

# Married Life and Raising Children

by Zac Poonen

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*A good family life is essential for effective ministry and is a key indicator of a person's character.*

**Duration:** 1:00:32

**Scripture:** Proverbs 22:6, John 8:7, 1 Corinthians 11:14, 1 Timothy 3:2-5, Revelation 3:19

**Topics:** "Family Life", "Church Ministry"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of family life in the church ministry under the New Covenant, contrasting it with the Old Covenant. It highlights the need for good testimonies at home, the role of elders and servants in the church, the significance of personal walks with God, family life, and church ministry. The speaker stresses the balance between discipline and mercy, following the spirit rather than the letter of the law, and prioritizing God's approval over people's opinions.

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## Transcript

I want to emphasize what we have often referred to in the church, that our ministry in the church is dependent on our life at home. Now it was not like that in the old covenant. In the old covenant, husband-wife relationship was totally unimportant.

There was emphasis on bringing up your children in good ways, teaching them the word of God when you're lying down, when you're walking on the road, and when you sit up, etc., in Deuteronomy. But there's very little about husband-wife relationship in the Old Testament, except in the Song of Solomon. And the great men of God in the Old Testament, either they were unmarried, like Jeremiah, or they were, we don't know very much about their family life, like Ezekiel, or they were, like David who had eight wives, and Moses who did not marry an Israelite, and the only thing we read about him and his wife is they had a fight over their son being circumcised, and his wife did not allow his son to be circumcised, but that did not affect his ministry.

We never read about, after that, about Moses and his wife, but still he was perhaps the greatest leader of Israel there. So the ones whom Israel today considers their great leaders, like Moses and David, they had a pretty messy home life. But when it comes to the New Covenant, we're told that a man cannot be an elder if he doesn't have a good testimony at home, a good testimony in the neighborhood, he's brought up his children well.

All those things are mentioned in the New Testament. It's a very high standard when you look at it. And since it is my desire that all of you have a ministry in the church, you know, some type of ministry, even if you don't have a lot of public speaking, you have some type of ministry in the church, the principle still applies as we read in 1 Timothy chapter 3. Of course, it's referring to an elder, but the principle applies to all public ministry.

An elder must be, 1 Timothy 3.2, must be above reproach. That means he must have a good testimony in the neighborhood, in the locality. There must be no reproach in relation to his particularly financial dealings and relationships with the opposite sex.

And that he must be a peaceful sort of person, not one who is known in the neighborhood to kick up fights and quarrels. And he must be the husband of one wife, meaning he must not be a divorced person to be an elder. He must be temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, and able to teach, not addicted to wine or quarrelsome, but gentle, peaceable, and free from the love of money.

You read through that, you see the qualifications to be an elder. Able to teach is just one thing out of many things. In other words, it must be a life that backs up his teaching.

And he must be one who can manage his own family well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. Because it says, if a man cannot manage his own family, how will he take care of the church of God? Because the church of God is a bigger family. So if a man cannot manage his own family, how will he build the church? That's why I've often said that the ground floor, the first story of a church is our personal walk with God, with a good conscience.

On top of that, the second story is our family life, and the third story is our church ministry. So the church ministry can only be built on a personal walk with God and our family life. Whereas in the old covenant, that second story was non-existent.

It was just two stories. Your personal walk with God and your ministry, that's all. And in some cases, even personal walk with God was not there, like with Samson, just ministry.

So old covenant, you know, you cannot look at those men as examples of new covenant servants. All of us are called to serve the church as new covenant servants, and you're young now, but you must grow up quickly. Like I've said before, I was only 35 when we started the church here, and Ian was 34, 34 1/2, 35 1/2, and we were the elders.

So many of you are going to get to that age pretty quickly if you're not already there, and you should be mature enough, even if you're not called to preach, to take responsibility. It's one of the sad things I see in a number of churches that where you have really good leadership, the others tend to be sluggish and don't come forward to share some responsibility where they can grow up one day to be elders in the church. It's not that we covet that, but there is a need in the church for strong leadership, and that's why it's very important that our family life is good.

In the same way, even if you're a servant in the church, you're not an elder. An elder is those who have spiritual responsibilities, and it speaks in verse 8 about deacons. Deacons are those who are... The deacon is just another word brought in from the Greek.

It's not an English word. You go into the world and talk about a deacon, they won't even know what you're talking about. Deacon is a Greek word.

