1 Timothy 3:2; Luke 15:11-24 Sunday 10/25/2026

I. Introduction and Review of Parental Stages

The Lord has really been blessing our families, and it was a time to go through this and do this. If you notice, I come at this a little differently than I have before. I have probably taught this at least two times before in our twenty-some years together. I wanted to do it that way because I had the transcript. Aaron did it for me. I had a transcript that put my other group's classes together that you could have and go through. Also, we put in something that we never did before. Angela and her husband put these together for me, and that is the step-by-step process of putting a vision in your family. It is so easy and so really good, and I thank you guys for doing that. That was really going to help a lot of people, and I am really excited about that. Every week, I just get emails or texts from families, from couples that are watching online, and then so many of you.

You will remember that last week, this was lesson three, we talked about the different stages that you will have to understand and be able to properly train your child. There is a science to it, a biblical science, and there is a process to it, a biblical process. We saw the importance of them through the five stages that they are going to go through as they grow up from being a baby to adolescents, to young children, to adulthood. We looked at:

1. The discipline stage
2. The relationship stage
3. The fellowship stage
4. The responsibility stage
5. The ministry stage (bringing it all full circle as the family together)

I told you that each one of these is important, and your child will go through each one of these. As you stand on your watch, which we saw from the book of Isaiah, you begin to see how they will go through these. I made it very clear, and I want to mention it again, so it is not a Monday, Tuesday thing. It is not where they hit one stage on Monday and the next one on Tuesday. Everything God does, including your spiritual growth, is a transition. It is moving through the process, and sometimes they will overlap, but they always will move into the next level. I do not know if you see it; probably you people who disciple people and work with them probably see it, but it is very obvious to me when I see you and how God has brought you through. There was never just a one-day, next-day where it happened; it was a process that God brought you through.

You also want to remember, and I remember this when I am dealing with people in general, every child will be different. You do not approach everyone the same way. There will be, as I said, overlap transition in each one of them, and you are going to find that. You are going to find multiple children in your family will have to be dealt with differently. You do not want to just focus on one and think that all the other three or four kids are going to be the same. It is not going to work that way. You need to be on your guard. The more children you have, and praise the Lord for it, but the more children you have, the more you have to pay attention to each one of them because they are all going to be different.

Obviously, the end result that we want to get to is families ministering together, leaving a family legacy of generations carrying out God's Great Commission to a lost world. I showed you how this was God's plan for the nation of Israel. He said in Genesis 12:3 that all the families of the earth would be blessed through the nation of Israel. Then, of course, in the New Testament, it is also God's plan: families ministering together through the generations of building and reaching other people that reach other families, and it goes from there.

In the last four weeks, I gave you basically everything that you need to be everything to your child. The family vision packet that I talked about a minute ago that our folks helped us with is an incredible asset. I have never done that before, but I saw the maturity of some of the people in our church that are working with our kids, and I wanted to use that and really make that available to everybody, and it really worked out well. Now you have a step-by-step outline for you. You will also have each week's outline for you. You have the overall structure of what I have done before and through the transcript. Along with that, I have couples standing by that if you want to begin this, and I know if it is new to you and you have never done it before, I get it, I understand. I have couples that are willing to sit down and help you and work through it and show you and work with you through that. Obviously, last and hopefully not least, I am here for you. I will do whatever I can do. There are times that I meet with families and young couples, and I help them understand and put things together, and I am always here to help you.

II. The Challenge of Losing Children and Becoming Blameless

Now, our last time together, I want to kind of bring it all to an understandable conclusion here, and I want to talk now because we have talked a lot about not losing your children and all the things that you do. But let us be honest, there are going to be times and there are going to be families and there are going to be people who lose their kids to the world. I think this is probably one of the most unanswered questions that you will find today because pastors just do not know how to give the answer. I found out through the years, it is the things that you have to understand. I want you to know first off, as a pastor dealing with people, I never looked down or judged anybody for losing a child to the world. I think that is counterproductive. It is going to happen, it is part of life. I wish it did not, in a perfect world it would not, but we do not live in a perfect world.

I am going to show you in a few minutes here the four or five reasons, or basically four reasons, why this happens, and I want you to understand because there are some things that I think you need to see to get together. I never looked down, never judged somebody no matter what the situation is. Believe me, the heartache, the pain, the tears of sleepless nights, it is enough. You do not need me to add the weight to what you are carrying or anybody else for that matter. I am here to help you. This is my job. I do not care, I have said it many, many times, I do not care where you have been, what you have done, or what you got into. All I care about is where you are at today and where you want to go from here. That is all I am focused on, that is all I care about because whatever situation you find yourself in this morning, if you have lost your children, whatever situation you find yourself in, I want you to know that there is always something that

you can do. It is never a time in anything in Christianity where there is not something that you can do.

