

Parenting: Raising Up Godly Leaders

by Shane Idleman

To raise godly leaders, parents must prioritize God's truth, lead by example, and make tough decisions, while also embracing their role and seeking synergy in their relationships.

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Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, Proverbs 3:11, Proverbs 4:1-4, Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 22:15, Proverbs 23:13, Matthew 11:28, John 14:1, Colossians 3:21

Topics: "Parenting", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the vital role of parenting in raising godly leaders, asserting that everyone influences someone, regardless of their parental status. He encourages listeners to embrace their roles as spiritual leaders, make tough decisions, and discipline their children with love and intention. Idleman highlights the importance of perseverance in parenting, leading by example, and the necessity of prayer in nurturing a godly family. He reassures those who feel regret about past parenting choices that God can restore and redeem their influence. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to prioritize spiritual growth and character development in the home.

Transcript

This is an interesting message this morning because as you're going through Proverbs, there are topics that are not going to be able to relate to everyone. The one this morning is parenting, raising up godly leaders. Raising up godly leaders, but I said that to say this, all of us are going to be able to benefit from this message.

Whether you don't have children, whether your children are gone, whether you're single and not there yet, the principles in Proverbs are very important. Here's why. All of you in this room are influencing someone.

I don't know, Shana, you are. Every single person in this room, I don't care how old you are or how young you are, you are influencing somebody. Somebody is looking at your life and if you live my life, you live in a fishbowl.

Many people say, how can you live in a fishbowl? Well, you do too. You just don't know it. People are watching you.

That's what we're going to talk about this morning. All of us can glean from this message and I'm going to cover just four or five things from the book of Proverbs. Number one, to raise godly leaders.

That's what we look at children as future leaders and maybe grandchildren. Can anyone relate now? You know what, I was looking over the last two years worth of memorial services I've done or have been to, something that always stood out and still does is when kids come up here and they say, my grandpa or my grandma meant the world to me. They influenced me.

They read the Bible. It's like, we've missed how important that role is of being a grandparent. And actually, you can get away with a lot more.

Right? You can let them eat whatever they want, stay up late, root beer floats, and they love you. It's when they come back to the parents that we have to do that hard job of reeling them back in. So, grandparents, those who are single, get these principles in your spirit now.

Or if you haven't had children yet, get these principles in your spirit now because you don't just come to the altar and say, I do, and then become a man or woman of character. You don't raise godly children the day you say, I do. You raise them early on before you even have them.

It's something you're putting in your heart that God's working in your life. And I was going to wait to the end, but this keeps coming up. I also want to encourage you because I know people are going to hear this sermon and they're going to think it's too late.

I wish I would have known that 25 years ago. And I don't know how God does it, but he does it. Once we get back on track with our mindset, once we say, Lord, I did blow it, would you begin to rebuild those years? Would you begin to rebuild my influence? Would you still bring that prodigal son home, Lord, even though I wasn't a good example? He will hear those prayers.

So you don't have to live in regret, because God says, give me your regret and watch what I do with it. He always says, give me your regret and watch what I do with it, if the heart is right. So don't sit here in regret.

Just sit here pondering the goodness and grace of God. Number one, to raise godly leaders, you must embrace your role. What do you mean by that, Shane? Well, here's what I mean by that.

You are stewarding God's gift. Selfishness must die. And if this was one sermon I would go sit in the audience on, it would be this one, because this is an area we all have to work on.

But to truly lead and guide children and train them up in the way they should go, you have to, number one, you understand or you embrace your role. Okay, my role isn't, this might be a surprise, but my number one role isn't to pastor. Your number one role isn't to work and pay the bills and make the money.

That's what you do, but the role who God designed you to be, us to be, is to lead and influence others. Especially when it comes to our children. See that will make, that will change things because now you put things into perspective.

It's not business. You know how many people have destroyed their marriage because they sought more money? Because they went after careers and dreams that are not God and good and God given? And they're following all these things and I hear it all the time, but Shane, in five years things will slow down and then I can spend time with my family. I've never seen that come to fruition.

Of course there are exceptions, but we're always following, so get your focus in front of you. It has to start here. Okay, parents, this is going to go out to different people, a lot of people will hear this who are

parents.

Your role is to raise godly children. That's the primary goal, to have this wonderful relationship with the Lord and God and then you take that and then you invest into others. And then, yes, you work, yes, you have priorities, and yes, you have activities and you do different things, but that has to be your main role.

And maybe I'm over clarifying this, but I saw this all the time, especially working in the industry I did and the different places I did. Men thought that their main role was to pay the bills. What do you hear? What do you hear often? I pay the bills in this house.

It's like I make the money here. I go to work. That's not your primary responsibility because you can succeed at business and fail at home.

It happens all the time. So of course the scripture I'll be jumping off and on of all the time is Proverbs 22.6. Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. They will not turn from it.

Now, just on that scripture I could spend the next hour. So I'm going to try to just throw in some other things here. Proverbs 4, 1 through 4, hear my children, hear my children, the instruction of a father and give attention to no understanding.

Now he's talking to the kids here. He's encouraging them. Listen to your father.