It's exactly a Greek word which means servant. So I translate it as servants. The servants can be men or women, and they have the other ministries.

Like many ministries we have in CFC, like a web team or treasurer or taking care of conferences or organizing food and so many ministries which are not the spiritual leadership of the church are called servants. And there can be men, there can be women taking Sunday school classes for the children. They also must be people of dignity, you know, and not double-tongued, etc.

They must also be without reproach. And there must be women servants also, verse 11, who must be dignified and not gossips. There also, verse 12, their married life must be good.

One wife, they cannot be divorced. Good managers of their children and their families, etc. Now when you come to Titus, where Paul says, I want you to appoint elders in the church in Crete.

He says, I left you in Crete, Titus chapter 1, verse 5, so that you can appoint elders in every city as I directed you. And again he says, first thing, an elder must be above reproach, husband of one wife, not divorced, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. He doesn't say that the children must be preachers, but they must believe.

Because, you know, our children know us better than anybody in the church. The people who know you best are your children and the servants who work in your house. And the testimony of your servants and your children, let me tell you, is far more important than what anybody in the church thinks of you, even what the elders think of you.

Because they see you every day, many hours a day. And they see you when you are not singing, not praying, not preaching, when you are living. So, if they see you, and if they see Christ in you, they will be drawn in some way, even servants, and our children will be drawn.

I felt like that about anybody who worked in our house, whether as a servant, I never called them servants, helpers, or our children, that if they did not see Christ in me and my wife, there's something wrong. What did they see then? Did they see us? I'm not saying perfection. I made many mistakes in bringing up my children.

I've often punished them in anger. And I would always, almost immediately, after punishing them, rush off to the bathroom, lock the door, and really repent and weep before God. Over a period of time, my children discovered what I was doing.

I didn't feel that they were old enough to understand an apology from me. Because if every time I punished them in anger, I apologized for my anger, it would become a joke to them that they would think that I was apologizing for disciplining them, which I was not. But they wouldn't know the difference.

So, I gave them one consolidated apology when they were 18 years old, when they were leaving home, for all the years when I punished them in anger. They were old enough then to understand the difference between anger and discipline. But I really felt bad about it because I knew the anger was wrong, the discipline was right.

And because I repented and wept before God, it became better. And that applies to not only discipline, but any other area where you fail as a father or a mother or a husband or a wife. If you are quick to repent, there is great hope for you.

I want to tell you that. None of us come to perfection like that. We press on to perfection.

See, one of the accusations people make against CFC is you guys think you are perfect and the rest of Christendom is not. I said, just come to our church building and see what's written on our pulpit. It's written we must press on to perfection.

That is the clearest testimony on our pulpit that we are not perfect. I said, it's you guys who don't preach press on to perfection who think you are perfect. Do you ever preach on pressing on to perfection? No.

Oh, you must be thinking you are perfect. We are preaching all the time on pressing on to perfection. We are the guys who think we are imperfect.

So, it's a misunderstanding. It's because of the casual, careless way in which Christendom reads the Bible. And that's why there is so much of shallow family life.

You find elders, pastors, their wives separate from them and divorce them and all types of things. Famous pastors and preachers. Because that's not emphasized.

It's not important. The main thing is how do you preach and how many people come to listen to you. To me, that's all garbage.

And these are the people about whom Jesus will one day say, when we cast out demons, we preached, we had such mega churches. He said, I never knew you. Get away from me.

Remember this. I believe we are really going to see it. And if you are not, I won't be surprised when I see some of these, today's famous pastors in India and other countries, great preachers, the Lord telling them in that day, get away from me, go to hell.

I will not be surprised. Some of you may be. Some of you may be listening to some of these television preachers, men and women, and not valuing life over ministry.

Yeah, so be careful. Because we live in an age where ministry and preaching and gifts are valued much above life and family life. And this is started in the West and is crept over to all westernized churches in the East and gradually to non-westernized churches also, where family life is unimportant and hardly ever spoken of because usually the pastor doesn't have a good family life.

And there are pastors who write books on family life who end up divorcing their wife or living separately. So there's all type of confusion in the day in which we live. And that's why in our church, we emphasize family life such a lot.

It's not something new. We emphasized it 37 years ago and we have continuously emphasized it all these years, saying it's very important how you live with your wife and how you bring up your children. Because everyone must have a ministry in the church, either you're not an elder, at least there's some type of servant, some type of service in the church, which every one of us can do.

