

How To Be A Godly Father

Ephesians 6:1-4

Pastor John Miller

I want to read verses 1 to 4 in Ephesians 6, so would you please follow with me in your Bibles beginning in Verse 1: Paul says, "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right, or the righteous thing to do." He says, "honor thy father and thy mother," which is the first Commandment, "with a promise. That it may be well with thee that thou mayest live long upon the Earth. And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath or discouragement, but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord."

It is Father's Day and I wanted to look together with you at the subject of how to be a Godly father. Someone has said that a child is not likely to find a father in God unless he finds something of God in his father. I love that. If you want your children to love God and to know God and to find God, then your children should see God in the way that you live.

And isn't it interesting that God Himself refers to Himself as a Father to us. That he's a Father to the fatherless. And when we get saved, the Bible says that we cry out, "Abba Father." Jesus taught us to pray so that when you pray say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." So God is our Father but God has given to us earthly fathers to represent him, to mold and shape and make their children into men and women that will honor God and serve God.

I believe that children are a gift from God. I believe that children are loaned to us from God, and we only have them for a short time to influence them in the ways of God. So I believe that we need to make a priority as dads the raising of our children, the discipline of our children, the love and nurturing of our children, and that we need to teach them in the way that they shall go.

You know as I was thinking about being a dad myself, I thought there are three great joys in my life, and I want to give them to you, and I want to kind of give them to you in their order. First of all, the day that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, that was the greatest day of my life upon Earth. And I'll never forget that day, that I prayed and I asked Jesus to come into my heart and to forgive my sins. And such joy that I felt, and I knew that I was His child, and that God was my Father. And I began this journey of God my Father and I his child, and that was the greatest day of my life, for which I am eternally grateful.

The second greatest day of my life was the day that I married my bride, Christie, and the Lord brought the two of us together, and we became one flesh. I became a married man. That was kind of freaky, kind of mind blowing, I'm married, I just felt, like, weird, I'd look in the mirror like, "you're married, dude."

This is crazy, you know? I was 25, I should have been mature by that point, but I had a lot of growing up to do, and that God brought to me this amazing woman to be my wife, and to be a devoted mother, and a devoted grandmother. I still take great joy in seeing my wife's love for our children, and for our grandchildren and her commitment to them, it just means the world to me.

So I accepted Christ, day two, that day when I married Christie and we became husband and wife, and then, you've guessed what the third thing is by now, that is the first child. That when my daughter Sarah was born, and then daughter Amy- or, daughter Bethany was born, let's get them in right order.

And then Bethany was born, Amy will be here third service, so I've got to make sure I get it straight. And then, you know, Sarah, Bethany, Amy. I did this so well first service.

And we had three girls, and I thought, "you know, hey, this is great I'm a dad of three daughters, I love my girls, they're such a blessing." And I grew up by the way with all sisters.

Two older, two younger, I'm right in the middle.

Dolls everywhere.

Dolls, doll houses, doll's clothes... everything. I thought, and then I had three girls, I thought, "what have I done to deserve this?"

No, I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I wouldn't trade my girls for the world. And so I'm destined to live my whole life in a house full of women, you know, it's like, Lord... and then we had a blessing come along, our fourth child was a son.

Jared. What a blessing he has been, what a joy. And how he loves his big sisters and how his big sisters love him and they get along so wonderfully and they just bring such joy to my heart.

And as I thought about that, I thought, you know those are really the priorities of a man's life. Your relationship to God, your relationship to your wife, and your relationship to your children. Your commitment, priority wise, is number one, to maintain a healthy and right walk with God, to be the man of God, that God's called you to be, and then to be a devoted husband. Before you can be a father, you need to be a husband.

Now I went into it probably too much- too much detail first service, but I actually believe that God has ordained that you get married first before you have children. Now it is a trend right now in our culture to have purposefully, intentionally, to have kids out of wedlock. "I'm not married, but I want to raise a kid." That's flat out- that's flat out wrong. Now I realize that through death or divorce or other tragedies, we have single parents, and God will help you, He will intervene, He will strengthen you, but that's not God's design. God's design is that children be raised in a home of a mother- with their mother and their father. And they excel best if they have their biological father and mother in a loving relationship, nurturing, training, disciplining, rearing, those children. I don't know anyone that would argue and not say that that is the best for our children.