Give attention to understanding. But then it hit me like a ton of bricks this week. That's not just for kids.

That's for us. That could be God saying, God, listen to all of us. My children, listen to my instruction.

Give attention to what I'm saying. Listen to me for I give you good doctrine. That means good teaching.

What I give you is good and right. And do not forsake my law. Do not leave it.

When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me and said to me, let your heart retain my words and keep my commands and live. So we get this from this text. Here, open your ears and focus your attention on understanding God's truth.

Where you lead, others will follow. See, that's not just a parenting verse. We can't say, well, I don't have kids or they're growing too bad.

No. God's saying here, open your ears. And I would say that's one of the greatest needs in the church today is to open their ears.

Listen to my understanding, listen to my ways, listen to my commands. Focus your attention on understanding my truth because where you go, where you lead, others will follow. So who's leading us? That's why I often say Hollywood or the Holy Spirit.

There's your choices. I just remembered when I used to speak at men's conferences, I would always make that point about those motorcycle shows and fathers watching these and fathers watching these programs and fathers while their kids are there just dying spiritually, dying to spend time with their fathers. But they're watching and doing all these things that have nothing to do with God's truth.

Please don't misunderstand. I'm not talking about entertainment, having fun with your kids, but teaching and training has to be the priority. And here's why your prayer time and your reading time, spending time in God's Word is absolutely and completely essential here.

This is why we push this issue so much. Fathers, your reading time, your time with God, it's essential here. How are you going to teach people what you don't know yourself? How are you going to lead them where you have not yourself been? The only way I can teach my children heartfelt worship and time in God's Word is if I do it.

They might not like it, but drag them out of bed at six in the morning. Get them here to morning worship. Let them see it sometimes because I know there will come a time years from now where God will bring back that thought and they'll remember, oh, I remember my dad on his face at the altar praying for my family.

I remember that. You're putting these impressions into their mind, what it looks like. Mothers teach and nurture, but fathers must be involved in shaping character.

But this is a good reminder here that both of you must be in agreement in certain areas. There's something I talked about yesterday. We had a staff elder deacon luncheon type thing, and I mentioned the word synergy.

Do you know what that is? Synergy is the definition. I probably should have looked it up because I probably messed up the definition. But when you take a couple of different things or a couple of different people, the work that they're doing, the sum workload of what they're doing is far greater than what one person can accomplish on their own.

It's not one plus one equals two. It's one plus one equals three or four or five. There's synergy.

So when the wife and the husband and the spouse come together, they get on the same page and they say, we're following Christ, and that's the direction we're taking our children. And there's unity there. Now of course, my husband's not saved or my wife's not saved, and that's impossible.

Shane, I understand that. Please don't misunderstand. But God will do.

You plus God is synergy. So don't worry about the spouse that isn't coming along. I'm not talking about that right now.

I'm talking about those who can be on the same page, those who can go in the same direction. And you might disagree. I've seen this before.

You might disagree on discipline. What that looks like. But do not disagree on direction.

What direction is our family going? What direction are we taking our children? And that's why it is challenging. Because sometimes, even with my wife and I, she'll tell you, too, that that's why we have to get on the same direction, because sports comes in, doesn't it? Or this comes in. When my daughter's gymnastics is really good, and my son, at eight years old, we had the three travel ball teams that were wanting him to play, at eight years old.

I'm like, oh, that sounds great, the flesh, right? And then when you see what's involved, and what happens is you begin, God begins to go on the back burner, and all these other things are in the forefront, and we

are teaching them that you can put God to the back and focus on these other things. God is not a priority. So be careful.

That's all I'm saying. Because I don't want to get an email saying, you say I can't do sports? Of course not. I think it's important.

I think you should coach your kid's team and be involved. But be careful what that priority is. And be careful, you can say no also.

Little League tried to get me to do things on Sunday, said I'm not available. They actually changed the schedule around on all the games so I could make some of the games when I was coaching. I said, I can't do that.

If you want me to coach, then here's what you need to do. And they did it. So there is ways, and God will begin to honor that, but again, there are disagreeing on little issues, but what direction are we going? The direction is to follow Christ.

The direction is to see it resembled in our homes. And in case some of you are mistaken right now, I do not follow this perfectly. Sometimes I look more like Howard Stern than Jesus.

Is he still around? That might not be a good example. Let me think of a better. What's a better example? Come on, Randy.

Help me here. Hmm. Trump? Then Jesus? No, that's not good.

Hmm. Okay. A work in progress.

How's that? Sometimes you know you resemble because you can't walk on water all the time. You can't be at home and live perfectly. Oh, Dad's so gentle and loving and forgiving and makes all the right decisions.

It's bringing that back to Christ, but I've noticed that it's incredible for your kids to see you say, I'm sorry. That was not right. I apologize.

I just told Aubrey, sorry, a couple days ago. I'm sorry. I came home as a little agitated.

That wasn't right. But see, that's how they see Christ in you. They see, oh, okay.

What would be that parent who thinks they're always right? And they can just boss people around and the kids never see. See kids have to see humility and here's what I've learned. When I humble myself, guess what they do? Oh, maybe start crying.

