

# Proverbs 22:6

Sunday 12/31/2017

Absolutely great. I love that song, my favorite song, "Battle Hymn of the Republic." It is great. Most of you do not know the story behind Will. Obviously, he is an accomplished musician. I remember when Will first came to our church, he did not have a beard back then, but he was playing the saxophone. He went to college for his music, and he was obviously very, very good at it.

He came in and talked to me one time. He had just started to come into church and had been struggling with a career in music, playing in bands on Saturday night, but wanting to be in church on Sunday morning. He was caught as a young Christian between that. He asked me, "What is your advice on my playing on Saturday night and then coming and playing on Sunday morning? I just need somebody to help me put it all together."

I said, "Well, here is what you have got to ask yourself: How much value is feeding unsaved people's flesh on Saturday night with your music ability, and then feeding God's people with it on Sunday morning?" That is all he had to hear. He fundamentally gave up his career in music, pursuing it any farther than using it for the Lord. Now he is one of the finest preachers, one of the finest musicians, and one of the finest young men we have in our church. I love him very much, and I am proud to call him my son. That was very good today. I just want you to know there is a story behind everybody. Sometimes you cannot tell it, but there is a story behind everybody. That is a great story.

## I. Review of Previous Lessons

Today, we are going to be in our fifth lesson on training up our children. Tonight at Bible study, I said this the other night, that we have time tonight, and we have been in this now for five weeks. There may be things that I did not cover because I did not have the time, or there may be things that you want to know about your own particular circumstance with your children. Tonight's Bible study would be a great time to ask. Write your questions down, think it through this afternoon. It is fine with me if we just talk about other things that you want to do. I do have a couple of things that I want to talk about tonight and going forward in the next year, but I just want you to think about that. There may be things that I have said that you are up against that you need a little more insight on, and everybody will learn from it. It will not be something that is just your own deal. People will grow from it as you ask your questions.

This is our fifth time together, and we base this on Proverbs 22:6. We have been coming through the book of Proverbs now extensively, and we come up against this verse where it says:

*Proverbs 22:6*

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

I told you that, given the status of our church, all the young couples, all the young singles, all the young marriages, we wanted to take a time and really focus on this passage. So far, if you

remember, we have covered four major vital areas with a lot of sub-things, but four major vital areas of importance.

The first week, if you remember, we simply set a context for training up your children. I told you that everything in your Christian life has to fall into a context. This is what the Bible does. When you learn the Bible, the principles of the Word of God, it forms the ability for you to look at things and not just see them as they appear, but see them within the context that they really are.

We use a lot of words and we say a lot of things sometimes that are all relative terms. It sounds like we are making a good statement, and maybe we are. Or it sounds like we are making an accurate statement, and maybe we are. But in my mind, I have so skewed my mind with looking at everything as close as I can to it. I hear people say things and I ask myself, I never ask them, but I ask myself because everything has to be put in a context.

Somebody will be in a conversation and somebody will hear somebody say, "Well, so and so, he is a really good man." And I say to myself, "Compared to who?" That is a relative term. "He is a really good man." Compared to who? Joseph Stalin? Somebody said, "Well, he has done a really good job." Compared to what? You see, those are relative terms that really do not tell us anything. It is just a general statement, but when you compare it to something, it will set the context.

Somebody will say, "That is a really good church." Compared to what? Benihana? Compared to who? That is a relative term that really, when we use it, it does not mean anything unless you have a context to establish what you are talking about. Somebody says, "That is a really good family." Really? Compared to what? Everything has to fall within a context. So, the first week, we set a context. Without a context, everything is just relative. There is no real authoritative meaning to it.

The second week, we looked at the importance of establishing a baseline of truth, the first line of defense in your children. The third and the fourth week, we talked about the evil day. I took you on the fourth week and I took you back to Daniel 1 and showed you how Daniel is a perfect picture of where your child is going to face, and our kids in our church are going to be up against.

Along with that, we gave you a lot of key words and phrases that you will use once you understand them and incorporate them into the training up of your children. One of the best ones that I use all the time in just about everything I do is the concept of long term versus short term. Many times the things that we do short term look good, but you look at them with the long term, they do not look so good.

I talked about proactive and reactive. Proactive being the place where you get out in front of things before they happen. Reactive is when you chase them to try to fix them. We talked about how to react versus respond. When you react, it is a fleshly thing. It is a knee-jerk reaction. But when you respond, you filter whatever you are dealing with through the principles of the Word of God, and you do not react, you take a little more time and you respond.

I talked about the simple concept for all of us of being smarter than the problem, understanding that the Christian should be smarter than the issues that they have to face because you have got the greatest book in the world in your lap. Along with that, I talked about the high tower concept. In the Bible, you will find the Tower of David. He talks about his high tower. I told you how that the high tower is in our life, and the inspirational application is being lifted up through the Word of God and building the principles into our lives where it lifts us up that we look beyond the circumstances of life and many times see what is coming long before it gets there.

I tell you all the time a little free phrase concept that again I use all the time for every Christian: You have got to look ahead, you have got to look around, and you have got to look behind. The high tower allows you the ability to do that.

Then we talked about in dealing with your children in the world how that many parents try to isolate their kids from the world, which does not work. But the real key from the Bible standpoint and the principle is not to isolate them from the world because the world is always going to be there, but rather to insulate them from the world. Give them what they need to protect them from what is coming their way.

We talked in Matthew 7, the great principle that I think ought to be one of the key hallmarks of every family, and that is building your house upon a rock and not upon the sand. Then I defined for you the age of accountability. We are going to even talk about that more in the weeks to come, but I showed you from the Bible how important that age is and how our responsibility as parents is really wrapped around that. That is the key focus for your child no matter where you are at in life. I showed you how that each week we kind of go through a compounding effect with these. We build on what we talked about last week, and we are moving along those lines, and we do.

Today, I want to begin to walk you through the next level of understanding on how to use some things in the Bible. But before we do that, let us go to the Lord in prayer.

## II. The Progression of Life and Training

Growing up is a progression for all of us. Growing up is a progression of developing different stages in life. We talk about infants and babies, and then we talk about adolescents. We talk about junior high-age kids. We talk about teenagers. We talk about young adults. We talk about adulthood. We talk about older folks and aged and people in the golden years of retirement. All of those are stages of a progression of life. It is really important to understand that because in dealing with your children, there are five stages of progression of training and teaching that you want to go through.