Why we would pass laws in America to do anything otherwise, I do not understand. Bible or no Bible, it's insanity to encourage anything but a marriage between one man and one woman raising children in that home. That's the building block of society.

That's the building block. And it just so happens to be God's divine design. That's the way God designed it. First comes marriage. Then the children.

And God wants you to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. But it's difficult. It's hard- before we look at these verses, I want to mention three things that make being a father difficult. The first is the drift away from the Biblical pattern from marriage, which I just addressed. The second is the decaying morality that is the result of our abandoning God's word, and the third is the description of the last days in Second Timothy 3, it tells us that in the Last Days, men will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. That men will also love themselves and they will love money. And then it says that they will not love family. The English translation renders that, "without natural affection," but the Greek phrase there literally means, "without family love." There will be no love for family, and this is what makes it hard to be a dad, a Godly dad, a Godly father, and husband in these Last Days that we are living. Yet, as Christian fathers, God has given us precepts and His word to follow.

And before we look at Verse 4, God's word to the fathers, I want you to notice in Verses 1 to 3, Paul gives us some principles as children as to how we should relate to our parents. And they are two fold, I want you to notice that first of all, in Verse 1, there's the action of obedience. It says, "children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right, or righteous," some translate that "natural," or just a- "according to nature" thing, it's the right or righteous thing, or the natural thing. Now the word "obey" means "to rank yourself under." And it has the literal meaning of listening to- you ever see little toddlers, and mom or dad are going, "do you hear me? Are you listening to me? Did you-" here's the classic, "did you hear what I said to you?" And they're just still looking at their little computer game, and they're like- you know in the restaurant the other day, to have lunch with our kids and our grandkids, and they got these little computers on the table, the kids never- they're just playing computers while we're eating, and it's like, we came here to have a family meal, and there's like, I felt like throwing it across the restaurant.

I didn't.

I would have been arrested and had to pay for the stupid thing.

Is that Pastor Miller throwing a tantrum over there?

It's like, turn off the phones. Turn off the computers. Let's talk. Let's communicate. I think families sit around the dinner table and they text each other, you know.

"Pass the mashed potatoes please."

Like, what's that? It's insane. But so many times, kids aren't listening to their parents.

This word, "obey" conveys the idea of listening with the purpose of obeying. They're both involved in that Greek phrase. It's an action. But there's the attitude verse, too. Where it says, they are "to honor thy father and thy mother." And that this is the first Commandment with a promise, he's drawing from Commandment #5 in the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, "that

it may be well with you-" Verse 3, "that thy mayest live long upon the earth."

So first is the action of obedience, the second is the attitude of honor. Now how do children honor their parents? Well it's hard when their parent is not honorable, but basically they are to obey them, they're to respect them, they're to love them, and they are to care for them. Why? Notice that, in Verse 3, because it's a Commandment with a promise. What is a promise? That it may be well with you. So generally speaking the principle, coming out of the promise, is that you'll have a better life.

And I flat out believe that. I believe that a child who learns to listen to his parents, and obey his parents, and honor his parents, will have a better life. They'll do better in school, they'll do better socially, they'll do better spiritually, they will learn to a better adult, when they listen and obey and honor their parents. I believe that's just a flat out rule of the Bible, which is true in life.

I think of so many heartaches that were spared me, because my parents instructed me in the way of the Lord. And things that it kept me from that I would have indulged in, had I not been taught, that's right that's wrong, we don't do that in Christian- God sees your heart, God's looking in you, this is God's Word, and it kept me from a lot of harm. And I have scars on my face to prove that if I'd obeyed my parents the other side of the coin, I wouldn't be all scarred up, either. "Don't play on top of the garage."

"You could fall and hurt yourself." I'm in the doctor's office getting all stitched up because I'm doing what my mom told me not to do. Should've listened to her. I have friends that are dead right now because they didn't listen to their parents and obey the law.

So it's a Commandment with a promise. Now, little footnote here, this reference to the Commandment with a promise, he's drawing from the Ten Commandments, known as the Decalogue. Do you know what Commandment #5 is? "Honor your father and your mother." That's the Fifth Commandment.

