

1. a Godly Heritage

by Denny Kenaston

Denny Kenaston's sermon emphasizes the importance of establishing a godly heritage through active faith transmission from parents to children across generations.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6, Psalm 78:1, Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 19:14, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:20, 2 Timothy 3:15

Topics: "Family Devotion", "Christian Parenting"

Description

Denny Kenaston preaches about the importance of having a godly home, inspired by the example of the John Gerber family. He emphasizes the need for parents to set a vision and goal for their families, to raise children who are a testimony to the glory of God. Through personal experiences and reflections, he encourages families to prioritize devotions, singing, and prayer together, and to seek revival in their homes. He challenges parents to be diligent, purposeful, and intentional in raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, following the examples of godly families like the Gerbers.

Transcript

The 1st of 11 messages on The Godly Home

Praise the Lord. Let's all kneel for prayer at this time. Fall upon our knees before the Lord.

"Our Heavenly Father, we come to you at this time in the name of Jesus. We thank you Lord that He is the center of our homes. We thank you Father, that He is the strength and motivation of our lives. And oh, God, we just want to set our hearts at the beginning of this week, Lord, to learn all that we can learn about having these kind of homes, that can bring honor and glory to your name. Oh Father, I realize today that every one of us stand here with an opportunity to have our lives completely changed. God we're asking you to do it. We're asking you, by your Spirit, to take the finger, your finger, and carve upon the tables of our heart, things that will make us never be the same. Father God, we know and realize, that the Spirit of God is brooding over the people of God in these last days, turning the hearts of the fathers to their children, and turning the hearts of the children to their fathers. Oh God, I pray, you'd give each one of us here submissive hearts, that we may yield totally to the working and the moving of your Spirit, that is prevailing upon your people in these last days. Father we acknowledge before you tonight, that we shall give an account of the things we shall hear this week. Lord I pray, let an awe settle down over each one of our hearts tonight. Let a reverence settle over us tonight. Let an openness of heart settle over each one of us tonight, Lord. And we ask you God, that you'd bind Satan, and every evil spirit, yea, that would try to

hinder the work that needs to be done this week, for we know, as we have heard already, he is out to destroy each one of our homes, and stamp out the testimony of God upon the earth. So Father, we want to commit the rest of the service into your hands, we pray you'd give us a vision tonight God. This is our prayer and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen."

Christian greetings again to each one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus. I feel impressed to say before we get into this week of meetings on the home, I want to remind you that I believe in soul winning and I believe in doing the work of God. You may not think that I do, when I get done this week. You may feel like what you should do is stay home all the time and raise your children. But the only reason why you'll feel that way is because we're concentrating on one basic truth all this week. So I'll just assure you ahead of time. I believe in winning souls, and I believe in doing the work of God, and you keep this in mind through the week. Actually, I see the work of God as two fold. Number one, we need to be reaching out into the world around us, preaching the gospel and building the lives of people, and God uses this method to build the church of Jesus Christ. And wherever there is a church where they do not do that, the church of Jesus Christ is not growing the way that it should. However, the work of God has a second one also. And that is that God uses through the anointing of His Spirit, Fathers and Mothers to raise up godly children. And thus, He prospers His work upon the earth, and thus, He builds His church upon the earth, and thus, He raises up a testimony upon the earth, as fathers and mothers yield themselves to the anointing of His Spirit in their life, He'll pick them up and use them to raise up children, godly children, which make up the church of the next generation, and build the work of God. Truly, we must have both of these if we're going to have a true church fifty years from now, if the Lord tarries that long. One is not enough; we must have both of them.

Now I want to say this in introduction, and these first few things are introduction. The messages that will be given - they are an eight course meal. Just want to warn you, I'm not giving out eight different meals, I'm giving out one meal, with eight different courses. There's a big difference there. And I would just like to encourage you, not to pick and choose, and wonder, "Well, I think I'll stay home this night", and, "What are you going to preach on tomorrow night?" And, "Oh, I don't think I need that, I think I'll stay home..." I would just like to encourage you not to do that unless you absolutely cannot come, for some reason. I would encourage you to come all eight evenings and get the full meal. I've noticed something about human nature. We usually tend to skip the ones that we need the most, and I believe that Satan has his hand in some of that; and then maybe come for the ones we didn't need to hear so much. So, I want to encourage you to stay for every course of the meal. You never know - you may go home with mashed potatoes and dessert, and get no steak, if you miss one night. And also, you may misunderstand a message if not viewed with all the rest of them. Some of the messages are strong. I'll warn you ahead of time. But they don't look quite as strong, if you view the whole. So I'd encourage you that way.

Now, what I'll be sharing this week, my wife and I have learned out of failure. We took our failures and went to God, and in His Word, and began to meditate upon His word, and we looked at the needs that were in our home and we began to ask questions to God, "Why are the children this way?" And, "Why doesn't this work?" And, "Where is the need here?" And, "What is wrong here?" And we began to bring those things to God in faith, and we began to meditate upon His Word, and the things that I'm sharing this week, we've learned them out of meditating on God's Word. And every one of you can do the same thing. And I would encourage you this week, to keep track of all the scriptures that are read and take them home, and chew on them, for months and months to come. And God will transform your home. But I want to say again, we are sharing out of failure, not out of success. So don't think that there's no hope for you. I'm just

a hippie, as I already have said, and so is my wife. We had no clear patterns to follow in our home, neither one of us. As we look back to our heritage, my home was not a very good example to follow, as far as godliness and order. And my wife's home is the same way. We had no patterns to follow. I didn't know how to be a husband, she did not know how to be a wife, and neither one of us knew how to raise children! So there's hope for you. I want to encourage you with that this evening.

