

# Passionate Parenting Conference

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. They said they were expecting a skip this morning. I said, just hang on, you're about to see one.

I was, where's Trent? Last night, before you got there, we were talking about how you combine these two themes, off-script, passionate parenting.

You've got a leak here. You guys see that? It's like dripping right there. Off-script, passionate parenting. You know, cancer, kids. And I said, yeah, basically it's, you're dying of cancer, you don't have a lot of time, you better get passionate about parenting.

You know, somehow they tie together here, I'm not sure. But how are you guys doing? You guys awake? I'm not awake, so, you know, whatever.

Well, take your Bibles, and I would encourage you, I hope you have something to write down on, or take some notes. And we're going to change gears. We've been talking about trials the last two nights, and it's been depressing.

[ 1 : 08 ] Now we're going to talk about kids, it's going to be even more depressing. Thank you. I don't have a clue. I felt like I knew what I was doing with my sons.

I don't have a clue what I'm doing with my daughter. She just cries a lot. Women cry. A lot. Drama. With boys, there's hardly anything that a matchbox car won't fix.

You know, or a truck, or a gun, or something. But with girls, it always goes much deeper, much longer. You have to talk about it.

The women are getting mad at me. Well, we have a few hours, and you guys look tired, and we're going to jump into it and try to be an encouragement to you.

How many of you have kids? Most everybody? This couple back here, they've been married how long? A month. So they're starting early, taking notes back here today.

[ 2 : 13 ] You're not making an announcement, are you, by being here? That's a very long future. Okay.

You hope. You hope. How many of you have teenagers? How many of you have more than one kid? Let's find out how many. Two? Three? Four? How many?

Four? Four? Four? Four? Five. Five, take the cake there? Six? Where were six?

Right here, six. That's right, six. So no Duggars in the audience. All right. Well, go to Psalm 127 if you would. And we're just going to cruise through some stuff today.

And some of these slides I might end up skipping just for the sake of time, make sure this thing works. Yeah. We're going to talk about real parenting. And I just want to start these next few minutes and lay a foundation with you.

[ 3 : 13 ] Honestly, parenting is one of the great privileges of life, isn't it? My family grew up faster than I can keep track of.

My son Lance is 22. And he just got married about three months ago. Got married in late June. And just started on staff with us.

He's doing youth and music. So pray for him. Pray for that father-son combo. I don't know how long it'll last, but we'll do the best we can to serve together.

We're having a good time, though. And then my son Larry is 19. And he's in between figuring out what college God wants him at and what to do with his life.

So pray for him. He's serving with us in Connecticut. And then Haley is 13. And she has survived the transition to Connecticut and turned a corner probably in about April.

[ 4 : 09 ] And we're thankful for it. But Psalm 127, just let's read together verses 1 through 5. And let's go ahead and read them out loud, the whole five verses.

Ready, go. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Lo, children are in heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth.

Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. Lo, children are in heritage of the Lord.

Verse 1. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. So you may have read this letter at some point, but this is a letter that a young lady wrote to me.

[ 5 : 16 ] Actually, it was while I had cancer. It was right in the middle of my cancer battle. And she was in a Christian college at the time. And I posted this on my blog. I used it in the book.

I called it the saddest letter I'd ever read. I just walked into the office one day, picked up a letter, read it, handed it to my secretary. I said, that's the saddest letter I've ever read. And it's true. And it just struck me.

I ended up emailing this girl, contacting her. We talked a few times on the phone. And I can give a broader context to her situation. But here's what she wrote to me. She starts by saying she had read a couple of my books and wanted to share a situation with me.

She said, I'm a junior at a well-known Christian college. I grew up in highly respected, fundamental, independent Baptist churches. I went to excellent Christian schools. My father's been a Christian worker since before I was born.

One would think that my testimony would go something like this. I was saved when I was five. And I dedicated my life to God. And I've been growing a lot and serving him. And now I'm studying to serve him full time. End quote.

[ 6 : 16 ] But that isn't my story. Actually, though I did make a profession of faith when I was very young, I didn't get saved until I was 17. Since I was 12 and now on into college, I've struggled with serious issues.

I found out when I went to college that I'm not the only good kid. That's in quotes. Who is or has struggled or who is still struggling with serious stuff. We struggle with issues like eating disorders, depression, suicide, cutting, pornography, gender identity, homosexuality, drugs, drinking, immorality.

The list could go on. We listen to wild music. We idolize pop culture's heroes. We watch dirty sitcoms. We have no discrimination in our entertainment, our dress, or in any aspect of our lifestyle.

Obviously, I'm generalizing my problems. You would not find this in every Christian young person, but every Christian young person from a conservative background. And praise God, some of us do not struggle with any of these issues.

When I read this to teenagers, by the way, by this point in the letter, it's like deathly silent in the room. It is just every time. I've done this five or ten times with teen groups in different contexts.

[ 7 : 27 ] It is just like you could cut the air with a knife at this point. My point is that the problems that are supposed to be the bad kids' problems, it's so sad that they have this good kid, bad kid mentality.

You know, we're all bad. Let's just get that straight. We're all bad. All right? The bad kids' problems belong to us. Unfortunately, our parents and youth workers don't know that we struggle with these things.

And they don't know what to do with us when they find out. Quite frankly, I believe that if you grab the average Christian school teacher or youth worker and ask them, what would you do if you found out that one of the kids you work with was a homosexual?

They wouldn't know what to say. My point is not simply that they don't know that we struggle with or how to deal with it. I think there's a simple reason why good kids struggle with such serious stuff.

And there is a solution. At the risk of being blunt, I'm going to be blunt. Our parents did not spend time teaching us to love God. Our parents put us in Sunday school since K-4.

[ 8 : 33 ] They took us to church every time the doors were opened. They sent us to every youth activity. They made sure that we went to good Christian colleges. They had us sing in the choir and help in the nursery and be ushers and go soul winning.

We did teen devotionals and prayed over every meal. We did everything right. And they made sure that we did. But they forgot about our hearts. They forgot that the Bible never commanded the church.

Well, I disagree with this statement. She says this, and I told her she was wrong. They forgot that the Bible never commanded the church to teach the children about God and his ways. That responsibility was laid at the feet of the fathers.

I told her it's both. It's the fathers and the church. Unfortunately, our fathers don't have time for us. They put us to where we're surrounded with the Bible, but they didn't take time to show us that God was important enough to them to tell us personally about him.

So to us, Christianity has become a religion of externals, which, if you ask me, that is the polar opposite of what Christianity is.

[ 9 : 37 ] Christianity is an internal relationship. But so often our kids get to thinking it's nothing but an external show, a religion instead of a relationship.

So she says a religion of externals. Do all the right stuff. You're a good Christian. So some of us walk away from church. Some of us stay in church and fill a pew.

Many of us struggle with stuff that our parents have no idea because they hardly know us. I think these problems stem from, first, our detachment from our parents, second, from our misunderstandings about the essence of Christianity, a relationship, not a list of rules.

I worry that many young people like me are not even saved because of their misunderstandings about Christianity. I know this isn't a well-articulated treatise, but it comes from my heart. And then she proceeds to say, you know, write a book to parents, and she encourages me to try to reach out to help people.

And then she says, I've run out of things to say. Thanks for trying to help Christian teens and their family. And she signs it. And she gave me an email, and I wanted to get a context for this letter. So I wrote this girl and ended up asking her for her phone number, and we talked a couple times on the phone.

[ 10 : 50 ] And the context of this letter was I asked her questions like, are you angry at your parents? Tell me the source of where are you with your parents?

She said, actually, today I am building a better relationship with my parents. She was in college. She said, I wrote this letter because I'm more burdened that my younger sister, my younger sibling have a relationship with my parents that I didn't have and that I wish I had now.

I said, are you saying in this letter that all the things that you did are wrong, that you wish you hadn't gone to Christian school, or you hadn't had the standards or the rules or the guidelines, or that you wish you didn't serve in nursery and choir?

She said, no, no, no, no, no. She said, I'm glad I did all that. She said, it was all the right stuff. She said, but there was something missing internally. There was something missing relationally, spiritually.

She said, I got to college, and I found out that not only did I struggle, but a lot of the people in my Christian college that grew up in the same environments that I grew up didn't get it. They were struggling too.

[ 11 : 52 ] And we were just starting to connect the dots on a relationship. And she said, it stems from, she said, Brother Schmidt, my dad was in ministry my whole life, and I've never had a relationship with him.

He's always been too busy for me. It's always been all about ministry and all about serving the Lord. And she said, I'm glad he served the Lord, and I'm glad he had ministry, and I appreciate the good, but I just wish that he had a relationship with me and that he would have shown me his relationship with God so that there could have been a handoff there.

And we talked for really a couple of hours, and that young lady was really struggling with some serious things that had she been close to her dad and had he transferred that right relationship with God, she probably could have navigated much earlier in her life.

I want to start with this statement. Everything about the Christian life or the Christian home, I should say, is to be a model or a living picture of your personal relationship with your Heavenly Father.

And the words I want you to write down are spiritual authenticity. Everything about your life at home and church and ministry and career, everything about your relationship with your children is to be a living picture of your personal relationship with your Heavenly Father.

[ 13 : 15 ] And your model speaks louder and longer than your mouth. Your model speaks longer and louder than your mouth. Your life, your words, your action, your attitudes are either a picture of God's grace and glory.

Children are an heritage of the Lord, except the Lord build the house. Your life, everything is either a picture of God's grace to your child or a picture of your flesh to your child.

And too often it's both. You know, we're trying to do both. They're going to get plenty of both. I get that. But as a parent, you are a reflector and a deflector.

You are to be reflecting God's love and God's grace and God's glory and God's holiness. And even through your brokenness and through my sinfulness and my flesh, showing repentance and showing grace and showing redemption, showing Calvary, showing the relationship that God wants to have with us, the grace relationship with His children.

It all happens in the heart. I made a list of things by way of introduction, how parents lose their way. Let's see if I can jump forward to this. Yeah, how parents lose their way.

[ 14 : 30 ] I would encourage you to write some of these down or think through them with me. Number one, we get too busy. I get it. I'm busy. You're busy. We've got bills to pay. We get pulled in every direction.

I said, we're starting adult classes at our church. And I said to the couples that we're going to be teaching, Dana and I are going to teach the 30 to 45 couples. And I said to them, our goal will be to help you stay in love while your children try to destroy your marriage.

And everybody in the room laughed because we know you get married, you have your honeymoon, you start your family, and after you have kids, it's like your job, your kids, and everything else in your life tries to wreck your marriage and wreck your home.

And everything tries to pull you apart instead of being together and time and all of it. We get busy. We get intimidated. How many of you are intimidated as parents?

I mean, it scares me to death to think I'm responsible not only to keep this person alive. You know, that's bad enough. Because the first five years of their life, all they do is try to kill themselves in a million different ways.

[ 15 : 34 ] Okay? So, I mean, if you have a five-year-old and they have survived, you get an A for, you know, up to now, you're a good parent. Okay? So, keeping them alive.

But then, cultivating their heart, protecting them from all the bad stuff that's out there, and trying to get them to fall in love with God and go forward with God. When Lance got married, I was just telling Trent in the car a little while ago, when Lance got married a few months ago, my son Larry and I were driving in the car the next day, and he said, so, Dad, how does it feel?

I said, what? He said, how does it feel to have one of your sons now completely done, married, going forward? I thought about it for a second.

I said, Larry, I have very simple parenting goals. I mean, honestly, I have two end goals in parenting. I said, I want you to know and love the Lord Jesus sincerely from your heart.

I want you to love God. By the time we're done, and you're out of my house, I want you to love God. And I said, number two, I want you to be committed to a biblical framework of decision making.

[ 16 : 46 ] I said, I can't try to micromanage your decisions. I can't try to determine your standards. I'm not going to try to run your life. Or, I'll counsel you. I'll direct you. I'll guide you.

Whatever influence you extend to me, I'll be a friend. I'll be a co-laborer and an encourager in your life and a coach in your life. But, at the end of the day, you've got to make your decisions as you become an adult.

You'll be responsible to God for that. And I want to make sure that I've equipped you with a biblical decision making process. That when you have big decisions to make, you know how to go about those decisions.

So, that's my two goals. I said, that you love God, and that you make decisions biblically. And I said, so, where's Lance at? Lance loves God, and he has so far in his life, and especially all of his big decisions, choosing a wife, choosing a career and a future, choosing a college.

He has a biblical framework for those decisions. So, I feel like he's on the right track, and I'm one third done. And then I smiled and I said, but looking at you, it's going to get a lot harder from here on out.

[ 17 : 53 ] And we had a good laugh about that. But honestly, we get intimidated, because it's overwhelming, the scope and the magnitude of the parenting responsibility. We get proud. Sometimes we want to micromanage and control and overreach our authority, and I'll talk about that in a minute.

We get focused on externals, like she wrote in that letter. We want them to look right. It helps us around church to fit in and not be embarrassed. And, you know, socially, it keeps our world a little smoother.

And, and it makes our, if they look right, we kind of lie to ourselves that they are right. So, the externals. Next, we get tired. Oh my goodness, you're tired this morning. I know you had a hard week. I know you've had a long week.

And, just coming here this morning, shows that you're, pretty passionate about parenting. When you had all the other things you could have done this morning. We get focused on environments, and we forget the power of our model.

What do I mean by environments? Well, what she wrote there. We throw them in Sunday school, youth group, Christian school, home school. We think that an environment is going to cultivate the heart. We think that an environment is going to sanitize their world.

[ 18 : 56 ] Listen, you can, I've done enough family counseling to know that home school families have as many problems as public school families. I've dealt with public school families with incest and immorality and abuse and sexual and verbal and alcoholism and drugs.