Now, Bible students understand that the Ten Commandments is divided into two tablets of stone. Moses had two tablets of stone. But they disagree on how many on the first stone, and how many on the second stone. We know there's two stones, but is it five and five, or is it six and four, and how are they divided up on these tablets of stone? I happen to believe that it's the first five on one stone, and the second five on the other stone, which is interesting, because the first stone or tablet of the law, deals with my relationship to God. The First Commandment: "thou shall have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. That shalt not make unto thee any graven images." All the Commandments on the first set of stone- or piece of stone, were all my relationship to God. But guess what appears at the end of that first piece of stone? Commandment #5. "Honor thy father and thy mother." Now, we would like to pull it over to the second piece of stone. Which deals with my relationship to people. Don't lie, don't steal, don't commit adultery... and don't commit murder. So we put that on the second tablet. Where does God put it? I believe that God puts it on the first tablet. First five. And why? Because I believe that God has placed parents and the lead to be taken by

fathers, to be his representatives to be taken in the home.

So fathers, you have a great responsibility. You are God's representative in that home. So much of what kids learn about God they learn from the example of their father on earth. I heard of a little boy that was dying one time, and his father was by his bedside, and the father said to his son, "son, are you afraid to die?" and the little boy looked up at his dad and said, "Not if God is like you." That's radical. And that's the example of a Godly father, of a loving father. And we want to be that representative in the home.

So children are to obey their parents, and they're to honor their parents. And it gives us a Commandment that it may be well with thee. Couple verses to back that up, proverbs 10, verse 27, the fear of the Lord leads to length of life, but the years of the wicked will be cut short. Here's a great verse to read your little ones when you're tucking them into bed at night: proverbs 30, verse 17. By the way, that's tongue-in-cheek, I say that sarcastically. Listen to what it says: "The eyes that mock a father, that scorn obedience to a mother, shall be plucked out by the ravens in the valley."

Verse isn't over. "They will be eaten by the vultures."

"Good night, little Bobby, sweet dreams."

He's like [crying sounds]. "I have a verse for you tonight sweetheart, when I tuck you into bed."

"Don't mock your mother or father or the ravens are gonna eat your eyeballs." Whoa. That'll get them in line real quick, right? They see any birds outside they won't want to go out the door.

But generally speaking, it will bring length of life.

Now, Paul moves to fathers, and His instructions for them, Verse 4. Now the Bible's a balanced book, and God does not command children to obey or honor their parents without also giving parents a corresponding responsibility. I don't know if you've ever noticed that in Ephesians, but when it tells wives to submit to their husbands, guess what it tells husbands to do? Love their wives. When it tells children to obey their parents, guess what it tells parents to do? Don't provoke your children to anger. But nurture them and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When it tells slaves or servants to be obedient to their masters, guess what it tells masters to do? It says give unto your servants that which is just and right and equal. So the balance in the Bible is amazing to me. So Paul exhorts the children, which are dependent children, to obey their parents, and even as adult children we do honor our fathers and our mothers.

But now he moves Verse 4 to the parents, and he has two basic commands for them. One is negative, and the other is positive. So I call these the father's "don'ts," and a father's "do's". Dads, I'm speaking directly to you. Here it is: don't provoke your children, verse 4, to wrath. That's the negative. The NIB translates that, "do not exasperate your children. Do not goad your children to resentment lest they lose heart and become discouraged." Fathers can easily

misuse their authority. "I'm the man of the house, do what I say, slamming doors, hitting walls, yelling, screaming, getting mad, and dads come in and kids cower, and "do what I say," and you yell and scream- we don't represent God in the home. We don't represent Christ in the home.

Now I by no means am a perfect father. I'm a human being, and I make mistakes and there's no such thing as a perfect dad. But I have raised children, I have now grandchildren, and I realize the challenges and I've learned a lot by just experience, and looking back in perspective. What a blessing if you could raise your children and then God gave you a second chance to do it all over again, huh? He doesn't. You only got one shot at it, so you'd better get it right.

And I think that it's important that we pay attention to what God's word says. He says "do not exasperate your children." And let me just give a few ways that fathers exasperate their children. First one is criticism. Dads that overly critical. Dad of the soccer field, "can't you do anything right?" or, dad telling you, "you never do anything right, you can't do anything right," and they're always criticizing, and maybe they use harshness or sarcasm or ridicule their children. In Colossians 3:21 the parallel passage, it says "do not discourage your children." And criticism can discourage a child.

