

From Heart to Home

Josh Patterson – April 26, 2015

Good morning. Are you doing okay? Good. All right, my name is Josh Patterson. I'm one of the pastors here on staff. Just about every month I teach in Kids' Village and have for the last 11 years. Every time I get up, I say to the kiddos, "Hey guys, let's say thank you..." So kids, I need you to do this. Can you say, "Thank you, Mr. Bleecker"? He could barely hear you. You have to say it louder than that. Say it again. Okay, parents, adults, after the service, Michael has told me he would like for you to say that to him after every time he... So can you just say, "Thank you, Mr. Bleecker"?

I really do love teaching in Kids' Village. Every time I'm in there, I have this thing I do with the kids where I try to make sure they're with me. I'll say, "Hey, I'm going to ask you a question, and if I ask you a question, I need you to respond a certain way." I say, "If I ask you this question, there's only one way that you respond. You lift up your hand like this and say, 'Cha-ching.'"

Let's practice that, okay? If I say, "Are you with me?" you go, "Cha-ching." Kids first. Are you with me? *Cha-ching!* Great. Now parents, adults, everybody else ready? Are you with me? *Cha-ching.* Okay, now I am going to need a little bit of help. I'm going to ask questions. I'm going to do this one a little bit differently than I may do on a typical Sunday. I'm going to engage you. The hope is you will help me. So are you with me? *Cha-ching!* Here we go.

I am unashamedly a sports fan. I grew up a sports fan. Sports were a big part of my family growing up. I grew up in Dallas, so I'm a Dallas sports fan. I love the Mavericks, I love the Rangers, I love the Stars, and I love the Dallas Cowboys. I have my entire life. I respect you if you grew up in another city and you're a fan of the teams of that city. I'm not quite sure what to do with people who are fans of teams because of their colors or because of their mascots or things like that. I get really confused with all of that.

If you grew up in the Boston area, I expect you to cheer for the Red Sox. I expect you to love the Patriots, and I can respect that. So part of what I'm doing as I'm a sports fan... I'm teaching my little

ones to love Dallas sports, and I'm teaching them and really training them, specifically with the Cowboys, to know what it means to have the privilege to cheer for America's greatest football team. It's just a part of what we do in our home.

Let me tell you what this looks like. We watch the games together. We sit down on Sundays. I arrange things around Sunday. Like a noon kickoff is so awful, because noon is nine minutes from now, so I feel that, but a 3:00 game is great. We will arrange the day, and we'll sit there and watch. I'm answering questions. I'm dialoguing. We're talking about players. I mean, this is what we do. I love this team. I talk about the glory days that were then, and the year... This is our year. I'm thinking. I'm always hoping. I'm in. I'm ready. Can I get an amen?

They know Dez caught that ball. They know that. At the end of the season we had this question, because in my house, part of loving the Cowboys means there are teams we *don't* love. You're not allowed to be a fan of the Eagles. You can't cheer for the Redskins. You can't love the Giants. The Chiefs? Who cares? They're a non-factor, but there are certain teams we just can't root for.

When DeMarco Murray got traded to the Eagles, there were questions the kids had. "What do we do? How do we respond in this situation?" I responded like any father would. "Here's what we do. We respect the man. He played great for us, and we respect him. We wish him the best in all of life, and we pray that his team is awful." That's what we do. That's how we reconcile this. I don't see what the issue is.

Let me just say this. You transmit what you treasure. You pass on your passions. I see this with my in-laws who are massive Baylor fans. They went to Baylor. My wife went to Baylor. Her grandparents went to Baylor. Her brother and her sister went to Baylor. Her cousins went to Baylor. You went to Baylor. They teach the kids, "Put your hand on your knee like this. Then you bring it up and do the Sic 'Em." They get them the clothes. They take them to games. They do Homecoming. They are Baylor fans. There's just this something.

