

## I. The Youth Ministry: A Vital On-Ramp

Thank you all for being here today. This is fun. It is a blessing to get to talk to you. Two years ago was the last time I had a chance to give a true kind of state of the youth. We have had a very crazy, wild two years, so I will do my best to catch you all up and tell you where we are going today. It is going to be a good time, I think, so hold onto your seats. We have some cool stuff for you today.

I always like starting off with this. I know that not everybody has a kid in the youth. Not everybody is affiliated with the youth in some way, so I always like starting off with something kind of fun just to show that the youth matters to the whole church. A weird one that I realized talking to one of our youth kids this week at camp, realizing that my young kids right now that I have, my middle schoolers, they will be Timothy counselors or youth counselors for Opal and Mabel. So those of you that have kids that are really young, we are training the leaders of their generation right now in our youth. It makes it a little bit more real to me. I guess I better finally start doing a good job or something. I thought that was fun.

The other fun thing too, this year, last year, we had twenty-two girls at camp. This year, we literally doubled it up to thirty-nine. The youth ministry is a blessing in that it is such an on-ramp for the ministry and such an on-ramp for people into our church. If you want to have an antidote to the dinosaur graveyard church that Bob always warns about, I really think the youth ministry plays a key role in that. It is a super, super fun ministry to be a part of, and I am very thankful that I get to work with you and your kids.

## II. A Season of Transition and Growth

Let me catch you up on the last two years. First of all, we are at a massive transition point with our youth. We started two years ago on our journey through the books of the Bible. We went through about two chapters a day for the last two years and have gone through as an entire youth group reading the Bible together. Every week we would get together, we would preach on the books that we were on, what things to look for, what scriptures to divide, all those different things. It has been really fun laying a foundation with all these kids. When you do such an exegetical study like that, we have gotten to cover every topic under the sun, and it has been a real blessing.

The second reason that this is a phenomenally large transition for us is that for those two years, we have had all the same leaders in our youth group. If you remember, last year we had no seniors. We have had the same guys developing for two full years, learning for two full years, leading for two full years. The ceiling of what it means to be a youth kid has really risen. They ran me out of content. At one point in time, Taylor and I were looking at each other and our batch of guys and we said, "Oh shoot, we have got to come up with some more classes or lessons because we are out." They ran us out, so we had to make more content for them. What a blessing

to have that problem where this many years in we are still having to accommodate and meet our kids where they are at because they are pushing so hard. So, it is a real blessing for us. Now we are losing those seniors and we are looking to start our next big study. The youth group as a whole is going to change a lot, and I am very excited for where we are headed.

One of the fun things we did for this year in preparation for this transition, we have known this has been coming for years now. What we did is my senior veteran leadership in the youth group and I met together. Bob has always stated that the vision of the youth is to get our kids ready for his ministry. So we got together all of our senior leadership and looked at the guys and the girls, asking, "What are the traits, what are the skills, what are the qualities, what are the goals we have for them to be able to fulfill that vision that Bob has given them?"

The fun part was that we then took those goals and we did not do anything with them. We turned around and met with our older kids, the kids that have gone through multiple discipleships, the kids that have been around for a while, and said, "Hey, how would you fix this?" All the things that I am going to tell you about today that we are changing and implementing, they do not come from me. They do not come solely from my vision or from my leader's vision. A lot of it comes from the kids and saying what they need and where they want to grow. I think it is a much better solution than I probably would have come up with. We will get to the specifics on that later on, and I am very excited to get there.

There was one consistent thread that I want to deal with today that is going to lead and shape all of our sermons and teaching for the next few years. This was this consistent thread that when we met with all these kids, they had a consistent desire to have a true readiness with the Bible. By that, I mean the words they used were that they oftentimes said they want "sweat for principles." If any of you were not around two years ago when we talked about "sweat," that is our soul winning and evangelism training. What that was is we took four, five, six, seven weeks, did basically an intensive crash course on evangelism and how to share your faith. Then we started with that training and then transitioned to, "Okay, now you are going to debate each other in class, and now you are going to fight each other, and now, oh, there is a final test, and you have to get 100% to pass." It stressed the kids out in the best way possible, and I loved it.

The funny thing to me was that all those kids said, "Hey, we want that, but we want it for more than just salvation, more than just sharing our faith. We want that level of confidence, that level of comfortability with all the Bible." As we have been thinking about what the kids actually need these next few years and what they are actually wanting, that became our main focus: the idea of getting them truly ready for what they are going to face, truly ready for the ministry that they are going into, and truly ready to do everything that God has called them to do. What does that readiness look like beyond just dumping some principles on their lap, teaching them a couple of things? How do we develop them? How do we train them? How do we give them that next level of experience?

### III. Readiness: Beyond Just Having the Tools

Go ahead and flip with me to 1 Samuel 17. The teaching we are going into today is a story you are all very familiar with, but I want you guys to look at this idea and basically the premise that I am going for right now is that teaching alone, equipping alone, is not enough to make someone ready for what God has called them to do. I think this is something we understand in real life all the time. Just because you have the tools, just because you have the equipment, does not mean you know how to use them.

Case in point, I own a softball bat. Anybody that has seen me, if you are not laughing, you have not seen me play softball. It is pretty bad. I have never played softball, but I am that kind of guy where I would go on YouTube and I watched a dozen videos on how to hit the ball and how to, I learned all about it. "Okay, what are the rules? How do I do that?" And guess what? I go out there and I still do bad. How many years I played softball and it just never got better. Just because you are equipped, just because you know how to do something, just because you have the tools, does not mean you are actually ready to perform the tasks that you need to perform.

I was also reminded of back in the day when we would do construction, we would go into guys' houses. We would show up with our tools and stuff, and we would open their garage door to start work on something. You would look, and on their wall, they would have a hundred matching, super expensive tools all put on that pegboard, real nice. They have the nice lighting. It is just an immaculate display of tools. We would always chuckle to ourselves, first of all, because we are there, which meant that they were not using them. But you would look, and they are all clean. The saw blades were still all perfectly sharp and had all the paint on the side still. It made us chuckle because it is, "Hey, here is this guy that has every tool under the sun, better tools than we have, every tool that you could ever imagine." And yet someone else has to come do that work.

Now, I realize there is busyness and stuff like that. I realize there are reasons for that. But the point being, there are days I worry as a Christian that I have spent my years building up a beautiful spiritual pegboard of principles and doctrines and learning and teaching. I am like that guy that never takes them off that shelf and uses them and actually figures out how to use those tools wisely. At the end of the day, having access to the best spiritual equipment means nothing if I do not know how to use it. That is where we are going with our kids in 1 Samuel 17.

Let us look at a, I am going to start in verse 32, a very familiar story. I am sure you guys know where I am going.

