

# Teaching Your Children in the Bible

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at [gracereformed.org](http://gracereformed.org).

And now, today's sermon. I started doing summer camps in my 30s a few years ago. And now that I'm in my 40s, summer camp has become a lot more complicated for me.

I went out to play basketball a couple of nights with the students and woke up the next morning realizing my body had felt pain that it had not felt in a while. And then I chose to hop in the pool and play football one day and the next morning woke up and I for sure thought an elephant had sat on me.

So I took two naps yesterday to try and recover and get ready for this morning. My voice is still recovering. We forgot our sound system, so I projected loudly to the students.

But I have to tell you, I love these students and the leaders that went. I think every year I think this, but I know in my heart that I felt like this year was the best year we've ever had.

[ 1 : 0 9 ] Just a sweet, sweet time with the students, no problems. And it was just, it was really refreshing to be able to not only get to know them, but also be able to teach them the word of God.

Every year I like to come back and tell you, the congregation, specifically you parents, what it is that we covered. So that you can, one, learn what your students are learning.

But also I want to encourage our church with this. At times it's good to stop and reflect on all of scripture and how it applies to our life. And so this will definitely be more topical today than we normally do.

But I wanted to take this opportunity to encourage us. Just as, for those of you that donated, and I know some of you donated significantly to summer camp, just as a reminder for our church, summer camp is not for entertainment.

I can't stand that kind of camp. I'm not, we're not trying to build some larger youth group or entice parents to come and bring their families here. I mean, obviously, we're meeting in our cafeteria.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] So we're about the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so as strange as this may sound, summer camp for me is a training ground. It's where we take their phones from them, literally, and they don't get them back until they get into the parking lot.

And we're trying to remove outside influences and give them opportunities to really focus their heart and their mind on the truth of God. There is a fight for their souls and their affections.

And as we are aware of this as church elders, we take this fight serious. And we want to prepare ourselves and them as they begin to face this as they grow older.

So this week, in preparation and really kind of recovering and picking up where we left off last week with the students, or last year, we covered everything from deep theology of the spiritual realm to dating this week.

And we connected them to help them understand the significance between their affections and the God that they love. The world teaches us to simply follow along with the program.

[ 3 : 24 ] And the Bible warns us, as we've been learning in Peter, he says, Have this mind in you, have this attitude in you, that when you fight against the world, you will be persecuted.

And so the pressures to fit into the crowd is enormous at their age. They feel it. The blind leading the blind is celebrated. So we use God's word to expose the deception that Satan has for them, that is waiting for them in their hearts, and that will sinfully draw them in.

And we then learned about the joy of Christ and how the joy of Christ in the gospel and his real and true and everlasting love is what draws us to himself and helps us fight against our sin.

And so we're going to be discussing that this morning. Here's kind of a really rough overview. If I were to try and summarize the seven lectures that we had together down into just three main points.

So this will be what we cover this morning. It's this. First of all, the Bible is a magical, powerful book. Had a ton of fun with this one. The Bible is a magical, powerful book.

[ 4 : 33 ] Number two, the Bible is telling a story. And then number three, the Bible is our hope for all of life. This morning, we are not only going to just kind of touch on the highlights that I think would be helpful for you to know and to hear, but I want us to also be encouraged in our faith.

These are truths that don't just apply up to the age of 18, but beyond for sure. So we're going to begin with this idea of the Bible as a magically powerful book.

Most Christians have been trained when we approach our Bibles is that it's really an instruction manual. We read it looking for helpful corrections or helpful guidances.

I did the survey with the students. I said, please raise your hand if you were discouraged one morning, went to the Psalms to be encouraged, read the Psalms, and walked away thoroughly discouraged and confused.

And all their hands went up. You fall into the imprecatory Psalms, and you're just like, wow, this guy is angry. The Bible can be very confusing if you do not understand how to read it.

[ 5 : 42 ] And so what we want to do is understand its point and its power and how it's to be used. While the Bible does provide wisdom for navigating this world, it was not designed to be read this way.

It's not a guide as far as, like some people say, a guidebook before leaving earth. And if you read it this way, you're going to ignore much of what the Bible has for you.

So this week we learned about God's various stories that tell us how to view not only our world, but how to view his world, the visible realm, the spiritual realm.