Now, having said that, we have been through this for the last three weeks, and there is no question about it now. As a parent, if you have lost your child, bottom line, it is on you. You are the blame, nobody else. I think now that our time of coming through the Word of God and looking at the Scriptures, there is no question about that. It should be clear now over the last four weeks that we have got under our belt and we have looked at. So that is not the issue. So the question is going to be this: If you, the parent, are to blame, how now do you, the parent, become blameless? That is the key. So many times pastors, people, judge so many other people in the things in their life that they look at that maybe they have struggled with. They do not really understand that whatever situation you find yourself in, certainly if you have lost your kids, and I am saying it again, if you have, it is very clear now, anybody who takes another position just wants to skip some things under the blackboard. You are the blame. My job is to help you understand. Now, how do you become blameless? That is the key. That is what I want you to see today. In that concept, there is always something that you can do.

Now, for us to understand that, we need to come back over to 1 Timothy chapter three. You do not really need to turn back to it. You can just follow along today. Most of you know what is in 1 Timothy chapter three. Here Paul gives young Timothy the guidelines for being a pastor. Then in chapter three on down in there around verse eight, he does the same thing for a deacon. In the church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, there are two offices, only two. Those two offices were given in the book of Acts and given to the church. The first office is the office of a pastor. He is called a bishop in the Bible. We do not call it that today because we do not want to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church because they have bishops. But fundamentally from the Bible, a bishop in the New Testament is a pastor. That is an office. The second office is the office of a deacon. They are the only two offices that you have.

Now we live in a world today where the big question is, and you find this in a lot of churches, where there are women deacons, women pastors too. Those two concepts are never found anywhere in the Bible. The reason they find a woman deacon is because they go over there in one of those places where he talks about some lady called Phoebe, and they are supposed that she is a deacon. That is what they build it on. Nowhere in a New Testament church, in church history, in anywhere in the Bible, is there a female ever involved in those two leadership roles. The reason is because the Bible makes it clear, because of the fall, she is the weaker vessel. She has a presence in the world that a man can never attain to, and it is the presence of being able to be the author of life that a man can never do. It is a thing where she has her specific role and man has his specific role. When you put the two of them together, you have the biblical concept. You know as well as I do, in the world where I live today, it is upside down. Somebody asked me what I think is wrong with America today, and I simply say, America is an insane asylum that is being run by the inmates. It is a mess. Everything in Christianity is upside down. So we need to understand some things and straighten some things out.

But in 1 Timothy chapter three, he talks and gives the charge and gives the guidelines for a pastor and also for a deacon. And he says in verse two that he says a bishop, that is a pastor, must be blameless.

1 Timothy 3:2

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

Now I have thought about that over the years, and I have asked myself the question, being a pastor for many, many years, I have asked myself how in the world can that be when the pastor seemingly gets blamed for everything? How do you remain blameless? That is the question. Once I thought it through and looked it through, the answer is really a simple one. As a pastor, I am going to talk about pastors, and I am going to come back to the role of the father and the parent. As a pastor, when you make a mistake, and I did, let me clarify this, not if you make a mistake, but underline when you make a mistake, because you will. You do not try to sidestep it. You do not try to hide it. You do not blame it on somebody else. You admit to it, you make it right. Now, even though you made the mistake, after making it right and addressing it and dealing with it, you are blameless. Blameless is simply taking responsibility, taking the blame, and being responsible for it. When you do that, you are blameless. That is, I am going to get to it at the end of the sermon, that is the single core doctrine of the Bible. You hang with me, I will show you. I will show you when we get there.

Everything in life comes down to you and to me as a pastor, but not only to a Christian, is to be blameless. How do you be blameless? You take responsibility and accountability for whatever mistakes we make in life. I have known pastors all my life, all my life, who failed in their churches. They failed in their churches, and then they blamed their own failure on all the people in the church. "Well, this person did this, or that person did that." Everything rises and falls on leadership. I do not want to hear it. You can "wah, wah, wah" all you want. At the end of the day, leadership is about a chain of command that you establish, and then it follows through from there. End of story, end of story.

Harry Truman was a good president. Of course, he got into the presidency after Roosevelt died down there in Palm Springs, but he became a decent president, the president right after World War II. Then Eisenhower came in after that. But on his desk, he had a little plaque, which I always admired. In fact, somebody gave me one years ago. I do not know what happened to it. But that little plaque had a little saying on it. You know what it was? Raise your hand. Who can tell me what that saying was? Hold on there, I know you can. I know you can. I want to see somebody that is young. Yes, what did it say? "The buck stops here." I like that. I like that. Because everybody likes to pass the buck. Do not pass the buck to me. Twenty dollars would be okay, but not a dollar. But his famous phrase was that it became famous for, "The buck stops here."

