

I want to close out the Authority series today. So let me very quickly walk you back through what we've said up to this point. You've got God, who as the Creator of all things, ultimately has rights over all things and can do whatever He pleases with all things. He is ultimate in His authority. Now God has given us a self-disclosure of Himself in the Scriptures. So then the Scriptures carry the authority of God over your life and over my life. From there, we took the Scriptures and said, "Here's how authority works in regards to institutions." We first looked at government, and then we looked at the church and how the church was built out. We looked at everything from how it is to be organized to how it is to be lead and how we are to interact with one another in regards to pursuing holiness, righteousness and doing the work God has given us to do.

And then there's one more really big chunk in regards to how God divvies up the the authority among mankind, and that's really outside of the church in the home. So I want to discuss how authority works itself out in the home with you today. My day of epiphany was in 4th grade. I was sitting in class, and for the first time in my life, I had the thought, "Mrs. Dutrey is fine." I had never thought that before, I had never been interested in that before and I had never noticed curves before. At that point, it was my mom and my sisters and other things that did other things. But for whatever reason, in 4th grade, at my desk, I looked up, there's Mrs. Dutrey and I'm going, "I'm eventually going to have to get me one of these." That was my day of epiphany. That's when it happened. That's when it clicked. And then I got confused very early on because, I was constantly getting in trouble. I don't possess the ability to whisper, and I tend to be very opinionated, which gets you in a lot of trouble early on in life and apparently gets you a job at a church later in life. So at one point near Christmas, Mrs. D snapped and yelled at me and said, "If you open up your mouth one more time, I'm going to pull your desk right up here next to mine." If that's not coming on to me, I don't know what is.

So within about fifteen minutes, I had my desk pulled up next to Mrs. Dutrey's, and I sat there and chatted a bit as the semester went on. Here's what I mean by day of epiphany. I have a seven-year-old daughter, a five-year-old boy and an eighteen-month-old daughter. That's the Chandler quiver as it stands. So here's what I know. I know that my daughter right now is all about the girls. She's all about slumber parties, dolls and she couldn't care less if little boys across the street notice what she wears or approve of her behavior. She just doesn't care. Now her girlfriends carry an unbelievable amount of weight, but she doesn't care about the boys right now. I know the day is coming, and I'm preparing my heart for it. I've prepared my weapons for it. I'm completely ready for that to come. My five-year-old boy right now couldn't care less about women. He wants to blow stuff up, and he wants jets with guns. At the end of the day, my boy wants to be with boys. He's not interested in girls at all, but there is coming a day, the day of epiphany. It's the day where, all of a sudden, what's nowhere on the radar becomes central in the radar, and now all of a sudden it does matter what they think. Now my girl is not only going to want to hang out with the girls to hang out with the girls, she's going to want to hang out with the girls because someone else is there. And there is a day where my boy forgoes catching things in fire, running through the backyard naked and peeing wherever he wants to pee because of girls. You can watch the transition. You go from a 6th grade boy who doesn't care that he stinks to a 7th and 8th grade boy who is covering their stink with cologne on into showering. That transition happens because of the day of epiphany. "I want one of those." Next thing you know, we're all watching Jennifer Aniston movies, and it's not because she wins Academy Awards.

Now, there is a scientific way to explain this. This is chemicals, this is hormones and this is the continuation of our species. There is a scientific way to explain this, but the Bible is going to say that there is something even underneath all

of that. Although it is a hormonal imbalance that causes that thing to occur, God is wanting to communicate something to you and to me in light of all of that. Now let me just start by saying this. A lot of you are single. We're going to talk about the family today of children, husbands and wives, but I want you to know that you are making decisions today and living today in such a way that, how your marriage works and what it looks like, will be drastically impacted by the decisions you're making today. So this has everything to do with you.

Now some of you have come in here, and you're really just busted up. You're in a marriage that's dark or you've been divorced several times. I want to call you back from yesterday and a feeling of guilt over failures and call you to a trusting of the cross of Christ that wipes clean anything behind us and sustains us where we are today. Guilt and shame is different from conviction. Conviction says, "I've sinned against a Holy God who loves me and has made a way to make myself right before Him," and runs to God. Guilt and shame says, "I've gone too far. God can't love me," and runs from God. You've got to understand the difference lest you run from God instead of to Him. So whether you're divorced right now, whether you've been divorced a couple times, whether you've never been married, whether you're single for a season, all of this will be for you today.

