

# (The Missing Messages in Today's Christianity) Being Godly Parents

by Zac Poonen

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*A godly home is built on the foundation of God's perfect love, and it requires discipline, love, and wisdom to maintain peace and fellowship.*

**Duration:** 55:49

**Scripture:** Exodus 25:2, Isaiah 54:13, Isaiah 59:21, Isaiah 61:8, Hebrews 12:5

**Topics:** "Christianity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the husband-wife relationship in churches, particularly in India. The devil seeks to attack the Christian home because he knows that by destroying the home, he can destroy the church. The foundation of the church is built on the individual Christians' walk with God, which is built on God's perfect love. The speaker also highlights the need for fathers in the church and in the home, who will sacrifice time and energy for the sake of their flock and discipline them. The sermon encourages parents not to neglect their children and emphasizes the importance of fathers leading their children in teaching them the scriptures. The speaker also shares a progression of how children perceive their fathers as they grow older. The sermon references Malachi 4:6, which speaks about the restoration of the hearts of fathers to their children and vice versa.

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## Transcript

So now we want to, we're going to have two sessions. And now we're going to continue where we left off at our last session. In our last session we spoke about the missing message in a lot of our churches anyway, in many churches, particularly in India, of husband-wife relationships.

And that's around the world. We must remember that the devil is seeking to attack the Christian home. Because he knows that if he can destroy the Christian home, he can destroy the church.

It's very important to recognize that the church is built on the home. And the home is built on the individual Christian's walk with God. And the individual Christian's walk with God is built on the foundation of God's perfect love.

So here is a three-story building. The foundation is God's perfect love for us. And the first story on top of that is our personal individual walk with God, husband walking with God, wife walking with God.

On top of that is the home. Husband, wife, children. And on top of that is the church.

That is a missing message in Christendom today. Because many, many great Christian preachers who got tremendous gift do not have a good relationship with their wives. Many great preachers that you read of, you'd be surprised to know some of the great people you see on television, Christian television, famous people, wonderful teachers.

If you go into their family life, you'll be surprised to discover they are divorced. They couldn't get along with their wives. Wives couldn't get along with them.

Or they were unfaithful to their wives and went and slept with some other woman. They were committed adultery. This is the state of today's Christendom.

And the other thing, which of course you see more in India also, the children of some of these great preachers are all wayward. They're not following the Lord, many of them. Rebellious.

Disrespectful to their parents. Disobedient. So, the third story is shaking.

Why? Because there is no proper second story. They're trying to build a third story on thin air. And the second story is shaking, family relationship, because they don't have an individual walk with God.

That's why they're unfaithful to their wives. It's very, very sad. This is the state of affairs in the world, around the world today.

And all because we're not rooted on the perfect love of God for us. The foundation, we must be absolutely convinced. God loves me perfectly.

He delights in me. And every commandment He has given in His word is out of His tremendous love for me. Don't you parents know that? When you tell your teenage daughter you must come home by such and such a time, you must not be later than such and such a time.

I don't want to specify the time, because I don't know what time you have set in your home. And I never had a teenage daughter. I got daughters only after they came into their twenties.

Don't you parents know that when you make a rule like that, it's for their good? But those teenage daughters don't know that. It's like that. Most of God's people don't know that when God places a restriction, it is for their good.

We are as stupid as those teenage girls. So when you see those teenage girls being rebellious, remember, that's how we are towards God very often. God says, don't do this, we go and do it.

God says, do this, we take it lightly. But when we are perfectly grounded in the perfect love of God, we say, God, everything you have commanded in your word is absolutely the best for me. And God says, oh, I wish that my people would realize that.

That everything I have commanded, they would do it so that it might go well with them. Do you know that just like you want it to go well with your children, God wants it to go well with you? How many of you parents wanted to go badly with even one of your children? You got to be an evil parent to be like that. Even evil parents wanted to go well with their children.

Multiply that by a million, and you'll understand how well God wants it to go with you. I believe that. It's changed my life.

To recognize that God wants it to go well with me. Every day of my life, He wants it to go well with me. And everything He tells me is so that it may go well with me.

And that's why I want to strictly obey the word of God. Why do I want to study the Bible? Because I want to know what God has said that it might go well with me. In a sense, it's a very selfish thing to do.

I want it to go well with me. Because my Heavenly Father wants it to go well with me. And this whole book is a book of God's love for me.

Some of it may be quite strict. That's out of His love for me. Just like you're strict with your teenage children.

And so, how shall I build a home? Exactly like it says in the book. I want to show you a little expression in the book of Exodus. Build your home like Moses built the tabernacle.