While we're talking here, let's turn to Psalm 78, where we'll start out with our text. I'd like to give you a watchword this evening. That's a word that you should keep in mind, a thought that you should keep in mind through the whole message this evening, and that is this, and I've given it already - God is no respecter of persons. Some of the illustrations that I plan to use this evening, you may be tempted to think, "Well, that's some special individual". But I want to encourage you and remind you to keep reminding yourself that God is no respecter of persons. He will honor and respect anybody who honors and respects His Word, and in whatever area they do honor it, He will honor them in that area. This evening's message, we'll give it a title called "The Godly Heritage", or "A Godly Heritage".

Reading in Psalm 78, verse 1-8, let's read together, " Give ear, oh my people to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old. Which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord. And His strength and His wonderful work that He hath done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation. A generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

Now here in these verses, we see God's plan to propagate the faith to the next generation. Now I want to say this in the beginning; I believe in salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and every child in this room is going to have to come to the age of accountability and come to the place where they acknowledge their own sinfulness and their own need of a savior. And repent of their sins and be born-again. However, I feel it's very foolish for us as parents, to start resting on salvation for our children, and thus to neglect the propagating of the faith to our children, as we've read here in these verses. I think we do foolishly, if we have the mentality that says, "Someday salvation will take care of my children." God's plan to propagate the faith is for fathers to teach the mighty works of God to their children. And then their children will rise up and teach the mighty works of God to their children. And then those children will rise up and teach the mighty works of God to their children, and then their children will rise up and teach the mighty works of God to their children. And may I just say by qualifying as we begin here. I am not talking tonight, about passing on religion. I'm talking about passing on a living, breathing, vibrant Christian faith into the next generation, that that generation can then pass that same living, breathing, vibrant Christian faith into the next generation, and so on it goes. That is God's plan to propagate the faith from one generation to the next. Praise the Lord.

I want to say this: The generation to come was most specifically, the father's responsibility. And you may get a little weary of me saying that this week, but it is the father's responsibility. Yes, God has given you a helpmate. And you wives need to learn how to be a helpmate to your husbands, but fathers, God has laid the specific responsibility of propagating this faith to the next generation right upon you. Notice a verse that is up here. "And He," that's the Spirit of God, through Elijah, "shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the

children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." That's what the Word of God says, that's the way the Spirit of God works in our lives. So much of the responsibility lies upon you fathers. And I trust you will have big shoulders this week, as we begin to lay out your responsibilities. The father is the head of the home. And the responsibility lies heaviest upon him, and God looks to him when there is a failure. Now lets look more specifically at these verses. At verse four and five we see a beautiful illustration given here in Psalm 78, and verse five and six, I'm sorry. "For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed the law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers," That's one generation..."that they should make them known to their children," That's the second generation... "that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born," That's the third generation... "who should arise and declare them to their children." That's the fourth generation. Oh what a beautiful picture! When we see this in the Word of God, and we see that this is the heart of God, and the mind of God concerning our families. And these are the verses that Israel lived off of. And wherever you found somebody who did what these verses said in the Old Testament, you saw that they got results. Just like God said. When God said to do it, He had in mind that it would bring results. And those who obeyed what God said - they got the very results that God said they would get. It worked! It worked for those who obeyed!

If we could just look at a few illustrations here this evening: Boaz was a man of God. We know about Boaz. Boaz married Ruth. But he was a man of God. And he had a son by Ruth, named Obed. And Boaz raised Obed to be a man of God. And when Obed grew up, he had a son named Jesse. And Obed raised his son Jesse, to be a man of God. And when Jesse grew up, he had several sons, but one of his sons name was David. And he raised David to be a man of God. And David was the sweet psalmist of Israel, a prophet in Israel, and the king of Israel. And David was a man of God. And he had a son named Solomon, and he raised Solomon to be a man of God. And Solomon became the king over Israel; he became the writer of the Book of Proverbs, and the writer of Ecclesiastes. Now, later on in his life, he went his own way. But here, we see five generations who followed this very thing that we're looking at, this very precept in the Word of God.

Here is another one: Abraham was a man of God. And he had Isaac, as a son. Isaac was a man of God, and he had Jacob as a son, who later, after he wrestled with God, became Israel. And Israel had many sons, but one of his sons was Joseph. And Joseph was a man of God. And Joseph had a son named Ephraim, who was also a man of God. There's five generations again in the Word of God. One more that we'll take a look at, and this one is four generations. Amram was a man of God. And Amram had two sons, Moses and Aaron. We'll just follow the line of Aaron because it goes further than Moses. Moses line only went from one generation from himself, but Aaron had a son named Eleazor, who became the high priest after him, and Eleazor was a man of God. And he had a son named Phineas, and he raised that young man, to be a man of God, and Phineas was a man of God, and he was valued for truth. And I tried to search out the lineage for Phineas, and I know the name of his son, but I couldn't find anything in the scripture to say what his character was like, so we'll stop there at four generations, but I believe that Phineas' son was also a man of God.

Now what we have here, are biblical examples of how God's Word works, just like he said it would. Hallelujah. And we need to get a hold of that in our own lives. How would you like this week, to get a vision, to be able to claim generations of children! How would you like to be able to do that this week? I believe with all my heart, that you can do that. I believe that it is within your fingertips and God is no respecter of persons, and I'll show you as we go along, that it is possible for you. Now, the Lord may come before we get all that done! But I think it's foolish for us to say, "Well, the Lord may come, I'll neglect my

children." And I've heard men say that before. That is foolishness. God wants us to have a vision! God wants us to see the generations to come! God wants us to live in light of those generations to come!