Now, very honestly, I have been in this business for a long time. I may not know anything about cars. I may not know anything about this. I may not know anything about that. I know pastors. Almost sixty years worth. I know it. I have preached in their churches. I have dealt with them. I

have seen them. I have seen some great works, some terrible works, and some works in between. I know pastors. I want to tell you right now, this is the hardest thing for a pastor to do. The hardest thing for a pastor to do is to admit that he has made a mistake. The hardest thing for him to get up and say is, "I am not perfect, folks, and I made this dumb mistake, and I want to bring it to you and ask your forgiveness." Here is the deal: they think if they admit to making a mistake, the people are going to look down on them, going to lose respect for them, think that they are weak. Actually, the opposite is true. I have learned this over the years: most people in most churches do not want a perfect pastor. They just want a real one. That is the key. But I am going to tell you, pride is a terrible thing. Pride will keep you from circumventing the verses in the Bible that put the blame on you so you can put it on somebody else. That is simple. The Bible is clear. There are places in the Bible you cannot even argue with them, but people will sidestep them because of pride. When it comes to being a pastor, I have seen it all my years. I have seen it all my years, and it is a terrible thing. The people actually will respect your honesty more than they do your hypocrisy. Because a pastor gets up there and he puts the blame on somebody else, everybody in that church knows where the blame really lies. Honesty is the best policy. You deal with it. You deal with it.

I will tell you something else, not only is it true with pastors, but it is absolutely true with politicians. You will see it on all levels. The President of the United States, a Congressman, or a Senator, they never admit they have made a mistake because to them, it is a sign of weakness, and they need to think that the people will not vote for them. I do not care who it is. Trump, Biden, Clinton, Obama, Bush, none of them, according to them, ever made a bad decision. It was always the decision that they made, but there were some circumstances that were not their fault. That is not true. In my lifetime, I think the most honest president in my time that I have seen was JFK, John Kennedy. Now he had a lot of problems, and yes, he was a Roman Catholic, and yes, he was a Democrat, and yes, I get all of that. But Democrats back then were different than they are today. The thing I have studied about his life is the fact that despite all of his problems, when he was president, he took responsibility and accountability for the mistakes of his presidency. I think the one that stands out the most was the disastrous Bay of Pigs.

Most of you do not know what the Bay of Pigs is. You think the Bay of Pigs is someplace where they raised pigs. The Bay of Pigs was in Cuba. I cannot tell you in the sixties how the fear of communism was rampant in this country. Unbelievable. I mean, there were groups that were sniffing out communists that were in every facet of this country in politics and everywhere else. The Cold War was at its height with Russia and all of the Russian communist satellite countries. Ninety miles off the coast of Florida is Cuba. Cuba was run by Fidel Castro. Fidel Castro took over that country back in the fifties through a revolt, and then the country went communist and linked up with Russia. If you are old enough, you will remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was another issue. The Cuban Missile Crisis was Russia was planning long-range missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba that could reach the United States in two minutes. No time for warning. Kennedy was president at the time, and Kennedy put an end to that in a great Cuban Missile Crisis, which is a great study in itself.

But the CIA was run by a man named Alan Dulles. Alan Dulles was a Roman Catholic. His son was a Jesuit priest. It is another part of the story. He was the head of the CIA. They had such an absolute fear and hatred for Castro and Cuba that the CIA was trying to invent all kinds of ways to assassinate Castro. Finally, they came down with a plan to invade Cuba. They got together, I do not know, four or five thousand ex-Cubans that were exiled from their countries that had the same hatred. They put them together in a battalion or a regiment or whatever the case may be. The CIA launched an attack on Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. It was in Cuba. They never told Kennedy about it. In fact, they lied to Kennedy. Once it happened, it started to go south very quickly. Then the CIA called the president and wanted some air cover to make it a success. Kennedy refused. The Bay of Pigs was a disaster. All of those guys were either killed or taken prisoner, tortured, and executed. The whole thing fell on its face. Kennedy was enraged because of the fact that the CIA, Alan Dulles, had done what he had done without informing him of the truth of it. Kennedy got up to make a speech. He had to for the disaster of Bay of Pigs. Just like Truman had the saying, "The buck stops here," Kennedy offered up one of the greatest lines that I have never forgotten, and I have used, that is so true. He simply got on television before the whole country. Even though he had nothing to do with it, even though he was not directly involved with it, he understood everything rises and falls on leadership. Before the country on NBC, ABC, CBS, he started by saying this, "My fellow Americans, success has many fathers, but failure will always be an orphan." And he took responsibility for it.

Now, this is where I can really get into the story, but we do not have time. The next day, he fired Alan Dulles, and then he began to dismantle the CIA so that they could never do that again. He started that, and of course, less than a year later, he is assassinated in Dallas. That is another part of the story. But it is an incredible, incredible picture of a man who was the President of the United States taking responsibility and accountability for a failure that he even was not directly responsible for, but he understood the great principle: everything, everything, everything rises and falls on leadership. End of story.

So, you see it all through, not only pastors with churches, you see it in politics. You hear Donald Trump, Biden, and all Clinton and all those guys, you would think they never made a bad choice in their life. They have made plenty of bad choices, but pride and weakness will not allow them to take responsibility for it.

III. Understanding Parental Scenarios

I want today to give you five things that you can do to be blameless. Again, I will help you with these things. I will tell you right now, when you are done with this today and you decide, "Okay, I know what I need to do now," sit down, let us talk about it. Let us put a plan together. Every circumstance, I am going to give you the general concept, every circumstance will, you will have to tweak it and turn it, cut it and make it fit. But this is what you have got.