This is some of the stories that we covered that I wish we could cover this morning because they're fascinating. You know some of them. Maybe some of them we've forgotten. But we covered things like a 21-day battle between angels that had to be stopped by Michael.

Angels riding on chariots of fire. How Saul called up Samuel's dead body and was rebuked for it. How God uses the counsel of spirits in the heavenly realm to judge humanity.

[ 6 : 46 ] Where demons come from in the fall of Satan. These were some of the stories that we covered. And I wanted to open their minds to be able to read these passages and then know what to do with these stories.

Other than just say, that's weird, and keep reading. They need to know why they're there and how it influences them. What was fun is that I felt like I handed them 3D glasses.

And as they opened up their Bibles and they saw these stories which were blurry to them and made no sense, they came into sight. And the connection to the story and their life came to life. As I would walk with the students to and from the dining hall or to the different activities we would have, they would pull me aside and ask me all kinds of fascinating questions.

Because they were curious about my affection for these stories. I believed them. I thought, excuse me, I thought they were real. I trust them.

And they influenced the way in which I interact with God in this world. They were hungry. It was fascinating and fun. Late night conversations about how to understand.

[ 7 : 53 ] My favorite lecture was on the power of words. Some of you may have heard me talk about this. But to see their eyeballs. I wish I could have just wore a hidden camera. Most people today understand how spells work.

The power of words. Not because they have studied history, but because we're aware of fantasy books and movies that are popular these days. When spoken correctly, a spell is a group of words that draw on a power.

It's promised. You speak these words in this way, it draws on a power source, and it brings a magical end, a magical effect. And that's what a spell stands for.

And if I told you the Bible is filled with spells, you would think I'm nuts. But the concept of a list of words that draw on a power and bring a spiritual result is exactly how your Bible is written.

It's exactly how you're to believe it and understand it. Let me give you some examples. James tells his readers of the church that there's going to come a moment in the time in their life where they realize they are lacking something.

[ 9 : 06 ] It's called wisdom. Turn with me to James chapter 1, and I want you to read how James says this. James says there's going to come a moment when you lack something called wisdom.

And then he defines it. He defines wisdom as meekness, gentleness, kindness, and open to reason. And that they, if they would like to receive this meekness, that they need to do something in order to receive wisdom.

This is James 1, 5. If any of you, James chapter 1, verse 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Now listen to the requirements. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. Well, think about what he just said there.

You request wisdom by means of words through the mediumship of what? Prayer. And he responds with granting that wish.

[ 10 : 12 ] Isn't that interesting? Typically when we think of wisdom needing meekness and gentleness and humbleness, we want to try harder to develop that in our life. And James says, if you need it, you can actually gain access to it by simply using words.

So we don't read our Bibles this way. But the Bible is intended for you to read it and understand. Words draw the attention and the power of a source that is far greater than us.

That's the reason why it is written. All the Old Testament stories are designed to prove to you the power source is worthy of your trust and faith. He says, don't you dare go ask God if you don't believe because it's going to throw you all over the place.

And where do we gain the knowledge and the hope and the trust and the faith of a God who has the power to literally grant us things that are far beyond our control? Stuff like meekness and gentleness and patience.

He says, you ask a God who can change the very inside of you. And you do it with words. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 4. This is another one that I love.

[ 11 : 21 ] What happens when you're trapped in sin or you fail? You know that you have gone against God's law. I had this whole section in my notes, but I took it out for the sake of time this morning.

He says in chapter 3 that the word of God is, he says it's powerful. It cuts so words have the capacity to cut to your soul.

Think about that for a moment. No one else, nothing else in the world is described where a section of words, your Bible, has the capacity to cut into your soul and mess with it in good ways.

So he starts this way, and then he tells you, the one that you are tapping into, you're going to use words to tap into a source, and the one you're tapping into is not an angry God.

It's not a God that requires sacrifice. It's not a God that you must first make a transaction. You know how the writer of Hebrews describes the one to whom we're tapping into?

[ 12 : 24 ] Jesus, listen to this title, the sympathetic high priest. A priest is one who goes between man and God. When you fail, when you sin, when you fumble, he says, remember you can use words with faith, and the one you are requesting this from is your Savior who loves you and is sympathetic to your situation.