Okay? Moses had so many brilliant ideas when he was 40 years old in Egypt. He studied in the best academies in Egypt. And you can read all the great books written by psychologists on how to have a happy home and all that type of stuff.

But there's nothing to beat the Bible. Moses had all that wisdom from Egypt. And God said, that's not the way I'm going to build my tabernacle.

I want to give you a pattern for the tabernacle. Do it according to that. Exodus 39.

We read an expression that comes 15 or 20 times in these two chapters. One of those is in the last verse of 39, verse 43. Moses examined all the work and beheld they had done it just as the Lord commanded he had done so.

Moses blessed them. Moses had given some details to the workers saying, this is how you must do this. This must be the length of this.

This must be the material for this. The curtains must be made of this, this, this, this, this, this. Finally, he examined everything exactly like the Lord commanded.

And then we read many times in this chapter 40, it says, verse 16. Moses did as the Lord commanded him. Right through that, many, many times, it keeps on saying, just as the Lord commanded.

Verse 21, last part. Just as the Lord commanded Moses. 23, last part.

Just as the Lord commanded Moses. 25, and on and on and on and on. Till the end of the chapter, thus, verse 33, Moses finished the work.

Just as the Lord commanded Moses, verse 32, thus he finished the work. And when he finished the work, it comes a number of times, I don't have time to show it all to you. When he did everything as the Lord commanded, you know what happened? The same thing will happen in your home.

The glory of the Lord, verse 34, filled the tabernacle. And they couldn't enter. Because the glory of God was there.

Don't you want that in your home? Oh, I long for that more than better furniture, better curtains. I don't care. Lord, I'm willing to live with old furniture and old curtains.

But I want your glory. I want people who come into my home to sense the presence of God. I want them to be blessed.

Not only my home, I say, people enter my compound. They must be blessed. Just like in the tabernacle, the glory of God was there.

I long that my home, I prayed for that. That every person who enters my compound will be blessed. Enters my home will be blessed.

Not by me, but by the Lord who is there. And that's why I want my home to be a home of peace. Because God dwells where there is peace.

And it's the God of peace who will crush Satan under our feet. Romans 16, 20. If there is no peace in your home, Satan cannot be crushed.

You may not know that, but Satan knows that. And that's why he always tries to bring unrest into your home. Either between husband and wife, or between parents and children.

Perpetual unrest. Be alert. Head of the home.

Husbands, be alert. If your wife is upset, keep your mouth shut. Sisters, maybe you're more godly.

If your husband is upset, keep your mouth shut. At least one of you, bring peace into the home. Maybe fellowship has not yet come, but start with peace.

Next step will be fellowship. You know, as I said, you need two hands to make a noise. If one hand refuses to cooperate, there's no fight.

There's peace. If both cooperate, there's fellowship. So, that's how it must be in a home.

The glory of God must fill our homes. We need homes in India where the glory of God fills it. It may be a hut, or it may be a palace.

It makes no difference to God. Jesus was born in a stable. He was quite at home in poor people's homes.

He was quite at home in rich people's homes. He wasn't against this or against that. Some Christians are against rich people's homes.

That's because you're not like Jesus. Jesus could go equally to a rich person's home and a poor person's home. It was just the same to him.

Because he knew these things don't make a difference. This one stone will not remain upon another. So what does it matter whether it's a palace or a hut? It's the people.

It's their peace in this home. That's what the Lord was looking for. And that's what he looks for in your home and mine.

Seek to be a home where Jesus can dwell. You know, when I got baptized in the Holy Spirit, a renewal of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, 32 years ago, nearly 32 years ago, it was January 1975, the brother with whom I was praying, as he was leaving our house, this is January 1975, he said, Zach, I want to leave a word with you. It is a prophetic word.

I never realized it then. He said, this is the word that I want to leave with you. The news went around that Jesus was in the house.

Mark chapter 2, verse 1. The news went around that Jesus was in the house. And I never knew that six, seven months later, the church would start meeting in our home. But I've never forgotten that word he left with me.

The news went around that Jesus was in the house. I said, Lord, whatever price I have to pay, whatever people may say about me, let the news go around that Jesus dwells here. When Jesus actually came to Jerusalem and Judea, they didn't think He was the Son of God.

You know what they called Him? What did they call Him? Bilzebul, Prince of Devils. So all may not recognize it. Paul says, we are a savior of life to some and a savior of death to some.

There was a man, there was a Pentecostal man in Bangalore some years ago who hated me so much. He wrote a tract called The Head of the Serpent is in 16 Dacosta Square. Spirit of the Antichrist.