See because that humility and that gentleness, that forgiveness, it begins to work the way God wants it to work in your family. So it's okay to admit mistakes. And we admit mistakes often.

Lord, I haven't mastered this. The hardest area right now for me, I'll just tell you up front, is family devotionals. The devil doesn't care if we watch TV, but as soon as you, let's see what the Bible says.

Oh, everybody's throwing a fit. Everybody's having a breakdown. Everybody is like, what happened? Let's just do this.

So you're struggling, you're contending, there's warfare, you're shaping your children. The enemy's primary attack is against the parent's influence. Did you know that? I was going to read different statistics on fatherless homes, which I have before.

It is alarming. And this is from 1999. The National Center for Fathering said this, according to 72% of the U.S. population, fatherlessness is the most significant family or social problem facing America today.

Do you see the craziness in the news? These kids that are like, are you kidding? What is wrong? Look in the home. Look in the home. And people say, well, I'm not an absentee father.

I live at home, right, but you don't have to leave home to be absent. We can be absent in our homes spiritually, emotionally, absent, absent of the role that God has designed us to lead and to live. Fatherless homes, many more times, kids that come from fatherless homes are many more times likely to be in prison, to drop out, to have kids out of wedlock.

They're even four times more likely to be poor. There's behavioral problems, there's drug and alcohol abuse. All this just escalates.

Why? Because of that godly influence. Also when the mother's not involved, it was interesting, the top two is angry kids. When the mother's out, when we drop them off at daycare all day, we're not there, we're gone.

Angry, angry, anger, it's like the statistics were skyrocketing. Also rejection, the kids feel rejected, so their anger. Anger and hyperactivity.

When the mom, the role of the mom is missing. Number two, to raise godly leaders, tough decisions need to be made. Okay, so you have to, you understand your role, and number two, if you truly want to raise godly leaders, tough decisions need to be made.

You've heard me say this before, I'll say it this morning, but welcome to life. Welcome to battle. This is not comfortable Christianity.

This was a big wake-up call for me 15 years ago, Christianity's not comfortable? It's not your best life now? I mean, I read the book. I just want my cozy, comfortable life, bank account's good, everything's going good, my kids will just be raised in the fear and the admonition of the Lord, I don't have to do much. We can play Nintendo all day and go to Disneyland and just the good old days.

But then the more you go through life and read the Bible, you realize it's a battle. It's warfare. There's difficult decisions have to be made, which means you will have to make difficult decisions when it comes to work, activities, your business, all these different things.

What is the priority? Tough decisions. I mean, I've known men that have given up jobs because they were losing their family, or they retired or they stepped back because they were losing their family. We had a pastor's event Thursday and somebody, a pastor who serves, I believe, down at Grace Community Church spoke to us and he said there was a season many years ago when he tried to be a pastor and wanted to and things weren't opening, he couldn't serve anywhere, doors were closing and he took it to God for a while and God said, how do you want me to open a door for ministry when you won't even minister at your home? When you won't even lead your home? What makes you think that's not ministry? And he took a 10-year leave from ministry and just served his family and served the Lord and then from

there God began to use him.

And did you know that a man can actually be disqualified from ministry if he doesn't lead his home well? A person can be disqualified from ministry, a man, if they do not lead their home well. Now what that looks like, there's many different views on this. The bottom line is you think of a priest like Eli who just let his sons do whatever they wanted with the Lord's food and prostitution and didn't restrain them, didn't do anything.

My view on it is if a father can restrain and they don't, that's what they're talking about here, restraining. You know, if you live in my house, this is not going to happen. Here's how we're going to conduct ourselves.

Now you can't force people to do things. I've seen people, you know, they want a pastor to resign when their 24-year-old goes off the deep end. Well, that doesn't make any sense because he's an adult, you know, but in your home when you can lead your family.

So it can actually disqualify a person. In order for someone to be an elder at our church, an elder at any church, the Bible says does he rule his home well? Is he watching the spiritual condition of his home? Is he making changes when they need to be made? Is he stepping back from certain things to invest in his children? Is the marriage falling apart? It's a challenge for a lot of us in this area. I remember, you know, we read all of these heroes of our faith.

We love, we read these books by people. We go, oh, we just love these people. They are so spiritual.

No, they had hang-ups. One of the people I really enjoy is A.W. Tozer. And it's common knowledge that he neglected his family in many areas.

His wife was quoted as saying, I know Tozer loves the Lord, but I don't know if he loves me. Because so much time spending God and finding that balance. So to raise godly leaders, tough decisions need to be made.

Maybe you hearing this later, hearing this this morning, there are tough decisions that need to be made. Number three, to raise godly leaders, you must, you ready for this word? It's not going to be politically correct. Starts with a D. Discipline.

To raise godly leaders, you must discipline them. It goes back to number two, that a man can be qualified, disqualified from ministry if he doesn't do anything. You know what that is, right? Just little Johnny runs the home.

Little Sally's just so silly when she's two, but it's not very cute at 12. And they just run the house. I want this.

I want this. Give me food. Give me food.

Give me this. Give me. Give me.