In Bible Institute, we started our Bible Institute last year because of all the host of young men and young ladies that really want a desire to learn the Bible. I did something this time that I have really never done before, but I saw how valuable it was. You take the Bible. The Bible appears to be one of the most complicated books on planet earth: 31,171 verses, 1,189 chapters, 66 books. It overwhelms you many times. But I showed you how that what we did is we broke the Bible down into 17 compartments. Every week or every month when we meet together, we take that

one compartment, we separate it out from the Bible, and we completely learn and understand what that section means. Then when we get through with it, you will have the ability to bolt it all back together and understand the overall concept of the Bible.

You learn the Bible in stages. God never intended for anybody to sit down and just start reading the Bible on their own and getting it all together. That is why God gave you a church. That is why God gave you pastors and teachers. Paul said the same things I have committed unto you that you have heard of me, you commit to faithful men. It is an unbroken chain of going through the different stages of spiritual growth. I have showed you before, coming through the Bible, how that in your own spiritual life there are seven stages of your spiritual growth that you go through. Breaking it down just makes it a lot easier.

I want to begin today to walk you through the five stages of training up your children. We are going to look at each component. We are going to define it. We are going to talk about it. We can answer more questions about it tonight, or you can come over and see me anytime that you need to. But I want to show you how that these things as an individual stage and then how they bolt together in the whole composite of your child's life.

Last week, I showed you how that your child will go through a transformation process. They will be transformed one way or the other. A transformation for them to take their stand in life. There are only two stands they are going to take. We saw it from Daniel 1 last week, and that is they are going to stand for God or they are going to stand for the world. I showed you last week the four areas by which the world is going to come after them. These five stages, when we understand it and we apply it, will be the training of your child to God and the transitioning of your child to God and a life of going to wind up serving Him, which is what ought to be the goal for all of us as parents.

Many of you around here today have newborn babies and young children, and they are not able at this point in time, and you have asked me about this. They are not able at this time to sit around like some of the families are doing, take each lesson, and do as we talk about doing it. They are not ready to do that yet. You have come to me and you have said, "Hey, we just have a new baby. I want to learn what I can." Okay, here it comes. This is for you today. This is going to give you the understanding of what you have got to start, and you can start right now. I do not care if they are only six months old. You can begin the process now of what you can do, and we are going to talk about this today.

Your kids, newborns or babies, are not able to have a family meeting as such, but there are some things that you can do. This is where you will start with your newborn babies or your babies, or wherever you are at with your kids, going back and understanding. Even if you did not do these things from the get-go and now you are in a place where you are experiencing some problems, it is okay. All you have to do—I am not saying you can go back and fix it—but understanding the whole concept is the key because I do not care where you are at, there is always something you can do.

Given the total collapse of the family today and all the issues with children that we see, what I am about to say is probably going to be hard for most parents to grasp and understand, maybe

even to believe. But what I am about to tell you is absolutely true. I realize in the world that we live in today, this is a foreign concept, but then most of the things that I teach you today are. But this is so true and so vital for you to understand this, and it is so out of touch with everything that is going on today.

Most children and their parents, the older the child gets, the harder it is. It seems like the bigger the kid, the bigger the problems. That seems to be the standard and the norm in most families, Christian families, I am not even talking about the world. It is easier for them at a young age when you can somewhat control everything. But when they hit 10, 12, and 13, 14, and 15, it gets really hard, and everything begins to go south, so to speak. Now you are fighting all kinds of issues and problems, and in most cases, your child now gets out of control of the parent.

But I want to tell you something now that is the standard today in any church, I do not care where it is, in any church, in any Christian world. This is what we are faced with because of the total breakdown and collapse of the family. But based on the Bible format, listen to me, as your child gets older, it should get easier, not harder. The older they get, the easier it should become to deal with them. You are going to find that in many cases they do not have the real issues to deal with. I get it. They are basic kids. I understand. They are going to have basic kid problems. I get it. There is no perfect child, just like there is no perfect parent, just like there is no perfect preacher, just like there is no perfect church. I get it. I understand. But the older they get, when you follow the basic fundamental lines of what I am about to give you, if you do it right, the older they get, the easier it gets. The easier it gets.

It simply comes down to raising a family and training your kids. At some point, it is going to require a lot of hard work. Those of you with kids know that now. The great thing about God and parenting in the Bible, you get to choose where you do the hard work. You can do the hard work when they are babies and get them to that place, and it gets easier, or you can take the easy route at the beginning, and then it really gets hard later on. You get to choose. Life is choices. It really is.

Your Christian life is the same way, really. There are a lot of parallels between building a church and building a family. In fact, I would say to you that if you are paying attention, if you are in a good church that is building things right, use that as a model because there are so many parallels. Your Christian life is the exact same way. You are never going to be problem-free as a Christian because our biggest problem is our flesh, and we are always going to struggle with that. But you know as well as I do that the more you get into the Bible and the more you grow and the more you walk with God and the closer you get with God, your problems do not go away, but dealing with them becomes easier. That is so true of almost everybody sitting in here.

How many of you were heavy drinkers before you got saved? How many wanted to be, but just never did? How many still are heavy drinkers? My point is this: You know the big major problems you had when you first got saved, you have worked through them. I am not saying that Will does not want to, I am not saying I do not want to go out and get smashed every once in a while. What I am saying is he does not. We all have our old sin nature, and we all have things we look back at our life and we think, "You know what we used to do." You may have that twinge

for a moment, but then you realize something. You realize that at the end of the day, with now what you know and where you are at in the Bible, there is not any value to that. The problems are still there, but your life, because of the principles of the Word of God, has gotten easier dealing with them. They did not go away.