We're talking about a godly heritage. Now a heritage is that which is passed down from one generation to the next. We're talking about a godly heritage, so we're talking about passing down godliness, from one generation to the next generation, to the next generation - that is a godly heritage. My testimony and my wife's testimony is that there was no godliness passed down to us, from the generations before us. We had none! A lot of our past, we're not even allowed to think about. "Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of a good report, think on these things." And a lot of our heritage, we had to forget it. In fact, a lot of our heritage, we had to ask God to help us forget it. But our testimony and vision is also this: That by God's grace our children will have a godly heritage. My heart is fixed. Our heart is fixed, that our children will have a godly heritage. That they'll have something to think about. That they'll have something to remember, to look back to in their lives. What do I mean when I say a godly heritage? Well, I get a vision of my children's children, growing up, and looking back and remembering Grandpa Kenaston, Grandpa and Grandma Kenaston. Grandpa Kenaston was a man of God. Grandpa Kenaston knew how to pray. Grandpa Kenaston loved God. Grandpa Kenaston was a zealous man. Grandpa Kenaston served God. Grandpa and Grandma Kenaston loved the Lord Jesus. And we get in our minds a vision of our children's children, growing up with those things to think about. And maybe you can't appreciate that tonight. Maybe you have a heritage to look back to. But we don't have one. But by the grace of God, we're going to have one! And we can have one! And we can change the entire direction of our generation, simply by submitting ourselves to God and obeying His Word, and we can do that. And I'd like to encourage every one of you to get the same kind of a vision, so that your children, and your children's children, can look back and say, "Yes, I remember Grandpa and Grandma. They were godly people. When they prayed, God came down. When they spoke, my heart burned." Oh, that we would have that kind of a vision, each and every one of us.

Now, you may not have much of this to look back to, but it's God's will, that your children have it! And if your parents have failed at it, let's rise up above their failures and march to the beat of a different drum, and go ahead and chart a new course for the sake of our children, so that they can have that kind of a heritage. It is said, that a test of a man's Christianity, is his children. And that's right. That's a right statement. But I like to carry it one step further than that, looking into the Book of Proverbs, we find that a test of a man's Christianity, is his children's children. What do I mean by that? If a man's Christianity was thoroughly in his heart, he will have propagated it so thoroughly into the hearts of his children that they would be stirred up then, to go out and put it into their children. The test of a man's Christianity is his children's children. And I think that's a good challenge for everyone of us here this evening. To just lay that kind of test out before us, and ask ourselves this evening, what kind of a vision do we have? Do we even see our grandchildren, or are we just looking at our children? God wants us to look down the generations further, than just the children that are in our home.

A few examples that came to my mind that really blessed my heart: I'd like to share with you one example, and that is the example of William Booth, who was the founder of the Salvation Army, which was a mighty force for salvation and for God over a hundred years ago. William Booth was a soldier and a general in the Salvation Army. He had a wife named Catherine Booth. They had eight children together. William Booth loved God. There was no question in the hearts of his children about his dedication to the Lord. And he lived out a godly life in his home, and so did his wife. And those eight children, they grew up, and they just wanted to follow their father and their mother, and the steps that their father and mother walked in...all

eight of those children went right after them. And were scattered around the world as missionaries - preaching in some of the big cities around the world. Reaching down into the degradation of society. Well those eight children had forty-five grandchildren. And those forty-five grandchildren watched those eight children and their spouses and saw that they loved God, and that they were excited about the Lord, and that they had a real Christian life in them, and those forty-five grandchildren, every single one of them, rose up and said, "I'm going to follow the faith of my father and mother!" And those forty-five grandchildren all went out, scattered across the world on the mission field, to do the work of God. It blessed my heart on my last trip to Africa, I got on an airplane flying to Kenya, and there sat a Salvation Army lady, and I walked up to her and said, "Are you a born-again Salvation Army lady?" And she got a big smile on her face and said, "Yes, I've been born-again." And we had a little bit of talk there. And I began to share with her my appreciation of William Booth, and she told me that she went to Bible School with some of William Booth's great-grandchildren, and they're out on the mission field this day. That's what God wants! That's what God wants us to do! Pass on a vibrant, living Christianity to our children that will cause them to rise up and go out and do the work of God, which will cause their children to see that their parents are serious about God and they'll rise up and do the same thing, and it just keeps going on and on. The only thing that breaks the chain is cold-heartedness, and lukewarmness, and sin in the lives of God's people.

I think of another illustration that blessed my heart, and that is that of Hudson Taylor. Hudson Taylor was the founder of the China Inland Mission. He had a great-grandfather named James Taylor that lived during the days of John Wesley. James Taylor turned his heart over to the Lord, on the day of his wedding, because he heard John Wesley preach a sermon a few days before, which said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And there at his barn on the day of his wedding, he got on his knees, and he yielded his life to Jesus Christ, and he was late for his own wedding because he was on his knees praying, that God would bless his home. That young man, after he got married, it took him about two weeks to win his wife to the Lord, because he got converted on the day of his wedding, it took him two weeks to win his wife to the Lord, he became a Lay-Methodist preacher. He had several sons, and they all rose up and the zeal of their father, and became Lay-Methodist preachers, and then those sons, had several sons, who rose up and became Lay-Methodist preachers, and out of those sons was one father, who was the father of Hudson Taylor. And he used to pray, everyday, while he had a little boy, named little Hudson in his house, and the little boy would hear the father pray everyday, "Oh God, would you send missionaries to China. Oh God would you send missionaries to China." And Hudson Taylor, when he was six years old, he got alone with God, and said, "God, I'll go to China." And he said himself, at six years old, that he'll go to China and serve God. And it doesn't stop there. But the generations of preachers keeps right on going up to this generation, right now there's nine generations of preachers in the Taylor heritage and there's one right now in Thailand who is a missionary there. Nine generations of preachers! We're talking about a godly heritage! We're talking about some men getting a vision, and getting a hold of the grace of God, and raising up their children the way that their children will follow after them, and then their children will follow after them, and theirs will follow after them. And what is going to stop us?

One last illustration. Oh may God give us the vision of the potential that we have! May God give us a vision! He is no respecter of persons! None at all! These men are not special men that God chose out! These are men who obeyed God! That's what they are! And they got the fruit of their obedience. May God give us a vision that consumes us. A vision that will drive us to action. A vision that will pull our priorities back when we get busy. A vision that cannot be dimmed by anything in this world.