And, I've dealt with homeschool, Christian homeschool. Everything is, you know, dresses to the ankles and almost Amish. And, I've dealt with incest and sexual abuse and immorality and dad sleeping with prostitutes and everything else in homeschool families too.

Okay. Okay. The problem is in here. Okay. I get it. The world is wicked. But, but your heart and your child's heart can be just as wicked as everything out there.

Okay. So, about the time you've purified and sanitized your child's world, you've still got big problems. Okay. It's still going on in here. So, environments do not, I'm not saying they're not helpful, but you've got to know what an environment does and doesn't do and where, what place it holds.

But, we focus on as long as they're in the right environment and as long as I'm providing, you know, doing my job to put food on the table and a roof over their head and education and clothing, I've done my job, yay me, and we'll let the school and the pastor and the church and all that environment do all the spiritual formation.

[ 20 : 14 ] Bad decision. We forget that our model is what speaks the loudest. Bad decision. Because, because your model speaks louder than your mouth. And I want to talk to you for a few minutes about what is, how do we deal with this model?

The fact that children are in heritage, God's building the house, everything is a reflection of our relationship to him, and the end goal is to take their heart and cause it to fall in love with God's heart and connect those two hearts and send them into their adult lives.

I want you to write down three thoughts about real parenting. Number one, real parenting models real obedience. Real parenting models real obedience.

Write this statement down. What kind of kid am I? Before you start talking about what kind of kids you have, let's talk about what kind of kid you are. I'm not talking about what kind of kid you were when you were growing up and you had a dad or a mom or a stepdad or whatever your situation was.

I'm talking about right now in your life, what kind of child are you to your father, your heavenly father, because that's the foundation of it all.

[ 21 : 26 ] Deuteronomy 11, 26-28, Deuteronomy 5, So God commands my children to honor me, but he commands me to honor him.

Are you with me? He commands me to honor him. One of the most powerful things you can do as a parent is to live passionately, faithfully, vibrantly for Jesus Christ to show your kids that your obedience is real.

To model the obedience you expect should be coming from you to your father. Your children, when you say obey me, ought to be able to rest that in their mind on yes, because that's what you do to God.

You obey God. What a hypocrisy for me to say to my child, Obey me. If they're seeing me, disobey God. I mean, that's ridiculous.

That is, that's insanity. For me to say obey me, now, I, and it really shows a misunderstanding of our authority and the whole structure of things.

[ 22 : 53 ] For me to command obedience, but not to render obedience, has the model and the formula all backwards. And in youth ministry, and family ministry, for 22 years, I often, often struggled to get kids to be passionate and committed to a Savior about whom their parents were passive and casual.

So I was working to get these kids committed to Jesus Christ and loving Him and knowing Him and not just externals, I'm talking heart, falling in love with Jesus Christ. Their parents were kind of passive and casual and external and surface about it, and there really was no depth of love and no real rendering of obedience.

Are you obeying? Is your obedience obvious? Or are you disobeying? So real parenting models real obedience. And it just starts with this issue. Am I being an obedient child?

If you are not being obedient, then no matter what you say, it's all surface. And it's going to come back to bite you at some point. If your kids cannot see a substantive obedience example.

I'll tell you, being called to pastor, someone told me years ago, before I was sick, they told me, I read this somewhere, I don't know where, but it's not original with me.

[ 24 : 15 ] Every child needs to see their parents at least one time in life express radical faith obedience to God.

There needs to be some unfolding crisis, calamity, call, some situation that wrenches the heart of the parent, that tests and prove visibly the real faith of the parent in the eyes of the child.

And the child needs to see mom and dad obeying God with abandoned faith and trust in some significant way. And that one occasion, that one event will solidify like cement or like gel, you know, it just solidifies and proves to the child this is more than talk.

This is more than external religiosity. This is real relationship and real faith. And then sometime after reading that, you know, in our lives it was cancer and then it was this call to Connecticut.

And I'll balance with you, Larry, Lance was a piece of cake because he was finishing college, getting married, planning to go into ministry anyway, start his life, so he couldn't care less where we were living. He was planning on moving away anyway.

[ 25 : 31 ] In fact, it was an added bonus that we ended up together in Connecticut and that was not something we could have manipulated the way that God orchestrated it, but thank the Lord for it. But Larry and Haley, this was wrenching for our family.

22 years in California, all they ever knew of family, home, friends, stability, life, and God says, walk away.

And I said, no, and I resisted for a long time. And God finally pinned me and said, you can give in or I'll kill you.

And I said, okay, I'll give in. And when you put it that way, when you compare the two, I guess Connecticut is better for the short term than the grave.

So I yielded and I sat down with Larry and Haley and we talked at the family and we began to explain God's call. Now, I had six months to wrestle with God.

[ 26 : 31 ] I had six months to lose sleep. I had six months for God to work me over. And I expected them to just, okay, great, we're going to Connecticut. And I shouldn't have and realistically, they wrestled with that and they resisted and they didn't want to go.

They didn't want to move. And we had long, hard talks about it. We didn't argue but we didn't, we weren't happy about it either. I mean, and frankly, I wasn't. I wasn't happy that we were going or that God was calling but I knew he was.

And I remember specifically though with Larry, we were on vacation. This was July. We had been voted in as the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church. We didn't have one box packed.

This was June 26 or something like that. Two weeks later, we're on vacation in North Carolina. And we got to go home, pack boxes and get to Connecticut by about August 18.

And so vacation was barely vacation. It was just a whirlwind of your mind just running up 80 miles an hour. And Larry and I were taking a walk and we were talking about this move and he was just expressing that he was struggling.

[ 27 : 41 ] And I was trying to explain to Larry, this is God. This is God's call. I don't know what he's doing but we got to trust him. We need to obey him and it's going to work out and this is going to be probably the best thing that ever happened to you and God will honor your obedience if you adjust your attitude.

I'm saying all the stuff that I'm supposed to say and I'm trying to cultivate his heart going the right direction and he's giving me every reputation and every emotional, you know, he's pushing back and pushing back and yeah, I know, I know, I know, I just don't like it.

I don't want to and I don't know why and we're going back and forth and I finally said, look, Larry, I said, I know this is hard. It's hard for me too. I don't expect you right now to accept it.

I know that it took me months to accept it. I said, but let me just straight up ask you, Larry, I said, do you believe that God is calling us? Has God revealed that to you?

Do you know that this is God and not just me and not just an identity Christ and not just me? I just need to be a pastor. Do you get it? He goes, yeah, I get it. I said, so, do you want me to disobey God?

[ 28 : 47 ] And he was quiet for a minute and I said, really, Larry, just tell me straight up because I need to hear you do you want me to disobey God?

I don't want to lose you. I don't want you to get angry at God or angry at me. I don't want to wreck our relationship or I don't want this to be the event that makes you bitter and makes you rebel against God. But do you really want me to disobey God?

He said, no. I know you need to obey God. But I still don't like it. You know, and he still, we still went round and round about that, but that was a pivotal moment in the whole journey for him and for me because he realized this wasn't me pursuing anything in my ego or my agenda for life.

It was off my script and off my radar and way out of my imagination. But, do you want me and I needed my kids to see I was simply obeying God and trying in that to model to them not only obedience to me but obedience to God ultimately.

So real parenting models real obedience. Number two, let's hurry. Real parenting models real authority. And this is, I'm going to dive into this for a minute and talk about authority with you. I think we misunderstand authority.

[ 30 : 09 ] I think we misappropriate it. I think sometimes we misuse it. And we don't always get it. A few verses here. Jeremiah 20, I'm sorry, 32, and I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever for the good of them and of their children after them.

So God says, the reason I want your heart to be mine and the reason I want you to fear me is for your good. You hear that? Okay.

Ezekiel, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and do them, they shall be my people and I will be their God. So God says again, my statutes, my ordinances, I want to be your God and these things are for your good.



I'm a protective, I'm a jealous, I'm a loving God. Ephesians 1, that in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather all things together in one, all, sorry, that he might gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, which are on earth, even in him.

I want you to get the picture. All things together in one in Christ. Philippians 2, God hath highly exalted him, given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

[ 31 : 29 ] I'm building a case here. Luke 6, why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Jesus referencing his authority. Again, Matthew 28, 18, Jesus came, spake unto them saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth.

Colossians 1 talks about Jesus having all power. He is over all dominions, principalities, powers. All things were created by him and for him.

So, what are the principles that I draw or that I want to try to build from these scriptures? Number one, Jesus is all authority. He has all power. Right?

I know we know this, but I want you to appropriate it now as we talk through these, we link these truths together. Jesus is all authority. Number two, Jesus is the final authority.

So, all of it comes back to him. We're all going to be bowing before him. We're all going to be answering to him. Okay? So, all power, all authority, all of our parental position ultimately comes from him, is his to begin with.

[ 32 : 36 ] I want you to write down the word authority and I want you right next to it the word authentic. authority and authentic. The words have a correlation.

Authority and authentic. The word authority comes from Latin roots signifying something that came from a factual or original source in settling an argument.

Okay? So, authority from Latin roots was this is the final truth. this is the ultimate substantiation.

Factual, original, source. Okay? Final authority. This is the answer. This is the truth. The word authentic comes from Greek roots meaning original, genuine, not fictitious.

Okay? So, authority, authentic. In present day secular culture, the word authority has negative connotations. We sometimes hear the phrase question authority implying rebellion.

[ 33 : 42 ] When in actuality, when considering the root meaning of the word, questioning authority is actually a positive thing. Because what you're doing is you're going to the final, original source of truth.

You're going, I want to know the truth when you question authority. Or as to go find authentic source of truth to get your authoritative answer.

So, today the word authority often implies the use of power, or sometimes it's misuse or abuse. But we need a biblical understanding of authority that helps us understand how to model authority in the home.

If you're going to enjoy parenting teenagers, if you're going to understand God's intent of your role and his role, you're going to have to understand what authority is and express it properly. What is authority? Well, here it is.

Jesus is authority. Okay? Now, that's simple. I get it. Simplistic, but it's also huge. Jesus is authority. Biblical parental authority is simply the life and power of Jesus flowing through you for somebody else's benefit.

[ 34 : 48 ] Because how does Jesus use his authority? For your good. For my good. Okay? His power is for our good. His laws are for our good. His love is for our redemption and our good.

So, if I'm going to be given authority, delegated authority, by the Lord Jesus, to exercise in someone else's life, I need to number one, steward it like I'm answering to him and like I'm using what's his, and then I need to express it in a way that accurately reflects him and how he would use his authority in this child's life.

In other words, I don't have any right to take the power, the influence, the authority that's been given to me by God and use it wrongfully or carnally in my child's life.

Now, we've all done that. We've all done that. I've done that. Your flesh grabs a hold of that stick of authority, that rod of authority, and uses it wrongfully. Here's an example.

I might be sitting in the living room watching ESPN or Sports Center or Monday Night Football, and Haley might sit down at the piano and be practicing her piano, which is one room away.

[ 35 : 58 ] And she might be playing the same song for an hour, 52 times, the same song. And I may be trying to hear something on TV. I may be watching something really important on Fox News. And so, because I am the authority in the house, and I am the head of the house, I can go, shut up in there!

Stop! I can't hear! Okay, have I used my authority? Yes or no? Yes. Have I used it the way Jesus would use my authority?

Or his authority? No. I've leveraged my power, I have abused my authority is what I've done. I have not used my authority for the good of my daughter.

Was she sinning? Was she doing anything wrong? Or anything hurtful? No. She's actually doing something right. It's much better than sitting in a room text messaging.

It's much better than sitting in a room on Facebook or reading some mindless junk. I mean, it's better that she sit at a piano developing skill, but I in my carnal human use of my power can, now I've never done that by the way in that context.

[ 37 : 09 ] I've never told my children to shut up. I tease them and tell them to shut up, but we usually don't speak to each other that way. I'm just using an example of how often we can use our power, our authority, in a way that doesn't reflect Jesus Christ.

We don't model real authority and use it properly and steward it properly. Biblical authority, and I want you to write this statement down. It is the life and power of Jesus flowing through you for the good of those under your care.

The life and power of Jesus flowing through you for the good of those under your care. Let's see what I've got here. There it is. The life and power of Jesus flowing through you for the benefit of those under your care.

Now, as you're writing this down, I want to review quickly three kinds of parenting, three types of parents. parents, and all of us probably fit into one of these categories, and there's one that ought to be our goal.

The first one is a passive parent. Proverbs 29, 15 says, a child left himself, bringeth his mother to shame. This is the I'm too busy, I'm too tired, I'm distracted, I'm watching TV, I'm into my own life, leave me alone, go take care of your own self.

[ 38 : 19 ] And it's just, I don't have the energy, the capacity, the knowledge, the passion, the care to deal with you, I don't know what to do with you, so I'm going to neglect you, I'm going to be passive, and just let you be what you want to be.

I don't have the energy to talk to you for the next three hours about dress standards and modesty, so I'm going to let you wear whatever you want to wear, then I don't have to deal with you. I don't have the energy to train you, so passive.

Next is the oppressive parent. Your fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. This is the overbearing, the forcible, the demanding, the authoritarian, the authoritative. I don't care about you, just do what I say.

This is the control-oriented parent. Again, it's not relationship-based, it's not nurturing, there's no real chastening here, it's just slamming down. Your biggest tool is your loud voice and your threatening demeanor.

Do this or else. Your biggest leverage, your biggest weapon is threat and fear and punishment and all you're doing is modifying behavior instead of cultivating a heart and just getting your kids to do what you tell them to do because you said so.

[ 39 : 37 ] The third is the authentic parent. This is bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is being genuinely like Jesus in expressing biblical authority, strong in truth but tender in love, balance.