*And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.*

*And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.*

*And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:*

*And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.*

*Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.*

*David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.*

*And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.*

*And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.*

*And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.*

I always laugh reading that story. The idea of David finally agreeing to go fight this Philistine, and Saul finally agreeing to let him, so he says, "Hey, I am going to give you all this armor, I am going to give you this kit, we are going to load you up, and then we will send you out to that Philistine." I think how many times in my life, when I have been working in a counseling situation or a discipleship situation or parenting situation, do I take the Saul approach? Load this guy up with tools he has never proved, load him up with things that he never got for himself, and dump them on him and expect him to go fight his battles. Do I take the Saul approach when someone comes up to me with their problems? Do I listen to it for three seconds and then make a snap judgment, just chuck some verses at him, tell him to figure it out, "This is how I got through it," and ride off into the sunset basking in my own intelligence?

Here is the deal: Saul's armor and Saul's sword were the best equipment David could have got his hands on. They really were. I do not know if you have ever seen armor from back in the day that was made for those kings. It is not chunky, it is not clunky. There are a million rivets on those things. Every piece of that metal forms and molds to the body of the man that is wearing it. I cannot imagine Saul's armor being anything less than amazing. It is what any of us would want to fight in. It would give you the protection, it would give you all the advantage that you could ever hope for. It would be like, I imagine it being offered an Abrams tank and turning it down. You are just like, "This is the best military tool that we have available to us," and yet David turned it down because he had not proved it.

There is more to preparing our kids, there is more to preparing our disciples, there is more to preparing the people around us, there is more to preparing ourselves than simply the idea of getting the right equipment. The right equipment is a start, but again, if I have all the tools and do not know how to use them, I cannot be effective.

#### IV. Two Keys to Readiness: Personal and Proven

Two things that were missing from Saul's loadout, two things that were missing from Saul's equipment, were this:

1. The tool had to be personal.

The tool that David used to defeat the giants was not the perfect tool, it was not the shiny tool, it was not the magnificent armor of Saul. It was, right in verse 40, his sling. It had to be personal. Back when I was in construction, I would always get made fun of for running Rigid. I do not know if any of you guys know what I am talking about where you get into that relationship where everybody kind of makes fun of what tool brand you run. I will defend Rigid to the death. I still say they are pretty good tools, but I got used to them, I learned to like them, they were my tools. Then I would go over and I would grab one of my co-workers' Milwaukeees or something that is objectively a better tool, and man, it felt like I had never used a tool before. It was weird. I do not know if you have ever used someone else's screw gun when you are used to yours, but either your screw is going in at half a mile an hour, it takes you about three years to get it in, or you have punched it straight through the boards you are going through and it stops on the other side. There is a value to having your tool and you know its quirks, you know the way it works, and then at the end of the day, you are more effective with it even if it is objectively not as fancy and shiny as the other tools.

Spiritually speaking, it is important to me that all of my principles and all of my doctrines at some point in time need to be my own. They need to be my own, not something that was handed to me, not something that I have memorized from someone else, not something I picked up from a sermon, but something that I have worked with to the point where I am comfortable with it and I know how it works. We have noticed this a lot with kids as we work with them, especially when you are dealing with kids that have been church-ed, maybe at camp, they have grown up in a different church or even our church. But they have been in church their whole lives. You ask them for a meaning to a verse, and they are able to give you the perfect definition, spot on, on the money. You ask them to pull that meaning out of the text with the words that are there, and they struggle.

There is this scary thing where we as people, I have noticed this in myself too, you can memorize truths. You sit under Bob Long, and you can memorize these doctrines and hold them in your head, when in reality, if I had to put the Bible in front of me and teach that or pull that out of that text on my own, I cannot do it. Or it would take me a minute. You do not have the same faith, you do not have the same trust in those principles. You guys understand this, whenever God gives you a nugget, you are working on something, and God gives you a little piece of something, just to get you through a situation, get you through a tough time, you hold on to that. It means something to you. But then how many of us have fifteen books of principles we have written down and never looked at again? That is what I am talking about. You get where I am going with this? It is the idea that those are all great, they are all valid, but I have not made them my own yet, so I cannot be effective with them in the same way as the ones that I have made my own.

Bob hits on this all the time. This is why he is so keen on "have your own study Bible." This is why he is so keen on "make your own church history book." This is why he is so keen on creating a catalog of the principles God has shown you and working with those things. You have to spend time working with those principles to where you get comfortable enough with them that you can be effective. You cannot use someone else's tools.

Proverbs 15:5 Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.

Personally, as I have been studying this this year and thinking about this, we have been thinking about this, we are even heading for like six months now. It has convicted me in two different ways.

➤ I need to spend more time getting things from the source.

I need to spend more time getting things directly from God. Listening to commentaries is great. Reading all my spiritual books is great. Spending time in the Word is better. Getting things straight from God. I might get less. I might not end up with fifteen pages of notes after the deal. I might not be able to go to my Bible and say that I have all these different things. There is a time and a place to go to those resources. But I would catch myself in my spiritual walk. I would spend so much time in commentary, spend so much time reading other people talk about God, instead of just going and reading God talk about God. That is one of those things that convicted me out of that situation.

➤ I need to spend more time getting things really down, like actually down.

The things, the principles that I want to use, the tools that I want in my tool belt, I cannot just slap them on my tool belt and pull them out without having ever used them. So I need to identify the tools that I need, and I need to spend time with them. There needs to be a situation where I have taken something apart and put it back together. I need to be able to feel confident that if I need to recreate that principle, if I need to find it in the Bible, I can get there on my own. I need to be confident. This always stresses me out with the kids. If I am going to be held accountable for the things that I teach at the judgment seat of Christ, I better be really, really sure that I am getting it straight from the book and it is not somebody else's. Even if they are right, and they are, that is the blessing of sitting under a good church is you end up with a ton of principles that you never had to work for. But I still need to take the time to make them my own so I can know without a shadow of a doubt that when I get to the judgment seat of Christ, I can defend what I taught and defend what I believed.

I think it is kind of funny with David. In his situation, it was arguably better to have fewer tools at his disposal that he knew how to use well than to have the best kit that he could possibly have. I was convicted, I am always convicted really, of the young men that come into this church. You guys get saved. I watch you singles a lot from afar. I feel like I am always busy with high schoolers, so I just get to see the singles over there doing their cool stuff. But I see you seniors or you singles, and these new guys come in, and maybe they have been saved all of a month. They cannot lay out dispensations, they could not lay out the seven sevens, they could not do dispensational truth, they could not do all those different things. They barely know the order of

the books if they do at all. And yet, spiritually armed with basically nothing but a screwdriver, every screw in their life is tightened. I always get convicted by these men because they know about one thing: that they are saved by grace. And then everybody they ever come across hears about it. That is the example to me of someone that has a tool and they really know how to use it. Then I compare that to myself and my wall of tools I have collected all over the years that are collecting dust. Batteries are drained, bits are dull, blades are rusty. What is better? The one tool you use or the hundred you do not? So I get convicted by that.