And for that we must have a good family life that backs us up. So don't find a satisfaction that others in the church think you're okay. It means nothing.

Throw that in the trash can, their opinion. And the other thing I want to say to those who are serious about following the Lord, don't ever get discouraged because you find yourself repeatedly falling. Whether it's in

anger, to overcome anger is a... I think for some people it is much more difficult than for others.

It's a serious problem for some people, just like discouragement is a very serious problem for some people but not so much for others. I had a problem with both, I'll tell you that, anger and discouragement, both in my personal life and in my family life. I mean, even when I was riding a scooter on the roads, I had a problem with anger and I had to battle it.

But I never excused myself. That was my salvation. I never said, oh, that's okay.

I want to tell you this, if any of you get angry and you say that's okay, you're doomed. I'll tell you right now, you're doomed, you'll never get victory in your life because you said it's okay, it's not okay. Every time I lost my temper, I would say it's not okay.

Every time I got discouraged, I said that's not okay. It's not right, I haven't got there, but because I kept saying this is not okay, this is not the way I should be living, I got there. And I believe God has delivered me from Jesus keeps me now from getting discouraged and getting angry.

I used to say in a more immature way once that I got victory over anger and discouragement. But the Lord corrected me and said don't say it like that. Say Jesus keeps me from getting angry.

Jesus keeps me from getting discouraged. Same thing, but a completely different smell about it. Completely different tone when you say it that way and that is the truth because I remember certain situations where I could have very easily been discouraged or angry or fallen into some sin and I can absolutely certainly say that it was the Lord who kept me.

Otherwise I would have fallen. So if you ever get victory in any area, be sure to give the credit to God and to say the Lord keeps you. But this is very important and you know there is another thing mentioned here about not, you know in all these places we see in Titus 1 verse 7 also, not fond of sordid gain.

That means not eager to make money, not money hungry. That's how it says in the Message Bible. Money hungry.

Are you money hungry? You know always hungry for more and more. If you are without a job or you are not earning enough to meet your family's needs then to eagerly look for sources of income maybe even more than one source of income is perfectly right. That's like a unmarried man looking for a wife.

He looks at this girl that girl he is always looking at to find out is this one suitable for me? That one suitable for me? Like that to look for money and job to support yourself is absolutely right. But if you are already earning far more than what you need for your family income and you are still seeking for more then I will tell you what you are like. You are a married man who is still looking around for other women.

Are you like that? You are a married man you already got a wife but you are still looking around for other women. It's exactly the same when you earn far more than enough for your earthly needs and you are still looking around for more and more and more. Because what happens is there is nothing wrong in earning more money but it can sap your usefulness to God because you got to spend time for that.

So I say it's perfectly right for a single man, single woman to look for a marriage partner and it's perfectly right for a person without a job or who is not earning enough to support a family to look for any more sources of income. There is nothing wrong in getting a better job I always tell people when you apply for

jobs go for the one that gives you the highest salary. If you don't have to sacrifice your soul and your family life look for a good salary, there is nothing wrong in that.

Like I always encourage parents to give their children the best education possible let them go as far as possible in education but we have to make sure we are not money hungry and I will tell you why because that affects your family life. The first two problems in family life is one in-laws and the other is money. These are the two areas where maximum conflict arises in a family and that's why we have to be very careful in these areas that we have a scriptural position in relation to our in-laws.

Sometimes it's a very complicated situation in relation to in-laws where you know there may be some who are dependent and who need help and then of course we must help them. I remember one man asking me, one brother many years ago in our church asked me my parents are poor they have done a lot to educate me and bring me up and now they are in need but when I try to help them, my wife says no, we can't give them money. So what should I do? I said obey the word of God which says your left hand should not know what your right hand is doing.

So just give them some money without your wife knowing about it. It's perfectly right because it is right for you to help your parents and you know it's a little more difficult to answer a question when a wife's parents are needy and she is not earning anything. I wouldn't make a rule on that but if you can you can help them too.

Peter was a good man, he had his mother-in-law staying in his house we know that from Matthew chapter 8 and he was concerned when she was sick that he told Jesus about it and Jesus came and healed her. See in all these things there is no law there is no law which says you must keep your mother-in-law in your house or you must not keep your mother-in-law in your house. There is no law in all these things and why doesn't the Bible lay down rules? It just says emotionally we must be detached from our parents and if your wife knows that you are really one with her that every decision you will take with her and you are one with her I believe the average wife would be considerate towards helping your in-laws financially or even taking care of them if they are in physical need and you will never regret that.

