

1 Timothy 4:12-13

Sunday 7/21/2019

She was a better student than I was. That was great. I appreciate you doing that.

If you have your Bibles this morning, we are going to be in Proverbs today and next week. This is really the first day of camp. I know tomorrow we get settled in, but I always look at today as our first kickoff because I want the parents involved in this. Thursday night we are going to close out the camp, but the last message for camp will not be that Thursday night; it will be next Sunday. Again, the parents can all be part of that, and I want you to see and understand what we are going to try to do.

As you are probably well known from our little display up here, which is quite an incredible deal, the theme is going to be overcoming. They have t-shirts printed up that deal with either being a victim or being victorious. I can tell you this: every year we have done everything possible to ensure that the camp will be everything that God wants it to be. Some things, obviously, we cannot control. The weather is one of them, but God has really been good to us so far this year. It looks like it is going to be in the 80s, and it will not be blistering heat. Every year, the camp gets dynamically different.

I had two small churches call me last week and this week, talking about wanting to come and be part of what we are doing next year. We have the little pastor Baptist Church right here on 23rd Street. Their youth group is coming, a very small number, but the pastor will probably be in and out, and we will get a chance to meet him for those of you who have not already met him. I can see where we can be a real impact in some of these churches. Camp for me is just the entry level. I can see us down the line, as we make relationships and friends, seeing what we have. I could see us, like we used to do many years ago, sending small teams in to teach that church how to disciple people. There is just no end to it, but it starts with what we do next week. That is why, as I talked to the counselors a couple of weeks ago and talked to you to get you to pray for it, next week is so vital. The key to success next week, as I said, is not going to be the preaching; it is going to be the spirit that prevails in that camp. That comes down to all of us.

The kids are going to have some tough times, some of them. They are not always going to just fall in line, and we expect that. I understand that. You do not get this many kids together where everybody is hitting on all eight cylinders. There are going to be some battles next week. Where we do not need the battles is among the adults who are there. We need to be one going in and better than one coming out. I am sure that we will because we have the greatest people on Earth who go and work hard: our counselors, our workers, the cooks, everybody working together for one purpose. That purpose is our kids, making next week the one time where we get the world out of their lives. They will not have any cell phones, radios, TV, or video games, so for four days we can concentrate on the Word of God.

I. The Pastor's Heart for Camp

The first couple of years we had Dean Hanson from Dr. Ruckman's church. He had been our camp speaker, and Dean did a great job. Dean and Shelley are really good friends of this church,

and I appreciate them very much. But as we grew and matured through our camping process, it became obvious that for where we wanted to go, and for the philosophy of the church and building families, it became my responsibility to begin to preach the camps and teach our kids. This is doing what honestly no one from the outside could do, not because they are not good preachers or do not know their Bible, but simply because they do not have the heartbeat of what goes on here.

Most of you work with me in ministry. I say most of you; I almost said all of you, but that would be an exaggeration because, very frankly, some of you do not care about the ministry here. Is that okay to say that? Can I say it again? Alex, you said some of us. Do you mean yourself? Did you put yourself in there? You have such a lovely house, by the way.

The key to a successful ministry is families. Most churches separate the adults from the kids in their own mental thinking. Their camps become a fun thing, which they should be, but it becomes all about the rah-rah stuff. I am not saying they do not teach the Bible or preach to them, but the philosophy has to be: why are we going to camp? It is because most of you adults who work with me in ministry, who see the value of this church, do not miss church; you are here, you are part of what we are doing. Your kids are going to be the future of that. It is not going to be the future just because we say they are the future; it is going to be the future because we together mold, help, and build them. It takes all of us.

I go to camp next week to preach. Honestly, I have your best interest at heart. I know you; we know each other. We have labored in ministry together. We have been through some good times and some bad times, but we always come out on top because we want to do what the Bible says. Simply, I am working for you next week, moms and dads, my fellow laborers. I am in the best position to do that simply because I understand a great concept: a church will only be as strong as its weakest family. I know this is not true, it will happen, but I do not want it to happen. My goal is not to lose another child to the world in our church. Yet, I know we will because the odds are against us. Sometimes the parents are against us. But in spite of that, I will never take my finger off the trigger; that is the motivation behind everything that I do: building our families together in every aspect. I want you to know that. Also, I want your kids to always know that they have a pastor who loves them and cares for them.