Again, as a dad, I told the kids, "Hey, here's the deal. If you can't get into A&M, Baylor is a fine choice. You can go there, and I wouldn't be terribly upset about that. That's fine." That's just kind of how we live with these things. But you transmit what you treasure. They love it. It's fun for them. They're passionate about it, and they're giving this to the kids. It's this good, healthy kind of environment.

The reality is we're all doing this. It may not have anything to do with sports or colleges. It may have to do with a craft or music or a hobby or gardening or cars or hunting or fishing or electronics or kind of tinkering and building. You are passing on something. You just are. Everybody is. We transmit what we treasure. We pass on what we're passionate about.

This is not just for a parent but for Christians. The reality is there are no neutral parties out there. Everybody has an agenda. I've heard parents say, "I just want to back up. I don't want to really push anything on my kids." My response would be, "You're the only one who doesn't want to push something on your kids." I don't care what school they go to, a private school or public school, they're pushing something on your kids. Media is pushing something on you and me and our children. Entertainment is pushing something on you and me and our families.

Everybody is pushing something, so to stand back and pretend it's neutral is to walk in a sense of denial and foolishness. That's why the Lord Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 28, "Hey, here's what I want my people to be about. My people are to be about taking this gospel message to the nations, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you." We are to be diligent about making disciples. We too have an agenda. We too have something we're to bring to the table, namely the glory and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's not that Baylor or A&M or sports or Cowboys... Those aren't bad things. They just have a pecking order. They're just not the main things. If you have a Bible, grab it and turn to Deuteronomy, chapter 6. Moses is going to lay out a pecking order for prioritization.

You can be an absolute fanatic about hunting and want to take your kids there with you. You can be passionate about cars and about gardening. You can be passionate about whatever it is, and that is good and right and fine, but there's a pecking order of priority, and Moses is going to lay that out. Deuteronomy 6. We're going to start in verse 4.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as

frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Let me give you the key point. We do this in Kids' Village. Here's the key point for the message: *the formation of a Christian home is the fruit of a Christian heart*. Now in Kids' Village, I have the kids help us. So we're going to repeat that. Kids, here's what I need you to do. You're going to say it with me. Ready? Kiddos, let's go. "The formation of a Christian home is the fruit of a Christian heart."

Now we're going to get a little bit louder. We're going to divide the room. You guys, *this* side, are going to yell, "The formation of a Christian home..." *You* guys are going to try to yell louder. "...is the fruit of a Christian heart." Are you ready? "The formation of a Christian home is the fruit of a Christian heart." Y'all want to try that again? Because they beat y'all on that one. Here we go. Ready, go! "The formation of a Christian home is the fruit of a Christian heart." Unbelievable. That was a tie.

The formation of a Christian home is the fruit of a Christian heart. We're going to talk about this. Right out of the gate, Moses says, "Hear, O Israel." The word *hear* is the Hebrew word *shema*. Do you know what *shema* means? It means hear. So it's called the *Shema*. The *shema* means hear. Moses is saying, "Hear, O Israel." It carries this idea of, "Obey. Take hold of this. Look at this. Grab it. Heed this. You have to get this." Who? Israel, everybody, the people of God. "Hear, O Israel."

What Moses is going to write about here is he's going to reveal who God is. In fact, God is revealing who he is through Moses. He says, "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**" Now this statement basically is the summary of the law. This statement carries the essence of who God is. This idea that the Lord our God is one means the Lord is unique. There is no one like him. He is different. He is set apart. There are no other gods like this one God.

When Moses is writing this, he's writing into a context and into a culture where there are all of these false religions and false gods, and these false religions and false gods competed against each other, and the people didn't know, "Is this god happy? Is that god happy? How do I please this god? How do I please that god?" There was all of this confusion. It was called *polytheism*, meaning multiple gods. So they weren't quite sure what was going on.

Then here comes the Lord, and he reveals who he is. The God of Israel, Yahweh, says, "The Lord is one." He's unique. He's different. He's set apart. He's all-sufficient, which means he can do anything. He's all-powerful. All of a sudden, the God of Israel stands up and is presented as completely unique.