Of course there are some very evil women who want to be completely free of their husband's parents but you will see that they will suffer in the long run. Have you heard that story? I mentioned it once a man who had his old widowed father staying with him and his wife just was a very I would say an evil woman and she didn't really want to care for the husband's father and you know how that can be a big struggle and she finally told him listen, you are going to have either him or you are going to have me. There are many wives who have spoken like that and the husband is torn between a father who cared for him when he was a baby and brought him up or it could be a mother and a wife whom he has to be united with and it's a very difficult decision.

So they live near a forest and the wife suggested why don't you put your father in this wheelbarrow and push it out in the middle of the forest and leave him there. Let him die. He is old in any case.

He is not going to live another year or two. So he finally had to do it and he put his father in a wheelbarrow and said I want to take you for a walk. He was an old helpless man and his little son his eight year old son said dad where are you going? He said we are just going for a walk with grandpa.

He said I want to come with you. So they walked together into the forest and then the son saw the father leaving his father there, old grandfather there in the middle of the forest and walking back. Then the son

understood what was happening and so he said dad don't leave the wheelbarrow there.

Bring that back because when you are old I will need it to take you also into the forest to leave you there also like this. It takes a little boy sometimes to put sense into a selfish man or woman. So honor your father and mother if it will go well with you.

I will tell you that. Learn to honor your father and mother and learn to honor your husband's father and mother. It will go well with you and your children will see it and they will respect you.

I am not preaching what I have not practiced and I would suggest that you hear that. So in-laws is a big source of problem and sometimes there is no definite answer because a wife can be very stubborn. And it's selfishness basically.

It's not understanding that Christianity is meant to be a life of self-denial and sacrifice. And what is it that such wives don't like? The self-denial, the sacrifice. That's what they don't like and that's why they never become godly.

They can live comfortable lives without any they can run their own life, go where they like, go when they like. Their program is not disturbed by an old sick mother-in-law or father-in-law in the house. But watch such wives.

They never develop spiritually. I have seen it in every single case. And I have also seen those who have sacrificially and in a self-denying way denied themselves time, money, energy to serve.

And I have seen the result in such people. So, don't think Christianity is a life of ease. And if god has decided that your father-in-law or mother-in-law should live long and you should look after them, you can be sure he will not allow you to be tested beyond your ability.

And he will know exactly when to take them home or take them away or somebody else to care for them. It's a test of your faith in god. And very few people have faith in god.

I tell you a lot of people in CFC who seem to understand the doctrine so well and who think they are very very spiritual, who imagine themselves. They are not. Don't follow their example.

So, I am not here to make rules on what you should do. All I say is do not think that the best Christian life is one where your convenience is never disturbed. No.

I have seen parents who got retarded, mentally retarded children, saintly mothers. And I have seen other mothers who are proud of their, you know, smart children. They may not be so spiritual.

I am not saying you can't be spiritual if you have smart children. It's a question of attitude. And if you God has to allow for our sanctification, God has to allow some type of self-denial in our life somewhere.

Otherwise we'll never grow spiritually. Those of you who have a very comfortable life and nothing to disturb it, you have no difficult in-laws, plenty of money, nice house and drive along on Sunday morning in your nice car to a church and attend worship, sing the songs and listen to the message, come home. You can imagine that you are highly spiritual.

I want to tell you, you may not be, even if you are in CFC. It's those who have gone through trial, particularly through years of self-denial and sacrifice for the Lord's sake who are spiritual. Some of you

may feel sorry for some of those other wives who have to deny themselves so much with difficult in-laws or difficult children perhaps.

But in the long run you'll find when our true glory shines forth through us in eternity, you'll find that those are the ones who are really godly. And those of you who escaped that path and chose the easy path, you missed the glory that you could have had, that God gave you an opportunity to have, but when you came to that fork in the road you chose the easy path. I remember reading a poetry, it's a secular poetry which says two roads diverged in the wood and I chose the road less traveled.

That means there was grass on that path. The other path was well trodden and I chose the road less traveled and that has made all the difference in my life. I can believe that.