Authority is authentic, it's tied to what is true and real. It says watch me and then do as I do. So real parenting models real obedience, it models real authority, thirdly it models real redemption.

We're going to take a break here in just a second. It models real redemption. What am I talking about? Redemption is this, you were lost, you were hopeless, I was lost, I was separated from God.

He loved me as I am. He loved you as you were. He suffered, he sacrificed to bring you to himself. He redeemed you by grace which is undeserved and unconditional.

He works in you to nurture and to grow you into his likeness and he forgives you when you fail and he loves you through it all. Your heavenly father is rich in mercy, great in love, powerful in life, abundant in grace, eternally good.

[ 40 : 48 ] He accepts you as you are. He works in you by his grace. He teaches you how to walk. He leads you to repentance. The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance. I mean, and the model of redemption in your relationship and in my relationship with God is, I was saved undeserving from the penalty of my sin.

Every single day of my life I fail, I struggle, I limp, I trip my way through this relationship and I get back up and I repent and I continue to seek the Lord and cultivate my relationship with him though it's undeserving and his grace is inexhaustible and more often than I can remember I play the prodigal and he stays there with his arms open waiting for me to repent and come back and run back into this relationship and I cannot exhaust that love and that redemptive grace between him and me and that is what ought to unfold between a parent and a child.

Real obedience, I belong to God and I'm obeying him. Real authority, my power is given to me by Jesus and I'm expressing his love in your life and I'm answering to him with how I use this so I'm going to use it for your good, not my agenda but your good and real redemption.

You know what? When you disappoint me, I still love you, I forgive you, I welcome you back, I recover you, I help you recover yourself and we go forward in the light of God's grace and redemption.

We'll study this in another hour more carefully as we talk about chastening. Before we discuss rules, order, discipline, home structure, it all begins here.

[ 42 : 29 ] Where are you with God? What picture are you projecting into your child's heart? What model are they seeing?

Are they seeing a model of real obedience? Are they seeing a model of Christ-like authority? My fear is not that my children will run from God.

That would be a fear but that's the wrong fear to have. The fear that we should all have is that we would show them the wrong picture of Jesus that would cause them to run from him.

Are you with me? We were talking about a guy this morning in the car that was a rebel. And rebels, I'm working with so many young people that were away from God that are now in their 20s or early 30s, helping them see that the God they ran from is not the God of the Bible.

Are you with me? Their lies in their head of who they thought God to be, so bad, so oppressive, so harsh, so fly off the handle, angry.

[ 43 : 47 ] Believe me, I get it. God has anger. But you know what the human mind thinks of when we think of God and anger? We think of our parents flying off the handle.

That's the image. So our kids run from that God. Why? Because that's the God we showed them. Instead of showing them the Redeemer of the Bible.

Instead of showing them the prodigal father of the Bible. Instead of showing them the Savior who said, neither do I condemn thee. Instead of showing them inexhaustible grace and true sacrificial authority.

Jesus, all power, emaciated, dying, beaten, bloody to redeem you. Think of that. I mean, that picture. My passion as a parent is I want to show my kids that Savior.

I want to show my kids that grace, that Jesus. Listen. People don't run from that God. They run from a caricature of God.

[ 44 : 54 ] When you see Jesus for who he is, you run to him. And when you model the right model, your kids are going to know that you're broken and that you belong to a loving Savior.

They're going to know that they're broken and they belong to a loving parent. And it's just your home model, even though it's fractured and flawed, it's going to show them the grace of God and the redemptive love of God.

And they're going to, at some point, their heart is going to fall in love with God. And that is the final end goal. Not that you win the argument. Not that you, you know, that they do what you want them to do or have all of your standards just the way you have.

I get an email every single week from a parent somewhere in America. And they're all the same stories and they're all very sad. And it's, I know people that kick their kids out of their home for something as simple as they don't listen to the music that I want them to listen to.

I get it. You want them to listen to better music. But kick them out of your house? Really? I mean, I had a lady that wrote me and she said, my son moved in with his girlfriend and moved away from our home.

[ 46 : 02 ] And I feel like we need to love and encourage and still maintain a relationship and try to win them back and try to cultivate them back and stay open to them.

And yet my pastor and my church and other people are telling me to cut them off and not even have a meal with them. I mean, on and on and on. And I just wrote the lady and said, I am so sorry you're being given that horrible advice.

You need to love your child. And I said, don't facilitate the sin. Don't endorse the sin. Don't participate in the sin. Don't somehow make it, don't further it somehow, enable it, don't pay for it.

But be grace. Be loving. I mean, no, don't condemn them. No, don't cut. I mean, they need to see that we're obeying a loving Savior that we don't deserve to belong to.

They need to see humility, genuine Christ-like authority played out. And our goal needs to be not to control them, not to simply leverage their behavior, which we'll talk about in a minute, not to simply keep from being embarrassed about their behavior in public.

[ 47 : 09 ] Our goal needs to be to be in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and to help them be genuinely falling in love with the same Savior. Let's have a word of prayer and we'll take about a five-minute break and we'll jump into our second hour, okay?

Okay, we're going to cruise through some stuff here and I'm going to try to hit some high points and give you some principles that have helped me. Just very quickly, Proverbs, chapter 23.

You guys awake? Am I keeping you awake? Okay. I just want to caveat everything I'm saying with, it's easier to teach this than it is to do it, okay?

I'm as bad at all this as you are. I just know what I'm supposed to be doing and asking God every day to help me get it straight. And more often than not, I have to repent and tell my children I'm sorry and ask them to forgive me, which also is a model of redemption.

And that's a healthy thing too. So, that's a good thing. Proverbs 23, 26. My son, give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways. Doesn't that tie in with what we just studied? My son, observe.

[ 48 : 27 ] That's not the verse, by the way, that I'm reading. My son, give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways. Proverbs 4, 23 is the one on the screen. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

The principle I want to talk to you for the next few minutes is about targeting the heart. Targeting the heart. Question to consider right now. Are you managing behavior or are you building belief?

Are you managing behavior or are you building belief? Your children will live according to their belief. Everybody does. You do. I do. Belief drives behavior.

Okay? Not what we say we believe. All right? Your behavior is always a product of your belief. It's a product of what you really believe. Your behavior is always congruent with your belief.

Now, what you say you believe, what you tell yourself you believe, may not be congruent with your behavior. But your behavior is directly linked to what you really, in your heart, believe.

[ 49 : 30 ] All right? So, in parenting, too often we get focused on managing behavior instead of building belief. And what happens with that is it is very short-lived.

You cannot manage behavior for very long. And we're going to break that down a little bit later here. But that has, that's a downward cycle that ends.

You, you're not going to be able to forever manage the behavior of your child. So, at some point, your management of their behavior transitions to them living according to their belief.

If you haven't helped them build their beliefs, develop their faith, cultivate their heart for God, then their behavior is going to go a direction that you wish it wouldn't. And then you're going to grasp for authority and try to stranglehold their behavior back into control.

And they're going to say, buzz off. And if you don't, then they're going to run. And you're never going to see your grandkids at Thanksgiving and Christmas. You know, I mean, I've seen behavior modification run a very bad course.

[ 50 : 39 ] It works when they're five. Do this, do this, now do this, now sit down, now be quiet, now obey, obey. Do what I say. That is purely behavior modification.

And you need to do it. I get it. There needs to be a lot of that in the early part of life. But at some point, you've got to get your eyes out of just managing behavior. Because that's just all surface.

You've got to target the heart. And you've got to be developing and building belief. Behavior modification or building belief. Let's talk about behavior modification for a minute.

Behavior modification. The psalmist said, let thine eyes observe my ways. I want you to study my beliefs, my behavior. I want you to look at the way I live.

I want your heart to connect, not just your behavior, but your heart. Behavior modification is parenting by externals. And it is, a couple things I want to say here.

[ 51 : 38 ] It is easier than building belief. Modifying behavior is easier than building belief. Why? Building belief requires you to know what you believe.

It requires you to be able to intelligently dialogue about it. It requires you to be able to substantiate it in the word and in life. And to make an intelligent argument against the lies of Hollywood and culture and everybody else that's lying to your kid about why your beliefs are wrong and their beliefs are right.

So it's hard. Belief building requires you to become a student, to grow, to intelligently be able to transfer your belief and help your kids see the lies and see through the lies.

Behavior modification is just list the behavior and create a big enough pain consequence that they're highly motivated to behave this way. And there's always, you know, worse punishment and worse consequence and you can always, you know, it breaks you, it makes you nothing more than a judge or a police, you know, officer.

It makes you an enforcer of laws and it makes your child nothing more than a criminal. Okay? Behavior modification makes you the law and your child the criminal because they're always going to break your laws.

[ 52 : 57 ] That's what we all do. You break God's laws. I break God's laws. Your children will break your laws. And when we build a home that's all about laws, laws, laws, and no behavior development and redemptive grace transformation of the heart, what we're doing is we're creating a criminal law justice system.

And then our children have to figure out how to get around our laws and then hide their crimes and blame their crimes. And then the goal becomes staying out of trouble.

Boy, you talk, average 15-year-old, you say, what's your goals for school this year? I just want to stay out of trouble. What is that? That's a kid that's grown up in a behavior modification mindset.

They don't care about learning. They don't care about following mentors. They don't care about getting ready for their future or learning how to make decisions or getting wisdom from God's word and understanding and insight about how to succeed in life.

They just want to stay out of trouble. I want to keep everybody off my back. I don't want the merits. I don't want detention. I don't want to get expelled. I don't want the hassle of the law coming down on me.

[ 54 : 05 ] Are you with me? See how short-sighted that is? It's a mess. It's easy to modify behavior. It's difficult to build belief. Behavior modification is visibly rewarding.

So it's not just easier. It's visibly rewarding. Hey, look at my kid. My kid walks right, talks right, looks right, dresses right, does all the stuff at church, has the right haircut, has the right dress.

Look at my parenting skills. I have painted a beautiful portrait of behavior. And then you go to restaurants and you're in church and you're at the airport or wherever and people compliment you.

You have wonderful children. You have beautifully behaved. What a beautiful family. Your family is so well behaved. You're going, yeah. I am a good parent.

And you know as well as God knows, they're tyrants. They're rebels. They look good, but at home they are disobedient, disrespectful, defiant, divisive.

[ 55 : 04 ] They're killing each other. They're bouncing off the walls. You guys are like, how do you know this? I'm a member of the club too. So it's visibly rewarding.

Everybody thinks that, ah, we've got a great family and we're doing a good job. Behavior modification is short-term thinking. In other words, while I'm around, my kids are behaving.

And by the way, remember, it's only when you're around. If they don't believe what you believe, they're not going to behave the way they should when you're not around.

When they're in private, when they're with friends, your behavior modification just disintegrates. There's no, because behavior modification is built on enforcement.

And when there's no enforcement, there's no motive to live right. There's no motive to do right. There's no motive to grow the right direction. When there's no threat, when there's no penalty hanging over your head, in the behavior modification system, the motive for behavior is punishment.

[ 56 : 17 ] By the way, we talked about punishment the other day and does God punish us? So often, we think this is our relationship with God. And we think we're behaving to keep God off our back.

And we play the Job. We play Job's friends. You know, what did I do to deserve this? And what did that person do to deserve that? And as long as I'm good, God will be good to me.

And as long, you know, if I'm bad, bad stuff happens. And we get this crime and punishment relationship going on with God, which I'll talk about later. Behavior modification is necessary, but it's not the goal.

When they're young, it is necessary, but it's not the goal. It's not a gauge of success. My children behaving well is not a gauge of whether I'm successful as a parent.

I might be successful at modifying behavior, but that's not necessarily a true success. Next, behavior modification can become a game. In other words, it's a cat and mouse thing.

[ 57 : 16 ] Just, you know, my children trying to stay out of trouble and avoiding the unpleasantness of the conflict, keeping me off their back, keeping me out of their room and having long lectures, you know, staying out of trouble.

In other words, children learn. And some are just, some are strong-willed and more renegade and their personality, temperament, style is more, they're going to push the boundaries and they're going to, you know, they're going to test you and kind of end your face and push you.

Some just pull back and fly below the radar. There's no values being created. There's no conviction. There's no belief in what they're doing. They're just deciding to take, to go with the current, to comply, to conform temporarily because I want to get along.

I want peace in my life. I don't believe what these people believe, but I'll live the way they want me to live to keep them off my back so that my life can be relatively peaceful. I know I'm scaring you right now.

We thought this was the goal, right? Behavior modification is about conforming, not transforming. Okay, so it's external, not internal. Behavior modification teaches us motions, not mission.

[ 58 : 38 ] So it looks good even though it can be fake. All right, so that's behavior modification. Now, the other side of this, by the way, we focus in behavior modification on rules, correction, and punishment.

Rules, correction, and punishment. It's just, you lay down the law, you set up a penalty. When the law is broken, you lay down, you mete out punishment. And I will tell you, this is not the relationship you have with God or that God wants with you.

If it were, then there would be no need for Jesus or grace or the cross. Okay? If you could do this with God, if you could be successful at this, there would be no need for a Savior.

Okay? The law reveals to us that we can't do this, that we fail at this. That's why we need a Savior. That's why Jesus needed to be on a cross crying, it is finished.

That's why he needed to be the fulfillment of all the law. Because we can't. And we try to modify our behavior with God, and at the end of that, lifetime trying to modify our behavior is always failure.

[ 59 : 45 ] Always. Because no matter how good you get at modifying your behavior for God, there's still a whole lot of behavior you still need to modify. Right? And the more aware you become of how much behavior you still have yet to modify, the more you could feel like a failure, and the more you know how desperate you need grace, and unconditional acceptance from God.

And the more that motivates you to let God have his way in your life, because you know without that you are utterly hopeless. You're a whitewashed sepulcher, utterly broken without grace.