The last illustration. Jonathan Edwards - God used Jonathan Edwards in revival in the eastern part of the United States, over in New York State, 150 years ago. Jonathan Edwards had a wife. They were dedicated to the Lord. God gave them 10 children. They had a godly home. They raised those children for God. And Jonathan Edwards and his wife, they were anointed by the Holy Spirit; it's evident if you study their lives. George Whitefield came to their home and saw that godly home, and those 10 children and went back to England and said, "I'm going to find me a wife, that's the most beautiful picture I've seen in a long time of a godly home."

David Brainerd was planning to marry one of Jonathan Edwards's daughters, until he died of pneumonia, because he prayed himself to death. But Jonathan Edwards was a man of God! And he raised his children to be men and women of God! And the State of New York did a study on the five generations of the Edwards family, and I'd like to just give those details to you here this evening. In those five generations that they were able to trace, there were 729 descendants from the Jonathan Edwards family.

Out of those 729 descendants, 300 of them became preachers, 65 of them became college professors; and I'm not talking about professors like we have now. Back in his day, the schools were made for one reason and that was to raise up preachers, to send them out to preach the Word of God all over the world. Sixty-five of those descendants were college professors. Thirteen of his descendants were university presidents. Sixty of his descendants were authors. Three of his descendants were congressman, and one was a Vice-president.

All from one man who loved God, and set himself with his wife, to raise his children for God. And now we can see how the generations flow out from that. They also did a study at the same time, and this is just a good example of what happens if we neglect our responsibility. Max Juke and his brother, married sisters. They didn't believe in Christianity, they didn't believe in Christ. They believed in living their lives for themselves and going their own way. Five generations of their descendants were also calculated.

They had 1,026 descendants. Of those 1,026 descendants, 300 died of an early death because of a hard life. One hundred forty spent an average of 13 years in the penitentiary each. One hundred and ninety of their descendants became public prostitutes. And 100 of their descendants were alcoholics. And it was figured, back in the days that the statistics were written, that it cost the State of New York \$1.2 million to take care of all those derelicts. We're talking about getting a vision! We're talking about a godly heritage! We're talking about having something we can pass on to our children that they could pass on to their children, and on and on it goes.

Just give you a few more little statistics here this evening: And for those that are listening to the tape, I'm putting on the board here, two little marks, and we'll call one, poppa, and we'll call the other one momma. We did this in our house a couple of months ago, and it was very interesting. We put two little marks on the board, and underneath those two marks we gave that poppa and that momma, six children; we put six marks underneath the two marks and said, "Now the poppa and momma have six children." And then we just went a little bit further and said, "Alright, now if each one of those children had six children also have six children, let's see how many that would be - 36." And then we decided, "Well, lets go down one more generation, and one more generation and one more generation." And what we came up with is in the next generation, there were 216 descendants. And in the next generation there were 1,296 descendants, and in the next generation, there were 7,776 descendants and we added them all up and came up with more than 10,000 from one poppa and one momma who had six children, whose six children had six children, and each one of those six children had six children and in five generations you had 10,000 people. Now

maybe that doesn't do anything to you. But to me that is very stirring. And I'll tell you somebody else that it's stirring to, and that's Satan. He knows the statistics! He knows that if he gets you right up here (meaning the top of the chart, the poppa and the momma) he's got all this down here at the same time (meaning the generations to follow). He is no dummy! He knows if he can shoot mom and dad off the rock of Christ Jesus, he'll get all of these down through here and he'll have 10,000 of them for himself. But our Heavenly Father also knows these statistics, and the Spirit of God knows these statistics, and God knows that if He can get a hold of a poppa's heart in these meetings, and a momma's heart in these meetings and set them in the right direction, that they will raise up their children for God in such a way, that they will raise up their children for God, and then their children for God, all the way down here, we have 10,000 descendants. Now I realize, that's hypothetical. Maybe you could say, "Yes, but one won't; and one won't here." But I only give it as an illustration to help you to see the potential that you as a father, and you as a mother have here this evening. Cut it in half if you want. Make it 5,000. It's still a tremendous work of God. A tremendous work of God.

So God is calling us to our responsibilities, as parents, to see the potential. But, you have to be truly a Christian man. You have to be truly a Christian woman at home. If you're truly a Christian man at home. If you walk with God at home. If you rise up and teach your children, at home. If you will be diligent, at home. If you'll live an example, at home. If you'll live out the principles of the Word of God, at home. If you'll live with a fire in your bosom, at home. If you'll get consumed with raising your children, at home. God can do something, just like we put on the board up here. With your life. Some of you are looking at me like you don't believe me. But the Bible is the Word of God. And we need to get a vision. Without a vision, the people perish. But with a vision, God's work is prospered and it goes forth! And it's blessed. If you'll live like that at home, you'll have children that will rise up and raise their children for God! We see the illustration of a Bishop in the New Testament. One of the requirements of a Bishop is to make sure he has a family that's in order. One that lives right, behind the closed door. We know that's true! If you find a home that's in order, you've found somebody, who lives right, behind the closed door. You'll find a man who's in order in his private life. You see, our family gives us away. We cannot hide ourselves. We may think for a few years that nobody really knows what we're like. But it's not true. We cannot hide ourselves; we cannot hide what we are like. Our children give us away every time. Father and mother are sober - children are sober. Father and mother are foolish - children are foolish. Father and mother are critical - children are critical. We cannot hide ourselves. Only thing is, it takes a few years before the children come out of their innocence and begin manifesting the examples that they lived while they were in your home. So we can see from that example why God says, if you're going to choose a bishop, you make sure that man has a family that's in order. Because it tells you something. He's doing what's right, when nobody else is around. He's living a consistent life, when the door is shut and everyone else is gone. You can see it, in the home. Our family is an expression of us. Our family is an extension of us. Our family is a carbon copy of us, and, if I may say more specifically, of us men. Our families, our homes are an extension of each one of us. It even says that in the scriptures. The house of Onesiphorus, the house of Stephanus, the house of Philip - it uses those terms. And the reason why the Bible uses those terms is because your family is your house; it's the expression, the extension, the carbon copy of your life. Now that's not a very pleasant thought at times, but it can be a real motivation to each one of us to rise up and raise our children for God.

