Proverbs 1:1-6 Sunday 10/18/2026

I. The Lifeblood of the Church

Last week, I told you that one of the unique things about our church is the tremendous amount of young singles and young couples that, after they get married, begin to have children. It is just an incredible process for any church to have that youth, that growth, and that young mindset that keeps the church alive. Most Baptist churches, anyhow, are pretty much where the average age is probably 105, and there are no real young people; they can't get them, they don't know how to get them. You are the lifeblood of this church, and it is what will carry this church on long after I am gone, and I certainly appreciate it.

Another thing I really appreciate is the response that some of you have been giving to me. I will be in my office on Thursday night or early in the morning, and you will stop in and just tell me what you are doing in your own family, how other people within your family are coming to you, and other friends are coming to you. This is what you want to create: the domino effect that changes in your life and your direction, but then other people will look to you, and everybody helps everybody. That is the name of the game.

Not only here, I cannot tell you, all the folks, we have, I don't know, over a thousand people that watch us on YouTube. Every week, I just get text after text, email after email, from folks who are following along and thanking us for doing what we are doing. I even have ladies who want the planning books that you got. They are asking me if they can get those, and obviously, we will send those to you, get those to you. The impact is quite incredible. I know you do not see it; I see it. I do not think I even see it to the total extent—the impact that this church is having because of you on people around the country and literally around the world. Hardly a week goes by that one or two emails or texts do not come in.

I got a typical example of what I get. A guy down in Mexico emailed me last week, and he was frustrated. He talked about how he believes the Word of God, he takes a stand, he is out there preaching and doing all things. But the churches down there are totally against him because of his stand. His question was, "How in the world can I fellowship with a church that does not even believe the Bible is the Word of God?" He was venting, and I get that because it is a very frustrating thing. I told him, "I know you will find yourself in that situation, but across this country, there are probably 20, maybe 30 people that we are their church, and we are the ones. They cannot find a church where they are at. Nobody believes the Bible anymore." They found us on the website, and many of them send their tithe in, saying that this is their church, and they are with us this morning; they will be with us Thursday night.

I told this young man, "People who do that, you do not have to be out there by yourself." I know many of you work with people from other parts of the state or around the country. You work with them on a regular basis, every week, being that fellowship, teaching them the Bible, helping them. That is what has to be done. I just want to thank you for that. Those are the kind of things that I cannot teach you. Those are the kind of things that I see in you that only God can produce

in you as you grow and you fall in love with the Word of God and fall in love with people. That is something that I cannot teach you. That comes by your growth and your seeing the needs of people out there. I just want to thank you for that. This church may run about 180, 200 people, but I guarantee you, we are running about 900 or 1,000 on Sunday and Thursday night. So thank you for all that you do and for the impact that you are making, because without you, it would not be possible. Certainly, it does not come down on me. I am just the guy that sits up here and cannot keep his mouth shut. You are the ones who do the work, and I want to thank you for that.

II. Review of Seven Key Elements

You will remember, last time together, we looked and laid out the seven key elements to train your child in when you communicate that vision. We have covered all this in the first couple of lessons. You will remember I told you that fundamentally, training your child is about giving them a vision of a life with God, even though there are many components to that. So you lay out for them, and always through your vision updates, reinforcing what God has done for you and your family and what to do together.

We talked about seven things:

1. Defining boundaries, how important that is.
2. How to establish a line of accountability.
3. Your ability to read your child and know where they are at in life.
4. Avoiding unrealistic expectations with your child.
5. Using any disobedience, and it will come in time, as a teaching tool.
6. To know the different levels of discipline in dealing with them.
7. Understanding that you as the parent, you are the key, and the key is consistency.

I told you last week, inconsistency is worse than no consistency at all, and you have to be consistent. This is a problem for most of God's people today. It is a problem for those who do not even have children: staying consistent with the things of God, staying consistent with being in church, staying consistent with doing the things that God wants you to do, your prayer life, all of those things. I will guarantee you, the number one biggest problem that all of us have will be inconsistency. It is something that I know in my own life, it is never something that I can say that I have got it down now. It will always raise its ugly head in some form or fashion and needs to be dealt with.

Our first two lessons showed you and defined for you the vision and the ability to use that vision based on the Old Testament verses on it. Today, I want to move in, and now that I have given you that, I want you to see and understand the five stages of your child's development within your family vision plan. This is so important because if it is going to fail, it is going to fail here: parents' inability to read their children and see them as they grow up through this. Understanding how these five stages will work and how you provide a balance in dealing with them. These five areas of growth or development will depend on your ability to read your child. That is where it all starts.

We talked about the very first one: standing on your watch. That was part of the vision. Standing on your watch, and I showed you how that last week, it very clearly that the Bible says in the book of Hebrews that your child's soul is in your hands. You are the watch care of that child's soul. I also told you that every child is going to be different, but the levels will always be the same. The children may not enter into them at the same time as other children do, but all these five stages are absolute, even though every child will be different. You know, you have to be able to see each stage will vary from child to child and most definitely sometimes will overlap. The ages that I am going to give you for these stages, they are approximate ages. There is no end on Monday, started on Tuesday. It is a transition thing that every child will go through, and for sure, they will overlap. Your job is to be able to see where they are at and be able to address that where you have to.

III. The Sin Nature and Early Influence

Let me give you a perspective about all children. I love the little babies that you all have. All of them are the cutest little things you ever saw in your life. I am not kidding you. They look at me and they smile. They have big blue eyes or big green eyes. I will talk to them, and they will smile, and throw my mustache, and all those things. I just enjoy them, and I enjoy seeing them. But do not ever forget that that little cute bundle of joy has an old sin nature. Sometimes we forget that. I am telling you that no matter how cute they are, embedded in that is that old sin nature, and if that old sin nature is not dealt with within these first five stages, actually within the first two or three stages, you in time will lose any influence that you could have in their life, and then somebody else will have more influence. That is the number one thing you want to stop. You want to stop anybody having more influence in your child's life than you. There is a process to do that found within these five that we are going to talk about. When that happens, you have now lost them.