Now, the model for this will be found in Luke chapter 15 verses 11 through 24. We all know it, and it is a great story of the prodigal son. Doctrinally, this prodigal son obviously is the nation of Israel. But inspirationally, it is a great picture of showing you where you begin to understand that when you lose your child, in this case, to the far country, this is where you begin.

Now, I want you to see here what I want you to see here is that when the child heads into the far country, behind that with the parents, there are four basic scenarios. You will find yourself in one of these scenarios.

6. Maybe you were unsaved and they grew up, and now they are out in the world, and then you got saved, but they are gone. This happens so, so many times.
7. The second scenario, maybe you were saved, but you were out of fellowship during this time. The key times when you should have been there for them and you were not, and now you are back, but they are gone.
8. The third scenario is you were in church all the time, but you were playing the spiritual game. You were never, never, never really connected to what you needed to do. Now you never trained them. You went to church, you played the spiritual game. Maybe you were a deacon, maybe you were a Sunday school teacher, but you never, never, never did for them what it needed to do. Now they are gone. Now you are at the place where you see that. You are right with God, but you lost your children.
9. The fourth scenario, and I see this more than I would like to see it. If there is any place that I do have with this than the first three, I totally get and understand, but this fourth one, I will be very honest, I have a tough time with. That is parents who care nothing about it. Nothing about it. Nothing about it. They look for every reason not to come to church. They get their kid involved in everything out there and every sport to take them out of Sunday, to take them out of Thursday, to take them out of child training. They care nothing about it. The parents in most cases have their own problems. Many of them have a live-in with them or they are somebody they are living with that they are not married to. Terrible example for the kids. They are the worst example that any children could have. You lose the kids. Mom and dad, you will never get. They are gone. They are probably not even saved, but they will lose the kids. When I see that, I see the most terrible of the four. The first three I can get and understand. The fourth one, I am going to be honest, I have a very tough time with. I may keep my mouth shut about it. I may never say anything. This is why I check my blood pressure every morning. Because it is unbelievably cruel to have a mom or a dad that just do not care about their kid's spirituality. They put everything else ahead of it. The mom and dad themselves have their own agendas that have nothing to do with God. You will wind up losing your kids. Those are some of the ones that, as I said last week, the Old Paths Baptist Church Adoption Agency takes in when we can. But there again, you learn a hard lesson. You learn a lesson that when we get them at twelve, thirteen, or fourteen that are really out in the world, we try the very best we can. But I want to be very honest. Sunday morning and Thursday night and the times that we can have them in our influence, it is hard to undo fourteen years of what the parents have done to them. It is a tragedy. It is a tragedy. But these are the four scenarios you have. First three, I understand. First three, I will show you how to be blameless. The fourth one, I do not even want to get into it.

IV. Five Steps to Becoming Blameless

Now, I want today to give you five things that you can do to be blameless.

1.) Stop enabling them.

Now, the model for this will be found in Luke chapter 15 verses 11 through 24. We all know it, and it is a great story of the prodigal son. Allow me to read it for you.

Luke 15:11-24

11. And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Father, help us today. Help us to put all of this stuff in one final capsule that we can all look at and understand and to help. Lord, these are good people. Lord, they are my people. I feel a tremendous responsibility for them to be able to be there to help them. Lord, I do not want to lose another child to the world. Honestly, Lord, there is no reason to. Help us, Father. Help us to

understand and to be there and to do what we need to do and helping these good folks do what they need to do. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for Your sake we ask it. Amen.

Now, there are a couple of things I want you to see here that we need to learn from this passage on the prodigal son. The first thing I want you to see is verse 13 through 16. This boy goes into the far country. He is living with his father, and then he decides, and he has obviously thought about it because the way the thing lays it out, and he asked for it in verse 12, and then not many days after, he thinks it through. He goes into the far country to live his life his way. The Bible says in verse 13 that he wasted his substance with riotous living. To me, and I could preach this thing and take it apart and make a five-week series out of it, "wasted his substance." The substance is in every one of you. The substance is what God has put in us. The substance is what makes you who you are. The substance is what God wants to take and develop and make you what He wants you to be. But here is the case with this boy. Like so many young men and young ladies are going to find today, they want life their way. He had an example of a father who seemingly, because we do not know the whole story, but seemingly is doing everything that he is supposed to do. Then he takes his inheritance. That is another key word. Notice it did not say money, it did not say goods. Inheritance. That kid wasted his substance, not just on the things that he did, but he wasted the substance of inheritance they would have gotten in the millennium with the Lord Jesus Christ. Wasting of your substance. Wasting of your substance. I have got to move on through this. Now he is at the bottom of the barrel, is he not? He is finally enrolled in Pig Pen University. Notice the Bible makes it clear that it is pigs. He is a Jew; they are unclean animals. It is a complete picture of the destruction of somebody's substance, completely out, everything that God wanted him to be.