Very often, my brothers and sisters, you will find in family life you come to a place where there's a choice you have to make to go the way of self-denial and sacrifice or the way of ease and comfort where your convenience is never disturbed by any other human being or by any other requirements where you can run your own life and it's not the path that will make you spiritual. You will imagine yourself spiritual but you will never acquire those values of true Christian values that come through suffering and self-denial. God has ordained that path for his children and some of the greatest saints in the world have gone through very serious areas of sacrifice and self-denial.

You may not know all about it because a godly man and woman will never reveal the areas where they had to deny themselves or sacrifice. They'll keep quiet about it mostly but wherever you see a saintly man or a saintly woman you can be absolutely sure 100% that there are areas in their life which you know nothing about which made that man or that woman what they are today and you can admire them and say I wish I could be like them but then you have to make the same choices that they made in different areas in their life which you know nothing about and such opportunities will come to you also in difficult situations and God doesn't force you to choose that road less travelled the road of self-denial. You can choose the easy path which is a well-trodden path which most Christians walk on but you'll never come to the fulfillment of character and ministry that God wants you to have in the church.

So if some of you are going through difficult situations in relation to your children or in-laws, you know some have problems with children who are sick or frequent sickness or mental sickness is a terrible thing, it's a lifelong thing and people who have such things don't feel sorry for them they may be far ahead of you in God's eyes and I admire such people if they can take it in a good way of course there are some who have such problems who go through it but who go through it with grumbling and complaining right from day one till the end they get nothing out of it they have wasted it well they get some credit for going through it but they would have got far more credit if they had said Lord I believe that you will never allow me to be tested beyond my ability and here is an area where my husband and I are one and I want to be sympathetic to his struggle with his parents and I want to help where I can and I believe that God will honor you for it and so sometimes God tests us like that, you know there are verses in the Proverbs which says don't despise your mother when she is old or your father I told you in-laws and the other problem is with money if you are married to a very covetous, greedy wife that can be a real problem you know where she is always wanting new clothes even though you have piles of them hanging in your cupboard, why do you want so many new clothes, isn't it just to impress people that you are not just the same person that you are pretty well off no, I thank God for the days when, I mean even when I was in the Navy I used to discipline myself very severely in my expenditure, I earned a very good salary way back in 1965 and but I was single and I didn't have much expense and I would hardly ever buy any new clothes for myself I had

very few shirts and pants, very few just about two or three perhaps even though I was a naval officer and I would wear them and if they got torn I would I remember wearing pants which were stitched in the knees where I fell off a scooter or something I would wear that, I was ok I didn't care what people thought about me, I was neatly dressed, I didn't feel I had to follow the latest fashions I didn't need more than one or two pairs of shoes and I had all that spare money with which I could help poor people and give for God's work and buy Bibles for those who could not afford to buy Bibles and buy Christian books and give it to people.

I did that for all those years and well I believe that God has rewarded me far more than I can ever think, I mean you can never give to God and come short He'll give you a hundred times back and I can say that and even in those early years when I out of necessity because my income had dropped 85% when I left the Navy and quit my job to serve the Lord and the devil would constantly harass me when I got married saying what a fool you were to leave your job now you're struggling, you don't have enough money and I refused to use my gift to make money I said all the great preachers go to the cities Lord send me to the villages and so even in those days before my marriage I used to go to the villages to the poor villagers where hardly anybody went to preach to them this is in 67 and that's why

I married Annie who was wanting to work among lepers and I remember when we were married it was a very very sad and heavy thing for me that to my newly married wife I could not give her a home of her own that's not easy for a husband that I could not give a home to my newly married wife, not even a hut I just did not have enough money to pay house rent, not even for a small little house so what to do we had no alternative but to live in one little room 10 feet by 10 feet with our parents for 2-3 years and we said fine if God has permitted that we'll accept it and it was not difficult for it was not easy for Annie but it was in the midst of those struggles when she was desperate and discouraged that God baptized her in the Holy Spirit and I believe she would not have come to that place of

need if I was a rich man and I had my own house and I could go around with her comfortably she would never have come to that place of need where she had to cry out to God for help and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit it's only when we are in need that we cry out to God and that's the reason why God allows us to come to a place of need it was the same with me years later when I came to such a desperate place of need in my own life that God filled me with the Holy Spirit it changed the direction of my life completely and I want to say to you my dear brothers and sisters what you need more than anything else is the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire and don't just sit back and imagine that you have it I hope you have the real thing and if you are baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire

do what I do seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit every single day seek for a renewal of that that will affect every area of your life pray together as husband and wife for the power of the Holy Spirit and you will not pray for that if you are not in desperate need if you are sort of satisfied and comfortable with what you have thinking that well I'm in a good church and everybody thinks highly of me and I've got some type of ministry there and everybody respects me and I'm okay well brother I feel sorry for you that's all I can say I pray that you will have some situation in your life that will drive you to need financial need or in our case it was financial need and I hope something will happen in your life that will drive you to need because it's when we are in need the Lord says in

