

Family Discipleship (Part 3) – Moments

Matt Chandler – May 1, 2016

Hey. How are we? Are you doing all right? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Deuteronomy 6. We've been in that book for the last couple of weeks. This will make our third week in Deuteronomy 6. Again, I think we want to really dial in and dig in to this text in particular.

There's been quite a bit of conversation in our offices this morning about whether or not my shirt is pink. Here's the deal. I don't know, and I don't care. All right? It's springtime. It's a spring color. My wife dresses me. I'm done with it. I don't want to talk about it anymore, all right? Don't encourage me. We'll be here all day if you encourage me.

Deuteronomy 6 is what the Jews called the *Shema*. It was how they saw God educating them and educating their families and, therefore, educating them as a people. Two weeks ago when we started digging into this, we said what we see in the *Shema* is this grouping of concentric circles that show us or inform us of how our hearts grow in the Lord and then how, ultimately, the hearts of those around us grow in the Lord.

We've been talking about family discipleship, right? Moms and Dads, we're already making disciples. I think you already know this if you have kids. Right? You know this the first time your kid says something that *you* say but you'd just rather not *them* say. Then they say it, and you're like, "I'm making disciples." You didn't even know you were making disciples, and yet you're great at making disciples. You know this when your kid does something you don't want them to do but *you* do. Right?

We've talked about how to think rightly about making disciples in our home, making followers of Christ in our home, just being really honest out of the gate that parenting is hard work and nobody does it perfectly. We read the *Shema* to find these concentric circles, to consider them, and then by the grace of God implement. Let's look at this together. Deuteronomy 6, starting in verse 4.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." This is circle 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."** That's circle one. You want to know how Christian education works, what it looks like to grow as a disciple and to make disciples? It starts in circle one. Circle one is that *you*, Mom; *you*, Dad; *you*, single; *you*, married with no children...*you* love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

I've always pointed out to kind of the stunning reality of where all this begins. He didn't say, "You're not behaving well enough, so behave better." He said, "Love me." The great command of the Scriptures (and this is a sweet deal) is that you and I get to fill our lives with things that stir our affections for Jesus. That's what we get to do. That's what we give ourselves over to on a daily basis. "What can I do today that stirs up my affections for the Creator of the universe, that increases my joy in God?"

There should be no begrudging submission to that. "Do I have to?" Increase your joy? Yes. Increase your capacity to love? Yes, you do. You have to give yourself over to that. This isn't this giant complexity of ever-increasing morality. It's loving the Lord, and then that stuff handles itself. Circle one into 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."** The place in which you live is the second circle, but you can only make disciples of Christ in the second circle if you, yourself, are growing in a love relationship with God in Christ.

Then the last verse. Verse 9: **"You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."** This would be kind of your outreach or how to show the city or engage our neighbors. That's the last circle. We won't even really address that circle in this series because we're talking about family discipleship. We said we're going to talk about family discipleship through this lens. We're going to talk about *time*, we're going to talk about *moments*, and we're going to talk about *milestones*.

Last week we talked about *time*. Here's how we defined time. We said family discipleship time is creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life. You're not adding anything. You're just building this into the rhythm you're already in.

Remember when you sit down, when you rise up, when you go on the way, when you drive in the car, when you're taking them to practice, when you're picking them up from school, when you're putting them to bed, when you're waking them up. As you do, not add these things. That's imperative that you understand this as we continue to dive into this series. It's not, "Add these things." It's, "As you're doing what you're already doing, be more intentional and mindful."

I said last week as we discussed time that I think you can do everything we're going to teach in this series in 10 minutes a week. Ten minutes is all it will take. Create an intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of... What's the purpose of this intentional time? Thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel.

We said if we were going to do this, there were four things. I started all of them with *C* because of my Baptist roots. We said we're going to need to be *consistent*. By *consistent*, I don't mean that every Monday night we do this. I mean that it's a conversation we have over and over and over again.

If you think about you, if you're a Christian, if you think about how often *you* need to be encouraged in the Lord, *you* need to be reminded of his grace, *you* need to be stirred anew with what's true about God and what's *not* true that you are telling yourself, how much more often do children need to be reminded of these things?