This is what we have been trying to do in the youth for the last two years: we have been trying to basically teach a man how to fish. We spend a lot of time trying to teach them how to use concordances, we try to teach them how to study things, we try to give them times and situations where they can learn more, we try to teach them how to cross-reference, we spend a lot of time trying to rightly divide the Word. Just ask any of my kids, flip open their Bibles, they should have notes in Acts, dividing out Acts 2 and showing that it is not to us. At this point, it is a running joke in our discipleship group whenever we are kind of investigating another church or looking at other beliefs. It is like a race to see who can find Acts 2:38 first, and all the guys bust out laughing. That does my heart good. That does my heart good that my kids know enough about the book to be able to be safe from some of those low-hanging, easy-to-snatch-people-up doctrines. It does my heart good. So I am very thankful for that and that we have been able to give our kids that in these last few years as we have gone through the Bible. This will continue to be a goal going forward. But in my opinion, there is still another step. I feel like that is step one to this process of readiness and confidence.

## 2. It had to be proven.

The second step that David had, it had to be personal, but then it also had to be proven. David had access to the best military equipment possible. That military equipment could have killed hundreds of men, but instead he opted for the sling that he himself used to slay the lion and the bear. The fact that he had proved that sling gave him the confidence and the wherewithal to engage when the moment was necessary. I catch this all the time in my own life. When you have really prepped something in the Bible and you have done the work and you have put in the time, when you see that opportunity to use it, you jump in, you are fast. If there is something in the Bible that I have kind of halfway put together and it is kind of there, and I have some notes somewhere about it, I could go find it. When I see those opportunities, I hesitate. A lot of times that momentary hesitation is the difference between taking that opportunity and losing it. So I want our kids to be so equipped and so ready and so comfortable with the principles in their life that when the opportunities present themselves and God says, "Hey, I want you there," they can respond. That is my goal.

I have a hot take. If you have one of those big trucks, you know what I am talking about. If you think big trucks, big wide wheels, the whole nine yards, lifted maybe. If you have one of those big wide trucks, I think at some point in time, you should take that guy out into an icy parking lot and go do some donuts or something. I think you need to take that thing out into a ditch somewhere and try to get yourself out of it. I think you need to go mudding, and I think you need to go put it through its paces. The reason I say that for those of you that do not drive one of those

trucks, who are the worst drivers when it is snowy out? It is these truck guys that think they are invincible. They are just driving a million miles an hour down the road, and they have tires so wide they could hydroplane on fog, and they do not understand the weight distribution issues. That right turn very quickly becomes a left turn, and they do not even know about it. I see it all the time. Every first snow of the year, there are six of those in the ditch on your way to work. In my little tiny Corolla, I am just like, "How are you doing?" They have a substantially more capable vehicle. My Corolla is pulling no one out of the ditch. But that does not really make a difference when they are down there and I am up here. Again, this principle of just because you have the right tools does not mean you know how to use them and does not mean you can perform when the time comes that you need to.

Spiritually, what I think we all should be doing is basically taking our tools out for a spin. That is the solution to me in this situation. I need to be looking for opportunities to prove my tools. I need to be taking the truck out and testing it out. I need to be taking the drill out. "Okay, still works. Battery is still good. Put it back." I need to be doing something where I feel confident with those tools in life.

How do we do that? This is where I say we just need to look for:

➤ The opportunities in the ministry that God has given us.

The best way to prove your weapons against the giants is to practice against some lions. So discipling someone, giving that person a ride to church and having that spiritual conversation, helping at camp, volunteering with the softball diva, maybe even twice a year. I know it would be crazy. Those are the things that have been given to us as an opportunity to sharpen ourselves. Sometimes I think we forget what a blessing it is to do that. We get so used to, "Oh, I can do a DVA. I have done a hundred of them." Well, skills atrophy. Anybody remember after COVID how hard it was to have small talk with people? I do not know if anybody else had that problem. It is like, spend three months inside, and all of a sudden I cannot hold a thirty-second conversation with anybody. Skills atrophy over time if we do not use them. So staying in that ministry and being in that, I think it is absolutely key to continuing to prove out the tools that God has given you.

➤ Iron sharpening iron.

We have the ministry, and then we also just have our ability as a church to keep our shelves sharp against each other, pushing each other. I hear this is again, all those singles, all these whisperings. I do not know if you guys actually do anything. I just hear cool things and I assume it is true. But I hear about you guys doing little popcorn preaching sessions. You end up at someone's house, and all of a sudden, "Oh, we are all preaching on this verse." That is great. That is keeping the tools sharp. I hear about you guys doing little studies. I hear about you guys giving little devotions. If you are old like me, I learned how to give devotions at prayer group. It was that moment where we had this internal time where we could practice and grow and learn together and fail if needed be. But that is how you learn those tools.

This is why if you are not a member at a regular local church, I will say it is impossible to be truly proven with your tools. The church is a necessary vehicle for that, and they both only happen here. I preach this all the time to the people that I am around. I do not know if anybody else does, but I think Bob's greatest unsung quality. Yes, he is an amazing Bible teacher. Yes, he is an amazing leader, all those things. The thing that blows my mind the most about Bob is his ability to wholeheartedly 100% delegate chunks of his ministry to people for their development purposes. The amount of lack of ego that is required to be able to share his ministry in the way that he does so that we can learn is unrivaled. I have gone to a lot of churches over the years, and it is always just the boys' club that runs the ministries. It is always the top dogs, and they take everything, and everybody else is pretty much just expected to show up on Sunday and Wednesday and keep their mouth shut. That is not how it works here. We have a profound opportunity in this church that if you want to be busy with the ministry and learning and sharpening your tools, you can be. There is no excuse not to be. I would encourage you, hit your wagon to this church, get in the ministry. If you are here and you are in the ministry, get in another one. There are definitely a few. Better yet, look for the needs that God is calling you to help out with. Maybe it is a ministry that exists. Maybe it does not. Maybe there is somebody else that needs help. Maybe there is some other situation that needs remedied, and maybe God is calling you to work on that and grow yourself a little bit. Put yourself out there and do something like that.

## V. The Youth Ministry's Future Plan

Switching gears now in our last few minutes here to my plan for the youth. Now that I have kind of given you my heart, this idea where I want to see our kids have this confidence and this readiness and this ability to run into battle confident and smiling instead of hesitating into battle not confident and smiling. This is where our focus will be going forward.

3. We are going to continue to help the kids collect the principles they need.

We cannot go away from that. So, going through the Bible, preaching, teaching them principles, that is going to have to continue to happen. But my goal now is to add that second layer of helping our kids prove the tools that they have already gotten. Even if they have only got one, one proved tool is better than one hundred not. That is what we will be going for.

