

The Leader and His Home

by David Smith

Every person is a leader, called by God to lead in their own sphere, and true leadership requires a deep fear of God and a willingness to obey His commands.

Duration: 1:13:56

Scripture: Psalm 86:3, Jeremiah 11:11, Matthew 9:35-38

Topics: "Family"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for faithful shepherds in the church and in families. He highlights the impact of fathers who have failed to shepherd their families, leading to a cry from the younger generation for father figures. The preacher also discusses the importance of communication in relationships, particularly within the family. He references Matthew 9:35, where Jesus is moved with compassion for the scattered and shepherdless multitudes, calling for laborers to be sent into the harvest. The sermon emphasizes the need for shepherds in homes, churches, and communities, and the importance of fearing God and acknowledging His holiness.

Transcript

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You know, as some of us are not in this session right now, some of the men that have been uniquely called to the work of God and commissioned, charged to serve the flock, our tendency would be to think that the leaders are not here, but the fact is that every one of us is a leader and God has called every one of us to lead. If you're here and you're a husband, God has called you to lead your wife. If you're here and you're a father, God has called you to lead your children.

If you're here and you're not married, God has called you to lead where you're working. He's called you to be an example to your neighbors, to your brethren in the church. There's no one here who can say, I'm just not a leader.

The question is, are we good and faithful leaders or are we unfaithful leaders? And that's a choice that God has given to us. The answering of that question is up to us. Which will it be? In Matthew 9.35, you can turn there.

We'll read a few verses. It says, And Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest. When I hear Jesus in this account, how when he saw the multitude of people, in his heart arose up a picture of sheep scattered and having no shepherd.

He was moved to pray, to appeal to the disciples, to pray that God would send forth laborers into this harvest. And I don't believe I'm stretching the picture here by saying that I really believe the great call today is for shepherds. It's for shepherds in our own homes, brothers.

It's for shepherds in the churches. It's for shepherds in the community. God gathers his sheep into flocks and he sets shepherds over them.

He said in Jeremiah 10.21, we'll read a couple of verses in the book of Jeremiah. It says, For the pastors are become brutish and have not sought the Lord. Therefore, they shall not prosper and all their flocks shall be scattered.

In Jeremiah 23, verses 1-4, he says, Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pastors, saith the Lord. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people. Ye have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not visited them.

Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doing, saith the Lord, and I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries, whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more nor be dismayed, neither shall be lacking, saith the Lord. The scattered sheep of our day and time, of our generation, I really believe are the result of failures in two key areas.

First of all, we must say with trembling, if we think we are among those that have a heart for God's flock, if we say we are among those shepherds that God said He would raise up and give a heart after Him to feed the flock with knowledge and understanding, with trembling we must say that the pastors of God's flock have failed. And we must say with trembling, we must dare not think that we are excluded from that condemnation. The call is to us today, brothers, in the church of Jesus Christ, He is calling for faithful shepherds who will not strip the flock and fleece the flock and feed themselves on the flock, but will serve them, will visit them and nourish them.

There is also the effect of fathers who have failed to shepherd their families. The cry of this generation of young people is, where is my father? Who is my father? I'm 40, I'll be 41 years old next week. When I was

growing up in suburban Detroit, a middle class, blue collar kind of community, among let's just say my hundred classmates in the early 70s, I was, I can't think of another boy or girl in my, among my peers that came from a divorced family situation.

Now there were some that had troubles, but let's just say there were five that I didn't know about. Out of those hundred, the numbers are still so small. And today it's almost the exception, well it's so completely flipped around that the exception now is that you've got the original two parents in their first marriage with all of their own single children.

What has happened so quickly? I don't believe that, I believe that the fruit of this is coming on us suddenly and is becoming known suddenly and it's accelerating. But I believe that the seeds of it go way back when dad abandoned his place as shepherd in the home. Brothers, God hasn't just left us to see these things and wonder what's happened.

There are answers. I just would desire us to grasp a vision for to be shepherds in our homes. To be shepherds in the flock of God.

Maybe God won't. Maybe God will give you the gift of singleness, brothers. Don't despise that.

God can give you the grace and equip you. But, but, I don't believe that. I don't believe that.

I don't believe that. As I look at the qualifications of elder and deacon in the New Testament, the clear proving ground, the primary proving ground, is in the home. If he's not qualified by leading his family well, then he's not fit to lead the church of God.

It's just that way. Just as another testimony, I as a zealous young man, radically converted at the age of 21, had this concept of what it meant to serve God. And I thought, well, you go to Bible school and you follow this path and then you take a job as a pastor in a church and that's how it works.

Well, God didn't clearly lead me into that. What he did clearly do is he gave me a wife and then in very short order, I had a large family. Right now we have 12 children and it'll be 18 years this year that we've been married.