Now we're talking about a godly heritage here this evening. We're talking about passing on to the generations to come, the mighty works of God. And our backgrounds here are different, and I don't know some of you. Maybe your parents didn't do a very good job. Maybe you've already been sitting here thinking and listening while I've been talking and saying, "My mom and dad weren't that way with me."

Well it could be that that's the case, but, brothers and sisters, now it's our turn.

Now it's our turn! Maybe they didn't do right! Maybe they could have done better! But now it's our turn! Let's rise up! Let's rise up and build for God! I'd like to make a statement. Outside of the ministry, the work of God, rearing my children for God is the most challenging, maturing, self-denying, time-consuming thing I do. Outside of the work of God, raising the children for God is the most challenging, maturing, self-denying, time-consuming thing that I do. Why do I say that?

Because raising your children for God must become a priority. It can't be a sideline. You are not going to get the results that we've been speaking about this evening, if raising your children is a sideline! It's got to be a big priority in your life! One of the biggest. Now in the New Testament, if we could just turn there in Ephesians just for a moment, chapter six, we want to read a verse. Ephesians 6:4, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Now there is a very small statement, and God does not say a lot in the New Testament about raising children. Very matter of factly, He doesn't. But this little verse that we've read: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord", I would like to challenge each one of you this evening, that you could spend 30 minutes everyday, for an entire year meditating on this simple little verse and not get done with all that you could draw out of it. It's a very simple statement: "Raise them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But yet, it has great depth to it. There are many, many statements that are hidden in that one verse that we've read. Many, many of them. God's Word has many applications to it, many applications tucked away inside of it. But we must meditate upon God's Word, in order to draw them out for our lives. I'd like to make another statement. Just as we can draw many many things to our mind when we look at this verse here in Ephesians 6, we can do the same thing in other areas of life.

For example, if someone told you to go out and raise up a garden, and make it fruitful, many things come to your mind. If someone told you to go out and build a building, those of you that are builders, many, many things come to your mind. I don't know how many would say, it's probably a multitude, of different things that come into your mind, with the simple statement, "Go and build a building." Go and build a house, builder! Go and raise up a garden, farmer! Go and bring and bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, God's people!

And what I'm saying is, is there are many, many, many things in that simple little verse, that we need to know, so that when that verse comes to our mind, our mind will be filled with thoughts that we can do, and that's one of my goals this week, is to fill your hearts and minds with things, that you can do, to raise your children for God. Also, I'd like to convince you that the principles of raising a garden work, and the principles for raising children work just the same. Let me say that again.

The principles of raising a garden work! And the principles of raising children work also! Many of God's people do not believe that. Many of God's people do not believe that. In fact, they live in unbelief. They live in fear. They live in doubt, as to how their children will turn out. But I believe in my heart, that in the same way that we learn principles about building a house or raising a garden, God also puts principles in His Word. And if we'll follow the principles that He gives in His Word, we can get the same results.

We can get lasting results. Everyone of us here we know, there's no doubt in our mind, if we go out into our garden and put the little seeds into the ground, we know that something is going to grow. We know

how to take care of those plants. Our hearts desire is that we would get a vision of our homes in the same way. That we would know, "Okay, now I have a child. Here's what I need to do with this child in order to raise this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Point 1, point 2, point 3, 4, 5, 6 - 10, 20, 30, 40 - 80, 100, 200! Put 200 points underneath it! That would be an underestimate. Oh, that God would make us students of raising children! Just like we became students, of our gardens, of building a building, of running a business, of sewing, or whatever! Oh, that God would make us students of raising our children for Him. So many people lack faith in raising their children. But this evening, my testimony is, that I do have faith.

I do not faint in my heart as I raise my children, I do not listen to the lies of Satan, who comes along and says, "It's not going to work out." I do not listen to those, based on the Word of God, I have faith in the principles of God's Word, that if I do what the Bible says, then God will do what He said He will do! And I believe that! And it's faith in my heart! Raising my children is not a giant to me! It's a blessed opportunity! If I obey the Bible, I'll get results. If I obey garden principles, I will get results. May God give us a vision of faith of what He can do if we'll just simply follow His Word in raising our children.

I've noticed something about children. People get pretty touchy when you try to talk to them about their children. People get easily offended when you try to give them an admonition. Maybe you've tried before, and sensed that coolness of spirit, you sense that quietness, sense that wall going up, when you try to encourage somebody or admonish them about their home. Maybe you've felt it. I've noticed it many times, as a pastor. When you try to talk to somebody about their children, it seems to be a very touchy issue. And I believe one of the reasons for that is because our children are a part of us. And when somebody begins to bring a need to us about our children, what they're really saying is, "Right here, on me." (Meaning, they are really speaking about the parent) But I'd like to encourage you this week, that you open up your hearts, if we really have our sights set on a godly home, we will welcome the admonitions that come our way, and I want to encourage you, just open your hearts. I may step on your toes this week, if you come back after tonight. I may step on your toes a few times, but I assure you, I have godly children in mind and nothing else. Ourselves, we receive much criticism concerning our home, concerning our children. Much criticism comes my way, often. I often wonder about the motives behind some of the criticism that comes our way, but none-the-less, we get a lot of criticism and I'd just like to share with you what I do with it. When somebody comes to me, and wants to give some criticism about my home, I welcome it. I welcome it, I take note of it. I go home and think about it. I bring it home and sit my wife down, and say, "Jackie, here is some criticism that has come our way concerning our children. Let's take a look at it. Let's ponder it. Let's pray over it. Let's see if we're doing right in this area." And the reason why I do that is because I don't want to make a mistake! I don't want to find out 10 years from now that I made a big mistake! I want to know now! So I would say to each one of you, that I welcome your criticism. I would encourage a gentle criticism, but I'll take it any way you can give it! I want to raise my children for the Lord! I would encourage each one of you to be the same way this week. Just open heart, teachable spirit, willing to learn, willing to examine your homes. I believe God will bless you if you can do that.