Now, the next thing I want you to understand, this is where he needs to be. I will say it again. This is where he needs to be. Because this is where God begins to deal with him. Verse 17 says, and I love this, "when he came to himself." "When he came to himself." "When he came to himself." Verse 17 is a great principle. You never want to deny your child when they are in the far country. "When he came to himself" means, and it is in the text, he gets down so far that, and this is where they have got to get, and I am going to show you in a minute why they never get there, because you have to stop enabling them. He is down at the bottom of the barrel, has nothing, eating pig food. And he came to himself. He says, "Look at me. My father's servants have bread that they do not even need to eat, and I am starving to death." You know what he has to come to? When he comes to himself, you know what that means? It means they begin to see what they had, what they lost, what they gave up. Look where Pig Pen University leads him. Verse 18, "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Notice the two things he recognizes he sinned against. The first one is God up in heaven. The second one is his own physical father. This is where the reality begins to set in with those kids. But they have to come to themselves, and you as the parent have to allow them to come to themselves because there is no other way.

Now, so stop enabling them. We will come back to that in a minute. Now, I want you to see the father's position in this. Verse 20. The father is standing and waiting for him to come back and come to himself. He is praying, and he is trusting in what he knows in the Old Testament God

had to do. I am sure that will be Proverbs and all those other places that I have given you. But I want you to note, and this is very important, he did not go after him. He did not go after him until he saw the boy was returning from afar off. Then he goes out to meet him. The father did not chase him. He did not sneak around and look through the bushes and see him back there in the far country. He did not make sure that he did not go hungry or suffer. He did not get gas and put it into his car when he did not have enough gas. He did not give him a job or get him a job. He did not give him money to get by. When he got in trouble and got in jail, he did not run there and bail him out. He did not pay his rent. He knew what that kid needed was time with the pigs. To eat what they eat. So God could deal with him.

Here is what you will find. I have dealt with this for almost sixty years. I have watched some of the most disastrous things take place in families' lives. I get it. Here is what you find in enabling them. The parents failed them as a mother and a father. They feel terrible about that. They feel guilty about that. Yes, they feel responsible for that. So in your mind, you see them in the far country in Pig Pen University, and you feel responsible for it. So you try to compensate your failure then in what you did not do. So you become a helicopter parent. You hover over that drop zone, dropping supplies into the far country. Buddy, I see it. I have seen guys that lost their kids, and they feel terrible about it, but they never stop and see why they did and what to do to get them back. So what do they do? He creates a job for him in his little business. He thinks by giving him a job, he is going to build a relationship back into their common church. No, there is only one thing that will get him to come to himself: Luke chapter 15 at Pig Pen University.

I had a lady in the church years ago. She is no longer, left our church a long time ago. Thank God for that. Some people in churches bring joy wherever they go, and some people bring joy when they go. She had a daughter that was just, she started worked her up one side and down the other. This daughter, this daughter just used her unbelievably. The daughter would not come to church, wanted nothing to do with God. The mother felt like she could not abandon her daughter. So she went over and she would clean her house. She would pay her bills. She would make sure she had food. She would do this and she would do that. Actually thinking that if I do that, they will come back. If that was me, I would just ride it out. You are paying for everything. If I got right, I would have to get a job. If I got right, I would have to take responsibility for the rent. By doing that, honestly, you simply undo everything that God showed you He wanted to do in Luke chapter 15. You failed them early on in life, and now you are going to fail them again.

Now there will be a time when you should help them, but not at the place where God is trying to get their attention at Pig Pen University. My suggestion to you, if you find yourself in this situation, until you see them coming back, and we will talk about that in a minute, I would take the position of the father in chapter 15 verse 20. He did three things, and I tell you to do these three things.

10. He watched.
11. He prayed.
12. He waited.

Three keys to your child in a far country. I will tell you one hundred percent of the time, based on my time in the ministry, you will never get them back enabling them. There is no point to it.

2.) Fix the core support system that failed them.

The second thing, you have to fix the core support system that failed them. That will be you, the parent. Now this will be the first thing that you need to see and do. You have to fix yourself before you can fix them. You have got to quit dealing with them through your emotional and your guilt. I would suggest you get whatever help you need. Get a Bible-based plan. Sit down, let your pastor help you. Get a support group around you. Start getting the principles to put into place. Get yourself ready so when God gets them to the place that they are ready, you are both ready. It does no good for God to deal in our heart for them to come to themselves when we have not come to ourselves yet. You now must develop in your own life the idea of responding to situations instead of reacting to them. Build self-discipline, build consistency, build patience, build long-suffering. Get involved in your church. Start to minister to others. Prepare yourself, get yourself ready. Learn from the mistakes you made. Do not beat yourself up. Move forward in your life. Find you a church and a pastor of people who do not look down on you but want to help you and make you better, who really understand it. But you need to see first your own failure to now be successful in helping them get back. That is by taking responsibility and starting to fix it by fixing you, the core support system. Get yourself ready for when God gets them ready.

3.) Take full responsibility for the failure of your family.

