

Family Discipleship (Part 1) – Modeling

Matt Chandler – April 17, 2016

Good morning. How are you? Doing well? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Deuteronomy, chapter 6. I want to thank you for the grace afforded to me to do ministry in other places. I've been out the last couple of weeks. I got to spend some time in Rome. Just for the building up of your own faith, there in Rome at the Acts 29 European conference we had 280 ministers and their wives from 27 different countries.

Sermons were being translated into multiple different languages, all in the shadow of the ruins of the greatest empire to ever rule the earth that at one point was hell-bent on killing us and destroying us all, and yet I paid 15 euros to walk through their ruins. Let it build up your heart to know that the most aggressive schemes of man against the people of God will always fall flat. You can go check out the pyramids. You can go check out the Colosseum.

It's a marvelous thing to be preaching the Word of God and hearing it in the back of the room being simultaneously translated into French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian while realizing that that starts to gather up borders that went well beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. Here's something to consider. Rome ruled the known world for 1,500 years. The United States is still in Pampers.

This was a brutal, powerful empire, and here we are. Not only are we here, but we're flourishing in a way that would have blown their minds. They threw everything they had in regard to earthly power, and we simply spread. Let that build up your faith this morning. Regardless of what's on the horizon for us, as we see increased secularization, as we see the losses of things we thought...

It looks like we're on the twilight of what was an unprecedented experience of Christians having cultural and political favor, and we can see that vanishing. I just don't want you to be nervous or panicked about that. Christian courage and trust in the Lord will be the undoing of every empire that stands against it, and we have a lot of historical evidence on this end. So be of good cheer. The God of the Bible reigns on high.

With that said, we're going to start a four-week series today on *Family Discipleship*. I need to say a couple of things to lay the foundation before we dive into our text. Not only for today, but really for all four weeks we'll be back in the same text. Let me start *this* way. We believe the God of the Bible is true and that he is the only real God and that he has created everything that exists, including certain systems and structures, for two ends.

The first end is for the glory of his name, and the second is for the joy of his people. When God designs or works things, he's working them for his glory and our joy. We believe that. We embrace that. In fact, when my time is done as your pastor... I don't plan on ever pastoring another church. I plan on being with you until it's time for the old crazy guy to step aside and make space. "He's crazy now. Those were such good days, but he has lost his mind. Let's find another guy."

You won't have to tell me. I already have other guys who are going to tell me when they see it coming so I can transition out peaceably and we don't make this a tomb. My plan is to be with you for the long run by the grace of God. I just got back from Rome, and I couldn't wait to get here. You for me, *this* for me is a very generous gift of God. I love being here, being with you. You're what I think about when I go to sleep at night. You are the object of so many of my prayers.

So when my time with you is up, I want in the deepest parts of your soul for you to know that all that God has done and all that he has designed and all that he has wired is for his glory first and foremost (I'm not the point and you're not the point) and, secondly, for my joy. God's ways are always better than our ways, and the Word of God always lines out for us what is best for us.

When the design and plans and commands of God are submitted to, humanity flourishes. We talked about this in *A Beautiful Design*. When we see and hear the Word of God, when we submit to it..."You're God; I'm not God; I'm going to let you be God; I'm going to do things your way"...then mankind flourishes. I'm not talking about financial flourishing, although we see some of that.

I'm not talking about you getting everything you want, because your wanting is not always in accordance to what is best for you. What God has for you is what is best for you. Ultimately, when we rebel against that, when we think we know better, destruction always follows. It might not for a week. It might not for a month. It might not for a year, but eventually, to reject and buck against God's good design is to sow into your soul and, therefore, into your life destruction.

When we're talking about family discipleship, we're talking about how God designed things to be and how he designed things to work, and if we will submit to these things (we'll get to our imperfection already before we even start the series here in a minute)... If we're submitting to God's good design, we have a beautiful shot to really flourish as families and, therefore, flourish as a community of faith and, therefore, flourish as a community and, therefore, flourish as a state and, therefore, flourish as a nation. We can boil it all the way down to that.