Isaiah I will pour water upon him that is thirsty the poor and the needy will cry out to me and I will meet with them so that's so important and that's why God allows financial difficulties and He will test you to see whether you are extravagant in the way you spend on yourself and miserly in the way you give to God God saved me ever in my life from being extravagant on myself and miserly to God I never want to be like that

one single day of my life because God has never been miserly towards me He's always been extravagant towards me and I want to be extravagant towards Him I don't mean just in terms of giving money some of us may not have much money to give to God that's okay but extravagant in your willingness to deny yourself and sacrifice you know your comforts I remember reading the

testimony of a great servant of God called Charles Spurgeon who lived 160 years ago in England he was a great preacher he started preaching when he was about 15 years old and I think after he was 55 or something he became very sick and he had to be in bed most of the time he could not preach and when he was lying in bed and he couldn't preach after he had already been preaching for 40 years he said this he said I thank God that in the years God gave me health I served Him with all my heart so that now when I don't have health and I lie in bed I have no regrets.

I hope you'll be able to say that in the years when you had a lot of freedom and a lot of opportunity to be extravagant towards God you were extravagant and build your family that way your children will see it and that will affect them it's not just teaching them I remember one of my sons telling me he said dad it was not just preaching but you know when I got up in the morning from bed as a little boy and came through the sitting room I always saw you there every single morning with your bible and he said that formed an impression upon my mind which can never be erased it's not that I preached to them come on read the bible it's what they see I'm not saying that you all can do that you know you can do that artificially and it means nothing we are not doing things to impress our children

but what I'm trying to say is your children are far more influenced by what they see in you more than what you preach to them one of the questions is how can we get children to be interested in reading the scriptures well what I did was I got, I know that children all children are interested in comics and so I got a comic strip bible the whole bible, the bible in picture form, not a children's bible with a lot of written text and pictures but a bible is entirely in comic strip form from Genesis to Revelation and I got them because I knew they would read it and then we would discuss at the dining table I would ask them some questions that would drive them to go and read that book again and it was not heavy because it was a comic strip bible I recently got a copy of that for my

grandchildren, for each of my four sons families and I said this is what your grandchildren should read it and one of my grandchildren only seven years old has read through it already completely I was so thrilled to hear that it's called the action bible it's a pretty thick comic strip very very good for children we must encourage them to read and the way to encourage them is to ask them questions what does it say and after a while I found that they would ask me questions and would catch me sometimes in something which I did not know there are a number of facts in the bible which I learned, I'll tell you honestly I learned from my children which they discovered in that bible and told me and I'm very thankful for that type of interaction and then the principles that we learn in the bible

that we must teach our children whenever you get opportunity when you are sitting together as a family one of the things I wish I had done a lot more with my children, basically two things I used to sometimes take my children out on a date you know what a date means just take one on one I would take each of my children out just for one evening and just go father and son go out together you know we couldn't afford to go to any expensive restaurant we'd go to some place and just have an ice cream or something which was a luxury for us to afford those days and just for one on one and they looked forward to it I wish I had done that more and I would encourage you for the growing children to do that something that I still do is kneel down sometimes with my children put my arms around them even

though my children may be 40 years old never stop putting your arms around your children and if you keep doing that from childhood we do it when they are small, we hug them, kiss them and all that but once they grow up we don't even touch them you haven't come to that stage yet but you look at so many others they don't touch their grown up children I don't know why I still hug my children and kneel down, put your arm around them and it will be very easy for you if you keep doing it from childhood and they are 4 years old 5 years old, 6 years old, 7 years old 20, 30, 40 put your arm around them and pray with them that personal touch means such a lot fathers and mothers hug your children kiss them we must express affection you know that means such a lot to children to know that my dad and