Most parents think, because the time that I get into it to help them, they are 16, 17, 18, or 19. Most parents think that when your kid gets that rebellious stage of 16, 17, 18, and 19, that you lost them. That is not true. You did not lose them at 17, 18, and 19. You lost them at 4, 5, 6, and 7. That is what you have to see. That is what you have to deal with. That is what you have to understand.

First off, let me address those of you that have those little babies. Obviously, you cannot disciple them. They are just, they are in the goo-goo stage. They do not even eat real food yet. They eat that mushy stuff that I had to eat when I had my tongue down. I know what a kid goes through. I was on baby food for a week. The bottom line is, and then they grow into those little beanie-weenies that you get in the cans, and life begins to progress. But when they are little like that, what do you do? Honestly, do you just wait? I mean, they are babies, they have just been born. They are six months, eight months, 12 months, one year, two years. Do you just wait until they are old enough that when you, they understand, what do you do?

This is where a great biblical principle comes in that I want to give you today, before we even get into these five. It is found in Job chapter 33, verses 15 and 16. It is a verse that I have used for

adults for years and years and years, but I am telling you, this is a great principle for that little baby that you are holding in your arms.

Job 33:15-16

15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;

16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.

At six months, or a year, whatever, you cannot really communicate to them. But what you can do and what you ought to do is apply this principle. While that little baby boy or girl is sleeping in their crib, you are reading the Word of God to them. You are praying over them. You are letting the Holy Spirit of God take into that little subconscious. That is what the principle says: God seals our instruction.

I have told people for years and years and years, the last thing you want to do on any night is go to bed with the 10 o'clock news and 16 pieces of pizza in your gut. Your body works all night. Now, I am telling you something that I do not do half the time, so I am just saying I do not do it either, so I am not really getting on this to you, but this is what we ought to do. The last thing we ought to do before we go to bed is just take—you do not have to read a lot. I have had people say, "Well, I try to read my Bible when I go to bed, and I just fall asleep." What is wrong with that? What is wrong with falling asleep with the open Bible on your lap with the Word of God you put in there? Nothing wrong with that. That is a great thing. I always thought that when you go to bed at night, you ought to be praying, and when you pray, fall asleep praying. Say, "Why?" Because if you die in the night, you wake up, you can finish the prayer in His presence.

Sleep is an incredible thing in the Bible. The Bible says that God seals our instructions. When you read the Word of God at night and your body does not have to work and function all night to pass out all the stuff you ate and all the terrible things you saw on the news before you went to bed, the Holy Spirit of God can take that book and instruct you for the next day. He does the same thing with that baby. You pray over them. You read the Word of God over them. I did it with my kids. You sit there while they are sleeping, and you pray, "God, I know that I cannot decipher them right now. God, I know I cannot get into their little life with the Word of God, but God, You can. And I claim Job chapter 33, that as I read the Word of God, You will seal their instructions in that little subconscious that someday is going to have to build a relationship with You. And when I am about to read, Lord, take in that little heart of theirs." Then you read something to them. That is how you start. Yes, you cannot disciple them yet. You cannot do anything yet, but you can do that based on that great principle.

IV. The Five Stages of Child Development

Now, let us look at the first stage:

- The Discipline Stage

Without a doubt, this is the most crucial stage that you are going to face. It really is. The reason being, and most people do not understand that, you as the parent, this is the first, this will be your child's first encounter with dealing with respect and authority right here in his life. You fail this at four, five, six years old, you will be weeping at 16, 17, and 18 years old. Now here is where the old sin nature begins to raise its ugly head, and you begin to see it in this child. This is their first testing of authority. As they get a little older, they reach those terrible twos where their favorite answer is "no." Everything you say, "Do this," "No." "Come over here," "No." You have got to get a handle on that. If that is not gotten under control in time, you think it is cute. You think it is cute. I knew fathers that taught their children a cuss word and thought it was cute when they said it. You see how that works a little bit later on in life. If that is not gotten under control, you are going to have a strong-willed child on your hands, and that is another whole story. Change and rebellion at 12, 13, and 14 will start right here.

As early as eight months to 14 months, they will start to defy your authority. They will try to control you. I will give you a good example. You put the baby down for a nap or to sleep at night, and it cries. It does not want to go to sleep. You are sitting out there, and it is crying. You feel sorry. So what you do is you go back in. You pick it up and you hold it. You put it back down again. You go out. It cries again. You go back in. You pick it up four or five times. You are teaching that baby that they are not going to go to sleep because they know if they cry, you are going to come back in and do it again. Let that little sucker cry his heart out until he goes to sleep. It will happen. Parents, that is the beginning of them controlling you. You have a heart for it. I get it. But I am telling you, even though you have a heart for it, you are going to always have heart. But in your parenting skills, someday you are going to have to overwrite that in your heart and make the hard choice. It starts right there. Those parents do not see that. I get it. I get it. I get it. You are saying, "Well, Bob, what did you do when your kids would not go to sleep?" I turned the TV up. No, you sang. That is what it was. And I put everybody to sleep. I am just kidding you.

Anyway, here is where your consistency begins to pay off. First off, Mom and Dad have got to be on the same page. You begin to take charge of their life by establishing a direction in life, strong and decisive, through communicating with them about the family together and how much you love them. You start to be right then building that team. Obviously, at this young stage, no corporal punishment at this point. That will come in time.

Once you get through the discipline stage, and that is going to bring you up to maybe four or five years, and like I said, all of these overlap, then you are going to get into the second stage, which is:

- The Relationship Stage

Like I said, you have got to be flexible with these ages. Every child is different, but they are going to overlap. But when you are on your watch, you know now when that child is at and what you need to begin to be doing. Here is where honestly, you can really get some work done now. Now you can have good communication with them. Now you can establish and talk and begin the foundation of a good solid relationship that is going to pay off 10, 15 years later. Now you

want to build a solid relationship that is so strong that later in life, no one can take them from you. Now is the time to begin to do that. Do not wait down the line someplace. I will show you why in a little bit.