So I want to lay that as the premise of this whole series, and then I want to say a word to our singles. A good portion of The Village Church is made up of single men and women. You might be thinking, "What in the world is this series going to have to do with me?" I'm so glad you're asking that question, because it's the next part of my notes. It's just providence that you've asked that and I have a little section here to talk about this.

When the Bible begins to talk about the church, it talks about the church in interesting language. Let me give you some of it. Galatians 6:10 says, "**So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.**" Then again in Ephesians 2:19, he's going to use this same language, *household of faith*, except he's going to tweak it just a little bit. In Ephesians 2:19 he says, "**So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...**"

The family is a picture of what God is doing globally. He has made for himself a people, both universally and localized, and he is that place's Father, and we are his sons and daughters. What I want you to hear and understand as a single man or a single woman is that God has called you into this place locally as part of his household, and you very much have a place in the discipling of men and women and families in this congregation.

Maybe there are two separate ways to think about it. The first way is that the church is filled with broken, recovering people. Correct? The church is filled with people whose lives are not in the ideal vein of what God would have for us. Sin brought about some destruction. There are broken homes in this room. There are single moms and dads in this room, either because of the destruction of sin and death or because of the destruction of sin and relational brokenness. That's just the reality.

There are no perfect people at this church. Anyone pretending to be perfect shouldn't be trusted. So what an opportunity for a single man or single woman to participate in serving and helping and

coming into those spaces and giving of themselves for the building up of the body. Maybe the second way to illustrate this... My wife and I would not consider ourselves perfect parents. In fact, we're probably hyperaware of our failures and inconsistencies as parents, but we're in our children's lives, and we go after our children's hearts.

By the grace of God, there are two young beautiful godly single women... They shouldn't be single women. Men, I don't know what in the world you're doing. If you're like, "Well, who are they?" email me your résumé. I'm not outing them here. What these two young women have done is they've taken my 13-year-old daughter, and they just encourage her and love on her.

They are to her a preacher that is different than her daddy and her mom, while all the while reinforcing the beauty of Christ, reinforcing the glory of God, reinforcing that what the Scriptures say is true. We need this as parents. We need those who will pour into our children who are other than us. So you have a huge role to play. That's not even to start with the fact that you are a son or a daughter. You are already part of a family unit, even if what I'm saying about the household of God doesn't persuade you.

I will unapologetically be talking to parents during this series, but from time to time I want to go, "Okay, here's a good space for you to play. Here's a good place for you to step in and really use your gifts and use how God has designed you to build up the household of faith." Just hear me. You have a big role to play in a very real way. You become the mortar that holds together some broken spaces. I want you to embrace that and relish that and guard your heart against downshifting into, "This doesn't have anything to do with me," because this has tons to do with you.

Now parents, let's do this. If you're the parent of children... Your golden retriever doesn't count, but if you're a parent, will you stand with me? I promise you you're not going to be embarrassed or anything like that. I'm just going to try to encourage your heart. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to lay the ground level right out of the gate.

If you're a parent, how many of you normally sane people have at one point or another just lost your mind at one of your kids? No, keep your hand up. Don't do *that* thing. Keep it up. Parents, look around. Isn't this good news? You're not the only one who freaks out. Now put your hands down. How many of you, in a good desire to discipline and shape your children well, have disciplined probably more aggressively or a little bit farther than you needed to? Okay, put your hands down.

One of my aims over the next four weeks is not to do this drive-by guilt of how terrible parents you are. Let's be honest. This task is epic and feels impossible, so I don't want to do a drive-by guilt. I want to encourage your hearts. In fact, I want you to say this with me really quickly. I'm going to say it, and I want you to say it back to me boldly and like you want to believe it. "I don't have to be a perfect parent." Say it.

You don't, because you can't be and you're not. Breathe. You're not, and here's the great news: God hasn't asked you to be. It is not the expectation of God that you be a perfect parent. He knows you can't be. He knows you won't be. I also want to lay *this* before you: regardless of how you've snapped or what you've said or how harshly maybe you've punished here and there, you have ruined nothing. Look at me. You have ruined nothing. Today is a new day.