I told you at the beginning that most of these plans were actually created by our youth kids. I think you are about to see this is actually really good. Let me give you some of their ideas that they have been working on. Some of these have already been implemented quietly. Some of them are about to be implemented. There are some that are not even on this list that are just still getting formed up to where I cannot really announce them yet. But we have some cool things coming up.

➤ Ironing, sharpening iron.

I want our kids to be able to sharpen each other. I want our kids to be able to grow each other. One of our kids saw a need that, "Hey, we need to be able to check our knowledge. We need to

be able to make sure we understand these things." So, they have been starting to make little quizzes and little things to go along with our sermons so that kids can then take one of those quizzes and practice and drill things at home and make sure they are working. There was one point in time a few months ago where we had, I do not know, I think it was like fifteen of us at like midnight playing a keyword memorization game. It was fun. These are good things. This is such an opportunity for our kids to spend time putting together and ministering to each other in that way.

➤ Xavier is setting up a Toastmasters for the youth group.

We have Xavier. He saw a need. We have been about the only opportunity our kids have to give devotions is at our youth events. Last March, I was booked out through October of this year. So, the kids are clamoring for opportunities to give devotions and prove their ability to speak to their classmates. It is fun. I am very excited. Xavier is going to be setting up, and it is coming out soon, basically a Toastmasters for the youth group. We are going to be able to get together and find the day to meet, practice giving devotions to each other just as a family, someplace safe to fail, and give each other feedback. Super excited for that opportunity to just grow our kids and give them more opportunities.

➤ Starting our own little youth bookstore.

As far as the ministry goes, we have had fun opportunities where we have kind of started our own little youth bookstore, I feel like. Those of you that have been using the tracts that you have seen, the little neon tracts, those were the youth kids that saw a need and a burden to be able to go hand out more scripture to people. I think to date, we have handed out around three thousand tracts this year to the point where I can see bumps on the church traffic on the website when we have our big days where we go hand stuff out. So, blessings there to have our kids go out and actually talk to people and witness and get to see some of our phenomenal leaders deal with people and learn from that. Even yesterday, I cannot remember who it was, I do not know if it was Juliana, I think it was Juliana, had one of our leaders basically was having them quiz them so that, "Hey, give me some things that someone might say so that I can practice." That is what I am all about. That is what I am all about. I want our kids to be able to have that opportunity to practice and fail in a safe environment.

➤ Starting a rock climbing ministry.

We also, it is going to be kind of crazy, I am giving you all the different things. We have had one of our boys that saw a need to build more team building and build more camaraderie in the youth group. So, we are starting up a rock climbing ministry before too long. It should be pretty fun. I think that will be happening now after camp. Hopefully having an opportunity to practice hosting, practice getting groups together, practice welcoming visitors, all these very cool things that are key to being able to serve in Bob's ministry down the line.

➤ Revamping our remote ministry.

Lastly, we are also going to be revamping our remote ministry. We have so many good remote kids that tune in. Many of you know how bad I am at texting. I literally had a note to say I was surprised there was no AMN if someone did not say AMN. But I am awful at remote communication. This year we have kind of decided Taylor is now taking and running with the youth kids. I am super excited because he is the guy that texts everybody about their birthday. I am pretty sure I got an anniversary text before I woke up on my anniversary day from that man. So, super excited now. We are trying to put more resources on improving that experience for our remote kids, getting them brought in, and then giving them ministry opportunities. How can they minister to the other remote kids? How can they minister to, in our ministry, how can we get them opportunities so that they can prove things even if they are not able to be here in the flesh? I am super excited about that.

### ➤ Curriculum shift.

To top it off, our curriculum is going to shift as well. As I mentioned before, we have been going through the Bible and teaching how to fish. At this point in time, my goal will be every week when we get together, we are going to be going through the things that God has called us to be ready for. Yes, we will take a few weeks to slowly walk through all the principles and all the doctrines that we need, but then we will not move off a topic until we have had the opportunity to practice with that and train with that and feel comfortable and know that every kid, they have got the tool and they have also proved it as well by the end of that moment before we have moved on. That is kind of the main shift that we are doing today. There will be a Sweat V2 at some point. Get excited for that. This is going to be a very exciting year or two. Keep your ears to the ground. The youth is going to be doing some wild stuff.

My end goal for this time period with our kids is just that they will not just be equipped. They will be ready. They will not just have the tools. They will know how to use them. Not just that, they will feel comfortable using them so that when the time comes, they can employ those tools immediately the way that God has called them to do.

In closing here, I have one last request to the parents. This is the only other thing we are changing this year. We will be sending out an email very shortly that you guys will be receiving. Kenzie and I would love the opportunity to meet with any and every parent that wants to meet and get together and talk about a plan for their kid. One of the nice things about a youth group of our size that is still fairly small is that we can have individual and personal plans for every single kid that comes through our youth group. We do. We are not a cafeteria that has to serve slop that is generic for everybody. We are that dietician at that Power 8 University that can look at what each individual child needs, what each individual kid needs to grow, and make sure they are getting that. That is why we need you guys. There is nobody that knows your kids better than you. We are just taking our best guess. So please, take us up on this opportunity to get together and just have a conversation. If nothing else, you can just ask us questions, and we can kind of talk and see where we are headed in the future. I would encourage you as parents, please, help us help you. Use us as a resource to achieve your goals that you have for your kid, instead of us just kind of flying blind. I would pray that we work together to make that next generation ready to be

able to do whatever God has called them to do. That is all I have got today, Bob. Thank you very much.

## VI. The Timothy Ministry: A Training Ground

Thank you, Jared. I just want to add that all of the counselors that work with him in there are all out of our singles ministry that really are grounded in the Word of God. We do not put people that do not know what they are doing in there. They really, really have been through our Bible Institute. They have been through our people ministry. They have worked on all levels, and they really do a good job. So, thank you, Jared.

Our Timothy ministry serves two purposes. Danny and Jamie head that up and do a great job with that. When Danny and I put it together and were thinking about doing it, actually, right when we moved over to this building, we thought about the aspect of having a special class for that age group, but using our singles and couples to do the teaching, to get involved with those kids. I am the kind of guy that I want to, whatever I do for the Lord, I want to squeeze every drop out of it I can get and not leave anything left over. I looked at it, our kids, what they need, but then we had a host of young men and young ladies, singles and couples that really, really know the Bible and let them go in and teach these kids, work with them, disciple them, mentor them, teach them the Bible on Thursday night and Sunday morning. So, it has been a great thing for not only our kids, but a training ground for the young men and young ladies. Many of those guys now are out in ministries in the nursing homes, and they are preaching everywhere and doing everything. I appreciated what Jared said about the tracts. If I could just add one thing to that, do not put them in the ATM machines. Those of you who are Thursday night, you know that. I want to turn it over to Danny, and I want him to come and lay the direction out where they are going with Timothy. Our classes are all geared together to train up to the next class until they get to my ministry, which is the singles ministry and the adult ministry, and then we go from there. So, Danny, come and lay out where you are going with all this.