Listen to this quote from Matthew Henry. He says, "It is better to have one fountain than a thousand cisterns; one all-sufficient God than a thousand insufficient [ones]." **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."**

So God has been revealed in verse 4, and this God is unique and powerful and mighty. Then Moses says, "This is how we're to respond" in verses 5-6. He gives a command, and it's an interesting command. The command in verse 5 is, **"You shall love the LORD your God..."** *This* God, this unique God, this all-sufficient God, this God who has revealed himself. You don't have to wonder what he's like. He's telling us what he's like. "You shall love this God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your might."

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever heard that verse before? Have you ever heard that verse in the New Testament? Who said that? Jesus said it. Jesus picks up this verse from the *Shema*. He goes back into the Old Testament and picks it up and brings it all the way over here into the New Testament.

Somebody asks him, "Hey, what's the greatest commandment?" and Jesus says, "The greatest commandment is this: that you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." He says it in Matthew, in Mark, and in Luke. All of those writers pick this up.

What we see here is that this phrase, this command, isn't something that's just for the Old Testament, but Jesus brings it into the New and says that all of our life, all of our essence, all of our expression, all of our intellect, all of our strength, all of our will is to be focused toward this one all-sufficient, almighty, all-powerful, all-glorious, all good, wise, and loving God. That's what we're to be about. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all of your strength."

Then in verse 6 he lays it out a little bit more. He says, "These things..." What things? The things we've just been talking about. "They shall be on your heart." Before Moses ever gets to activity, before he ever gets to things we're to be busy about doing, Moses starts talking about affection. Before he moves to activity, he begins with affection. This has to be on your heart.

Parents, before you ever spiritually lead in your home, you have to have the gospel rooted in your heart. It starts with this confession personally. Is it down in the depths of who I am that the Lord

our God is one, that he is unique, set apart, mighty, wise, generous, good, and loving? Has that taken root in my heart? Has that reality hit my heart and taken up residence there? Because that's where Moses says it has to start.

Again, before we're ever investing in those in our homes, there has to be a deposit in our hearts. So the first question I would pose to any of us and all of us is...*Has the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ taken up root or residence in your heart?* Do you love him? Do you have affection for him? Not some kind of weird affection, but an affection of "I am moved by this one who has laid down his life for me. Because I've been purchased and bought with a price, I can live for no other." Has that washed over you? Has it washed over me?

So we see that God is revealed. Then Moses says this is our response. So the question is...*How do we do that?* How do we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength? How do we make sure these words have taken up residence in our hearts, as verse 6 says? Moses is going to say in verses 7-9. The outworking of verses 5-6 play out in verses 7-9. They play out through regular and routine reinforcement.

Essentially, what Moses is saying is, "I'm continuously and constantly preaching the gospel to myself and to others." Peter is saying the same thing as he writes his epistle. He says, "Hey, brothers and sisters, look up. You have to be reminded of this gospel you know and love." We have to be reminded of this gospel we know and love. It's not just something that I walk down an aisle at age 5, 6, 7, or 8, shake a hand, say a prayer, and I'm good to go for the rest of my life. You and I are driven to drift.

Who has ever been to the beach? Raise your hand if you've been to the beach. Okay, have you ever been out in the ocean? Get your hand up if you've ever been out in the ocean. Did you have a good time when you were out in the ocean? Is it awesome? Have you ever been out in the ocean and been playing and hanging out, and all of a sudden you look up and realize your parents are over there and you've kind of drifted down *this* way a little bit? And your parents are like, "Get back over here!"

You swim back over there, and you're in line with where they want you to be. You're kind of hanging out and playing, and then what happens? You look up, and you've drifted. That is the Christian life. You and I will drift. It's a part of who we are in the broken reality of our hearts. So you

and I have to swim against this drift. How? Through regular and routine reinforcements, that we're continuously and constantly preaching the gospel to ourselves and others.

You see what Moses says here in verse 7: "You shall teach your children diligently." It's interesting as he's talking about the passing on of the confession. What confession? The *Shema*. "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**" This confession is to be passed on and reinforced parent to child. It's not the job of the priest or the pastor. It's not the job of the church, primarily. It's the job of the family unit, whatever that unit looks like, to then commend this confession to the next generation.