With that said, I want us to dive into this text. I just want to walk through what the text is. Deuteronomy 6 is called the *Shema*. It was for the Jews how education was to work, how they were to commend the works of God to the next generation. As we read it, here's what I want you looking for. It's three concentric circles of how education works or how family discipleship will work.

When we say *family discipleship*, what we're saying is how we disciple our families to treasure Christ as Lord. When we're talking about family discipleship, we're saying, "We're, as a family, going to follow Jesus; here's how that looks." In the *Shema*, we see concentric circles on how this works. It starts in the center. It cannot start anywhere else.

You can't start at the outer ring and work your way in. Nor can you start in the middle ring and work your way in. You must start at the center, and then after the center is established, you will simultaneously be operating in all three rings. The first stage is the most important. Without it, we have no series. With that said, let's look at this. Deuteronomy 6, starting 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."

May God bless the reading of his Word.

The first sentence of the *Shema* is a theologically rich and profoundly beautiful sentence about the unity in the Godhead. We're not going to unpack this one with a lot of vigor this morning. **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."** So here's what we know: who we're educating the circles about. We're educating the concentric circles about, "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." The God of the universe is the subject matter of discipleship at every level.

From there, it starts with circle one of three concentric circles. Look there in verse 5: **"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."** This is a fascinating text. First, we see circle one in Christian discipleship is you and me loving the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and all our mind.

I want to point out a couple of things. First, it's fascinating to me that he doesn't say, "Do the Ten Commandments, and teach your kids to do the Ten Commandments." He didn't say, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Here's the code you must submit to and obey in order to teach the next generation how to be my people." No, he says, "Love." Why? Because you do not do by what you understand to be right or wrong; you do by what you love.

It is not your understanding of right and wrong that motivates your actions; it is love that motivates your actions. The Lord, the God of the universe, not wanting you to be constrained to what you do not love but rather what you know is right or wrong, and your life is filled with nothing but a long history that reveals you don't do what you know is right or wrong; you do what you love.

This is why you order what you order at restaurants. You know what's good for you. That doesn't stop you. Why? Because you love. I mean, you're looking at it, and you're like, "Mm, yeah. That superfood salad looks good, but so does that cheesecake." You go with the cheesecake. Why? Because it's what you love that motivates the direction of your life.

Have you ever really paid attention to your kids? If I think about my kids, I have one in particular... In this area of this kid's life they are so disciplined and driven. They don't forget anything in this domain. They never forget. They're on it. Then the rest of their life is this messy train wreck. You know why? Because there's a lot of love over *here*, and there's not a lot of love over *here*. This kid

knows what's right and wrong, but it's not their knowledge of right or wrong that motivates and drives; it's what they love.

We are a people who are not primarily thinkers. We're a people who are primarily lovers, and it's what we love that drives and motivates our lives, which is why the *Shema* doesn't start with, "Do what you know is right." If you're thinking education, aren't you thinking, "Tell me the rules and the dos and don'ts"? That's not where God starts. God says, "No, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

Now a big question is, "Okay, how do you do that?" Well, the Scriptures create a lot of freedom here, but there are always certain pieces. First, there's the truth of the Word of God. I think I lean on this a lot. I *want* to lean on this a lot. I think there's a big difference between... If we're talking about love and really building a love for Jesus Christ into our lives, we're not talking about dry Scripture memorization; we're talking about steeping in the Word of God.

You know how you make a good cup of tea? You don't make a good cup of tea by putting the bag in there, pouring it, and then immediately taking it out. You let it steep. You let it sit for a while. Because we're a culture so built on speed and efficiency, meditation, quietness of heart, considering, and meditating upon the Word is necessary for us to grow in love. An acquisition of knowledge devoid of its connection to the heart does not get us where the Lord would have us.

I want to lay before you really quickly that without this first circle, you are bucking against God's design for the family and have begun to sow seeds of destruction into your family. Let me try to say it *this* way. For the family to be all that it was designed to be, we must be Christians. You can moralize your family.

I would never say you can't have from a worldly perspective what looks to be a great family, where you laugh and your kids say, "Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am. Yes, sir. No, sir." That's moralizing. If the God of the Bible is true, that is not ultimately a win. It's not ultimately a victory for you to have upright, moral kids who are really respectful if, ultimately, we have not taught and sown a love for Christ, which is the way to the fullest life possible, which is what we want for our kids.