In most churches today, the kids just see the pastor walking around. He does not have time for them. If it is one of those big mega churches, he does not even know who they are. He certainly would not come and preach camps; it is too hot, too much work for them. The bottom line is, I want your children to know that I am here for them too. We have great counselors next week. Zach and Jenny do a great job with the kids, and all of you who work there, but I never want those kids to think that they cannot always pick up the phone and call me because they are important to me. I want to be totally approachable in any way to them. I am their friend, and we will do whatever it takes to help them and you as the parents, as we try to build everything together.

I honestly want to make the camp the best time of the year for them. I really do. I have been in camps all my life. God got a hold of my heart through a camp. I have done it for almost 50 years

of my life. I understand it, I get it, and I know the mindset behind it, and I want it to be the best time for you. Our people are absolutely amazing. Believe me, they go all out. It is like when the circus used to come to town in my day. I still remember as a kid that the fairgrounds where they had the circus was about 10 miles away, but the train tracks, because I lived on the other side of the tracks, the train would come in early in the morning. This is when it showed up on trains: steam engines and car after car after car, Barnum and Bailey circus. I remember all the people in the neighborhood would line up, and they would take the animals off, and we would march them in a big parade, and everybody would go to the fairgrounds. Everybody would say, "The circus came to town," and you would watch the people get involved, and they would put up the big top, and they would do this, and all the excitement of everything that went on. I have never forgotten that. Our camp is a lot like that. The Amaro boys are incredible at what they can build and what they can do. Every year, you ought to see our obstacle course we have for these kids; it is unbelievable. Every year, it is like Worlds of Fun, where they add a new attraction. They add a new dimension to the obstacle course every year, and it is incredible. Wait until you see what they have for you guys to do this year; it is unbelievable. I am glad I am an old guy; I do not have to try to do it. I would be in the hospital for a week. It is absolutely incredible what these guys come up with. Yes, we will use a lot of them in the Ironman competition coming up in November, like we always have. That will be a fun time. That is going to be a zombie thing where the zombies are going to try to get you from coming through the obstacle. Every year they do it; it is incredible the imagination. Wait until you see what they do.

I hope that you come on Thursday night where you can get a little taste because I started the sword drill concept a couple of years ago. I want you to know I appreciate many of you moms and dads already working with them on their sword drills. A sword drill is where they have to stand up, put their Bible on the floor, and I give them a verse, and they have to jump down, get it, find the verse, and then get the verse. I have great prizes. I just got an award from Amazon about a week ago. I spend more money on Amazon than anybody on the planet Earth. I start eight months before we get to camp buying stuff. We have stuff that is not like the cheap things you get at the circus or the carnival, all made in China, those little things that fall apart. No, no, no. This is from Vera Bradley purses, blankets, everything to US Army Special Forces Army packs, and everything in between. We have some great stuff. I bear no expense. Why? Because not only do I want you to have fun—the worst thing to do is to pay \$100 to go to camp and win something you can get 10 for a dollar—I want you to enjoy what you do. I want you to go home, and every time you look at what you won, I want you to realize that you won it because of what you did with the Word of God, and you won it at camp where the Word of God was everything. Bass Pro has donated a lot of stuff for us. It has just been a great time, all that we are going to try to do. It is fun; it is fun.

I have a little thing here, Courtney, and Courtney did this. This represents camp. I am going to walk this around here and try to zoom in on a camera. I do not know if that camera zooms in or not. Here is the first day at camp. That is the first day, out of the gate. We are going to hit them hard, make them fumble. Here we go, out of the gate, getting them. Right, guys? Amen. We are going to get them. We are going to hit them hard, right? Every one of those kids will not know what hit them when Jesus walks through that camp. Amen. That is you right here, that is

tomorrow morning. Last day of camp: the walking dead. Clothes ripped off your body, flesh hanging from your neck and your head and your elbows, your knees all skinned up and scratched, bug bites from everywhere. Now you went from "out of the gate" to "the walking dead" and think you are going to go to Worlds of Fun the next day? You are out of your mind. I always want, as I do with you, why not? I do it at home, why not here? Some things never change. That is true of you guys too, the adults and everybody that we work with and deal with, and certainly I come into contact with.

I always want to see our kids as God sees them. I will never want to lose sight of who they really are, just like I never want to lose sight of who you really are. I never want to lose sight of how important you are to what we do here, and I never want to lose sight of how important your kids are to what we do here. As Psalms 127:3 says, they are God's heritage. We get that verse and think that they are your heritage. They are not your heritage; they are God's heritage. It is your responsibility to make sure that they fulfill all that God wants them to be.