And secondly is over-strictness. Don't be overly strict or controlling. Now I've mentioned it before but I still think it's a great illustration, parenting is like holding a wet bar of soap. The tighter you squeeze, [sound] they're gone. Some kids are just seething with anger, "I can't wait 'til I move out, I can't wait 'til I get out from under my parents' domination and control, I can't wait 'til I get away from my dad," and the minute they get out, they write their parents off and they have nothing to do with them anymore. And many times it's because you're holding them too tight, but on the other hand, if you hold a wet bar of soap too loosely, [sound] it slips right through your hands.

So there's a delicate balance. It takes the wisdom from God, it takes being filled with the Holy Spirit, to know that balance, on not being overly strict, or not being too lenient, but often in Christians' homes, we become too strict, we want to keep them from the world, we want to protect them from worldly influences, and I do believe, that as a dad, you should know who your kids' friends are, you should approve of them, you should know what they're listening to, what they're watching, what they're doing, what their activities are, you need to be engaged, don't be a deadbeat dad and not have any clue about what's going on in the lives of your kids. You should find about their schoolwork and their homework and how they're doing in school and how they're getting along, and you should take time to listen to them. And the list could go on and on. But you need to be careful that as a Christian father, or parent, that you're not overly strict, or you're living legalism in the home rather than God's grace, or you're concerned only about your own reputation. And if you get arrested and your name's in the paper, that's going to reflect badly on the family, so don't step out of line. In other words, your only concern is not for the kid, but for your own reputation. And you need to be concerned with your own reputation.

And then thirdly, you can exasperate your kids by inconsistency. You say yes, you say no, you say yes, you say no. We all know as parents, our kids will ask us something and we'll say, "no. I

don't care what it is, but the answer's no." "I was going to ask if I could mow the lawn for you, dad."

"Yes!"

"Good boy, right now." And I remember telling my son, "no, no, no, I was just frustrated, I was just," you know, "don't bother me," and she goes "no, leave me alone," and then I found out what the issue- it was like, oh. I had to apologize, I had to eat crow, I had to ask your kids to forgive me, it's okay, you know, go ahead. But its like- you know, they're going to become schizophrenic.

Last time I ever rode a horse, forty years ago, it was about the third time I tried to ride a horse. I don't do horses.

I don't ride horses. They're big, and scary, and they have their own minds. And I don't have a clue what I'm doing on these stupid things, it's like, "okay, giddyup, horse."

I don't know how to give it the right signals, I don't know how to turn it, stop it, you know, there's no gas pedal or break, you know. Last time I rode a horse, that horse was doing whatever it wanted to. You wanna know why? Because it knew it had an idiot on its back.

I knew the dude riding it hadn't got a clue so it was just, "woo-hoo! I'm just going to do whatever I want." And I couldn't get the horse to cooperate.

And that's like a lot of parents. A lot of parents don't have a clue what they're doing. They're thinking, man I wish this thing would have come with an owner's manual. It did: the Bible. Heard the story of a fourth grade Sunday school teacher that asked his class, "Does anyone know what the Bible teaches parents to do?" Or, he said, "What is God's word to parents?" And a little boy in the back said, "Forgive them, Father, they know not what they do."

He's like, "My parents haven't got a clue."

But God has given us his word, and we need to be careful that we're not overly strict, we're not inconsistent, and we don't show favoritism, that's another way to create anger and bitterness and exasperate a child. Isaac favored Esau over Jacob and then Jacob favored Joseph over his brothers, and it caused division in the family. I know you're naturally kind of drawn to one child, one who's kinda- maybe is athletic, and you're athletic, and you think, this is the cool kid, and you focus on that one, and this one's kinda nerdy and they don't do anything that you like, but yet you need to make sure that you love all your children equally, amen, you know why? Because God loves us all equally, right?

God doesn't love one more than the other because they're athletic and the other one isn't. And you don't want to compare them, "why can't you be like your brother? Why can't you be like your sister?" and we compare kids and we frustrate them.