That's what I want for my kids: the fullest life possible. It's found in Christ. It's not found outside of Christ. So we can't even talk family discipleship if we're not talking about you cultivating a heart

that loves Jesus Christ, Mom and Dad. It's interesting in this text that he's not giving responsibility to the dad or to the mom but to the family.

Now why would the heart of the parents for Jesus play any role in family discipleship? Let me lay two things before you. First, God's design is so thorough and so effective that you *are* discipling your children right now. You're discipling your children. You're discipling your grandchildren. There's no way around it. God's design is so thorough, so good, that you *are* making disciples. The question is...*What are you discipling them in?*

So if we could chat for just a second. Again, I'm about to say some heavy things. I'm saying these ultimately for what I hope to be your good, maybe your repentance and submission to God's design. Men, if you are aggressive toward your wife, if you verbally belittle your wife, if you refuse to serve your wife like Christ loved the church, you train your sons to be the next generation of narcissistic, self-seeking cowards, and you train your little girl that that's what she can expect from men. That's how you're making disciples.

Ladies, if you are a consistent nag and consistently feel like you have to be the Holy Spirit in the home, a couple of things. First, I've never met the man who has been transformed by the nagging of their wife. I've never met the man who's like, "You know what? Now that you've said that for the six thousandth time, I'm in. I'm going to change." It's just not how it works.

In fact, even the Bible would feel sorry for your husband. God says it's better for a man to die in the desert than to live in a home with a contemptuous wife. Think about it. God is like, "Yeah, man. Um, you should just go to the desert. No, don't take any water. Just go."

"Am I going to die?"

"You're going to die. It's going to be slow, it's going to be awful, and it's going to be better than this. So go."

Listen, ladies. When you're constantly nagging, you're training your sons in a way that emasculates them, as you emasculate their father in front of them, and on top of that, you're training your daughters that the way to get what you want is to constantly chirp and nag about somebody's weaknesses rather than being an expert in your spouse's strengths, even if they're hard to find.

I'm not giving your man a pass. He could be an incompetent moron, but he's *your* incompetent moron, so you need to grow in your understanding of what he does well and speak that into him in front of your children. We are modeling; we are making disciples right now. That's why this is so important. If we're growing and fueling a love for Jesus Christ, we begin to extend grace to one another.

Even when we do get a bit "naggy," even when we do say things we don't mean, we're quick to apologize and own our sin in a way that models for our children the need we all have for Jesus Christ. This is massive: that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

A few weeks ago, I talked about the primacy of filling your life with what stirs up your affections for Christ. For me, this is such a compelling idea around discipleship. You want to know the generosity of God? Here's this big command: "Work on loving me." How great is that? Just pay attention to my heart. What stirs up my affection for Christ? I'm just going to jam my life full of what stirs up my affections for Jesus. I know that involves the Word of God and meditating and steeping on that.

For me, I love coming together with the people of God. I love singing with the people of God. I love those things. Those things are commanded. God has given us those things as things that stir up our affections. I don't know if notes are the best things to do in the gathering. There's something about just experiencing being together as the people of God as the Word of God goes out. If you're type A, you keep doing notes. I know how difficult it is to even try to do it off of me. Good luck to you.

What else stirs your affections? I like the early mornings. I don't know what it is. Early mornings make me feel closer to God. I'm not any closer to God in the morning, but I feel that way, so I'm going to get up. There are things that are nowhere in the Scriptures that by simply giving myself over to them I feel my affection stirred for Christ.

That doesn't feel heavy handed to me by God. "Come on! Quit trying to make me love you." It doesn't feel heavy handed. It feels freeing and delightful. It means the Christian should be marked by joy, because what we've been set free to do, even as we stumble and bumble and are still broken, is to pursue an ongoing ever-heating-up love relationship with God. That's a beautiful freedom we've been given.