He says, "You shall teach them diligently." The word there carries this idea of over and over and over again. It's constant. It's continuous. It's repetitive. It's routine. It's regular. It's what we do. You see that, because he's going to outline some things. Look at what he says in verse 7. "You shall teach them diligently. You shall talk of them when you sit and when you walk, when you lie down, and when you rise." It's this idea of wherever you go and whatever you do, this is what you're to be about.

The Cowboys are awesome, and Baylor is okay, and you have all of these other things, but what you're doing in the pecking order is this is primary. This is the umbrella under which everything else falls. The imagery that comes to mind as Moses writes this is one of a sculptor, one who's an engraver. He or she has a stone or a marble and is etching into that stone and bringing shape to it, creating detail and getting in and working into that stone.

Here's the reality for one who's an engraver or a sculptor. This is not occurring through happenstance. You don't just walk by it and this thing gets engraved. It doesn't just happen as you go. There's intentionality in what Moses is talking about here. There's purpose and design. There's focus and attention. It's not whimsical. It's not done on the fly. What Moses is saying is there is a concerted effort and a consideration of what I am trying to shape and invest.

It also carries the idea of permanence, that by God's grace you hope that what you are investing in this little heart, this little life, continues. You hope it sticks and stays. Moses is going to use opposite terms to describe the totality of what he's talking about here. He's going to talk about sitting and walking, which is the idea of when you're inactive, when you're just hanging out, and then when you're active, when you're going about.

When you're inactive and you're active. What Moses is really saying is all the time, whatever you do. Then he's going to say when you sleep... So you're out. You're lying down. You're asleep. And when you rise. It carries the idea of both at night and during the day, which is all the time. The gospel should be at the center of one's life and one's labor.

Now I think there are some things to note in this. What Moses is talking about is not occurring at the synagogue or at the temple. This is not happening on the Sabbath day. If you take that and bring it into our context, what Moses is talking about is not necessarily what's happening *here*. It's what's happening on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday and so on and so forth, which means it's not just Matt McCauley and Derrick Campbell; it's you. That Matt and Derrick would be an echo of what's happening in your homes and in your workplaces and in your environment.

It is a privilege and an unbelievable opportunity the church has as we gather on a weekend, but this can't be it. What Moses is saying is it's day in and day out. You know this. It doesn't necessarily have to do with parenting. It can be you investing in someone else in a discipleship relationship. You're longing to see Christ formed in another person. It is a continuous kind of thing. It is time together, investing in them. The unique opportunity for a parent has to do with proximity. Just look right there. They're right there. Sometimes they're right *here* and right *here*.

What I want to do is I just want to walk through what I hope are practical and helpful ideas for how we, primarily as parents (and I'll speak to the rest of us in a little bit), can invest in the next generation. Let me say this. If you don't have kids, you're a young professional, young single, young marrieds without kids, empty nesters, your kids are grown and gone...

If you're a member of this church, my hope would be that you would sense the weight and the angst of the investment you have in the next generation of this church. Why? Because we're a family. So that you would care about my little ones because they're a part of this covenant community and that I would care about your little ones as well, that we would recognize we're in this together.

Each and every week, the largest group of people who do not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ are birth through fifth grade. Every week, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. Just about every weekend there are about 1,200 kids who come through here, most of whom don't know the Lord. What an opportunity we have and what a desire. Think about this.

Again, affections lead to activity. The gospel takes root in our hearts before it takes root in our homes. You should long for those little ones to have an awakening and come to understand who the Lord Jesus Christ is, because although they may belong to my family, we're a part of a bigger family, the church. We all have a role to play here.

Hopefully you received this on your way in. If you did, grab it, look at it, and check it out. What we have done is provide a framework for family discipleship. I'm going to reference this. I'm going to talk through this. It's a framework for family discipleship, but the more I studied this, the more I prepared for this weekend, it's really a framework for discipleship.

