lose control. You are going to find that when they are about eight months to two or three or four years, you are going to see them begin to test the authority. I know there are pictures that you show everybody on your phone and in your wallet. They are the cutest little things in the world. They are the cutest little things with an unclean nature and an old sinful nature you ever saw in your life. Those babies, they will automatically, when they are babies, try to take control of your family.

I have seen it. I have seen a mom have a little baby. Take it over. Leave it with somebody. "Thank you for watching my baby." Can feed out. Baby starts to cry. "Oh, it is okay, honey. Mommy will be back." Baby smiles. You start to walk away. Baby cries. Baby has got a little baby notebook. In that little baby notebook, she says, "As long as I keep crying, I am in control because Mom will keep running back." Now I know why you run back. You run back because you think that makes you a good mother. It does not. It puts the baby in control. The baby cannot drive, cannot fly airplanes, cannot even talk. Baby cannot do anything meaningful in life except control you. Leave the baby. "Oh, how can you say that?" Because five minutes after you are gone, they are having fun. On page two of the little baby notebook, "She is gone now. Let us have some fun." It is incredible. It is incredible.

We start to see them manipulate the circumstances around them. You have to begin to teach your child in the early years that there are some things that are not going to be allowed. There are some things out there that will hurt them. There are some things that, and at this age, they find their first word which becomes their favorite word for the next 10 years: "No." "Pick up your toys." "No." "Come on, let us go to bed." "No." "Come on, what is got it?" "No." You see, you have got to get to that point early. You have got to teach your child, listen to me, you have to have a process of discipline very early in life to teach your child to say no to the world, but not to say no to you.

V. The Relationship Stage

The second aspect is the relationship stage. Now this is where in this stage you will begin to develop, they will begin to develop their skills of relationship. This will be ages, again, two, six, seven, eight, someplace up around there. Every child is different. Now here is where you ensure that no other human being, no coach, no teacher, no young man, no young lady, nobody that maybe they meet at school will ever have more influence in your child's life than you, right here in this stage. You now, because they come through your lifestyle, God in their life. Let me explain that.

At two, three, four, five, six, they do not understand about the Bible, they do not understand about God, they do not understand about salvation, they do not understand about all the great things of the Bible. All they know about God and God's love and Jesus Christ is what they see between Mom and Dad and what Mom and Dad display in their life. That is all of God they can get. Especially when their kids are that age, you do not sit down with your big King James Bible and try to teach them the 11 dispensations. Maybe some of you do, but they cannot get it. At this stage, all they know about God, all they see about God in the early beginning of building a relationship with you will turn into a point in time, their relationship with God. You become in their life everything that God is. We saw that with young Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 1, 2 and 3, the first week.

1 Samuel 1-3

This is the same way with you and me. The Bible says that God is a spirit. We must worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and truth. I cannot understand God. I do not get God. I do not know. I cannot see Him. He is a spirit. I do not know. He is some power somewhere in the outer reaches of a place called heaven. But what I do know about Him, I learn through a relationship with my Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. You want to learn about God, you want your child to learn about God, then they will learn it through a relationship with their Mom and Dad because you will be all they know about God. Everything they will learn and understand about God later will be based on your relationship with them at this stage.

At this age, you can communicate, you can talk, you can have meaningful dialogue, you can reason with them, you can begin real teaching instructions. Here is where you will lay the foundation of the Word of God in their young lives. Here is where they will, at this age, they will begin just to see a glimmer of the two great aspects of God's vision, outwardly by you and your wife and inwardly by the things that you teach them.

Child development experts tell us that the best parenting or the best parents are those who just simply do three basic things:

1. Parents who are great organizers and designers of a child's environment. That basically means providing a good structure for them.
2. Your direct interaction in the little things in their lives. That is in the Bible. "You will be faithful in the little things. I will make you rule over the big things."
3. A strong, firm, disciplinarian while showing and displaying great love.