Thank you, Bob. I know you guys have your Bibles with you. You can be turned to 1 Peter chapter 5. As Bob said, we do have a unique situation with our Timothy ministry, and it is indeed a two-pronged attack, so to speak, and it is intentionally that way. I love the fact that Jared brought up that a lot of the kids that he is working with right now in the youth group are going to very likely be counselors and Timothy workers when his kids are coming up through that age group. So, he is training his own future, so to speak. All of that is intentional.

As Bob said, our goal is first and foremost with the kids. We are trying to give them everything that we can give them and prepare them so when they come into the youth group, when they hit that age, they hit that seventh grade year, that they are ready to hit the ground running as best as we can. You have to understand when that age group of fourth grade to sixth grade, and those of you that are parents of those kids at that age group or you have had them, that is an interesting age. That is an interesting transition even going from fourth grade up through that. But we have a plan in place that we have used with the kids that has worked out really well that basically we have them for three years.

They are given the opportunity when they hit that seventh grade year. I think we have been over this before, and you all know this, but for those of you who are visitors that are maybe thinking about having your kids come here or your whole family coming here hopefully, seventh grade they have the opportunity if they want to stay in Timothy for another year or for part of that year because they are a little bit intimidated about going into that older group and being there with sixteen and seventeen and an eighteen-year-old. We understand that. We understand that that is a big gap, and so they have the opportunity to do that. But the goal is that whenever they reach that point that they feel comfortable and they are ready and they move into there, that they are ready to jump in. They are ready to dive right in with the things that, all the things that Jared is talking about, and as you can see, they get into some pretty good stuff. They are far beyond the simple lessons on Noah and the Ark, and we go beyond that as well in Timothy.

All those things are extremely important with the kids as they are growing up at a very young age, and you have the Bible Buddies and the Bible Explorers where they are also establishing foundational things, getting these kids to learn the books of their Bible and be able to find the books of the Bible. So when they get into Timothy and we are given, we are going through actual devotions with them and actual lessons, they can find the place that they are going to, and we can continue to build on that.

How we operate with them is basically we are on essentially a three-year plan because ideally and basically we have them for three years: fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade. Whatever year they come in, they will end up getting all three years because we will always be at a point in that cycle.

➤ We spend one year where every month we go through a character in the Bible.

The Timothy workers will have them essentially eight, depending on the month, nine times between a Thursday and a Sunday morning. They will all prepare messages, short devotions, and things that they teach on that subject for that month, whatever that might be. So if we are going through a character and let us say it is David, then they are talking about David for the entire month. You can imagine there is a plethora of things that they can teach out of the life of David. The idea and the thought process behind it is we give all of our guys the opportunity to take whatever God is dealing with them on and build messages that they can then give to these kids. Even though the entire month is spent on David, there is so much in his life. These kids are going to get all sorts of different things. They are going to get a lot of doctrine. They are going to get the doctrines of salvation. They are going to get doctrines about forgiveness and all of the different things that we want them to begin to have in that foundation to begin to be built.

➤ Then we have a year where we do twelve months of actual studies.

Things like faithfulness, things like courage, things like love, giving them biblical definitions of those important doctrines, again, to establish that baseline and establish that foundation.

➤ Then the third year, we give our workers the freedom to teach basically whatever they want.

We limit it. If they come to us and say that they are wanting to do a lesson on Daniel's 70th week, we might suggest these kids are probably not ready for that. You have to keep it age appropriate. But our goal with that for the kids is to give them as much Bible as we can give them, give it to them in a chunked-down version of format that they can digest, that they can understand, that they can take on the level that they are at, and that they will have that foundation built. So when they get up with Jared and they get up in the high school class, and they are with those older kids, that they can begin to then take it just to that next level. They can begin to take the things that Jared is going to teach them and continue to build on that. We want them to be ready to not just go in there and sit and listen, but ready to be able to jump in and begin to participate. Even though they might be nervous about it at first, they might be scared of the idea of some of these Sweat trainings and giving a devotion at a youth event, and the different opportunities they are going to have, that they will quickly be able to grow into those things and be ready for it so he is not sort of starting at ground zero with every one of them.

At the same time, like Bob said, we are taking the young singles and married couples, and they are actually teaching the classes. They are actually leading. So they are pouring themselves back into these young kids, they are investing in them. Then it becomes a cycle that then feeds and builds, and builds on itself. Because you take the kids that are coming out of the high school class, and we do not force them. But I do not know if we have ever had any that said no. We always offer them and give them the opportunity to roll right in right after they come to high school to be in one of the Timothy leaders. Again, then we just continue that development with them. They begin to learn different aspects of it than what they even had in high school, because now they are truly in a leadership position, and they have some certain responsibilities. They have things that they have to know how to handle certain situations. They have to know how to deal with things. What are the things that are okay to say? What are the things that are not okay to say? How do you develop a lesson that is going to be okay for fourth and fifth graders versus maybe where you have been talking to high school kids? Then they just continue to grow and develop, and then are able to take all the things that Bob has given us on a weekly basis on Sunday and Thursday, and continue to build those things into their lives.

So that is where we are in Timothy. What I want to do the rest of my time today is I want to speak to you as a follow-up to camp. I want to give you a little bit of an insight into some of the things that we talked about at camp, and what you as parents can be doing, and in fact, what we need you to be doing, not only whether your parents of kids in Timothy, but if your parents in the youth group. I think and I hope you will understand what I mean as we get into it.

## VII. Are You Ready? A Parent's Responsibility

I am going to very quickly and very briefly tell you what I preached when I was at camp, because it ties directly into what I am going to speak with you about today. As you know, you saw it on the video, you have seen it with your kids' T-shirts and all the stuff that they brought

home from camp. The theme to our camp this year was "Tick Tock, Are You Ready?" We played off of that Tick Tock thing, because we know that this is a huge thing in our society today. These kids are all on their phones all the time, and especially on their TikToks. But it was not T-I-K T-O-K as in TikTok, it was T-I-C-K T-O-C-K as in tick-tock, because are you ready for being and becoming everything that God wants you to become? We talked to the kids about some things specifically that they needed to be ready in their own lives to be able to be everything that God wanted them to be. And the fact that the clock is ticking, God's clock, and the opportunity to do what God has called him to do and to be everything God has called him to be.

➤ Day 1: Having a ready mind and a ready heart.

You have to get your mind and your heart in line and in tune with God and with the Word of God, and you have to make a decision that this is the life I am going to lead. This is the path I am going to walk. This is the direction that I am going to go.

➤ Day 2: Ready to serve and then ready to sacrifice.