It doesn't matter what people say. They called my Savior, Prince of Devils. That man, I don't know where he is.

He's dead and gone. He could never build anything. I have nothing against him.

I don't know whether he's in heaven or hell today. He doesn't bother me. But I know, whatever people may say, I have seen how the Lord has blessed different people who have entered my home.

Poor people, rich people, it makes no difference. I believe your home must be like that. Throw your home open to God's people.

God will bless you. Reward you. As you're able to have meetings in your home, even if your home is small, gather 3-4 people there once in a while and have a prayer meeting.

Share God's Word with them. Let the news go around that Jesus is in your house, not only at the meeting time. Any time if people walk in, they see husband and wife loving the Lord.

The husband, the head of the home. The wife in her position as a submissive wife and a helper to her husband. And children who are God-fearing, who obey Daddy and Mommy, who help Daddy and Mommy.

Think if you can have a home like that. Whether you have two children or ten children, that there's a testimony there. This is missing in today's Christianity.

You hardly hear much teaching on the home in most Christian churches because most pastors and preachers don't have the authority. They cannot stand up and say, I never shouted my wife 365 days of the year. They can't say that.

Well, how can they preach about it then? Unless they're hypocrites. They can't say that all my children are born again and baptized because many of them are not. So, we must fight the battle here and say, Lord, we want a home like that.

You remember what God told Moses before he built the sanctuary. He said in Exodus 25. The Lord said to Moses, it's amazing, it says in verse 2, Exodus 25 verse 2. The Lord said to Moses saying, Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for me.

Every man whose heart moves him, you shall raise a contribution. You are to raise from them gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet. Have you ever thought how this bunch of slaves got so much money? Do a bunch of slaves have gold and silver and scarlet and all that? Do you know there's a little verse written in the book of Exodus that when they left Egypt, God told the Israelites, let me paraphrase it, you fellas have worked here for 430 years and they have not paid you your salary.

Go and tell the Israelites to pay you your salary before you leave. Collect gold and silver from them. Is there anything wrong in collecting your salary? Imagine if you got 430 years of salary all together once.

They came out as millionaires. I don't have time to show you that verse. And now the Lord said, see how I have blessed you? You never expected that.

You thought you'd come out as slaves, you'll come out as millionaires. Now give some of that to build my home. Build, verse 8, a sanctuary for me that I may dwell in your midst.

They were not doing God a favor. God gave them such an abundance that they gave a little bit of that to God. You can only give to God what He's given to you.

What is your home to be? A sanctuary, a holy place where God can live. Build it according to the pattern, not according to your Egyptian wisdom, not according to the wisdom of Egypt's psychologists, but according to the Word of God. You'll have a godly home.

And years later, when you come to my age, you should be able to say, come and see. You may not be able to say that when your children are small, but as you grow up, you should be able to say to others, come and see. Come and see how my wife and I live together.

Come and live with us and see. Come and see how our children are, how they've grown up. I'm not saying that they will grow up perfectly.

I've never expected my children to be like tin soldiers in the house. You know, when they were small, people would come and ask me, Brother Zach, do your boys ever fight with each other? Yeah, I said they're normal. They're all children of Adam.

They fight. I don't allow them to fight physically. That happens even once I stop them, separate them, and tell them to go and lie down on their beds for a few hours until they cool off.

But if they argue with words, I say, oh, that's okay. Words are just... But one thing I found about children fighting with words, they can fight as if they are the biggest enemies and half an hour later they are the biggest friends. But when grown-ups fight, oh, husband and wife won't talk to each other for days.

Learn from your children how they argue and become friends so quickly again. It's not serious if your children have these little tussles and when they are into their teenage years, they go through a little patch,

up and down. Some go through smoothly, some go through a difficult patch.

You know why? Because they are children becoming adults. They are sort of in a transitional stage. They are neither here nor there.

The parents think they are babies and they think they are adults. Both are wrong. Parents think, oh, my little baby.

He is not your little baby anymore. And the little baby who is probably 15 years old thinks I am a man. You are not a man, brother.

You are still a kid. So it's because both are wrong. The little 15-year-old thinks he is a man and the parent thinks he is still a 3-year-old.

You can't treat a 15-year-old like a 3-year-old. No, you can't. As far as I can remember, I did not physically beat my children once they came into their teenage years.

I felt I had to pray with them and love them and judge myself. That's the position I took, that if my teenage children, I mean, I was born again before they were born, so I tried my best to discipline them. Some may ask me, did you discipline your youngest son as much as your oldest son? I say, perhaps not.