And then lastly, the list could go on, but I think of being irritable. I think of how many times I brought home my irritation to my family. I had a bad day. Isn't it funny how many children lose heart because their dads had bad days? Guys, don't take out your frustrations on your kids. It's not their fault that the deal fell through. It's not their fault that you got fired. It's not their fault. Don't blame your kids, or take out your frustrations on your wife or on your children, and then neglect, as David neglected Absalom.

God created our children with their hearts like a compass toward their parents. It's an awesome influence. I look at my little grandson and I look at him look at his dad, and I see in his eyes and I see in his face, he loves his dad, and he wants to be like his dad. And I looked at my son and I realized my son wanted to be like me. And how much influence and how much impact, and what I taught and what I believed and how I lived and how it impacted his life. I have to think about others now that I'm a father.

You guys as dads today, you need to be thinking about your kids. The way you live, the way you act, the way you react, your attitudes, your actions. You're molding and shaping them, they're learning from your example. And if we do these things, inconsistency, favoritism, neglect, or criticism, or over-discipline and strictness, it can frustrate them.

But what are the positives? Let's move on in our text. Paul says it very clearly. They're three-fold. These are the "do's" of fatherhood. Do: bring them up, do: nurture them, do: admonish them. Three "do's." I call them tenderness, or love, discipline, and third is, instruction.

First of all he says in Verse 4 to the fathers, "bring them up." That word, "bring them up," in the Greek, that phrase excuse me, "bring them up," is the same word translated in chapter 5, verse 29, "to nourish and to cherish." Jump back to Ephesians 5, verse 29, speaking to husbands he says, "No man ever hated his own flesh," but what does he do? He nourishes it. He cherishes it. That's the same Greek word translated in verse 4, "bring them up." Nourish them. Cherish them. You know what the word means? It literally means, "to warm with body heat." It means "to warm with body heat." The idea of tenderly, affectionately, hugging your children, showing them affection. John Calvin translates this, "let them be fondly cherished." Rear them tenderly. It means to feed them- their emotional tank, with love and affection. Children need a father's love. I believe that children need to be told by their father, "I love you."

I've had deadbeat dads come into my office, "You know, I like my kids but, you know, they irritate me and they frustrate me, and- I've got a lot of work to do, I'm frustrated, you know, and the wife needs to get them out of the way, and take care-" it's like, they're your children. God trusted them to you. You better walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh in that home, which is being irritable. You're in the flesh when you're irritable. And you're only thinking about yourself. And kids have an emotional tank that needs to be filled. And nobody better to fill that tank than a father.

Let me give the dads some advice. You dads, start with your daughters. Hug them, kiss them. Tell them that you love them. Fill that emotional tank or they'll find it somewhere else. Be an

example. Hug your daughters, kiss your daughters, be affectionate with your daughters, show love to your girls. And your sons. Even a dad, you go, "well that's not very manly, I want my son to grow up to be a man," you know. Nothing more manly than a father holding a baby, kissing a baby, hugging a toddler, kissing a toddler, hugging an adolescent, or a teen, or hugging even their adult children.

My dad is 90 and he's kissed and hugged me all the way up into his 90's. When I was a teen, my dad would come in my room when I went to bed and he would hug me and kiss me and he would say, "I love you. I'm proud of you. I'm praying for you." It changed my life. Changed the direction of my life. I never forgot that. It went with me all through my life, and in a thousand different ways, it protected me to think my dad loves me, he respects me, he's praying for me, he respects me, my mother loves me. And that's what this word means.

So job number one for a Godly father is to show affection to your children. Man is never more manly than when he shows affection to his own children. Tell them you love them, hug them, listen to them when they talk, and spend time with them. I laughed just a little bit because now, when I'm with the grandchildren, I actually enjoy hearing them talk. I was with my granddaughter the other day, she's 5. Ah, she's just going a thousand miles an hour, and I just- I was just digging it.

Now I understand, if she lived there, I'd probably get tired of it.

I think, "ah, this is so awesome." But then I thought back and I remembered when I had three little girls in the house and I said, "let's play a game, it's called, be quiet."

"Who cannot talk for the longest time?"

"Sounds fun. Let's play that game. Let's play the be quiet game."

But now when you're a grandparent, and it's like man, if I knew how fun grandkids were, I would've had them first, you know?