Hebrews 4.16. Let us then with confidence. Do you see what he uses? He uses the person and work of Jesus Christ as your confidence. The miraculous work of Jesus Christ dying and raising from the grave and sitting at the right hand of the Father.

He says, with that, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.

That is a supernatural. You cannot get mercy and grace from a God by earthly means. Are you catching this? Your Bible is very much written for you to be trusting words, putting faith in those words, and looking for a response that is beyond your world.

Your Bible is designed this way. But this is my favorite of all. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2. We, I told the kids, I titled this lecture, Talking to Zombies in the Bible.

[ 13 : 55 ] Trying to be super relevant, youth pastor. Failed, obviously, because I got one chuckle. Whoever you are, God bless you. We defined zombies.

Zombies are, in our world and whatever the fantasy world is, they're human beings that have function, but they're driven by a virus. And that virus is causing them to be obedient to whatever its passions are.

And so it's to consume other people. And so it is destructive in nature. Right? This is exactly how Paul describes us. Look at this.

This is Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1. And you are dead in your trespasses and sins. Now he knows he's not talking about dead physically. So we have to think about what is he talking about. And he goes on to tell us.

Spiritually. You had not the capacity within yourself to do anything that was reflective of the glory of God. You could not love him. You could not obey him. You were dead. And then what did it look like? He uses the word.

[ 14 : 53 ] And once you once walked. So you were definitely living. You were progressing. You were doing something. But you were following what? You were, as zombies follow the virus, you were following something else.

Following the course of the world. Which means there was a path set for you to follow. And who set it? And who leads it? Keep reading. Following the prince of the power of the air.

The spirit that is not work in the sons of disobedience. So if you meet someone who does not proclaim to have the light of Jesus in their heart. They have not been brought to life.

You are literally talking to someone who is spiritually a zombie. They can only do what the course is set for them to do. And it tells us in the next two verses that they are carrying out the desires and the passions of their heart.

Let me ask you this question. How does someone go from death spiritually and only following the course of the world to alive and free? Do you guys know? We all know.

[ 15 : 56 ] It's through words. You cannot use logic to bring someone to life. Can you? You cannot. You cannot use science and words so that they can logically say, I'm a dead person.

I'm going to make myself an alive person. What does the Bible say? They come to life by hearing and hearing what? The gospel. So a set of words proclaim.

Now I ask the kids this. Could God have used his own voice to bring people to life? Yeah. Could have used angels? Sure. Could have used a big screen in the sky? Sure.

But he didn't choose to use that. He chose to use our voices. Our bodies. So just stop and think about this for a moment.

You have a person who's dead. I start using the gospel, the words that are given to me about Jesus' death, brother, and resurrection and about the law. Do you know what immediately what that does according to John 3?

[ 16 : 57 ] It taps the Holy Spirit. Because if the Holy Spirit does not come and do what? Regenerate the heart? They don't come to life. Do you understand that for a moment? You're using words.

It grabs the power of God and it brings someone to life. Now tell me that doesn't sound like a magical spell. The whole Bible is explaining how this works.

The apostles stand up on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 people see the Holy Spirit come upon the apostles and then it comes into them. What were they doing? They were proclaiming words.

You see, we don't read our Bibles this way. We try and naturalize it. We try and make it so it's logical explanations like good advice from Buddha. Someone asked me this this week.

What's the difference between Christianity and Buddha? And I said one has some interesting sayings with no power. The other one has actual power you can not only witness in the Old Testament but you can witness in this life here.

[ 17 : 54 ] No power. All power. What does Jesus say? All what? Authority has been given to me on heaven and on earth. Which means he can bring to pass whatever his promises have been made.

It's fascinating, right? So you're reading a story in the Old Testament that's filled with all kinds of wondrous stories. And then we're called to believe them and then proclaim them.

This is why there's something supernatural that happens when we build each other up with God's word. When we sing his word. When we pray his word.

This is why the writer of Hebrews later on goes to say, Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves as such as you are doing. Because you're removing yourself from the very power source which is centered around God's word. We're going to be talking about this at GRN.

But it's not only God's gospel and its words but its gospel and its visible sense. The baptism in the table of the Lord are both promised to bring supernatural power within the believer.