Give me. And they just, can we go here? Can we do this? Scream. Throw a tantrum.

Tantrum. And you're running through. You see some people in Walmart and you're like, Lord, who's running this house? Little monsters.

Because we've all been there, haven't we? It's like, just give me the Cheetos off the shelf and be quiet. I need some relaxation. Proverbs 13.24. We're going to talk about an interesting topic here, and I want to be sensitive and careful, but it's important.

Proverbs 13.24. He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly. Chase in your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction. Now a couple things come to mind.

Hate can mean to prefer less than. You know, we hear this word, like Jesus said, unless you hate your father and your mother. And we don't have time to look into this, but if you look into the Hebrew language, they use a lot of pictures, like a thorn, and different things would be used as a picture to the word hate.

It really means to prefer something so you avoid the pain next time. And so we hear this, God hated Esau, God hates your father, or you can't follow Jesus. The word, the root word is to prefer more than.

I prefer more Jesus than I prefer my parents. I prefer Jesus over my wife, and my wife wants to follow Jesus more than me. And see, that has to be the dominating relationship.

So you are not truly caring for your children if you do not discipline them. You prefer passivity to pain, and you prefer comfort to confrontation. But it says here, promptly deal with it when there is love, not anger.

Promptly, deal with it right there when it's love, when love is going to come out of you, not anger. And if you know, okay, anger is going to come out, maybe take a little break. Walk around your block, listen to some worship music, and then you come back and you deal with it.

The chasten means to have a restraining or moderating effect. So it says chasten your son while there is still hope. See at a certain age, there's hope there, you're bending the will, you're training the child.

Chasten them, and that word means to give a moderating effect. And I think of like a flat tire. It's going to affect the performance of that vehicle, and that word kind of comes like taking the air out of something, like take the air out of their evil ways, and flatten that tire so they can't go as far as quickly, and you chasten them.

So here's the application. If you don't discipline your kids, you're not teaching them to stay away from the source of pain. If we don't discipline our children or even grandparents, if you don't discipline your children, you're not helping them avoid the source of pain.

What is the source of pain? Disobedience to God's word. The undisciplined son enters the world thinking it's all about him, the undisciplined daughter enters into life thinking she's a diva. You'll get that.

Paris Hilton come to mind? 50 million followers on all her different media outlets. And we think, well, I'm not going to discipline them. Well, if you don't discipline them, the world is shaping them.

See, discipline is part of them feeling pain for the choices they made that do not line up with God's word. So it's that disciplining through conforming the will, like the military does. They break down your will.

But it has to be followed in love. So here's a few things you could do. Take them to the hospital homes, bring the patient's presents, feed the homeless.

We have something in the bulletin for that. Here's a biggie. You ready for this one? Tell them no.

Tell them no. And they know what parent they can go to to get certain answers for certain things, right? My kids know if they come to me about getting junk food, I'm like Fort Knox. Nope.

I don't throw a fit. I don't care. I could care less.

Nope. Nope. But, if they go to Morgan, might be able to get something there.

But then on other things, she's more like, I said no electronics for three days. I told you no electronics. I'm like, oh, man, can't we watch Do Perfect or those bottle flip videos? It's just nothing at all, but you have to be selective in that area, too, because the electronics are overpowering and mentally shaping, and there's actually something that they know of now, which, of course, is obvious, is addiction from these things.

Give me your phone. Mom, you have a five-year-old. Give me your phone.

I have to have a phone. I have to have a computer. I have to have my... I have to.

It's this addiction, so you have to withdraw them, just like a drug, and say no. That's why tough decisions have to be made. That could be for some of you.

Have you been convicted lately to disconnect something? Is there ungodly things you're watching on Netflix? Things on YouTube that are just not good? Well, you go to it, and you hit delete, and remove it for a season. Make hard decisions if it's something that's hurting your family. You are shaping a will.

You're programming a mind, and you're training them to follow God or the world. It's very important, but also Colossians 3.21 says this, do not provoke them to anger, which means do not trigger. Do not inflame.

Do not annoy dads, primarily. Do not exasperate. Do not provoke them like a snake, a rattlesnake.

You're just provoking it. See, you can be the calming temperature in your home. You can calm that environment, or you can provoke it, and cause the kids to lash out even more.

So it says, fathers, don't do that. That tells me dads have a predisposition to do that, right? You kind of can provoke that, and it's not wise. Proverbs 22.15, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.

Foolishness is in their heart. The rod of correction will drive it far from them. Proverbs 23.13, do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

What is wrong with the Bible? People are thinking, well, this topic is interesting, because there are different sides of it. We know that America especially, even in our area, is one of the highest child abuse, has the highest child abuse rates in L.A. County. We know that that's not the heart of God.

We know that beating somebody out, it's a no-brainer. However, we don't want to run to the polar opposite and do nothing. So what's he talking about? Well, one Hebrew author said that the rod of correction was written by King Solomon, who himself carried a scepter, a rod.

It's basically like a king, a father who withholds his authority and refuses to establish boundaries and laws as a king does for his nation. Such a father hates his son. So the rod of correction, this authority that God has given us to correct in our homes, if we remove that symbol of authority, we don't care for our children.