Now the world calls that the key to successful parenting. The Bible calls that a vision, giving your child a vision. It will keep that relationship forever. You want to get to the place in your life where your child values their relationship with you so much, that you have built and instilled in them through a relationship with them so deeply, that it absolutely kills them to think that they may have done something that breaks that relationship. That is what you want with your child. You want with your child a child that is so into you and you are so into them that the last thing in the world they would ever want is to lose that relationship. Because there will be times when something pulls that relationship. There will be times when they are faced with things that will break that relationship with you. You want to do the work early on that in their little hearts and their little minds the most tragic event up to that point of their life is breaking that relationship with Mom and Dad because I stepped outside the boundaries. It is that simple.

VI. The Fellowship Stage

The third next level of building Christian character in their life will be the fellowship stage. Now the next stage is where we see your child enter into what we commonly call the age of accountability. This is where they get saved. Six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, I do not know, somewhere in there. This is where you win them to Christ. This is Day One in their life. Because up to now you have been representing God and Christ in their lives. Now they are coming to an age that if you know what you are doing, you can actually transfer that working relationship that you have with them and show them how to have a working relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ after they get saved. Mom and Dad have been all they have had. Mom and Dad have been all their ability to understand who God is and what He is like through the parents. Now in this stage you transfer all you have done to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I must say that this is where most of our young kids are in our church today. We have many of them that are going to camp that are already saved. We have a lot of the younger ones that are maybe right on the edge. But every one of them are right here almost without exception. It is a thing where this is where you really want to go to work. Up to this point in time, Mom and Dad have built a discipline stage and a relationship stage that have ensured that their influence will never be overridden with their child. Now is where in this stage after you do one and two, you now begin to build in a fellowship stage that just like nobody in the world will ever take their relationship from you, that Mom and Dad will be always number one. Now in a fellowship stage you will ensure that the fellowship that they build with the Lord Jesus Christ will carry them through and nothing, nobody, nothing will ever take them from their relationship with Jesus Christ. It becomes number one in their life. You know why? Because they were trained that way. You know why? Because character of a relationship and fellowship is now instilled in them.

You have two goals in your child's life through all of these things that you want to accomplish. You want to instill in them that they cannot function in life without that relationship that they have with you. I have seen parents and families and kids where they hated each other. Would not speak to each other. Children totally rebellious toward their parents. Now we look at that and say, "Well, we have got rebellious, those kids are rebellious toward their parents." No, you got it

wrong. You started out with the parents being rebellious toward the kids, not doing the stages. You want to get two great goals in your child's life:

4. That they cannot function without you in the relationship.
5. That they cannot function without God and His fellowship.

An incredible concept.

VII. The Responsibility Stage

The fourth one, the responsibility stage. Now in this stage your child should see and understand that they have some responsibility in life. This is 14, 15, 12, 13, I do not know, maybe up to 16, 17, 18. Everybody is different. You have stood on your tower and watched them physically, emotionally, spiritually develop. You have put the first three stages in their life in working well now.

I have got to tell you this thing, even though you do all of these things, your kids are still kids. You have got to be able to determine when it is just goofiness of being a kid going through all the changes or it is real authority problems that they are having. You have got to be able to discern that. You know how you do that? You do that from your tower. You do that by looking at in a three-perspective way. That is how you do that. Kids are going to be kids. I have seen some of your kids in this church as they were growing up that they were, I mean, they were running all over the place. They were into everything. So many parents say, so many people look at that and say, "You better get control of that." I get that. I get that. You need to have control of your kids. You need to stop them from doing this, pulling holes in the wall or pulling down the thing or getting a cutting torch and cutting the beams out. You need to stop that. But you realize that there are some things kids just do because they are kids. I have watched some of those same kids that were crazy and did crazy things and Mom and Dad were always on them turned out to be some of the best kids you ever saw in your life. Kids are kids. You cannot expect them at eight or nine or 10 or 12 or five or six or seven, eight to be an adult, but you can expect them to be within those five stages and hold them accountable to it. That is what you have got to do.

Now at this point, honestly, you should be giving your child more responsibility and allowing them to use them and use it right. Unfortunately, in almost every case, this is where when your kid hits this age, you have got to put real restrictions on them. You tell them to be home at 10, they get home at midnight. You tell them they cannot have the car, they hotwire it and take it anyhow. This is where if you have done the stages right, you ought to be adding more responsibility to them because they ought to see themselves as part of the family and understand that, "Hey, I have responsibilities here." You should not have to tell them when they have chores that need to be done. You should not have to remind them 20, 30 times. You say, "Well, they are always on their video game." Oh, you mean they just went out and got a job and bought their own video game? Giving your kids things without a disciplined structure of them, how to use it, it is going to be a disaster.