Okay? I digress, but isn't that awesome? Okay? Let's go to the next one. Let's talk about behavior modification. I'm sorry. No, that's not where... Belief building. Here we go. Let's talk about belief building.

Belief building. Psalm 40, verse 8. I delight to do thy will. I delight to do thy will. Yea, thy law is within my heart.

Think about that. I delight to do thy will. Your law is in my heart. God, I know your heart, and my heart is for you.

[ 60 : 56 ] I delight in you. That's not just behavior modification. That's not just outward conformity. That is heart transformation. The heart is where the values are formed, where questions are contemplated, where relationships are cultivated, where spiritual battles are fought, and a wise parent is on a relentless pursuit of the heart, not just the behavior, the heart.

They're constantly asking, what is going on in my child's heart? What belief is driving this behavior? Listen, with my daughter, I can try to make her wear what I wanted her wear.

I can try to make her listen to what I want to listen to. But at the end of the day, if she's complying and conforming without developing belief, then I am on a short-lived cycle.

Because it's only that much time before she's on her own doing what she believes, not doing what dad used to make her do. Okay? So I have a very short time to get into her head and heart with the word of God and help her develop a belief system.

If you've got a daughter in this room or a teen daughter, you're probably having lots of conversations about what she wears and how her makeup is and how her hair is. And I'm telling you, for me right now, my mission in life is to help my daughter see there's a difference between being cute and being sexy.

[ 62 : 16 ] There's a difference between being fashionable and stylish and, oh, I love your outfit, and being provocative. A 13-year-old doesn't get that. And Forever 21 doesn't want them to get that.

And Disney Channel doesn't want them to get that. And so I've got Hollywood and culture trying to cram my daughter into their sexy box.

And I've got a daughter that doesn't think in terms of sexy. She thinks in terms of cute and fashionable, and I want to fit in and be attractive and just be up-to-date. And boy, I'm telling you, I have two options.

I can say, you're not wearing that whenever you're... You know, I can march around the house and throwing my temper tantrums, slamming down my will, and she will never get it. All she'll see is a belligerent dad who didn't want her to be cute or fashionable.

She doesn't even think sexy. She doesn't even think provocative. She doesn't know how other men think or see or other teenage boys think or see. She doesn't know that side of it. But guess who's got a teacher?



[ 63 : 22 ] I do. You do. We were having a conversation the other day. This was several months ago. By the way, if you haven't read the book, Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters, that's a great book. Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters.

But we were talking about dress. And I'm trying to help her see beyond my standard. I'm trying to help her see beyond my preference. I'm trying to help her see this battle for her soul and her mind and her values and her body and how the world disrespects her and wants her to disrespect herself and devalue herself.

The world wants to objectify her and dehumanize her and turn her into a sexual object. And trying to communicate these values into the head of a 12 or 13-year-old is, Lord, I'm so in over my head.

We were three hours. In fact, at one point in the conversation, I went down to my office. I said, wait a minute. I'll be right back. I went down to my office. I got the book, Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters. I brought it up.

I sat on the couch. I said, listen, this isn't dad. This is a doctor. This is a lady doctor. And I said, I don't even know if she's a Christian. But I'm going to open this book. I'm going to read to you. And I'm reading her paragraphs that I have underlined of this book.

[ 64 : 32 ] Your daughter needs you to protect her. She wants to know that you love her. And I'm reading this to her. So now it's not dad talking. It's Meg Meeker talking. A physician who treats teenage girls and telling her, your dad should be doing this.

You know, your dad should be it. And I'm telling you, we read that book out loud together. I read for about an hour. I'm flipping things. Look at this. Look where she talks about modesty. Look at this. This isn't me. This isn't the Bible. This isn't even Jesus.

This is Meg Meeker. And I'm reading this to her. And I'm telling you, something happened. And the first hour of that conversation was her will against my will.

The second hour of that conversation was us, was her discovering, dad has a belief that I need to have about my value, my body, my identity in Christ.

And the world wants to trash that and shred that and make me somebody that I am not. And all of a sudden, the spotlight shifted off of her will to dress and my will to dress and the power struggle to the development of her heart, the cultivation of her beliefs.

[ 65 : 43 ] And I'm telling you, parents, that's the deep end of parenting. You can't do that if you've really got to watch a lot of movies and play a lot of video games and have all your hobbies lined up in your life.

Okay? Because this takes time. This takes a kind of love that will stay up until 3 a.m. when you've got to get up at 6 a.m. This takes a kind of love that will stop the world because this child is struggling.

And let's go for a walk or a drive and talk through this and help get beyond the argument, get beyond the will struggle into the belief and help them see the truth.

But I'm telling you, when this happens, the light bulb comes on in their head, their heart softens, and they thank you. And they're grateful that you have seen beyond their behavior and you're helping to develop the right belief structure.

Now, very quickly, and I've got to press through this a couple of steps. It begins with you loving God and you growing in his word. Again, if you're going to develop belief, you've got to be able to intelligently dialogue about why you believe what you believe.

[ 66 : 50 ] So this means you become a student. And praise God, we have more resources at our disposal than we've ever had. But you've got to become the student. And don't be afraid of not knowing the answer.

Don't be afraid of your kids stumping you. They're going to stump you. They're intelligent. They think through it. I had lunch recently with a couple in their late 20s, and they had been away from church.

They sat down with me at lunch. They've been visiting our church, kind of poking their heads back in. And I'm trying to draw them back in and help them understand I'm not pastorally going to try to micromanage your standards or your behavior or your decisions.

I'm going to help you love God and grow in his grace, and I'm going to let the Holy Spirit deal with you on your decisions. And so we began to talk. And this young lady grew up in Michigan. She could have written this letter to me. She's not the girl that wrote it, but she could have been the one.

She said, my dad was in Christian education. I was in this school and that school and this church and that church. And she said, here's my big beef. She said, I was labeled a rebel. She said, everybody thought I was rebellious.

[ 67 : 51 ] She said, I honestly, pastor, I wasn't. I became rebellious because everybody told me I was a rebel. She said, what I was was a 15-year-old girl who needed answers.

She said, all I was told was how I was supposed to be and what was expected of me and how I had to live. I was never allowed to ask why.

And any time I asked why, I was rebuked for having a rebellious spirit. And she said, I didn't have a rebellious spirit. I just needed some substantive belief structure to uphold my external behavior.

Why did I have to live this way? And if somebody could have intelligently helped me develop a belief system, I would have never gotten away from God. Building belief rather than just cultivating or just modifying behavior.

So it starts with you getting into God's word. Number two, turn every context into a teaching context as much as you possibly can. It's you applying life situations to biblical principle.

[ 68 : 59 ] And do you see this and do you know why and how come? And I'll tell you, just to give you a quick example, we were preaching at a church in Las Vegas. That was my most profitable preaching trip ever.

All right, just making sure you're awake. We really won big that trip. It was a church plant. It was outside the city. If you've ever been to Las Vegas, it is a city, actually.

It's not just a sinful place. There's suburbs and people and there is this, the one, you know, they call it the strip, the one road with all the hotels and all the party life and all the casinos and all of it.

So we're outside the city and we went to see Hoover Dam and we went to see, we went on a horseback ride out in Red Rock Canyon. We had a couple days. It was right around Lance's senior year. So we were kind of combining it into a family memory thing.

And we were preaching at a graduation in a church service. We rode quads. It was kind of a fun trip. Well, one evening we were going to go to dinner and find a place to eat. And we wanted to drive down the strip just to show the kids the, you know, I, frankly, I had never been there.

[ 70 : 08 ] It was my first time to be there. We wanted to show them the lights and the, you know, the different stuff. And we get going down this road. And I'm telling you, it was a mistake. We shouldn't have. And my wife starts to freak out.

She's going, all right, everybody look this way. And she's going, everybody look this way. Everybody look down. Okay, everybody look at the ceiling. And she's directing our eyes, you know. We didn't realize, you know, the billboards and the posters and all the stuff that was going to be thrown in our face.

So we drove through that. And it was like, okay, yay, there's the Statue of Liberty. And there's this one. Everybody looked, you know. And as we were getting to the end of that street, you know, just people everywhere.

Just droves and droves of people. And I just began to talk to the kids. I said, kids, these people are miserable. These people don't know how to find happiness.

They don't know how to be sexually fulfilled. They don't know how to keep a marriage together. And so they have to numb their lives. Their lives are so miserable that all they can do is speak with curse words.

[ 71 : 10 ] I said to them, you know, you ever been around somebody that all they do is cuss? And they're like, yeah, Dad, we've heard people like that. Well, if you were unsaved and you were in that much sin and that much pain, all you would do is cuss too. Their lives are so miserable that's all they think of.

Life is a curse word to them. Life is one numbing experience to the next. One drug, one alcohol, one party, one partner to the next. Because in those moments they pretend life is pain free.

But it's getting worse and worse and worse. And I said, this is people desperate for happiness. So we turned that into a teaching context. The next day we were looking for a place to eat. And Lance and Larry go, well, whatever we do, don't go back down that road.

We don't want to go back down there. But praise God. Thank you, boys, for having a high standard. So turn every context, even bad decisions, into a teaching context.

Number four, fill your, did I get all these? Number four, fill your, did I miss two? Spend time teaching God's word. Okay, spend time teaching God's word.

[ 72 : 12 ] Number three, turn every context into a teaching. Number four, fill your life and home with God's truth. Again, whether it's family devotions or whether it's just a talk over the dinner table or whether it's some situation that's unfolding, whether it's the music you play, try to fill your environment with the truth of God.

Number four, or five, fully commit to God's way as a parent. And what I'm talking about, again, it all comes back to your model. It all comes back to, by the way, all these principles were taken from Deuteronomy 6, and I'm trying to hurry.

But you've got a model. You've got to be the one obeying and honoring God and showing that it is the best way. This is the important, probably the most important part of this lecture.

I want to hurry through this because I've got one more thing I want to touch on. Supernatural resources. I know you think, just like I do, I'm in over my head.

I can't do this. How can I build belief? I don't know what I need to know. I didn't go to Bible college. I haven't read a lot of books. Listen, shout down all of those lies.

[ 73 : 17 ] The God of the universe saw fit to place into your care one of his children. He wouldn't do that if he didn't expect, if he wasn't planning to equip and enable you to fulfill that obligation by his power and by his grace.

Yes, you are in over your head. You need him. But you are perfectly partnered with your children. You have what your children need.

All right? Don't think you can't do this. You have supernatural resources at your disposal. Yes, you are just a person, just like I am. But you have to, by faith, accept, God partner me with my kids on purpose.

God, by his grace, is going to give me what I need. What are the supernatural resources? Number one, you have his word. His word is alive. It is powerful. It grows. It multiplies. And as you take it and teach it, it will come alive in your child's heart.

Number two, you have the Holy Spirit of God. You cannot put a descriptor, an adequate descriptor on what the Holy Spirit can do in the life of your children. You cannot adequately understand or describe how he can make your words come into their heart with greater power and greater significance and greater depth.

[ 74 : 37 ] So you have prayer. Huge. Huge. Prayer. Pray with your children. If you got one thing from all three hours this morning, if you said, Carrie, you can only say one thing to these parents, here's what I would say to you.

Every night before your children go to bed, go to them individually right before they go to sleep, kneel down by their bed, hold their hand, put your arm around them, hold them in your arms, depending on what size they are.

I remember trying to do this when Lance was, you know, 16. Come here, son. You know, it was a little awkward, so I just grabbed his arm at that point. But many times I cradle them. My wife taught me to do this.

Okay. Her dad prayed with her every night of her life growing up until she got married, until the night before we got married. Go to their room, kneel down, how'd your day go, talk to them for a few minutes.

No lecture. No, you're not fixing stuff right now. You're just loving them. You're just visiting with them. And then pray with them. I said pray, don't preach. You all know what I'm talking about. Dear God, this child is struggling right now.

[ 75 : 39 ] You know. Rain down fire of conviction, Heavenly Father. You know. God, I don't know, but you might be one second away from striking this child dead for all I know.

You know. Don't do that, okay. Don't do that, all right. Because he might be one second away from striking you dead too, okay. You're no better than your child when it comes to that, okay.

Dear Lord, thank you so much for letting me be Lance's dad. You have blessed me so much.

Thank you for Lance. Lord, sometimes Lance is having a hard time, but overall, help him to know he's doing a good job. And sometimes I have a hard time too, so thank you for being patient with me.

Lord, help me to be a better dad. I need to be a better dad to Lance. Show me how I can be. Lord, help Lance to sleep well. Help him to wake up tomorrow morning and have courage and wisdom and strength. Help him to be a good example.

[ 76 : 41 ] Help him to be a good influence. Help him to encourage others and do right. And Lord, be with us tomorrow. Help us to honor you. Thank you. You know, whatever. Three minutes. In Jesus' name, amen. Lance, do you want to pray?

And my kids would pray. This became such a habit in our life that if we didn't do it, they got a little tweaked at me. Like, you know, they were a little bothered.

Or they, Dad, come on, I'm ready for bed. I'm waiting for you to pray. And if I didn't come right now, if I was tied up doing something, Dad, come on. You know, they'd get bothered at me. In fact, one night I asked Haley, when I got down by her head there and I was talking to her, I said, Haley, what's one way, if you could change anything about me, what's one thing that you would change?

And she said, she thought about it for a minute. She said, you really want to know? Oh, no, is it that bad? You know, I said, yeah, I really want to know.

I'm not going to get mad. No matter what you say, I'm not going to defend myself. She said, I wish you would come as soon as I'm ready for bed to pray with you. I'm like, oh, I'm sorry. I can handle that. I can do a better job at that.