If you have kids, great. This is going to be really helpful for you. If you're in a discipleship relationship with somebody else, two grown dudes, this will work. Just heed the principles of what this is. It's broken up into three things: *time*, *moments*, and *milestones*. *Time* is create family discipleship time. It means building intentional time into the rhythm of your family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel.

I want to talk about some ideas, things you can do, just get right on-the-ground practical. If it's helpful, great. If you have better ideas, send them to me. I want to know. I want to learn. We need each other. Most of these ideas I have hijacked from somebody else. *Time*. You're looking at the landscape of your life and considering, "If I don't put it in this slot, if I don't make a concerted effort, it's not going to happen. Everybody I know is busy. I have to put this here or I'll just simply drift and it won't happen." Let me tell you some really unique times I think you can leverage.

First, bedtime. Bedtime at my house... I have four kids: 9, 6, 4, and 2. Most nights I look at Natalie and she looks at me. The number one goal for the night is to get the kids asleep. That's it. By any means necessary. It's challenging. It can be frustrating, but there's something really unique about that time.

What we try to do... This is probably our most consistent time. We can read. We can just lie there and read with them. We use *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. The older ones are reading something else. If you don't have one, we have one for you. Go get one, and just read it to them. Open it up. It takes five minutes. You'll learn something. I learn something. They learn something. We can pray together.

Let me say this. How amazing it is for your little ones to hear you pray for them, just to bless them. "Lord, thank you for this little one. Thank you for little Johnny. I love him so much. I thank you for creating him. I thank you for giving him to our family. I pray that you do a great work in his life. In Jesus' name, amen." You don't have to be a professional pray-er. There's no such thing. Just pray for them.

Pray with them. Ask them, "Hey buddy, how can I pray for you? Sweet girl, how can I pray for you? Any way I can pray for you today, tonight, tomorrow?" My son has a standard prayer. "Help Papa run better..." Because he got a knee replacement. "Hope I get a popsicle, and pray against nightmares." Great. We're going to do that. Then we're going to wake up in the morning. "Papa still can't run, but hey, you didn't have a nightmare. Praise God." We can celebrate this. You can pray. You can sing. You can read together. You can use bedtime.

How about mealtime? You may not have many meals together as a family. Why not set aside a night? Why not just pick a time? Or anytime that you *do* have a meal, what if you did something like this? I have a friend who does this. He takes last year's Christmas cards. They keep them in a shoebox. Anytime they have a meal together as a family, they get the shoebox out and pull out a card.

"Hey, here's the Hughes family. We're going to pray for the Hughes today. Remember these guys. This is where they are. This is what they're doing. This is why we love them. This is how we connected with them. Let's pray for them." They just work their way through the cards. Just teaching the kids. An opportunity to come around a family, to bless another family. It's a simple idea. It's easy. Well, it may not always be easy. It can be challenging. I get it.

Family night. Pick a night. Do pizza night. Do a movie night. Just do a night where you can get together. Fight for these things. Every single weekend, The Village provides you with resources for your kids. You can pick them up by any one of the classrooms on your way out or Thursday you get the campus email.

In that campus email are resources for Little Village, Kids' Village, middle school, and high school. Why not leverage the ride home from church? Why not just ask them questions? You can ask them the questions that are written there. The answers are also written there. You can ask. They can answer. You can have a discussion. Leverage that time. Why not? It's a time. Use that time.

Here's another idea. I have four kids. I was just trying to figure out, "How am I going to get time with each one of these kids?" and somebody said, "What if on the day they were born...? Lily was born on the twenty-eighth. Luke was born on the eleventh. Liv was born on the sixth. Lucy was born on the eighth. What if on the sixth, eighth, eleventh, and twenty-eighth you just did something special and unique with one of those kids?"