I look over the crowd today and I see so many of you who grew up in our church, many of you from way back in the day with me, as young singles, and now you are married with your own kids. The building of the church is through the building of our kids into strong families. It is the key to ministry. It is the key to overcoming, and it is certainly the key to whether they are going to be a victim or they are going to be victorious. I want you to know I understand how God sees them, and I want you to know how the devil sees next week.

II. The Spiritual Battle for Youth

I told the counselors when we had a little meeting here a couple of weeks ago on a Friday night, I wanted them to get an insight because I understand everybody is pumped for camp, and I am too. Everybody is excited about it. I do not want to take that away from you, but I want you to see and understand the real battle that is going to take place next week. It is like the crucifixion. You read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and you get the surface of it, and unfortunately that is all the depth that a child of God usually ever gets of the real price that was paid on Calvary's cross. But when you go back to Isaiah 50:7-8, Job 30, Psalms 89, Isaiah 53, Psalms 22, Isaiah 52, you see the real battle that took place. There was more that day taking place than just a bunch of scribes and Pharisees taking the life of a man named Jesus. There, encased in the sinless Son of God, two spiritual beings met in the spiritual world, and a battle took place. Your souls, my soul, hung in the balance. Jesus audibly got the victory, and we were saved this morning because of that.

No less important, next week there is going to be a battle taking place, and these kids' souls are going to hang in the balance. It is up to us how we go in, our motivation, our spirit, and everything that we do. Why we are doing it is going to make the difference because do not forget, do not ever think for a moment just because we have a really fine obstacle course and really great people, the food is going to be great, and the weather is going to be nice. Do not think for a second there are not going to be some battles that go on. We need to make sure that those battles are not with us.

Today I want to give you just one key verse that will help you, moms and dads, or people in our church who are not going to camp, and even those who are going to camp, understand my goals for the rest of the week, and put you in a better position to pray for us. I want you to take your Bible and turn to 1 Timothy 4:12-13. This is not going to be a very long sermon today because we have a lot of things to do; it does not need to be. We are just going to come through these, get into the prayer groups, and then we have a full day of things we have to get ready for camp, and I am sure you do because tomorrow is going to hit pretty quick. 1 Timothy 4:12-13 has always been one of my favorite passages. It is Paul talking to Timothy, and he says:

1 Timothy 4:12-13

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

I want us to look at our kids in camp in a long-term fashion. The long-term will be paying attention, and he says, "give attendance." That means be doing it. Three things that I want our kids to learn—and this is not what I am going to give you this morning, this is the end result—are to read the book, preach the book, and to know the book. That is the long-term goal that I want them to get to, just like most of you are where you need to be. With that in mind, Chris Schmidt, would you stand up and ask God's blessing on the sermon this morning? I would like to pray for all the workers who have heard our peace with Father, that He will empower them in the victory in their lives, if these young kids that come follow, maybe to work in their lives, maybe make these words real to them, and make these words a heartbeat of their lives that they can go forward and do in the next generation. So church, pray your hands on it.

Next week, I am going to take six fundamental goals out of this passage. I am not going to preach them to them per se like I am going to lay them out to you, but they are going to be masked in the passage of the chapter, or the story, or my sermons next week. Then, the following Sunday, when we come back, I have one main theme that I am going to preach all next week and then put these in. I am going to come back and give you that next week so you can have a complete picture of where I have been and what I am trying to do and why, so you can better be in a position to help your children. These are six fundamental goals for these kids to keep in their lives after camp, and it is certainly the key to overcoming. We have a lot of victim status in Christianity today. Everybody wants to be a victim. We want to be a victim because we do not want to take responsibility for our own issues. It is easier to blame somebody else and make us the victim and them the bad guy. Of course, that is just the way it is in the world, and unfortunately, it is the way it is in Christianity. So, these six fundamental goals that I am going to give you today are what I am going to be building into them in other aspects, different ways, this next week.

There are so many great aspects to being young from the Bible standpoint. That is why Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth." Young people have a great quality about them, and that is why the devil goes after them. I have said it for years: the devil will go after young people because they are at the most volatile time in their lives, but they are also in the most crucial time in their