[ 77 : 43 ] But it mattered to them. So prayer is huge. And at the end of the day, it's just a good time. It's a good time to talk about the day. They go to sleep. Their last thought on their mind as they go to sleep was their loving parent praying together with them.

What a great way to go to sleep. So godly music. This is big. And I'm not going to try to get all micromanaging on all the different styles and different things.

I'll just say, you've got to obey the Holy Spirit. And I will say this, if it's biblically centered, if it's helping them develop their love for Christ and their heart for God, if it's producing good stuff, I'm for it.

End of day. That's all I care about is if it's producing a good response in their heart. Close relationships. Very quickly, I'm going to hurry through this. Close relationships and God's people. That's your church and the environment that you bring them into.

But God has given you these supernatural resources that will help you to build belief in their heart. So are you managing behavior or are you building belief?

[ 78 : 46 ] Targeting their heart. I want to hurry and jump into this principle because I think this is probably the single most important parenting principle that God's ever driven home to my heart and life.

But turn, if you will, with me to 1 Thessalonians 2. 1 Thessalonians 2. And I want to maybe take 20, 25 minutes, and then we're going to take a break and do some questions. 1 Thessalonians 2.

Write down that statement, influence Trump's authority. Now, first hour, we talked about what is authority and modeling the right authority and stewarding my authority as from the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2 is like the model passage of Paul's ministry, right? It's his portrait of how he ministered to the believers at Thessalonica.

Now, look at verse 1. For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. So this was not carnal, human. There was no games being played.

[ 79 : 52 ] There was no personal agenda, selfish agenda. This was real deal. This was real ministry. Even after we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

By the way, there it is. Because they see that Paul, in spite of calamity, in spite of suffering, in spite of hardship, he's giving, serving, preaching. So his faith was validated by his suffering.

He was proving his faith to these new believers. And they had no question of whether he was the real deal because his model withstood the test of testing and trials.

Okay? Verse 3. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile. But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God with trieth our hearts.

Paul said, I'm answering to God. I was doing this as unto the Lord. I mean, so much here. For neither at any time use we flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness.

[ 80 : 56 ] God is witness, nor of men sought we glory. Neither of you, nor yet of others. When we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ, but we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.

Some parents, just right there, gentle. Are you ever gentle? Or do your kids see one channel? Abrasive. Forceful. We're gentle.

Verse 8. By the way, this is the apostle Paul. Did he, in this writing, does he have apostolic authority? Yeah. I mean, he's penning the very words of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This was big time. I mean, is he leveraging that authority? I mean, is he coming down hard? I am the, don't you know who I am?

You know, no. Look at how he came into these people. Gentle. Verse 8. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls.

[ 81 : 57 ] Because you were dear unto us. This is what Jonah missed. You know, he went and said what God wanted him to say. He just never connected. He wasn't affectionately desirous. He was hoping God would destroy these people. You know.

Paul said, I came in. I was desirous. I was affectionate. I love you. I liked you. Verse 9. You remember our labor, travail, laboring, night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you.

We preached unto you the gospel of God. You're witnessing God also how holily, justly, unblameably we behaved ourselves. There's his model. Among you that believe.

As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged. Look at those words. Exhorted, comforted, charged. Every one of you. Look at it. Look at what it says. Here it is.

Big red light. As a father doth his children. Say that phrase. As a father doth his children. This is a parenting passage as much as it's a pastoring passage.

[ 83 : 03 ] This is a fathering passage as much as anything else. Yeah, it's a model of ministry. Yeah, it's a model of a shepherd with the flock and the under-shepherd, I should say, with the people of God.

God's heritage. Not lording over, but being affectionately desirous and tender and gentle and cultivating and modeling and leading. And he says, as a father doth his children.

Now, here's the principle. And here's how I've seen it play out in my office. A Christian family comes in. And they want, their child is struggling.

Their teenager is rebellious. They're having lots of arguments at home. And they escalate, escalate, escalate. So somebody throws something. Somebody slams something. Somebody's in their room. Somebody's, you know.

And they don't know what to do with this. They don't know what to do with this fighting. They want to leverage authority. Parents want to control this child. They want to get this child back into obedience.

[ 84 : 02 ] When they were five, they did what I said. Now he's 16 and he's not doing what I say. And I'm bringing him to you, Pastor Schmidt. I'm bringing him to you, Mr. Youth Pastor, so you can fix this problem. Because this is a hassle to me.

I'm not getting ESPN like I used to get. My friends at church are, I'm embarrassed in front of them because they know my child was expelled or suspended or having trouble. Other people are saying, don't hang around that child.

I'm really, this is really inconveniencing me. My child, this whole parenting thing. It was really fun when they were, you know, really little, not sleeping.

You know, now this is really an invasion into my life. So can you fix my child so that I can go back to my life? That's what they were thinking. They never said it that way.

But that's what they were thinking. We're bringing him to you because we don't know what to do and you need to fix him. And they expected me to bring out a magic wand, a little cup of fairy dust, come to the child, sprinkle fairy dust, and go, you shall now be obedient.

[ 85 : 01 ] And, okay, be sure to tithe on Sunday and God bless you and have a good day. Everything should be fine now. Great, now I can watch ESPN. My child will behave the way I want him to behave. It doesn't work that way.

That's fantasy land, okay? Five years old is gone. All right? It's never coming back. Here's what I see. Parents describing the problem. The teenager's sitting there with their arms folded, head down.

Everyone's picking on me. And what I really see is these parents have no influence with this kid.

They've lost all influence. This kid doesn't care what they believe. This kid doesn't care what they think. This kid has somewhere in his past totally dismissed his parents' credibility.

Totally dismissed his parents as intelligent beings. As truth-based, truth-oriented beings. Wise beings.

[ 86 : 01 ] He has dismissed them. Now, I'm not saying it's right. I'm not saying he's right. I'm not saying that it's healthy. I'm just saying this is reality. These parents have lost influence.

This kid has dismissed their influence. And is no longer extending to them influence. These parents are now terrified because they have lost control.

And they don't know what to do except grasp for control. And the only tool, the only resource they have to grasp for control is authority.

So, they start slamming down Bible verses and preaching and leveraging their power grip, which in this situation does nothing.

Except make the kid stauncher, more distanced. It's a stick with which they repel the kid further and further away.

[ 86 : 56 ] They have no influence and they don't really have authority. They think they do. And biblically they do. But the child is now old enough to say, I do not acknowledge your authority.

And I do not give you influence. And that drives us crazy. Because we don't have control. And if you have little children right now, you're going, oh no. Let's just put them in a box.

And you're panicked. So, this principle, influence or authority. The Apostle Paul, in his model, did not, at this point, did not simply leverage his authority.

He cultivated influence. He cultivated influence. Because he knew these people were independent thinkers with their own will and their own mind and their own ability to make decisions.

And he knew if he was going to get anywhere with the gospel, it wasn't going to be by demanding following. By demanding authority. By demanding adherence to truth. It was going to be as he won the privilege of influence.

[ 88 : 08 ] That he would then exert that influence. Okay? So, he cultivated influence rather than leveraging or grasping for authority.

Listen, when it comes to protection, you leverage authority. Get out of the street right now. Stop sticking your hand in that light socket. No, you cannot spend the night at that person's house.

And I don't care if you understand why or why not. This is what we will be and do. Okay? That's authority and it's primarily a protective thing. Okay? When it comes to direction, you think influence.

When it comes to protection, think authority. When it comes to direction, think influence. Okay? Here's another way to say it. If you want to protect my life, then leverage your authority.

If you want to direct me, then you better get influence. You better gain influence. Okay? Okay. You must like them. I wanted to ask a million parents in my time in youth ministry, when did you stop liking your kids?

[ 89 : 14 ] Now, I know we all love them. We're obligated to love them. It's the Christian thing to do. But do you like them? Okay.

Well, yeah, I like them. No, no. Here's a deeper question. Do they think you like them? A lot of teenagers. Oh, parents. Yeah, of course I like my kids.

I love my kids. Crazy about my kids. Ask the kids. My parents hate me. My parents do everything they can do to not spend time with me. My parents find every kind of interest, every kind of work, every kind of overtime, every kind of extra bonus paycheck.

Every extra dollar is more important than me. My parents do everything they can do to stay away from me. They don't like me. And I don't like them. Okay, put yourself in the head of a teenager.

How do teenagers decide who to like? I'm not talking about like dating like. I'm talking about like, like, like, like, like, you know. How do kids decide who they like?

[ 90 : 12 ] You guys don't know, do you? You're looking at me like you don't know. It's who likes them. You like me. Hey, then I like you. You don't like me. Well, I don't like you either. That's how they think.

Well, that's all for each other. No, that's how you think too. You don't like people that don't like you. And you like people that like you. Because they're good. They're right. I'm likable. And if they don't like me, they're stupid.

Because I'm likable. You know. It's all about like. You know. It sounds so trivial. But when you read the, you read that passage we just read. If you were in Thessalonica, here's what you have thought about the Apostle Paul.

That man really likes us. That man cares night and day. And his motives and his heart. And he's gentle. And he's cherished. And he's so expensive.

He likes us. He does everything he can do to spend time with us. He does everything he can do to pour himself into us. That man doesn't just love us. He lives that love.

[ 91 : 11 ] He likes us too. Man. I like him. All right. Now I know that sounds so trite. But if your kids think you don't like them.

Or even have a question about whether you like them. Then they don't like you. And if they don't like you. You don't have influence. And if you don't have influence.

You don't have anything. If you don't have influence. You don't have anything. Write this statement down. But unconditional acceptance is the optimal environment for change. Law doesn't change anybody.

Leveraging obedience. Demanding change doesn't change anybody. That's back to behavior modification. Unconditional acceptance is the optimal environment for change.

So let's talk about the principles here. That we see play out in the Apostle Paul. We've already talked about authenticity. Okay. In the first hour. What does authenticity do? It produces credibility.

[ 92 : 09 ] It produces credibility. You don't have influence with anybody. If you're not credible to that person. Just think about life.

Let's just talk about influence and life for a minute. Okay. Influence is a fragile thing. All right. Let's talk about this class this morning. I don't know most of you. You don't know me.

But you have extended to me the privilege this morning to influence you. Which is a gift that I don't deserve.

But that you extend to me. It's your choice. I can't. Trent couldn't. His pastor couldn't. Demand that you come to this meeting this morning.



We couldn't law you into this seat. We couldn't authority you here. Lots of pastors have tried that over the years. And abusive pastoral authority is simply a recipe for eventual resentment and disdain.

[ 93 : 14 ] And I meet them every week of my life. People who grew up in Connecticut. I mean America had too much abrasive, abusive, angry, overbearing pastoral authority.

But Connecticut got more than its fair share in the last 30 years. And every week of my life I meet people that when I say I'm pastor, they just immediately in their mind check me out of their mind.

No influence because you're a jerk. Because every pastor they've ever met of an independent Baptist church was a jerk. And overused and abused and misused, misunderstood his pastoral authority, trying to control people and shame them and berate them and whatever.

That's a rabbit trail. I'm sorry. I can't demand you give me influence. You can't demand your children give you influence.

Influence is something that the receiver decides. That's just the way it's built. The receiver says, I will give you influence.

[ 94 : 19 ] If you're out talking to somebody at Dunkin' Donuts and you're going to invite them to church or you're going to try to witness to somebody. And you say, hey, I go to such and such. I want to invite you to my church. If they give you 30 seconds, if they give you 60 seconds, they've given you a very small sphere of influence.

They have extended to you a moment of influence, albeit it's small. Now, I know a lot of Christians. I know a lot of parents. I know a lot of spiritual leaders, pastors and others who try to use their authority to demand influence.

They get angry if they don't have the influence they think they deserve. And then they berate people for not giving or extending greater influence. Instead of accepting whatever influence you extend and trying to be a good steward of it as a servant of the Lord.

Being gentle, cherishing, nourishing, teaching, in meekness, teaching those that oppose themselves. Her adventure that God would bring them to a spirit of repentance to the acknowledging.

I'm messing this verse up as I quote it. To the acknowledging of the truth that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. What is my job in helping somebody that's struggling? To, with meekness, teach them. What's God's job?

[ 95 : 30 ] To convict them and bring them to repentance. What's their job? To recover themselves. Are you there? Okay. So this mixed up understanding of authority causes us to take the reins out of God's hands.

And we leverage authority, demanding influence, demanding adherence, demanding obedience. Because we know what's best. And we go, yeah, we do know what's best because of the truth of God's word. But we go about producing it or implementing it or manufacturing it all wrong.

We can't manufacture anything. It's got to be the work of God. All we can do is hope for influence and then steward our influence through teaching and cultivating and nurture.

That influence would then produce transformation. So how do I get influence? Authenticity produces credibility. The Apostle Paul went in and lived the Christian life and loved them and that gave him credibility.

These people said, hey, that man's real. And he had credibility. The next principle is that his credibility produced influence. Okay. Because he was credible, people said, we want to hear what you have to say.

[ 96 : 36 ] We want to understand your way of life. We want to know who this Jesus is. We want to get this because we see it in you and we want to know you. This is where I get, you know, you've got one extreme of confrontational evangelism.

And the hyper extreme of that is everybody you talk to cramming the gospel down their throat. Whether the Holy Spirit's involved or not is irrelevant. Okay. The other extreme is extreme passive lifestyle evangelism where you never talk to anybody about the gospel until they actually know you for like ten years and then they see it and then they finally come to you and go, what must I do to be saved?

Okay. Two ridiculous extremes. Where in all of that is the moving leading of the Holy Spirit that we see in the book of Acts? The book of Acts was men following the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of people, connecting their lives, and then those men using that credible life, that credible gospel, and taking the influence they've been given in cultivating the gospel and cultivating relationships until somebody would come to Christ and then discipling them in that same way.