But that's partly because I was a little older and when you get older, you get a little more patient and a little more control over your temper than when you are young. And what to do? I mean, if I became a father at the age of 67 like right now, I would do most things so perfectly. But unfortunately, I became a father when I was 29 and I was pretty stupid and foolish like all of you.

So, I often wondered, Lord, why you didn't allow us to become fathers after we become 70 or something like that? And I think, you know, if I was never a parent, I would still be as foolish when I'm 70. That's what we don't realize. We learn wisdom as our children grow up.

And you can read all the books on marriage and hear all the messages on marriage and still do some of the foolish things I did when I was 29. Because you've got to learn it the hard way. You know, like children learning to walk.

Supposing from the time your child is born, you say, I'm going to teach you how to walk. I'll tell you, I've had enough experience. It'll still stumble and fall a thousand times and learn to walk.

So don't be afraid of making mistakes as parents. We'll all make mistakes. Acknowledge them before God.

I used to punish my children with anger, but I used to repent of it. Because I knew the discipline was right, the anger was wrong. And I used to go before God frequently and cry out and say, Lord, please help me.

I need to eliminate the anger from my discipline. The discipline is right. The anger is wrong.

Sometimes I punish my children wrongly. And I've had to repent of that before God. Now the question is, did I go to my children each time I punished them wrongly or in anger and apologize to them? Should I? I should, but I didn't.

I'll tell you why. Because I felt that they were not old enough at six or seven years of age to understand the difference between anger and discipline. So if I go to my six-year-old and say, listen, I'm sorry, I beat you

with anger that time.

Okay, Dad, I forgive you. And then next day or next week, again I beat them with anger. Again, he'll lift up and say, okay, Dad, I forgive you.

And the next time I beat him, he'll say, I know what Dad, he's going to come back after five minutes and apologize to me. He'll never appreciate my discipline because he doesn't have wisdom. So you know what I did? I never apologized to them.

When they all became 18 years, I gave them a consolidated apology for all the years I made a mistake. Say, I did it wrong, but please forgive me. Because then they were old enough to appreciate it.

You know, it's like a servant in your home or supposing you're a supervisor in an office and every time you did something wrong, you went and apologized for the anger. That guy's not even a Christian. He'd have no respect for your authority.

So you've got to be wise. Don't live by laws. Be wise.

See whether the other person understands what you're trying to say. And children sometimes don't understand. And then you've got to repent only before God.

So, some people are so legalistic. They do things in a legalistic way, mess up, make situations worse than it was before. But I believe it's right to discipline because the Bible says that I want to go to the New Testament.

You know, people say, Brother Zach, don't go to the Old Testament and these things because you always preach to us from the New Testament. Okay. I used to go more to Proverbs in the old days.

You know, train up a child in the way he should go. When he's old, he will not depart from it. And foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of correction will drive it far from him.

These are verses. It's true. But I want to turn to the New Testament.

Hebrews chapter 12. And it says here in verse five, You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord.

Nor faint when you are rebuked by Him. Listen to this. Those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines.

What does the Lord do to those whom He loves? He disciplines. And every son whom He receives, every single, that means son and daughter, there's no exception. What does He do? What does your Bible say? Scourges.

You see my belt? That's scourging. Scourging is with leather. It's not a rod.

It's scourging. The Lord does it. Don't try to be more spiritual than God.

If God does it to His children. It says in the next verse, It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons.

It's true. I have never scourged or disciplined those who are not my children. Even in the church.

I treat people in the church as my children. I discipline them. People in other churches, they can do ten times worse things.

I don't do anything to them. We only discipline our own children. And listen to this expression.

Read it carefully. What son or daughter is there whom his father does not discipline? In the first century, Paul could say that. In the 21st century, Ha! Not Paul, whoever wrote Hebrews.

I'll show you thousands of fathers like that today. And you see the result in today's rebellious children who have no respect for older people. Who got religion without spirituality.

Because their fathers never taught them discipline. I read somewhere that sometime in the 1940s, a book came out in the United States of America called Baby and Child Care, written by Dr. Benjamin Spock. That became the standard book for all parents of that period to bring up their children.

And he said don't discipline your children. The result was seen in the 1960s when all the children became hippies. Lots of them, rebellious.

Such a thing had never happened in the United States for so many years. I read this somewhere, it's not my research, but I read this somewhere. The influence of the teaching of one man whose book was accepted as standard.

No, no, no, we don't discipline our children. There are better ways, negotiate and negotiate? What are they, business partners or something that you negotiate with them? They neglected God's word and they reaped the consequences. Well, thankfully that book was not circulated much in India.