lives, and they are also in the greatest time of their lives. If you go over to John Knox Village or any retirement center, about 11:30 Saturday night, walk down those halls and listen carefully. I do not think they have ever had a drug bust at John Knox Village. I do not think the old men and old ladies get up on the roofs and get high and drink; if they did, they would never get down again. If you walk down those halls, you do not hear any Led Zeppelin, or I do not even know who these guys are today, or blowing under the door. You might hear a little bit of Willie Nelson creeping in, and you know why? Because those folks are in the senior part of their lives; they pose no threat anymore. The devil is not going to go after them. But you, our young people, young people across the world, the reason why there are so many issues in the schools and with our kids, and drugs, and all the things that happen today, is because the devil knows the great principle: how absolutely vital it is. The leaders of our country today—if you want to know why our country is in such shambles today—it is because the leaders of our countries today, back in the 60s and 70s before you were born, were the hippies who were high on everything, burnt down colleges, burnt down everything on the planet, and stood for nothing. The devil knew if you wanted to destroy a country, you go after the youth. If you want to destroy a family, you go after the youth. If you want to stop ministry in a church, you go after the youth, which in time destroys the family, which is the unit that the church is built around.

There are so many great aspects. You kids, your minds are the sharpest. The teacher self the piano. Guys like Josh pick up music stuff and just pick whatever. Logan, the way you sing and play the trumpet. All of you kids do so well in what you do. You grasp it quickly. You get it together. You understand it, and you can make it happen. Your minds are the sharpest they are ever going to be. That is why the devil wants to dull them with drugs. Your flesh, your strong bodies. You guys blow me away. Some of you play two games of softball on Saturday night in a hundred-degree heat, two games back to back. You go to Jason's Deli and then you go out and play volleyball until midnight. Man, we pitch a game and a half, Bob, and I am ready to pick you up and beat him in shuffleboard over at John Knox Village. That is all I have left. My job, our job, the parents' job, is to channel that the right way. That is why he says, "Be thou an example of the believer." Next week is about what we try to do here in mom and dad's lives, and it does not always work. You are going to have a greater church in the work. You are going to have people who will only come when they say, "Whoop, it is on the calendar. We have to go tomorrow." It is foundation building. It is taking young men and young ladies, moms and dads, families, and building on the foundation of their salvation and bringing them through that foundation and putting all the things in their lives.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

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;

Because I am going to tell you something, and every mom and dad needs to understand it. Some of you have already experienced it. If you do not build on the foundation and put those things in those kids' lives and get on board with you, there will come a day when it comes to the Bible, God, and church. They will simply say to you, "I have no pleasure in them." I always thought that was great insight by the Holy Spirit of God that says to young people, "Remember now thy

Creator in the days of thy youth," because the greatest challenge that kids have to face today in school is God's Creator. The evil days are going to come. I know you homeschool your kids, you put them in Christian school, you do all those things, and the devil will find a way to get in. It is not about isolating your kids from the world; it is about insulating your kids from the world. Because that evil day is going to come, and the years are going to draw nigh. What you do not want to happen is when they are 20, they are 30, they are telling you, "I do not want to go to church anymore. I do not believe the Bible anymore. I do not want to do what is right. I want to do what I want to do. That is a bunch of bunk, all that stuff about going to church and going to the Bible." Solomon knew that now is the time, kids. Now is our time, Mom and Dad. Now is the time to give them the foundation of remembering their Creator in the day of their youth. God knows how important your kids are, what God wants to do, not only in their personal lives, but in the ministry of this church. But the devil knows it too. Our theme this year, as I have said already, is to be an overcomer, to overcome those things. It is a great concept, because if there ever was a day that our young men and young ladies need to understand and overcome the world, it is the world that we live in today.

III. The Six Qualities of Overcoming

Our text today, Paul says, "Be thou an example of the believer" in six things. I want to briefly go through these six things for you, so you can better understand where I am coming from next week, because these are the things that I am going to go after. I may not go after them directly, but I will go after them indirectly, and you can be sure I will infuse them into what I am doing. I want to build these six things into their lives next week. These are the six qualities of our overcoming. In life, as I said earlier, I am going to say it again: in life, even as adults, you will either be a victim or you will be victorious. You will be a victim of your alcohol, you will be a victim of your tobacco, you will be a victim of your drugs, you will be a victim of your illicit life, you will be a victim of your tragedies in life, or you will be victorious over them. It is just that simple. By the way, these things will work for adults too.