Now what I just had to stop and realize is that God was preparing me to serve his body as I had settled deep in my heart, was a burden in my heart to serve God. But what I had to experience over the years that immediately followed that was this sense that I was becoming less and less useful to God. And that somehow all these things I thought that it took to serve God, you know, a softball coach and ushering and set up and tear down in a port of church and all this stuff, home group leading and Sunday school teaching, I don't know if I mentioned that already, but you name it and that's what I thought you had to do to serve God.

Well, what I found out is that I was becoming ineffective in all those things. My family was withering and dying and I was being trained and I didn't even know it. But God in his wisdom has given the family and that would be the main topic that I want to consider today.

It does express itself wonderfully in a beautiful way in the church, but we're going to consider the leader and his home. And whether you're leading your own family today or not, I just want to ask you to just be attentive and let God speak to your hearts. I trust that it will be for his glory and the building up of his body.

But let's ask ourselves this question, man. In developing a vision, what kind of home do you want? What do you want it to look like? What do you want it to feel like? What do you want it to smell like? What do you want people to sense when they walk into your home? I was talking to somebody and they were experiencing difficulties in their home. There had been years of turmoil and I shared with him that my vision while he and his wife were together and I shared with him my vision was for them to be a radiant couple, that the fire of love would be burning in their hearts together, that their children would be content and joyful and that there be a sweetness in their children's lives and all these sorts of things, painting this picture of joy and beauty and rest, clearly centered on the Lord Jesus Christ with him reigning as Lord and him being the union that binds he and his wife and their children together.

And as I shared this vision with them that I wanted them to see it and believe that it was possible, I asked them, are you willing to be a unified couple? And the answer came back, well, of course, that's an obvious question. The answer to that is obvious. Who doesn't want to have a happy life? I said, that's not what I asked you.

I didn't ask him if he wanted a happy life. I asked him if he wanted a unified family, unified in the Lord Jesus Christ. I had told him that the only way to that was absolute surrender, dying to his own will, dying to his own rights.

The fact is, our brothers, that our choices have proven that we are willing to settle for less than full surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ because we've been pursuing a happy life. Amen? But there's no such thing as fullness outside of Christ. So my call is not to just paint a picture or set a vision before us of a happy life or of a joy-filled home.

It's a picture of death to you and me and to all of our own ambitions and our own dreams and just taking up the cross of Christ in our homes, of bringing the glory of God and the grace of God, which he only gives to the humble, to the destitute. He gives strength to the faint. This is a call for weakness, brothers, but it's a call to strengthen God.

That's what I want to offer to us today, is to pursue a vision of Christ in our homes, of being the Lord Jesus Christ to our families, of being a fountain of his life to our wives, a fountain of blessing and grace and peace and life to our children. And there's only one way that can come, and that's through you and me nailing ourselves to the cross daily, taking that up, considering ourselves as wretched and undone and seeing ourselves as God sees us. Oh, but therein is the pathway to life.

Glory to God. So the question again is, what kind of home do I want? Of course we want a happy home. We want a happy life.

God made us that way. He put those desires in us. He's made us to respond to pleasure.

But there's only one way that is sanctioned by God to the fulfilling of that. So the question is, is how badly do we want it? Do we really want it to the point we're willing to pay the price and come to God on his terms? So in Psalm 128, we can look there. We'll spend a little bit of time here.

And the painful truth of it, brothers, is today we do have the life we want. We do. Our lives today, I know there are circumstances that have beset us that have been outside of our control.

I acknowledge that. Some of them have been very difficult. But today we have the chance to respond in faith and find ourselves right in the center of God's will today.

And today our life is the product of our own choices and our own responses to the choices we haven't been given. The choices that God has just determined. Where we're going to live.

Who our parents are. And you can even set yourself out a mark five years from now. And with certainty I can tell you, you'll be right where you want to be in five years from now.

By the grace of God. We won't be able to blame our circumstances or blame God or any other thing like that. But as we set this vision before us of what we want our home to be like.

And we walk by faith in the grace of God. And we die to ourselves daily. And we nurture and we plow and we sow those seeds.

And we build and we labor and we fight and we pray. We're going to be where we want to be in five years. Glory to God.

And God can get glory out of that if our hearts are right. In Psalm 128 it reads, blessed is everyone that fears the Lord, that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands.

Happy shalt thou be. And it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house.

Thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold that thus, that thus, in these ways, by these evidences, thus shall the man be blessed that fears the Lord. What a beautiful picture.

The promise with certainty. If we fear God, we can count on this sort of fruit. We can count on being blessed if we fear God.

We can count on eating the labor of our hands. We can count on it being well with us. We can count on our wives being fruitful and our children like olive plants if we fear God.

But it's a very, very serious condition that he sets before that fulfillment. Do we fear God? Brothers, when our wives are insecure, when they're worrisome, when our children's countenances are droopy and they're fighting with each other and they're squabbling and there's contention in our homes, when we're laboring and we're laboring and we're laboring and it seems like we're getting further and further behind and we're not eating the fruit of our hands and it's not going well with us, what's it telling us? We don't fear God. Thank you.

Let's just be honest. We don't fear God. I recognize the place of free will that our wives are accountable for their own choices and all those things, brothers, but a husband, by definition, what's a husband, men? A gardener, right? Our wives are the product of our tending.