mom love me they care for me, they know all the stupid things I've done and how naughty I've been but they still love me very much that's so important in our day to protect our children discipline this is very important because I'll tell you why it's important because our heavenly father disciplines us and he's our pattern and if you don't discipline your children, you don't love your children that's clear because Jesus says I don't know whether you know this verse in Revelation chapter 3 in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 19 those whom I love, the Lord says I reprove and I discipline so what does the Lord do to those whom he loves he rebukes them he disciplines them when I was a young Christian the only proof I had that Jesus loved me was that he died for me on the cross so if you had

asked me in those days how do you know Jesus loves you I'd say easy he died for me on the cross today if you ask me, I'm a mature Christian how do you know Jesus loves you I'd say boy he rebukes me he disciplines me and the more responsibility I have the more severely he rebukes me you ask me do you hear an audible voice no, but what I hear in my heart is almost as loud as an audible voice a rebuke I'll tell you there are times when the Lord has rebuked me for some small little thing that I have wept with joy wept with joy I often weep before the Lord when I'm alone mostly when I wake up in bed in the middle of the night or something like that that I don't disturb anybody and wept with joy that the Lord cares so much for me that he would you know punish me for a small slip up and I say

Lord please do that please keep on doing that I know many preachers who have done great ministries and fallen away and I'm not any better than them if you preserve me I will never fall away I want you to correct me, correct me, correct me I promise you I'll never get offended I have said that to God and to man I will never in my life get offended I have finished with getting offended that will never happen in my life there are certain areas I'm battling but getting offended is not one of them that's finished years ago I want all of you to overcome getting offended our children will get offended when we discipline them that's natural but we have to discipline them even when they don't understand it and I didn't do it for any small little thing the main reasons for which I punished my

children was disobedience or speaking disrespectfully to their parents, they very rarely spoke disrespectfully to me but I think they were a little more bold with their mother and if I ever heard that or heard about it, I would not allow them to do anything till they went and apologized, I say you're not doing a single thing till you apologize to your mother it's very important to make them even if their apology is half-hearted and just saying okay mom I'm sorry and you know they don't mean it it doesn't matter but you've got to get them to say it, they've got to humble themselves and you must be very firm on that, disrespect and disobedience not where they were ignorant many times they're ignorant, you know sometimes your child can come from school and use a bad word don't punish him for

that because he doesn't even know what it means, he may have learnt it from some boy in school he must assume that they don't know you to instruct them and correct them and guide them but telling lies that's

another thing I was very strict on there's a verse in Psalm 58 I think it says the children go astray from their womb, telling lies I think it's Psalm 58 verse 3 from birth they go astray telling lies, so if that's the case then I must correct them for this very serious thing habit that they've got in their nature of telling lies so take this matter of telling lies very seriously they know when they're telling a lie you can see it in their face you must correct them and I've told some of my children I don't care what wrong thing you did what you broke but don't tell me a lie, I won't

punish you for what you did wrong but don't try to bluff me, there are minor forms of discipline like go and lie down in your bed or you can't play cricket today you know my boys used to play cricket on the road outside our house you can't play cricket and I didn't because I used to try my best not to physically hurt them other forms of punishment are there is it right to threaten a child with punishment or something and then not punish him I think it's right, you can't change your mind because God also did that, he told the city of Nineveh, I'll destroy you in 40 days and then he didn't destroy them, so I see that there is an example in God for me to change my mind about punishing a person, to say I'll punish you and then not punish you because I see some change in that person that we are

happy with the change in the child and say okay I'll let you go so don't feel that oh I have to keep my word, don't be a legalist say I said I'll spank you so I'm going to spank you that's legalist we must be merciful and I always tell parents we must be strict with our children because they got an evil nature that will take them to hell but we must be merciful to them because they got that evil nature from you so you got to be merciful as well you can't blame them for that nature, they got it from you so we keep that balance between so that is just few simple guides on if you do it in love there'll never be a problem in this area those are some of the main things ultimately it's the Holy Spirit who guides us in these things like I said right at the beginning I want to emphasize as we

close that it's not by law that we run our home it's a terrible home that's run by laws and rules I mean children will get sick and tired of rules and laws but certain principles we must have not strict rules like in the Old Testament Jesus was very merciful let me give you one example in the Old Testament when Jesus was in heaven before he came to earth from heaven he gave a law to Moses that every woman who is caught in adultery must be stoned to death Jesus gave that law to Moses 1500 years later he comes to earth and he's confronted with that law by a Pharisee this woman was caught in adultery and they did not know that the person standing there Jesus was the one who gave that law from heaven 1500 years ago but Jesus knew that I am the one who gave this law to Moses now the Pharisees