1.) In Word

I do not want them just knowing the Bible, but I want them to be an example of it in their lives. Kids need course correction. They really do, because kids by themselves, just growing up naturally, will have a lot of drama in their lives. Many times parents get caught up in the same drama. We as parents do not need to get caught up in the drama. We need to lead our kids through the drama with the Word of God and its principles. We need to build and instill into your child that every situation in life—sometimes we think because they get in situations at school, and we get into situations in relationships—we are running to our kids' rescue, always trying to bail them out. I call them helicopter parents. They are always hovering with a life preserver, and they go from issue to issue to issue, rescuing their child. I want to tell you something: your child needs to learn how to deal with the issues of life right now because those issues are going to be in their lives the rest of their lives. We think because they are in school right now, they have peer pressure with people, that that is going to end when they go into the workforce, that that is going to all suddenly go away when they become adults. It is only going to intensify in every aspect of

their lives. Listen, the problems they go through now, God allows them to have because He expects you and me as parents to walk them through them to get them ready for when they really have to face them without your being there, without your protection. But every time a kid gets into a problem, I do this really well. Here it comes. That is a helicopter. That is me thurping up some ice. I am telling you, Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." We hear that all the time. I preach it to you adults, but it is true for your kids. Next week, I am going to try to get them to see the importance of the Word of God. That is why I have the sword drills. That is why I do what I do with them. That is something that I do not go to camp for; I stay out of camp. I have had my fun in the sun. The people who run it, they run it. I just stay out of it and let them do it; they know what they are doing. But at the same time, when I do my deal, I want to have something that I interact with them with. I always want it to be around the Word of God, no matter how much fun we have with it.

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Last week, I preached a message out of Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron." I want to help your child realize next week that the people in his church are there to help them. You as their parents are there to help them. The kids they have in their high school class, our singles, we are there to help each other. We help each other not only with the Word of God in their own lives. I do not want my people just to know what they believe about the Bible; I want you to know why you believe what you believe. I want to take all of those things next week and help them to be an example in word, as the Bible says in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Because the Word of God is going to lead to one of the greatest aspects that needs to be in your life, or your life will be over before it ever starts. That is helping you make good decisions and choices in life. Life is about choices. Without the Word of God to guide us, without the Word of God to give us the baseline for making good decisions and choices, we will make the wrong choice every time. Then it says in that verse, "teaching and admonishing one another," helping each other.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

2.) In Conversation

Then he says, "in conversation." Kids communicate through everything today. I remember back in my day that you had a telephone with a party line on it. You would pick up the phone to call somebody, and if someone was talking, they had to hang up and wait until they got off. We did not have cell phones. I remember when the first cell phones came out; I got one, and I had to get a small guy to carry it around; it weighed 65 pounds. They were huge. The idea of communicating. Most of you young kids do not even know anything about Star Trek, the TV series, but it was a classic, and we grew up on it. I always enjoyed it where Kirk and Spock and Dr. McCoy are down there, and he gets his little finger, flips it open, and says, "Scotty, beam me

up." How would I know that I would have one of those today? I just flipped mine open. Gentlemen, you are better than that; you have the next generation of iPhone: I20, I25, I30s, I40s. Where is it going to stop? We did not have that when I grew up. Most of your moms and dads—well, maybe not your moms and dads, you older folks—we did not have that back then. We communicated by talking. I watch you kids; you have your cell phone in your hand, and you have two thumbs, and you are... I would never do that. You want to talk to me, you call me. I like direct conversation. If you text me, I have to text you back four or five times to find out if you are angry because I cannot tell by your text. So I just do not care if you are angry; call me. If you text me, it better be a one-word answer on the way back, and it will be an hour before you get to that. How do you send this? In my day, we communicated. We talked. We sat around a dinner table at night, and we had conversation. You are sitting at a table, playing with your little thing. You get on air, and you are off in a corner playing your little games on your phone. You see it all the time. I look over your shoulder, and you have the goofiest, stupidest games on the planet. Why do you get something where they kill each other, war, tank battles, all this stuff of chasing this little thing around and jumping from thing to thing to thing? Are you kidding me? It is not all you have to do in life is jump from little things to little things. Get in it, man! What are you doing? It is what we do. No wonder the kids are brain dead today. You have the most dexterity in your fingers on the planet, but your brain is dead. I am kind of like it is. You can turn your cell phone in as soon as we are done here this morning. Do not... Oh, you better be louder than you are willing to live it. I am just kidding. But I am telling you, social media, are you kidding me? What was social media back in my day? Going over to my buddy's house and hanging out. Now, you get 25 people on a little deal, taking these little goofy pictures and sending them of yourself. Do you know how stupid you look doing that? I know it is the culture we live in today. I was born in the wrong century, I am telling you. But kids communicate all the time. The Bible says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Whatever is in your heart is what you are going to communicate. Our conversation should be built on the things of God and what He is doing, not who your latest buddy, boyfriend, or girlfriend is, or "isn't he hot?" Yes, I am, but that is beside the point. Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." Philippians 3:20 says, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Hebrews 13:5 says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have." That is the conversation we need to have. I have to tell you, when we get to Jason's Deli and all those places, and you older singles are hanging out together, and you older couples, it is always talking about the Word of God. I love that. I really enjoy that. You are always talking about what you found in the Bible or showing me this or showing me that. I get that. But the Bible says in 2 Peter 3:11, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved," that is the world, that is everything you are communicating with and doing right now. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Building our lives into eternal things, not worldly things. I am not saying you do not have fun. You would have to look a long time before you find somebody that enjoys life more than me, that has fun and can kid around, and I get it. But at the end of the day, that is really not what I am about. I am about that book and helping you be everything that God wants you to be. I have told you many times there are only two things on this planet that are worth investing your life in because they are the only two things going to last for eternity. One of