The greatest lie that a preacher can tell his congregation is to get up there and say, "If you get saved this morning, all your problems are over." To which I say, "If you get saved this morning, all your problems are really going to just start." Your eternal security and salvation may be fixed, but oh boy, when you get up off your knees from getting saved and everybody is slapping you on the back and you are as happy as can be and you have got the joy, joy, joy down in your heart, and you walk out that door, guess who is waiting for you? He has got his arm folded, and he is going to say, "Oh, you are a Christian now. I am so happy for you. You are saved on your way to heaven. You are never going to wind up in my lake of fire. I am really glad for you that you are a Christian now. I always wanted to be one too. I just never had the stuff to do it. But now let me tell you something. I am glad you are saved, but do not become a fanatic. The Bible is okay, but do not just devour that Bible like all those other people in that church. And that guy preaching up there, do not believe everything he says. You are your own person. Hey, I am glad you are saved. Congratulations. Just do not take it too far." He is waiting for you. If he cannot get your soul in hell, he is going to make sure that he derails you, that you will never, never, never be all that God wants you to do. As you get into the Bible and you grow and you learn the principles and learn to side-step everything that he is thrown at you, the problems do not go away, but they become easier, casting all your care upon Him, for He cared for you. Now you do not have to deal with it. Now you have got the greatest lawyer in the world, and He will plead your case and plead your cause. It is just that simple. He is a good lawyer.

You look at any church, you have basically three types of families in any church.

1. You will have dialed-in parents who really do the work with their kids and do a great job, and it shows.
2. Then you have the second group that I call midline parenting. They are great people. They love God. They have issues with their kids. Not 100% dialed in, not always 100% their fault. Many times they got saved late in life or got dialed in late in life, and their kids were older. So there are circumstances to it. Sometimes they just did not do what is right. But many times this mid-level parent will come to the place when they get into it and they start to see the problems, they immediately dial in and do what they need to do.

In the Bible, there is a phrase that most people do not understand, it is called being blameless. The Bible talks about a pastor that needs to be blameless. I have always struggled with that because I did not know how a pastor could be blameless when he gets blamed for everything. But the truth of the matter is, it is not talking about that. It is talking about that when you as a pastor or you as a Christian do something wrong, take responsibility for it and make it right. Once you make it right, once you do what you are supposed to do, you are blameless. Nobody can blame you anymore.

You will have people that you have problems with in Christianity, and maybe you cause the problem. Many times people hold grudges, many times they do not want to forgive. They do not want to let things just go away. Sometimes that bothers God's people. I have dealt with people like that all my life, and I always tell them, "Hey, look, when you go to that person and you do what is right and you ask for their forgiveness and you lay it on the line no matter what happened or what you did, you are now blameless." That is the greatest feeling in the world, to know that we are blameless. Now the problem is on them, not you anymore. You have done everything that God asked you to do.

I have seen parents and dealt with them all of my life that have actually lost their kids. They missed some things, or maybe they got saved late in life or got dialed in late in life, and the kids were older and gone down the road already, and they tried to do everything that they could do. But when they came in and talked to me, we put a plan together that even though their kids today are out in left field someplace, I want to tell you that the parents before God this morning are blameless. Because there is always something you can do. You may not be able to fix the total problem, but taking responsibility and dealing with it will make you blameless. That is a great concept for the ministry, for Christianity, and the people that you have to deal with or you work with or your own family.

So I have the midline parenting people who are great people, but sometimes they find themselves in a difficult situation. But in many cases, if not most of the cases, they will do what they need to do. We put a plan together, and we get to a point where no matter what the outcome is, the parents do what is right and are held blameless now at this point. Do not ever worry for a minute that I do not know how most pastors handle it, but if you do what is right in any given situation with your family, and we work together on it, and it does not work out, but you do what is right, I will stand behind you 100%. Nobody will ever clobber you. I will take your side as your lawyer, and I will simply say, "You know what, they are blameless. We together, we did, they took responsibility, they did what they needed to do, they are blameless." Incredible concept.

3. Then you have the third line of families who are basically a disaster. Mom and Dad are not dialed into anything. Many times, I am not talking about deadbeat people, sometimes I am, but you would be surprised how many of the famous preachers back in my day, who if I told you their name, you would remember them as some of the greatest preachers and pastors you ever saw in your life, who lost their kids to the world. We all hear about Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday, probably the greatest evangelist America has ever seen in the 20th century, maybe the world, millions of people trace their conversion back to his meetings, but his own boy died and went to hell.

Sometimes there are preachers who lose their kids. There are deacons who lose their kids. There are spiritual leaders in a church who lose their kids. They are not all deadbeats. Well, they are, they are just spiritual deadbeats. But you see that all the time. They are weak. They are caught in the world system. I have seen some great preachers who have built some great churches that actually they lose their kids. It is a thing where it all goes back to that complete and total breakdown. You find where kids will run the show, and the parents cannot get on top. Kids will always dictate the rules, and the parents simply become a pawn in the great chess game of life.

John Wayne said once, "Life can be tough, but it is a lot tougher when you are stupid." That is a true statement. That is not really my favorite word as I told you the other night, but the more I see this Christianity today, it becomes my more favorite word. Now ask yourself this, let us just get down and ask ourselves this. Just put the fluff aside, scrape it off to the foundation. Let us just get on us today and ask ourselves this: How come some kids just grow up and seemingly have no real issues? In our church and other churches too. Their kids, I get it, their brothers and sisters, they fight like cats and dogs sometimes. Their sisters and sisters, they fight over whose clothes this is. I get that. But they go through life with Mom and Dad, and there is no deceit. There is no lying. There is no sneaking around late at night. There are no secret relationships. They can pick and choose the right friends without Mom and Dad telling them about it, or when Mom and Dad point something out, they go along with it. There are no secrets. They enter into the really tough years, and it just does not seem to affect them.

Nobody is more important to them than Mom and Dad, and nobody will ever pull that out. I do not know how many girls were snatched out of Mom and Dad's home by some good-looking guy who got more influence over the girl than Mom and Dad had. I do not know how many guys got ripped out of a family because some gal had a lot of problems. I have seen where coaches could have more influence in a kid's life than their own parent. I have seen teachers that have a lot of influence over them, and the kids would gravitate to those teachers, and those teachers necessarily did not teach them right, but they became more valuable to the kid than listening to what Mom and Dad had to say. I am telling you, I see kids today that nobody is more important to them than their Mom and Dad, and nobody will pull them away. I want to say to you that did not happen by accident.