They talk, they have fun, they goof off, and then you give them back to their parents. Let them go crazy. But we need to listen to our children.

Now here's the second thing for dads to do. This is the second "do," dad. Nurture means taking the disciplinary action in the home. So it says, bring them up in the nurture. In the nurture. The word nurture- in the English, the word "nurture," we wouldn't derive this from it, but it actually means to train them by discipline. Kids need discipline. And dads should take the lead in disciplining their children. Proverbs 13:24, "he that spares his rod hates his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him, often." Even in Hebrews 12, verse 6, says, "whom the Lord loves, he chasteneth."

Whatever happened to spanking? Now, I know I could go to jail for saying that. I mean I can see it on the evening news, "pastor tells congregation, 'spank.'"

You can go to jail for spanking today. That's why our country's in a mess. God have mercy, the Bible says, proverbs 18:8, "chasten thy son while there is hope. Let not thy soul spare for his crime." "You're gonna kill me, you're gonna kill me!" "No, I'm not." They freak out. And you haven't even hit 'em yet.

You ever have that happen? [screaming] I haven't even started! I'll give you something to cry about.

And God has provided a soft little spot on their backside for the application of this Biblical principle.

I'm gonna give you some steps in corporal punishment. Now, I know that there's time out. When I was a kid, I never heard of such a thing, time out.

My mom had a big wooden stick and hung that on the wall. All she'd have to do is point to that sucker, I'd say, "yes. You got it mom." Proverbs 29:15, "the rod and reproof give wisdom. But a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." And then Proverbs 22:15 says, "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Now some steps is you start young, you read the verse that says "while there's hope," people bring teenagers to us pastors and say, "fix 'em." Fix 'em? 18 years you messed 'em up and you want me to fix 'em in an hour?

It's not going to happen. Start very young. It needs to be based on prior instruction. They need to know that what they were doing was wrong. It needs to be in private. Need to tell them why they're being punished. Don't do it in anger. Spank them in the proper place. Look for a change of heart, and take the time to love them and show affection, and forgive them afterwards. Time to spend with them.

There's a woman named Suzanna Wesley, she had 17 children including a man by the name of John, and another son by the name of Charles, they were the founders of Methodism, famous preacher and songwriter Charles and John Wesley. She said this about parenting, she said, "the parent who studies to do self will and his child works together with God in the renewing and the saving of a soul." You work together with God in the renewing and the saving of a soul. God has placed you in that home to be his representative who the Lord loves. He chastens.

And then thirdly, and lastly, there is the instruction. This is a third "do": it says you bring them up, you love them tenderly, you nurture them, you discipline them consistently, and then you give them the admonition of the Lord. That is verbal instruction with a warning. It literally means, to place before the mind. He's saying to fathers, you're responsible for the instruction of your children in spiritual things. God entrusted them to you. Don't expect the pastor or the Sunday school teacher, or the school teacher, or the University professor or other people to teach your kids. They need to learn values from you, they need to learn the word of God from you. So dads are going to have to know their Bibles if they're going to teach their children, amen?

You're going to have to be a man of the word.

And if you're home at night and if you have the opportunity, I know this is a painful thought, but you turn the TV off. I've already had a couple dads this morning excited, "can you believe it? Father's Day. And game 7 of the NBA finals. On Father's Day, praise God!"

"Nothing anyone can do to stop me from watching that game today! Praise Jesus."

Who can say no to a dad on Father's Day? "Hey, it's game 7, I'm watching the game." It's like, Father's Day and you're telling your kids, "shut up! Be quiet!" I know it's painful, but if you've gotta turn the game off and you've gotta discipline your kids... I see the dad in front of the TV, yelling, "get your kid out of the way! He's blocking the TV!" What?

We need to take the time to teach our children. Spend time with each one, reading scripture, Bible and scripture for little Alice. The picture Bible. And you tell them, and you pray with them, and you read with them, and you have devotions with them. Dad needs to take the lead. You know the Houston Police Department many years ago put out a pamphlet. It's called "how to ruin your children." And they give you steps on how to ruin your children. Step number five was, "never give them any spiritual training." Let them wait until they're 21 years old, and let them decide for themselves. That's a way to ruin your kids. You need to start when they're young, not only disciplining, but training. This is the teaching, this is the instruction. In Deuteronomy chapter 6, the great word to the children of Israel was, you love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and these words that I've commanded you, you should teach diligently unto your children. You should talk with them when you sit down, and when you stand in your home, and when you walk in the way, and when you lie down. So parents are given the responsibility and I believe fathers should take the spiritual lead in the home of leading in prayer, of leading in devotions, training their children in the way that they should go.