them is the Word of God, which "liveth and abideth for ever." The other one is the souls of men. Everything else will be dissolved.

Philippians 1:27

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Philippians 3:20

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 13:5

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

2 Peter 3:11

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

3.) In Charity

Then the second thing, he says, "Be thou a believer in charity." Yes, some of you are certainly characters. Character is defined in 1 Corinthians 13. A great verse that goes along with that is in 1 Timothy 1:5, where Paul tells Timothy, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Charity will be our unconditional love for each other. Charity is that I love you whether you do right or whether you do wrong. Charity is that I love you no matter what you do to me. Somebody said one time, "I have treated you pretty bad sometimes. How come you never did that with me? You never did that back." And I would say, "Because I do not want to be like you." Charity is unconditional love. Charity is love unfeigned. There is no, I am not trying to get something from you. Charity, true charity, is loving you the way God loves you because you have the ability to see that person or each other as God sees them. So you put your personal things out of the way. You do not let them get in. I told you last week, I could find something bad about everybody, like you could with me. If I focused that out in life, we would never have anything. But the bottom line is you cannot go through life that way because you have to see each other and begin to see each other. This is where kids have a tough time sometimes when they are going through that age, and I understand that. True character comes based on the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We think that charity and character go hand in hand. True character is charity. But character for a child of God will be the character qualities of Christ in their lives, not just that they are a really good guy. It will be based on the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5: love that you have, based on God's love for you; the joy that you have, based on the fellowship you have with God; the peace that you have, based on that fellowship; the longsuffering that you have because you realize through love, joy, and peace how God has put up with you, so you are willing to put up with somebody else. Gentleness, when you

want to crack somebody, you do not. Goodness, always doing good to other people, leaving them better than you find them. Faith, your faith growing every day because of the love, the joy, the peace that God has given you. Meekness, meekness is not being weak or being wimpy; meekness is power of God under control in your life. And temperance, knowing when to go home, knowing when to shut up, knowing when enough is enough, knowing when through all of these things that you have the wisdom to be tempered in life. You are not born with character. You can be born with good qualities. If your mom and dad are unsaved and they are good people, you will grow up with a good work ethic, good things like that. Many times the world defines that as character, and I understand that, and I would not argue with that. But for a Christian, real character is not a good work ethic. For a Christian, real character is not that you are really a nice guy, get a nice haircut, look good, dress nice, and are very respectful, saying, "Yes, ma'am, no, sir, yes, ma'am." We think real character for a Christian is the character qualities of Christ in your life based on the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. This is what I want to give them next week.

1 Timothy 1:5

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

4.) In Spirit

The fourth thing he says is "in spirit": "Be thou an example of the believer in spirit." Our spirit will be the single most important aspect of our relationship with Christ after we get saved. John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Real biblical worship is not about music. It is not about singing. It is about your spirit, your human spirit, lining up with God's truth and letting your spirit be one with His Spirit; that is true biblical worship. Whatever else comes into that, that is the fundamental beginning of it. Our human spirit connected to God's truth becomes one with it. Whatever or whoever your child allows themselves to spend time with and hang out with by association, or you allow, that is who they will be. The spirit is the greatest determining factor. The spirit of man is the greatest determining factor of where we go and what we do for the Lord. True worship means ruling over your own spirit, making sure your spirit is in control of the Word of God, not your spirit in control of you. Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." We have talked about that many times.