Where I go work out up there, they have got this little gymnastics, not a little, big. There are hundreds of little kids. Sometimes they are working out down there, and I see these little gals, they are about that tall. I do not even think they are teenagers, some of them probably are. You ought to see those gals. They will run down a thing from here to the door, and they will hit a deal and they will do four or five flips in the air, hit the ground, and keep flipping and keep flipping. I would have vertigo so bad I would be in the hospital for a month. I have seen a little gal sit on the floor. I would sit down and show you, but I could not get back up. She sat on the floor, lay straight out with a big rope, kept her leg straight, and climbed up that rope with her legs straight out this way. I could not. I watch them. Oh, the balance bar. That was really fun. The balance bar, that little thing about that wide that you walk on, and you stand on, and then you do a flip on, and then you put one foot on. I fall down going up the stairs, and they are that wide. I am worried about getting in there. The steps are wide, but I will tell you.

I bought a pair of waders. I did. I do not know why I am buying waders. I told the guy, "What are you hunting?" I said, "I am not hunting anything. I am baptizing." He did not get that at all. These waders weigh 175 pounds. I could baptize in the Missouri River this afternoon, and I would be warm. You would be freezing to death, but they are incredible, and they are heavy. It is like he thought I said, "I am going deep sea diving," and he sold me the lower half. They are very heavy. I just, you know, but I watch these girls are on that balance beam. They are not even looking. And then up to a flip, back down. If I did that, wow, would that ever hurt. I am just

telling you. They make it look so easy. You watch those little girls run down there, and they just give a little skip, hit that thing up in the air, and boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

When you have kids and you see families where the kids seemingly do not have any problems, and they just really turn out and do not have any major, major issues, and they wind up doing everything about right, sometimes you look at that and you think, "That looks so easy." Just like watching those little kids on gymnastics. It is not easy. It took those little girls hours and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of hours to get to do that. I have watched them in the training when they just did not have the spiritual gift of flipping. I watch them hook them up to a harness with two ropes on the side. They go up, and then they feel that way if they fall, the harness catches them. That would be fine. But you know, one day sooner or later, that harness has got to come off. They make it look so easy, but it is not easy. They spent hundreds and thousands of hours.

I want to tell you something. You look at a family that has got great kids and seemingly do not have any problem, we get the idea, "Oh, parenting is easy." There are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and thousands of hours. I want to talk to you about that today. It just did not happen by accident. They have a good core value system. They have been developed biblically in three very important areas:

4. Emotionally, they are strong emotionally.
5. They are strong physically.
6. They are strong spiritually.

Much like what we saw with Daniel last week. That is because when it is done right and biblically by God's design, Proverbs 22:6, as they get older and you have done the hard work earlier, it gets easier. Hard to understand, I get it. Just look at families that you see, and I want to tell you right now, there is no magic family. There is no magic church. There is no magic mom. There is no magic dad. There is no magic pastor. If it is worth its salt in anything, it is because somebody labored to get to that point. All families are the same. The Mom and Dad have old sin natures. The kids surely got old sin natures. Everybody has got one. The difference is how they were trained.

I want to talk to you about five stages of building your child and how they will be the key. This is in place from birth to death, a learning process. Now allow me to explain about these five stages some things that I want you just to carry with you when I talk about this. First of all, these stages will overlap. It is not going to be that on January 1st of 2020, you were in stage one, and then two weeks later, you entered into stage three. They are going to be a progression. They are going to overlap. Not only are they going to overlap, but they are going to build, just like our lessons. They are going to build on each one. In other words, you are going to start with one. You are going to overlap into another, but you are going to build. You are never going to just do the first stage and then forget it. It is going to be incorporated into everything you do. But the distance between stage one and stage two, there may be some overlap. There may be some overlap because every child is different. So you may read my book on child training, and I give you the

ages one way, and then I give them another way here. Every child is different. But it is truly that these are the five stages that you are going to have to go through.

The Christian life, again, I use these parallels so you will understand. The Christian life is the same way. It overlaps as you continue to add to your faith. Most Christians do not understand how the devil operates. They do not understand how God operates. When you look at God and you understand how God wants to work in your life, here is what God does. If you are ever going to get to where you need to be with God, you are going to go through your own progression and your process. You know what God is going to do? The first thing God is going to do is subtract some things out of your life. That will be the world system. Once He subtracts the things out of your life, then He begins to add some things. Once He begins to add some things and you start to take them in, then God begins to multiply some things. So the process is as God subtracts, then God adds, then God multiplies.

Now the devil just does the opposite. The devil will take you, and he will add some things. That will be the world. Then he will subtract some things. That will be the things of God. And then he will multiply the things of the world in your life. See how it works? It is not complicated at all. It is very simple. The Bible teaches very clearly that your Christian life, once we get saved and we give up the world, then it is a process the rest of your life of adding some things on each other.

He says in 2 Peter 1:5:

*2 Peter 1:5-7*

*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*

*And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*

*And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

In other words, once you got saved and got subtracted the world out, then God adds some things. Those things that He adds will lead to God multiplying the blessings in your life and the things in your life. These are the seven things that you add to your faith. Nowhere after God subtracts the world does He subtract anything out of your life. He just wants to add to it. If He adds to it properly and you accept it, there will be no need to subtract anything.

### III. Stage 1: The Discipline Stage

The first stage I want to talk to you about here in understanding this, and now that we are ready to go and we got that little introduction, first of all is what I call the discipline stage. This will start when a baby is born. So all you young families with kids, they are right in the perimeter here. It will run up to about four or five, somewhere in there. During this time, there are going to be two watchwords that you want to remember. The two words will be teaching and training. You want to remember that. They will overlap. These things will overlap.

When I talk about teaching, I am talking about here is where you lay down the rules of life, the basic fundamental disciplines of life. You teach them that. When I talk about training, I am talking about once you teach them, the training then will be the reinforcing of what you teach by

consistency and you having a plan. You train through a consistency of teaching discipline. You have to understand that. Those are the two key words.

I want to tell you right now, this is the most important stage. Most parents lose their children right here. This is where most parents will turn over control of their family to the kids and never recover. You will see it with mothers, God bless them. They have a baby. The baby is not sick. The baby has not got anything wrong with it. You take that baby in and you lay it down in the crib. You put everything just right. The music is playing. The little things are jingling around up there. Everything is going well. You walk out and close the door. Baby cries. Baby starts to cry.