What if on the sixth you took Liv to doughnuts or you wrote her a note or you just did something that let her know, 'I'm thinking about you, baby, on this day. This day I'm thinking about you in a unique way. I think about you all the time, but on the sixth, hey, it's you and me today, girl. Or it's you and Mom today.'" That we would use that time to speak into them with good gospel truth. It's just trying to create energy. Really, it's just the impetus to start. There are times when I stand back here and I just feel overwhelmed. I don't know what to do.

Here's what prayer looks like at our house around the dinner table. "Hey, let me pray. I'm going to pray for the meal. Stop eating. Stop eating! Put your fork down. I just want to pray for the meal. Would you put your fork down? Close your eyes."

"Dad, you close *your* eyes."

"You close your eyes. Close your mouth. Dear God... Get off the table!" That's what it's like. "God, thank you for this meal. Help these kids be obedient. We've got to get to bed, amen." It's a hustle. It is a total hustle, but pick a time and do it.

Moments. Here's what moments are all about: capturing and leveraging opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations. Let me give you four things I think you can leverage. I think you can leverage technology, discipline, your home, and the car. There are a billion more. Let me walk through these.

Technology. How many of your kids love to play on your phone or your iPad or the computer? Not all of your kids love that? Great job. Send me an email about how you got to that point. What I want to do, as my kids long for technology, is to take that longing and redirect it toward a gospel purpose. Let me tell you a couple of things, just ideas. Again, I'm picking these up from anybody I can.

There's an app called New City Catechism. Just get it. Ignore me right now and download the app. It's written by The Gospel Coalition. Tim Keller had a huge hand in this. It's really helpful. It's really good. It's 52 questions you walk through as a family. You will learn something. I've learned something. My kids learn something. And you know what? When they say, "Hey, Dad, can I play Angry Birds?" I say, "No, but you can look at New City Catechism. Okay, great. Here, play it. Look at it. Read it. Learn."

Scripture Typer. It's an app. Download it. I think it's free. If it's not, it's worth the money. It's just a Scripture memorization app. It's what I use. When my kid says, "Hey, can I play the Lego deal?" I say, "No, but you can do Scripture Typer." "Okay." So he takes my phone, and he's in. He thinks he's playing a game, but he's memorizing Scripture. I'm taking a longing and redirecting it toward a good gospel work. You can leverage technology.

I have a friend who uses a deal called Operation World. Operation World is an organization that looks at literally every country across the globe and considers what the impact of the gospel is in that country. So take a country, Myanmar. It's a closed country. "Here's what they believe. Here's where the impact of the gospel is. Here's how you can pray for that particular nation." He just puts it up on Apple TV, AirPlays it right onto the screen, they watch a three- or four-minute video about this particular country, and then they pray.

It's five minutes, but do you know what just happened? They just put on their God goggles, and they got to look through this and see, "Oh my goodness. God is working in a billion different places that I'm unaware of. Here's a way I can engage and pray." Their little worldview is expanding a little bit, and guess who else's worldview is as well? Yours, mine. They're just leveraging technology.

You can leverage discipline. Anybody ever have to discipline their kids? Okay, eight of you. Thank you. Again, email me about how you're doing this. Discipline is a literal every single day opportunity, but it's an opportunity we can leverage for the gospel. I'll say this. Most times my flesh is so incited I'll miss an opportunity. It's just reality. But if I'm walking in the Spirit and I have this opportunity... "Why did you punch her? I'm going to take you into the other room." Here's how you can leverage it. Thirty seconds. "Hey buddy, let's sit down and talk. What's going on?" "Well, she did this." You know, all of that. "Okay, what's going on in your heart?"

"Well, this is how it felt. This is what happened."

"Okay, what does God say about your heart?"

"He says my heart is dirty and is broken."

"That's right. But what did God do for dirty and broken hearts?"

"He sent his Son."

"Yeah, he sent his Son. What did he send his Son to do?"

"He sent his Son to die on the cross."

"That's right. He sent his Son to die for these very things, just like Dad's heart is broken, Mom's heart is definitely broken, and your sisters' hearts are broken. God sends his Son to die for broken people. Isn't this amazing?"

"Yeah."

"So what do we do in light of that?"