As they get older, they see the family for what it is. They see their part in it. A team member who has a responsibility to the team. We see it in everything. Your kids play baseball. You have them

there every time. How many times have you told them when the kid did not feel like going, "No, no, you signed up for this. You have responsibility to the team." They play soccer. "I do not want to go today to that." "No, you have responsibility to the team." You will do that. You will train them in sports and they have got a responsibility to the team. But when it comes to your family, you never make it a team concept. I cannot believe how simple this is. I had to write a book. It is so well under a million copies. You are building them toward a goal in their life and you are using the family structure as the tool to do it with. It is just that simple.

VIII. The Ministry Stage

Then the last stage. The last stage is the ministry stage. The final stage that built on the first four stages and interconnected together in a child's life, building layers, connecting them together. Now he or she is 17, 18, I do not know, 19, 20. They are part of the family ministry. You see, it has come full circle now. It is set now not only for them, but it is set into a fact that they will raise their kids up the same way.

I will give you a good example. When I first met Barb, her dad and mom had a family business. It was called Laverne's Market. You would be hard pressed to find a family that was more united and close. They were not saved, but they were united and close and had really good value systems and really good qualities. Laverne's Market was just a small market uptown, but it specialized in a lot of really good stuff and a lot of elite people. It had a very good name in Canton, Ohio. Everybody in that family worked in that market. Barb has a brother and she has a sister. The sister, her name is Sweetie, Suzanne, and her brother is Tommy. Sweetie married a guy named Benny, and I married Barb. It was a thing where Tommy worked with Howard. Barb cut meat right alongside of her brother and her father. Sweetie, I am not sure what she did, probably just ate stuff, but she was part of it too. When they got married, Benny worked there. When I lost my job at Hoover's before I came out to Kansas City, I worked there. It was one of the most amazing things to see how that family working together in a family business, working side by side, everybody knowing their position, everybody having a loyalty to that business that wants to make money. Tommy, the brother, went all the way after he left there and became the president of IGA for the state of Ohio. He went right to the top in time. It all started with a family business where families pulled together.

You notice the Trump family last week? You notice how close and together they are, how they love each other, and yet they all worked there. Forget the politics of it. He has got one of the finest families that you have ever seen in a long time. You know why? They worked together in a family business. Nobody trying to cutthroat somebody else. Nobody trying to get ahead of anybody else. They just realized, "This is our family. This is our business. And our business is to work together to make money to be successful."

Take that same concept, if I may give it to you. Take that same concept and put it into a family ministry. You want success in ministry? Have a family ministry. Have your kids work alongside you. Maybe your kids work in doing what you do. Moms with sons, Dads with daughters, Dads with sons, Moms with sons. Everybody working together, not working in a family business, but working in a family ministry. That just does not happen. It just does not go to church all your

life, and it happens. No, no. Things have to be built into your children. Now maybe you can begin to see how all three aspects of the vision work together. It just works like that.

This is my vision for everybody here as your pastor. My vision for you is that everybody gets everything you need to be everything God wants you to be. This should be the vision of every one of you for your children. That you realize that just as it is my responsibility to get you everything that you need to make you successful in this family ministry that we have as a church, and we are a family, you take that down on a lower level of your own family. Your sons and daughters working with you side by side in the ministry, family ministry, because in life you build these five areas and are consistent in each one of these. These are the training ground of biblical principle. It will produce a strong church when we do it this way, and it will produce a strong family. Your child will either grow up and have real Christian character, or your child will just grow up and he will be a real character. But you get to choose. You get to, as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, do not blame it on somebody else. Do not blame it on this person or that person. It is your responsibility.

When you look at Christianity, the Christian life will be simply based on two simple concepts. It is not hard. It is based on one, what you have to get rid of in this life, and two, what you then fill the void with of what you just got rid of. I think this is the most fundamental mistake that pastors make and parents make. I have heard preachers all my life getting a sermon, and you need to give up this, you need to give up that, you need to quit this, you need to quit that. Most of the stuff they are saying you need to quit, it is good stuff. The problem is they will never give you anything to replace what you are giving up. There is a void in there, because the pastor gets you to give it up, but he does not fill it with something else. It just comes right back in in time.