So let's get to work on this. Let's look at Ephesians 5, starting in verse 22. Underneath a man pursuing a woman and a man finding his wife is this message that God is wanting to communicate, but it doesn't have just to do with finding a husband or wife but the interaction between them in a relationship. Ladies, do me a favor. Don't, "Yeah, but. . ." until we're done. Don't throw your circumstance into the mix until we get through this, and then we can deal with the "yeah buts." Verse 22 is wildly popular in our culture. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." So you're not just submitting to your husband, but you're submitting to your husband as to the Lord. Like you submit to Jesus, submit to your husband. I don't know that it gets any stronger than that. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Our language doesn't do justice to what God calls a man and woman to be to one another. Because all we've got is "love." And "love" means a billion different things. It's everything from a feeling that we get to a devotion to something. And we've talked about this before. Men love their children and the Cowboys. Now surely we're not talking about the same thing. You don't love taco Tuesdays at Rosa's like you love your wife. . .I hope. But we've just got this one kind of generic word of "love." So I want to start to outline for the woman in here what the Scriptures ask you to do in regards to your husband.

The first thing I would ask you to do is to love your husband by respecting him. Nothing is more important to a man than respect. If a man gets angry or a man pouts or a man pouts angrily, nine times out of ten, it's because he feels disrespected. A man who feels disrespected tends to react in ways that are ungodly. In the end, one of the interesting things is even scientists and sociologists would say that women are far more emotional in general than men are, and there is not a command in the Scriptures for you to feel something for your husband but to respect him. And then the Scriptures are just crammed full with warnings to young men about the type of woman he marries. Let me give you some examples. Proverbs 21:19 says, "It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman." This word "live" literally means "exist." It's basically saying, "It would be better to die in the desert than it would be to be locked in a home with a woman who wears you out, who nags you to death, who wants to fight, who is afraid of everything." And that's the Bible, ladies. The Bible is saying that you wounding your husband with your mouth, you wanting to start fights with your husband and you fretting over everything constantly is worse for the man than if he just went into the desert to die. And then there is Proverbs 27:15. "A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike." God just said, "Your husband is being waterboarded by you. Nothing is more damaging to a man's ability to fulfill God's calling on his life for a family than to live with a woman who consistently and constantly emasculates him, berates him and tries to dominate him.

The second thing I would ask you to do is to love your husband by submitting to his gentle, sacrificial leadership. Let your man lead the home. This is one of the greatest ways you can respect him, by letting him lead. "Well, he's not interested in leading." There is a way to help him lead, and there is a way that does not help him. There is a way to encourage your man to lead your home, even if he's not interested, and then there is a way to not do it. What we've seen in the Bible is you don't nag him to death over it. Ladies, encouragement in the mouth of a woman is unbelievably powerful in the heart of a man. You see, when you're an expert on how badly your husband sucks, you remove any real ability of his to fulfill what God has for him. Because even if he's doing what you nagged him about, he won't do it the way you want him to do it, he'll feel like he can't win and he'll just wash his hands of it. To find those areas he does well, to breathe life into it and to create environments where you ask him to lead out even more is far more effective and far more biblical than you wearing him out about it. "Well, I guess you just don't care about the spiritual lives of our children. I guess I'll just do it myself." Those kind of things, you constantly eroding away his foundation, it doesn't serve you and it doesn't serve your family well. You as a wife who has a disengaged husband, it could be as simple as going, "Hey, did you see this Bible the kid's ministry at the church gave us. It's got these stories about Jesus. If I got the kids all dressed and ready, would you read us a story and can we pray as a family? I'll take care of all the details. Would you just do this? Hey baby, thank you so much for how you take care of the finances here, how you make sure we've got the things we have needed. I was thinking and praying about this. What do you think about sponsoring a Compassion kid? What do you think about doing angel tree this year? What do you think about taking care of a family that's not blessed like we are this holiday season and making sure they have things." This is a smooth, shrewd, brilliant woman who is able to help her husband lead rather than waterboard him into submission.