But it says what son is there whom his father does not discipline? It's because you love. And whom the Lord loves, He disciplines. If you love your child, you will correct him and discipline him.

And because even God put man under law before He brought him under grace. And law involved punishment. Have you heard the story of the carrot and the stick? The carrot and the stick means the way to get a donkey to move forward is hold a carrot in front of him, the donkey will keep going.

If he doesn't move, use a stick behind him, he'll move forward. The carrot and the stick. And this is the same principle with which we bring up children.

Offer them a reward or punish them. That is how God brought up Israel under the law. If you obey me, I'll give you this, this, this, this.

If you don't obey me, I'll punish you with this, this, this. It was the carrot and the stick. You can't be better than God.

And children are under the law in their younger days. They're not under grace. They haven't come to the life of walking in the spirit.

And any person who's not walking in the spirit is under law, even if he's 50 years old. If you're not filled with the spirit, my brother, sister, even if you're 100 years old, please be under the law. Otherwise, you'll live a life more wicked than Old Testament people.

The law, every man who does not walk in the spirit must be under the law. And children do not know what it is to be in the spirit. And therefore, they have to be kept under the law.

And the law has a carrot and a stick. You read in the Old Testament. Go to Deuteronomy 28, it's very clear.

So, which son is there whom his father does not discipline? And listen to this, verse 8. If you are without discipline, which all children become partakers, then you're not really God's sons. You're illegitimate. You're an illegitimate child if God doesn't discipline you.

Furthermore, verse 9. We had earthly fathers to discipline us. That was universal in the first century. All fathers disciplined their children.

And we respected them. Yeah? One day your child will respect you. If you discipline them.

And we shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live. Further, verse 10. Disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them.

That means we don't do it perfectly. That also is recognized in Scripture. We don't do it perfectly because we are not perfect.

But God who is perfect, disciplines us perfectly. All discipline, whether we give to our children or God gives to us, verse 11, does not seem to be joyful. No child appreciates a spanking.

It is very painful. And when God disciplines us also, it's painful. If you're disciplined in the church, it is painful.

But to those who don't get offended by it, those who are trained by it, not everybody, those who allow that discipline to work in their life, afterwards, it will produce peace and righteousness. So, fathers, don't be discouraged. I want to read something to you which if I can find it, about how you know, people consider their fathers.

Somebody wrote this. At age 4, the child says, my daddy can do anything. When he's 7 years, he says, my daddy knows quite a bit.

When he's 9 years old, he says, well, dad doesn't really know everything. When he's 12 years old, he says, dad doesn't understand. When he's 14 years old, he says, dad is old-fashioned.

When he's 21 years old, he says, boy, my dad, he's completely out of touch with reality. When he's 25 years old, and he's close to getting married, yeah, I think dad's okay. When he's 30 years old, he says, I wonder what dad thinks about this.

I'd like to know. When he's 35, he says, I'd like to get my dad's opinion on this matter. When he's 50 years old, he thinks, what would my dad have done in this situation? What would he have thought of it? And when he's 60, well, my dad's not alive.

I wish he were here. I could talk it over with him. So don't get discouraged if they are at different stages and say different things.

They'll change their mind as they grow older. Okay. Don't get discouraged if your children don't appreciate what you're doing for them right now.

One day afterwards, it'll produce results that you'll be thankful for. Your children will thank you for the discipline, the correction, the strictness that you add at home concerning time when they should come back, certain things you're not allowed them to do. You did not give them indefinite amount of money for them to spend as they like.

You did not buy certain things because, son, we can't afford that in our home. You taught them to live with simple, simply and be frugal in the way they lived. It'll help them in the long run.

Your children will not get into debt when they set up a home because they saw in your home you never bought anything that you couldn't afford. I've seen a lot of people, as soon as they get married, they get into debt. They get into debt from the time of their wedding.

Not at all a good testimony. If that happened to you, repent. Don't let your children see parents who are in debt.

It's not a good testimony. Cut down your expenditure. Let them see how you live at home, how you use money carefully, that money doesn't grow on trees, that you can just get it and spend it as you like.

And especially if you're a very rich person and you earn a lot of money, oh boy, you really need to be careful that you don't spoil your children by giving them everything they want, everything you can afford. It's not wise. It's not good.

It's good for children to learn to work and not have everything done for them. It's good to have children to learn to struggle a little bit. That'll make them tough.

To do work around the house. I believe, you know, in India, how important it is for children to get an education. I believe that's one of the great things.

Indian parents excel. I think they're some of the best parents in the world as far as this is concerned. That they really take seriously their children's education.