Now at this point in your life, as young as that baby is, you have a teaching opportunity. Baby is not sick. Does not have colic. Does not have rabies. Baby is fine. Now you have a choice in training. Most mothers, God bless you, you will go back in, pick up that baby. I have four dogs, but two in particular are the smartest dogs in the world. They know one key word: treat. I conditioned them. I trained them. They got me. I failed in parenting my two labs. If I do not give them a treat, they do not go to the bathroom. Now they will sit and look at me. If I say, "Go potty, treat," we are done. Back in.

Now they did not read a book on training your master. I trained them to do that. I took them in. Every time I took them out, I gave them a treat. After a while, now they are dumb dogs. They do not know anything about life. They do not know anything about the Bible. They do not know anything about God other than what Romans 8 talks about. They are completely oblivious. They do not articulate words. I tried it. Somebody said, "My dog understands because I will say something, and they will blink at me, and that means that they understand." You are nuts, lady. You are nuts. Your dog is blinking because dogs blink. But we want to believe our dogs are human. That is true. I even have people that said, "Are you and me, are the dogs going to heaven when they die?" I have got to admit there is probably a better case for a dog going to heaven than some people, but that is not the way it works.

Every time we came in, I would give them a treat. One time I did a little test. I was sitting on a couch looking at me, and I said to them, I knew they did not understand, but I wanted to prove my point. So I said to both of them, they are both looking right at me, I said, "I am going to kill both of you. I am going to go and get a ball bat, and I am going to start with you, Daisy, and I am going to beat you bloody." That old tail is going, ears down. And I said, "Then, Buddy, I am going to rip you off. I am going to take a rope and hang it around your collar, and I am going to pull you up, and I am going to watch your eyes bug out." His tail is wagging. He is looking at me. Both of them come down and lick my face. Next day, they are all out there. I said, "I love you guys. You are everything to me. I will give you all the dog biscuits. Let us get you what?" Tail between their legs, off the couch, hiding around. All I see is two brown eyes looking over the top of the chair. They do not get it. They do not know, "Go potty, dog biscuit." No, I trained them that way.

When your little baby in there is crying and you walk in and pick it up, put it back down, baby says, "Uh-huh, I want Mama to hold me. All I have got to do is cry." You cry again, Mama comes in. "What is the matter, honey?" Baby talking, baby talk is, "You are such a fool. I am going to

do this all night long. I love it." "Oh, honey, honey," put him down, walk up. Oh, oh, oh, leave him cry. Walk away, leave him cry. They will stop in 15 minutes. They will. They will start looking at the little thing, booing around up in there. They will get tired, they will wear out. They will say to themselves in baby talk, "This is not working." This is where most parents lose their kids.

I will tell you something else. This is where you are going to encounter the demonic thing of all demonic things in your children: the strong-willed child. Oh, the defiant one. The one who you are sure has Viking blood in his veins. Defiant. This is where, at this age, this is where they first begin to test authority. They want to see how you are going to succumb to their demands. Most parents just broke down and fall down like a broken accordion.

I want to tell you something. If you have a strong-willed child, now is the time right here where you break it. You have to break that strong will with that child early. There is a way that you do that. A child has to come to the point in this stage where he understands that there are no temper tantrums. There is no stomping your feet. No going out to the mall someplace and he has a toy and you say, "Put it back," and he said, "No." "I said, put it back." "No." "Come on, give me the toy." "No." You take the toy in front of everybody. Cashiers, managers, people in line. You are embarrassed, are you not? Sure you are. You should be. That is why they have those little half baskets in your cart. You stick his head down in that and close that sucker. He is quiet.

This is where you begin the formulation of the baseline. "I am not going to tell you again." Kid says to the brother, "That means we have got nine more times. Let us do it." I said this when we started. How many parents, when you tell your child the first time, "That is it, stop it," you do not want them to stop. You know why they do not stop? My dogs will not go to the bathroom without a biscuit. I trained them that way. You tell them once. When they are little and they are growing up, this is where you not only break the strong will, but you leave no uncertain terms that you are the decisive factor in this family on discipline. They are not getting away with it. You may have to work at it for a little bit. I am not telling you that the first time you tell them, "Do not do it," and you may have to work the problem a little bit. But they will get the message. They will get the message.

I know I will make a lot of parents upset about it. They are not going to get the message, in this case, with a timeout. Timeouts are for basketball. It is for hockey. It is for football. I am not saying there is not a time that timeouts are not important, but in more cases, it is the parent who needs the timeout than the kid does. You need time out in the yard to scream. Time out in the yard to have that favorite cigarette. Time out in the yard to sneak that small PBR out there to get your nerves calmed down a little bit. Timeouts, in this stage, do not work. They do not need a timeout.

This is where you are going to find that they do not put up with any disrespect for adults. You see it. You see where your kids will obey you, kind of. But when they get into the elementary and somebody, one of the workers says, "Now do not do that," they will stick their tongue out at them. This is why I do not work in the elementary. This is why Bob does not work in the elementary. We would cut their tongues out. I would put a little jar in alcohol and give it to you

to take it home. You can sew it back on if you want. It is up to you. My advice is, do not. But I am telling you, I will not tolerate that.

I had a kid one time years ago in this church. I went up to him, just a little guy. I went up to him and I said, "How are you doing today?" He kicked me. He is probably 20 years old now, and I am sure he is still wondering how the last five times all four of his tires went flat. I know where he lives. This is where they begin to test authority. Right now, in this little age, their disobedience is based just on action. But in time, if you do not deal with it, it is going to be based on attitude. You have got to stop that. Now is the time for strong, decisive, leaving no doubt in their mind who is in charge of this family. And they are not getting away with it.

Another thing you can never tolerate is hitting and biting other kids. We have had kids in the nursery who are missing a chance to be on a Walking Dead. They are walkers. They bite people. And the parents say, "Oh, is not that so cute?" Cute! I had an uncle one time that had a dog, and you know how he cured that dog of biting him? This sounds gross. The dog bit him. You know what he did? He bit the dog back. Harder than the dog bit him. That dog never bit him again. Incorporate that into your training manual. It is hard work.