"Tell him we're sorry."

"Yes, tell him you're sorry."

"God, I'm sorry for hitting my sister."

"Great, now you get to go tell your sister you're sorry."

"Liv, I'm sorry for punching you. Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, I forgive you."

Great. You've walked through gospel repentance and reconciliation. Is it hard? Absolutely. Most of the time I'm like, "How dare you hit your sister? What are you thinking?" Then it looks like this:

"Daddy has a broken heart, and I'm sorry for the way I acted and the way I responded. Will you

forgive me? As much as I'm putting on you, buddy, this gospel truth, Dad is in the same boat. I need the same Savior I'm pointing you toward." You can leverage discipline, the discipline the Lord presses on *your* heart and the discipline you're pressing on your little ones' hearts.

Leveraging the home. I have a friend who put up a chalkboard in his garage. As they drive in or drive out, he or she or the kids are always writing notes to each other. "Praying for you today as you have the big test." Or writing a Scripture up there or "Think you're awesome."

All of these little gospel glimpses and nuggets they're using, and they're kind of trying to outdo one another. "Hey, you did great today in baseball. So proud of you." They drive in. "Oh man, it's there." It's like, "Dad is thinking of you. Mom is thinking of you. Sister is thinking of you," whatever it is. They're just leveraging the home.

Using music as a teaching tool. Bleecker can sing. I cannot sing. So we will play Bleecker on our phones and have Bleecker sing. We'll just sing with Bleecker. You can have Bleecker sing in your home. He does these little memory verse things, and you can do it. You can leverage your home for the sake of the gospel, just these little moments.

Just last night, at some time in the dead of the night (because I have no idea what time it is when the kids climb into the bed), Luke climbs in the bed and lays right here on me. So I have *this*. Natalie has all of *that*, which is fine. It's my call to give her all of that in that moment. Luke says, "Had a nightmare." "I'm sorry, buddy. Was it bad?" Actually this is not me. This is Natalie. "Yeah, it was bad." "Well, let me just remind you that it's a lie. It was not real, and you know what? No matter how big your fears are, God is bigger."

Then at 3:00 in the morning...I don't know what time...she just prayed for him. It's seizing a moment, an opportunity to speak truth into a little one's heart. It just pops up. Now let me say this as a parent. When these opportunities pop up, seize them. Be ready for them. That means we have to kind of sharpen our game, in a sense, which is good and right, and all of us need to do that. There's no shame in needing to sharpen up your game. Let's just sharpen it up, and let's go. Let's get after this.

Milestones looks like this. Parents mark and make occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones of God's work in the life of the family and of the child. Ideas. Salvation. If you have a little one who comes to faith, you need to mark that. You need to celebrate

that. If you have a neighbor, a friend, a coworker, a cousin, an uncle, a dad, a grandparent who comes to faith, this needs to be celebrated in the home.

A baptism needs to be celebrated. The first time they take Communion. Mark that. Use that. I have friends, grandparents, as their little ones are growing up, they have bought a Bible. Their hope is that if God would grant them years, on their 13th birthday... They've just been marking this Bible for their grandchild, and they're going to give it to them at a special moment. They've just been underlining verses that are meaningful to Grandma and Grandpa.

At some point they're going to hand that to that little one. They're going to be able to open it up, and there's a legacy that's being passed on. I've been a part of these things, these rites of passage, where these men will speak into this 13-year-old boy and call out something bigger in him that he knows is there, call him to live for some type of transcendent cause. These are milestone moments, these purity talks, these rites of passage, that you're marking these things.

Some of the markings and the commemoration could be around loss, the loss of a parent, the loss of a grandparent, the loss of a friend. There are plenty in our church who have suffered loss, and as that anniversary approaches, rather than covering it up and not looking at it, by God's grace they step into it and use it as a tool to commemorate and mark God's faithfulness and goodness and provision and care for their family, even in a time of loss.