When we're talking about consistency, we just mean it's a conversation we keep having. In fact, if your kid has not yet said to you, "Are we always going to talk about this?" you're probably not having it enough. You don't want them to hate the conversation. You do want them to know you're going to be having it often.

Then we talked about *clarity*, right? We need to make sure we're talking about spiritual things in ways they can hear and understand. If you're bringing up the Bema Seat or talking about transubstantiation, my guess is your fourth grader probably isn't following along with you. If you're introducing Jonathan Edwards to your third grader, I mean, maybe that's why it's more than likely it's not... Unless, you know... I mean, I've seen your bumper stickers. Maybe your kid is just a little intellectual genius.

Then we talked about being *creative*. All we meant by being creative is...listen...we serve a God (that's why I started with the G.K. Chesterton quote) who created laughter and who is joy personified. The older I get, the more I'm skeptical (and color me judgmental) of crusty, angry Christianity. I find them to be irreconcilable.

We should be marked by joy as we steep in God's delight in us despite us. We should be marked not by Spirit-sprinkled, fake happiness but deep-seated, rooted joy in knowing our God is for us and not against us, regardless of life's circumstances. We talked about being creative, having fun as we make this intentional time and turn to the gospel.

Then lastly we said as a church we wanted to serve as *counsel*. We wanted to set you up to crush it (slang for "do really well at it"). We want to set you up to just excel at this. Here's what I said last week. I think it's important. If you have a first through fifth grader and you checked them in, they are learning about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. That's what they're learning about right now. They've already sung, and now they're learning about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. *Boom!*

When you pick them up, this is in the doorway. We got you, fam. Here's what you have. On the car ride home, you don't even have to say, "Hey, what did you learn about today?" because they will say, "I don't remember." We're not setting you up like that, because we want you to win. You're going to get to say, "Hey, I heard/read you learned that Jesus was the Good Shepherd. What do shepherds do?"

"I don't know."

"Really? Do they take care of sheep?"

"Oh yeah, they take care of sheep."

"What are sheep like? You know, I've seen them. We've been to petting zoos. What are sheep like? I mean, what would it be like if we had a sheep in the backyard? I mean, that's not happening, but let's just imagine we had a sheep. What are sheep like? Well, how does Jesus care for God's children like a shepherd? Does he protect them? Does he rescue them? What questions do *you* have about Jesus being like a shepherd? Do *you* have a question?"

Remember when I said you could do all of this in 10 minutes? Then if you'll just look at your calendar at some point today, we have your family devotional right there. Remember we're pushing out romantic notions of it being like Pentecost or them showing up with a journal, going, "Teach me, Father, the ways of the Lord." Right? That's not happening.

We have seven questions. I'd say your goal is four. Get through four without someone getting spanked or sent to bed, and you just won. You just won at parenting. It's in the door. You get to pick it up and just take it with you. You have conversations on the way home. You have it. You have your time as you go.

I've added nothing to your week except to look at your calendar and find 10 minutes in which you can make this family devo happen, with no romantic notion about what's going to happen other than you're going to have a conversation about Christ together as a family. We just want you to win, and that's what I meant by *C*.

We talked about *time*, and now we want to talk about *moments*. Here's how we define *moments*. Family discipleship moments are capturing and leveraging opportunities in the course of everyday life. Again, in the course of everyday life. You're not adding anything. This is what's already happening for the purpose of gospel-centered conversation.

What we're looking for is opportunity in the normal flow of life to turn conversation toward the gospel, to turn the conversation toward the things of God. Now Jesus was a master of this. I know some of you are thinking, "Hey, can you use another example, because he is *Jesus*?" The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit of God in you if you're a Christian is making you more and more and more and more like Christ.

To look at what he does and to emulate who he is is what the Holy Spirit of God is accomplishing in our souls. The Bible shows us in Luke 21 Jesus is with his disciples in the temple. He sees a widow with two small copper coins. They were called *mites*. She dropped those coins in what we would know as kind of the offertory plate or box or whatever. Jesus goes, "Okay, boys. Check it out. Do you see the widow? She just dropped two mites, two copper coins, in the offering. I'm telling you, she gave more than anyone else has today."