So during this time, they get to understand what a relationship with God is and needs to be. They get this by two examples. Now what you are doing is you are building your relationship with them now. In time, as they get older, you are going to take that relationship that you have because you and your husband are all at this stage. They know about God. It is all they know. You are going to cultivate that. You are going to manipulate that. You are going to bring that along that in time, you are going to transfer what that relationship is with you and them to what their relationship shall be with God. That is the process. It takes some time. It takes diligence. It takes consistency. But that is where it is.

The first two examples they have, first of all, is Mom and Dad. The great first example that they see is the relationship that Mom and Dad have, the love that they have, the commitment that they have, all of the things that they are going to have to have in their relationship with the Lord. The second one is the one that through that together, husband and wife, Mom and Dad, you build with them. You bring them in. You let them feel like there is no difference between Mom and Dad and them. They are all in this together. Here you are building with them that in time will ensure that nothing or nobody will get between you and them.

That is what the devil is going to do. The devil is going to try to divide your family. How he does that is in the most subtle, unbelievable way that you could ever imagine with your children. He is going to get you to be so preoccupied with everything else you are doing, no matter what it may be, that you do not on your watch see that. Sooner or later, you wonder why they are gone. You wonder why they picked up with some idiot guy or some idiot girl. You wonder why now when you sit down and try to talk with them, it goes nowhere. You know what has happened? It is simple. It is not complicated. It certainly is not rocket science. You know what has happened? You lost the influence in their life, and now somebody else influences them more than you. If you do not get that established early, you will never get it back later in most cases.

I am telling you, I am just telling you, and I am not somebody up here that just got on the internet last week and found all this stuff. I am talking to you about stuff for almost 60 years I have had to deal with, see the cause and the effect, see the ones that worked, see the ones that did not, and everything in between. I am telling you, this is a crucial aspect. In time, in your training, you will transfer that relationship to the Lord, and you are building with them, and this will be the key to everything. Right now at this age, the relationship that you build with them.

As I told you last week, when the time comes to discipline them, and it is going to happen, the idea that you want to have firmly already established is the idea of a broken fellowship with Mom and Dad will be the worst punishment. The fact that they have disappointed you, that you do not have that fellowship anymore, that you cannot come to the place where you want that child to have in their hearts that, “Mom and Dad, you know what, I cannot sleep tonight if we are not okay.” That is what you want. If you can build that, when you have to discipline them, I do not care if you beat them with a two by four, don’t. It will not be the pain of being hit with a two

by four that really tears them up. It will be the broken fellowship of Mom and Dad. Because in time, stay with me now, in time, you want that to be the thing that when they get out of fellowship with God, breaks their heart and brings them back to God. It is the broken fellowship with God. But it starts with the two examples that all they see of God: Mom and Dad, Mom and Dad.

The best parents will be those who do three key things during this phase:

8. A superb designing and organization of your child's environment. Developing with them the right attitude about the things that they face. This leads to attitude and action, which we have talked about many, many times in dealing with people. Through the relationship stage, you begin to mold their character. You begin now through the relationship to shape their will. You now deal with the things that they face when they are eight, nine, 10, 11, and 12. You know, kids can be very mean to other kids. If your kids are in public school, you know that they get trashed there many times by other kids. If you have them in a Christian school, same thing happens. It happens in churches. Now you either can complain about that or you can see that as the blessing in disguise that it is. Because you take that and you use that to teach and train them that this is just the beginning of life. You are going to get out there in the world, and you are going to go to work for somebody, and somebody is going to get jealous of your work style. Somebody is going to want to get you fired. Somebody is going to talk about you. Somebody is going to be jealous of you. So you are going to see it in churches. Those kids need to realize that life is about the challenges that you have to face. You can either look at them as obstacles of life or you can look at them as opportunities of life. Attitude and action. You train them. You get them to that point. You begin to mold the character, shape that will. You begin now to take the negative things. They are going to naturally come into their life. They are there by design. You can either throw your hands up, get mad, cuss out somebody for doing this or saying this to your child because that is what they will do down the line someplace, or you can take that problem and turn it around into the understanding that this is life on planet earth. This is where you begin to build their spiritual immune system. You have at this stage, tremendous opportunity. You want to use it wisely. This will be the beginning of outside influences. But you use that as a teaching tool.

Here is where you begin the process that we talked about many times of insulation versus isolation. You cannot isolate your kid from the world. Most parents make the most tragic mistake to think that shedding rules and regulations or putting them in some kind of spiritual atmosphere, isolating them, is going to be fine. It is not. Sooner or later, they are going to hit the world. Sooner or later, that world is going to smack them right in the face. Isolating them from it only is going to put them into a situation where they do not know what to do. You have the greatest training and teaching opportunity to insulate them before they hit that. It is rather you use the thing that they will face in the world, but it has to be taken care of. They are going to face it.

9. A direct intervention with the little things that are important to them in life. You want to show them that you are never too busy to listen to them. The two words that a child should never hear from his parents, unless it is in the middle of an emergency, are "Not now." They come up and want to show you a picture they drew in school. "No, no, no, no, not now." "Oh man,

you are going to make a touchdown." "No, no." Turn the TV off, look at the picture. I am just telling you, you have to show, you have to allow them to ask the "why" question. "Why is this? Why is that?" What a tremendous opportunity that is to teach them something. You have to take a total interest in everything that is important to them, not what is important to you.

Relationships will be built on little things. That is the way it is with God. He says, "If you are faithful in the little things, I will make you rule over many things." Your relationship with your spouse that you got married, where did it start? It started on your first date. Now unless you are just a really special circumstance, you did not get asked to be married on the first date. If you did, you obviously should have said no. But the bottom line is simply this: it was the little thing. You went out to dinner, you ate, you did this, you went to a movie. Everything was light. You know, you look at home, you made a hug, no kissing on the mouth yet. You did all those things that are just, you know, "I really had a good time tonight." If you are smart, you will simply say, "Could I see you again?" You do not take for granted that she wants to see you. You want her to say, "Oh, I would like that." Well, now you are in, man. But it is the little things. It is the little things. You go to the door, pick her up, "Wow, you look really nice tonight." It is a little thing. You do not go up and say, "Hey, what do you think about getting married next week?" You do not do that. It starts out with the little things. But with your kids, it is the little things that are important. It is not the big things. Do not wait until they get on a baseball team or a football team or a soccer team before you are their cheerleader. You start right now. You look at their strengths. You look at their weaknesses. You focus on their weaknesses, but you encourage them in their strengths. In time, their strengths will override the weaknesses. I mean, come on. We act like this is some manna from heaven revelation. It is simple stuff, man. It is simple stuff. Relationships will be built on the little things, not the main events of life.