[ 18 : 55 ] And we're going to talk about this in our lectures in a couple of weeks. I encourage you to come and be a part of that. And this leads us to really how do we then learn about this power.

And this leads us to our second point which is the Bible is telling a story. And kids, you are doing a great, great job. You're going to enjoy some of these stories so stay tuned. Your parents are going to be nervous with some of these stories.

Yeah, who said that? All right. We know there are stories in the Bible. There's lots of them. We grew up around them. Some of them we grew up around and really have never thought about why they're significant and what they're for.

But ultimately the Bible is the story of redemption. This is what the Reformed faith teaches. This is what our confession teaches. And it's very easy to see from Genesis to Revelation. It's about the story of salvation. He's redeeming himself with people.

But you cannot have the story of redemption if you don't have destruction first. You have to be redeeming something from someone. So this destruction must be significant if it calls for the creator of the universe to send his son to die.

[ 20 : 03 ] That's a pretty significant destruction. So this section will be much shorter for the sake of time. But I want us to help begin to understand how we live today was set up how the world started.

In Genesis 3, we always think of the book of Genesis about creation. If I were to ask you to tell me, what is the book of Genesis about creation? Guys, there's two chapters on the book. What are you doing with the rest of the 57 chapters?

It's not about creation. It's an unbelievable story setting the foundation of your faith. So what do you have? You have Adam and Eve in the garden. And when you read about Lucifer, you begin to realize he's a very powerful being.

He's a very beautiful being. And he's there in the garden. And then all of a sudden, he is witnessing Eve and Adam becoming the authority of the world. They are to have dominion over the world.

Do you know what they are? They're dirt people. They are literally clay people. And it says in Job 38 that the angels, the spirits of God, watched him create the world.

[ 21 : 08 ] So they're sitting there watching, wow, you put dirt people over your creation. Not us. And the Bible says we're made lower than the angels. Not us. You didn't put us over the world.

You put them over the world. Do you think he may have gotten a little jealous? The answer is yes. I can't believe he put dirt people over this creation. I'm going to turn these dirt people against their God. And so he does.

And he brings upon himself a curse and a promise. It didn't go as he thought. My guess is, I don't know, this is speculation, God would curse them and then hand it over to the angels.

I don't know. Sin is foolish and it causes us to do irrational things. But this is the reason I point out this story. There was a promise made that from the seed of Eve, a son would come and he would become the redeemer.

The way it's described is this way. He's going to crush the very head of the one who destroyed the world. And then there was a promise to the seed of Eve that judgment was coming.

[ 22 : 06 ] So there's two promises, one of redemption and one of judgment. Let me ask you this. According to your own knowledge, did Satan take his judgment and sit down and wait for his day?

The answer is no. That's the whole point of the story. The greatest foe tried to bring the greatest coup against the world and God proved in every circumstance he could not be stopped.

You cannot be claiming, I am the most high. I am the most powerful. There is none greater than me if you've not been challenged. Was God challenged? Yes or no? We see it in Genesis chapter 6.

If God promises that a human being coming from Eve is going to bring redemption, well it's logical. Let's get rid of humans. And so we read, we read the story a couple of weeks ago where the angels come down and they create these hybrid humans.

And all of a sudden this phrase, if you look at Genesis chapter 6 verse 11, there's an interesting phrase that Moses uses when he describes the world. He says this, Genesis 6 verse 11, now the earth was corrupt in God's sight.

[ 23 : 07 ] The whole thing. And then you have a contrast with the earth being corrupt. Not only was it the humans, but it says all of the, everything was corrupt. And then in verse 8, he describes Noah in this way.

For Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Verse 9. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man. Blameless, you can also describe it in this way. Perfect in his generation.

You ever wonder, just be honest with me for a moment. You ever wonder why the generations, the genealogies are in your Bible? Anybody reading them and be like, why are these here? They're random and long and strange.

Thank you. Someone right over here agrees with me that it's important. They're there because you have to answer this question. Did the Messiah really come from Eve?

Is the Messiah human? This is why it says he looks at the earth and only the generations of Noah was pure. And so he wiped the face of the earth to restart the human race.

[ 24 : 13 ] So plan one of Satan was let's just corrupt all of the world. That failed. Then plan number two. Turn with me to Numbers chapter 13. He learns, because Satan's paying attention, he learns that from this interaction with Abraham, that through this land, this promised land, the Messiah will come and all the world will be blessed.