Let me tell you something. I get this. I get it. Listen to me, Mom and Dad. I get it. You work all day. You work hard. You come home. And you are tired. You have got things you want to do. And you have got that little child, that little kid. Honestly, let us just be honest now. Put it on the table. The last thing that you want to do after a full day at work is come home instead of vegging out, watching what you want to watch, doing what you do. Now enter into a four or five-hour training mode session. Let us be honest. Along with being honest, let me just say this: You should have got a puppy. Kids require work. Hard work. I get it.

## IV. Stage 2: The Relationship Stage

We get through the discipline stage. And of course, here are open things for you to ask questions tonight. Then we move into the second stage, which is the relationship stage. This will be somewhere from six to 12, 13. It is an overlap. This stage is very important. When you build through number one, a baseline of discipline through truth. Now here is where you can really go to work with the teaching and the training. In this section, there are two more key words you want to learn: communication and availability.

Now you can begin to lay out the vision because they can understand now. You can build a relationship where they are not little babies anymore, where they are now beginning to move into a concrete world where they can understand basic concepts. Now you begin to lay out the vision of God that God has for them, your family, and how they are a key part to it. Most kids grow up in families, first of all, having no clue what the vision is, to having absolutely no clue that they ever exist and fit part of it. The reason why they will go get more involved in being something else here is because you never made them something here.

Building your children into the family concept. Constantly reinforcing at every opportunity their importance to you and your family through the expression of love and commitment and the family wholeness of that, "Man, we could not be a family without you. You are that

important to us." I want to show you now how important you are, but as you grow and get older, I want to show you the long-range effect of how important you are. You make yourself available to them through everything in life to do for the things, and you are never too busy for them.

This is where you begin to develop boundaries for them, that through your relationship they understand why there has to be boundaries. This is where you learn to read your child.

*Proverbs 20:11*

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

You learn to read your child. When you learn to read your child, then you do not put your child into a situation where you avoid unrealistic expectations for them. But at the same time, you use any disobedience as a teaching tool. You will know when to spank and you will know how to spank. There are four basic things, and of course we can get into this at any time you want to talk about it, but there are four basic times that you spank:

7. Rebellion. The Bible says that rebellion is a sin of witchcraft. You stop it now.
8. Lying. Tell your children, "I do not care what you did, just tell me the truth. You lie to me, you tell me the truth, we will work through it. You lie to me, you are done."
9. Willful disobedience. Defiance. Looking at that look in your eye as you are the parent when they are just a little kid telling you what they are going to do.
10. Hurting others.

Using any disobedience as a teaching tool, and there is a way that you do that. We do not have time to get into it today. Here is where you become their best friend. Here is where after laying the foundation of stage one, now through the relationship stage, you become their best friend. They now begin to trust and believe you more than anybody. You have that option with them. It just comes down to your communication and your availability to them. If you do not make yourself available to them and communicate to them, I promise you the devil will find somebody that will. Here is where they begin to block out the outside influences that will have no more power in their life than you. This is where you become the role model for them.

## V. Stage 3: The Fellowship Stage

Then we move into the next stage. These things, you can see, are progression. Once you come through the discipline stage and into the relationship stage, now as they get a little older, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, whatever, it is an overlap. Now is where you enter into the fellowship stage. This is where they will most likely, either at the end of stage two or in stage three, hit the age of accountability, and they will need to be saved. You need to understand that.

Up to this point, you as the parent, really, and most parents do not see this, you are all that these young kids ever see and understand about God. Everything they are going to form about God that is going to come to them when they trust Christ as their own personal Savior will be only what they see Christ in Mom and Dad. Brother, that is a scary thought. Their knowledge of God, their knowledge of Christ will be based up to this point on what they see in the parents. They will

judge the validity of Christianity, the validity of it all being really true, based on they see it really true in your life. In most cases, that is zero. You are in trouble.

Now here is where the parent should, through their relationship and the fellowship, now begin to transform that to Christ. Using what you have built with them in a relationship and fellowship to now transition them at this age of accountability, based on what you have with them, shoehorn them into a relationship and fellowship with Christ at salvation. You have everything in place. The mom is a picture of the Lord Jesus. The mom is the picture of the church. They have everything there, the godliness of what is going on in a family, the love, the security, everything that they see, that warm fuzzy feeling that kids want so desperately and they cling to.

Now you have made yourself available to them. You have made yourself accountable to them. You have made yourself in every aspect of it. Now you have trained them and you have taught them. Now you get to this stage, and you take all of the things that they have seen in you as Christ, and now it is a walk in the park to transfer that to their own relationship with Christ. Because now you have an example and a model to tell them. Now you can sit down with them at salvation, and it is a thing where you show them that the relationship that you had with me was only here to get you ready for the most important relationship you will ever have, and that is with the Lord Jesus Christ. All the things that we have done for you, all the things we put into your world, all the things that we have loved you unconditionally, are waiting for you in Christ Jesus. We will walk them right into it now.

Giving them an understanding of God's salvation and a relationship with Him based on the one that you have had with them. Reinforcing the family values along the way. Reinforcing the discipline along the way. Reinforcing God's purpose for the family and how much they are a part of it. Now they grow up and they come up in a family not knowing any other way but God's way.

Again, going back to the parallels. There are a lot like many of you here. The thing I love about so many of you, especially you young singles that are saved. You never were part of a corrupt Christianity church. You never had to see the politics that goes on and the dishonest and underhanded things that happen. You were just a good old garden variety sinner. Somebody brought you here, you got saved, you got into the book, God began to grow you up, you got the shop when you got going. Now you have really made something of yourself, and you did not have to wade through all that other garbage that is out there in Christianity. That is the greatest way to do it.

When you take a child and you bring him up in that structure, he grows up not knowing anything else like so many of you. All you know is the King James Bible is the Word of God. All you know is God saved you to serve Him. All you know, you are not worried about this or that or being a deacon or being a... All you want to do is just be what God wants you to be. You do not have all the baggage. You may have some baggage from the world. I can deal with that. I would rather deal with baggage from the world than baggage from the last church you were at. So that gets complicated. But your kid grows up in an environment where he does not know any other way but loving God and walking with God because the only example he has seen and had is Mom and Dad doing the same thing. You have built the right discipline in his life. You have built

the right relationship in his life. And now you are building the right fellowship in his life. All this will lead to the right walk with God.