10. Building a strong and firm discipline while showing and displaying great love. This will build within your family a safety net of security. You want your child to always look at your family as the safest place on earth. A place where they never have to be afraid. A place where they never have to be insecure. A place where they never have to look outside to find what they are looking for. I am telling you.

Now over the next stage, this will be:

➢ The Fellowship Stage

They will be about, oh, I do not know, 12, 13, 14, 15, somewhere in there. I get it. All these stages will blend together as they grow. There is no Monday and Tuesday deal. I have told you that already, but it is a transition of their growth. Just like what God does in the Bible with the books of the Bible. It does everything in your spiritual growth. It is the same way. Up to this point, if done correctly, everything that they know and understand about God will be through their relationship with Mom and Dad. Plain and simple. After this point, I mean the love, the Bible, the reproof, the correction, the instruction in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16, like we talked about last week, it will all be there.

Now when you begin the process of taking the fellowship through the relationship and now you transfer it to God and what they can have with Him, you lead them to this. It is not something

that they hit the age of accountability and they get saved. And then you leave it to the Sunday school teacher or whatever for them to find God. No, no. You have to orchestrate the leadership that takes your relationship, and then your fellowship drops it right in the hands of the Lord. That is what your job is. However you do that. There are many different ways to do it. Please do not think that what I am telling you up here, it is all good stuff, but you know what? Every situation is different. You should be smart enough to get the principle and then you develop the right process.

This is where you begin to see the blessings of God within your family. This is where you begin to connect the life of God and fellowship with Him as a really good lifestyle. If you do this correctly, we talked about your vision update with the family. One of the things that you want to do, when I preach to you, I know, I know, when I preach to you, I try to make it fun. I know I have to say some hard things. I get that. Even at that, I have learned over the years that if you are going to sucker punch somebody over something that they need to get right, if you make them laugh first, they are laughing so hard when you hit them, it does not hurt as bad. My job is, when I preach, is to make it a fun time. One, I want you to see the magnitude of that book. I want you to see how it is the greatest book in the world and how all you can get through it, and I want you to see in my life what it has done for me, what it can do for you, and I just want to have a fun time with it. I will make stupid jokes. I know. Some of you sit out there and say, “Well, you know what?” I am just telling you. You want to make people feel good about the Word of God and preaching the Word of God. So you add a little levity to it.

When George Whitfield preached, he was very animated in his preaching. You know what the old guard, the old Church of England, they said it was of the devil. You know why? Because you just did not stand there rigid and just talk like that. That is how they did it. You know, you go to most churches, that is what the preacher does today. He will just preach about getting people saved. He will scream at you for women wearing slacks and this and that, your mustache, your beard, and all those things. That is not no fun. It is no wonder people do not want to go to churches today. I get it. Churches ought to be the funnest time of your week. You should have got up this morning and looked at me and you said, “Boy, I look terrible, but I have got to get ready because I am going to church and I am going to have a good time. Boy, I cannot wait to get there.” I mean, when you get in that car, you ought to be slobbering with anticipation of what God is going to give you today. Are you having fun? Amen? Oh, half of you. Maybe a quarter. Let me do it right. You are having fun? Amen. You are having fun? Amen. You are having fun? Amen. You guys in the middle are not having no fun. You got beat by both sections.

I am going to tell you something. That is what the family vision meetings ought to be with your child. It ought to be fun. You do not come in and sit around the table. “Let us pray. Oh, Lord.” No. Take them to their favorite place to eat. Sit down and laugh and have a good time. Talk about the fun things and then come back home and just say, “Was not that a fun time?” And they are going to say, “Yeah, Daddy, yeah, Mommy, that was really great. We do that again.” “You betcha we are going to do it again. But now we are going to have another fun time because our family is a family of fun, but it is also a family of God. Now let us talk about our vision because we want to have fun with this. Let us talk about what God is doing at church. Let us talk about the

missions conference coming up. Let us talk about the guys that are preaching down there. Let us talk about your big brother that is going to be preaching. Let us talk about so-and-so. You know so-and-so." "Oh, yeah, I like her. I like him." "Well, they are really doing what God wants them to do. Let us talk about that." Then you bring it back to, "You know what? This is what our family is. Just as we had a good time eating at your favorite place, we want to have a good time in God's favorite place." See how it works? I mean, it is, come on, guys. Is it that hard? Really? Is it that complicated? Talking about the blessings of God in your own family, what He has done, what is going on in church, the special events, the Halloween thing.

There is a great teaching tool. You can do one or two things. You can stand up and say, "Well, Halloween is of the devil, and it is the night of the dead and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," or you can, "You know what? The world celebrates this. We do not. But we are taking an opportunity because we are going to get some tracts. And you work with me, and every kid that comes by, you put one in there. And let us try to win some families out of that." It depends on your perspective. You can be the stark Presbyterian baptized in dill pickle juice, or you can make it fun in everything you do. Let them see the value of what you are doing. You do not just say, "We are doing this because this is what we are doing." They need to understand cause and effect and how you take everything, make it into the ministry. This is what you do. You are now through communication, begin to transfer all that you have with them. And now it is going to go to God. And now you have God's total family.

I give a little warning to you about this. Of course, there are so many things to warn about that we could just take one, two whole weeks through that. Watch about the social media that your kids get involved in. I think you, again, this is none of my business, but I think that you ought to have parameters and limits. I mean, giving your kid a cell phone when they are four years old is probably not the best idea. You need to monitor those things. You need to have a setup on their phone that you are seeing what texts or whoever get, and I guess they have that now. I do not know. But you have got to be careful with those things because I am telling you, as I told you from the very first time, the attack today is on your family, targeting your children. If you are not on top of that thing on your watch, the devil is going to sneak in the back door, and that is one of the ways he will do it.