And it was a process of nurture. And sometimes in our world, if they don't get saved at the door on the first time, we're never going to talk to them again, or we never talk to them until they ask us. And the moving and the working of the Holy Spirit is somewhere in the middle there where we're just sensing and leading and following God.

Paul's credibility produced influence. And then he used that influence to teach the word and to cultivate relationships and love people and lead them in grace. And then watch this. This is really cool. His influence validated his authority.

[ 98 : 18 ] What is the point of authority? The point of authority is not to control somebody. It's not to bring them under your power. It's to bring them into a love relationship with Jesus Christ where they're willing to submit to His authority.

It's to bring them to a love relationship with Christ where they're willing to submit to the authority of His word. I don't want people to submit to my pastoral authority. I want them to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ and the authority of His word.

And I'm just kind of the guy handing them off between their messed up world and the love of Jesus Christ. I'm just kind of the conduit that's cultivating them that direction.

Are you there? Later in the chapter, he says, You receive the word of God, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth. The word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe.

What did these people do? Strange man comes into the city, starts preaching, starts loving, starts caring, starts serving. We don't know him. We give him this much influence. He loves us.

[ 99 : 21 ] He loves us. He loves us. The influence grows. His credibility grows. We give him more influence. Wow. We believe. We grow. His influence becomes massive. His influence brings us to believing in the word of God, to submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ, to living under the authority of God, the one true God in our lives, in a redemptive relationship.

Wow! Game over. How did we get there? Influence. The apostle Paul didn't leverage, manipulate, control, browbeat, apostolic authority people into the gospel.

He influenced them into the gospel. And that is exactly what plays out in your home, in my home. So often, okay, so often, we have lost influence and don't see it.

And then we try to grasp control. And our kids have already said, I don't have influence. Listen, this is important.

Your kids will outgrow your authority. Your kids will outgrow your authority. What am I saying? You're not going to be in charge of them forever.

[ 100 : 40 ] The most pained, the most distraught young adults I ever talked to are 23, 24-year-old Christian adults whose parents are still trying to control their lives like they're five.

That is unbiblical. At some point, you've got to hand your child off to a higher authority. And you've got to be confident in God.

He's a better parent than you are. And I want to say, I'll give you a quick illustration. I had a young lady on our staff. She was 23. She worked in our publications team. She taught part-time in the school, worked as a secretary in the publications.

Her dad was a pastor. Her dad called her and said, you will come home and work for me. You will be my secretary. This is God's will for you. She's 20, stinking, three years old. Now, I love this man.

He's a friend of mine. But he overstepped his authority. And she comes to me and she's bawling her eyes out. Now, this is a godly girl. This is a pure girl.

[ 101 : 44 ] This is a servant of God. She's done everything her dad ever asked her to do. She is a model child. And she's 23 and she's serving God.

And her dad is trying to slam down an authoritarian. And I sat with her and she's weeping. And I said, you are really in pain right now.

And I said, but somehow, I don't think the pain is over the decision. I said, what does God want you to do? And I didn't have an agenda. I mean, I liked that she was on my team. But if she wanted to go work for her dad, I wanted to go work for her dad.

I mean, whatever God wants. I said, what? What does God want you to do? She said, I believe with all my heart. I have sought the Lord. I have studied his word. I believe with all my heart.

He wants me here right now. I don't know about next year. I don't know about five years from now. But right now, this is God's will for me. I said, so your distress, your tears, your pain, what is it?

[ 102 : 46 ] She cried harder. You know how women are. You know what I'm talking about, women. You touch that nerve. You know, it gets worse before it gets better, right? So I'm handing tissues across the desk. And she's, you know.

She stopped after a few seconds. And she said, at what point in my life, her lips quivering, when do I get to be acknowledged that I can obey God?

She said, I have done everything. She said, I've never slept with a man. I've never had a drink of alcohol. I've never smoked a cigarette. I've never said a cuss word.

I've never gone to a movie theater. I've never worn something immodest. She said, I have obeyed my dad in every way. Why can't I finally look to God and obey him the same way?

Do you see? That man didn't realize there was a transfer that happened. Now, I would probably suggest that it's around 20, because in the wilderness wanderings, when the children of Israel decided not to go into the land of Israel, God said, everybody that's 20 and older, you're going to die.

[ 104 : 04 ] And everyone that's under 20, you get to go in. I don't hold you accountable for your decisions. I always, when I read that, I always think, what a bummer if that was your 20th birthday. You go like, wait, you mean yesterday I would have gotten to go to the promised land, and today I'm going to die in the wilderness.

God, can I just get a pass, please? God had to cut off somewhere, and he said, 20 years and above, you account for your decisions. And I think that's an important principle.

Your children will outgrow your authority. But here it is. They will never outgrow your influence. They will never outgrow your influence.

And so often, when they become teenagers, listen, I mean, at five, it's mostly authority. I get it. It's mostly you go to bed, get ready, clean up, stop doing that, pick that up, go in the toilet next time.

It's authority. And you're top-heavy with authority. Listen, somewhere out of late elementary and into junior high and senior high, it starts to tip. And most parents don't.

[105:10] This is where the transfer happens. And by the time they're teenagers, parents are pulling their hair out and going, who did you become? And what happened to you? And I can't do this. And parents are suicidal and wanting to leave the home. And, you know, nutty, we used to joke about this is your teen parent meeting, here's your sedatives and your drugs, and you'll be okay.

You know, this is what happens. Authority becomes less because now your child has a mind that's under construction, by the way. But now your child is thinking through stuff and doesn't just take your authority as your final word.

All of a sudden, influence, you've got to have more influence. To have influence, you've got to have a friendship. You've got to have a love relationship that they like you and like being around you, and you like them and like being around them.

And through that, you sneak up on them with very authoritative truth, very authoritative God, very authoritative Bible. But you cultivate it into their lives with influence.

And so often, here's what I do in these appointments, I'd ask the parents after they kind of pled their case, I'd send the parents out of the room and I'd say to the kid, all right, Jimmy, look, I'm your friend. I get it.

[106:16] Your parents are imperfect. I'm a jerk to my kids sometimes. I'm your friend. I'm on your side too. I'm on your parent's side. I'm on everybody's side here. Just talk straight with me. Just shoot straight with me.

At what point did this relationship break? You talk to a 15 or a 17-year-old. Where did this relationship break? And this angry kid starts to soften.

Sometimes they have to dig deep. Sometimes it doesn't come right. Sometimes it's right there. I had a 17-year-old girl one time say, I hate my father. You hate him. Like as if if he were dead tomorrow, I would be thrilled.

She was vicious. Where did the relationship break? What these parents need to be asking themselves, and what we need to be asking ourselves in these broken moments is, not how do I get my child to obey.

Dig deeper. Why is my child dismissing my influence? Where did I lose influence? Where did this relationship come unraveled?

[107:22] And that's the conversation you've got to have with your kid. You've got to get back on influencing ground. The only way to do that is to reestablish credibility.

Somewhere your credibility was demolished. Maybe your fault. Maybe the kid's fault. Maybe totally fabricated in the kid's mind. I've seen everywhere in between.

Maybe my inconsistent living damaged my influence with my child. Maybe they're just believing all the lies of Hollywood, and they have rendered my belief system invalid.

And it's nothing I did so much as something that snuck up on me. There's a lot of reasons why this can break. But let me say this to you. Hollywood doesn't want, Satan doesn't want authority in your child's life.

Hollywood wants influence. Satan wants influence. And he's winning. And all he has is influence. He doesn't have power. He doesn't have authority.

[108:21] All he has is lies. But they're believing the lies. Why? Because somehow those lies look credible. Somehow those lies are attractive, and Satan does everything he can do to break down your credibility with your child.

So, influence trumps authority. In principle, no. I get it. In principle, in theory, the doctrine of authority stands.

God is authority. I am parental authority. The chain of command. The protective edge. The umbrella of protection. I get it. I get it. But in practice, if you don't have influence with teenager, you have nothing, and you never will have anything.

Okay? And your authority is going away, but your influence doesn't ever have to go away. You just have to be willing to acknowledge that it's influence, not authority anymore.

All right. Let's have a word of prayer. And we'll take a break, and then we'll do some questions. And Trent, anything else I should be saying? Okay. Five-minute break. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this time. I pray that you would drive home this principle that influenced trumps authority and help us to properly use our authority biblically as a reflection of Christ and stewards accountable to him, but help us to seek credible, authentic relationship from which we can influence our children.

[ 109 : 39 ] And when it breaks, help us to pursue the restoration of that influence. And we thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Okay. Let's take a break. We'll resume in a minute.

Okay. Man, you guys are killing me here. All right. I don't know what order to do these in. How much time?

What time is it? Okay. All right. How can I change my kid's attitude? She's not... She's not... I don't understand this question.

How can I change my kid's attitude that she is not being judged by people around her? I think that question is referring to a child that doesn't think other...

The value of a good name, is that what we're talking about? Oh, okay. Okay.

[ 110 : 35 ] So it's other people like... I would teach her to accept that because man looks on the outward appearance. Whoever put the question in. Man looks on the outward appearance.

And then I would talk about the value of a good name. I'm not sure I understand that question. So if I got it wrong, come back to me maybe. Let's see here. What do you do when your child is 16 and it is too late?

It's not too late. And a couple of the questions in here were about, you know, what do you do about changing this? If I've been going about the wrong principles, there's a wonderful thing called grace and repentance.

Okay? And what you can't do is pretend... You can't just pretend that you were doing it one way and then just, you know, that nothing that you weren't doing that way. Oh, I don't know what you're talking about.

This is what I do. You know, you can't just fabricate change and then pretend that nothing changed. Okay? You need to repent. Okay? Before you're a child. And that's a good model too.

[ 111 : 36 ] All right? But it's okay. You're growing. Your child doesn't expect you to be perfect. Your child knows that you're learning how to be a parent. Your teenager knows you don't know what you're doing. My kids do.

My kids know I have no clue what I'm doing. So when I... And the way they know that is when I blow that, I go, yeah, I'm sorry. I blew it. You know? So if I were you, I would take my kids out to lunch or I'd have a family meeting in a loving context.

And I'd say, listen, I am an idiot. I love you and I mean well, but I'd blow it. I'd make a lot of mistakes. I'm not God. I'm not Jesus.

And sometimes I do a pretty poor job of representing him in your life. So here's where... Here's what I've been doing and what I was thinking. And here's how I've realized it's wrong. And here's what the Bible has shown me.

And so this is what I desire. And if I've hurt you or if I have misled... If there's some problem between us, many times with all of my children, there have been moments where I have just taken them out for the express purpose of finding out where did I break this relationship.

[ 112 : 42 ] Lance was about 15. And we were... For three or four days, he had been just punchy with me. Every time he saw me, just kind of in my face.

And every time I said something or asked him to do something, you know, just kind of abrasive and stiff-necked. And I would try to rebuke that, hey, you know. But after two, three, four days of that, I go, you know, this isn't doing anything.

Is this broken? You know, what's the problem? It's not doing anything. That's where authority, you know, where's my influence here? What's this kid's issue? What's his beef with me? So I said to Dana, there's some issue here.

I'm going to take Lance out. So that night we had visitation. And I said, Lance, come with me. And we went to the meeting at church. And then we went out to make a visit. And then after the visit, we went out to a restaurant. We sat down on the way to the restaurant.

I said, Lance, I want to talk to you about something. I said, there is something. You have a problem with me right now. No, I don't. Yeah, no, don't refute me.

[ 113 : 45 ] Just listen to me for a minute. You do have a problem. It's okay. I get it. I mean, I'm not rebuking you for having a problem with me. I want to talk about this with you because there's something that I've done or something that you're thinking, something between us.

The little attorneys in your head have come together and built a case against me and convicted me guilty of something. And you are sentencing me to abrasive attitude, treatment, response, because I deserve it somehow in your mind.

And maybe I do deserve it. Or maybe the little attorney guys in your head don't know what the attorney guys in my head should tell them so they can convict me innocent. So I said, I need you to think about what is going on in your heart that is resentful towards me.

And all on it, he thought, he said, Dad, I don't know what you're talking about. I said, I get it. It's not residing right there in your conscious mind.

So that means it's subconscious. It's residing more deeply in your heart. But somewhere in your deep heart, you're having a conversation about me with yourself.

[ 114 : 57 ] And in that conversation, I'm not doing the right thing, and I'm agitating you, and it's coming out of you in the form of an abrasive spirit or a closed heart.

And now, in a moment, did Lance need to be rebuked for his bad attitude? Yes. Does that fix it? No. You get what I'm saying? Okay. Rebuking him might be the biblical thing to do.

Reproving correction. Yeah, that's the wrong way to talk to your father. That's the wrong way to be. Okay. But now, how do we fix this? How do we find out what the offense is? And is it legitimate?

And if it's not legitimate, the child needs to repent. And if it is legitimate, the parent needs to repent. Okay. But someone's going to have to repent. Okay. Someone's going to have to acknowledge wrong belief, wrong behavior, and turn from it to different beliefs and different behavior.

That's repentance. So, he said, Dad, honestly, I really don't know what you're talking about. I said, well, you just think about it while we get to this restaurant. Maybe it's going to come to you.

[ 115 : 54 ] But somewhere. So, we got our food. We sat down. We were eating. And some 15, 20 minutes into our time together, he goes, I think I know what it is.

Now, this is critical. This is pivotal. If I'm going to be like defensive jerk, I shouldn't have this appointment. Okay. I've got to be receptive.

I've got to hear through his paradigm. I've got to hear what his mind is processing. So, I can either help him see that he's thinking wrong, that he's been buying a lie, or I need to hear myself exposed.

I need to see myself through the eyes of my child or my wife or whoever and repent. And here's what he said. He said, Dad, you don't mean to do this.