Well, if that happens, that means judgment's coming. So guess what he does? He blocks the land. And he blocks the land with, if you remember in Genesis chapter 6, it says when these humans mated with angels, they produced Nephilim.

Well, you'll learn about the Nephilim later on. This is Numbers chapter 32. And this is verse, sorry, Numbers chapter 13, verse 32. Some of you are like, there's not 32 chapters, John.

All right. This is the spies' report of why they're not going to go into the land. So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, the land through which we have gone to spy out is a land that devours its inhabitants.

They're cannibals. And all the people that we see or saw on it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim.

[ 25 : 30 ] And we seem to ourselves like grasshoppers. And so we seem to them. Do you know who also is from the line of Anak, of the Nephilim? Another giant. And guess what his name is?

Goliath. All of a sudden, you have armies that are inhabiting the land. And they're so great and so powerful, Israel's like, yeah, we're not going in there. And God gets angry with them for not trusting in him.

And understanding that not only were they in the land, they had surrounded it. If you learn the tribes, believe it or not, the Nephilim also have genealogies. Super nerdy. Spent some time reading them. But it's true.

They have genealogies. And you start learning the line of the Nephilim. And what you learn is that they're surrounding Israel. And at times, God says, go in and wipe out that entire tribe, not only its leaders, but all of its children.

Why? Because they're Nephilim. And other times, when the tribes are human, he doesn't do this. And so, yes, I know, this is the strange part of your Bible. But it has a point. Well, this one failed. They went into the land.

[ 26 : 29 ] The land was established. The kingdom was established. And all of a sudden, the promises were fulfilled. And what we have is the land fulfilling, bringing a kingdom. And David's final promise has come that one who will sit on the throne of David will be the one, will be the one who brings redemption.

We'll turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Jesus shows up on the scene. What are they trying to do there? They try to kill all the children.

Jesus becomes a man and draws attention to himself by fulfilling all the prophecies of healing and miracles. And the enemy thought they had won.

How did they think they had won? By killing the Messiah. They assumed Jesus was bringing in the kingdom physically. But what they did not understand is that by killing him was the fulfillment of why he came.

This is 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Look at verse 7. Paul is talking about the enemy and how they tried to stop their judgment from coming in our salvation. Genesis 2, 7.

[ 27 : 35 ] But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages of our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Okay, this takes us back a little bit to 1 Peter chapter 3. Do you remember when we're reading this? And the church is suffering. And they're not sure if what they're suffering is really God's victory.

And he stops them and he says, Remember when Jesus also suffered on the cross. And when he died, he descended into the place of the spirits to proclaim victory. This is 1 Peter 3, 18 and 19. You remember that?

This is connected. Paul is saying this knowledge was kept from the enemy. Because if they would have known victory would have come through death of Jesus, they wouldn't have killed him.

But they killed him thinking they had won. And this brings us really to what I was trying to teach the students in understanding the story. Okay, so now the Messiah rose victorious.

[ 28 : 33 ] He brought many sons to glory. He let the captives free. He holds the keys. Do the enemy just now sit down and say, well, we lost. Oh, no. They know judgment day is coming. This is why in the church's letters, both Paul, James, and Peter warn us about the tactics.

James says, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Peter says, be sober-minded for he's an adversary who wants to devour you like a lion. Paul says, put on armor for he shoots at you. Why? Because the last form that has to take place in order for the judge to come is that the whole world receive the gospel.

And who are the givers of the gospel? We are. And so who does he attack now? He's not going after Jesus. For he's the victorious king.

He's going after the messengers of Jesus. So the whole story of the Old Testament is to tell you just how dangerous and powerful he truly is and at what length he will go. And so now, as Paul, Peter, and James say, he goes after our minds.

And this leads us to our last section, which is the Bible is our hope for all of life. If you try and find hope in this world, it is fully on the course of the prince of the power of the air, as Paul says in Ephesians.



[ 29 : 45 ] And their minds are corrupted. And they want to corrupt our minds with it, for that postpones their day of judgment according to their logic. On Wednesday night, we covered dating and the true perspective of love.