I've seen a lot of western homes where the parents don't even seem to bother whether the children are educated or not. And those children grow up later on and struggle, struggle, struggle. Financially, they get into debt and there are hardships.

Because their parents never said, listen, we want to give you a good education. I was recently seeing a little life story video of this black, young African-American boy in America who grew up in a slum. In a ghetto, as they call it.

With all bad friends. I think his father had left him. His mother was bringing him up and, you know, fights and quarrels.

He almost killed somebody. Etc. But his mother was determined to give him an education.

And worked hard and encouraged him and encouraged him. And by the time he was around 32 years old, he became the top children's neurosurgeon in one of America's top hospitals. Doing unique operations.

It's an amazing story. And it was due to a mother who was determined to give her son a good education. You know, that's, I believe that's something that parents need to take care of.

That we allow our children to be able to stand on their own feet when they come of age. That we encourage them. And therefore it's important that parents take time to sit with their children.

To do their homework. To teach them the subjects that are difficult for them to understand. Or get help for them.

It's very important. I mean, it may mean effort. It may mean money.

It may mean sacrifice. But when your children are one day standing on their own feet, they'll thank you for it. We've got to live for our children as parents.

That's the mark of a good father and mother. That you don't just think of yourself. You know, a good father and mother will always make sure that children get good food.

If they can't afford good food for everybody, they'll deny themselves. Make their children have good food. In the same way, we want to have it good for our children.

Give them a good education so they can be established on their own feet. They don't appreciate the value of education when they're 13, 14 years old. They may want to play the fool.

But they don't appreciate it enough. But we who are older and we've lived in the world, we know how that's important for them. If it's only a good education that'll enable them to get a good salary later on and be able to earn their own living so that they are not dependent on others and they can stand on their own feet and there's a certain dignity that comes about them when they can stand on their own feet and even spiritually.

It helps them when they know that they're not having to constantly struggle because their parents ignored their education. I've come across a number of cases like that. Of parents who couldn't care less for their children and I've seen those children suffer, suffer, suffer, suffer, suffer.

Please, we see it's unfortunate. Some of them, their parents were not believers, they were godless and such children can only forgive their parents. They were ignorant.

Forgive them for they don't know what they did. But we need to learn lessons from that. And I want to say to you parents, don't get so busy with your work that you neglect your children.

And not just education. I want to show you a verse in Malachi chapter 4. In Malachi chapter 4 we read this verse that we already saw. In the last days the Lord will send someone.

The last verse of the Old Testament says the Lord will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children through His servants and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise He will come and smite the land with a curse. You know what is the great need in the last days in the world? He's speaking about the great and terrible day of the Lord, verse 5. And we are approaching that great and terrible day of the Lord when the world will be judged.

And the church as I said in verse 5 is to come in the spirit of Elijah and John the Baptist. And what are we to proclaim? The missing message. We need fathers.

In the church we need spiritual fathers. We don't need directors, superintendents. Certainly we don't need dictators.

We need fathers in the church. Fathers who will sacrifice time, energy for the sake of their flock and who will discipline their flock just like you do at home. And in the home we need fathers.

Not a word is said here about mothers. Fathers. Just like the husband is the leader of the home, the father must lead his children to teach them the scriptures.

Don't leave that to the Sunday school. No. I never left the teaching of scripture to the Sunday school.

My children attended Sunday school here from childhood. But I said that's not the place. I'm not going to let the Sunday school teachers take the responsibility.

I have to make sure first of all that they know the facts of the Bible. So I used to get them a Bible storybook that they would be encouraged to read with pictures and all that so that they would know the facts of the Bible. I don't have to instruct them all.

If they themselves read it, that's great. But then the principles of the Bible, I have to teach them. And we would talk about it at different times.

And my wife was particularly careful whenever the children came back from school to talk to them, I think every single day. How was your day at school? I wasn't often at home. I was traveling so much in the preaching of the gospel.

But how was your day? And then you discover so many things that happened in school. Maybe they picked up some bad words in school. I remember one of my children once, I don't even remember who it was and I don't want to try and remember who it was, used a bad word.

I don't know, maybe six or seven years old. I knew he didn't even know the meaning of it. Because we never used it at home.

So I laughed inwardly and I said, do you know the meaning of that word? He said, no, somebody used it in school. I said, please, I'm not going to explain the meaning of the word to you. But it's a bad word.

Don't ever use it again. And I never heard him use it again. You can't blame the child.

They're surrounded by people who are doing all types of wicked things in school. You've got to, just like you give them a shower or a bath when they come home, you've got to give them an inward shower or bath from the habits they have picked up from school. Who's going to teach them that if somebody steals your pencil in the kindergarten, you should not steal somebody else's pencil.