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Proverbs 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

5.) In Faith

Number five, faith. I want to build a concept of faith in them: learning to trust God in every aspect of their lives. Right now it should be easier because they are quicker, faster, and smarter. They can retain verses, they can remember them, and they have all the abilities and faculties at

their peak form. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." That is where we have to get them, but that is where we ought to be as adults. Romans 4:12 says that daily we walk in the steps of that faith, every day of your life. So many of God's people claim to be saved, claim to have a point in their lives when they ask Christ to save them. Faith is the farthest thing from their world. They do not walk by faith; they walk by sight. They walk from thing to thing that they want to have in their lives. God is as far as they can get away. They have everything in their lives that they want, everything in their lives that they want to do, and they will give God whatever is left over when they never have time to do it. I do not want that for our kids. You show me a parent like that, and I will show you parents who have lost their kids. As they grow in faith by us, as adults, our leadership, guiding them through all the issues of life, our example first of being a believer to them through all the issues of life, will give them one of the greatest principles anywhere in the Bible in Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." What a great principle to build into the concept of faith in your kids next week. They are going to come in, just enjoying it on all kinds of levels. Some of them are actually going to come in, a couple that I know of, on fire, ready to go and help me. But there will be some work to do, and I understand that from Monday to Thursday, we have our work cut out for us. My goal is that we all come in, just enjoying it, but the majority of us will go out as one, and that is going to take some work. I am guaranteed right now there will always be holdouts that will not do what they need to do. But that is beside the point; we need to do what we need to do.

2 Corinthians 5:7

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Romans 4:12

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

6.) In Purity

Then the sixth thing, "in purity." Keeping yourself for God and His calling in life for you: purity of your heart, purity of your spirit, purity of your body. These are the six things that are the key to overcoming. These are the six things that I want to build into them next week that will take them from victim status to victorious status, overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil. Getting to the point in their lives where they can stand. Right now they have our support and backing, but they will come to a time in their lives, just like Daniel, where they will have to stand up against the Nebuchadnezzar of this world, and you will not be there. All that we do next week will be my goal to lay in the hearts of our kids, laying the foundation of truth in their lives now, that it might become a reality as they move on through their lives.

IV. The Long-Term Vision of Camp

As I said earlier, I have been in camps for almost 50 years of my life. I look at my own life and how, when I got right with God, it was a camp that God used to really get my feet on the ground. My father had passed away, and I had just gotten out of the military. I was just a young guy, and I knew that I was not where I needed to be. God put a man in my life, Mel Subaca, who was running that camp. I remember the night I sat there and listened about all the exciting things that were going to camp. I did not know anything about anything, but I wanted to be a part of it. I had a telescope that, down the line, really gave birth to the "Gospel in the Stars" many years later. I remember going up to Mel and saying, "I did not know what to do. I did not have anything to offer." I said, "Mel, I have a telescope. If you would want to, I would be glad to bring it out and show the kids the moon and planets." He immediately saw what I see in so many of you. He saw an opportunity to let me in. He had me do it, but he put me with a guy, Chuck Schuster, who really knew his Bible and really knew what he was doing. He became my mentor and my handler, as they would say in the CIA. He kept me, taught me, and helped me, and we became great friends. It was things like that.

When I first came to Kansas City in 1977, we started our first camping program down at Beth Eden, way down there by Lebanon, Missouri. Those people are probably the old camp guys now, probably long dead. I will never forget that first camp. Some of you, believe it or not, Steve Bracken, you are walking around now, you have a green beard. He looks, he is probably in his fifties. I do not know how old he is for sure, but probably in his fifties. He was 12 years old when I first met him at that first camp. I want you to know, I whipped his rear end many times because he was something else. He is still with me. Troy McKinney, remember those days, Troy? Those old days, boy, back there. Old Mel used to come and preach our first camp. All the kids, all the pastors' and all the deacons' kids got saved. Do you know that was a tough thing to go back? You would think moms and dads would be happy. Oh, no, no, no. Troy knows how I used to make him crawl down the dirt road through the mud puddles when he did not do what was right. I could not do it now. I remember there were two boys, Joe Kramer and Brent. He is dead now. Yes, Brent. They were two screwballs, man. They always got in trouble. I tell you, I set an example. I had a half a mile of dirt road, gravel with mud puddles. They crawled on their bellies all the way down. They were begging to get up. I just put them down there, my boy. I will tell you, the camp director almost had a heart attack; he thought he was back at Auschwitz or someplace like that. But I was not going to put up with it because these guys would tear up a camp. There were some wild experiences back there. I had a kid one night that was demon possessed, and I had to deal with that. This little kid was 90 or 100 pounds, and I was a full-grown man, probably 160 pounds. He was demon possessed, and it was a nightmare of nightmares. That little 90-pound guy picked me up and threw me all the way across the gym. Shot that sucker before he ever got out of the floor. No. Those were some days. Eddie Baloo, Eddie is not here today, but he is another one. Meredith Pool, remember Meredith? You were the worst girl on the planet. That is no lie. But your dad and I always said that if you ever got it together, you would beat the rest of them hands down, and you certainly have. I love you for it, and I am proud of you. You can pay me later, no big deal. Penny Hansinger, Penny has put up with me for years and years and years. She would go in there, and she was always there to help