It is the same way with your family. I have heard all the stories, "I tell them that they need to be at church. I tell them they need to read their Bibles, they need to be in ministry." That is not filling the void. Those are outward things you do. The void needs to be filled with inward things. I grew up in an area where the pastors would get in the pulpit and they would say, "If you just read the Bible, it will solve any problem you got." That is not true. Reading the Bible will not solve your problems. Jehovah Witnesses read the Bible all the time and it has not helped theirs. Mormons read it all the time, they are not getting anything out of it. Reading the Bible will not solve your problems, but applying what you read out of the Bible will solve your problems. You can read it all day long, but you have got to apply it. That is the key.

Parents do the exact same thing. When it comes to your children, you can make demands. You can ask them, you can make them. You can ask your child to give up something that is not good for them, but I want to tell you something and you better listen to me, until you have something for them to replace it with, you are wasting your time. You have to fill the void biblically with something, the right thing, the right way.

I am going to tell you right now, Mom and Dad, next week I am going to have your kids give up some things. I am coming after them. I am coming after them for a reason and a purpose, but I am going to have them, next week I am going to have them, they will do it because through the preaching of the Word of God and because they are good kids, next week I am going to have

them give up some things: the world, the flesh. They are going to give up some attitude. They are going to give up some laziness. They are going to give up some sin. They are going to give up the wrong relationship. They are going to give up their attitude toward you. I am also going to replace what I asked them to give up with something much better.

I do not know how to do many things in life. I really do not. I have never been good at a lot of different things. I could not fix a broken car if my life depended on it. My lawn mower the other day, I went out to cut the grass and it would not start. It has got one of those ones that I paid over \$500 for as opposed to start on the first pull. I pulled it, it would not go an inch, just like it was locked up. I saw that the cord that went down inside and there were three screws holding that cover on so bravely got a screwdriver, took it off and I said, "Yep, there is the problem," an engine that I know nothing about. I put it back on, tried to pull it, could not pull it off. I got so mad I just kicked that sucker. It rolled into the garage door and when it did, I heard something clunk. I pulled back and about 10 pounds of dead dry grass fell out from underneath of it. I pulled that cord, it started right up. That was luck. Barb will not let me fix anything around the house. She calls Donnie. I built a deck one time for a guy that looked like Jack B. Nimble and Jack B. Quick. He does not know how to do this or fix this. It was a mess. It was a disaster. It was crooked, fell over, lady leaned up against it. She went down about six feet. Was not a good show at all.

I do not know those things. I only know one thing: how to build a church and how to build people. I thank God every day of my life for my family. I do not say much about them. I am harder on them than I probably am any of you and they all know that. But I thank God every day for my family and I have not always been the best father in the world. I will not tell you. I had to learn some things too. But I always understood that I never had any excuse of not having a good family. My family worked with me in the ministry. I understand why God never gave me boys because I work with young men all the time and if I would have had two young men, I get it. I get it. God gave me two girls and they are the greatest girls in the world and then He gave me two sons that I did not have and are two of the best I could ever have in my life. They are husbands and everybody works with me. I could not do what I do without them. But they are not who they are because of me. More so because of their mother but not me. But I always understood that I never had any excuse for raising a bad family. Do you know why? Because over 40 years of ministry dealing with over a thousand families probably, I have seen every mistake that every parent ever made. I am not the smartest guy in the world but I learned what not to do and what to do by watching somebody else.

I love this church. As far as I am concerned, I think this church is the greatest church in the country. You say you are biased. I probably am but everybody comes in here cannot believe it. But you know why? It is a great church. Same reason of my family. All I know how to do is work with people and build a church. You know how I learned that? Because I watched for 40 years every pastor and every failed church make the mistakes that he made. Blaming his people, doing this, trying to start a church without a plan. I see young guys go out today trying to start churches. They fall flat on their face. They have no clue what they do. They will not listen to anybody who has been down the road who knows what you do and what you do not do. This

church is a success not because I am a great preacher. This church is a success not because I have the great IQ of knowing everything. This church is a success for one reason: I have learned by the failures of others.