Something that's been a real blessing to me as I meditate on homes and raising children has been our persecuted brethren in Russia. How they train their children. Oh, what diligence they exercise in the training of their children. Over in Russia, and I know it's not that way now, but it has been for many, many years; in Russia, the children went to the communist schools. In Russia, the Christian children were laughed at while they were at school, they were mocked at openly, they were beaten, they had their Bibles torn up in front of the class, and they were made fun of while they were at school.

The parents knew their children would have to go through these kinds of things when they sent them away to the communist schools. They didn't have the opportunities we have to send them to a Christian school, or teach them in our own homes! But something that this situation did in their hearts was something that we need to get a hold of ourselves. It made those fathers and mothers very earnest. They had to do right! They had to train those children! They had to pray for their children!

They had to give the right example to their children! They had to live out a Christian example before them, because they had to send those children out into an ugly, mean world, that was set to destroy the faith that was inside the heart of those children. It would do us some good, to meditate upon them some, as we examine, how much time we are giving to the training of our children. And by the way, the communists don't get very many of those children. It doesn't seem right that we should lose ours to the world, does it?

You know that God's people are losing their children to the world, generation after generation, after generation it's happening. That's one of the things that motivated me to make a complete change in my life and begin looking for other people besides the Christian people that I was dwelling among many years ago. I looked around and I saw that they couldn't even keep one generation of their children. I saw the children growing up in the church there, and the girls were sensuously dressed and the boys were running after "hot-rods", and there was promiscuity among the young people, and worldliness, and going to amusements, and all these things, and I looked at those things and I said in my heart and I said to my wife, you know, if we stay around here, this is exactly what's going to happen to our children.

We don't want to lose our children to the world. We don't want our children to go out into the world and leave Christianity behind, and it happens all the time doesn't it? Look in the newspaper sometime and see for yourself! Open up the page there, to the wedding section. See the Stoltzfus', the Weaver's, the King's, and all the other names that you'll find in there. Look at them there in the newspaper, you can see them! Big fancy suit on, big fancy tuxedo; she has a \$500.00 wedding dress and everything is fancy and all that!

You can look in a paper and see for yourself! They are losing them by the dozens and dozens and dozens every year. We don't want to do that! We want to have our children. We want to have our children in the faith! We want to have them in Heaven with us someday! Hallelujah! But that doesn't happen by accident and it's not all up to God and salvation for that to happen. God has much for us to do with it. Also, I think we can learn something from the Catholics tonight. You know what the Catholic priest says to the parents when their little children are born?

I guess they probably tell them this at their baptism, because they baptize babies. They tell the parents, "You give us your children for the first seven years, and we'll have them in the church the rest of their life." That's what they tell the parents. What are they saying by that? You bring them to church every time there is an opportunity, you bring them to the confession, you bring them into the Sunday school classes, you put them in our schools, you put them in our socials, you fill their lives with everything that is going on in the Catholic church for the first seven years and we'll have them for the rest of their life! What are they saying? Those first seven years are very important years, very important. Get it right. Do it right. Let's learn from them! We can learn!

We're talking about a godly heritage. One time I had the opportunity to sit down at an old Mennonite man's home, who had twelve children. We got to visit there. He had us into his home for a meal, we sat down at the table, and it was a full table - it was a long table strung out there, and we sat down and had a meal together. And there were all the children, sitting in a row around the table, father here, mother here and all

the children around there. It was a blessing to have a meal there in the home. After the meal was done and we were finished fellowshiping there in the meal, we went in the living room and I sat down and talked to this wise old Mennonite man and I said, "Tell me...could you please tell me - what did you do to have your children turn out like this?" He had a dozen of them. Age 25 to age 3. "What did you do to have your children turn out like this?" And I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Well, I didn't do anything. It's just the grace of God. It's just the grace of God." And I know that's a good and humble thing to say, but it's not true. It's not true. It's not just the grace of God. If you leave it all in the grace of God, it won't turn out right. And I believe for some people, that's why it hasn't turned out right. Because they just left it all in the "grace of God" - when God told us things to do! It's not just the grace of God, I agree. When we get all done, and we're old, and all our children are raised, yes, we're going to say, "If it wasn't for the grace of God, we never could have done it. God did it in spite of us." I know we'll say those things! But we also have to acknowledge, there are many things that we did, according to the Word of God, if the children turn out right. Imagine, going out into the garden, planting the seeds, and then putting a little lawn chair, right next to the garden and just sitting down and trusting the grace of God to take care of the hoeing and the weeding and the fertilizing and the cultivating and the watering and all those things! Imagine how foolish that would be. You plant a garden like that and just trust the grace of God, and you'll have a weed patch, with a little bit of fruit, maybe, on the plants.

So let me encourage you. It's more than just the grace of God that makes our children turn out right. There are many things that we can do! Israel trusted in God, but they also went out to battle. And we need to trust in God, but we also need to get busy and raise our children and do what God tells us to do.

Now I'd like to share a little story with you this evening, that God used in my life many years ago, I guess it's 10 years ago. I'd like to share with you a little story about the John Gerber family. We're speaking about a Godly heritage; we're speaking about passing on to the next generation. God used this family to implant some things in my heart that you saw the result of tonight. It all started way back here, with this little family, the John Gerber family. The John Gerber family lives in Ft.

Frances, Ontario, Canada. They live there to this day, although John Gerber passed away a few months ago, I am told. Ft. Frances Ontario is a small town of about 5,000 people. It's not an area like this, where we live in. There's not a lot of plain people around Ft. Frances, Ontario; it's just a regular little city of 5,000 people. But a few years ago, 10 to be exact, I was up in International Falls, Minnesota, working with a revival team, and every night - the revival was three weeks long - and every night there was this family that just kept coming to the meetings, and I noticed them.