Brothers, let's just take responsibility for that. And this says, I'm not going to argue with God, that our wives will be fruitful. And I'm not just talking about children.

I'm talking about spiritually issuing forth life. The fruit of joy and peace and wisdom. Fruitfulness in the fullest sense.

There are many wives, I've seen them, with a row of children that look beaten down and burdened and have that fearful look in their faces, who are insecure in their husband's love, who see their children as a burden, who face each day with hopelessness and their bodies are just a reflection of their souls and

they're weakening and they're breaking. Brothers, do we fear God or not? Do we look at that and say, what's her problem? Do we look at our wives and condemn them because of their weak faith? Brothers, or do we say, oh God, do I fear you? Do I see my wife as a reflection of my tending? Do I see my children as a reflection of my raising of them? Do we or not? If we don't, we will never get ahead. We will never make any progress.

And it's proof positive. It's the evidence crying out against us that we do not fear God. It's on my heart right now.

This was going to be the last thing I was going to leave us with, but I'm going to leave it with you right now or give it to you right now. This conference or those godly home tapes or those head covering tapes or whatever it is, they can be such a tremendous blessing. They can be a tool that God gives to us to bring much glory to His name and much blessedness to our homes.

Or they can be the scourge of our families. If we get a hold of this stuff and bring it home and say, here, look where we need to be. And say, you need to change.

You need to put dresses on. You know, my wife did not wear dresses until not that long ago. And some of your wives might not be wearing dresses.

I don't know. But it doesn't matter a stitch. If we're coming at our wives with condemnation and oppression and a whip, the key to us bringing this home as a fountain of life or bringing it home as a scourge of death is brokenness and humility.

Will we take responsibility for all of these things? Will we say, God, if my home is not in order, it's not my wife's fault. It's not my children's fault. It's me.

So, brethren, there is a way. And I've seen this. And some of you might be able to too.

That a wife, I've had wives tell me, at least one that comes to my mind, and the husband agreed, that things started to go downhill in their home when they got a hold of the Godly Home Tape Set. But it's not the fact that there was information in there that's inherently going to produce that kind of fruit. See, the problem is pride.

If we don't start with us and say, I am the problem here, then we come with this load. And we have that accusing finger. And then we get into self-pity when they don't shape up.

And when things don't go the way we want, what's still lacking in all this? It's the fear of God, brothers. Do we really see ourselves in light of this glorious picture? Do we see ourselves in light of this glorious gospel and all these beautiful promises that He gives for the home? Oh, they're beautiful, aren't they? Oh, they're beautiful. A fruitful wife.

Children like plants. Oh, it's beautiful. But it's not cheap.

It's going to cost us everything we have, especially our pride. Especially our pride. Let's consider for a few minutes what it means to fear God.

And in this picture of this carnal man's response to these beautiful things and these convictions, you're going to see part of what might look like or is part of the fear of God. Let's just, for example, put ourselves in that place. Maybe we've been there.

Maybe it's not that far of a stretch. Maybe it's us right now. But we get a hold of these convictions.

Praise God, I believe 1 Corinthians 11 is just saying what it's saying. And I'm going to obey it because I fear God. And all these different other things.

Obedient children. God wants children to obey their parents. And He wants us to discipline our children, doesn't He? These are right things.

In Psalm 130, verse 3, it says, If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? There we stand in front of these truths. And we say, Oh God, You're right. Oh, and I've failed.

And I need to shape these things up. But it goes on to say, the fact of just knowing these things and even acknowledging them does not necessarily mean we fear God. There are many people out there that are walking around condemned and defeated and issuing forth death wherever they go in their self-righteous holiness.

And they know the truth, but they're not bowing their hearts to it. They're not saying, Oh, woe is me first. And the effect is death.

But look what it says in verse 4. Now we can see in verse 3 of Psalm 130 that sense of, Oh God, You are holy. Who can stand in the face of You? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. Do you notice the writer here says that the fear of God comes not when we stand simply in view of His holiness and our iniquities.

We can come face to face with those things and still not be in the fear of God because our pride will keep us from humbling ourselves in the face of it. Just knowing it's not humility, brothers. It's when we see, Oh God, God, forgive me.

And by faith we receive His grace. By faith we receive forgiveness. You know, when Jesus was in the home of that Pharisee and that sinner woman came in and started pouring out that extravagant display of love on Him, what did the Pharisee say? Well, if he knew who she was, he wouldn't let her do that.

He went on to say, gave the story of two men that owed a sum of money, one very little and one great. He said, the man who was owed the money just frankly forgave them both. He said, who would love him more? The Pharisee said, well, the one who is forgiven more.

And that's what he said. He who is forgiven much, the same loves much. If we really know the forgiveness of God, if we really know it in view of His holiness, and we humble ourselves and say, Oh God, God, forgive me.