are telling him to keep that law and of course he was right in saying he who is without sin cast the first stone so they all go away except for one man is left who is without sin and that's Jesus he's qualified to throw stones why didn't he keep the law which he gave why did he disobey a law which he himself commanded in the bible there we see Jesus was not a legalist who went by the letter he went by the spirit why was that law given in the Old Testament to restrain people from taking adultery lightly and there's a great need for such a law in the world today it's only the Muslims who seem to be following that that women who commit adultery should be stoned because the Christian world preachers, pastors, everybody takes adultery so lightly it's terrible, it's terrible when Muslims are

more afraid to do that, I mean I'm not recommending that but it's tragic when Christendom is sunk so low that grace is not able to keep a person above Sharia law, there's something wrong there and Jesus would not stone, I'm not saying Sharia law is right, I believe Jesus is right, he says he gave that law to restrain people from adultery but when he is actually confronted with a woman who was repentant he did what

God did in Nineveh I don't condemn you don't sin again I see there the heart of God he hasn't come here to stone people to death, and we are not here to discipline our children like that, we are merciful but we see repentance our heart changes and we don't follow the letter of the law but the spirit, and if our children can see that dad doesn't follow, that's one of the things I

wanted my children to see that I did not follow the letter of the law and I used to tell them some many times, I say I want you boys to know that I don't care what people in CFC think about the way I brought up my children, you know my children never got baptized till they were 17 years old, all of them, each of them I was not in a great eagerness like some parents are to get them baptized quickly so that I have a good testimony, oh brother Zach's children are all baptized, I couldn't care less for that, I know that when some of my children got baptized some of their friends took baptism as well because they felt, hey this guy's getting baptized, he's our friend we also should get baptized, it did not go too well with them, because they were getting baptized because their friends were

getting baptized I never wanted that, I said you must get baptized when you're convinced yourself I don't care if you get baptized when you're 25, I'm not asking you to get baptized for me to get a name in the church, I couldn't care less for that, many parents want their children to behave properly, behave well, but they want to get a name, oh my children always say thank you, good morning etc, etc, etc what are you doing it for, I hope you're doing it for the good of your children, that's ok, but if you're doing it to get a name for yourself you're raising a bunch of hypocrites at home I'll tell you that, don't do anything, teach them good manners, of course we must teach them, but not for a name for yourself the motive must be my children must grow up to be considerate, kind and good,

for themselves not because, I mean many times parents try to get a name out of their children for themselves, and God sees that, that's one thing I fought, I don't care, that's why I sometimes would allow my children to do you know, dress in certain ways which others didn't think was right at one time I allowed one of my children, his hair was long, and I said I have no problem with that, because I don't see any word in scripture which says it's a sin to have long hair it says in 1 Corinthians 11 that nature says a man, it's a shame for a man to have long hair, and I say it's not what God says, it's what nature says I'm not particularly concerned about nature if it says God says that, I would have obeyed that, but when he says nature says that in 1 Corinthians 11 that meant that it's not

customary in your area for people to wear it and you know at different times, for example in Jesus time, I think people in Israel probably had long hair, all the pictures of Jesus we see are with long hair and in the 17th century a lot of men had long hair, so those things are not serious to me, but sometimes you can be disturbed, what do people think if my son has long hair I'll tell you, I couldn't care less that's just one example I say, is the person living before God one day I asked him I said, son tell me, why are you having this long hair he said, I'll tell you the reason dad, because you asked me I have made, taken a vow before God I made a promise to God and I'm claiming something from God by faith and I kept this hair long to remind me to keep on claiming that and when that is

fulfilled, I'll cut off my hair, so every time I look in the mirror I'm reminded to claim that promise I said, boy here is a growing boy who's really having a desire in his own way to try and claim a promise from God, what a terrible thing it would have been if I told him, hey I'm losing my testimony because you've got long hair, I'm just giving you an example don't be bothered what people say, be more concerned what God thinks about your children what God thinks about your family than about what people say or think about your family, what people say throw it in the trash can, whether it's good or bad and live before God's face

and I believe all of you can have wonderful families, that's my prayer all your problems are solved praise the Lord, if not the Holy Spirit will help you let's

pray Heavenly Father as we bow before you help us to honor you in our family lives and to really seek to please you in all things, to live before your face Lord, it is so important, help us each one, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen

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