The third thing I would ask you to do is love your husband with brotherly love. This is found in Titus 2. Here is all that means. You guys should be friends. There should be things you enjoy doing together. I don't think that means you need to go to a tractor pull, although you knew what you were getting into when he got down on one knee with a Gravedigger t-shirt on and offered you up that ring. So you knew then, and it shouldn't have taken you by surprise. But you've got to find things that you like to do with one another. There needs to be laughter, there needs to be joy and there needs to be friendship in the marriage. Where this grows cold, you're going to have future problems. You need to work at remaining friends and doing things together. I get invited to speak in different places, and I don't go anywhere outside the church that Lauren doesn't sign off on. And I always travel with someone. So a pastor always goes with me, and I always want to be above reproach and never want any accusation to be levied against me. But she'll look at that list and go, "Hey, you can tell the boys that no one needs to go on this one with you." And that trip is never to places like Houston. So she went to London with me in May, and she's gone to Seattle with me several times. She likes to travel and it's something we like to do with one another. We don't play sports or anything like that together because she's unbelievably competitive and ends up screaming obscenities at me. So we stay away from that.

The fourth thing I would ask you to do is love your husband by doing him good and never harming him. In the same way that encouragement in the mouth of a woman has a powerful effect on the soul of a man, knives and daggers in her mouth do a great deal of damage to a husband's soul. You're going to see this in Proverbs 31. It's going to constantly say that a Proverbs 31 woman is a woman who never harms her man. She doesn't emasculate him, she doesn't flirt with other men. That's not who she is. She is steadfast about her man. I've been in the room several times where I felt sorry for a guy. We were in New York a couple weeks ago, and there were thirty of us having dinner, almost all of us pastors. One of the wives of a pastor was going back to the hotel room early and he just said, "I'm just going to stay a bit, baby. What are you doing back at the room?" She was going to get ready for bed and go to bed, and he was just going to stay with us and hang for a bit. And then she yelled at him in front of all of us that he had been sick and it wasn't smart. Now she was probably right. If you've been sick and have had the flu, go home and get in bed. But she handled it horribly, horribly wrong. So this is an example of a woman maybe even being right but doing harm to her husband and

emasculating him in front of a group of other men, his peers. Now if you'll love your husband like this, Christ will teach you His sufficiency and He'll strengthen you and become your treasure.

He moves on from here to the men. Whenever the Bible addresses marriage, it never starts with the man and it always starts with the woman. There is not one text in our sacred literature dealing with marriage that starts with the man, which is interesting since the man is told to lead the home. That's because no man can lead a woman who refuses to follow. It doesn't matter if he's Patton. If a woman goes, "I don't care what you do, I don't care what you say, I'm going to do what I want," it doesn't matter what the man does, he can't lead a woman who won't follow. So that's why the Scriptures always start with the woman. So let's go back to Ephesians 5 and see what God says to the man. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." That's tying marriage back to the creative order, not some sort of cultural idea but the creative order. He's quoting Genesis right there. "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Now there are all these different things happening in this text, but the thrust of it simply that there is something going on in how a man has been commanded to love his wife and the difficulties in that relationship of a woman submitting to that headship that should remind us of how good, glorious and beautiful God is that He has adopted us and calls us His bride.

Now here are the expectations that God puts on the man concerning his wife. The first expectation is that the man would love his wife by sacrifice, by giving of himself. How does Jesus love the church? He loves the church by going to the cross, by dying on the cross as the initiator of reconciliation. Husbands, you are primarily the servant of your wife. "Well, I thought she was supposed to submit to me?" She is supposed to submit to your service and your initiation. Here's what I mean by taking the initiative. It's my understanding from this text and from 1 Peter that the onus is on you husbands to ask for forgiveness when something goes bad, even when you're only 1% to blame and she's 99% to blame. Now, I wouldn't apologize like that. I would leave percentages out of it. From my own personal experience, I wouldn't go, "Baby, before we go to bed, I think that 1% of that was on me, and I'm sorry. Do you have anything you want to say to me?" I just don't see that going well for anybody. No man has come back and said, "I did the percentage deal and it worked like a charm." My recommendation is that you would leave percentages out of it and just go, "Baby, I didn't handle that correctly. I didn't trust the Lord in that. I lashed out. I said things I didn't mean. Can you please forgive me?" And then don't go, "Now, do you have something to say?" Let it lie. Because here's what you've done. In that moment, you have taken some dynamite away from the flame. You've pulled back kindling that can't burn anymore. Now all your wife will be left with is her own behavior. When you take yours off the table, she'll simply be left with hers. So you take the initiative and say, "I'm sorry. I didn't handle that well."