Back in my day, before most of you were born, we did not have social media. We did not have cell phones. I remember when the first calculator came out. I remember when the first watch came out that was a little Casio, whatever they are, you know? Now, look at you. You can answer your phone on your watch. It will tell you that somebody is at your front door. It will tell you your dog just made a mess in the kitchen. It tells you everything. I did not have any of that. Your kid now gets online, and you do not know it. There are predators out there that are searching for just your little children. I did not have any of that. I mean, when I grew up, our worst adversity was the television. I remember the sermon I heard one of the preachers preach back in that day was called "The Thief in the Living Room," talking about TV. TV is nothing anymore. You get on that internet, and you can get anything you want. Most of it you do not want. You start getting into texts with people, and they send in pictures. I have had people, I had young men in this church that were zeros, got went someplace else, and then texted girls in this church for them to

send them naked pictures of themselves on the phone. Now, what are you going to do with that? Besides kill the guy who is still alive and probably still asking for pictures. But the bottom line is that is your job, man. Why would a girl submit to that and send them pictures, which happened? The answer is simple. You lost influence in their life. Now some idiot stick in St. Louis has got more influence than your daughter that he can send her, “Hey, send me some naked pictures,” and she cannot wait to do it. Are you kidding me? I would have fixed it. If you would have called me, I would have sent you some naked pictures of myself and really blew his day.

Our next two stages, stages four and five, they are going to pretty much go hand in hand, but we are going to look at them separately. But when you get to this point, and you know, if you built those three key stages in their life so far off your watch, the discipline stage, the relationship stage, and the fellowship stage, now:

➢ The Responsibility Stage

Now when you get to the age of understanding, you now give them responsibility. It is really important here. You do it at home first. Again, this is a teaching tool to get them ready for later. “Your job is to feed the dog twice a day. Your job is once a week, clean your room.” These are chores that we have a list on a refrigerator. “You need to cut the grass to help Dad. You need to rake the leaves in the fall. Your Dad has got crack problems, go and shovel the snow for him.” You know, help with the dishes. The things that you can build where a family, we have a team together, so we have got to do things together and work together. This is going to be the first real interaction that they have that is going to get them ready for the world.

When they get a little bit older, they are going to get a job. Danny is a pharmaceutical rep now, and he travels all over the country, and he deals on high levels with all kinds of people. He has been a pharmaceutical rep to companies and very much in demand. He has won, I do not know how many awards. You know where he started? He started over at a little Mexican restaurant over on Metcalf waiting on tables when he was probably 16 or 17. It is a thing where your kids are going to get a job. Some of them are going to wait on tables, they are going to get a job at a restaurant, they are going to get a job at a car wash, they are going to get a job at a grocery store, they are going to do something. When they do that, you cannot be the bubble anymore. You cannot protect them now. They are going to get in, and they are going to hear guys tell dirty jokes. They are going to hear guys talk about their conquests with women, the wild parties they went to. They are going to invite them to their drinking bashes and all the things. Now, this is where you take the transition from the terrible twos where their answer to everything was “no,” and you do transfer that to 17 and 18 when they get an opportunity to say no. But it all starts. It is coming. It is coming. I am telling you.

Again, these ages all vary. Each child develops at a different rate. This is where you will begin to work with Jared and Mackenzie, Danny and Jamie with the high school, bring them in. Even before that, Bible Explorers, you are having problems or issues. The leader up there is for. Get a hold of them. Tell them what is going on. Let them be aware of it. This is where Youth Night, you know, they begin to take up responsibility in ministry. Last Friday night, they had a meeting. They went over to someplace and had some fun. But you know when they had the Blue Spring

days down here, Jared got a booth down here. They made things and they sold things so they could make money for people going on mission trips. I helped them with the parking lot, but they did the work. Camp. Tremendous things get done with them in camp that I preach before camp every year. The parents' responsibility when hearing out the other. These are great assets that God has laid at your feet. Your job is hard enough to be able to have people in this church that will work with you and help you. They will not do your job, but they will support you in the job that you are supposed to do. You now add to their foundation of life, responsibility and accountability that they are going to need all through life.

I have watched kids. You know, after many, many years, you are pretty much a pretty good reader of character. I have watched young men and young ladies that are 16, 17, and 18. I really like to watch them during softball, especially the girls, but the guys too. I have watched them all the time. I think I have seen young men watching glamorous acting in a research trial. The world can set of people that are, for me, you can have big cosplays who do not know. Some of you Moms and Dads raised your boys and girls that when they were 17 and 18, they got a job. Other ones, they lay around and play TV things on their deal all day long and do not do anything.

Now, my generation is different than your generation. Back in my day, there was a little Mom and Pop store on almost every corner. There were no Aldis. There was no Hy-Vee. There was none of that stuff. We had Fisher Foods was the only grocery store that we had. They do not even have them out here, but almost on every street corner in a neighborhood was a Mom and Pop store. That is where you went. There was one right one block down from my house there and a block from where I went to grade school. I got a job there when I was 12 years old. Oh, this is not one of these stories where I walked through the snow two miles to go to school. I got a job when I was 12. I made 50 cents an hour. I stayed at that job until I was probably a sophomore in high school. Then I got a job at Woolworth's washing dishes. I got $1.75 an hour. You know, I bought my first car, making $1.75 an hour. Of course, the car only cost $300, but $300 was a lot of money back then. I will never forget it. It was a 58 Ford, lasted about six months before the engine blew. I had nothing to do with that. Trent, I am just telling him, it just blew. Nobody told me when that little needle on the tachometer gets into nine, that is not supposed to happen.