It was fun. Many of them were very nervous, and I did that on purpose. But the nerves went away quickly when they realized it's a very relevant conversation. See, we don't like to talk about dating because we don't agree.

It's awkward, right? No one seems to have the same opinion. If I were to take a survey in here, those of you without kids would say, I don't care. Those of you with kids would say, I got a lot of thoughts on this one.

It's fascinating. But most people tell me there's nothing in the Bible that talks about dating. And guess what? You're right. It's a modern concept. But the result of, I loved asking this one.

I asked the kids. We took a long time on this one. What is the point of dating? It was fascinating to hear the different perspectives. There were various views. What's interesting about our Bibles is that it absolutely talks about how we are to interact with individuals.

[ 31 : 02 ] Whether in or out of the church. Whether the believer or the unbeliever. And so this next section is about how our understanding of God's affection and love towards us. The point of the spirit.

What's going on in this war. The attacks of Satan. And our affections towards each other. So does it talk about the progress from single to marry? And what that looks like?

Not in modern language. But it has a lot to say about how God's love for you controls your love for others.

So we're going to walk through this very quickly this morning. The problem that I have with the concept of dating is not the practice itself. It's the motivation behind it. And it plays with everything that we've already spoken about is the evil plan to corrupt children's minds.

And I say children because they are involved in a practice of pretending they are married. But yet not actually being married. So instead of giving you advice on dating, which I will refrain from, I want to talk about the concept of love.

[ 32 : 12 ] I used this illustration at summer camp. I'm thankful the kids caught it. I love ice cream. Some of you say a little too much. I do. It's great.

But then I tell you I also love my wife. And what's your first question? Tell me. What's that? Do you love your wife more? Some of you should say, well, obviously you love your wife more.

But it's so confusing, right? We use the same word. Love. Unfortunately, I might just have a stronger whatever wrong view of love that is.

But it could be. You see, when we think about the word love, typically we cast that word on things that bring pleasure to ourselves. I also love pizza and dirt bikes.

Don't want to marry them, but I sure love them. Right? But we are transactional with the things that we love. I will invest my time and money if it produces in return desired net, right?

[ 33 : 12 ] Gratification. If it brings significance. So this is where we define love according to the world. And we even do this to each other in our human relationships. First of all, love is absolutely conditional.

It's conditional. What's the whole point of dating? I need to find out if you meet my conditions. Because if you don't meet my conditions, we're going to move on. Right?

And then we've got to figure out how to get out of this thing. Because, you know, it got a little romantic. And, man. So we use things like, well, you know, I just fell out of love. Listen, I can't equate anything good with falling.

Every time I think of the word falling, my daughter's lamp fell yesterday and it broke. So if you fell into love, that's probably a bad thing. You probably shouldn't trust that. Secondly, it's transactional.

Right? We're waiting kind of to see. Like, I'm going to invest. Are you going to invest? I'm going to put time in. Are you going to put time in? And does the transaction meet the quality? Definitely there are times I get the bill when I go out to eat.

[ 34 : 11 ] And I'm like, nah, man. This food ain't matching what I'm about to pay. I'm going to pay about half of this. It was horrible. But we do this humanly speaking. We do it in our marriages, too. I feel like I'm putting in and you are not.

And then thirdly, it's temporary. Earthly love is 100% temporary. There's no guarantee it's going to stick around. Now, you know what we love to write songs about? How our love will never end. And then you turn to the next song.

And what's the song about? How you broke my heart and my love ended. I'll never stop loving you. Wait, you cheated on me. I totally stopped loving you. Let's look at how the Bible describes this.

This is the unconditional love of God. This is when it says, we love. We love because he first loved us. So it can't be a different kind of love. It has to be the same love. So what kind of love does God have for us?

This is Romans 5a. It's an unconditional love. But God shows his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. At your worst possible point of life, God says, that's when I started loving you.

[ 35 : 15 ] There is no condition that you can meet to get in or out of his love. This is what makes the gospel so powerful. God's gospel is not clean yourself up, make yourself lovable, and I'll love you.

You know, we need Sarah McLachlan's music playing in the background. We put it on our puppy eyes. God, will you love me? No. He says, in your rebellion, Paul says it this way, when you are the enemy of God.

He loved you. It's not conditional. Now, we don't understand this kind of love. Trust me. I would love to love my family this way with an unconditional love, but I'm a sinner. It's really hard, right?