That takes us to the second circle. The first circle is you growing in a love relationship with Jesus Christ. Then it moves to... I'm going to read verse 6 and on to verse 7. Let's look at this. **"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart."** That's circle one. Here's circle two. Verse 7: **"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."**

Mom and Dad, the first circle is you stirring your affections for Christ over and over again with everything the Lord would give you to stir up your affections toward him. That's sweet. Then circle number two is "Teach them diligently to your children." Now let's talk. When I read that sentence, let me tell you what immediately pops into my head. What immediately pops into my head when I read, "Diligently teach them" is "I don't have time for another set study of the Bible."

I have football practice on one given night. I have a barn to take a daughter to on another one. I have gymnastics to get a third one to. Everybody has something. My wife is in the training program. I'm just trying to get everyone fed, showered, and in bed before 10:00 at night. I don't know when I'm going to teach the doctrine of God to the three Chandler babies.

What? Is it 6:00 on Monday? I'll tell you, there's a lot going to invade 6:00 on Monday. Is it Tuesday night at 9:30? That's going to go real well the next morning when we try to get everybody up for school. When am I supposed to do this? But the text itself so serves us. It's like God knows we live in an actual world and these things aren't ethereal.

Let me show you that you can do this. Let's look at the text. **"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house..."** How many of you sit in your house? *Boom!* You can do this. You're on it, because you have a couch. You sit in your house. What about "Walk by the way"? Any of you drive your kids places? Look at that. There's no more beautiful place to trap your children than the car. They have nowhere to go.

We'll talk about this more as we move forward. If you punt that time to devices for them, then we've already sabotaged the opportunity to have all sorts of gospel conversations, to hear their heart, to pull from their heart. I'm not saying that's easy. In fact, you have to work at thinking of questions that can't be answered with "Yes" or "No." You're going to have to work, because your kids 90 percent of the time... "How was school?"

"Good."

"Good normal or good special?"

"Good."

Right? Is this your experience? Every once in a while they'll open up their heart and throw up on you, but most of the time you're going to get one-word answers, so you're going to have to work at it. We'll talk more about that. So you're in your car. You have a place to sit in your house. That's awesome. You're like 50 percent of the way there in regard to "diligently teach." Do you guys go to bed at night? Okay, what about do you wake up the next morning? You have all you need right now, then, to diligently teach.

What are we diligently teaching? We're back to concentric circle one. Remember? I said if you do circle one, you'll eventually do all three of these circles without thinking about which circle you're in. What are you teaching them about? You're diligently teaching them the first command, that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might, and now you're diligently teaching that to your children.

Now when are you doing that? You're doing it when you're sitting around the house. You're doing it when you sit at your dinner table. *Please* sit at the dinner table. There *is* a night to chuck chicken nuggets at them in the back of the van. There *is* that time, but there must also be time where we're sitting together. I don't want to preach or teach this like we're not living in the world we're living in and the time we're living in.

We're not in BCE here. We're not an agricultural society, where the kids are coming to work for me and working in the field. There *is* a time when you get through the Chick-fil-A or when you don't even try Chick-fil-A because that's like a four-and-a-half-hour wait in line. You figure out how to get nuggets to them. There is a time to do that, but we have to establish at least some consistency around the table. Later in the series I'll give you all sorts of sociological information about just what eating dinner together does. It really is stunning.

As you sit in the house, as you're in the car, when you're going to bed at night, when you get them up in the morning... Again, I'm not trying to over-romanticize this. There are mornings in the

Chandler house where breakfast is a ZBar, a lot of screaming, maybe some juice, and "I can't believe you lost your shoes again." Then there are other mornings where it's bacon and eggs and prayer before school. It's inconsistent.

I love what he says here. Actually, the first-century Pharisees... You want to talk about adventures in missing the point. Look at verse 8. **"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."** What the first-century Jews had done is they took a box and put the *Shema* in a box, and then they bound that box to their forehead. They literally walked around with boxes on them that had the *Shema*.

They took this text literally. They had the *Shema* on their hands. Again, this is an adventure in missing the point. As I was saying earlier, it's not just about reading and memorizing; it's about steeping and knowing. What the Word of God is commanding us is that the *Shema*...to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and all our might...is to become the lens by which we see the world and the motivation by which our hands work.