Do you think that woman who was forgiven so much went on her way to live a self-centered, self-gratifying life of indulgence the way she had up until then? I think not. It's when we bring together the conviction and the holiness of God with repentance and forgiveness, it says, by mercy and truth, iniquity is purged in Proverbs 16. And by the fear of the Lord.

When our iniquities are purged, you know, to really know that your sins are forgiven does not give you and me a license to sin at all. It grips us, if we really experience it, it grips us like this, that we cannot do the things that we would. Because we fear God.

Because we've been forgiven. We've seen this mountain of sin. We've seen the wreckage in our homes that we have produced living for ourselves.

And oh God, it's gripped us and we've seen a vision for what God wants. And we say, oh God, forgive me. Oh God, I will fear you.

I will walk in your ways, whatever it costs me. Oh, and the burden lifts and hope is lit in our hearts. That I will serve God.

And I will be a faithful husband by the grace of God. And I will love my children. And I will walk in the fear of God.

But it does not come without humility. It does not. I want to make this very practical.

Brothers, we must be a continual fountain of life in our homes. Our wives, oh brothers, don't we want their faces to light up when we come home? Don't we love the picture of those children pouring out of the house, climbing on our lap in the car? We can't even get up the driveway because they're crowding on us and telling us all these wonderful things that happened in their day. Oh brothers, isn't it beautiful? How bad do we want it? Are we willing to humble ourselves before our wives and admit how we failed? Are we willing to take responsibility for our self-pity and our selfishness in so many ways? Oh brothers, it's worth it.

It's painful, but it's worth it. I would like to lift up among, right up there among the highest of goals that are a part of this vision is that we would, we would seek to settle for nothing less than a climate in our homes of love and of peace and of harmony and of goodwill, of trust, of humility. The climate in the home.

You can homeschool, you can discipline, you can do all these things which are good in their place, but if it's done in a spirit of tension and ill will and all this stuff, it's just going to embitter those children and embitter your wife and set the life right out of there. How does this work in our lives? Sometimes I work away from home and I just want to speak to you brothers out there who, there are some of you, one of the things, one of the components that oftentimes is set forth as part of this vision is dad working at home. How many of you think that's a good thing? Hey man, I think it is.

How many of you don't have that as part of your experience right now? That's me too. For years I have just, oh, but you know my own choices have laden me with a burden right now in that area and God in His sovereignty has seen fit to leave me in it for this time and that's, I have sought Him and we are seeking Him as a family, but I have just purposed that that is not going to hinder me from being a fountain of life to my family. I am convinced that I am in the center of God's will right now.

Now I'm looking beyond this and I'm looking for more and better, but right now this is where I am and I'm not going to fall into despair because it's not exactly the way I would want it to be. But sometimes I call home and it's happening less and less and less and that's a good thing, but I call home and I can just tell things are not going well. You know, you get, now we've got, my oldest three children are converted and what a difference that makes, you know, that now you're, you know, and they were all good children, they, you know, reasonably compliant, but the facts are is that children are in the flesh until they're converted and you inject all that flesh in a small little house and all the tension that goes along and all it takes is one and it's like, you know, popcorn popping, you know, and it just, before you know it, it's a brush fire out of control.

And then I call home and sometimes you can just tell that mama is being tried. And where was I going with this? Oh, but anyway, look here, how do I, how do we deal with this? You know what you do? You stop the homeschooling, you let the chores go and you get on your knees and you call on God and you tell your wives, say, mom, stop everything and you just get on your faces before God and you get everybody together and you say, look, do we see what's happening? Oh God, and we just stop it until the sweetness is restored. And oh, you know, it's amazing what, what, what you can get done then and all these things you think you've got to do.

Oh, we put ourselves under, oh, and there's so many burdens I think that God would just want to free us from, but let this be a burden on our hearts that we will not settle for anything less than love in our homes, whatever it costs. And I don't know how many, my testimony, if it's anything, it's the mercy of God. It's the, the mercifulness of my children and brothers.

I want to encourage you to cast yourself on the mercy of your families. When you get home, I don't care if you feel like you've been doing good. Let just, just say, oh, my little family.

Oh, Papa has failed you. Will you please have mercy upon me and forgive me? I love God. I am seeking God.

I need your help. We've come short of God's glory in our home. Oh, and you can name the ways.

Oh brothers, what beauty there is in just flopping out there before your families and with your families before God. And you'll find the grace of God blossoming and you'll find, and you know, with, with, with a large family and I, you know, you, you do too. How much time do you have? You don't have enough time.

If you're working away and you've got a row of children, you won't be able to give them all the time you would want to. And that you might think they need, but more than anything, they need God in their, in your homes. They need God flowing out of you.

They need to be pointed in hope to God. They need to be ushered into the presence of God where there is fullness of joy, where they can, they can commune with the, with the father, where there's sweetness between each other. And I, you know that now the scripture also says to that, to the, to the shepherds, he says, let's look in Proverbs.

I think it's chapter 27. I want this to be practical verse 23. It says, be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks and look well to thy herds.