I am telling you. Over the last two years without saying anything to anybody, I put our young kids to a test. I told you when we started this, a pastor has to know where he is going, who he is and how he is going to get there. I do not always say something to people, but I see this thing. I watch it. I know it because I have seen the failures and I have seen the successes. I have watched our kids. I put them to a test. I had them begin to take their own youth activities and they run it. The counselors just kind of stand back and let the kids run it. I watched that for almost two years now. At the same time, God was developing and taking many of you adults up to Lincoln where God in an incredible way has just unearthed some people up there who just really love God and want to learn the Bible. We began the process of working with them, you going up in teams, them coming down here. Many of them are coming to camp next week and we have got a great contingency from up in Lincoln going to be here. Many of them are here today. Many of them, the rest of them are coming in this afternoon.

But now where we are at right now, I am going to ask your kids to give some things up, but I am going to replace it in their life with something that is spectacular. Now they have a need up there in Lincoln based on what you the adults have done to reach out and reach young people with the Word of God. We are going to use our teams just like we have used our adults to do that. So out of next week at camp with all the other things I am going to try to accomplish, I am going to ask God to give me four teams out of our teenagers. Four teams.

- Danny and Jamie will head up a team.
- Aaron and Kelly will head up a team.
- Justin and Angela will head up a team.

They are all working with the high school. Zach and Jenny will be over all the whole concept of it. The fourth team will be made up with Caleb up in Lincoln with all the kids up there. These three teams down here will coordinate with the team up in Lincoln. On a monthly basis, each one of these teams will go to Lincoln. They will go up there and they will help them plan a youth activity on a Friday night. Then they will come back on a Saturday morning and our young people, yes, your kids who are sitting in this room right next to you right now, they will begin to teach these kids up here how to disciple, concept of missions, concept of ministry, and concept of laying out and teaching the Word of God and putting a devotion together.

I am going to do with your kids exactly what I have done with you. This church is now at that level. I have been standing on my tower, on my watch, and I have been watching what God is doing with the adults and then what He is doing with your kids. They are ready. So next week I am getting four teams. Next week I am going to go after every kid I can. I am going to get the ones lost, saved if I can. I am going to get everybody back on track, but it is open to anybody who wants to be a part. I am going to ask them to give up something, but I am not so foolish that I can ask them to give up the things of the world without giving them something better, just like I do you.

How many of you who disciple people, how many of you who work with people who have problems and you have won them to Christ and you have worked through issues with them, how many of you, and you know who you are, how many of you would trade that for the drunken life in drugs and sex and all the goofy things you had before? Anybody want to go back and trade it? No. No, you know why? You gave it up and I gave you something better. That is how it works. That is how it works with our kids. Here is the genius in this. They are going to be going up and the same weeks they are going up, the adult teams are going up. They are going to work together. It will be a chance where Moms and Dads can work and minister as a family, a team concept on the same weekend.

Now along with that, we need to reinforce the vision. Our teams are three and the one in Lincoln, four. They are going to work on a regular basis. They are not just going to go up. The team leaders are going to take them on a weekly or a monthly basis and get them together and work with them, prepare them, give them tasks, help them, structure them, keep them accountable with you, the parent, what God is going to do next week. Caleb will do the same thing in Lincoln with his team, develop them in connection with Zach and Jenny and the teams down here.

I want to tell you, Mom and Dad, I have thought this thing through. I have worked this thing through. I have prayed this thing through. I have been on my tower, on my watch, and I have done all the work for you. There never will be a time probably in the history of your life that you will ever have such an opportunity where you can bring it all together right now. But I am telling you, I need your help. We will continue to work with the younger kids to our elementary, bring them up, the high school kids as they grow up and get out of the high school, they move over with me into the single ministry and they work with me in ministry. The whole process is now in place. It took us 13 years to get here, but we are here and it is only going to get better. It has only been a beginning.

Years ago, those little discipleship lessons that you teach everybody and work throughout the week, years ago, those lessons were translated in almost nine or 10 other languages. Some of the people right here, Chris Schmidt was here, Shankle is here, Penny is here. Some of you back then, you know that we literally had teams crossing in the air going into Europe after the wall came down, taken into Romania, into Russia, into Odessa, and into Hungary and Romania, into the Philippines, in Central Africa, South Africa, into Korea. We went everywhere and developed those lessons and it was what made you guys who you are today. This is just the beginning. I am not saying we are going to go around the world, but we are going to Lincoln. It has got to start somewhere. It is all going to come together next week.