The third thing, as far as I am concerned, this is the key to it all. You take full responsibility for the failure of your family. Quit sidestepping the verses that clearly point the finger where it needs to point. Get rid of your pride, get rid of your arrogance, get rid of your hypocrisy. Do not tell me you believe the virgin birth and the tribulation and the rapture of the doctrine but then you want to sidestep the ones that make you responsible for your children. Because without a doubt, number three will be the hardest thing you ever have to do in your life. Yet, it should be the easiest thing to do, but it is not. Here is what I will help you do. Call a family meeting. Humble yourself. Tell them of your failure to give them the vision. You can put yourself in whatever scenario, one, two, or three. You will never be number four. But you can lay it out and say, "This is where I was, and I am sorry, I did not do, I take full responsibility for it." You will begin to establish the first fundamental principle in your life that you better get down: everything, everything, everything, everything, everything rises and falls on leadership. Then you ask for their forgiveness. I cannot tell you what you will gain by doing this. God will use it.

Now, the response could be in a couple of different ways. Number one, they will come back and they will say, "Oh, no, Dad, no, Dad, we do not blame you, we do not blame you." And that, the kids are actually now starting to defend you. Or you are going to hear, "Yes, you are. Yes, you were not what I needed." Either way, you do not defend yourself. Either way, you own it, you take it. You let it get out of their system, the pain that has been there probably for many years. In time, if you follow through with these steps, God will use it to soften their heart. But I want to be honest with you, in almost sixty years of ministry, I have only had two fathers that were willing

to do that. Pride is a terrible thing. I do not understand why your pride and your arrogance and your hypocrisy, when you know what the Bible says, but are you allowed to stand in your way of that kid ever maybe having a chance to come back?

4.) Get a life of consistency.

The fourth thing. Get a life of consistency. Here is where you begin to set the example. You have stopped enabling them, you have fixed the core problem or you are in the process, and then you have set out with them and you have been honest with them. Now you begin to set the example for them. It does no good to set the example for them without you explaining to them why you have to set the example. You cannot fix something without explaining how it got broke. Can you not get that? Please do not tell me you are going to call the meeting and you are going to say, "Well, when we went to church, I am really sorry where you are at, but when we went to church, those other families over there, they were really a problem." Are you really going to think that they are going to buy that? You become the example that God will reach down through you.

I use this all the time in dealing with marriage scenarios where maybe the wife wants to do what is right and the husband does not, or the husband does and the wife does not, and they are frustrated. I would tell them, and it is the same scenario, I would tell them, "You start to do what is right. Then God will reach down through the person who is doing what is right and tap on their shoulder who is the one who is not doing what is right." That is where it has to start. Nobody should be closer to your children than you. You have allowed something or somebody to get closer. Now you want that back. So how do you do that? One, you become blameless. Two, you start to live a life of consistency, you get honest about it, and then you allow the Holy Spirit of God to reach down through you and touch their hearts.

Can I be honest? It is a lot easier just to blame somebody else, is it not? You bet it is. Do not kid me. I have been there. I have seen it. This is one of the hardest things you will ever have to do. My suggestion is, you young couples, do not get yourselves in that situation. But if you do, I am here. The book is here. Now allow them to see your changed life. You confessed it to them, you made it right. Now let the Holy Spirit of God deal with them through your humble attitude of brokenness in your contrite spirit. This will always work even when it does not show. Here is where the consistency and the patience pays off. But you have to fix yourself first to be able to let God fix them.

5.) Once you take responsibility, now you can help them take responsibility.

The fifth thing, once you take responsibility, now you can help them take responsibility. Now you are in the blameless position. Blameless. I am going to show you, when we get to the end, this is the single fundamental basic doctrine of the Word of God. You try to form a bond with them. It will not be the right bond that you could have had, but you have got to start somewhere. You begin to bring them into your world, even if it starts on their terms, but your motive is to get them to build that relationship. They may reject it. That is okay. This is where you have to be patient. This is where you have to understand that you have to give them all the space that they need. I said it earlier, you cannot fix in a year what the damage that was done in nineteen years of their life.

Men especially, men especially. Men, and I can speak about men, because guess what, I am not transgender, I am a man. So let me talk for you. Men can be the most insensitive, stupidest people on planet earth. Where a woman, on the other hand, is one of the most sensitive, tender people on planet earth. So we got made up. I have dealt with marriage situations where the guy knew he was wrong, and he did not do what was right with his wife. She is struggling with it. She is not ready to work it all out yet, but she is headed in the right direction. The hardest thing to do is to get him to keep his mouth shut and be patient. I will tell him to do a few things. He will do those two things and then he will say, "Are we back now? How am I doing? What is wrong with you? I am doing everything I needed to do." He is insensitive and he is stupid. Because he does not realize that it takes longer to fix something than it did for you to break it.

It is the exact same way. You have to be patient. You have to give them space. You have to give them time. Do not ever read what you see on the outside. When you have done the first three or four, do not read on the outside what is going on on the inside. Trust the promises as God is doing what God does best, working in their life. Sometimes they do not want to show that. Sometimes they have not got all the anger out. Sometimes they just do not know where they are at. So, you need to know where you are at. You need to be stable. You need to be steadfast. You need to be patient. You need to be long-suffering.

Isaiah chapter one verse 18 is to me, one of the great parenting principles in the Bible. God is my Father. I am His child. You are a father and a mother, and you have a child. When you get to this point, I always look at my life before I was saved. When I was in the world, and brother, I was in the far country. I always think of that great verse in Isaiah chapter one there where it says that the Lord says, "Come, let us reason together."