Now brothers, when we get home, I want us to have this kind of, how many of you are herdsman here? Anybody a herdsman? I mean, you know that by, you must be observant. You must know those animals. And if you see anything that's not quite exactly right, you know, you key in on that one and you find out what's going on.

You take its temperature, you see how much it's eating or whatever it is. I'm not a real herdsman, but I have a flock and I, I am keenly attuned to this. That when I come home, I am, you might observe that.

I don't know, but I am almost constantly, when my children are walking by, I'm touching them. I'm talking to them. I'm looking for the, where is there a sparkle in their eye? I am watching and I am watching and I'm watching.

And there are, there are, there are many late nights because I've got to stay up with one and talk. We've got to pray something through or they're having a struggle, whatever, but we must be attentive to the state of our families. And if our hearts are broken before God, whatever hours he gives us with them, we use to his glory and we make the most of it.

And we pray, God, if there's one of my little ones, if my wife is, is, is laboring and struggling, you, we need to devote special attention to that, to that one that's struggling. And so communication, the topic was the, the, the leader and his relationships. You know, there's no relationship without communication, but even those little things, you know, you, you know, you can be walking from, from one end of the house to the other, to go out the door and along the way, you've got little children, you can touch them, you can communicate to them, you can pat them on the bottom, you know, when they're bending over to tie their shoes, I mean, whatever, you know, just love them in word and in deed continuously.

It will bear fruit. It does. I am not going to ask for a show of hands, but I know there are many of you out here who have never heard your father tell you that he loved you.

Now he might say, well, you know, I loved you and I gave you a, you know, good food to eat and sent you to school or all these things taught you how to work. I don't want to take anything away from that, but brothers, we must have more than that. Does God give us more than just that? I mean, he gives the unbelievers those things, doesn't he? What does he give to his children? His spirit in them crying, Abba, father.

Oh, brothers, we need to be that father before our children and to them. Oh, we must. To our wives.

Adam failed to protect his wife through his own passivity. Men, we must take responsibility. We must be leaders.

We must face the tendency in our own lives to just let things go, let things happen the way they're going to happen. That's part of the curse, brothers. And it's only by the grace of God that we will, we will rise up above that.

It's our natural inclination. The other time, the other side of the curse is that we would rule with tyranny and harshness, barking out orders demanding. Well, that's not, that's not reflecting God either.

We need to be cleansing our wives, purifying and encouraging them, teaching them, discipling them to present them without spot or wrinkle. Does it sound, does it sound like a picture of Christ and his church? Isn't that what Jesus is doing for each one of his own? You know, Jesus has taken responsibility for our sanctification. He has.

Faithful is he who calleth you who also will what? Do it. Are we cultivating our wives' spiritual life, nurturing them and leading them toward God in purity and in holiness? Or are we hindering them and defiling them with anger or lust or bitterness? Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them. We're defiling them when we're bringing those, those influences into the home.

Are we making it easy and pleasant for them to submit to our leadership? Are they resting under the shade of our tree, brethren? Oh, they must be. Hypocrisy and unreality. And we're not, you know, most of us here are here because we're taking this, this matter of the Christian life seriously.

But I, I'm pretty well convinced that there is nothing that will embitter a wife or children more than hypocrisy. And the more we know, you know, have you ever felt this, this sense that well, maybe I'd just be better off not being accountable for all this information. You know, you're going to be accountable.

You and I are accountable after this week, aren't we? How many of you are about like this now? Yeah, I understand. But there's no safety in ignorance, brethren. So let's just face it and humble ourselves.

You know, God can even, I've heard, I've already heard a couple people this week say, I don't want to be a hypocrite. Well, amen. Can God deliver someone from hypocrisy? Amen.

Believe it. Be willing to believe that as you come into the light, God will expose you. Will we just yield to it as the real key? Let's just determine by faith, God, whatever it costs me, make me real in my home and in our churches.

Because their souls are at stake. What an awesome charge it is to be a husband and to be a wife, to be a father. To our children.

By the way, what time does this session end? 2.50. Thank you. Concerning our children, let me just back up again. I've got a few more practical sorts of things.

Men, never, ever, ever, ever complain about your wife to somebody else. Never, ever, ever be sarcastic to your wife. Never complain about her cooking.

Never complain about her ironing. Now, you might need to guide the home. I mean, if you're responsible for an orderly home and the condition of things and when there's admonition and guidance needed, well, give it in love.

Amen? But I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a sarcasm rooted in pride and despising of them. Brethren, put it away.

Let's put it away. For our children, the Bible says to us husbands or fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. And I know there are many that are here today that are struggling with anger and bitterness because of the homes they grew up in.

You know what this is talking about. How tragic that the very thing we determine earnestly in our hearts, it won't be so in my home. It won't be so in my home.

We will have a happy home. Lo and behold, we wind up repeating the very same thing. Why? Because of bitterness in our own hearts.

We have not been able to take our eyes off of that thing. Even as much as we've hated it, we've still kept our eyes on it. And lo and behold, as the brother said, we become like that which we fix our gaze upon.