What I have done the last three weeks, the way I have parents and kids and now today completely lays out the plan of where we are going and how we are going to get there. I did it for two reasons. First of all, I only got four days next week. I needed some extra time, so I built in two, before camp, four weeks with the kids being in here and today that everybody is on the same page of what I am going to do. You kids know now what my plan is. You adults now know what my plan is. I have taken the vision to the highest level. Next week, come tomorrow night, I do not have to waste time laying it out. I am going to work with them and we are going to get some things done.

Second reason, this will never work for your child without you. I have laid out the vision. You now have to climb up on that tower and get on your watch. You now must begin to reinforce what I am trying to do. They are still young enough, they are still tender enough, they are still soft enough, but that will not last forever. Ecclesiastes 12, verse 1 says:

Ecclesiastes 12:1

1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

When they come back next week, they will be ready to go. The question is, will you be ready to go? Listen, there is an evil day coming in your child's life. Someone who is knocking on their door right now. There is an evil day approaching your child where they are going to take that child right out of your life, right out of your family. That evil day is coming in your child's life and you better be ready for it. There is coming a day when they will not care about God anymore. There is coming a day when they will not look at church and the Bible and say, "I have no pleasure in them. I do not want to go anymore. I do not want to be part of it anymore." They are going to adopt the attitude that some of the parents have right now. The day will come and as the years draw nigh, the devil will do everything he can to destroy your child and by doing so, destroy your family. It breaks my heart to say this, but it is so true. It is so true and it is sad to say. The devil's greatest ally will be the very parents that God gave those kids to lead them and prepare them for this, against this evil day. He will find them to be readily ready and able to help him by not giving their child that vision.

IX. Regaining a Lost Relationship

In the few minutes we have left, I want to talk, I would not do this justice if I did not talk about how you can regain the relationship with your child if you already lost it because some people already have. There are people listening on here today. There is a number of them back there and people will, if you have seen the reviews on our deal, people are just watching it all over the place. So this will help them. I know that most of you were on track and I know you got it, but I just need to do this. Nothing else, you being aware of this, can help somebody else that God puts you in your world. There are five things that you must see and understand. I will help you. But I am telling you right now, folks, the longer you wait, the harder it becomes. When that evil day finally comes and they walk through the threshold into that day, you are done.

The first thing, if you have lost your child and you have got a child out in the world that does not care about coming to church, does not care about the things of God, and they may be nice kids, but they are just out there in left field.

6. You need to stop enabling them. You the parent have created the environment that led to their departure. You better understand that.

There are so many reasons for that. I have seen where the Dad was weak spiritually and Mom ran the house. I have seen them where the parents are always blaming their kids' problems on somebody. I have seen them spoil them beyond belief. I have seen them allow their child to do

whatever and when they do something, instead of holding them accountable and responsible, they just laugh. "Oh, is not that cute?" Their inability to make hard choices and decisions in your child's life. I know why. I hear it all the time. "Well, I am afraid if I really come down hard on them, I will lose them." You have already lost them. Tough situations require tough parenting.

You know what many parents are? And I love them. They are helicopter parents. Always hovering over their child with a life vest. Any trouble a child gets into, throw them a life vest. Never letting the child take responsibility for their failure. Always bailing them out. Always helping them. Always being there. As the child just escalates and or escapades and causes more problems, gets more serious, they just get bigger life vests. They are always hovering. They are always there. The child never learns to take responsibility because they never face the accountability of what they do. Mom and Dad always bailing them out. Totally out of balance.

7. The next thing, second thing you need to do is fix the core support system. It is broken. That will be you, the parent. Remember, key. Children do not cause problems in the home. Children just reveal the problems that are already there. Parents do not just give the child a vision. Parents are the model for the vision for the child. Proverbs 11, 29 says:

Proverbs 11:29

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

You bet you will. It will turn into the storm of your family, the storm of your life, the heartbreak of losing your child.