"Well Chandler, she does this, this and this." Okay, you apologize for your part. Keep thinking back to the gospel. This is how Christ loves you, with sacrificial, loving headship. We don't love in order to get a response. We love because we are loved by Christ. My problem with the bulk of the books written on marriage, even the ones that target Christians, is it's basically this idea of exchange. "If you do these things for your wife, here's how she'll respond." Now let me tell you why that's crazy. Seminary guys ask me all the time, "Hey, how do you do life? Tell me how you work with family." Here's the problem with that. I married Lauren, and Lauren is a unique individual. She's not your wife, and your wife is not my wife. There are things that my wife likes from me and expects from me that maybe your wife would hate. Maybe they would enrage her. I've got buddies who come to the bedroom at 9:00 to lead their wife in a devotional and they're like, "Baby,

get your Bible. I'm going to be in Mark 4 tonight." Now, Lauren does not want that from me. In fact, I think it would go really bad for me if I came in and was like, "Baby, grab your Bible. I'm going to try to go short tonight, but you know me." That's not what my wife wants. Now she wants me to spiritually lead our home and she wants me to spiritually lead her, but that's not how she wants me to do it. Part of this is learning the wife that God gave you. And here's how easy it is. Ask her. Just go, "How do you want me to do this? Do you feel like I'm doing a good job at this? How can I step up? How can I fill in these gaps?" We don't love in order to get a response.

The second expectation is that the man would love the woman in gentleness and humility. So if you remember Ephesians 5, we wash her in the water of the Word. It's not a fire hose. So when she's being crazy – gentleness and humility. When you can't win for losing – gentleness and humility. When everything is going well – gentleness and humility. The man of God is gentle with his wife regardless of his wife. Now if you're single, some things should already be lining up for you. If you're a woman who tends to be mouthy towards your friends, mouthy toward the guys you date, overly aggressive on certain things, domineering with the men you date, demanding over the men you date, emasculating of the men you date, if you're trying to protect your heart by being Attila the Hun, in the end it's your husband who is going to reap the terror of that. So now let's work on our hearts some, let's let the gospel penetrate, let's get into Steps, let's get some help in these areas, let's let the gospel wash over these area so we don't have to protect our hearts but we can open our hearts and be honest. If you're a man who tends to be macho and overbearing, you're going to be that kind of husband. These are things you work on even now and marriage will help you even more.

The third expectation is addressed in the whole book of Song of Solomon where it is going to say, "Husbands, you need to romance your wives." Really the default here for a lot of guys is, "Man, that's just not how I'm wired. I just don't think that way." Listen, God gave you Google. How easy is that? Just search for "romantic date" and get billions of hits. "Well if she finds out I got it from the Internet. . .she wants me to naturally be that way." Well that's your wife's issue. If you plan together a romantic deal and she's like, "Where did you get this?," it's desert time, bro. So romance your wife. There is an intrinsic desire in the heart of every woman to be loved and desired. If you don't fill that role, you will open up their hearts and minds to be tempted by someone else's affections. And this isn't complex stuff, guys. One of Lauren's and my favorite things to do is get up a little before the kids and sit out on our front patio, drink a cup of coffee and just talk. You should date your wife. I woo Lauren all the time. I get in bed well before Lauren does because something is going on in that bathroom for like an hour. I don't know what it is. I don't want to know. I'm scared to know. So I'm in bed, starting to fall asleep when she walks out of the bathroom to get her pj's on. At that moment, I'm always like, "Yeah! That's what I'm talkin' about." Now, I don't grope her; I just whistle and celebrate what God gave me. Now, that didn't cost me any money. It didn't cost me a lot of time. That was just me acknowledging, "Gosh, you're beautiful." Women want to hear that. And listen to me, somebody thinks your wife is beautiful. It might be old hat to you, but somebody thinks your wife is beautiful. And they're at the gym, they're at the office, they're on the road and they're at the store. Somebody thinks your wife is beautiful. She is as fresh to your eyes as she was the first day you saw her. God says, "Romance your girl. Woo your girl. Tell your girl she's lovely."