Isaiah 1:18

18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

In other words, you know what God did with me when I was unsaved? He could have just killed me and put me in hell. He should have. He could have cut off my legs in a car wreck and broke my back and put me in a paraplegic and just left me there. But you know what He did? Because even in my unsaved state, when I was in the far country, He loved me. You know what He did? He reasoned with me. He reasoned with me. Now you find yourself in the exact same situation. Do what God did with you. Be patient, give him space, give him time. Reason with him. Reason with him. I like that. Reason with him. Reason with him. What does that really mean? Reason with him. Reason with him. Give him the right reason to come out of the far country. I am telling you.

Now more than ever, they need you to be kind, long-suffering, understanding, but firm and unyielding to the work God is doing in their life. You certainly do not enable them. When they go through tough times in life, instead of running to their rescue, lovingly, kindly, reasoning with them, you say, "Yes, I really feel bad about that. I want to tell you, this is where Philippians 4:19 says, 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' I was at the same place. I lost this, lost that, and if it would not have been for God in my life, I do

not know how I would have made it." You see, you are bringing everything, but you have earned the right, you are blameless now. You have earned the right to be able to say that. You took responsibility for it. They see now the difference in your life, if you are consistent, and now you have earned the right. That is how you begin to help them. You do not help them by giving them the money. You help them by showing them the life of reason. There is a life with God. Let the Holy Spirit of God take it and work with it. It may not bring instant results, it is okay. The first time you ever, all you guys and gals that are the bedrock of this church, the foundation, you make the thing work, you are the core. But you know as well as I do, the first time you heard me preach, you did not run out of here, run down front, get me in the hallway and say, "I am ready to go." No, no, no. You had to reason it out with God to get where you are at.

Be the father, be the mother, standing by the gate, waiting, praying, and watching with open arms that when God has to get them to the point through Pig Pen University, that he came to himself, and then he reasoned, and then he said, "I am going back to my father." Do not deny him that.

Now within these five things you do, you will need to never lose sight of a couple of things.

13. You are going to have to make sure that you understand you have to make some tough calls. You are going to have to make some radical calls, but then radical calls deal with radical situations. In the world, this is called tough love. In the Bible, it is standard operational procedure.
14. Again, you begin to be the right model. Even if you think it is too late or it looks like it is too late, there is always something you can do. It is never too late to do right. Never go by what you see and what they say. Always know that God will work in their life on the inside reaching down through you if you do what is right. Trust the promises and the principles. Quit making excuses for them. Quit making excuses for yourself. Quit blaming them. Quit being angry with them. Quit being frustrated with them. Quit blaming them for what you made them to be. Take complete responsibility for the failure, and you lay out to them where you are at, and allow that process to begin of healing.

V. The Right Motive and God's Blamelessness

Now, the fourth thing I want to say here, this is very important. It is just going to sound really strange, so listen clearly. But it is a solid biblical principle. Whatever you do in these five things, you need to begin to develop the right motive in doing it. I will say it again, when you do these five things, you need to begin to do them with the right motive. Now, to most of us, the right motive would be, "I am doing this to get my child back." That is the wrong motive. You may never get them back. It may be twenty years before you get them back. You may be dead and gone before they come back. The motive that we have because of something particularly that we want, many times will end in a disaster. You do not do these things to get your child back even though your heart desires to get your child back. You do this because it is the right thing to do whether they come back or not.

I have dealt with couples and wives in marital situations, and she is done. He will say, "Well, I am going to try this. I try this and try this." I always ask him, "Why are you going to do all this?"

"Well, I want to get my wife back." I said, "Well, that is the wrong motive. You will never get her back that way. What are you talking about?" You do not do those things to get your wife back. You do those things because that is the right thing to do no matter what the circumstances are. Old Bob Jones used to say, "Do right to the start, fella." You do it because it is the right thing to do. That is the right motive. You never know what is going to happen. I know what the desire of your heart is. I get it, but you better understand that you are not doing it just to get what you want. That is what got you into this mess in the first place. You are doing it because you have now come to the place that you do what is right. The bottom line is to be blameless.

I have told you this many, many times that the end result in any conflict, I do not care what it is, who it is with or whatever. Sometimes it cannot happen. Sometimes it happens on one side, but not the other. Ideally, when both sides come to it, it is a good thing because it is a biblical thing. The key to God and the key to the Bible is restitution. When I got saved, I got restored to God. I made restitution. I will give you the old concept of standing in state. Your state is your fellowship that you are in right now, but you know what your standing is with God? You are blameless. You are blameless. You say, "Well, you do not know what I did. If I pulled out on the freeway and I gave him the high sign and cursed him out and everything." You are blameless. Sorry. Sorry. That may be your state, but your standing is sinless perfection. Why? God restores you. Restitution. Restitution. Once that happens, once you take responsibility and accountability for those failed actions, once that happens, now the process can begin. Whether it works out or not, you are blameless. Now it is on them. You have absolved yourself of any blame. You have got to see that. You have got to see that. I mean, you have got to see that. You have absolved yourself of it. Now it is on them.