I said, Lance, I'm not going to get defensive. I'm not going to get angry. It's not going to hurt my feelings. I get it. I blew it somewhere. Just help me know where so we can make it right. He said, sometimes, not all the time, sometimes when you're really busy, he said, in public, like at Sunday school with the teenagers or at a youth activity, you are really fun.

[117:10] And then, like you come home from a long day of work and you're really tired. And he said, sometimes there's like two different people. And I like the guy that's fun.

And sometimes I see more of the guy that's tired. And I'm telling you, that was just like, ow! Shut up!

You know, I'm not that way! How dare you talk to your father that way! No, I said, I just, you know what? That kid was right. That kid was right.

Sometimes they know they're right. And we don't acknowledge that they're right, which we lose credibility. Humility and repentance doesn't destroy your credibility.

Failure doesn't destroy your credibility. The lack of repentance, the lack of humility, the lack of authenticity and honesty and integrity destroys your credibility. I said, Lance, you know what?

[118:09] You're right. I said, and I've never even realized that I do that because sometimes it's a long day and I just come home and it's like my finally, my chance to just crash and just kind of veg. And he's been waiting all day for me to get home.

And yay, dad's here now. And we're going to have a fun. Oh, zombie man's back. You know, it's not fun, dad. It's a youth pastor, man. It's zombie man. And I didn't realize how he was perceiving that and that he wasn't cutting me that slack, that margin.

And so I said, son, I'm sorry. I apologize. I will work at that. I said, I'll tell you honestly, that's going to be something you're going to have to help me see. You're going to have to help me.

Sometimes you're just going to have to give me some space and margin and let me decompress. And other times you're going to need to remind me that I'm doing that. But before the Lord, I'll ask him to help me with that. And I'm giving you permission to call me on it.

If you see that habit pattern continuing, I want to work on that. And then he said, no, you know what, really, dad, I shouldn't even care. He said, I know you've got a lot going on.

[119:12] I know. And he kind of retracted. Like, it's not that big of a deal. And I said, thank you for your humility and your grace, but I get it and I'm sorry. Okay, so what I would say is just repent.

And God will honor that. And you're modeling repentance before your kids. And they will respect you more because of that. If you have only a few years of parenting left, what are the practical ways of developing influence time and attention?

Two words, time and attention. And more time and more attention. Okay? Look at, again, read 1 Thessalonians 2 and apply it to your parenting. And do what the Apostle Paul did.

Be affectionately desired. Schedule time with them. You'll have the rest of your life to develop your career and get the overtime. You don't have a lot of time with your kids. So cultivate time.

Practical things. Let me just ask a few questions. Do you have a family night or two or three every week? Do you take your kids out to lunch? Do you involve them in ministry, serving with you? Have you ever taken a whole day or two or three with one member of your family?

[120:17] I'm talking about take a child out of school. What are you doing, Dad? Me and you, we're going away for the whole day. We're going away overnight. We're going to spend two days together, just me and you. That's an awesome thing to do.

And it's not like you can do that once a month or once a quarter. But you could do that once a year, once every couple of years. We used to get Disneyland passes. We were an hour and a half from Disneyland.

And sometimes the family members would help us at Christmas time. You could get them for \$99 for the whole year. And Southern California resident. And so about every other year from our kids' preschool years up until their teen years, we had Disney passes.

So one year we get the passes, and I said to Dana, our kids were in their elementary years, and Haley maybe kindergarten. I said, this year, with these passes, I'm going to take everybody in the family to Disneyland by themselves for a whole day.

My day off was Thursday, so I'm going to pick, I'm going to take Lance for the whole day. Then I'm going to take Larry for the whole day. Then I'm going to take Haley for the whole day.

[121:20] Dana for the whole day. Then I'm going to go by myself for the whole day. Five days out of the year, five Thursdays, I took the whole day. And a couple of them, what I would do is leave after Wednesday night, get on Priceline, get a \$50 hotel down in Mannheim, and stay the night, go to breakfast in the morning, go to the park all day.

Those kids love that. You do that with your child, and you're not on the phone all day, you're not acting like it's a hassle to you, they're going to know you like them. They're going to know you love them.

You're going to have a good time together. Your hearts are going to gel. You're going to become a good friend. They're going to want to sit with you in church. They're going to want to hang out with you. So pursue them that way.

When my boys were little, I think I wrote about this in Discover Your Destiny. When they were little, I was taking them to Universal Studios. And before Universal Studios, they didn't know what it was. They'd never been there. And I was going to take them to Krispy Kreme Donuts.

I got my wife off at the airport, went to Krispy Kreme. I took them in. They're just little boys. And the lady there giving us a free donut. What do you want? And I said, give these two boys an entire box of donuts and give me an entire dozen.

[122:28] All of us. We each want our own dozen. She's like, really? I go, absolutely. And I'm being like, you know, like there, you know, we each want one dozen, you know, talking loud.

And these boys. And I mean, in that moment, my boys were like, this man is the coolest man in the universe. Now listen, at that time, a dozen Krispy Kremes were seven bucks, and that was worth every dollar of seven dollars.

I'm like, I'm going to position myself in their heads. Maybe it's ego. I don't know. I think it's influence. I want influence. But dad is the, I mean, literally two elementary boys walking with a box of donuts over to their table.

We had to get a big table because we had three boxes of donuts. We each had our own box to eat from. We took the boxes to the car. We each had a couple of them, took them to the car. They thought that was so cool.



And I think we got in the car. And Lance's like, dad, I can't believe you got us each our own dozen donuts, you know. So then we're driving to Universal Studios. And I said, we are going to Universal Studios.

[ 123 : 34 ] And they're cheering and happy. Yeah, we're going to Universal. And then they stopped. Silence. And Lance goes, what's Universal Studios? And then Larry behind him, he has a deep voice.

Yeah, what's Universal Studios? And I just laughed because they trusted me. And they were happy that I was taking them away for the day. So love those kids and get time with them and take them away for the day.

Haley, the time I did it with her at Disneyland, I'm thinking Disneyland, Space Mountain, roller coasters, fun. We stayed at a hotel. We went to the character breakfast in the morning.

And it started there. Snow White comes to the table. And I don't care about Snow White. Dad, I got to get a, I got to, she's little.

She's five or six. I got to get an autograph book. So we got to leave breakfast. Go buy her an autograph book. Bring it back. Sit down. Now she's getting all the characters. Chippendale and Snow White and Cinderella. And then she just got this game in her mind.

[ 124 : 33 ] She got this agenda in her mind. It wasn't about rides. It was about autographs. It was about princesses. So she gets in the park. She's dead. Can we go get more princess autographs?

I kid you not. From 10 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock at night, all I did was stand in line to see princesses. Not one Space Mountain ride.

Not one. I mean, we had every princess. And Dana and the boys were going to meet us at 7 o'clock. She was going to get them from school, do a few things, and then bring them down. And we were going to have dinner together. They were going to come into the park at 7 o'clock.

So all day in line, princesses, princesses, princesses, total different experience than the boys. And holding hands and cute and frilly and all this stuff.

And at 7 o'clock, Dana and the boys had texted me. They were coming to the park. We went out to Main Street to meet them. And they come walking up to us. Now, Haley, I thought she knew. She didn't know they were meeting us.

[ 125 : 31 ] And when she saw them, I mean, she just... And I'm hugging Dana and high-fiving the boys.

How are you guys doing? I look down at Haley and Dana's like, what's wrong with you? And she's like, this was my day. What are you guys doing here? You know? And I said, well, we had last night.

We had all day. And they're going to have dinner with us. And I tried to adjust her attitude. It didn't work too well. But she was so happy to be with me the whole day. Now, I'll tell you, she's 13. I try to do that once or twice a year with her.

Now it's cool we get on a train and go to New York. And we've done that. But do you realize, I did that two or three times with my boys, their teen years, and now we're done. They're gone. Lance is married.

My time of being able to do that is pretty much minimum. Larry, I've got a few more times before he gets married. And I'll try to take him on some trips with me and stuff. But it's getting away.

[ 126 : 29 ] Is it okay for a parent to ask their child if they like them? Yeah. I would also, you know, get a youth pastor on your team. Or, hey, how's your relationship with your mom and dad? How are things going? You know?

Other people can get a feel and help you know where you're at. But that's, I think the question is there, how do I figure out where I stand with my kid? And that's a good thing to explore. Okay? That's a healthy thing to explore.

As long as you're not going to demand that it change. You have to cultivate change. We know that, okay, this is a good question. We know that an environment cannot change the heart. Holy Spirit produces change.

The Word of God produces change. Environment sets up for the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Okay? So the environment's not bad. It's not completely valued.

Believe me, I'm all about right environment. Okay? What is the role the environment plays in a child's life? The environment facilitates the influence. You as a parent are saying, we want the youth pastor and the youth group to have influence.

[ 127 : 32 ] We want the Christian school to have influence. We want the pastor and the church to have influence. This environment, it's what you can't do is just think the environment is the solution. And then divorce yourself from engagement because you've got environments.

You know, environments are, and they facilitate influence and they also, they collaborate with you.

I'm trying to grasp for a word here. They complement your influence. So they reinforce what you're doing.

All right, as a youth pastor, I could never out-influence a parent. But I could augment a parent. I could complement the work of a parent and reinforce, yeah, your parents are right.

Yeah, that is true. Yeah. And that's where the youth pastor in the school, in the church, that's what you want. You want a team sport in cultivating the belief. But you are the leader of the team.

[ 128 : 34 ] You are the key player, the key influencer. Okay? What scripture passages charge the church to teach children? Good question. Here we go. Ready? There is a movement on that is diabolical that teaches you should never have Sunday school.

You should just home church and nobody should ever teach the children but the fathers. These people are loony. They are out to lunch. They're smoking pot. They're anti-church and they're dangerous.

I don't care whether you're home school, charter school, video school, bubblegum wrapper school, public school. I don't care how you educate your child. Okay? It's not a home school question.

It's a local church question. And it's a Bible question. What is the purpose of the local church? Well, Titus was sent to a messy, messy place to set things in order. These people were bad people.

They were bad people. But in chapter 2, Paul says to Titus, I want you to get older men and older women to teach younger men and younger women how to live sober, how to live righteously.

[ 129 : 38 ] I want you to teach sound doctrine. I want age-divided teaching happening in local church ministry. And it's right there in Titus chapter 2. Okay? Well, I've got news for you.

My 13-year-old is a young woman. And I don't know how some people apply that passage, but it's pretty obvious. That's age-divided teaching. Okay? Older, more mature people teaching younger, less mature people how to be mature and sharing in the parental influence and partnering with parents.

So there you go. And I think we could probably come up with a lot more in terms of the church being commanded to make disciples. And my children are disciples being made. We could go there, too.

But anyway, I don't know if the root of that question was in these homeschool movements that tell you not to take the kids to church. But if they are, don't listen to those guys. How do you convey to your kids that there will be different ages when they will be allowed to do things growing up that's not fair, without using the life's not fair speech?

Just sit down and teach them. And, you know, so much of it is your attitude and your tone. Just helping them understand. This is how life works. And you're going to grow in responsibility. And I don't promise you to have a cell phone at the same age your brother had a cell phone.

[ 130 : 56 ] I promise you, you can have a cell phone when God gives me a piece to give you a cell phone. And when I have the belief that you have the responsibility and the belief system to manage your cell phone. Put the impetus on them growing in maturity and the impetus on you to obey God.

You can never go wrong in those two. Okay? Okay. Well, why? Because I am obeying God. And God's telling me not to let you go to that person's house to spend the night. But, oh, how do I argue with God?

God pretty much trumps everything I came up with. You know? So, there's nothing wrong with saying, look, sweetheart, I don't have a good answer for you. I don't know all the whys and all the factors. But I just know that God is really giving me a clear no on this.

And I'm going to obey him. So, are you going to go with God? Or are you going to continue to fight me? And put the impetus on them growing in responsibility. Good, good questions. How should you handle a teen who complains about being so busy and their situation?

I would look at their situation and probably agree with them. In today's culture, today's teenagers are, in many cases, way too busy.

[ 132 : 04 ] I can't speak to every different context. I'm just throwing this out there. Medical fact, teenagers need about 10 hours of sleep a night. Most of them get six or seven. It's a medical fact.

They need more as teenagers. Now, they will migrate into their early 20s to needing less. But you study it. You Google it. You look at the surveys. You look at the studies.

They don't function well on seven or eight hours of sleep. In your 30s, there's a scale. There's a sliding scale.

When I read the medical evidence behind this, I understood why at 21 I could sleep for 12 hours and still feel tired. You know, I'd take my day off and crash. There is a scale.

Now, I can't sleep 10 hours unless I take something. Legal. I just, my body clock wakes up and I feel okay.

[ 133 : 02 ] Seven, eight hours. I can't go a whole lot less physically after cancer and all, but seven, eight hours. But teenagers need 10. Children need more than that.

Young children, 11, 12. That's why you put them to bed at 8 o'clock at night and they sleep until 8 o'clock the next day. Yay, we can have a marriage now. Get ready. When they're 18, that's not going to be the case.

But I would really caution you to help you, to balance your teenager's demands. And be careful about creating a very, very busy box and pushing them into that.

And here's what I'm talking about. The average teenager today goes to, gets up by around 6 and throws themselves together. If it's a boy, they get up at 7.30 because they've got to be at school at 7.40.

If it's a girl, they get up at 5.30 because they've got to get their toolbox and their power tools. They deteriorated overnight and they've got to put everything back together.

[ 133 : 59 ] So it takes them hours. So they're up at 6, on average 6.30, whatever. They get to school by 8. Now think about it. Class, class, class. You remember how tired you were? Just go back in your mind.