That's how we see the world: through the lens of, "Our house is going to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might. This is what we're about." So now we're going to talk about that when we sit down. We're going to talk about that in the car. We're going to talk about that when we lie down at night. We're going to talk about that when we get up in the morning. It's going to be inconsistent, and we're going to have a lot of opportunity to own where we failed, and one day at a time, over a long period of time, God is going to do some cool things.

Parents, let me take this off you really quickly. You will not, by your parenting, save your children. Did you hear me? The power to save is not in your hands. I say this because one of the things we've experienced at The Village Church for 13-something years now is a slew of men and women who have become Christians in their 30s who will say, "I got baptized when I was a kid, but I did not believe or understand but felt it was really for my parents."

I will oftentimes use a joke that's not a joke. It's actually based on a real story of what happens when you tell a 6- or 7-year-old, "Do you want to come to heaven with Mom and me or would you like to burn in hell forever?" You laughed, but that's based on a real conversation with a grown man who, with no joy in his heart and sin ravaging his life, considered himself a Christian because he was baptized when he was 7 with no understanding and no desire to really follow the Lord. He was

convinced he was a Christian, because it was important for his parents to look holy and look all together for their church friends.

One of the reasons we built out the baptism class for children and for parents is to help assist you in this, because we want to believe the best about our kids, don't we? I want to believe the best about my kids. The second they say something like, "Jesus died on the cross for my sins," we're like, "He's a Christian. He is." My son said that to me once. He was riding his little tricycle and said, "Hey, Dad, Jesus died for me on the cross," and I was like, "That's right, buddy. And then what happened?" He said, "And then the Easter bunny brings me candy."

We want to serve you, parents, with your children to make sure they grasp it. Christ *does* save, *can* save 5- or 6- or 7-year-old little children. My wife's testimony is that Christ grabbed ahold of her when she was 7, and that's her story. It's a beautiful testimony. I want that testimony for my own kids, but let's be careful not to press our children to make claims of faith that we have made and they have not.

Be encouraged. It's a long game that, by the way, isn't done being played once they leave your house. I didn't know that. I mean, you have kids and they're just kind of your kids forever. We keep praying. We keep loving. We keep owning our sin. We cannot save them. We can put kindling around them. We can point them to the joy found in Christ. Our homes can be places filled with life and vitality, rooted in the gospel, but we will not save them with persuasion. But the Spirit of God can, so we pray and we cry out and we plead and we hold fast and we expect.

That takes us to the third circle. Look at verse 9. "**You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.**" I hope you see what's happening here. You have almost a cascading effect out of an individual soul. So you have Mom and Dad, who are both committed to seeing a love for Jesus Christ be preeminent in their lives. They've jammed the schedule filled with what stirs affections for Christ.

They're talking about Christ in the car. They're talking about Jesus when they go to bed at night. They're talking about Jesus inconsistently, really wobbly, sometimes not fully, but they're doing the best they can with where they are. They have no expectations or visions of grandeur for their lights-out parenting skills. They're just doing the best they can with where they are.

Then the family unit begins to glow, and now not only is it written as lenses by which they see and

as what's on their hands, but now it's on the doorposts and the gates. Now the community is beginning to see the beauty of God's good design and life submitted to the design of God for the family. You cannot start here. You cannot start with outward-facing ministry. You start with outward-facing ministry, and in many ways the Scriptures would condemn that ministry.

Do you know that for a man to even be considered an elder he must have loved his wife and children well? Why would that be the standard for eldership, a man who serves and loves his family well? Because you can't have externally-facing ministry that is spiritually wrought if your soul hasn't overflowed into your home, because in many ways your home is sometimes the most difficult people to love.

You're around each other all the time. You see each other's weaknesses all the time. If you get praised outside... Everybody knows your weaknesses in your house. People don't so much know your weaknesses *outside* of your house, but everyone living in the house with you knows that you have some weaknesses. So it becomes easier for the glory of the outside world. The Bible goes, "No, no, no. That'll destroy your soul. It's loving the Lord your God in your heart, and then in your home, and then out of there it begins to overflow."