They were a little bit different. The men didn't wear ties. They had lapel suits, but they didn't wear ties. And the women dressed more modest than other women did, and they had this black thing on the back of their head - it wasn't as big as it ought to be, but it was there. I'd never seen anything like it in my life! And I was intrigued with this family. They come each night, and sit there, and it seemed like they were enjoying the revival meetings. And one evening, Mr. Gerber walked up to me after the service and said; "I would like you to come to my house for breakfast.

Can you come?" And I said, "Yes, I can." And he said, "Would you come on Tuesday morning?" And I said, "Yes, I believe I can come on Tuesday morning." He gave me some general directions on how to get there, I said goodbye, and he went his way. Well I started fellowshiping with other people, and I told them, "Well I'm going to the John Gerber home for breakfast on Tuesday morning." And they got a big smile on their face. And they said, "Oh, you will really enjoy that home." "Oh, okay - fine!"

I didn't know what that meant. I was a Baptist back then. I'd never really seen a clear beautiful example of a godly home like that one. So Tuesday morning came, and I headed out for Ft. Frances. And as I was going through the city, I made a turn or two that must have been wrong, and I got myself lost, and I thought, "Now what am I going to do? How am I going to find John Gerber? All he gave me was some general directions - how am I going to find him?" And I pulled into a little minute market there in the little city of Ft.

Frances, and I said, a little bit reluctant - I didn't know if anybody would know them. I said, "I'm looking for the John Gerber family. Do you know where they live?" And the person behind the counter got a big smile on their face again. And said, "Sure! I know where they live! Go down this highway, make a left hand turn, make another right hand turn and another left and you'll be there." Well I thought, "Thank you." And I got back in the car and I headed down the highway. And as I'm going down the highway, I missed the turn that I was supposed to make, and I kept on going down the highway.

You know how it is when you miss a turn - you keep looking and you keep looking - "Well maybe it's over the next hill..." Well, I went and I went quite a ways and finally I gave up and said, "I must have made a wrong turn, or I must have missed the turn." So I stopped at an old gas station out there in the country, and I pulled in there and I said, "I'm looking for the John Gerber family, would you have any idea who that is and where they live?" And the old man in the gas station got a big smile on his face, and he said, "Sure!

I know where they live! Go back up the highway, make a right hand turn, go through here, make a right hand turn, down the highway and left and you'll be there." So I went on down the highway, I made the turn, and there was a small residential area there, and then it went back out into the country, and somehow in that residential area I got lost again, and really - I do know how to follow directions, I got lost in that residential area. This really did happen. And I didn't know what I'm going to do now.

So I thought, "Well, I know how to knock on doors, I'll go up and I'll knock on a door." I knocked on a door and someone came and answered, and I told them who I was and I said, "I'm looking for the John Gerber family. Do you know where they live?" And they got a big smile on their face! "Sure! We know where they live! You just go this way, and go down this road, and turn in left and you'll be there." Ok, so I arrived at the farm. The boys were still outside doing the chores.

The girls were in the kitchen with momma, fixing breakfast. There were seven children at home at the time, when I was there. And after the boys got done with the chores, they all came in the house and we sat down at this table together, for a nice country breakfast and we ate the meal, and while we were eating we had some different conversations, talked about the revival meetings and things like that, and when the meal was over with, why, father, who was a short German man with a gruff voice, took his Bible and I was sitting right at his right hand, and he just put the Bible down and he said, "Here - you'll have devotions this morning."

And I was a Baptist and you don't do that to a Baptist. They're not used to those kinds of things. But he stuck that Bible in my hand and said, "You'll have the devotions this morning." So, I was on the spot. And I knew the Bible said to be "Instant, in season and out of season", so I opened up the Bible to Ephesians and started reading it, and I was whispering a prayer to God, saying "Lord, you're going to have to help me here..." So I started reading in Ephesians chapter 1.

And while I was reading, being insecure in the situation, I looked up to see what everyone's response was to my reading, and I looked down the row of the table, and here were all the children lined up, and they

had their hands folded like this, and their eyes were shut, and they were just squeezing everything they could out of the verses that I was reading. And I noted that. That was very unusual to me. We had a little discussion out of Ephesians chapter 1, closed the Bible, and then father passed out songbooks and said, "We're going to sing a while."

And we started singing. When that family started singing, the heavens just opened up. The glory of God came down at that little dining room. And I trust you know what I mean by that. I mean, the Spirit of God was there. It wasn't a dead devotion, it was alive with God. And I'm just sitting back, taking all this in. Finished with the singing, we had prayer together, he dismissed us, and I just got up from the table and started toward the end of the room, and the boys were right on me.

And they had tracts in every pocket. They had a gospel tract on the verbal inspiration of the Bible; they wanted to give me that. They had a gospel tract about Billy Graham and wanted to ask me, what do I think about Billy Graham. They were throwing tracts at me, left and right, asking me questions and I was so overwhelmed with all these young men doing this. I finished talking to the boys, and momma pulled on my coattail and she took me into the living room and she started crying and she was sharing with me, "Please, pray with us for Ft.

Frances, we're praying that revival would break out in Ft. Frances." And here is this momma sitting here crying while she's talking to me, and I'm just taking it all in. I've never seen anything like this before. And the boys took me on a tour of the farm, and we were heading out to the milk house, and I'm a city boy, and I'd never been in a milk house before, and just before we got to the milk house where the milk truck backed in, and he stopped right in the middle of his conversation, jumped up on the milk truck, stuck a track through the window, and said to the man, "Hey, have you been born-again?"

Gave him a track right there, and I'm just watching it all. Taking it in, wondering about this family, and the whole time they took me on a tour of the farm, they had a pig operation, and a chicken operation, and a cow operation - they had a dozen children, I guess they had all those things to keep them busy. But all the while we're touring the farm, they're just talking about the Lord, and I could tell they loved God, and they were asking me questions, and it was just a real refreshing visit there.