Most of us here, we can extend it to the church situation. Most of us here have come from a particular religious background or something like that. Some of you haven't.

Most have. You know, if we keep looking back at that place where we left and we're consumed with their problems and their errors and what they did to us and what they taught us wrong, do you know what we're going to become? Just like them. So let's just be done with it and let's fix our gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen? Amen. We'll become like Him as we do that. And it doesn't matter where we've been.

We can even thank God for all that because it's brought us today to the foot of Jesus where we can look to Him in faith and we can go on and get past that stuff. So, even our own failures, the devil would love to keep us bound up and beaten down with all of our failures in the home. Well, let's just deal with them and go on.

Amen? Amen. I think that probably the most important thing concerning our children is that our hearts be turned to them. Our hearts need to be turned to them.

God preloads fatherhood. God preloads with admiration in the hearts of our children. He does that on His own and He basically says, here, what are you going to do with it? And through our foolishness and our pride, what do we do? We bobble it and we spoil it and we tarnish it.

We embitter them with unkind words. One of the best things we can do is confess our sin to our children. If we have sinned against them, if we have failed in some area, and use discretion, brethren.

But look, I even share things that if I fail during the day, many times I'll just share it with my family because, you know, their hearts are tender. They want to walk with God. The Bible is taught every day in the home.

But there they sit, many times feeling like, I'm not very spiritual. I'm not, you know, I fought with my brother or whatever. And they need to know that there's a way that, they know we're not perfect for one thing, but they need to see, they need to be shown, how does one deal with this condition of guilt? How does one yield to the Spirit? How does one mortify the deeds of the body? How does one set his affection on things above? How do we do this? We need to show them how to do that.

And we need to secure their hearts. We need to secure their hearts. The highest calling for us as Christian parents is to disciple.

And that's what I think. I like the concept of discipleship rather than homeschooling or any of those titles. It's discipleship.

If you're a Christian and you're a father, you're called to disciple your children. Period. That's the highest calling.

To disciple them for the Lord Jesus Christ. And you can do it. God calls us to that and He will give us the grace we need to fulfill that calling.

More practical sorts of things. Back about ten years ago now, ten years ago this year, I was brought to the place of seeing that I had left my first love as a Christian. I was seeing the carnality and the worldliness growing in our home in many different ways.

I was seeing attitudes in our children, ways they were responding to each other that I did not, that I knew were wrong. But I had to see that it sprung out of my own compromise. And one of the things that we started to do, there were probably two key things that we started to do.

One, we started to take the matter of discipline as a matter of obedience. See, as long as you and I keep this idea in our minds that, well, I'm a Christian father and I'm a Christian husband and I know I should be having family worship and I should be leading my family in Scripture memorization and teaching them, but,

well, we're just probably not going to get on as far as we otherwise would in the Christian life. What we're doing is we're deceiving ourselves into thinking that we've got some option here and that somehow we can still produce Christian children and a Christian home without obedience.

We've got to take disciplining our children. We've got to take family worship. We've got to take prayer as absolutes, as commandments to which there is really no option.

If God has bought you and He's bought me and He is Lord and we are not, then we don't have any choice, ultimately. We kid ourselves in thinking that we do. And at the root of that is you and me.

We're at the center. We're in the seat picking and choosing what we're going to do based on the benefits we're going to get out of it. And we've got to get to the place where it is obedience and it's a matter of desperation.

For many years, another brother, we were about the same age, our children were in the same age groups, we would lament in an ongoing way. We'd ask each other, we were, quote, accountability or trying to keep each other accountable to personal devotions and things and time and again we'd just come back with the same miserable answer. Well, no, I guess I just haven't been.

Well, when this point came in my life ten years ago, I started answering him. I said, yeah, we have been. And, you know, we were getting up at, I don't know, very early in the morning and my children were little.

You know, my oldest three were seven and six and four and we were getting up early, even without mama, but because I had to do this. It was survival. And brethren, that's what I want to, I want to share that with you.

If it's not survival to you, then you're just on your own. Then it's you doing what you probably should do to be more spiritual or to enhance your spiritual life. It's got to, your life and my life depend on us getting a hold of God and if we don't, we're doomed.

And when I saw that it was no longer just an option for me, that it was survival. Well, guess what happens? Consistency starts to spring out when it's survival. And that's where you and I are at today.

May God, may God open that to our eyes. That it's do or die. The stakes are high, brothers.

And we must lead our children to God. We must lead our wives to God. We have no guarantees.

I'm sorry, we do. We do have guarantees that there will be a harvest according to the seeds we're sowing. In family worship, I'm going to suggest a change on those two terms because we tend to think of family worship as something you commence at a certain time in the day.

Well, at this time, we have our devotions. Whatever you call it. Devotions, Bible time, whatever.

There's a tendency in our minds to say, well, we do our spiritual stuff here and then we do the rest of our day. Or we separate God from all our thoughts. And you know what it says? That the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, does not seek after God.