The disciples are like, "Well, that don't make no sense." Now that's a paraphrase. It's not going to read like that in your Bible, but... "That doesn't make any sense. We've seen people give much more

than that." Jesus takes the opportunity to teach his disciples about kingdom economics. What God values is not the amount but the heart of the giver. What God wants is not money but the heart of his children. Now Jesus didn't prep that out. He hadn't done exegesis, built out his sermon, and got ready to go. He just saw a moment, and he took it.

We see in Luke 13, there was a terrible tragedy. A tower had fallen in one of the major cities of that day and killed a lot of people, very much like some of the tragedies that come across our TV screen. He uses that moment to teach his disciples why bad things happen. We see in Mark 10:17 through 27 that a rich man comes to Jesus. The story is called the rich young ruler if you have a church background.

He comes to Jesus and says, "**...what must I do to inherit eternal life?**" Jesus says, "You know the law. Do the law." The rich young ruler lies and says, "I've known the law since I was a kid. I've obeyed it all." Liar! "I've never broken a law in my whole life." That's bull! I don't care who you are. You're a liar!

Jesus then says, "Okay, one thing you lack. Sell all you have, and give it to the poor." The Bible says the rich young ruler left heartbroken because he was of great wealth. Jesus, in that moment, turns to his disciples and helps them understand to own things is okay, but to be owned *by* things is not. There's a way to be wealthy and free, and there's a way to be wealthy and enslaved. He took the moment that was there.

If you're a mom and dad of multiple kids, you'll love this one. In Mark, chapter 10, Jesus is with his disciples, and two of the disciples are brothers. They get in a fight. Did anybody have a fight break out between their kids this week somewhere (in the car, at the house, at the table)? These two brothers get in a fight, and Jesus takes advantage of this moment, of this fight between brothers. They're arguing about who is going to be the greatest.

I mean, if that's not a brother fight... Sisters don't get in fights like that. "Who is going to be the best?" That's a brother fight, full-on, "Who is going to be the greatest?" Jesus stops them and says, "The greatest will be the least of you." He once again begins to teach what the kingdom of God is like and how what the world values is on its head. Jesus says, "No, no, no. We will not exercise our authority and power like the Gentiles do. Whoever is the servant of all will be the greatest in my kingdom, and whoever exalts himself will be the least."

It's just a moment. Again, Jesus didn't wake up that morning and write that sermon and just hope somebody got in a fight so he could spring it on them. It was a moment. It was low-hanging fruit, and so he took it. Jesus is just an expert at this. As we talk about moments this week, you can do this, Mom and Dad. Here's what we're going to talk about. If we're going to take advantage of moments...

What I mean by that is in the dozens and dozens of moments that happen every day...in our cars, at our house, on the way to practice, on the way home from practice, on the way to the next practice, on the way home from that practice, as we're trying to grab dinner, as we're trying to get them to bed, as we get them up in the morning...we're going to talk about being *observant*, we're going to talk about being *prepared*, and we're going to talk about being *genuine*.

If you are single or you're married with no children, although we're talking about family discipleship, all we're talking about is a distinctively Christian way we engage one another for the increased joy of all of us. I'll come back to that over and over again in this message. Let's talk about being...

1. *Observant*. Every human being ever born of man is born with a disposition that's all their own, which is why if you have multiple kids, you know you have multiple kids. Same environment, same parent, very different kids. Maybe you have one that's just like a complete optimist. They are always sunshine. Maybe God gave you one who is kind of Eeyore-ish, you know? Just like, "I'm okay." They're just not ever getting really high, just kind of a steady, "Meh." Maybe you've been given one of those.

Now here's the key. Let me help. One of the keys to parenting (and I believe one of the calls on your life) is to love the kid you *have*, not the one you *want*. We love the kid we *have*, not the one we *want*. This is a terrible thing to see in this area, where what we wanted was an *athlete*, and what we got was a *reader*. Or what we wanted was a *reader*, and what we got was an *athlete*. You love the kid you *have*, not the one you *want*.