Now, the whole Bible, everything about God, everything about Christ, you and me, comes down to this fundamental concept that I just laid out for you today. I have had smart guys try to run me over with this, and they will say this, and it is true. They will say, "Let me ask you a question." I said, "Yes." "Did God let sin come into the world?" Yes, He did. Yes, He did. "And did God allow man to choose the wrong choice in the garden?" Yes, He did. "And does not the Bible say in some place that God created evil? And the devil?" Yes, it does. "Well then, what is all this stuff you have given me? If God allowed sin to come into the world, and God allowed man to make the wrong choice when He could have stopped it, how is God ever going to judge me and send me to hell when He is the blame for sin coming into the world in the first place?" I have been asked that many times. I have been asked that many times. Because at the end of the day, God, listen to me, God is to blame for sin coming into this world. You say, "Well, what heresy is this?" Oh, it is one you have not figured out yet. He did. You will be to blame. When you will all, at the command of your family, He allowed to come into the world. The key is coming blameless. So God, who was to blame? He could not blame it on the devil. He created the devil for the day of evil. He could not blame it on the third of the angels that left with the devil. He created the devil that got the angels to leave. He could not blame it on Adam and Eve because after they fell, there was a tree of life. He put a cherub with a flaming sword to keep everybody out. He could have done that around Adam and Eve's house to keep the devil out. God was to blame. So how did He become blameless? The same God that was to blame for allowing sin to come into the world, is

the same God that took on the body of man that came down and died on the cross to take the sin out of the world. And now He is blameless. See?

The same God that allowed it to come in is the same God who humbled Himself on the cross. He was God Almighty. He left the throne of heaven. He came down to earth, took on the body of a servant, left His deity up on the throne, humbled Himself to be a man. Now He is blameless. You cannot blame Him anymore. At the Great White Throne Judgment, if you try to bring up that argument, the Holy Spirit of God will stand up and say, "Uh-uh, out of court. Yes, you let it here, we let it in, but we paid the price to get it out. Once we did that, we are blameless. Now it is on you." Greatest single doctrine in the Bible. The whole Bible will build on it. Your salvation will build on it. You are a great Christian. You are the Bible, the whole Bible will build on it. Your salvation is built on it. Yes, He let sin come into the world, but He paid the price to take it out. He is blameless now, and then He made the same process for you with your family. You too can become blameless. But you have to pay the price, just like He did. Let us be honest, a lot of parents are not willing to pay that price.

When I think about Him dying for me on the cross, He is my Father, and I am His child. When I think about before He ever came down to this earth, and in the foreknowledge of God, He saw me. He saw me burning in hell. He saw me in my life as a disaster. He saw me headed for the lake of fire. God, as my Father, loved His child so much that He was willing to allow sin to come into the world. For the model for me, but then had the humbleness to pay the price to take it out. Now it is blameless. He put the blame on me. Then He said, after He was blameless, and I was to blame, He said, "Come now, Bob, let us reason together. I do not want you to go to hell. I do not want you to be separated from Me. My love for you was greater than My deity. My love for you was greater than My part in the Trinity. Because I gave it all up as the Son of God to come down to be the Son of Man. Why, Bob? Because I loved you as My child. As My child, I came down and made Myself blameless. Now you are the blame, Bob, let us reason together. Come on, son. I love you. I love you. I do not care what you have done. I do not care where you have been. I do not care how far you are in the far country and how many pigs you were with in the pig pen. Come on back. You know what? The thing that will never end for me and for you is My love. I will love you to the day I die, and that love will never waver." Those are the things that you think you should say to your child, maybe you should. Those are the things God said to me. He set the example. He set the example. There you have it.

VI. Conclusion and Next Steps

Now, everything you need, you have in your hands. You have me, you have the people, you have the material. I will be here for you. Before you have this meeting, if you decide to do that, I applaud you. Get a hold of me and let us sit down. There are some things that you need to say and do, and there are some things you do not need to say and do, but this situation will be different. I will help you plan that meeting. But for most of you with young children, my advice is the Lord never having to have that meeting. The meeting that you want to have is your vision planning meetings. You do that and never have to have the meeting I preached on today. But whatever you find yourself, I am here for you. I do not care what you did. I do not care how bad

you screwed it up. I do not care. This church is no different than the other church. The first time I had it, I do not know how many people signed up for your package. About a third of them have not even picked them up yet. Not even here today. That is just the way it goes. I have told you my philosophy: save as many of them as I can. I am not under the illusion I will get them all. But I am going to save as many of them as I can. That is my job.

Next week, before we get back in Psalms, we have talked about a family vision meeting for your family. For your family, this church is a family. I say the incredible time next week with where it is at on Sunday morning, be here. If you are working in the nursery, make sure you listen to it. But I want to talk about our family vision of this church, where God is taking us in the next six months and the next year. It is an incredible thing that He is doing. The job of the pastor is the job of a parent: keep that balance and keep the information of what God is doing. That is what we are going to do. Some incredible things. We are dismissed here.