God is not in all his thoughts. Psalm 10. God must be in all our thoughts.

You know what a fanatic is? God is in all his thoughts. All the time. But to be anything less than that is to just define yourself as a wicked person in pride.

How many of you have been charged? I'm not going to ask for another show. How many of you have been told you're proud because all you do is talk about God? You're out there. I know you're out there.

What a lie that is. But, rather than family worship, this is the picture. A worshipping family.

A worshipping family. What kind of family do you want? We want a worshipping family. We're going to worship God in everything we do.

We're going to worship God doing the dishes. We're going to worship God doing the chores. We're going to worship God praying.

We're going to worship God reading. We're going to worship God disciplining the children. I'm going to worship God hugging my wife.

Whatever. We are a worshipping family. Brethren, can we commit to being worshipping families? Amen.

God, God, God have mercy on us and give us this blessing. Give us this burden. Worshipping families.

So we must, first of all, be worshippers ourselves, brethren. We must worship the God of heaven with all our hearts in spirit and in truth. We must keep a clear conscience.

A foul conscience brings a cloud over us and keeps us from being able to minister that blessing to our children and to our wives. And it opens the door for Satan to move freely in and have his way. Give your first and best time to your wife.

The children are happiest and most secure when they know mama and papa love each other. When they know that things are sweet between mama and papa. Oh, I'll tell you, those children, they just giggle when they catch mama and daddy, you know, expressing their fondness to each other.

Oh, they giggle, but you know what? They just run off and they're happy and free. And it doesn't matter if they've gotten just five minutes from me. They're all set.

When they need their time, it's my responsibility to give it to them. But brothers, we've got to keep things in order here. The best thing we can do for our children is to love our wives.

And here's something that a dear brother back home just unveiled for us. You know, we've got to talk with our wives and listen, share our hearts with our wives. You know, they're called to be helpers which are suitable to us.

They're given to us, men, to compliment us and make up for us where we're lacking. And God gave them that responsibility and that place. And what do we do when we isolate ourselves from them, when we don't want to share our hearts? We're frustrating the very purpose that they were made for.

They want to get inside our hearts. They want to know what they can do for us to help us and to be a part of the work God has given for us. And we just withdraw and they just languish.

Oh, they need to know our hearts. We need to let them inside our hearts, brothers. And this is a work for most men.

Communicating verbally does not come naturally to most of us, especially, and for even those of us that it does, it seems to be hard with our wives, doesn't it? It just does. I think that our flesh and the enemy are there giving opposition in that area. Be enthusiastic.

You know, if this Christianity that we claim and we're walking in is not making us happy, why do we think they're going to want it? Fear and condemnation I don't think is very effective at bringing people to the Savior. When it comes to children, we give it to them, we give them doctrine and teaching and theology at their age level, but you know what? I give them the hardest and heaviest stuff. And whatever they catch, I don't know, but you know, that's part of the wonder and beauty of discipling our children in leadership preparation.

I mean, we get exercised in our teaching abilities and they get exercised in understanding and I just say, hey, let them have the heaviest, deepest, richest you can give them with love and joy. And they may not understand it, but they'll say, well, Danny's excited about it. There must be something to this.

Pray with and for your wife and children. It is nothing less than tragedy the number of men in the professing Christian church that do not and will not pray with their wives. If I charged you today that you must pray with your wives, that God requires it of us, I just wonder how many of us could say two years from now that we have seen a pattern, a consistent and fruitful pattern of praying together with our wives.

I just wonder how we would do. Statistically, we wouldn't be doing very good. Peter says to dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto them as unto the weaker vessel, that your prayers be not hindered.

In that I see it's almost like he's just assuming you're going to be praying with your wives. I'm not assuming that you're praying with your wives, brothers, but God expects it. God has made you one with your wives.

He's made us one with them. We are no longer two but one. And yet we live our lives as though we were two.

I am all for cultivating our own devotional life and all these things, but brothers, we're one. Our union is in Christ. Apart from Him, He's got one vision for us.

Brethren, He's got one vision and He's largely going to reveal it through and to you, and yet you don't share that with your wife. That we don't pray with our wives, we don't seek God together for this vision. What's wrong? It's our pride, brothers.

We don't want to disclose our weakness to them. We don't want to acknowledge our failures. So we just keep our own, you know, we keep our silence, we keep our faith, and it's got to go.

There's no option in this one here either, brothers. We must be praying with our wives. So we'll move to a close here.

Again, lifting up a climate in our homes of love, of love and of sweetness, and of the Spirit of God. A dwelling place for the presence of God. You know, I think it's in Psalm 132 here.

It talks about, for the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever.

Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Oh, brethren, God desires for our homes to be a habitation where He can rest and dwell in us by His presence. Where He can manifest His glory to us and through us and to

the nations.

He wants our children to be growing up in a home that's thick with the love and presence of God. Oh, a place that's so full and so real that when they step outside of that, they shudder. Or when they see something.