## VI. Stage 4: The Responsibility Stage

Now the fourth one, and this is where I told you it starts to get easier. The fourth one will be the responsibility stage. This will be 15, 19, 20, I do not know. Every kid is a little different, but it will be in that time frame, and there is overlap. At this stage, because you have done your work, you have a good foundation to fall back on and keep building on. Now where most parents are pulling their hair out and going nuts with their kids, you have built a working relationship with them that will naturally, they will naturally respond to truth.

You now have a solid base and a solid bond called trust based on truth and teaching them the principles of the Word of God. They see and understand how it all works now. Their responsibility to the family, they see that now. They are part of the team. When they understand the team concept, they are not going to argue about pitching in and helping because they are a team. They are like so many of you. How do you think that baptistry got done? There were guys in this church who saw a need, a couple of them started it, the rest of them piled in, and everybody worked their regular time, and put in time. They could have said, "No, I am too busy, I got that." They understand they are part of a team, and when you are part of a team, you do whatever needs to be done. You do not get to pick and choose what you want to do.

So your kids grow up, grass needs cut, trash needs to go out, clean the room. That is when I failed growing up, but I do have pretty good another thing. Pick up this, pick up that, car needs washed. You do not have to fight with them. You have conditioned them to think that we are a team. We work together. You are absolutely vital to our family. We would not be a family without you. You are everything. You are God's gift to us. With that comes a tremendous responsibility on our part, but on your part to hold the team together.

At this point, you have accomplished two great things in their life:

11. They cannot stand to be out of fellowship with God.
12. They cannot stand to be out of fellowship with you, Mom or Dad.

You get to that place in your life with your kids and your family, you have got something going. Not only can they not stand to be out of fellowship with God, they cannot go an hour. They cannot go a day. They cannot go overnight. When that fellowship is broken, it is like there is a hole in me. Something is missing. That is the same way they are with God. They cannot go through a day being out of fellowship. All based on the parent in their early years being Christ in their world, and then five stages transforming and transferring everything to them.

## VII. Stage 5: The Ministry Stage

Then number five, the last stage is the ministry stage. Again, I got this 15 to life, but that is not a prison term, that is just a thing here. But it is an overlap. Now you have come full circle. Now you are where you need to be. You have come through the discipline stage, the relationship stage,

the fellowship stage, the responsibility stage. Now you have given them the view of God and your family. You built the consistency of reinforcing it. Now you have reached the final phase and the ultimate goal for your children: establishing them in the ministry. The unbroken chain of God's heritage, our children, the fruit of His reward. Families ministering together as teams. Teams that are inseparable. Teams that are unbreakable.

It is like they talked about John the Baptist when he was preaching. He said a reed shaken in the wind, but it never got broken. There will be times that your family may be shaken in the wind, but it will never be broken. Again, the parallels. It is the same concept with our church. Building teams of men and women who work together. It just does not happen in a family, and it just does not happen in a church. In our church, there is a core base of people. Every church will have a core base. It is nothing unique to our church. Every church will have one. The only unique thing maybe in our case is ours is a very large one. Out of 250, maybe 300 some people, we have a very large base of people who are what we would call core people.

I am amazed sometimes on Sunday morning, and Bob has done an impeccable job with the prayer groups and continues to raise it up to different levels. But I walk up here, and you see me walking around up there, and I walk around down here. Over half our church is in those prayer groups. That says something. That is incredible. In most churches, you have prayer groups, you get four or five people to show up, if that. Then you have got to feed them breakfast. I am not giving you squat. Bible Institute. Yesterday morning, it was packed. Young men and young ladies wanting to learn the Bible. On top of that, older Christians that had been through it four or five years ago said, "You know what, you are not leaving me out on this." People ministry next Saturday. It will be packed. People saying, "I want to learn how to deal with people." Thursday night Bible study. It was packed.

In a church, the core base is unmovable. In a family, the core base is unmovable. They are rock solid. The church is built and stands based on the core. It is built on a rock. Matthew 7. If the rest of the church in any situation, if the rest of any church, if the rest of the church all got mad and left, it would not affect anything because the job gets done by the core people. That is why it does not matter. You love people, and you want to give everybody a shot, and you want to do whatever you can do to help them wherever they are at. But you know as well as I do, there are some people that do not want to move past point A.

Outside influences that would pull people off task in a church will not affect them. The mixed multitude will not affect them. The world will not affect them. Bad attitudes will not affect them. They see the value of what God has given them here, and you are not going to let anything pull you away from what God has given you because you see the value. It is true in the core of a church. It is true in your family. Your family, your kids say, "There is nothing pulling me away from this family. God put me here. I am here. I am part of the team. They need me, but I need them."

It is like 1 Samuel 3. I told you Thursday night, the thing that makes show them any of you where you really are is like old young Samuel. He let none of the words of God fall to the ground, and you have not either. In your family, your family comes to the place where your kids,

none of the words that Mom and Dad give them fall to the ground. When you build your family the same way you build a church, your kid will be solid to the core. Nothing or no one will affect them. That daily provision that we talked about last week will never get to them. All the negative forces on this planet will not move them because like so many of you in this church, you are the core. You know what you have got. Nobody is going to take it from you.

The older I get, the more I understand the less value I am to this church. When we started this church, I had to build it on my strength, my endurance, my fortitude, my bad attitude. I had to build it on me because of the Lord, but I had to build it on my stand because you were all young. That has all changed now. My stand has gone by the wayside, though I still have my stand. It is you that stand and make this church now. It is not my strength, it is the strength of you that makes this church. The older I get as pastor and the stronger the core becomes, I see I am working my way out of a job. Now I am not going to retire anytime soon, just like you as a parent are not going to retire soon, but here is what I am trying to get at.

I am 67 years old. I will tell you right now to put all your fears to rest. I will be in this pulpit preaching until the day I die. I have got no plans to move to Florida. Hawaii does not do anything for me. Been to Europe. It is as dirty as can be. Do not care about it. I have got one thing in my life in the last few years that I may have. I know I have got more time on the other side than I have got on this side. I get that. But I have got to also tell you I am having a time in my life. I am going to stay in that saddle, and I am going to preach the book, and I am going to train young men and young ladies so I cannot do it anymore. But I am not under the illusion that there is not going to come a day if Jesus does not come that the torch is going to have to be passed.