Class, class, class. Lunch break. Class, class, class. Social politics. Problems. Do you like me? They don't like, oh, nobody likes me. Suicide tendencies and Facebook. Look, it's so complex now. All the social networking and all the, and so they're in school until 3 and then many of them have sports.

So they're there until 5. Rush home. They're sweaty. They're tired. They're exhausted. They've been going now 11 hours. They haven't even touched their homework yet. They haven't had family dinner.

They haven't had any time to breathe hardly. They cram down dinner and then you're going, go clean your room, go make your bed. You didn't do it this morning and you're jumping on their case. And then they've got two, three hours of homework or study.

Well, by the time they even catch a breath, it's 8.30, 9 o'clock. And now we haven't even touched any hobbies. We haven't touched any extracurricular reading, interests, video games.

[ 135 : 02 ] We haven't touched music lessons, piano lessons, practicing piano lessons, voice lessons. We haven't touched science projects, book reports. You guys are getting tired just hearing me talk about all this stuff.

And they need you to help manage that. And so I would tend to lean towards that kid's probably telling the truth and is crying out for help. Now, if their definition of so busy is they spent six hours yesterday playing Xbox and they didn't have time to do their homework, erase everything I just said, okay, and deal with it differently.

But in my experience, we really fill their schedules. And we need to, we haven't thrown youth group, church, Sunday, none of that is in that mix that I just told you about. There needs to be some times in your kid's life that you just call time out.

Many times in their growing up life, I would say, no homework tonight. We're having a family night. You're going to bed early. But, but, but, but I'm going to get in trouble.

What's trouble? I'm going to get a demerit. Take a demerit. And if you're a Christian school teacher in here, you're going, doctrinal heresy. They live.

[ 136 : 13 ] The teachers live. Everybody live. They needed me to go, no homework tonight. I'd send a note. I'm not expecting leniency. I'm just letting the teacher know I trump them on my child's needs.

And they can make up their homework over the weekend. But I needed some time. And I needed to call a safe zone. No homework. Many times. We're not going to school today. What? We're not going to school today.

I know people that are like, you know, they're monitoring life. I never missed a day of school. God bless you. I'm glad I wasn't your, you know, child. Give them a day off. Let them sleep in. Don't set the alarm.

You know, let them bed. Let them recuperate. They need it. Okay. How rigid should standards be? As rigid as the Holy Spirit leads you to set them, but it's not about the standards. That's external.

Okay. If you lose the heart, your standards become completely irrelevant. Okay. If there is no heart, it doesn't matter what your standard is. Okay. You don't standard your way into the heart.

[ 137 : 13 ] Okay. And I would sooner win the heart and lose my standard battle than win my standard battle and lose the heart. Every day for the rest of their life. Because I'm not going to be able to micromanage their standards.

But I still want to influence their heart. My daughter and son may not do everything I would do the way I would do that. But that doesn't mean they don't love God and follow the gospel. So, we defined a box.

We called it a good Christian. Try to cram everybody into that box. So we feel like everybody's a good Christian. And it's, the end of that road is not happy. I'll just tell you that.

How do you fix past mistakes? When you repent, we talked about how much time do we spend with family per week? Every family is going to be different. And there is no, you know, I wish it was a formula in the Bible that God said, this is what I need you to do.

You, as a couple, here's how we work it. One of you is going to be better at reading their gauges. I wish they had gas gauges on their head. Emotional, spiritual, physical, you know.

[ 138 : 10 ] Haley is physically depleted. She's okay emotionally. Relationally, she's getting a little low. You know, I wish we could read their gauges. My wife can read their behavior and attitude and responses like she's reading gauges.

And she can know. Tired. Bad attitude. Needs time with dad. She just knows. Now, by the way, what I just said. Tired. Bad attitude.

Needs time with dad. Those are three different source causes that require three different responses.

But they all look the same. Okay? They all look like bad attitude. And if you're just authority parent, you're just going to shut down bad attitude. Sometimes it's not bad attitude.

Sometimes it's go to bed. And don't wake up until your body wakes up tomorrow. And then you wake up with a new child. Look what the Holy Spirit did overnight. Revival!

[ 139 : 09 ] No, it's called rest. Because when you're tired, guess what you are? You're grumpy. And you're edgy. And nobody wants to be around you. Okay? And you just go, I'm going to bed.

So, tired. Bad attitude. Needs time with dad. They're very different. But they all look the same. And you have to pray for wisdom. Because if you address tired the way you address bad attitude, you kill your child.

You kill that heart. If you address bad attitude the way you address time with dad, you leave a bad attitude undealt with. And you haven't reproven and rebuked and corrected that bad attitude.

If you treat time with dad the way you treat bad attitude, you can't. I mean, you've got to discern. In my case, it's my wife. And she coaches. And she says, here's where, you know.

And then by growing up with her, I've kind of learned what she sees. And we're just asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance. So, week to week, it's something you have to be sensitive to.

[ 140 : 13 ] On the time, the family time matter, let me just give you a quick illustration. We have this idea, especially as young families, that balance. Pretend this is a tightrope. We have this idea that one day we're going to reach this utopian balance.

That every demand of our lives is going to somehow come magically, mystically into sync. And it's going to just be in beautiful rotation. And everything complementing everything else.

And we're going to be able on that tightrope to go, look at my balance. I don't even need to put my arms out. I'm so balanced. I never have any imbalance. We are just walking through life in blissful joy.

And when that doesn't happen, we think, if I could just get my act together and balance it better, we could get this going. And someday, we're going to figure out this balance.

Listen, that day doesn't exist. It's never coming. There is no utopia. Heaven, maybe. Now, no. We're messed up. We're broken. We're working with not enough information against human nature and against the power of sin in us.

[ 141 : 13 ] And we're all going to be out of balance. Okay? But we do have the Word of God. We do have the Holy Spirit of God. We do have the grace of God. We've got all these resources working in us that can give us wisdom and understanding if we will listen.

Balance is not skipping across the tightrope. Balance is, think about a tightrope walker. Tightrope walker has that bar, and he's very quickly correcting imbalance constantly.

So what this is, we would say this guy's got really good balance. No. What he really has is a really acute awareness and sensitivity to imbalance and then immediate corrective action.

So before he leans too far this way, corrects back this way. Before he falls this way, corrects back this way. And now, the more you get used to sensing imbalance, the more comfortable you are making corrections, and then those corrections probably become fewer and farther between, and you get better at sensing and correcting.

That's balance. Okay? Sensing and correcting imbalance. So here it is. Stephen Covey, First Things First. Read the book. Every week, you sit down, and you say, how did I do last week?

[ 142 : 26 ] Did I give my family enough time? No, I worked too hard last week, and I neglected my family, so I better quickly correct that, or else I'll fall off the rope. And your family will forgive you week to week for, you know, give and take.

But if you go month to month to month in imbalance, you're going to wound the heart, you're going to wound the relationships, and it's hard to come back from those. So correct every week. Ask your wife, how am I doing?

Are you getting enough time? Are the kids getting enough time? At the end of the day, be willing to make really hard decisions, like I can't take any more overtime, or we're going to have to do with less money, but we'll have better home life.

We'll have better relationships. Those are always good decisions that God honors. How do you reach out to a teen who is distant? Same thing, time and attention. They will push you back, but you will eventually get through.

The human heart was made to receive unconditional love. And no one can perpetually resist unconditional love.

[ 143 : 26 ] They will eventually break. You just have to last longer. Okay? How do you influence your married children without putting, without butting in when you see them making mistakes?

You spend time with them in non-threatening, non-offensive, non- you just, I should let this man answer this question. He should answer all these questions. He taught me everything I know, or think I know.

So, I would say you work to have influence where you will be invited in. But don't butt in. Let them invite you in.

Okay? Maybe put out, hey, if I can ever help, if I can ever encourage you, or, you know. But don't butt in. It's just going to make things worse. In the middle of it all, how do you make a turnaround? Okay, I think I addressed that one.

How do you lead a teen to obey his authorities which are not honoring the Lord? Excellent question. You show that teen he's obeying a higher authority. Okay? And never obey the parents to the disobedience of God.

[144:26] Okay? You're always obeying God, but see through the parents as unto the Lord. That's the past. That's the quote. So, as unto the Lord. Okay? And to help the teenager see the higher authority.

Okay? Any advice on what to do for family devotions at differing age levels? Tell Bible stories. Just read passages. Something lessons. Go through books, etc. Okay.

Here's what we did as a family. Now, call me a heretic or whatever you want to do, but this is what we've done. We have had two prayer times together. Most days.

Most days in the morning on the way to school, we would all pray. Just around the car. We had a ten minute drive to school. We'd pray. We'd all take turns. And then pretty much every night, I would go to one bed at a time.

And then as they got older, sometimes they ended up all dogpiling on our bed. And then we would all pray together as a family. But every night, we would pray together. That was our family devotions.

[145:31] Okay? I did not have, I never have had this every day, every sit down and shut up. I'm going to open the Bible and lecture you now for ten minutes and tell a cute story. What I did is taught them all the time in every context.

In lots of context. I think the family devotion thing is a good idea if it doesn't tunnel vision you and make you think, well, we did our devotions five minutes this morning, so I don't need to talk about God the rest of the day.

I would rather you be talking about God all day long than have this formal thing that makes you feel better for a few minutes. Okay? So that's what we did. I just never felt this compulsion that I had to sit them down and have a little church service.

I would rather just, as we're walking, as we're talking, as we're sitting, as we're lying down, as we're, Deuteronomy 6, as we're going through life, just talk it up.

Isn't God good to let us do this? What a blessing. Man, isn't this amazing? Have you thought about this? I was thinking about this principle yesterday, and God's been teaching me this. What's God been teaching you? And just in conversation. So I guess you would say we had family devotions all the time.

[146:36] But that's what we did, and lots of different people have good solutions on that. How do you gain influence as a step-parent? Great question. The number one thing I would tell you on this, we're almost done.

The step-parents that I worked with, there was this, in the kid and in the parent, I'm trying to think of a term for this.

There's a really great term that no one's thought of yet, or that I just haven't read the book that I need to read. Every kid has a stick to beat down whatever authority is in their life.

Every kid can reach out and grab something. My dad lost his temper. My mom works too much. In a step-parent situation, the stick is, you're not really my dad.

Here's what you need to understand. Every family, every kid has a stick. Here's an illustration of what I'm saying. Haley, last year when we got to Connecticut, was going into seventh grade.

[147:49] What she doesn't know is that going from sixth grade to seventh grade as a girl is traumatic and dramatic no matter where you are and no matter who you are.

Because you are a little woman with lots and lots of tears and emotions that are coming to life that you don't know what to do with. And seventh grade girls are very, they're vicious to each other.

They're little demonic serpent snakey. They power play each other. It's vicious. They claw each other's eyes out. They hiss at each other.

They're horrible little beings. Every seventh grade in the world has these people. Now, I know they're angelic. They're your little girls. But at school, they are vicious, drama queen, fashion conscious, boy conscious, power playing each other.

Okay? Now, that would have happened in Lancaster. Haley's life was going there no matter where we live on planet Earth. Okay? But her stick all year long was, well, we moved to Connecticut.

[148:56] So all the drama and all the little power and all the little fashion and all the little social stuff of seventh grade, her stick to blame it on was, if we hadn't moved to Connecticut, if you hadn't done this to me, if you hadn't wrecked my life, everything would be fine and I'd be back with my friends.

And the wonderful experience happened. We went back to youth conference. We took a group of kids. Haley's all happy. She finally gets to go back home with her friend. She's very excited about this. And before we went to the airport in the morning, I sat her down.

I said, listen to me. Okay? I said, your friends are not going to be nice to you. What are you talking about?

I said, Haley, you have 25 friends in Lancaster that you can't wait to see. I promise you, at least one of them, if not two or three or five, are going to be mean to you.

I'm just prepared. No way, Dad. There's no way. Hey, these are my, I've known them since the nursery. They're not, Haley, trust me. I'm your father. I'm looking out for you. I'm preparing you.

[150:00] They're going to be mean to you. Why would they do that? Because you've been gone. Things change. You're the, they got their boyfriend. You're the threat. You're the new girl. It's just going to be socially weird and somebody's going to be mean to you.

No, Dad, I don't believe you. All right. Well, I'm here when you need to come cry. That's how we left it. Okay? 12 hours later, she's in our hotel room, laying on the bed, bawling her eyes out.

Oh, what happened? I can't believe Shana did that to me. Did I not tell you? So, that was a wonderful experience for me because she realized drama is drama.

People are people. Lancaster is no different than Connecticut in terms of social, high school, junior high drama. So, here's coming back to my point. The stick that step families fight with is the step issue.

All right? Authority is authority. God is God. Bible is Bible. Family is family. Do not legitimize the stick.

[151:13] That is the biggest battle. Do not legitimize the stick. I get it. That's the stick they use. Do not give the stick credit. Your step parent, apply the biblical principles of parenting.

Cultivate everything we've talked about. Influence. You have true. You have, in the child's mind, less authority. But that's what we all talk about.

Influence. Just cultivate influence. You still have authority, but it's going to be, you're going to get there through influence. You're not going to get there through authority. You're going to get there through influence.

Just realize that child would use a different stick if there wasn't a step parent issue. Your family would have similar struggles to fight through.

It just happens to be the stick that your family uses. So, I'm not saying it's not a legitimate situation. But it becomes the smoke screen that covers everything else.



[ 152 : 16 ] It's like the blanket that they throw over everything. You can't let that take you down that path. You've got to get off that path and cultivate the heart like any other parent would. And take courage.

Take courage in God because he's with you. He's for you. All the biblical premises and promises are yours just like a real parent. Okay? So, good stuff. We had a good time today.

Thank you for coming. Are we done? Okay. All right. Trent, you come. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. For more information, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.