When I got done, I got in my car, and Mrs. Gerber came out, and she had a loaf of German bread and she put it in the back seat, and she had a dozen eggs, and she put it in the back seat, and I waved goodbye and drove away, just pondering this whole thing, wondering, "God - what are you saying to me? This is an unusual visit that I've had." I made my way back down the roads, and came to the gate to go across from Canada into America, and a big tall Canadian, you know, with the uniform; he walked to the door of the car and you know, they always have a real gruff voice and frown on their face to catch anybody whose being dishonest.

He walked up, you know and said, "Where ya' going?" And I told him, "I'm going back to the United States, we're having revival meetings over there." And he asked me, "Do you have anything in the car?" And I thought for a minute, and I thought, "Yes, I do... yes, I do. I have a loaf of German bread and a dozen eggs in the back seat of the car." And that gruff man, he looked down at me and he got a big smile on his face and he said, "You've been to the John Gerber home, haven't you?" And I looked up at that man, and I said, "Yes, I have!" He said, "Alright, go ahead, on your way." And I just kept right on driving, pondering this whole thing.

God did something in my heart that day. We only had two children then - Rebecca and Daniel, they were little. Daniel was about two years old, Rebecca was about four - but God did something in my heart that day. He put a picture frame around that little experience, and I know it as if it happened yesterday. It's so sweet to me! But God gave me a vision there and I realized the power of a godly home. And I realized, look what this home did to my own life! And I said, "God, I want a home like that! I've got to have a home like that! Lord if you can do it for him, you can do it for me!" And I was just a "hippie". Hadn't been converted a long time, a few years. But I didn't have any vision like that. I didn't know what God wanted to do with a family. But God did something inside my heart, and I set myself, I mean, I patterned myself and I patterned my home with that goal in mind. I said in my heart, "I want to have a family that is a testimony in the community where we live. I want to have a family, that loves God and everybody else knows it. I want to have a family that can win souls when people come into the home. That's the kind of family I want!"

God gave me a vision. You know it tickles me now when I think about it. But I went home, and I know I made a lot of mistakes, but I went home with a zeal. I mean, I took those two little children and I sat them down, and I put momma over here and I got out the Bible and I said, "We're going to have devotions." We didn't have them before that, very little. Read the Bible a little bit, but no purpose! You know, I had no purpose! I had no vision! I had no goals! Now, I had the goals. And I put those two little children down, and we started with three songs. And I said, "We're going to sing in devotions! I want my children to sing like the John Gerber family sings someday, we're starting now." So we took three songs, and we learned them. And I'm sure that momma got a little bored with the three songs, but we sang those songs day in and day out, we sang those songs. I wanted the children to know the songs. And I made a lot of mistakes back in those early days, but my heart was right. My goal was right. My vision was right. I wanted my family to be a testimony to the glory of God. And that's what God wants for every family that is in this room. You know that you know, there's a dearth in the land for families like that. You know it is. You know you have to go a long ways to find one. That's not right! God is no respecter of persons, remember! God wants to do that with every single home that is in this room tonight! He wants to do it again! And He can do it again! And He is able to do it again! And He will do it again! If we'll just get a vision of what He can do! He'll do it again! But brothers and sisters, it doesn't happen by accident. That home did not happen by accident. Something went on, on purpose. You know it's interesting too; some generations back went on, "on purpose" too. I was talking to Brother Mose, oh, it's years ago now, and he told me of a trip that he made to Switzerland, which is where the John Gerber family moved from. And he said he met John Gerber's brother! And he's the same way, and his family is the same way, and there testimony is the same way over in Switzerland, as this one is in Canada. Somebody did something right, a generation before, or maybe two generations ago.

What is God saying to us tonight? He is saying, "My people! I want you to leave a heritage for your children!" He's saying, "My people! My Spirit is moving on the hearts of fathers and turning their hearts to their children!" He's saying, "My people! I want you to raise your children, that they'd be a godly example of my glory, and of my work in these days upon the earth." That's what He's saying to all of us! It's not right that there be just one or two here and there! It's not right! It's not right that one family gets a lot of attention brothers and sisters! It's not right! There ought to be so many families that get attention that all the families get lost in all the rest of the godly families, hallelujah! May God let it be so! It's not right, that there just be one or two! It's God's will, that the church of Jesus Christ be filled with Godly families, filled with Godly fathers and mothers, with a zeal, with a vision, with a vibrant Christianity, that they can pass it on to their children. And their children would take those hot coals and pass them on to their children, and on down the line it goes. I'll say this in closing about John Gerber. He passed away just a few months ago. The

church there where they went was called The Point of Pine Mennonite Church. There were about 40 people in the church. But at his funeral, there were 750 people out of a town of 5,000; 750 came to his funeral, out of every walk of life. They came to that man's funeral and honored him at his death. Why? Because one man and one woman, when they were first married, set themselves to raise their children in such a way that it would be a testimony to the glory of God. Let's be the same way, and set ourselves to be a testimony to the glory of God. Shall we kneel together for prayer?

Our Heavenly Father, Oh, God, we thank you. We've heard with our ears; our fathers have told us, God, what you've done in the days gone by. But now it's our turn Lord. Father, I'm praying tonight, I'm praying tonight that you will raise up, more John Gerber families. Lord, raise up more Jonathan Edward families. God, raise up, more Hudson Taylor families. God, I know that you want to. Oh Father, we just commit each one of these families into your hands tonight. Lord I pray that you'll stir each one of our hearts Lord, make us hungry Lord, make us thirsty Father, give us a visions that will not be put out no matter what comes our way. Oh Father, I just pray, I pray you'll turn the Spirit of the Living God loose upon each and every one of us, Lord, and may we not resist the grace of God, that is turning our hearts toward our children. Father, we thank you for the sweet blessings of these testimonies tonight, and we just pray, do it again Lord, do it again. Oh God, if we truly have revival, it's got to touch our homes, or it's no revival at all. God we're just praying now, committing the whole week into your hands Lord, I'm committing all these people into your hands, Oh Father, I know that some of them may not be able to come back, but Oh God, I pray, make it a priority in the hearts of the people, that their children may raise up and glorify you. Father we ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving. Amen.

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