Now obviously, and you can do studies on this word, rod, they break it down, and there's three Hebrew words and different things, but it's like a switch on a tree. Did you ever have that? My dad or my mom, go

out to that tree, and you pick your switch, and I come back with a little twig. Or my grandpa, I'll never forget those.

Snap! You know, and you're like, oh no. But it wasn't ever to abuse, it was just a light, hey, that hurt a little bit, I better not do that again. You don't leave bruises, you don't leave marks, you don't abuse, but there's a light, there's a stinging, like a bee sting, oh, I don't want to do that again.

So if we don't, and there are some people, God bless them, that think taking away a computer for a day is going to do it. I don't know. Each family has to come to this conclusion on their own.

Personally, it was hard for me, because coming from a family or a father that would be considered abusive today, so I would retract to the opposite, often, of being too passive, because of what I went through. But the goal, biblical goal, is to experience a little bit of, there's a little bit of pain. That's why there's a little padding here.

There's not bruises, there's not marks, it's not hurt, there's a little bit of pain there. There has to be, they have to feel. How are you going to discipline or train a child if there's no consequences for their actions? Now, you can't go make them stand in a corner like this for 10 minutes, I mean, if that worked for you, but I think it's clear that there has to be some amount of pain to where, ah, I don't want to do that again.

Why don't kids touch the stove anymore? And anytime I see a pan on there, I'm like, make sure that's not on, because you've learned that lesson. So there's something inside of us called the human will that opposes God. And so the will has to be shaped and conformed.

And as a kid is disciplined throughout his years, train up a child in the way he should go. You're training and you're altering that disposition to sin. God knows, not perfectly, right? We don't do it perfectly, and there are people who are raised in wonderful homes that go sideways.

I know Franklin Graham wrote a book on that, Billy Graham's son, and other pastors I can mention who've had issues, and Lord knows where we'll be when our kids grow older. I mean, you can't live on that regret and thinking that, you know, you could have done so much more. Ultimately, they're God's children.

And ultimately, you need to do as much as you can, biblically speaking, to steer them in the right direction. It's like a quiver. The Bible says that you have a quiver full, it's like taking that quiver and pointing and shooting that arrow in the right direction towards the enemy, and building them up and strengthening them in things of God.

So number four, to raise godly leaders. This is a biggie. To raise godly leaders, we must persevere as we lead by example and we train them.

We must persevere. You guys, do you like that song, Yes I Will? Yes I will. I praise God, yes I will.

But did you know it doesn't just apply to worshiping God? Yes I will praise you in the storm, is what we sing, but also, yes I will praise you in the storm of parenting. Yes I will persevere. When all hell is breaking loose in my home, I will continue down the path you gave me, Lord.

You have to persevere, even if there aren't results. Because that's what we say, oh, forget it now. Just let them do whatever they want, and there could have been a breakthrough just around the corner.

Do they see you praying more than praising your favorite team? Do they see you being selective with what you allow in the home? Do they see you making God a priority? Do they see you repenting and asking for forgiveness? Do they see an example of Christ in you? But Shane, that doesn't make any sense. You just said we, right, but do they see at least the example? I mean, it's been marred, it's been damaged. We're broken.

We make mistakes, but do they at least see that glimmering light of what Christ looks like when we say I apologize, I'm repenting myself, I want to ask for your forgiveness, I want to lead, and do they at least see you going in that right direction? Many years ago, I used to quote Josh McDowell a lot, and you probably have heard this, but he was asked by young adults, or he actually asked this question to young adults throughout his career and different things, and then he asked them to ask a question of him, and he said the top question that he received many, many, it's been 15 years ago now, that young adults would say is they would ask him, how can we live for Christ when we don't want the Christ that our parents have? Now that is enough to get most of you on this altar. How? How can we follow the Christ you're talking about, Josh, when we don't want the Christ we see in our parents? And the only reason I bring that up is to bring us to deeper repentance, because parenting is getting back on track. Parenting is getting up, back on track, staying focused, yes I will, yes I will parent according to God's will, even though all hell is breaking loose in my home, yes I will parent correctly, even when nobody's listening, yes I will sit down with a devotional if it's just me, yes I will, and you persevere forward.

I want to encourage you to listen to, it went out to the men yesterday, it's on our Facebook page, Ray Ortega gave just a, I think about an eight minute testimony, he's an usher here, and it just really, it just really impacted me yesterday. We have a father-daughter dance, we try to do it once a year, and his daughter wrote down, because your daughters can write down things for you and you save those, and they just had twins, I think two years ago or so, baby twins, twin girls, and his older daughter, she was 18, here's what she wrote to her dad. She said, dad, lead the twins to the Lord.

Lead the twins to the Lord. That's a great model. Lead them to the Lord.

And I thought, wait a minute. That's the goal. That's the focus of my life and your life? One of the main priorities is to lead them to the Lord? Not financial stability, which is good.

Lead them to the Lord? Because many children who are adults now, there's a couple here that have left, and they came back, but they left the church, they hated the church because their parents loved the church more than them. Always had to be gone. Always had to be going here.

Always said needing, needing, needing, and the children died at home. Same thing in the workplace. Pursuing and pursuing and pursuing and pursuing, but kids growing up, four years old, then eight, then 12, and then they're gone.

But they were chasing almighty dollar, and doesn't it sound good? It promises the world. And we have this mindset, if I could just make a little more, if I could work, I'll tell off for five more years, then I'll have more time for you guys. And they buy in, like, okay, okay.

Now, again, there's seasons in life. Don't feel beat up if you're in a hard season. I've had days where I've had to work seven days a week.

And I didn't see my oldest as much as some of the younger ones now, because I was in construction. It was long hours, long days, very tired, gone a lot just to get by. But see, my goal wasn't to keep doing that.

My goal was to get back home and to follow Christ. And Lord, would you bring these hours into submission to your will? Give me less time. Lord, I was always striving and fighting to get back to find that balance.

So there are seasons. Sometimes you've got to step up your game, get out of the house and kiss them goodbye, and I'll see you next week if there's bills to pay. And God's calling you to that season to make a difference in the financial area.

Proverbs 22.6, again, train up a child in the way they should go. And when they are old, they will not depart from it. It actually says when he is old, when he will not depart from it.

But it obviously involves male and female. So train up a child. Think about that.

Train up a child in the way you should go. Not the school system. You.

Not the youth group. You. It cracks me up.

Parents sometimes go, well, what do you have for our youth to teach our youth and to raise our youth? No, no, that's your job. We're just like a vitamin that's a supplemental to your normal eating. We're not the whole meal.

If you drop them off at church and hoping they're going to train your children, it actually can be counterproductive. Because you're the one to be investing in them, not someone else. Now, we're helping single moms next door.

There's families in disarray, and they need that. I understand that. But the primary, the primary responsibility falls on us.

Train up a child. And I thought of this word training. CNN reported in 2012, I don't know how many of you saw this, remember Michael Phelps? He trains every day.

At one point, he trained in the pool three to six hours every day and did separate exercises on dry land for four to five days per week. Top gymnasts, I went online and looked at their schedule, they spend 32 hours a week in training, broken up over six days. What is that, five hours a day? And here's the kicker.

They do this for a crown that perishes. A crown that perishes. Look, I've got this gold medal.

Okay, where are your children? That's the medal. That's the medal that people won't see. You might not get a lot of recognition and a lot of satisfaction in that medal, but that's the medal that lasts forever, pointing them in the right direction, training them in the way that they should go.

A crown that doesn't perish. But see, the enemy always goes after those things that are important. Always.

And he says, you'll get to the kids later. You'll get to pursue these things, pursue these things. You have to bring the flesh back.

Bring the flesh back to what does God's will say. Because, man, if you just jump into the current of society, you will go that direction. You are swimming against the culture all the time.

The favorite word in my vocabulary right now in this season of life is no. No. Can you speak here? No.

Not right now. Can you do this? No. No, no, no, not right now.

Because you have to gauge the pulse of what's going on in your family. And I have to gauge the pulse of the church. Is it going to take me away from church? Is it going to take me? Is it going to be hard on our family? Is this not going to be good for our family? Man, I'm trying to get out of this one, too.

But I will share something with you, practical application. Me and my wife, it's actually very hard for me and my wife. This is going to be coming up pretty soon.

I don't want to say it because God knows he might open some door. But as of now, I think, you know, we've solidified this. But my grandfather built a Quartz Hill Little League in Quartz Hill in the 60s with some other guys called Shackley Eidelman Field.

And then my dad built the smaller one. I remember he was on the Gannon Tractor. We built that in 1992.

And always, from when I was a little boy, always coaching, all-stars, managing. And this will be my son's final year there, but I don't think we're going to do it because it's just too much. 20 games, most of them are at 7.30 at night.

Sunday picture cleanup days, I've got 48 practices in between there, not to mention all these meetings and scorekeeping, and I've got to find umpires, and I've got to umpire 10 games myself. So you know what? It's just not worth it. It's not where we want to go.

It's not where we can handle right now. And it's disheartening, very disheartening. One of our daughters keeps being asked to be on these gymnastic teams.

Like once a month. Well, they ask me again. Well, tell them no.

The answer is still no. They're going to wear us down. Oh, it's only four practices a week, three, four hours a day.

Oh, only? Now, I know it's difficult. I'm not saying that's for you. I would never say you all have to do this because you might just be sitting at home bored to death twiddling your thumbs, and you can go do that.

But in our case, it's going to pull from other areas. I'm not going to be able to preach on Wednesday nights as much. It's going to affect this.

We're going to be running, our family's going to be running all these different directions for six months, not to mention newborn on the way. And games at 730 at night ending by home at 10? A couple times throughout the week all the time? And I know me. People say, well, just don't manage or don't coach.

I'm like, okay. And then I sit there and I'm like, oh, come on, guys. We need some help out here.

I'm like, no, I'm sorry. I can't. But even just all the activities, just too much.

It's not where we're at right now. It's tough decisions have to be made. Now, it's a decision I won't regret.

I regret that I can't fulfill that desire and that dream that I've wanted to do. We didn't do it last year either because of this very reason, but God's called us in a unique position. So take it to your spouse and ask,

are we doing too much? Is this wrong? Is this right? Is this what? Because most people, the reason we do this is we live vicariously through the activities of our children, and we want the next Mike Trout in our home.

Simone Biles, is that her name? Yeah, or the next. Look, but wouldn't that be great? Wouldn't that be great? Yeah, but be careful because most pro athletes aren't real close to God because they've learned that that's their God. To be successful, any top athlete has trained or practiced at their particular gifting for at least 10,000 hours.

That's current facts, 10,000 hours of putting that first. And I've invited so many people to church. I mean, you don't even know, over eight years.

I can't because what? Travel ball, football, baseball, soccer. I'm like, every weekend, just about. Our little Sally's so gifted.

I know, but does she know the Lord? So hard decisions have to be made. I'll just shoot you straight. I'm going to shoot straight.

I'm a straight shooter. But again, that's up to the family. Your needs might be different.

You might be able to bless your heart if you can do these things. And there are parents who will make some sacrifice, say, you know, but we're going to be in church most of the time. But we are compromising on these areas, and it's okay.

You'll have your different giftings and your different. Each family is different. You don't do what I do.

Maybe you have more time in the evening or weekends where I don't. That's the hardest time for me. And just remember, our character speaks volumes.

Our character teaches, doesn't it? They look at our character. I don't like that any more than you do. I wish they listened to my words.

Like the Pharisees, Jesus said, do what they say, but don't do what they do. But your character, who you are, teaches. That's why I love to quote that poem that says, Mom and Dad, the lessons you deliver may be very wise and very true, but I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.

For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give, but there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live. So the best way to train up a child in the way they should go is to live for Christ in full abandonment, full surrender. And they will follow someday.

They might not like it because their conviction is there and they're wanting to go out and spread their wings into this world that promises everything but leaves them destitute and depressed. It doesn't offer all these things. I mean, look at where, like Hollywood, all these people that should be the happiest people on the planet are the most depressed.

Read stuff what Jim Carrey says. Read these YouTube Mongols now, like Paris Hilton. And all these people have millions of followers.

I'm so depressed. Robert Williams. I can just keep naming.

Why? Because it's not fulfilling. Only Christ satisfies. That's why he said, Drink of me and you will never thirst again.

I have living water, not dead water that leaves you lifeless and dead and without hope. But come to me, all who are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Come to me and I will bring into you spiritual life, abundant life, the life that Christ gives.

But it does take full surrender. We put Jesus like he's at a, what do they call it, a smorgasbord? I like those mashed potatoes, but I'll take, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Yeah, but I'll take the dessert.

And we think God's principles are like, well, this one's kind of hard. I'll take this one. I'll take this one.

Church once in a while on Sunday. But the prayer, the fasting, the worship, the seeking him, the fully surrendering my life, no thank you. And the people are miserable.

And the family's falling apart. Proverbs 3.11, My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke. So this might be good for some of us.

Are we getting disciplined in this sermon? I am. God got out the spiritual paddle. I got spanked at Bethel.

Remember I told you Bethel Baptist. They just get, come on, Mr. Idol. Bam, with bad holes in it.

And I prefer that over spanking from God. And you know what, that worked. Thinking back, I never chewed gum and I did not talk in class because I had that big paddle.

It's coming out. They don't mess around there. You think you can negotiate.

And you can hear kids. You can hear it hitting. And the parents gave them permission.

And it changed things, didn't it? I don't want to say the wrong thing, but boy, if we could bring that back in the public schools. They might pull up their pants and not cuss out the teacher. God, I'm going to get in trouble.

You know, the sad reality is what goes on in the schools, I can't even talk about. Do you know they will call teachers in schools all over here the F word? Do you realize that? Spit on them, give them the finger. What is this? It's chaos.

America has lost her moral compass. Follow little Johnny who does that back to the home. And I guarantee he's running that home.

If that ever happens here, you come tell me, my kid, oh, oof. See, there should be a fear of not offending God or their parents and living godly lives. I tell my kids sometimes, and my son's not here, so that's good, because he'd probably be embarrassed.

But, you know, if they act up at home and they do things and stuff. And he's into parkour now, he's jumping off of roofs of houses. If anything, though, don't treat people bad at church.

Be respectful to your teachers. Be courteous, because if it gets back, if I hear that, we're not going to have a good day. And you teach them that kind of thing.

We are in a war zone. Now, you might be disciplined right now from the Lord. And I like what D.A. Carson said on God's discipline.

He said, when we face suffering of any kind, we should use the occasion for self-examination. God may be speaking to us in the language of a wise heavenly Father who chastens those he loves. See, that's what people don't understand.

If we're convicted or something's happening, it's because God loves us. God loves us. He said, come back.

Stop that. Such discipline may be God's response to a specific sin in our lives. Or it may be a more general way of toughening us up in this broken world, so we'll stop thinking that God owes us good health.

Or that our clean living and organic food guarantees us long and robust life. Doesn't. I tell people that all the time.

There's no guarantee in life. So our self-examination ought to be honest, and any repentance should be forthright. But we should not whip ourselves into a frenzy thinking that this crippling accident or something that you're going through, that we just went through, is because of our sin.

If it were, the remedy is always the same. Flee to the cross. Trust in our good and gracious and holy God.

So no matter what the reason is, like, Lord, why am I going through this? Why? Is it because of this? No matter what the cost is, no matter what the reason is, the remedy is the same. Flee to the cross. Trust in your good and gracious and holy Father.

This is how you handle regret. Or discipline, or whatever we're going through this morning, we flee to the cross. Some that are upset because they realize they've made mistakes.

They've hurt their family. They can't go back and rewind time, but no, but you can run to the cross and let God rebuild and redeem and restore you. If the truth be told, how many of us wouldn't go back and change something? Oh, if I could get them all back at one years old again, right? Is that about one years old? Be a whole new game.

This fifth one's going to be disciplined from day one. But you do, you start to put your guard down, and they begin to gain control in your home. And they begin to make, and they begin selfish because they just wear you down.

But this is a time, grandparents, even this morning, build yourself up, strengthen yourself in the Lord. I'm going to go ahead and close in prayer. God, my prayers for the families here this morning, and those who are listening even right now.

God, there might be tons of regret, but build them up, strengthen them, show them that ultimately these children are yours. You're their father. And we need more intercessors than we do anything else.

So have these parents maybe dealing with regret become intercessors. And you will use this humility, and you will turn it around on the enemy, and you will bring children home. Lord, I'm confident you're going to bring prodigal sons and daughters home because of parents getting refocused on their primary role as being a spiritual influence.

And we pray this in Jesus' name, amen, amen. Isn't that interesting too? You can still be that spiritual influence. How? Shane, they're gone.

Have you ever heard of an intercessor? Do you know you have an intercessor right now who intercedes on your behalf? That God says, I look for someone from among them to stand in the gap and fight the fight and pray in content. If I were you, I would be praying this morning for your grandchildren or your children or maybe children you don't have yet. Start interceding now.

Remember, our prayers do not die when we die. Our prayers are deathless. They don't die, Ian Bound said.

So if you pull down heaven, you say, God, I'm going to contend for my children and my grandchildren this week. I might even fast. I might even miss a meal.

I'm going to make it a point that you will release the hound of heaven, the Holy Spirit, and draw them back to you. Lord, I'm going into warfare. I'm removing things from my home, and I'm getting focused on you.

You're becoming my priority. Watch out, because heaven might open. Watch out, that conviction might come over that prodigal son or that daughter or that wayward spouse.

Because when you begin to pray and lay hold of God, you begin to lay hold the power of heaven, and every demon in hell must flee, and God answers. God says, I hear that prayer. I sometimes picture God saying, Now, finally, I've got your attention.

You've removed all those things that are idolatry, and now you're focusing on me, son and daughter. Where have you been? I've been waiting. I've been listening.

My ear's not short. My hand's not heavy. I'm waiting for you to respond.

How do you do that? By hearing a good sermon? No. By clapping during the lyrics? No. You grab hold of heaven, and you pray for the love of God.

Would you pray? God, the condition of our families in this nation, our churches, our children, God, the school system is falling apart. Drug use is at an epidemic level. Everything is falling apart.

They're taking their lives. God, we are dying. Our children are dying with living water just steps away.

God, would you intervene? Give us some hope. Let us see some answers to prayers. Bring revival.

Sweep across our school system. Give teachers the boldness and not be afraid of the district and of what society can do, but to go in there with the power of the Spirit and fight the good fight of faith. God, our little children are saying, somebody show me.

Somebody lead me. God, help us pray for them more. God, help us pray over them and for them and bless them.

Lord, I pray that people in this room have changed. Our prayer is going to be our priority. No more getting sidetracked.

Prayer is our priority. I'll leave you with something. I don't know if I got through it.

That's why I wasn't going to mention it. My daughter came to me last couple weeks ago. It still breaks my heart.

She said, Dad, I see you pray with others, but why don't you pray with me? You see how it slips in? And I do every day. He does all the time, all the time, but they don't see it. They need to feel your prayers, hear your heart, pray blessings over them, encourage them, build them up.

If I were you, what I'm starting to do is, prayer is my main goal. Prayer. If I'm going to pray for my children, they're going to know I love them.

I've asked, you want me to pray with you? Yes, it's like they'd rather have that than candy. They crave it. They desire it.

And I was so caught off guard because I spent a couple hours every morning with God in prayer and reading, praying for them, praying for their spouses. That took a while. Whoever they are.

Right, men, you know that. My daughter said, there's three houses in my backyard. They're going to live there.

But anyway, praying for their spouses, praying for healing, praying for health, praying for the enemy to not come against us. I opened up all the rooms at 345 this morning. I got here at four in the morning, and I went through and I prayed each of them that the enemy would have nothing in them, that they would keep them.

But it's different to go and actually pray with them and for them. What about if your kids are older? What about if you grabbed your 35-year-old and said, can I pray with you today? Can we do this often? Oh, God. Can you imagine? The power of prayer, it's amazing.

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