It's really, really hard, but it becomes the motivation. That if I'm going to say the words, I love you, you need to know I'm not looking at you saying there's a condition that you meet that I like.

What I'm saying is there's no condition that can change about you that will change my affection towards you. Now, that is a powerful love. Number two, it's sacrificial. It's the exact opposite of transactional.

[ 36 : 13 ] It's sacrificial. This is John 15, 13. John 15, 13. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friend. This is the antithesis of the gospel.

This is the heart of the gospel, right? Christ says, I proved to you that my words mean something. When I say I love you, I laid my life down proving it.

This is the greatest example of love. Number three, God's love is no end. It has no end. It's not conditional. So it's unconditional.

It's sacrificial and has no end. This is Romans 8. We're not going to read the whole thing, but you guys know this list. Romans 8, 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And he gives every possible means that could cause the love of God to end.

Now, the way I applied this to the students was whomever you decide to date, whoever you decide to pursue, whoever gains your interest for furthering a relationship should always be protected by biblical love.

[ 37 : 21 ] Which means you're never going to do things that would cause this person to have to meet a condition. That you are going to wait for the transaction. Let me put it this way.

You're not going to put this person in a position where they're going to have to give of themselves to gratify you for your own lustful desires. To gratify this longing of I'm alone.

I don't want to be alone. To have sensual desires fulfilled. You're not going to do that. Because that's to take and not receive. This is also true, by the way, when you come into marriage.

Two people who seek to love each other this way will always be thinking how to apply what Paul says in Philippians. Consider others more significant than yourself. You want to teach your kids how to appropriately date?

Demonstrate it in your marriage. Because when the man or a woman treats them in an opposite position by which they have seen at home, they'll say, No, I don't want to be married to something like that. I'm going to go ahead and back out of this real fast.

[ 38 : 26 ] But if what is driven is gratification, satisfaction, and fleshy desires, well, the world knows how to sing, produce movies, and produce media in such a way where we glorify the flesh.

We glorify sensuality. We equate satisfaction of the flesh with love. You make me feel good, so I love you. That's the same thing we say to ice cream. How demeaning is it to put that upon a human?

It's horrible. Instead of, I want you to experience the same kind of love that I experience from my God. John 15 says this.

You can have my joy. This is Jesus speaking to his disciples. And your joy will not only be there, but it will be complete. It will be filled, lacking nothing. It says to love one another.

We have to define that word love, right? And it is unconditional, sacrificial, and never-ending. This led us to the last night where we talked about, if you'll turn with me to Romans chapter 12.

[ 39 : 31 ] This leads us to the purpose then. If we understand how to read our Bibles as this war between God and his enemy, it's very much magical in its nature.

And God's love becomes our hope. It becomes our motivation. It becomes what drives us. Then what does this look like at the age of 13 to 30 to 80?

So at the end of Paul's massive, beautiful letter to the Romans about the gospel, he says this. Romans 12.1. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God.

Make sure before he tells them what he wants, the motivation. God's mercy upon you, I'm asking you to do this. You have received this love.

Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Now I'm telling you, the opposite of this is what they're experiencing.

[ 40 : 39 ] This is why Paul has to write this. You see, the world absolutely caused our children to sacrifice their lives for the gratification of others. Why do our children say and do and dress the way that they do?

Because they're being manipulated to be consumed by others. Ask your kids sometimes, why do they do what they do? Just sit there and ask them.

You'll be fascinated with what comes out of their mouth. You'll learn a lot about their heart. You'll learn a lot about what they do. And they themselves will probably tell you this. I don't know. I like it.

Great. What do you like about it? They themselves haven't thought about it. But they are being manipulated and controlled. And they're not being controlled by a God that loves them.

They're being controlled by a world that hates them. And they willingly do it because we let them. We totally let them. And Paul's here saying, now listen. This is a God who loves you.

[ 41 : 37 ] Who's done nothing but give you mercy. And I need you to hear me. The greatest freedom you have is to give your life away. Because then it can't be controlled by anything but a loving God.

I'm telling you right now. If I had to plan the controller of my life over to something, I definitely wanted to go to a merciful, kind God. You got it. What are my other options? Oh, the prince of the power of the air who destroys.