You know that as an adult. But a child's logic is, hey, somebody stole my pencil. Oh, I see a pencil there.

Let me take it. And they come home with somebody else's pencil. Do you check their bags when they come home? And they'll tell you, well, somebody stole my pencil, mummy.

So I stole somebody else's. A child's logic, that's correct. But you say, no, we are Christians.

Please go back tomorrow and return that pencil to the teacher and say, I found somebody's pencil. Here it is. I'll give you another pencil.

Don't worry. When you have children, people will steal all types of things of yours. We'll replace it.

Don't worry. But don't ever touch another person's property. You know, even in the 12th standard, one friend of mine, one of my children came to my house and stole his calculator.

Okay, forget it. And my children are so loyal to their friends that till today they never told me who stole it because they got it back finally, but they wouldn't tell me till today who did it. Yeah, I appreciate their loyalty to their friends.

My point is this. Children don't know many things. We have to teach them.

Don't assume that they know. They don't know. You're supposed to teach them little, little things.

I'm not saying my wife and I did it perfectly. We made many mistakes, but we would go to James chapter 1, verse 5 always. If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God.

That's my favorite verse for parents. If anyone lacks wisdom, let him go to God. And boy, we lacked wisdom.

Lord, give us wisdom. And I believe that if we live in humble dependence on God and we try to honor God in our home, even if we do 101 wrong things like I did, like my wife did, and like all of you will do, God will still make it go well with our children because deep down in our heart, our desire was to do His will. Our desire was that our home should honor God.

And if your desire is that, God will help you. One of the things I tried to be careful as a father was that if there was any event that my children were participating in, whether it was public speaking in the school or a prize giving in the school or a sports event or something, wherever my children were participating, I would always make sure, to the best of my ability, that I would be in Bangalore at home for that particular time. Because I didn't want my children to feel that Dad was so busy serving the Lord, he didn't have time for us.

I know I was busy serving the Lord. I had to go here and there, travel so many places. Some of the privileges I never had as a father was to be able to sit with my child during the meetings.

I never had that privilege because I was always sitting up in front leading the meeting and my wife was taking care of the children. But it's a wonderful thing to sit with your children in a meeting, to be able to teach them how to turn to a song or to turn to a verse in the Bible. That's great.

And the other privilege I rarely had was to be with our children on weekends. Weekends was the time I was always traveling because most other places, churches and all, they would want me on a weekend. And weekend was the time my children had holidays from school.

I'd say, Lord, well, that's one of the sacrifices I have to make because I serve you. But you've got to make up for that. And I tell you, God has made up for that in many ways.

But whenever they had an event, I always tried to be there to help them. If they were having final examinations, public examinations, I'd make sure I was there so that they'd be in school on time. So I worked my program around certain events that my children took part in school were very important days for me.

And I wouldn't neglect them for my work. Sometimes it was not possible, but to the best of my ability, I tried to do that for all of my four boys. You know, it means a lot to your children to know that you as a father and mother are interested in things which are important to them.

It may not be important for you, but it's important for them. And let your children see that you as a father are interested in that. That's how the heart of the father, like it says here, gets turned to the children.

And if your heart is turned to the children, the children's heart will be turned towards you. That's what the Bible says. And especially in the last days before the great and terrible day of the Lord, before God smites homes with a curse, like it says here, I don't want my home to be smitten with a curse.

Do you want your home to be smitten with a curse? No. Then fathers, turn your hearts towards your children. Take time to be with your children.

Have a date with your children. I wish I could have done that much more than I did it. Some things I wished I did a lot more, was to spend a little more time with children individually.

But, you know, so many people used to come to my house and I didn't always do it wisely. Because I remember once when one of my boys, I promised to take him out on his birthday and just as I was about to take him out, some brother came to see me with his problem and spent a couple of hours with me and it was so late. I disappointed my son that day and I'll never forget it.

I'll never forgive myself. He has forgiven me. But I feel so bad that I, if I had that more wisdom, I would have told that brother, listen, can I talk to you tomorrow? I promised to take my son out for his birthday today.

There's nothing wrong in that. When I was young, I didn't have a spiritual father to guide me in all these things. So I made a lot of mistakes which you don't have to make.

Don't neglect your children. Greet them on their birthdays. It's a habit that all of us have developed in our family to greet one another on our birthdays, wherever we are.

Nowadays, we call each other on the phone. In the olden days, phone calls were expensive. Through the distance, we'd write letters, we'd write cards.