me, whatever. I see what it does in people's lives. I look back in Canton, when I was at the camp there, and God was doing what He did in my life. Mel always had a special place in his heart for camp. I do not remember what happened to him; I would love to have him. He had two letters that he had gotten from two of his young men who had gotten saved that were killed in Vietnam. One of them was Frank Sills, and the other one was David LeBeau. I would sit with him at camp, and he would have those letters, and he would cry and weep. Both those boys got saved at camp. Mel would tell the story of how they were getting ready to go to camp, and David LeBeau was just 14 years old. He was sitting there in church one night, and Mel went down and put his arm around him. Mel put his arm around a lot of boys. He said, "Hey David, you want to go to camp?" David said, "Oh, I cannot go to camp. My mom, my dad is gone, and my mom does not... we do not have any money. I cannot go to camp." And I said, "She will go to camp." And he got that boy to camp. Mel tells the story: on the third night, he went down and got saved. Five, six, seven, eight years later, in Vietnam, Mel still had the letter. The last letter he wrote him, how he was so tired, and they were getting ready to move out. He had not slept for two or three days, and he stepped out that next morning, and a sniper bullet hit him in the heart and sent him into eternity. I wonder who the person was who sponsored that kid who never knew the difference that he made. Frank Sills, same thing. Mel took him to camp. He got saved at camp. Five, six years later, he is sitting in a little bunker with a lot of guys, and a Viet Cong mortar comes in and blows him into pieces. They did not find enough of him left to send home. They could not even find his dog tags. But he is in heaven tonight, both of those boys. Somebody cared enough to see them and understand what their needs were. There is a short term of camp; that is next week. But David LeBeau and Frank Sills are the long term of camp. Where will our kids be 10 years from today? What will they be facing?

I see our own ministry today. Joe Christensen came to me a number of years ago and had a burden for camp for his kids. Shortly thereafter, we had our first camp, and we have grown and matured. Yet here we are today, and we get caught up in the excitement, and that is good. I am excited too. But remember Lauren Case, the little girl who came to camp last year and got saved, and now she is in a hospital waiting for a heart transplant. It is not just about what we are going to do next week. Obviously, it is. I do not have a camp that I do not see at night after the preaching, and Danny and Zach and everybody and what I do. The counselors put everybody to bed. I envision in my mind the Holy Spirit of God walking through that camp, touching the hearts of our kids. Walking through that camp, walking into those dorms, listening to them laugh, listening to the counselors yell at them to get to sleep, "I am not going to tell you again!" The Holy Spirit of God just smiling. But when you finally go to sleep, as the book of Job says, He will seal your instructions for the next day. The Holy Spirit of God will put in your heart, "You need to get saved." The Holy Spirit of God will put in your heart, "You need to get right with God." The Holy Spirit of God will put into your heart, "You need to follow me and have fellowship with me." Who knows, a year from now, who would have thought that a year ago, little Lauren Case would be waiting for a heart transplant? Who would have ever thought that Frank Sills and David LeBeau, when they got saved that night, would be just a few short years in combat in a situation that would take their lives? Our labor of love is making the difference. The key to ministry, also the key to life, will never just be short term; it will always be long term. Most parents look at their kids short term. Most pastors look at their churches short term. We can

never afford to look at what God has given us just in the short term. Because the short term—listen to me—the short term, next week, the short term is just preparation for the long term. Where will these kids be in 10, 15, 20 years? I just want to say, Steve Bracken, Troy, Eddie Baloo, Penny, Meredith, I am so glad that God brought you back to me. You are my beginnings, you are my roots. To have you back with me now, old, bald, and gray, makes me feel really old too.

V. Conclusion: Providing a Vision

I will leave you with Proverbs 29:17-18, a verse that we all know, but we usually do not put it in the right context. He says:

Proverbs 29:17

Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

Verse 18 is a great verse that we all know, but we usually do not put it in the context with our kids, because you only hear in verse 18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." What we are going to try to do next week is provide a vision for your kids. What I need you to do, moms and dads, is to get yourself ready so that when I bring them back to you, you can keep that vision going. We will talk about that next week. We will talk about that as we try to put it all together next week. Let us pray. Do not leave, because I have one more thing I want to tell you.