This is huge for you to go, "This is what God gave me. God gave me an Eeyore kid." That doesn't mean he is bad, and it doesn't mean you need to make him kind of a laughy, skippy kid. He is a little mopey. That's all right. Love him in his mopiness. We love the kid we *have*, not the one we *want*. We need to know their dispositions, and then we need to be paying attention. We need to be paying attention.

Let's talk about that. To what do we need to be paying attention? First, I think we need to be paying attention to their sensitivity levels. Let me walk through some of that with you. One of my children had one of their friends come over to the house, and my kids were watching a cartoon. We were just watching this cartoon, and then that kid went home, and we had dinner and went to bed.

This kid slept with his parents that night because of the cartoon. It was like *Scooby-Doo*. It wasn't like some kind of these weird cartoons that are on. It was just *Scooby-Doo*. That kid was so sensitive that *Scooby-Doo* wiggled him out, which I'm fine. I mean, what can you do if you have a super-sensitive soul like that? Praise God for that.

You never want to go, "Oh, I wish you were more hardened," you know? What needs to happen is his folks need to know he is really sensitive like that, and I need to know where my kids are, lest I terrify them without knowing it. We need to be dialed into their sensitivity levels. You need to be dialed in to how the world around them is affecting them.

Several months ago, I was in my truck, and I had picked up Reid. Reid and I were heading to... We call it a man date. We were just going to play around somewhere. He said, "Hey, Dad, is Obama going to take my gun?" I said, "What, buddy?" He was like, "Well, a kid at school said Obama is coming to our house to take all our guns. I really like my .22, so I can hide it?"

I was like, "Okay, a couple of things. First of all, I doubt Obama himself is coming to our house to get the kind of guns we have. Secondly, I don't think they're coming to take our guns. There are too many people to take them." "I don't want him to take my gun. Come grab it."

By the way, I know you're in here. I know when I said that, you actually rubbed your piece. I know that happened, but here. You can be as brazen as you want about that. Just know they have drones and helicopters, and I'm glad you have a 30-round clip with a silencer, but it ends with you being melted and them literally pulling your gun from your cold, dead hands. That's how that ends. We can be as brazen as we want, but that's the way it ends.

I honestly don't think it's coming, but my point is this. My son thinks because of something he heard on the playground that there are government officials coming to our house to take something I like. My son is going, "Will you hide my .22?" I'm like, "First of all, that's shady, and it would be illegal if that was against the law. I'm not going to help you break the law."

Listen. He was distressed. They know more about the world around us than we think they do. We need to pay attention to how all the talk that's going on affects them, the brokenness of the world, the fears of the world, how it affects them. We need to be paying attention to those, right? If we're going to seize moments, we need to make sure how they're relating to the world around them.

You need to watch their relationship with others. At every age group and range, there will be relational drama, because we're humans. It's a Genesis 3 world. In the same way teenage girls fight, grown men fight (and *literally* in the same way sometimes). It happens when you get 6-year-olds together. "That's mine. Give it! I had it first!" Same thing up here with 40-year-old men. It's pathetic. Across the spectrum, there is... We need to be paying attention to relationships and how they relate to one another.

I think this is the most important. We need to pay attention and be observant to how they relate to themselves. You know you relate to yourself, right? You say a lot of things to you. In fact, I would argue that no one talks to you as much as you do. I have a child who thinks they have to be perfect. Then I have two children who have embraced the fact that they cannot. That's Chandler house.

One is so hard on themselves. Every time they mess up, they're cruel to themselves. They're shut down, heartbroken, tearful, inconsolable, to where we've had to come in and go, "Where is this coming from? Who told you you had to be perfect? Okay, so if this is because you're a pastor's kid, Mom and Dad have made their expectations clear. If there are other expectations on you from other people, you tell them to come see your daddy, because we've made our expectations clear."

If I'm not paying attention, what happens if I engage my perfectionist in the way I engage those who have embraced the fact they won't be perfect? Do you see the kind of damage and harm that can occur if I have one who is constantly beating themselves up for not being perfect and I have two who are like, "We can't be! Who cares? Woo!"? I'm taking the one who feels crushed by the simplest of failures, and I start going, "Are you kidding? Why would you do that? What were you thinking?" I mean, what am I doing but heaping shame now?