So I would kind of draw this linear line. An individual, Mom and Dad, whose hearts are stirred for Jesus Christ. In the car, in bed, in waking up in the morning, and even in some set times here and there, they are talking about, thinking about, pointing to the beauty of loving Christ that then transforms that home in such a way it begins to shine brightly in a darkening world.

Where do people come when the darkness begins to overcome them? If a marriage gets difficult and people haven't bought into the façade of suburban Instagram marriage... When marriage gets dark and difficult, those men and women, if by the grace of God they'll take a step forward, go to those whose marriage seems to be in a healthier spot, and ask advice and ask for people to help. The same thing is true for children who see the light of Christ shining in a home. They're drawn to that family. They're drawn into the health of that family, the stability of that family.

Then when you have a family unit that's shining out that has come together with a covenant family of faith in which God is the Father, then you have a group of families that form a greater family that becomes a bright light in the community. So you have a church that shines the light of Christ to the community, and then from there, the community can be drawn into it or repulsed by it based on the

state of their heart. Then you have the opportunity to affect community, state, and nation, but it all boils back to the basic family unit.

So over the next three weeks we're going to be covering family discipleship. We've worked very hard on creating this for you. I think this is the best thing we have ever done. It's for free in our lobbies or, if you're more digital, you can hop on the website and download it. Here's how over the next three weeks we're going to talk about family discipleship. We're going to talk about *time*, *moments*, and *milestones*. There's your series.

Next week we're going to talk about *time*. When we're talking about time, here's what we're talking about. When we say family discipleship time, we're talking about creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about and talking about and living out the gospel. We're going to talk about that next week. That's the sermon for next week. This is the text for next week. You have the guide if you want to start to read ahead, although my sermon will be somewhat different but aligned with.

The week after that will be family discipleship *moments*. When we talk about moments, we're talking about capturing and leveraging opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversation. Your children are going to present to you a thousand opportunities to have gospel conversations. My fourth-grade son does it. My 6-year-old daughter does it, and my teenage daughter certainly in the drama that is being a teenager presents us hundreds of conversations.

Just talk about the kindness of Christ, what it means to be gospel people, the wisdom of God in relationships. These are great conversations we have in the car, that we'll have at dinner, that sometimes we have as we're chucking chicken nuggets back to her to eat on the way to the barn before we rush to middle-school Bible study.

Our last week will be on family discipleship *milestones*. Here's what we mean by milestones. Milestones are marking and making occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones for God's work in the life of the family and the child. All of this is right here. Parents, look at me. You can do this. If you're like, "Man, I'm overwhelmed right now. I'm barely breathing right now." Okay, but we're not adding anything. We're just saying as you live.

This is a simple guide that's going to help in ways I can't even really unpack. It has been prayed over, and we're desirous to see God do a profound work in your family's life. So please grab one of these. If you're single, please grab one of these. *Time, moments, and milestones* works in an apartment filled with dudes. You can do this.

I thought one of the ways we could end is by taking a passage in the Scriptures that's about what it means to commend the majesty of God to the next generation, that we might read it out loud, rejoicing in the truth of God's Word together. We're going to read nine verses of Psalm 145 together out loud. Why don't you do me a favor? Why don't you stand, and we're going to read this together. You're going to read loudly over my voice that's amplified, and we're going to let the Word of God wash over us as we consider the faithfulness of God. Starting in verse 1:

"I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made."

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that this is true, that you are slow to anger, that you are abounding in steadfast love. You are good to all. We thank you for your mercy toward us, your generosity toward us. We thank you that as we are, as inconsistent as we are, regardless of where we are on this line of progressive sanctification, you long to use us to shape and mold our sons and daughters.

If we're singles in here, you use us to shape and mold those around us and other units we could enter into. We thank you and praise you that you would use us as we are. You're gracious and good and kind. We pray that you will stir our affections today. That is the key, affections that burn hot for you. We pray that even this gathering today will have encouraged our hearts to a greater love of you and desire to see you amplified and magnified in our homes.

So even today as we get in the car, even today as we sit around the living room, even today as we lie down later tonight, and as we get up tomorrow morning, would you be on our minds? Would you be on our lips? I thank you that we don't need to be theological giants to do this. Capture our hearts, Father. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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