The fourth expectation is that the man would love his wife by covering her, protecting her and providing for her. This is in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Here's what it says, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." My first year of marriage, Lauren was doing a devotional through the book of 1 Corinthians, and she came in and was just like, "So Christ doesn't get to be my head?" I'm like, "Easy, killer. What the Scriptures are saying is that it is my role to lead and to point our family in a direction and that it's your job to come under that and follow me." And we talked through that. That's all this means, that the husband has the role of provider, the role of protector and the role of leadership in the home. Now, that's not easy, not for the man and not for the woman. This is utopian. We all fall short of this and we fall short often.

So now I want to get into the “what if’s,” because here’s what I know. Some of you guys married crazy. She was hot when you guys were in college and you didn’t know about the crazy. You were blinded and then you got married and she’s crazy and you don’t know what to do. And some of you married a neat Christian boy and not a godly man. What I mean by neat Christian boy is he went to church in order to get you, and now is out. And he has absolutely punted on his responsibility to lead the home, to lead your children and to lead you. These are realities. Now 1 Peter is going to give us some insight on what we are to do in that case. So let’s look at 1 Peter 3. He’s going to talk to wives first in regards to husbands that don’t lead and don’t fill this role like they should. Starting in verse 1, “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives. . . .” Here’s what can’t happen today. Ladies, please hear me. You are not the Holy Spirit. When you try to be the Holy Spirit, things go really, really wrong. So for you to take copious notes when I’m talking to your husband about what the Bible says, only to get in the car to go, “Hm, if I had to grade you today, I’d give you a D-. And I think I’m being generous. That doesn’t help. You bringing up my points over and over again to your man on the way home doesn’t make him like this place or consider the things of God with any passion whatsoever. So this says, “If you’ve got a husband that doesn’t lead and doesn’t love, then you win him without a word. How? Look at what he says. “they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.” Here’s all he is saying to the woman, “Be gentle, pray, encourage, be your husband’s greatest fan, lead in such a way where you’re encouraging him to fill those roles and love him well. Let your beauty be inward beauty and not just external beauty.” Now I don’t think this forgoes external beauty. I think that both men and women need to take care of themselves, be good stewards of their bodies. I think you are biblically commanded to do that, but take care of your heart, grow your heart, grow deeply in your relationship with the Lord and let your husband see the effects of the gospel on you. That’s how he says to go about a husband who refuses to fulfill his duty.

Now look at 1 Peter 3:7. “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” Now don’t throw anything at me. “Weaker vessel” simply means porcelain. I love this text. He’s saying, “Men, if you’ve married a woman who may be a bit off, there’s a reason why she’s a bit off. She’s banged up. Maybe she was abused earlier in life. Maybe she’s got some issues in her heart that make it very difficult to trust you. Maybe she does have daddy issues. You have been a recipient of grace, and you extend that grace. Because if you don’t, your prayers will be hindered. How strong is that? You may be going, “You know, God, marriage is just really difficult and I don’t know what to do.” And God is going, “Hey bro, remember that grace I showed you when you were all banged up and how I forgave you and loved you right where you were and right when you were in the thick of it and extended My grace and mercy to you? Now you show that same grace and mercy to your wife. After you do that, let’s talk. But you do that first.” Now I know this is a complex subject and there are situations in this room I can’t fathom. Some of you are like, “She stabbed me, bro. I went to bed, I felt a sharp pain and she had stabbed me in the back.” So I know that there are things and stories and stuff I can’t even fathom. So when it breaks down and the home isn’t what God wants it to be, we take this advice from our boy Peter and husbands show their wives grace, patience and respect and wives show their husbands respect and try to gently engage and lead and transform their own souls so that their husbands will see the work of Christ in them.