And even little children would write on a small piece of paper and say, happy birthday, daddy or mommy. And to greet those children and make one day in the year special for your children, at least on their birthday. Not just cutting a cake, but much more than that, pray with them.

Lay your hands on them, father and mother, and make that child feel that you're so honored that God brought that child into your family for you to bring up. It's wonderful. You've got to make your child feel special.

Just like, you know, how you feel excited when you realize that God makes you feel special. Make your children feel special. It's terrible when, you know, never talk to your children saying you're good for nothing.

They make a mistake. I hear sometimes that some child says, my father told me you're good for nothing. And they get an inferiority complex.

Never say that. Never say to your child that, oh, how many times I told you not to do that. If God taught you like that, how many times I told you not to do that.

We'd get discouraged. Imagine if Jesus appeared before you and said, how many times I told you not to do that. What? You wouldn't be able to raise your head for the next few years.

Don't ever speak to your children like that. They're weak, they're foolish. We are also weak and foolish.

Be compassionate. Be strict, but be compassionate. I always say, we must be strict with them because they've got a fallen nature.

And we must be compassionate with them because they got that fallen nature from you. They didn't get it themselves. So we need to be strict and compassionate.

And as we do that, I believe that God will help us. God is interested that our children should grow up to be God-fearing witnesses. Let me turn you to this verse in closing.

Psalms 127 Written by a man who did not practice what he preached. Do you know there are some passages of the Bible written which are absolutely inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the man who wrote it never preached it, never practiced it. Proverbs, for example, was written by Solomon.

How much he has written there warning about evil women, and how many did he marry? 700 of them. Can you believe that he wrote Proverbs? That shows how even today there are preachers who preach things which they don't practice. But what they said was right.

So, Psalm 127 is one of the Psalms written by Solomon. And he says, verse 3, Children are a gift to the Lord, fruit of the womb is a reward, like arrows in the hand of a warrior. So are the children of one's youth.

How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them! They will not be ashamed when they speak to their enemies in the gate. The Lord's people have a lot of enemies, but their mouths will be shut when they see our children the way we have brought them up. People who criticize you, make fun of you, and call you a heretic, false teacher, this, that, and the other, their mouths will be shut when they see the way you have brought up your children.

Because your children know everything about what you live for at home. You can fool everybody in the church for 50 years, but you can't fool your children, because they see what you live for at home. If you want to know who's the head of the home, ask the children, they'll tell you.

If you want to know how Daddy and Mommy behave with each other, people in the church don't know, ask the children, they know. They may cover up for their parents, but they know. And the example you have left your children is the thing.

Children are a gift from the Lord, and it says here they must be like arrows. Imagine having your child as an arrow that you're going to fire against Satan. And when we stand with our enemies, their mouth is shut.

Isaiah 54 is a word that God gave me and my wife many years ago when our children were very small, we used to claim it. You know, I always say that there are promises in Scripture, they'll never be yours until you claim them. If somebody gives you a check for a hundred thousand rupees, it'll never be yours until you go and cash it in the bank.

Here is a promise, I've underlined it in my Bible. Isaiah 54, 13 All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and the well-being of your sons will be great. I printed it out and put it on a board in front of my dining table.

All your children will be taught by the Lord and the well-being of your sons will be great. There are wonderful promises like that that you can claim. Isaiah 59 verse 21 My spirit which is upon you and my words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your children, nor from the mouth of your grandchildren.

And another verse Isaiah 61 You know these are promises in Scripture. Anybody can claim them. Isaiah 61 in verse 8 In the message translation it reads like this Your children will become well-known all over, and your children who are in foreign countries will be recognized at once as the people I have blessed.

I go to these Scriptures and I say I claim them in Jesus' name. And you can keep your checks buried at home if you like, but I'm going to take them to the bank of heaven and cash them in Jesus' name. You can cash them too.

This is in your Bible as well as mine. We miss so much by not claiming the promises of God for our children. I want to say this in conclusion.

Don't let your children become spiritually poor because you don't claim the promises of God for them. Think how Abraham claimed the promises for Isaac and blessed him and said, God has blessed me and he's going to bless you. And Isaac continued that the next generation.

He called Jacob and said, God's blessed me, he's going to bless you. And Jacob called all his children as he was dying and he called each one of them and said, God's going to bless you. Bless you.

Why can't we do that to our children? Let's do that. Let's change the way we live with our wives and our children and make it really good in the days to come. Let's go humbly before God and say, Lord, make me the father and mother you want me to be.

I believe God will help us. Amen? A little louder. God will help us.

Praise the Lord. Let's pray. Thank you, Father.

We confess our hope right now. You will help us to build godly homes in this generation. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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