8. Third thing, take responsibility for your failed parenting. This is the number one key aspect that is so crucial, yet 99% of the parents just will not do it. Do not blame your children for what you have trained them to be. Remove yourself of your mistakes and failures by being accountable for it. Take ownership of it.

I want to tell you something. 40 plus years in the ministry dealing with hundreds, if not thousands of families, when they have lost their kids for these very reasons right here. In 40 years, I have only had two fathers that ever understood this that sat down and took responsibility with their family and said, "Folks, I screwed up. I messed up. You are where you are at because of my failures. I ask you to forgive me." In both cases, it worked. Two in 40 plus years. I am telling you.

9. The fourth thing. Now once you have taken responsibility for failure of your family, now you can begin to hold them accountable for the things that they do. It is the concept talked about in First Timothy chapter three, verse two of being blameless.

1 Timothy 3:2

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

I used to wonder what that was all about. The Bible says that a man who wants to be a pastor needs to be blameless. For years, I looked at that and thought, "How does that work? He can be blamed for everything. How do you be blameless?" We get the idea that blameless is we do not ever make any mistakes. Well, that cannot work. We all make mistakes. How do we be blameless? You know how you be blameless? It is simple. You are blameless when you make a mistake and then you take responsibility for the mistake. Most pastors are not blameless. They blame everybody else. They make a mistake. "It is your fault." Their church does not grow the way it should. "Well, that is the people." Something does not go right. "Well, it is so and so." I am telling you, no, no, no. Everything rises and falls on leadership. In this church, when I make a mistake and I do something stupid, I will never blame you for it. I will take responsibility for it.

Tappy. I forgot to announce the girls. Now, that may not sound like a big thing to you. It was a real big thing to me because I would never slight our women for anything in the world. She was right. I am in front of everybody. "How dare she tell me that I did not get it right? There is going to be a Deacons meeting right after the counselor meeting. She is being churched." Absolutely not. I am wrong. I am wrong. If I did not do it right, I will ask your forgiveness. I have had people come to me and say, "Well, I did not appreciate you doing this." Even though I may have thought that I was right in what I did, I do not care. My attitude is, "I am sorry. I should not have done that." The fact that my motive was right, my method was wrong, and I would never put you in a compromising situation. "I am sorry." You make a mistake and you take responsibility for it. You are blameless. Nobody can blame you once you have taken responsibility for where you failed. How hard is that? Pride, arrogance, blaming it on others will never get you blameless in your church or in your family.

10. Fifth thing, once you do all these things, now you begin a life of consistency. You see, you will always be able to hold people responsible for what they do once you take responsibility for what you do. Now you begin a life of consistency. It is the key to every success in life. It is never too late to do right. Do not do it to get your kids back. I have seen guys say, "Well, I am going to do right because I want to get my wife." I have made a lot of mistakes in my marriage and I want to do right to get my wife back. I have had parents come in, "Well, we did not do what is right with our kids. I want to do whatever I have got to do to get my kids back." I appreciate that and I understand where your heart is, but may I say something to you? That is the wrong reason to do it. You do it because it is right. You do not do it to get something back out of it. You do it because it is the right thing to do.

Right now with regards to our children, your family, your role as a parent, the vision of God we have talked about in their life over the last couple of weeks and where they go and what they do the rest of their life today is now in your hands. It is yours. You will never have a better opportunity to pull all the aspects of your family together than right now. Opportunities like this, ability and opportunities like this, I am telling you folks, they do not come along very often in life. I believe with all of my heart that God has brought our church to this level for many reasons. I believe that God has developed the leadership of this church for many reasons and I believe that God has put all the people in the right places for many reasons, but I believe that God has done everything He has done for this camp for one specific reason and that is to give you the best

opportunity you will probably ever have the rest of your life to pull your family together the way God wants it to be. Do not fail to let go or let God pull your family together through this church. The whole concept of Old Path Baptist Church is simply two concepts: the Word of God and our families. Nothing else matters.