Now we have to get back to Ephesians 6 because what happens is a man meets a woman, they fall in love, they get married and then there are babies. And sometimes babies come before that. That’s not God’s plan, but in God’s grace, He covers all the different variations of family that we have represented in this room. So you’ve got then a husband over a wife, and then you’ve got commands to parents over children. So let’s look at that and talk about that. Ephesians 6,

starting in verse 1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." 4Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." So let me go about this in a different way. "Children, obey your parents" is laid on the assumption that there are rules and boundaries by which you're bringing up your kids. It sounds crazy that you have to communicate that, but there is this whole line of thinking that any type of rule or boundary somehow crushes the little soul, the individuality of your child. It's simply not true. You just end up with a miserable little brat whom everyone around you wants to beat. "Children, obey your parents" assumes that the parents have a plan and a hope for their children.

I am no way a respecter of tyranny. I do not believe in the, "Here are 172 rules that you will obey in this house." I think it's stifling and life-sucking for you to have a system built out in your home that your kids can't win for losing. We have several things that we value in our home, and one of those is simply fun. We want to laugh a lot in our house. We want to play a lot. I want to say yes as much as I can until I have to say no. There is the constant demand of respect, not respect built out of our insecurities, but respect in that, "You will honor me as your father. You will honor your mother as your mother." And now that mine have gotten older, I've started to be able to do that thing my dad used to do and go, "Don't talk to my wife like that, bro. Don't do that. That will end bad. If you were a grown man, I would have had to choke you out. Don't ever talk to my wife that way." So I'm already having to do some of that, but we want to laugh a lot in our home. There are boundaries, there are rules and inside of that fence, you can play all that you want. But if you get outside of that fence, there are consequences. And that's not harsh, that's not evil; that's loving. Because everyone in here has been at that restaurant, has been at that store, has been in that situation where a kid is absolutely out of control, the parents are in tears and nobody knows what to do. In most cases, that was created. Parenting is hard work. It is not easy. Now I've met people who just have that kid who does whatever he or she is told to do, but most of us don't get that kid. Most of us get kids who have some sort of demonic attachment at birth that has to be sanctified with fire. . and/or the belt. So in the end, our role is to shape them and to mold them.

And there's a special word to fathers here. "Don't provoke them to anger." A parent should never humiliate their child, ever. That is not godly, it's not good and it's not how God disciplines you. You should never humiliate your child. In our home, when my kids get disciplined and it gets to that place where they get a swat on their bottom, we always have talks about that before and what we communicate is always the same. "You asked me for this spanking. You begged me for this spanking. You said, 'Dad, I'm feeling a bit insecure right now. I'm feeling a bit unloved. Would you please show me that you're going to protect me and care for me and provide for me?' Because if you know the boundaries and you purposefully stray on the boundaries despite being warned to stay away from that boundary four or five times, you're asking me, you're begging me, 'Please, discipline me.' And I'm bound before the Lord to oblige you." So do you have a plan for your children's lives? A lot of times, children who are out of control have parents with no real vision for their lives, no real plan for their lives, no real hope for their lives, homes that aren't fun, homes that are real stagnant and cold. Men, the best thing you can do for your children is love your wife well and kiss your wife in front of them a lot. Like you should make them grossed out by it. You should hear them groan about it weekly. It is a beautiful thing for your children to watch you making out in the kitchen. Just to make sure we have that defined clearly, just a long, extended kiss in front of your kids is a very healthy thing for your kids to see. For you to say, "We love you. Here are the parameters," is an unbelievably loving thing to you to do. To be spontaneous and fun at times is a great thing for your home. To not just say no because you feel like saying no is a good thing. There are times you're going to have to say no. There is no way around it. The conversation I can have with my children right now is, "Does daddy like to play? Does daddy like to have fun? Do we like to have fun as a family? Okay, then there's got to be a reason I'm saying no. I don't know if you can understand that reason right now, but here's what I'm worried about, here's what I'm fearful of and here's my concern. This is why I'm saying no." So I want to have things to fall back on, I want to have things to point to and go, "Did we not get out of bed at 9:00 at night and go eat donuts? Did you not hop on a plane with me and go to this place?"

Did we not take a walk as a family? Do we not have your friends over until 10:30 last night?" I want to have those things that I can say, "I am for you, so will you trust me here?" Do you have a plan for their lives, fathers? Because he doesn't say this to mothers here. He presses on the fathers. Don't provoke them to anger. This happens most often when a father is insecure, he's got his own issues and he sees his son doing things that he did that got him ostracized or made fun of and, in trying to protect the kid from what might have happened to him, instead of encouraging and loving his kid, he becomes his father towards his son. This is why the gospel has to bear weight on us over and over again.