It is just like your family. You as Mom and Dad are not going to be around forever, and through these five stages of building your family like the five stages I built at church, just that someday I am going to have to pass the torch to the core. You as Mom and Dad are going to have to pass the torch of your family to the core. It is life. Most pastors are of your believing. Most pastors come to the place where they get to be 50, 60 years old, and they have been in the ministry 20, 30, 40 years, and they think they have done their part, and so they all retire. Let me tell you something. When it comes to, if I have learned anything, when it comes to the ministry and getting smart and quit doing some dumb things and get to the place where you really see the value of what God is doing, you do not get to that point until you are at least 60 years old. Right when they are at their prime, when they have more information, more experience, more anything when they could impact and pass the torch to the core, they are off to the diners or graveyard. They are on the golf course. They are on their boat fishing. They are on vacation. In their minds, they have done their part. You have not done squat. The ministry and pastoring and preaching is a lifetime calling. There is no discharge from this war. Just pass the torch.

I know I will not be around forever. There may be a time that I am in a wheelchair, and I cannot do anything. You have got to wheel me in and out. I will always do what I can do. I will put the little white envelopes in the books. I will stand back there and yell at the kids, keep me out of the baptistery. But I am not such a fool as to know that in my ministry, building this church, there is going to come a time if Jesus does not come where I cannot do it anymore. You are going to have

to pick up the torch. The only way you will do that is if I have trained the core, and the core is strong enough that it can go on without me. And you pick it up. You have been with me now. You know what I believe. You know what I stand for. You know my strengths, my weaknesses. You know the good side of me, the bad side of me. You know everything about me that there is. You bought into what God is doing here. You put your life and soul into it just like I did. Now the process of ministering together is real. There comes a time when the torch needs to be passed. In your family, it will be the same thing.

The unbroken chain of churches who believe that book and stand for it. The unbroken chain of families. Getting to the place where you, the parent, are more important and the most valuable, important asset in your child's life. They, like Samuel, like you and me in the ministry, when it comes to you as Mom and Dad, they let none of your words fall to the ground. An unbroken chain of families ministering together. Building your child through the five stages. Understanding they overlap. Understanding that there is a fundamental discipline stage very early. It has to be done. The other four stages will make it or break it on your ability to accomplish the first one.

Then the relationship stage where you begin to dialogue with them. Have a meaningful relationship. It is not just a little child and you take care of them when they get an ouchie. Now you can talk to them. Now you can begin to relate to them. Now they can see. You begin to put words to what they see and what God is doing in your family. Then the fellowship stage. At this point, they, based on the fellowship that they have built with you, now you introduce them to the greatest fellowship they will ever have. That is with the Lord Jesus. Once you get that, you build it, and it comes to the responsibility stage. "Hey Mom and Dad, I am a teen. What do you need?" Just like you. I have got boys up there that all we have got to do is walk in and say, "Hey, my truck is loaded. Will you take it down there? Here are the keys. Go drive it down." Do you think I am worried about them stealing my truck? No, because I have got a bomb in it with a switch. If they get out of the parking lot, I just send them up.

Whatever I need to have done, they do it. Whatever needs to be done, you gals just jump in and do it. You know why? Because we are a team. There are some jobs that I ask you to do that I feel bad about because they are not glorious jobs. They are dirty jobs. We had one of the men's bathroom stools was all messed up last week. I look at it. I do not know what to do with it. I flushed it four or five times. It was overflowing. I do not know what to do. Tried to get my hand. It would not work. Somebody fixed it. I never called Larry. I figured I would call him this week. I was going to see him. I walked in today. There was a note, a "do not use" sign on it. Now it is gone. I flushed it. Works. Does not bubble over. It is great. Somebody did it. I do not know who did it. I do not want to know who did it. God, believe it or not, there will be reward. The job is you to Christ for unclogging a urinal. I did not want you to know that.

But that is what we have here. You see something, you fix it. You see something needs to be done, you do it. That is a team. That is where the family gets to, everybody works together. Everybody pulls together. Everybody gets to the point through the responsibility stage. They get to the ministry stage. It is a thing where now families are ministering together. The full flourishing of the thing. The unbroken chain. The way God designed it to be. Of families

ministering throughout the generation and together. Passing the torch from one generation to another.

I know a lot of you did not come out of homes like that. I know that. I have the utmost respect for you. I really do. It takes a lot to get my respect. Especially in parenting. I have people that I love to death. But I would not, I do not respect anything about them as far as parents are concerned. I have had that all my ministry. I have seen parents who knew better. Who know better. But many of you came out of homes and families where it was a disaster. The thing that I love about you, and the thing that endears me to you, is to see you where you are at right now. Some of you are married and you have kids. Some of you are not even married yet. But I know a little bit about you. I know that you will be the first in a long line of the generations of your family to break the chain of all the world and start the binding chain of ministry with your family from this point on. With you getting married, with your kids, and then their kids, and their kids, and their kids. It is going to move on from there. That is the greatest feeling that I could ever express to you. And seen in some of you. You really got it. You work hard at it. You do not make any excuses about it. You do what needs to be done, and you work hard. It is going to pay off for you. It is going to pay off for you.

To me, sitting here in my side of the golden years, looking back and realizing that, "Hey, someday this thing is going to have to move on, and I am going to have to not be part of it." I want to tell you something. It is comforting for me to know that if I would have passed away tomorrow, there is a core of young men and young ladies that would see that none of God's words fall to the ground when it comes to this church. We do not have very many Bible-believing New Testament local churches on the planet anymore. We cannot afford to lose one. We sure cannot afford to lose this one. But it all depends on your family. What you need to do. What you are going to do. What you are doing. And how you are letting me help you. Tonight we have our Bible study together. You have things you want me to go through. Clarify, lay out, get into more detail. It will be our time. I said it last week, and I am saying it again. In our church, let us not lose one more child. Let us not. We do not have to. There is no reason to. Just hold it together along those lines. Do not forget there is a meeting right up here right after for those getting baptized tonight. Be here at 6 o'clock sharp, and we will have a great time together looking forward to it. Let us have a word of prayer, and then we will be dismissed.