Anyway, I worked all my life. I do not say anything. I have a hard time, but I have a hard time with some of you slugs. Get a job. I do not care what it is. Get a job, go wash dishes, go do this, go do that. I like washing dishes because people did not eat all their food. I never had to buy a meal. I am just getting started. But anyway, I watched some of your kids. They are at it, get a job, do this, do that. They have initiative, they have goals. They are not going to let any grass grow under their feet. That is a great thing. Let me tell you something. If your kid is 20 years old, you have got to kick him out of bed in the morning, there is something wrong. They make an instrument for that called a cattle prod. That is right.

During this stage, ministry and responsibility, responsibility and ministry, you will note that this is exactly how I build people in our ministry here. In the Bible there are seven stages of spiritual growth, just like there are stages of spiritual growth for your children. I follow the same pattern. When you first get saved, 1 Corinthians 3 says that you are babies. Okay, you have got a baby. Then Galatians 3 talks about the fact that those babies grow into children. Okay, so do yours.

Then in 1 John 2, verse 13, it talks about they grow into little children. So do yours. Then they grow up to be young men. So do yours. But in my ministry, when you hit that age spiritually, now is where you get responsibility. Now is where I will let you in to do some things. Now is where I am going to see how you are going to react to the work of the ministry. Then it says, 1 John 2, fathers. Your kids are going to be fathers someday. Fathers, spiritually speaking, is when you come to the place that now you take responsibility for somebody else one-on-one. Then the next one is elders in 1 Peter 5. Now you are really there. Then the last one is in Philippians 1, and that is the aged. You have come full circle now. That is what I do. That is what you are going to do.

But then we come to the goal. We come full circle. We have come through the five stages, the responsibility, and now we are in:

➢ The Ministry Stage

Now where, as we saw in the text on the vision, the vision now speaks. It has surely come to pass. The final stage that will carry them through the rest of their life and establish generation after generation within your family, God's heritage of carrying on the ministry, the ministry stage. Finally now, your ministering together has paid off. Someday I am going to go home to be with the Lord. Someday Barb is going to go home to be with the Lord. My girls will be on their own. They are pretty much on their own now, but when they get in a jam, they will call me. "Dad, what do I do about this? What do I do about that?" But someday I will not be there, and they are going to have to deal with it. Someday Danny and Jamie will not be there, and you are going to have to deal with it. Someday Kelly and Woody are not going to be there, and you guys are going to have to deal with it. You know what? That is where the ministry stage pays off. Because now you have produced yourself, reproduced yourself in them to the third or fourth generation, and you are on your way. Family is now ministering together. Your child now at 17, 18, 19, 20 and beyond, he is established in the ministry, and you are a ministry family. The book, church, ministry now before everything else in life. You work together as a ministry team. They work in Timothy, but Danny and Jamie, they work in the high school with Jared, they work in the Bible buddies, the Bible explorers, they disciple other young men and young ladies.

You look around our church. I talked about the two boys that are preaching at the mission tonight. That is one of the most tremendous opportunities that God just turned that whole place over to our young men. They have pretty much run it. I do not go down. They need to be in scenarios where they have to face things that the guy in charge has to make decisions. It is the greatest training ground for your young men that you could ever hope to have. I hope that all your young guys as they grow up get involved in that. This afternoon, we have two rest homes. You know, old folks like myself in a rest home, which I have got my reservation to John Knox Village any day now, my name is on the list. But the bottom line is this, they are hard to win to Christ. Last Sunday, two of our boys won two of them to Christ. See? One of them had never won a soul to Christ by himself. He did. It was someone that was a Mormon. You see, most of us look at it as just, "Oh, is not that nice? The kids are going over to hold the old lady's hands and da da da da da da." No, no, no. They are learning the very basics of ministry by preaching, by getting with those folks, building relationships. And over the months and years, when some of

them to Christ, unheard of, unheard of. It is your kids, man. It is your boys and your girls. It is your kids.

The pastor should make his church, our church, and everything in it, not only a training ground for you adults, but a training ground for every young man and young lady that is growing up in your family. My job, finding ways to make you better. Finding ways to take what Mom and Dad has done and develop it for what God can do. Now you can see that these are the same stages of spiritual growth that we build in people through our discipleship. I have told you before that there are four goals in discipleship, and these should be the four goals in training your children.

11. Establish them in the Word of God.
12. Establish them with other people.
13. Establish them in your church.
14. Bring in a full circle and establish them into the ministry with you.

That is what our goals in discipleship are. That ought to be the goals in your family. I always thought that, and I have told you this many, many times, especially when we talk about the Proverbs, I always thought that Proverbs, the first six chapters, six or seven chapters, were some of the most incredible material for a father to give to his son, Moms too. Because you are going to find that in these first chapters, every time he starts out, he says, “My son.” I think one place he says, “My child” or “My little children.” You are going to find a goldmine of things that God will put into your child’s life if you do your job. For me, one of the key places, if you have your Bibles, is Proverbs chapter one, verses one through six. Now, when you read this, most cases, you are not going to make the association like I am going to do it. But this is, what I am about to read you is exactly what I have been giving you and preaching to you for the last two weeks.

Proverbs 1:1-6

1. The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

2. To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4. To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

6. To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

The first thing I see here exactly in verse one is what every father ought to be. Solomon, the son of David, he is a human man, king of Israel, his millennial inheritance. Those are the balance that every father ought to have. You may be human, but your focus is on the King. What follows here in verses two through six will be the five things that you built into your child that I just gave you. Verse two says to know, verse three says to receive, verse four says to give, verse five says to hear, and verse six says to understand. Let us see how it works.

The discipleship and the relationship stage will be verse two and three. In verse two, you are teaching them to know wisdom and to instruction. You are teaching them the beginning to perceive the words of understanding, even though they do not understand it all. At this early age, they will be introduced now to the three areas that they need to have in their life down the line. This is their introduction right here.

15. Wisdom
16. Instructions
17. Understanding

This is their introduction to it. This is where they begin to get it. Verse three, now they, through their training, they progress, look what it says in verse three. Now he receives the instructions of wisdom. When he does that in this stage, as you get a little older, notice he received the instructions in three things.

18. Justice. Now you are teaching what is right.
19. Judgment. Now you are teaching what is wrong.
20. Equity. You teach him how to balance it out.