After you have your heart and mind in line with the Word of God, where it needs to be, now you need to be ready to serve and then ready to sacrifice. We talked about the importance of understanding why God saved us and that it was to serve Him and it was to serve others. Then we needed to be willing to sacrifice the things that were most important to us in our lives.

➤ Day 3: Being ready to preach and then ultimately being ready to give an answer.

This is what is so great about what Jared is doing with the older kids in the youth group: he is preparing them to be able to preach. We defined for them and we showed them how in the Bible that because all of us think when we think about preaching, we think about this, we think about Bob as being a pastor, getting up in front of a room full of 250 people every Sunday and every Thursday night and preaching the land on the Bible. That is 100% obviously preaching. But the story of Philip in the Ethiopian eunuch was a story of one man taken out into the desert to go and open up the Bible for another person. And God called it preaching. So preaching is not just about getting up and standing behind a pulpit. Preaching is just about simply opening up the Word of God with another person or with 100 other people and sharing with them what God has given to you. We are all called to preach, every single one of us. Then we are all going to face a judgment seat of Christ someday. We are all going to give an answer. We are going to give an account for our lives.

God did some things this week. God did some great things at this camp. I do not know if Bob mentioned it when he was up here earlier. I was handling a couple of things, but there were probably around twenty kids that got saved at camp this week between the younger Timothy age kids and the older high school kids. That is an amazing result. We have talked about it this week, and without a doubt, everything that goes into camp, everything that you do, if one kid gets saved, it is worth it all. Even if nobody gets saved, but if one kid decides to commit their lives to the Lord in a better and a broader fashion than what they had done before, then it is worth it. But

God gave us a bounty this week. Twenty kids getting saved is an amazing thing in today's day and age if you sit and you think about it. But that means that there are twenty kids now that they now have a new life in Christ, and they are going to need some help. They are going to need some help to grow and to grow spiritually and to become everything God wants them to become.

My question, and what I am going to spend the next fifteen or twenty minutes before I close out today, I want to address all of us parents in the room, and I will throw myself in there because I still have one that is in the high school class: Are you ready? Are we ready to do what we need to do to be able to help our kids? Because as we said earlier, tick-tock goes that clock. Tick-tock, we get closer and closer every minute of every day to the time when God is going to tie a bow on this thing and He is going to wrap this thing up, and we are going to be out of time. So, are we ready to do what we need to do to take the changes that have happened in our kids' lives this week, whether it was trusting Christ as their own personal Savior or making a commitment to serve the Lord better? Are we ready to do that?

I asked you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 5. Let us read verses 8 through 10.

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

*Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

As we saw in that first verse, and you guys know this verse, you have heard this before: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour." The devil is out there. We tell the kids at camp, Bob says it many times to them, that whatever God does with you this week, the devil is standing right outside the gates of that camp, that the moment they drive out on Thursday morning and camp is over with, he is out there waiting for them to try to devour them. He is out there to try to prevent them from becoming everything God wants them to become. He is going to use everything at his disposal to be able to do that. It is your responsibility and it is my responsibility to protect them from that happening. So, are you ready?

What I want to do this morning in just a few moments that we have is I want to look a little more closely at the end of verse 10, because God gives us basically a three-step process here for you and for me as parents of what we need to do with our kids to be able to help them. Verse 10 says, "But the God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Perfect, that happens at salvation. We know the Bible tells us that our soul is made perfect in Christ. Our soul is sealed by the Holy Spirit. That is dealt with at the moment of salvation. But then he tells us three things that we need to do in our kids' lives to be able to solidify everything that is happening, everything that has happened in their lives in camp this week. That is establish, strengthen, and settle.

## VIII. Three Steps for Parents: Establish, Strengthen, Settle

### 1.) Establish

Let us talk about the first one, establish.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

You need to establish some things in your kids' lives right now. If you have not done it before now, there are some things that you need to establish in their lives. You need to establish some discipline in their lives. You may need to establish some boundaries in their lives. When we met with them at camp, the check-in procedure, you guys were there, it can be a little bit hairy, it is a little bit chaotic, especially when you are checking in 130 kids. We went right up to dinner, and then we went up to the chapel, and we had an orientation with them. I got up in front of them and addressed them as a group. I laid down some ground rules for the camp. One of the things that I laid out was, "These are the boundaries of the camp." There were physical boundaries that they needed to be aware of that we did not want them going past. One was because of their safety, because we wanted them within the realm of where we knew that they were going to be, and we knew that they were not going to go off and get themselves into any kind of trouble. We later found out that we were living on that campsite with about thirteen skunks, and so that became important, even though they were well within the boundaries. But things like that, you do not know what is out there. So we established boundaries. We have got to establish boundaries for our kids. The problem with kids today is that parents either are afraid to do it, or are unwilling to do it, or are unable to do it, but they simply do not do it. There is no discipline, there are no boundaries.

We need to establish structure in our kids' lives. When they come to camp, they have a lot of structure. That thing is pretty regimented from the time that they get up until the time that they go to bed. They have some free time throughout the day. It is not the military. But there is a lot of structure, and these kids will thrive when they have that. They need that. They desire to have it in their lives.

Another thing that needs to be established is a respect for authority. That is important not only so they will have the proper respect for the authority of the Word of God, but respect for the authority of the people that are in their lives. Most importantly, you, their parents, but the leaders like Jared that are going to be working with them, the counselors that work with them, the Timothy leaders that work with them. Listen, these kids are not in charge of their own lives. You as parents are in charge of their lives. You have been given that responsibility by God Almighty the same way that as adults, I am not in charge of my life. God is in charge of my life, and God establishes boundaries for me and gives me structure, and I need to have a respect for God's authority in my life. These kids, and it is not all of them, not across the board, and I am not here to complain about anything. I am just giving you an accurate picture because this is the situation. We had kids at this camp this week that looked like they had never been told no before a day in their lives. They could not handle it. Simply being told, "Hey, you need to sit down and stop

talking right now." Because they live their lives with no boundaries, with no discipline, with no structure, and it is going to be important for you to establish that in their lives or everything that God did in their lives this week at camp is going to go away, and it will go away like that. It is all going to be for nothing.

Colossians 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

You need to get them rooted and established in the faith. For a tree to be able to take root, you have got to have a deep enough garden or whatever you want to call it. You have to have ground that has enough dirt to be able to plant it. Go try to plant a tree in an area where you have got about six to eight inches of dirt and see how that tree does. See how well it grows. It will not. It will not survive. It will not even survive the first storm that blows because the roots do not have the ability to get into the ground, and it is going to get blown over. Your kids, until they get old enough to the point where they can establish their own area and they can establish their own root structure and their relationship with the Lord, they grow in your dirt as parents. The problem that we have is that many parents have no depth to them. They have got about eight inches of dirt, and there is nothing for their kids to take root in. There is nothing for them to be established in. It says they need to be established in the faith. Establish them in what they believe in, in the Word of God. Spend time with them. Take the time, and we are going to get into it in the next point, but reinforce the things that they are going through, that they are learning in Timothy, that they are learning in the youth group.