Let me wrap up the entire series with this. The question you have to answer is, do you trust God? Do you trust Him? And not just when everything is going great, because it's easy to trust God when everything is going great. Do you trust Him when it gets dark? Do you trust Him when it gets difficult? The thing about those who are bit more skeptical about the faith who point to difficult things and go, "This is why I can't believe in God," is the Bible is filled with difficult things happening to people. It's not like that is some sort of new phenomenon. It's not like everything always worked out well for everybody in the Bible. There are people who get killed constantly in the Bible, people who love God faithfully, who walk with Him uprightly. In fact, the whole study that we're going to do soon on Habakkuk is Habakkuk asking questions about why godly people have to endure sufferings. "Why is it that You won't do this, God? Why is it that You won't handle this? Why is it that You won't solve this?" Do you trust Him when things get difficult?

And this is where the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ have to be central in our mind. Because some of you have endured very dark days. Some of you have been abused, some of you have been taken advantage of, some of you have put yourself under authority before and it has gone very bad for you and some of you just have a hard time believing that God could be for you and you think He's going to pull the bait and switch on you. The evidence that God loves you and loves you now, not you later, is the cross of Jesus Christ. You haven't surprised God. Your behavior, the things that you've been a part of, the things that you've done, God isn't in the heavens going, "I did not see this coming. I'm taking back Jesus for you. No Jesus for you, buddy. If I would have known this 2000 years ago, there's no way I would have sent My Son to the cross." That's simply not the truth. He knew and He went, which is the evidence that He is for you, not against you. So then you have to wrestle with this question: Did God really send His Son to die so that He might destroy you? He already had destroying you down. But He's sending Christ to die on the cross for you, that's a massive objective evidence that He's for you.

Do you trust Him? And if you don't, what is it that keeps you from being able to trust Him? These are things I think you need to talk through. This is why we so desperately need Christian community. This is why we don't need to just go to church, but we need to belong to one. We need to have deep, strong relationships with other believers. This is why we need to be rooted into a place. This is why church has to be more than entertainment. On and on we could go, because bad things happen to good people. And the dark nights of the soul come to all of us. You just need to live long enough. And if you didn't, that was yours. So that's why we need one another. That's why we need the gospel. That's why we need to be focused.

So my hope and prayer is that you would leave here dwelling. Some of you have fallen short as husbands. This would be a great move just to apologize to your wife on the ride home. If you can't build out a working list right now, you can do that later. But just simply go, "I have fallen way short of what God has expected of me. Forgive me and help me be who God wants me to be." Ladies, maybe you need to get in the car and just go, "I'm sorry, baby. I know I wound you with my mouth all the time, I have not encouraged you and I have not loved you well." Some of you need to go home and apologize to your children because you've made your children the gods of your house, and children make horrible, horrible gods. Some of you have not put expectations on your children, you have not put rules down and you do not have a plan. It's a great thing just to gather up and say, "Mommy and daddy are sorry. We have failed God and we have failed you. Please forgive us as we now try to do what God would have us do for you." In all things, if you don't know how

to do these things, get around godly people who have already done them. This is why you need older saints mixed with younger saints. It's why a church that's all twenty-somethings is a very dangerous place and a place that's all sixty-somethings is a very dangerous place. It's why there has got to be a mixture, because we desperately need one another.

Let's pray. "Jesus, as we move towards a time of response, my prayer would be that we be in a lot of reflection here and dwell on what You saying to us in our relationship with You, what You're saying to us in our relationship with one another. For the single man and woman, God, I pray that You would begin to reveal and convict of patterns that are going to cause a great deal of carnage in the years to come if they don't repent and press into You. And for marriages that have come in here this morning that are just a bit banged up, I pray that they be encouraged by the Word, that they would be able to repent and confess to one another and that both would strive to be the type of man or woman that You've called us to be. Let us lead well. I pray for the men in this room, that they might gladly step to the forefront of what You've required of them and that they would see themselves as servants of their wives. I pray that they would serve her, love her and encourage her and that she might become, as Proverbs says, a "fruitful vine," that she might become all that she can become because of his loving support. We'll need You in this. It's difficult and complex. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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