Right through those stages, right through those stages. Now look at the next two stages, fellowship and responsibility to stage in verses four and five. The building of his character, the molding of his spirit. Now you give him, he is ready for this stage. It says subtly to the simple. He knows when to keep his mouth shut and when to open it. To the young man, knowledge, discretion. Notice it says to the young man, that is 1 John chapter two, verse 13. Now he hears and he increases in learning, verse five. Now he does not perceive understanding, now he gets understanding. Verse five says, now with understanding, look at it, he attains under wise counsel. Now he knows who to listen to and influences life, who not to listen to and influence their life. See how that grows, see how that is? That is incredible.

Now we see the final stage in verse six, the ministry stage. Now he understands the book of Proverbs, that is key. And how to interpret it, there it is. Interpret the words of the wise, not the preaching that he hears. The words of the wise and their dark sayings, now he is developing the depth in the Word of God. Now he is part of your family ministry, you have trained up the child in the way he should go. Now as he gets older, he will not depart from it, you have reproduced yourself in your child. Now he was made in your image, now you made him in God's image. It is an incredible book. Now you have everything you need right in front of you to make it work for your child.

V. Key Inclusions for Child Training

I say it over and over again, training up children is no easy task. It will require self-discipline, it will require consistency, steadfastness, vigilance, love and compassion, long suffering, patience, and open and honesty in your relationship. But I have given you all the material you need. There is absolutely no reason for failure other than the obvious. You see, I can give you the material, but you have to do the work.

Now, along with all I have given you as you train them, a couple of more things I think you need to include. I have not said a lot about this because I am going to put it in here. I cannot stress this enough.

21. Dads, Moms too, but Dads, you need to pray with your children. Most fathers cannot or will not pray with their child. They will let Mom do it. I cannot emphasize enough, especially a strong male presence of prayer in your family because God is male. Dads will seem to get involved in all the activities except the one that is most important. They will get involved in sports. They will make sure their kid is at the ball games, the flag football, the soccer, basketball, track meets, volleyball. They will take them fishing, they will take them hunting, they will take them to car shows. Sports and all the things that they do. Fathers will do all this and think that that makes them a good father and then wonder why somebody had more influence in their child down the line than you had. I will tell you what, because the fishing trip will not cut it. The hunting trip will not cut it. The sports are not going to cut it. It starts with you on your knees, with your son or your daughter in your arm around them. Pray for God's protection in their life and to build your relationship together and build that bond. The bond may be instituted with all the things you do, but the bond is submitted in your prayer time with them. Your praying with them should be an everyday process. It will teach them the importance of their communication with God.
22. Teaching them the respect of things of God. Now I know the church is just a building. You go down the street in the bar, it has got the same rocks in it that we make our building with. I know it is just a building, but it is what it represents. Church should never be a playground for your children. It symbolizes the place that we meet with God and do business with God. You know, I see it after church and before, your kids running and racing all over the place like it is some kind of game thing, climbing on the chair, banging on the piano. Mom and Dad are just oblivious to it. They are busy talking, doing this, doing that. Sometimes it is even at, I have been to birthday parties at somebody's house. I know the kids play and have fun, but you need to make sure that, you know, they are in somebody else's house, and they are certainly here fiercely in God's house. They need to learn to respect that. They need to learn that there are certain places that you go that they have to have a reverence, not for the building itself, but for what it represents. I have seen deacons that smoke all my life. During the church service, when they could not have the cigarette, you know what they do? They would go outside, have a cigarette. Why? They knew that it was not right to smoke a cigarette in church, but they thought it was okay in the parking lot. There are certain things you teach your kids if you want them to respect the things of God. Do you ever go back and see in the Old Testament when it would deal with the Tabernacle, there were some holy things, there was some furniture, some artifacts that were holy. Now, obviously the only thing we have got holy here is your socks and the Bible you hold in your hand. But what this place represents, your children need to understand. You do not act like a wild Indian when we go to church. If you want to go home and, you know, put the cat in a microwave and flush the dog down the toilet and do all the things, that is okay. But you do not do it here. I am telling you, these are the little things that, I get it, I get it, I get it. But you have got to begin to teach them that the house of God, even though it is a building, is where we meet with God.

23. For you to learn to use what this church offers, the classes, the Bible buddies, Bible explorers, Timothy, the high school class. These are tools for you to use. Not to take the place of what your job is as a parent, but to reinforce what you are teaching them. They are great assets. You work with them. You let them know where you are going. You let them know where you are at, what they need. These guys, these gals will work with you.

VI. The Church's Adoption Program

There is one other aspect that I want to address that, and this one, I never say anything about it, but to me, it makes this church very special and very unique. You know, I have always had the utmost respect for any couple that would adopt a child. I think that that is a very noble act of love and kindness. Having said that, here at Old Path, we have our own adoption program. God keeps sending us young men and young ladies who have been left to the world by their parents. There are many reasons for this, and I am not going to get into all of that. But fundamentally, the parents, for whatever reason, do nothing spiritually for their kids. The kids are basically cast adrift in a world that will swallow them up. God knows enough about you. This has nothing to do with me. God sees enough in your heart and knows how you have built yourself. That He knows that He can send to us, and we will take them in. Some we can help, some it is too far gone. I have seen some incredibly heartbreaking cases where kids were completely abandoned. Mom and Dad get into drugs, Mom and Dad are into the world, or Mom and Dad just do not care. Those kids are just cast adrift. It is like drifting through space with endless millions of endless miles of nothing, and then suddenly by the providence of the hand of God, you slap into Old Path Baptist Church.

I watch some of you take them in. I watch some of you invest in them. I have watched some of you, they never had a real birthday until you took them, had a birthday. I have watched you buy them presents at Christmas. I have watched you buy them clothes, buy them food, help them in all kinds of scenarios. I have seen guys and gals, and believe me, I know it breaks many of your hearts because you invest so much in them, and then you see they do not make it. You know what the average is? Out of every 10, we will probably keep two. You know what I am talking about. You brought them in, gave them everything they needed, and they got a better deal. They walked away from it. They went back to the world. They did not accept what you had. You learn one of the hardest truths in dealing with people in the ministry, and it is simply this. You learn this as much as you want to invest in those kids, as much as you want to go pick them up and bring them to church or do this or do that, to get them everything that they need. You will find out by the time they are 15, 16, and 17, you cannot undo the 16 years of damage that Mom and Dad did in their life by just going out and getting them and bringing them on Sunday and Thursday night and doing things with them.