2 Thessalonians 2:17 Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

We spent a good chunk of time talking about this at camp, talking about the importance of them understanding why God saved them. That God saved them to do service for Him, to do works, to do good works. That they were not saved by good works, but they were saved to do good works, to walk in them. I see this all the time in our activities. There are opportunities everywhere you go to teach your kids about ministry. It is not always about just opening up the Bible and being able to lay some things out, even though that is obviously hugely important, but just simple things about service and about doing things. You see it all the time. I go to a restaurant and I see a family with little kids, and I see those kids just absolutely destroy that table that they are sitting at. Food everywhere, food all over the place under the table. Those parents, they just get up when they are done. They pick them up and they walk out the door, and then somebody else can clean it up. They do not care who, they do not care, all they know is it is not me. I am not going to do it. That kind of attitude, that kind of pattern that we establish our kids, we do that within their whole lives. Then we have kids that become teenagers and go and wreak havoc and create messes everywhere they go. Then they just expect everybody else to clean it up. I am not just talking about physical messes. I am talking about spiritual and emotional messes, because they were never taught, "Hey, you clean up after yourself. You do not disrespect the place that you are in like that. Do not disrespect the church that you are in right now. Do not sit there and eat breakfast and then throw stuff all over the floor and then just walk out the door because you know somebody else will clean it up." How about teach your kids and say, "Hey, we are going to stay behind. I know you are tired. We are going to go and we are going to stay behind. Let us

help clean up. Let us help do this." That establishes a pattern for them. That establishes some discipline. That helps them begin to understand the importance of these things. Those are the types of things that at a young age they will then carry through with them. But we can teach them everything that we want to in youth group and in Timothy and at camp. If you are not doing things to continue to build those things into their lives, then it is all going to be for naught, and it is all going to be forgotten. It is all going to go away. Teach them about service. Teach them. Show them that they can be a part of God's ministry. They can be a part of the things that you are doing in ministry. No, they may not at a young age be able to open up the Bible and share with anybody, but you can make them a part of the other things that you do. But maybe the problem for some of you is that you are not in ministry in the first place, so you do not have anything to show them. We have got to establish them first. Establish them with roots. That is going to give them some stability.

## 2.) Strengthen

Then we see the second thing. The second thing it says, strengthen. So after we establish them, we have got to strengthen them.

Psalms 89:21 With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.

Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

This is not rocket science here. This is not a difficult thing. How are you strengthened? You are strengthened by eating. You are strengthened by eating food, by eating meat. The meat is a picture, is a type of the Word of God. We get strengthened spiritually by eating meat, by eating God's Word. Yet that in and of itself is not enough. I was laughing with Jadon Shipley, who was over at my house yesterday afternoon, and he had a protein bar in his hand that he was eating. There was another one sitting on the counter. I was like, "Is that yours too?" He is like, "Yeah." Then there was like a protein shake right there. "Is that yours?" He is like, "Yeah." I was like, "If I start drinking that, am I going to get, will I get big like you?" He goes, "No." He goes, "You have got to lift, you have got to lift weights, you have got to tear down those muscles and then and then it comes in and that is build up." I was like, "Yes, that is right. That is my problem. Is that the exercise part is what always gets me." But spiritually speaking, this is the exact same process. You can eat, and we get fed well here at Old Paths. But you then have to exercise in order to build those spiritual muscles. Just eating all that protein is not going to make you big, and it is not going to make you strong. It is not going to have the girls falling at your feet the way Jadon wants them to be. I am just kidding. It is not just you, Jadon, all the boys are like that. They all want that. So it is, it is not enough. You have to exercise. You have to exercise those muscles spiritually. We have to do the same thing.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

It is by doing the things that God has called us to do by taking the things that we learn and then actually implementing them. It is exactly what Jared is talking about that he is doing with the youth group. It is not about just learning the verses for Romans Road. It is actually then practicing and sitting down in front of another human being and walking somebody through it

and realizing, "Oh, I kind of stumbled on that one a little bit. I guess, I thought I knew how to explain that verse, but I did not explain it very well. I need to work on that." That is exercising it. That is how you grow strong spiritually. You have to have both. It is not enough just to learn the Bible.

What about the Timothy age kids, and what can you do? These guys, I hope you know this, that every month along with what we do with them, what we are teaching them, they have memory verses. We give them four memory verses each month that they work on for the whole month that are going to tie in to whatever it is that they are learning that month. Do you even know what they are? Do you know that they have memory verses to work on? Are you working with them on it? That is something that you can do. That is something you can do that reinforces what is happening. How about asking them, "Hey, what was the lesson on today? What were you guys learning about?" "Oh, it was about thankfulness." "Oh, okay." Then you know what you can do? Now throughout the week, I can find opportunities if I know that, if I take the time to find out what they are doing and what they are learning. Now throughout the week, I can reinforce that with them. I can find situations where I say, "You know, that is something we should be thankful for, is not it? That is something, when we pray tonight, that we should thank God for that." You reinforce those things and you help them to see that it is not just, they are not just sitting and listening to a fifteen-minute devotion or a twenty-minute lesson, and then just running back out and going back and doing whatever. Build something into their lives. Take the things that they learned at camp this week and dig into it with them and say, "Hey, let us find some ways that you can learn how to serve God, that you can learn how to sacrifice. Let us talk about sacrificing. Maybe we can give up an hour of video games a day to spend some time together, to spend some time in the Word of God, reading our Bibles," whatever that it might be. Reinforce those things with the youth. Jared just gave you a great picture and a clear picture of what they have been doing for the last couple of years and what they are going to be doing. But there are obviously some specifics within that that are going to happen on a weekly basis. Ask them what they are doing, ask them what they are learning about, ask them what they are working on, and then get into it with them throughout the week. Help them with it, build it into them, reinforce it. It is not enough. They do everything that they can, but it is not enough if they come home and everything that has happened on Thursday nights and then on Sunday mornings is getting torn down by what they are seeing in their lives at home. Thursdays and Sundays are important. They are a must, and they are a great start to strengthen your kids. But if it does not happen throughout the week, it is just not going to be enough. Ask yourselves, how strong would you be if you ate twice a week? Not very. We eat three times a day, some of us more than that. You have got to do something with them throughout the week. You have got to build into them.

### 3.) Settle

Then let us look at the third one. So we need to establish them, we need to strengthen them, and then the third thing it says to settle. Turn to Colossians 1 verse 23. That is not settle as in, "Well, just settle for whatever, settle for mediocrity." No, no, no. That is not what he means.

Colossians 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

So, continuing the faith, grounded, that is very similar to being established, grounded and settled. They go hand in hand. Settled means that you are basically unmovable. You are sitting and you are resting. That is what they need.