There are no other options. All yours. This is why he says, I'm pleading with you. Listen to the contrast. And how does this happen? Verse 12. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

The renewal of your mind of what? In the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the mercy that has come to you. The more of God's love you see, the more of him you want. The more of his grace that controls you, the more of it you want.

So don't be conformed. And how are we conformed? It's through our minds. So we have to be constantly turning our mind back over to our king. That by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

[ 42 : 42 ] We can't discern what is good and holy and acceptable because our minds are being blinded by the lies of the world around us. The world says it's acceptable and okay. Do you guys realize that the line of what is morally acceptable has moved at rates I've never seen before?

The stuff I've seen on social media this week is unreal. Thankfully, technology can blur stuff out, but the line of what is morally accepted and how we present ourselves on streets is that's what you want controlling you?

That's what you want controlling your children's mind? It doesn't start here. It starts with a little ask, right? A little ask. Man, I grew up in a Baptist church, so this illustration was used royally, but it's a good one.

How do you cook a frog? You take a frog, you throw him in boiling water, what does the frog do? He jumps out. Put the frog in lukewarm water and then start to boil it, and what does the frog do?

It cooks itself to death. That's exactly the tactic that he uses. He slowly draws himself. So this is why the writer Paul says, we have to renew our minds so we aren't slowly cooked to death.

[ 43 : 54 ] Church, it's time we stop pretending Satan isn't trying to steal our children away from us. It's been happening from day one in Genesis 3. You need to ask your children how they're doing, where their affections are.

What are they learning at school? What are they learning from their friends? Not because you're trying to pounce them and catch them. You remove that fear and they will tell you the world. They will tell you everything. If they feel safe, they know that you love them, and it's a lot of work, and it's terrifying once you find out the things that they know.

Your children are conforming themselves to something. It's part of our nature. We as parents and as a church, we want them to know the truth. We would do small groups every week, or sorry, every session.

One of the ones I asked the leaders to ask them is what they feel like has the most influence on their life. Specifically, negatively, where they actually find themselves doing things that they don't want to do, and they know they shouldn't be doing them.

I said, what influence is that? Number one answer, friends. Friends. They said, my good friends, I love being around. They're really helpful, but I do have friends that cause me to do things that I know I don't want to do.

[ 45 : 07 ] And number two, media. Those are two things they were willing to admit. See, Satan doesn't play nice. He's not like, well, I won't mess with their friends, so I'll get them over here. He's going to use whatever tactic he can.

He'll use whatever he can. So this hasn't changed, though, for 2,000 years. See, the whole instructions from Paul, Satan was going after the minds in Rome 2,000 years ago.

He's going after it now. It's the same tactic. He just uses different mediums now. So all of this to say, what I was helping them to understand is, how do they view themselves going forward?

What about their career? What about their life? What's their significance? Don't find your significance in whether you are or are not dating. Don't find your significance in whether you are a high-performing athlete or not.

Don't find your significance in your income. Man, the pressure. See, I have three teenagers. I have two of them in college. And the pressure that I see on their face when someone asks you, oh, where are you going to school?

[ 46 : 06 ] What are you studying? A.K.A. tell me how significant you're going to be. This is what we're doing. Right? I would love to have my son say, I'm going to be a trash compactor.

I'm going to crush trash for a living. Just you all smirked and smiled like, well, that's awkward and weird. Because we tie so much to our identity and what we do.

The Bible says you are significant because you have power to bring people to life. Whether a trash compactor collector or stay-at-home mom or president of the United States, you carry the king's robes and you set people free.

That's more significant than any way in which you find your career. And so these are the things that I was trying to help them. And parents, I would love to see us work together as elders and parents to continue to shape our children from the ages of diapers to the moment that we see them say, I do.

Let's pray. Father, I'm so thankful that you have called us to yourself by your mercy and grace. I'm so thankful that you lead us with a gentle and kind hand.

[ 47 : 22 ] Every time that we fail, you call us to yourself. And remind us of your mercy and your grace. And then you empower us with your love to say no to the flesh.

You empower us with your affection to help us to fight against the foe. Lord, help us. We believe, but help our unbelief.

In Jesus' name, amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where everyone is in equal need of grace.

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Love, por favor. Jeez.iyi, xin.