It is a heartbreaking saga. I look at it. I never say a word. It tears my heart out. I have talked to you guys individually about it because you work with them, but we have all seen it. I have seen young men, young ladies that had their Mom and Dad were in such a disastrous state that the boy had to get out of the family and get away from them, denounce them basically for him to survive. I have seen parents that did not, Moms that were single and slept with every guy on the planet,

and the kids got caught up in all that and do not do anything about it. We try to bring them to church, and we try to help them, and I guarantee you right now, I watch them every Thursday and I watch them every Sunday, and the thing that goes through my mind, we will do the best job we can. We are probably going to lose them. As good as you are, as hard as you try, as hard as you try, you cannot undo the damage that parents do when they are kids. I am telling you. There comes a point where you do everything you can. I have come to my life where I am at in my life to the rapture and everything that is going on and the way the world is. I am not under any illusions anymore that we are going to reach everything and everybody. We are in a survival mode in this church as all good churches are. We try to keep our heads above water with all the world cascading down upon us, but I am going to tell you right now, I have come to the conclusion, all I can do, all you can do, all we can do, save as many of them as we can, save as many of them as we can. We take them one at a time, we do the best we can, and when your heart gets broken because the world swallows them up, Mom and Dad, damaging influences worse on them and destroys them, and it tears your heart out, you have got to realize that that is the ministry. That is what dealing with people brings, too much knowledge, much grief. You have to understand that you win some and you lose some, and in the day and age that we live in, we lose more than we win.

Parents. Nothing frustrates me more. I have seen Moms and Dads that had terrible marriages, terrible home life, get divorces, get all this, get all that, Mom or Dad is left with the kids, and the kids are starting to go sideways and get into all kinds of problems, and Mom or Dad will contact us and say, “Hey, can you really help with my kids?” Well, sure we will. “Can you disciple them? Can you invest in them?” Well, sure we will. But you know what happens? The Dad will blame it on the ex-wife, the ex-wife will blame it on the ex-husband, but you know what the reality is? It is both of you. You want us to fix your child. You want us to fix this and do that, but you drive up, walk them in, give them to whoever, and then you leave. What are you teaching them? You want us to teach them to be consistent when you will not be? This is the heartache of ministry. These are the things that you have to hold inside as a pastor and many of you. Because you just cannot spell it all out. It is the personal trauma of seeing a child wasted to the world that does not have to be.

I will tell you this. I remember when I got out of the Army, and I was walking around town one day, and there was a recruiting office right there for the Army. Our neighbor brings everybody. I, you know, they used to have those big posters up there, and I was looking at this poster, and it was a poster of, I do not know, maybe a thousand guys. All you could see were their backs attacking something. They all had the same green uniforms. They all had the same helmets. They all had the same backpacks. They all had the same rifles. I thought for a moment, that was me. Why did God out of that 2,000 guys come down and pick me up out of it? About that time, the recruiting sergeant came up. I was still young. I had just been out of the Army myself. You know, you get the boy out of the Army. You never get the Army out of the boy. The old guy comes up and says, “How you doing there, son?” I said, “Doing fine, sergeant, doing fine.” He says, “Hey, I can sign you up.” He said, “That is the greatest Army in the world.” And I will sign you up. Well, I had already got my life straightened out with the Lord. He said, “How is that, guy? I will get you.” I told him, “I just got out.” “I will get your rank back. I can get your grade back. How

about it, son?" I said, "Well, I cannot." "Why not?" I said, "Because I joined another Army." And I witnessed to him about the Lord's Army, but I have never got that picture out of my mind. 2,000 guys from the back, you could not tell one from the other. Why did God reach down and pick me out?

I look at those kids that make it, maybe the two out of the 10. Without a failure, without a doubt, every one of them are something special that God sees in them. That is why they make it. Every one of those two to come out of the 10 are something incredible. Every one of them that do not go back to the world and stay. God saw something in them that in spite of the almost egregious circumstances they were in, where the odds were against them, unbelievably, God picked you out. He could have put you anywhere on planet earth and put you here. He put you here for two reasons: the Bible you hold in your lap and you. I cannot teach that. That comes in a man or a woman's life because of their love for the book, their love for God's Word, and their love for people. That you see beyond the crowd. You see the ones that God has picked out and given to you. I thank you for that.

This church is no different than any other church. We have our problems, we have our issues with people. Sure, not everybody likes me, not everybody likes my preaching, not everybody likes you. But there is one aspect that you cannot deny, and that is the fact that you care about people. So take those young men and your young ladies. I have seen some of you move them into their homes. They never had a real birthday until you gave them one. Christmas was just another day of the year until you made it special. You used all of that to make the Word of God special. They are in this church today, winning people to Christ, preaching at the rest home, preaching at the mission tonight, doing the work in all these areas of churches because somebody cared for them. Now that has nothing to do with raising your family, but I wanted to tell you that. You can always find negative things about any pastor or any church. But when you look down into the depth, you know what you see? You see that picture. 2,000 guys all dressed the same from the back, all look the same. You see the sea of humanity with kids, with parents that do not care, kids with parents that just like God picked me up out of that mess and brought me over here, God picked them up and brought them here.

Next week, we will finish out our training process for our children. I want to end with a key aspect. We are going to go through all the different ramifications, but I am going to show you how that if you have lost your kids, what you can do to get them back. Remember, the key to the Bible, the key to Christianity, the key to everything is one word: restoration. Restoring what is lost. We will look at that next week, and I will give you four or five things that you have got to do to get to the place. We will talk about it next week. When we get dismissed here, I see that there are a lot of people who are not really interested in what they are doing. I think that is a good thing.