I just want to end with giving you an example from the world of golf. Most people in conversations I have with them around family discipleship in particular, but really discipleship in general, they feel ill-equipped. They don't feel like they have the game. They're not quite sure what they're doing. They feel incompetent. They feel inadequate. Well, welcome to the club. Don't we all.

You know this if you're a parent. It's a hard gig. It's challenging. It's difficult. But if I look at the game of golf as an analogy, I see people who play this game and love this game who are wholly inadequate and incompetent to play the game. They just are. Like if you shoot 85 in golf, it means you're not good. You're just not. Par is way down lower than that, and you're not anywhere close, but it didn't keep you off the course.

Most of us are not scratch golfers. There are very few of us who are scratch golfers. If you shoot in the high eighties... Like around the office it's like, "I shoot in the eighties." "That dude is amazing." But you're not. You're just not. You're very below average in the game of golf. You just are, and

that's okay. The point is you keep coming back. We keep coming back to it. Our incompetence, our inadequacy, our being ill-equipped at this particular thing does not keep us from engaging it. We engage it because we value it.

I would say parenting is very similar. There are things we just feel ill-equipped to do and aren't quite sure how to play, but the point is you step up into the tee box and you just take a swing. The hope is you're just moving the ball down the fairway, trying to get it closer and closer to the hole. Just like in the game of golf, if you've played 18 holes and you hit 90 on the front nine, you took 90 shots. Mulligan after mulligan. You lost balls. You're on your fifth sleeve.

That's okay, because you know what happens? And it happens just about every time you go out there. You have that one shot, right? You just have that one shot. It's the one you brag about with the buddies. It's the one you go home and tell your wife about. It's the one where you get home and you're like, "I got up and down for a double bogey. It was amazing. I hit it flush, right down the fairway, driver, 182 yards."

It's that one shot. It's that shot that keeps you coming back. It's that one shot that draws something out of you, and you're like, "This is what it feels like. This is what it feels like to be in rhythm, to be actually good at this." But you're not. The point is there are those moments with these little ones. Most of the time you're just hacking away. You're just trying to get the ball down the fairway. You're just trying to keep it in play.

You're walking. You're looking for the ball. You find it, and you line up, and you hit it again. But every once in a while, that kid will come back to you. Every once in a while, you have that little window, that little glimpse, where they say something, where they bring up something. They ask a question or they give an answer or they let you into what their little world is like, and you just go, "Oh my goodness. That's amazing. It's all worth it. This is what I want. This is what I long for, this right here."

So you step back up, and you think, "Hopefully I can just repeat this over and over again," but you don't. You take a shot, and you go and look for the ball. You find it, and you line up, and you take a shot. You're just putting the ball in play, hopefully, and every once in a while you get that moment. You get that glimpse, and it's beautiful and amazing.

What's different between golf and your family is one is infinitely more valuable. We're not keeping score. We're just trying to finish 18. I don't care what the score is. I'm just trying to finish. So I'm going to find the ball, I'm going to line up, and I'm going to take a swing. I'm going to find the ball, I'm going to line up, and I'm going to take a swing. By God's grace, he'll let us into those little moments where we realize, "This is worth it. This is unbelievable. This is what I'm called to do."

I have a friend who looks at his family each and every day as a practice. He says, "From birth to 18, I have 6,570 practices with that kid." Then he says, "By the age of 10 there are 3,650 of those practices gone." You know this as a parent. It just blows by. If this adage isn't true, I don't know what is. "The days are long, but the years are short."

You look back, and you have a 10-year-old, with 3650 practices gone. You have 2,500 practices left. So seize this moment. Seize these opportunities. Seize what God has put before you. No matter where you find yourself, what age they are, seize what God has put before you, and by God's grace let's finish the course. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your grace, and thank you even now that we have the opportunity to share in Communion, the opportunity to be reminded in the Lord's Supper that you have covered us in our failures. You have covered us in our shortcomings. You have washed over us in those areas where we have blown it and missed it, and there's not one of us in here who doesn't have testimony after testimony of that fact. I thank you that your gospel runs deeper, runs truer, runs wider. I pray all of this in Christ's name, amen.