I have a quote here. I won't read it, but the essence of the quote was, is that if this is the cultivated atmosphere in our home, and if this is the environment that you have known and tasted in your home. The writer here is speaking from the 18th century or the 17th or 18th, some time ago, a couple hundred years ago.

He said that when we find ourselves in a home that professes Christ, where this sort of worship is not cultivated, it makes us shudder. That's the way I want us to be. That we just are cultivating such a sweetness in our homes that it's tangible.

That we have a vision for what kind of home we want. And that stone by stone, if that house has fallen into ruin, if that marriage has fallen into decay, the walls of the city are broken down. Oh, I just think of the returning exiles.

You know, the evidence of their sin was laid bare and open before the whole world, wasn't it? Their temple that they boasted in was burned and in rubble. Those walls that kept the enemies out, they were broken down. They've been overrun.

Why? Because the judgment of God on their sin. Now all their prophets that prophesied peace, peace and prosperity were silenced and judged because God had made it known. He was judging his people, but yet he brought that remnant back with a promise, amen? With a spanking, but with a promise.

And they said, the Lord, he is with us and we will rise up and build. Amen? And stone by stone, by faith, and with a sword in one hand and, you know, stones and bricks in the other, they began the rebuilding process. And that's all God, you know, if we're just willing to let God show us through the wreckage of our marriage, through the tension in our homes, or whatever it is, just let God speak to us what he needs to, but don't get discouraged in that.

Look to God in faith. Let's look here in the last passage here concerning the fear of the Lord. Let's keep our eyes on this vision.

Let's not keep our eyes on... let's see our failures, but let's keep our eyes on the Lord and let's truly fear God. In Proverbs 1, there's a verse in Psalm 86, verse 3, it says, Lord, be merciful unto me, for I cry unto thee daily. Brethren, let our cry come before God daily, with our families, for our children, for our wives.

Let's call upon God daily. Let's be willing to turn, as it says in verse 23 of Proverbs 1, turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.

I will make known my words unto you. God promised that if we will do that, if we will simply turn when he corrects us, he will pour out his Spirit unto us. He will make his words known, come alive to us.

But he says there's a warning here. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.

Here's this accountability for what we know, you know. Well, now that we know it, we're accountable. Are we going to yield to God? Are we going to go on with him? Are we going to walk in the light that he's giving us now? He says, I will also laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. We cannot afford to just kind of play around with this matter of leaving our homes. And think that, well, likewise, if you're here today, and you know God's calling you to repentance.

He's calling you to surrender your life to the Lordship of Christ. He's convincing you, you're not really, you're not saved. To just think, well, you know, someday I'll call on God.

We can't kid ourselves. To think that when we are good and ready, we're going to just call on God, and I don't think we have that promise from Scripture. This here says, they will call upon Him, but He will not answer.

They will even seek early, but they shall not find Him. Why? Because they hated knowledge. What are we going to do with what we're being given this week, brethren? Are we going to give ourselves to it, or are we going to harden our hearts? In Jeremiah 11, and this really will be my last Scripture here, I will balance this here.

Because, as a brother said last night, the devil does a good job of discouraging us and making us think, well, you know, I'm beyond hope. I guess I'm in that place where it's too late to call on God. Now I want to tell you that it isn't necessarily that way.

But we can't play games with this here. Jeremiah 11, 11 says, Therefore, thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape. And though they shall cry unto Me, I will not hearken unto them.

Again, the same truth. People calling on God, and God not answering and hearing them. But look what it says, Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Israel go and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense, but they shall not save them at all in their time of trouble.

Verse 14, Therefore, pray not thou, I won't go into that. So what's the key? What is the key? The reason why God would not hear your and my cry is because it's not a wholehearted, pure, desperate cry. There's still something, well, if God doesn't do it, then there's still something else.

You see, a purehearted, desperate cry for help from God, I am convinced, will always be heard. But if we're holding something back, and we're playing around with God, don't even think that He's going to deal with you and me, if that's where our heart is. So, this is where we're at.

Brethren, are we going to call on God out of a pure heart, out of desperation? Is it survival for us, or do we just want to have this nice little family we can take out in public and show off? I hope it's not that. Let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord, you have been merciful.

You have been merciful to me, Father. You have given me mercy upon mercy. God forbid that we would abuse your mercy, Father.

And I pray that we would not do that. And I pray that we would not be ungrateful and carelessly, recklessly, presume upon your goodness and your mercy. Father, deal with us as you need to.

God, let us have hope. Let us look honestly and assess our situations in our homes, Father, but look to you with hope and faith that God is in this work. That if we're doing it to your glory, Father, we can beg you and expect that you will provide the grace necessary.

Father, I pray that in true brokenness and humility, we could lay hold of this vision of a blessed home, of a fruitful wife, of children as blooming plants around our table. God that we would lay hold of this vision of true men, Lord, that walk with their God, who know their God. They that know thee shall put their trust in.

We do that now, Father. I do that now. And I pray that you would let hope and faith rise up in my brethren here.

Because your name is on the line. In Jesus' name, Amen. God bless you.

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