Psalms 119:89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

We know that God's Word is settled. What does that mean? It is unmovable. It is unchanging. God's Word has been established since before He created the universe and before He created any of us. It has never changed up until now, and it is never going to change. It is settled. That is what we need to be. That is what we need to help our kids to be. Our kids need consistency. They need consistency in their lives. We all need that. But the problem is so many times, parents will decide, "You know, we have not been doing what is right. We need to get back going to church. We need to find a place that our kids can go to church." So they try to start doing what is right. Then somewhere along the line, they fall right back into their old patterns. They fall right back into the world. They stop going to church, and they take their kids on this roller coaster ride with them. They are up and down. Listen, especially the high school kids, they have a little more flexibility, I guess, a little more opportunity. They might be able to get a friend. They can give them a ride to church. They might get a car at some point and be able to drive themselves. But these Timothy age kids, they really have a hard time. They are pretty much at the mercy of whatever their parents are going to do or are not going to do. They need consistency in their lives. They need it to be settled.

They go to camp and they get all these great things. God does these amazing things in their lives. Then they come back home to this roller coaster, and they are up and down, and they are in and they are out. It is not their fault. It is not by their choice. It is not by their design, but they are stuck in it. So the question is, parents, what are you willing to do what you need to do and say, "You know what? I am not doing this anymore. We are going to get involved. We are going to get plugged in. We are going to get our kids into this ministry and give them their best opportunity to get everything they can get. And we are going to reinforce it, and we are going to settle them."

They get a taste of it at camp. Like I said, for four days, we take their phones out of their hands as best as we can. We cannot control everything, but we do our best to get it out of their hands and show them that you can survive and you can function. You can actually even thrive and get a lot done with God if you put that thing down and you get rid of it. But for four days, they have everything that they could ever want. I understand that you cannot replicate that at home. You cannot do two-hour long, one-and-a-half-hour chapel services with your kids every day. You cannot have all of those things plus all the devotions and the quiet time and all those different things. But there are some of those things that you can do with them every day. There are some of those things that you can establish with them, but that is what they need. They need it to be established. They need to be strengthened, and they need to be settled.

1 Kings 8:13 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.

God built us a house. He says it is settled, and God will build that for them. But the problem is parents will undermine that ground that that house is built on and eventually cause the whole thing to collapse. They will do it because of laziness. They will do it because of selfishness. They will do it because of inconsistency in their own lives. They will do it because they do not love God enough themselves to make the commitment that they need to make to truly be that example for their kids and make sure that they are where they need to be and they get everything that they need to get.

Listen, and I know most of the people in this room today are members of our church, and most of this is directed at you guys. I am not trying to upset anybody that is a visitor, but I want you to understand, we love your kids. We love your kids, and we love you. We want to see them make it. We want to see them become everything that God wants them to be. We want to see them work their way all the way through the high school class and eventually to the point where they become an adult living and abiding in God's will. They find God's plan for their life, and they are doing everything. They are fulfilling all of it. That is our goal. That is our desire for them. We want to help them to do that. But that is virtually guaranteed not to happen if you as parents are not doing the things that you need to be doing to reinforce everything in their lives. There is only so much that a pastor, there is only so much that a counselor, there is only so much that a Timothy class, a youth group, that any of those things can do in these kids' lives without you doing what you need to do with them at home to solidify it and to make it be something that is lasting.

If you need help in your own life, you need help in your own walk with God, we can do that. That is what this church is about. That is what this church is built on. I do not want this to sound right now like this is some sort of infomercial for, "Hey, come join Old Paths Baptist Church." Although we would love to have you if you want to come be a part of what we are doing here. But this is what I need you to understand. If it is not here, you need to find a church somewhere that will help you grow spiritually in your own life, in your own walk, so you will then have the ability to establish and strengthen and settle your kids in their lives and in their relationship with God. You need to find a church that has the right Bible, because that is critically important. You need to find a church that teaches the right doctrine, because that is critically important to having everything that you need. Because you cannot pick a church because the music entertains you, or because the pastor is really funny, or because of anything else. You need to find a church that has the Bible, and they stand on it, and they teach it, and they preach it, and they will show you how to build it into your lives and then help you learn how to build it into your kids' lives.

Your kids in their future hang in the balance, and that clock is ticking. Tick-tock, tick-tock. You can think of that a couple of ways. One, it is ticking in the fact that God is going to come back someday soon, and you look at the world around us, and it is not hard to see that we do not have a lot of time left. Now with that said, I am going to turn fifty years old this year. I got saved when I was fourteen years old. We were pretty sure that the rapture was really close at that time when I got saved. I do not say that for any other reason than to say that we are still operating on

God's clock. I say it is getting close, but that still might mean twenty years. It might mean twenty minutes. I pray to God that it does. I am ready to go. I am ready to get out of here. But it might be twenty more years.

So the clock that is ticking is your kids getting closer and closer and closer to what the Bible calls as that evil day. That day, which is a day of reckoning for them where they are either going to make the ultimate decision that because they have been established and they have been strengthened and they have been settled in what they believe and in the Word of God and in ministry, and it does not matter what anybody at their school says to them, it does not matter what anything that they see on TV or anything they see in a movie or whatever else, they are unmovable at that point. It does not mean they are perfect. It does not mean that they will not make mistakes or do stupid, dumb things. Like I said, I am forty-nine years old. I do stupid, dumb things all the time. But I was established and strengthened and settled. So when that day came in my life, it was never an issue for me. I am not saying that to brag about myself. That is not a brag. I am not saying that. But that is what your goal should be for your kids. So when you get to that point, you are not going to be perfect. You are not going to be sinless, but you are going to be unmoved and unmovable from your decision to follow Christ for the rest of your life. That is the goal for your kids. That needs to be your goal for your kids. They are approaching that day. If you do not have them ready to face that day when it comes, they are going to take a right turn. They are going to go out into the world, and you may never see them again, spiritually speaking. That is not what you want. That is not what we want. That is not what any of us want. We have to put everything in their lives that we can, everything that they need. It is up to us parents to really do that because Bob, Jared, the Timothy leaders, the youth counselors can only do so much. If you are undermining everything that they are doing by your life and your lifestyle, and you are tearing apart the things that your kids are coming home because it is convicting you, and trust me, that happens. You do not want to feel bad about it. Then you start tearing apart the things that they are learning. You can be the reason that they go out into the world, and they get swallowed up by the devil, by that adversary, the roaring lion who is walking around, doing what? Seeking whom he may devour. The clock is ticking. We get closer every day. We are doing everything that we can. We love doing it. Everything that we possibly can for your kids, with your kids, to help them give them everything that they need. But you have got to do the work on your end, or it is just not going to stick. It is just not going to last. It is just not going to work. Are you ready? Am I ready? Are we all ready to do what we need to do to establish those things in their lives and make sure that they are strengthened and make sure that they are settled in the Word of God and in their faith?