X. Conclusion and Call to Action

Several years ago, I was preaching in a church, a large church, I preached Sunday morning and I was coming back to preach Sunday night and a pastor called me in my hotel room and he says, "Look, I have got a young couple that I am meeting with that is on the verge of getting divorced." He says, "I know you work with a lot of them. I have really not had that much experience. Would you mind, I know you have got a sermon there, would you mind sitting in and helping with this and just listening and maybe you could add?" I said, "Sure, absolutely no problem." I went in there and sat down in his office about two hours before I had to preach, spent an hour with him. Nice kids. Been married just a short time, like a year or two years. I could tell very quickly that it was over. Too many things had happened. Too many things did not happen and fundamentally that marriage was done. That was a tragedy because I look at marriages as a place where God puts a husband and wife together to accomplish what God's plan is for that family to reach the world. I saw in that instant right there a failed marriage that God would never, and they were both Christians, that God would never realize out of that marriage what He intended to get out of it. I was heartbroken.

We left. Pastor thanked me. I went back to the hotel, got ready, went back to preach. I was up on the platform. Choir was singing, getting ready to go. Let him have it. Preacher leans over and he says, "I forgot to tell you, we got a little special appreciation tonight. You will be on right after. We will sing another song right after this. We got a couple here that we want to recognize." I said, "Oh, praise the Lord." He got up, called up a couple, sweetest couple you ever saw. They had been married 65 years. Gray-haired couple, come up on the platform. She had roses. He got whatever he got. I forget what it was. They talked about him how long they had been in his church. Their kids had come down through there. Just a nice couple, went to church all their life. I sat there and thought to myself, and he talked about what they did and all that stuff. It was just normal Christian people.

I sat there and thought to myself, there is no difference between the first family that I just talked to that got a divorce after two years than this sweet couple who had been married for 65 years. One got a divorce after a year and a half. The other one made it 65 years, but neither one of them ever did with what God wanted them to do with marriage. One was a couple that did not make it past two years. The other couple was a couple that made it 65 years and never left her little home. They raised their kids who were good kids who got jobs, never won a person to Christ, never disciplined anybody, never did anything. I look at that and I think to myself, how strange we look at it. We look at the couple who after two years gets a tragic divorce, and yet we look at couples who have married 65 years and we think, "What a success." When it comes to God's definition of marriage and why He gave you a husband and a wife, why He gave the concept of marriage in the first place, they are both failures.

God saved you, gave you the wife or the husband that you have, will give you the wife and the husband that you have or will have, cannot wait to have. He will give that to you for one purpose, and that is that He takes you and him and your fruit, multiply and replenish the earth in a spiritual way. He saved you to raise a family that the heritage of God would go on. He says that the very fruit of your womb is God's reward. That your family, your children are God's heritage. They are not your heritage, they are God's heritage. We got the idea that marriage is something that we just get into because we want to do it without ever understanding the long-term perspective of why God gave you a husband and a wife and then gave you children.

Most of you, many of you here, you get it. Some of you have come in for bad marriages and you know what? You did what was right, you love the Lord, God has given you somebody or in time God will give you somebody. You will be right on track. You are right there in your world right now to put it together.

Next week we need to pray for the camp. I am going to ask these kids to give some things up and I have put it together to replace what they are going to give up with something that is great. Kids, I want to talk to you, I want you to come next week. I want you to come next week. I have saved us two days right now and I want you to come tomorrow night hitting the ground running knowing that we are going to work. You will have fun times all day long, they have got all kinds of things planned, it is going to rain all week, that will be wonderful. But come on your afternoon with you guys that are speaking and when I get there, when I preach, we are going to work. I am asking God to take in the young men and the young ladies in our church who have been trained by the Moms and Dads in our church to raise up teams of families who will minister together. That is where I am going after. I am going to ask you to give some stuff up but not without replacing it with something. Because I know how to build people, but I know how to build churches. Only thing I know to do in life, I should know, I have seen every failure in the last 40 years and I learned from it. I am going to show you this week, yes you have made some mistakes, yes you have done some dumb things, yes you have not treated your parents the way you should. But you know what, I am going to show you how to make all that right and I am going to show you how to come back with the right vision to pick it up. We are not ending camp on Thursday night, though we will not be at camp anymore. Our preaching service for the families and all the kids will be next Sunday morning. I am going to put this thing in its final form once we have all got to camp, once we have all gotten back, once God does what He has done, I am going to give you a message that is going to launch you of where you need to go. We will end camp on next Sunday morning. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus.