

Building a Home For Christ

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of setting a godly example in the family, focusing on forgiveness, gentle responses, and dedication of children to the Lord. It highlights the need for parents to lead by example in forgiveness, gentle answers, and dedication of children to God, drawing from biblical principles to shape a godly family that glorifies Christ.

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 4:31, Ephesians 5:1, Psalm 127:3

Topics: "Godly Parenting", "Forgiveness in the Family"

Description

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Transcript

We adults may have felt a bit left out, so I'd like us to teach you all a song. Jesus loves me this I know, though my hair is white as snow, though my sight is growing dim, still he bids me trust in him. Though my steps are oh so slow, with my hand in his I'll go, on through life let come what may, he'll be there to lead my way.

Praise the Lord. God is good all the time to adults and children. So, this session is for married couples.

There are two relationships we have. One is as husband and wife and the other is parents and children in our home. And to see something of the importance of this, I'll tell you how we've done it in the 47 years that we've had our churches in about 14 countries, over a hundred or more churches.

And we've taught this, the church is like a building. The foundation is the perfect assurance that God has become our father, that our sins are forgiven, Jesus Christ is my savior. If you don't start there, you have no foundation.

God is my loving father and if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, how much more my heavenly father will give me all that I need. Not all that I want, not all that I ask, but definitely all that I need. That's certain.

So, I must never move away from that foundation at any time. We are often tempted in this evil world to move away from that foundation. Then the first floor is our personal walk with God.

We have to begin there, keeping our conscience clean all the time. Like they say, keep short accounts with God, no credits, immediate payment. That means if you committed a sin, immediately confess it, ask the Lord to forgive you.

Don't wait till the evening. If you get a thorn in your foot, you don't wait till the evening to pull it out. Pull it out immediately.

If you get a speck in your eye, you clean it out immediately. Why should we treat sin any differently? It's more serious than a thorn or a speck. Immediately, keep a clear conscience.

That is the first floor. You cannot build a church if you don't start with the foundation and that first floor. Then the second floor above that is our family life.

You can't build a church without a family life. In fact, Paul tells Timothy, when you're appointing elders in the different churches, make sure that you look for elders who have these qualities. He says in 1 Timothy, in chapter 3, he says, number one, they must be a husband of one wife.

They should not be divorced people who've got two wives, one living somewhere else and one they're married to. So it must be a husband of one wife and must be someone who knows how to manage his own family, 1 Timothy 3, 4 well. Family life, because keeping his children under control with dignity, because if a man does not know how to take care of three or four children in his own home, how will he take care of a church with 50, 60 people? He can't even handle four children at home or two children at home.

They're all wayward, disrespectful. Such people should never be made elders. So we followed that rule in our churches that if a man's, we have about 150 elders in all our churches in different countries.

And if ever there's a testimony that one man, one of the elders children are wayward, I don't mean when they leave home and they're on their own, but when they're at home, speaking here about managing his own family. So when the children are at home, if they are not brought up with the respect for the parents and respect for the older people in the church, such a man is not fit to be an elder. So we teach in the church, we must bring up our families in a godly way.

So to bring up our children in a godly way. And then, sorry, let me come to the last. And then on top of the family is the third story, third floor, which is the church, building people together in fellowship as one body, not just as a club.

A lot of churches are clubs. There's a little book written at the back, a called a congregation, or a club, or a church. And he says there that some churches are actually congregations.

Some are clubs and some are churches, what is the difference? And he takes the two arms of the cross. And he says, the congregation is where an individual may have a wonderful relationship with God in himself. But he sits there along with maybe 30, 40, 100 others, who also have a good vertical relationship, but no relationship with each other.

They're like people sitting in a cinema theater. They're all interested in what's happening up in front, maybe the singing or the preacher, but no connection with each other. That's not a church, that's a

congregation.

Those people may come to the cinema theater regularly, and sit there as faithful members and pay their tithe and everything, but they have no horizontal relationships, only the vertical arm. I walk with God myself alone. That's Old Testament.

The new covenant is a body. The second thing he says is a club. A club is only the horizontal arm.

Oh, we have a wonderful time with each other. Just like in a club, they play billiards or golf, or here we come together and sing songs and listen to a message. We have no personal connection with God.

I mean, we slip up and sin and all, but we have wonderful fellowship with each other. That's a club. Then comes the church, which have both arms, that each person has got a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and they seek to love one another as Christ loved them.

That is the church. Read that booklet. It's just a few pages.

So that's what we have taught. So in the matter of bringing up children, there's one verse in the New Testament I would show you. A couple of verses.

Ephesians chapter 6. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. It's written especially to fathers. We can get so upset with our children when they do something wrong, or maybe we didn't teach them to do right.

I told the fathers in our church, when your children are small and they're building something with toys or Lego blocks or something like that, and they really don't know how to do it, they don't know how to look at the pictures, and you say, okay, son, or my girl, I'll help you make it. And you know how children are, no, no, dad, I can do it on my own. And they try and try for about 10, 15 minutes or half an hour, they get fed up and they say, they can't do it.

Then they come to dad and say, dad, can't do it. What do you tell them? Many fathers will say, I told you that. I've told husbands and wives and parents, never use those words in your home.

I told you that. That's the language of the expert. That's what destroys relationship.

When a wife tells her husband, I told you that long ago, or a husband tells his wife, I told you that. It's the expert. Or telling a child, the child just get discouraged.

What should you say? Say, nevermind, let's fix it. That's a better word to say than to say, I told you that. And then sit down with your child and fix that.

Or with your wife, some problem solved. Nevermind, darling, let's fix it. Nothing, the world's not collapsed.

We can fix that easily. If Christ could fix the world's problems on the cross, what is this little thing we have in our home? Why make a big fuss about it? Remember this. Please remember what you heard today.

Never say, I told you so. Never say, why in the world did you do that? Or why in the world didn't you tell me? Somebody left a message on the phone and your wife forgot to tell you. Okay, we all make mistakes.

The world is not going to collapse just because you didn't get that message that day. Maybe you lost a little money. That's okay.

Maybe God saw you loved money so much, so that God allowed your wife to forget to tell you that, so that you lose a little money. I'll tell you from my personal experience, number of times when I've earnestly, I prayed earnestly for many years, years and years and years and years, 40, 50 years, Lord, free me from the love of money. Because you said you cannot love God and money.

And I want to love God with all my heart. I don't want an atom of love of money in my heart, because I will not be able to serve you then. And you know how God has delivered me from it little by little, by making me lose large sums of money.

I mean, I never starved. He made sure that I had enough to eat and drink and feed my children. But it was a big loss, not some small amount for me anyway.

It was a big loss compared to the level of income I had and wealth I had. And I asked the Lord, Lord, why? The Lord said, didn't you pray a few weeks ago that you should be freed from the love of money? Well, I'm helping you. I said, praise the Lord.

This is an answer to prayer, is it? Great. I thought somebody swindled me. I thought my carelessness, I lost money.

No, God allowed it so that I can be free from the love money. Have you ever shouted hallelujah when you lost a large sum of money? I've done it. Because it is an answer to my prayer.

We all need it, brother. If you think you don't love money, you're probably the one who loves money the most. You haven't seen your need.

So you have to be careful that we don't provoke our children to anger by the way we speak to them. But bring them up, it says in Ephesians 6.4, in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Discipline and instruction.

Instruction from the Bible. I remember hearing a song sung by somebody here in the US. That he said, in my home, it's a song.

In my home, there were two things made of leather. One was the Bible and the other was a belt. And with the Bible and the belt, my father brought us up.

And one was King James Version, the other was bought in Sears. But those two leather items really helped us to grow up. And he said at the end, I feel that what our country needs, children in our country needs is a Bible and a belt.

So that's discipline and instruction. It's from the Bible. Discipline and instruction, whether you use a belt or something else.

We have to make sure that we don't, beyond a certain age, we can't use physical discipline. Because it's right, I never would use physical discipline beyond the age of 12 or something. And even before that, only in rare occasions, the belt.

And most of the times, my discipline for my children was, you can't play today. And playing cricket was a great thing in India. And they would have love to go and play.

And I'd say, no, you're going to lie down in bed while the others are playing. And they would come and beg me, Dad, give me a belt and let me go and play. That was a bigger punishment to them, to lie down in bed and miss the game.

So the principle is that they must, something that they love to do, we must not permit them to do. Because they disobeyed. If they spoke rudely to mommy, I tell them, I don't care what important work you're doing.

Stop it. Go and apologize to your mommy. We're not going to proceed before that.

See, you're very strict with these things, your children will grow up properly. And then of course, teach them the word of God. See, we had school very early in the morning.

And the children had to, there's no such thing as homeschool in India those days. And we had to send our children to school early in the morning. So we'd say a quick prayer and send them off.

And then the only time we could do it, you see, I didn't want to wake them up at five o'clock in the morning when they're all half sleepy and have family prayer. So they would get up at normal time, get their books and all ready for school and just a quick prayer with them and off to school. And then that evening, when we sat around the dinner table, that's the time when I took some little portion like daily light, a number of verses, not a big, huge chapter, but just a few verses.

Speak a little bit about it. And while we are eating, talk about things like, why don't we cheat in examinations? How should we deal with a boy or a girl who comes to fight with us in school and practical things in school? What do you find if you find that you're very good at mathematics and there's a child in your school who is very poor in mathematics? Have you ever thought of sitting down with him and helping him to do that while the others are playing? Spend 15 minutes with him. He'll love you.

Maybe you can draw him to Christ one day. So these are the instructions we talk about our children when we were at home together or when they play outside. I remember this happened once where our children would play outside and it's five years old or something.

And you know, as you children are, they play five years old, they hit one another. And you go and ask them, you ask my son, what happened, son? He hit me first. It's the usual answer is that.

And so I said, then did you hit him back? Yes. But he hit me first. Okay.

Well, I said, see, he's not a Christian. So we can't expect him to live by Christian principles. You're a Christian.

You can't behave like that. You can't hit him back. So now we got to go to his house and apologize to him.

And he said, Dad, will you apologize to me? I said, I'm not interested. I only want to know whether you'll do it. So we go to his house, knock at the door and the father opens and says, I said, sir, my son wants to say something to our little five-year-old.

Both are the same age. So my son says, I'm sorry for what I did. And the other five-year-old magnanimously says, thank you.

And they closed the door. And I said, fine. And my son said, Daddy, he never apologized to me.

I said, never mind. We are children of God. I don't know where that boy is today.

But I doubt whether he's following the Lord. His parents brought him up like that. My children are all following the Lord.

Discipline, little things like this, not always the belt. Teaching them to obey, respect the elders in the church, always speak respectfully. We have a lot of beggars coming to our gates in India, begging for money very frequently, knock, knock and say, give us some money because they're so poor.

They don't have food to eat. They don't have and many people from inside the house and say, get out, go away. So I tell my children, never speak to a beggar like that.

He's a man made in the image of God. The Bible says that in James, that every person is made in the image of God. I mean, his circumstances have made him poor.

By God's mercy, we are not in that condition. So if you ever spoke rudely to one of them, I'd say, listen, you run after him and go up to him to that beggar and say, sorry, sir, for talking to you like that. Please forgive me.

That is what we must teach our children. Respect. It doesn't matter whether the person is a poor, homeless person or a wealthy person.

There's no difference in God's eyes. You teach your children the value of humanity, respect for older people, irrespective of their position in life. And I tell you, your children will grow up to respect.

I used to tell them, don't ever gang up with students who are, you know, speaking evil about the teachers. No, get out of their company. Don't air your views there and get into a conflict with them.

Just pull out of their company and go somewhere else. And I'm very thankful for these little instructions that God enabled me to give them. Bring them up in the discipline.

The other is the instruction of the Lord. I was very keen that before my children left home, they should have read through the Bible. I gave them a living Bible, easier to read.

Or even if they don't understand it all, they don't understand it all. But I knew that my children will leave home by the time they're 18 to go to college, like it would be with many of your children. And before that, they must be born again.

They must be baptized and they must have some understanding of the page. It's the fundamental teaching. They should have at least read through the New Testament and they must know the teachings in the church.

So it's not enough to leave it to the Sunday school to do it. It's the parent's responsibility to bring up the children in the ways of the Lord. So that is the responsibility of fathers, discipline and instruction.

And here is a promise. Many promises in the Bible have got a condition attached to it. And the condition is, for example, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Promise all your earthly needs will be added to you. And we should be living testimonies to that at the end of our life. I longed, you know, when I left the Navy, people and my fellow officers in the Navy thought I

was crazy to leave such a good job to go out into an unknown future.

And one of the things we decided in our churches was none of us would receive a salary. We would all work like the Apostle Paul, earning our own living and supporting ourselves and never taking a salary from any church. And that's how I've lived for 47 years.

And that's how all my fellow 150 elders in all our 100 churches have lived. They don't take a salary from anyone. They work, support themselves and lead the churches because that's how Paul taught us.

And that's we never send reports of our work. None of you ever got ever got a report from us about our work in India. And even if you go to the CFC India website, which is the Bangalore website, you'll think that is the only one church in India because we don't advertise there where all our other churches are.

We do not advertise our work. We do not beg for money. We do not.

In fact, if you go to our financial policy website, you'll get some amazing revelations there. In fact, we discourage people from giving. If you're not born again, if you're not settled matters with others, Jesus said, go and ask forgiveness and then come and bring your offering.

We emphasize all that. If you're not forgiven others, please don't put money in the offering box. God won't accept it.

And if you have personal needs, please take care of your family needs. God is a millionaire, billionaire father. He doesn't want his poor children to starve by giving money for his work.

So we put things like that and then say at the end of it all, if you still feel you want to give, give with a cheerful heart. Otherwise, don't give. And there's no percentage.

And give us unto God. God, our father is God. We have no lack.

That is what we proclaim on our church website. But our children must grow up with these values. And what will happen? Here is the condition.

Proverbs 22, verse 6. Proverbs 22, 6. Train up a child. That is the commandment. In the way you want him to go or the way he should go.

Which you hear in the church. That's your responsibility. Parents, train up a child in the way he should go.

And when he or she is old, God's promise. He will not depart from it. Proverbs 22, 6. Condition with a promise.

Sometimes you see an advertisement in a magazine or on the internet. Here is a free offer. If you fulfill this condition, we offer you.

Come and take a free card to get something from Chick-fil-A or something like that. You fulfill that condition, you can be absolutely certain they'll mail you that card. You think God won't keep his promise? You train up a child in the way he should go.

God says, I'll make sure when he's old, he or she will not depart from it. They may go through a little up and down phase when they're in their early teens and early twenties. But by the time they come to about 30 years old, they are following the Lord.

Moses' mother did it single-handedly. Her husband was at work as a slave, six in the morning till nine at night. Single-handedly, she brought up his child.

Moses, just up to the age of eight or nine, sent him to Pharaoh's palace, the most wicked place on the face of the earth. And when he was 40 years old, he did not go astray from the way his mother taught him. Mother has a big responsibility because they're at home most of the time.

So take that promise from the Lord. And I believe God can fulfill it. And it is God's will that all our children become a testimony for the Lord.

And Paul wrote to Timothy, this is what he wrote in 2nd Timothy in chapter two. Think of a father saying this to his son. He says, 2nd Timothy chapter two, you, my son, Timothy, Paul treated him like a son.

You, my son, you first of all, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This is the father writing to his son. Whatever you heard from me, my son, entrust it to others.

That means teach your children, that is the grandchildren, what I taught you. And they will teach the next generation, the great-grandchildren. Amazing.

Paul had a concern for son, grandson, great-grandson. That's how we must bring up our children, to teach them to bring up their children well. And they must teach their children to bring up their children well.

That's how the word of God goes from generation to generation to generation. But what do we see, unfortunately? I've been in around Christendom in all denominations, most of them in India and in many countries. And I'm sad to say that the children of pastors and preachers are among the worst examples in these churches.

They just take advantage of the fact my dad's a leader and nobody's going to question us. It's terrible, the state of affairs. And according to 2nd 1 Timothy 3, such a guy is not fit to be a pastor, he's not fit to be a leader, he should resign.

I told the Lord that when I was preaching, I started preaching before I was married. And once we had children, I said, Lord, if one of my children goes astray, I have four sons, if one of them go astray, I will stop preaching. What do I have to preach? I had four children at home, I didn't bring them up properly.

What can I tell other people? I can only get up and say, brothers, pray for me, I've been a failure. Please pray for my children. That's all I can say, and sit down.

But very, very few Christians take that seriously. Their children are wayward, they grow up, marry ungodly women and men, and they think, okay, what to do? They're on their way to hell. And their lifestyle is leading other people to hell.

Well, the least you can do is fall on your face before God and say, Lord, have mercy on us, we've failed you. Can you at least say that to God? I've counseled people whose children are gone astray. And these, unfortunately, the parents came to the Lord at an age when the children had already gone astray.

They were grown up and left home. And I've told them, God always gives hope. I said, don't give up hope.

There's hope. If you promise one thing, do one thing that I ask you to do. Every day, you both of you, husband and wife, get rid of all your quarrels with each other, stop fighting with each other, and settle

things with God and with each other and live in peace with each other and kneel down and pray.

God will not listen to your prayer. If you don't live in peace with each other, don't even waste time praying. If you're fighting and quarreling, go and do something else.

But if you have settled matters and kneel down and pray five minutes a day, that's all I'm asking you. I said, you both of you, pray everything settled between both of you and pray specifically for each child by name, the one who's gone astray and say, Lord, acknowledge your fault. Lord, I'm sorry.

We failed you. We did not take these things seriously. We didn't hear about it, but we don't blame them.

We had the Bible with us. You know, whenever people say, we didn't hear that in our church, I say, can you read English? Do you have a Bible? Why are you blaming the pastor? You got a Bible at home, you didn't read it. Why in the world are you blaming somebody else? Did you get your children educated? Did you teach them ABC and multiplication and division? You taught them all that and you did not teach them the most important thing in life.

Fall before your face. Never mind. There's still hope.

Fall before your face, before God, five minutes every day and say, Lord, we have failed. Forgive us. We did not know.

And I give them a promise. And the promise for all those who have failed is Acts 17 and verse 30. It's my favorite verse for all those who made a mess of their life.

Because God, Jesus came for sinners. He did not come for the righteous. He did not come for those who live perfect lives.

Jesus came for those who made a mess of their life. Did you hear that? When he said, I have come to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous. I'm saying Jesus did not come to call the righteous.

He came to call sinners to repentance. The Pharisees, self-righteous people, he never went for them. Here is the promise in the last part of Acts 17, 30.

Sorry, the full verse, Acts 17, 30. God has now overlooked, ignored, forgiven the times of your ignorance. But now he's telling you to repent.

Can you do that? God says your times of ignorance I overlook. I forgive. I blot out.

Don't think about it. Don't waste your time mourning over it. You've confessed it to me.

I've forgiven. I've overlooked it. Now look towards the future and repent.

Repent means I turn around and try to do it better now. Not just say I'm sorry. Contact your children, I tell them.

Show them some love. Don't preach to them. Just love them.

Draw them to yourself. And through you, you can draw them slowly to Christ. If you pray for them, it's like I say throwing a, you know, out in Texas, I think they have lassos.

Put a lasso around and catch a cattle or something. I've only heard about it. And then they pull it in.

I say prayer is like a lasso you put around that guy's neck and he's got it. He'll run a little because there's a slack in the rope and they'll go for some time while you're praying. But one day they'll come to the end of it.

They can't go anymore. And then you just pull them in. And they'll come right in.

I say you take me at my word and tell me if it doesn't work. But you may have to pray for a few years before you see it. But God will answer your prayer.

He is overlooking the times of your ignorance. But he says now repent. But if you're too lazy to spend even five minutes a day in prayer for that, or if you're too stubborn to ask forgiveness from each other, then forget it.

Your children will go to hell and perhaps you may go there too. So you don't want that. See when we have family get togethers, I have four sons and 17 grandchildren.

So we parents and children, once a year we come together for a family get together like we did earlier this month. So 27 of us stand in a circle holding hands. And I say, okay, we're going to sing a song now.

Just two lines. Will the circle, this is a circle. Father, mother, children, grandchildren, husband, father, grandfather, grandmother.

This is a circle. It's an unbroken circle. All of us love each other.

All of us love the Lord. And I say there's a song which says will the circle be unbroken in the sweet by and by. There's a better home awaiting beyond the sky.

The meaning is one day when the Lord comes and when we meet up there, there should be no gaps in the circle. In this circle, all of us should still be holding hands up there in heaven. Every time we come together, we sing that.

Bring up your children. And if you have grandchildren, encourage them also in this way. Dear brothers and sisters, we are living in evil days.

The devil is working full time to attack the church. And in relation to the last days, you know what God says? Listen to this. The book of Malachi.

Malachi was the last prophet in Israel before John the Baptist. John the Baptist came in to assure the new covenant, preparing for it. And Malachi, God was fed up with Israel.

He was given up on Israel. And he's going to start with the church from Matthew onwards. But look at the last two words of Malachi which speaks of the final judgment.

One day I'm going to send Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord. That means someone is going to come with the spirit of Elijah the prophet in the last days. And I believe that is the church.

The New Testament church is the Elijah of the last days with a prophetic message and will come before the final judgment day of the Lord. And what will this Elijah do? What will this New Testament church do in preparation for the coming of the Lord? The last days, John the Baptist. John the Baptist came in the spirit

of Elijah for the first coming of the Lord.

The New Testament church is Elijah that's preparing people for the second coming of the Lord. That's you and me. What are we supposed to do? We are to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children in these days.

That's what I'm trying to do. Turn the hearts of parents to their children, not children to their parents. No.

The parents are the ones who are to set an example. Turn the hearts of the parents because in the last days the devil is going to attack families. That's what the meaning of that verse is.

The devil is going to attack families and you got to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and then the hearts of the children will turn to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and smite the land with a curse. The last words of the Old Testament.

The last word of the Old Testament is curse. And the last warning in the Old Testament is to families and it has to begin with fathers. Take the responsibility.

As I said, even if you've made mistakes in the past, there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. If you read that verse in Psalm 130, there is forgiveness with God that we may fear him. So let's accept that forgiveness.

So bringing up children is very very important and I would say one of the main things like everything we read in the New Testament. You remember Jesus said, follow me. He didn't say listen to me.

He did say that but the word that came most frequently from his lips were follow me. More than believe in me, follow me. And Paul the apostle dared to take up those words and said in 1 Corinthians in chapter 11 and verse 1, be followers of me as I follow Christ.

There are only two people in the entire Bible who said follow me. Not Moses, not Elijah, not even John the Baptist. Jesus, first of all, not just believe in me, follow me.

And the second was the apostle Paul. Follow me as I follow Christ. Is it right for a servant of God to say follow me as I follow Christ? Absolutely.

I believe that's my calling. Follow me as I follow Christ. We should be able to say that.

Come and examine my bank account books and examine, come any day, surprise me by a visit in my home and come and live with me one or two days and see how I live or anytime, surprise me anywhere, anytime. Follow me as I follow Christ. I'm not perfect but I'm seeking to follow Christ.

That's what all of us should be able to say. Follow me as I follow Christ. It's like climbing a mountain.

Mount Everest is 30,000 feet approximately. Jesus has already reached the top. He's finished the race.

He was tempted like us. Every step he overcame temptation and reached the top. He finished his course and in the snow we see his footsteps in the snow and Paul looks at those footsteps and puts his feet in those footsteps to follow Christ.

I mean he's way below maybe a thousand feet or something. It's 30,000 feet. He's got a long way to go.

He says I'm not perfect. I'm pressing on but I forget what ground I've covered. I'm pressing on towards perfection.

That's what he said and now we are still further down. Paul is at a thousand feet. Maybe some of us are at a hundred feet or 200 feet but we see Paul's footsteps in the snow as well.

So that's what I mean by I follow Paul as he followed Christ and my footsteps are there in the snow. I must tell people behind me follow me as I'm following Paul and Christ. It's a perfectly scriptural advice to give to others if you are seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

That should be what parents say. Most parents are saying hey listen son don't follow me. Follow what the bible says.

No wonder they go astray. We are to lead by example and if you are not leading by example then woe unto you because your hands the blood of your children is in your hands. It's worse than murdering them sending them to hell.

I'll tell you this it is worse than murdering your children to raise children and to send them to hell. Terrible and what a lot of children of believing parents have gone to hell and in hell like that rich man crying out for a drop of water they say dad why in the world didn't you show us these things and teach us how important they were. Mom you were with us every day at home why didn't you tell us you yourself found your way to heaven and you left us to go to hell.

Don't let that ever be said of any of our children. Spend five minutes a day if your children are going astray and live at peace with your husband and wife as husband and wife. You know when once a young couple just got married I didn't know who they were but a lot of people know me in India they just got married and came to my door when they just knocked there and said brother Zach we just got married yesterday we're catching a train in a few minutes can you give us some quick advice for marriage.

I said sure be quick to ask forgiveness from each other and be quick to forgive one another to all your life okay go catch your train you'll be all right. Be quick to ask forgiveness and be quick to forgive. You'll need that for the next 50 years.

Each other don't wait till the end of the day like I often say don't wait till the end of the day to pull out a thorn from your foot or a speck from your eye even if you're doing the most important work if there's a speck in your eye you will leave that work and go and wash it off. If there's a thorn in your foot you'll pull it out. No work is more important than pulling out that thorn from your foot you know it'll get infected.

What about asking forgiveness from your wife or husband because you accidentally hopefully accidentally sometimes deliberately spoke a rude word. We slip up like it says turn to the book of James says in James chapter 3 verse 2 we all stumble in many ways James includes himself we all stumble in many ways but if a man does not stumble in what he speaks he's a perfect man. I told you in our church the pulpit we have a word saying let us press on to perfection and the area where we need to press on to perfection as husband and wife primarily is our speech.

It is speech that brought a distance between Adam and Eve. Disobedience to God brought a distance between them and God but then when Adam pointed to his wife and told God she's the one who made me sin it brought a distance between them. So easy to blame one another if we are careful with our tongue that's amazing he's a perfect man.

Have you seen this verse in the book of Proverbs there are many wonderful verses here's a verse that tells us how Adam lost the garden of Eden how you can restore the garden of Eden in your home. Have you heard of that? Have you ever heard a message on how to bring the garden of Eden into your home again? The central thing in the garden of Eden was the tree of life and here it says in Proverbs chapter 15 and verse 4 a soothing tongue or a healing tongue is a tree of life. The tree of life the garden of Eden right there in your home a healing tongue a tongue that's words that bring healing is the tree of life today.

That's why it begins in the first verse with saying a gentle answer turns away anger. After you hear the message in the church that we must overcome anger one day your wife is terribly angry with you and you keep your mouth shut you're not an overcomer. You're probably saying like the pharisee Lord I thank you that I'm not like my wife I thank you that I did not lose my temper and your wife half an hour later goes before God and says Lord I'm sorry and like the publican she goes justified whereas you with yourself righteous I thank you that I'm not like my wife.

I learned in CFC to control my tongue. You are the pharisee so don't think by controlling your tongue and keeping quiet you become spiritual. You know what is more difficult than controlling your tongue? To give a gentle reply.

Try that next time when your wife is really upset controlling your tongue is easy little determination little yoga and you control your tongue but to give a gentle answer use the word darling or some affectionate word read the song of Solomon a lot of tips there how to talk to your wife or husband. I mean it I preached on it to married couples to read the song of Solomon read it to each other sometimes you do the husband does the bride groom's part and the wife does the bride's part I'll tell you you will be excited when you read it to each other you can fall in love with each other all over again a gentle answer is more difficult than to keep quiet it says a gentle answer turns away wrong so there is where we can be an example to our children they see us all the bible instruction you give them is not what stays in their mind they saw how daddy and mommy behaved in the home and they saw whether their home was a heaven or a hell and you know I've seen with children they learn things very quickly in the matter of discipline for example when should we start teaching children discipline even not physical discipline with words I tried to figure out in the last 50 60 years of ministry when does a child understand the word no and I've discovered when it's one year old is the first word in English he learns because I've seen it I saw a little child one year old in a house going up to climb the staircase the father knew the child will fall and from behind from about 10 feet behind the child is facing the other way he said no one word that's all the child stopped he didn't climb the next day I saw the child going near the staircase and looking around to see if anybody was watching it has a terrific memory for the word no I learned something about child psychology that day children understand the word no even at the age one I'm not telling stories it's the absolute truth which I saw with my own eyes and when I saw it years ago I saw oh boy children understand the word no at the age one and not if it is said oh darling don't do that not like that no must be spoken firmly then only they understand it those are two different languages no darling they won't understand anything but if you say no they get it so we have to be firm so we want our children to grow up in the right way and so parents must be an example in that our children must say well yeah we saw daddy and mommy a bit upset with each other but then we saw them asking forgiveness boy can you imagine the effect that it'll have on your children when they see daddy apologizing to mommy in a world which says dad is the boss they'll never forget it all their life it may turn them to the lord say boy there's something real about the religion of dad and mom because it's not her seen in the world the world says stand on your rights never apologize even if you do it do it in a sort of a roundabout way where it doesn't mean anything immediate apology that's what I always recommend to

married couples in our church don't wait don't wait till the end of the day end of the day is for half-hearted backslidden Christians you know it says in Ephesians 4 Ephesians 4 there are two types of Christians here read carefully Ephesians 4 one is for the half-hearted Christian verse 26 the half-hearted one be angry but don't sin don't let the sun set on your anger that means before you go to bed please ask forgiveness set it right the sunset was the time people went to bed in those days when there was no electricity so before going to bed ask forgiveness but for the whole-hearted believer for the whole-hearted one it's verse 31 let all anger be put away from you immediately so you can either live in verse 26 and get oh I've got permission till sunset uh-huh you classify yourself among the half-hearted sure why not join the whole hearted in verse 31 and put it away immediately and be kind to one another and forgive each other how should we forgive verse 32 just as God forgave you and then this wonderful word in chapter 5 verse 1 again ignore the chapter divisions as I always teach be imitators of God in what in forgiveness see the context just as God forgive you forgive each other be an imitator of God beloved children what a wonderful thing to imitate God in this one quality he has you know I've sometimes pictured what God what is God doing in heaven huh all the time 24 hours a day I'll tell you what listen from some corner of the earth somebody says Lord please forgive me forgiven by the time another fellow from another Lord please forgive me forgiven somebody from there Lord forgive me forgiven all the time in 60 seconds he's already forgiven about a 500 people forgiven forgiven forgiven forgive I see because so many people are asking for forgiveness Christians and others crying out to God and I say Lord this is how you are day and night without any rest forgiven forgiven forgiven forgiven through the Holy Spirit I say Lord make me like you make me like you not only to my wife or to your husband but to the brothers in our church to the sisters in our church we're all fallen people we make mistakes we all make mistakes be merciful forgive forgive forgive you can be like God in this area you can be an imitator of God you know by the way this is the only place in the whole Bible where we are told to be imitator of God we're told many times to imitate Christ be imitator of God the who who only one place in forgiving others I've been majoring on this subject for the last six months the Lord's burdened me I seek to understand the burden of the Lord whenever I speak and over the last six months as I've spoken to thousands of my own fellow believers through zoom in India and other countries I've been emphasizing forgiveness and I've been wondering because I've taught it occasionally in the past but not with such consistency almost in every message in the last six months as you've heard me even now in the last two days and I say Lord does that mean that your coming is near and that's why you're burdening me to get your people ready in this one area which is fundamental to them meeting with you in the final day dear brothers and sisters we are all fallen creatures forgive one another be merciful to one another may God bless you all and may you have wonderful families families that glorify Christ like a light shining in the darkness may our homes be like that then our churches will consist of homes like that and each of us has a responsibility may God help us let us pray heavenly father we pray that you will give us grace to remember all that we have heard and to follow you the footsteps of Jesus who freely forgave even when they nailed him to the cross father help us to be like that because very often when people hurt us they don't know what they're doing they are ignorant they're foolish so we know we can legitimately pray like Jesus said father forgive them for they do not know what they're doing help us to follow in Jesus footsteps here in our homes that we can be examples to our children and give us godly families in all the places represented here in this room today we pray in Jesus name amen we're going to have a few minutes of praying for some children now this is not a it's not a command in the bible that you have to pray for children so it doesn't matter if you didn't pray for your children you can dedicate your children at home perfectly in order but we practice it in our churches because of a number of reasons as I said not a command but a good practice which you need not follow if you don't feel like it and you'll not disobey any command if you don't do it but we see in luke chapter 2 that Jesus was dedicated in the

temple Mary brought Jesus Mary and Joseph brought Jesus and and we felt it is a good thing because it says in the psalms children are a gift of the lord you seen that verse and turn to the psalms psalm 127 verse 3 psalm 127 verse 3 children are a gift of the lord you believe that not a reward it says there a fruit of a womb is a reward also but a gift what do you do when somebody gives you a gift any decent person will say thank you thank you very much what if it's a million dollars oh wow thank you brother what if it's a child worth more than a million it all depends on how you value your child come to the lord and say thank you you know there are many barren mothers all over the world but i say you are not barren you got a child be thankful it's a gift from the lord say thank you and pray that god will give you wisdom dedicate that child to the lord and say lord i want this to grow up for you like hannah dedicated samuel say i want this samuel to live for you and samuel grew up to be a prophet you never know what will happen when you dedicate your child to the lord timothy's mother dedicated him to the lord and he grew up to be such an excellent apostle like paul finally so it's wonderful when we do that and it says here further that our children must be like arrows in the hand of a warrior you know over a period of time you sharpen those arrows so one day the lord can take your son or your daughter and fire that arrow at the devil and destroy the devil's word your son your daughter must be like arrows from the youth you have to shape them sharpen them so that one day in the lord's hand they can be fired at the devil not at other human beings

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