Now, by way of summary, to be a Godly father, I think there's three things that all dads need. Number one, we need to be right with God. We need salvation, we need sanctification, we need to be men of the word, we need to be men of service, and let me just throw this in lest I forget: I believe that dads should lead their families to church. Find a good Bible preaching, teaching church. I'll recommend Revival Christian Fellowship.

Where you can be taught the word of God. And we teach it in the sanctuary, we teach it in all our Sunday school classes, and we're continuing to focus on and work hard, but it's not really our responsibility, it's yours.

One of my jobs is to teach you the word of God so that you can go and teach your children. And you can be the spiritual leader in your home. But get involved in a good church, get your children involved in a youth group at an early age. And when you go home after church, don't have roast pastor for lunch, okay? Not that sometimes I don't warrant that, but don't criticize the pastor in front of your kids. Don't take your kids to church and then go home and have dinner and go, "wow, did you hear about the pastor, I don't agree with that," and blast the pastor, and the kids are like listening to you. That's bad. Don't do that. Don't criticize others in the church,

don't criticize the church, don't criticize other things about God or the Bible or Christianity in front of your kids. Live consistently in front of them. Nurture them, raise them. Show them there's joy in the Lord and joy in serving God, serving together as a family.

So you're devoted to God, to his word, to the church, and then secondly, you're devoted to your wife. The best thing you can do for your kids is to love your wife. Love your wife. Be devoted to your wife. We'll get it in a couple weeks on Sunday morning verse Peter 3:7, "husbands give honor unto your wives as unto the weaker vessels. Being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered." You can't pray for your kids to follow the Lord and not respect your wife in the home. If you disrespect your wife and neglect your wife and expect your kids to follow the Lord, you're deceived.

And then here's my third point: not only do you get right with God and devote yourself to your wife, but you devote yourself to your kids. The priorities in your life are God, your wife, and your children. The Bible says "blessed is the man who has a quiver full." God has blessed you with children and you need to make them a priority, and you need to be devoted to your children.

Now what I want to do, right now, is I want all the dads and the grandfathers to stand to your feet. I want you to all stand to your feet, and let's give them a hand clap.

We love you, we appreciate you, and we're thankful for you. All the dads, and you granddads, and we're going to close in prayer praying for our fathers right now, let's pray.

Father in Heaven, I thank you for these men, men that love you and honor you and want to live for you, and I pray that Lord, that you would work powerfully and mightily in the hearts and in their lives. Fill them with your Holy Spirit. Fill them with your word. Give us men that fear you and want to honor you. Make these men that are standing right now men of God. Lord help myself included, help us to be men that will love you and serve you and follow you with all our heart, with all our soul, with our strength, with all our minds. And secondly help us to love our wives. Thank you for the treasure that they are. We couldn't raise the children without them. We want to thank you for the support that they give. So help these men that are standing right now, I pray that they would love their wives as you love the church and you gave yourself for it, make them devoted husbands. Help them to pray for and love and be devoted to their wives. And Lord, their children, lastly I pray that in their relationship to their children, Lord, that you will help them to be honest, men of integrity, to walk in humility, to love their kids, to nurture them, hug them, and maybe you've got adult children, maybe you've got now grandchildren, hug them, kiss them, tell them that you love them. Show it by your actions in the time that you commit to them. Support you give to them. Attention you pay them. That you pray for them. You're the high priest of your home. You need to lead them in prayer and you need to pray with them and you need to intercede for them. Carry them on your heart daily to the throne of God. Lord, may these men be devoted to praying for their children. Lord, I pray that you will use them to raise up the next generation, of Godly boys and girls, moms and dads, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers. Put your hand on these men, use them for your glory. We give honor to them today as fathers. We thank you for them. Bless them wonderfully, powerfully, and mightily. We ask in the

name of Jesus Christ and everyone agreeing said.