So that conversation is over *here*. "What was that? Are you crazy? I will burn your world to the ground." But over *here*, it's a very different conversation. We need to pay attention to how they relate to themselves. Right? Then from here, we want to move into not just being observant...

By the way, if you are single, if you don't have kids, what have I described here except what's distinctively Christian relationships? In our Home Groups, in our houses with our single friends, I'm just observing, "Hey, there's a drift happening here. They're not normally angry like this." I just sense an increased agitation in them. I have noticed them getting... They're usually a little melancholy, but this is getting darker and more and more distant. So I'm going to observe, see that, and be...

2. *Prepared.* I'm going to engage. For what purpose? To turn the conversation to the gospel. If we're going to be prepared to engage what we observe, what do we need? We need two things. Mom, Dad, you can do this. We need to know something of the attributes of God, and we need to know something of godly character. Okay?

If we're going to be prepared to engage what we observe in our kids' lives, in our friends' lives, in our Home Group members' lives, if we're going to do that, we need to know something of the attributes of God. Who God is, what he is like, what we think of when we think about God are the most important thoughts in our mind. Then we need to know something about godly character. Let's chat about that.

When we talk about attributes of God, we're just talking about who he is, what he has done, what he is doing, what he is like. That's what we mean by attributes of God. Now if you have kids at The Village Church, every time we have them, we're teaching them one of five foundational truths. It doesn't matter what the lesson is, it's tied to one of these.

These five statements are so compact with deep, sound, biblical theology and yet are so simple that maybe if you feel like you're an infant in the faith, these are some of the best vitamins for you to take. Here are our five foundational truths your kids are learning over and over and over again: Jesus came to save sinners, God is good, God is in charge of everything, God wants to talk with us, and God made everything.

We have a CD with music that sings those five things. In fact, my youngest, Norah, for a year would not sing, "G-O-O-D, our God is..." She would say, "G-O-R-D, our God is..." That was a great moment. I was like, "No, God made everything, and he is good, so he gave us gourds. That's why your mom decorates with those in the fall."

They're singing it. They're hearing it. Listen. As a grown man or woman, if you have those five things down...in your gut, not just in your brain...I'm telling you, you're way ahead of many evangelicals just knowing those five simple statements. We want to know those five foundational truths, and then we can get into the attributes of God. Like, God is wise. He knows what is best. God is generous. He gives what is best. God is loving. God does what is best.

God is good. He is what's best. He is unchanging. God never changes. He is the Creator. God made everything. He is holy. God is complete, perfect, and separate from sin. God is just. He is right to punish sin. He is faithful. God always does what he says he will do. God is always faithful. He is never late. He never breaks his word. He never breaks his promises. He is faithful. God is our provider. He meets the needs of his children.

God is merciful. He does not give his children the punishment they deserve. God is attentive. He hears and responds to the prayers of his children. He is sovereign. He has the right, the wisdom, and the power to do all he pleases. God is compassionate. He sees, cares, and acts when his children are in need. He is glorious. He shows greatness and worth. He is a refuge, a place of safety and protection for his children. He is a deliverer. God rescues his children.

If you're going, "Oh no, no, no. You went way too fast there, Pastor," listen. I told you, we've got you. That was just page 22. It's just page 22. That's all it was. Page 22. All of that and more. Now let's chat for a second. If I just know those... That's what I know. I know those five foundational truths. Maybe I can just remember one of them, right? God is good. I have some of these attributes. I don't need to memorize all of these attributes. Let's say I have some of these attributes down.

Say your kid struggles with anxiety. They have a tendency just to get really anxious about things. Well, now we can step into that moment of anxiety, and we can start to have the conversation about how good God is, about how he is a refuge for us, how he can be trusted, how we can just ask him to give us strength, to give us courage, and then pray as Mom, Dad, and kid.

Think about my kid who thinks they have to be perfect. Do you want to know how often we talk about Jesus coming to save sinners? Do you want to know how often we talk about the forgiveness of God? Do you want to know how often when I'm owning my sin before them I point back to Dad's need for this? This isn't some sort of ethereal theology and some sort of ethereal kind of ghostly thing in the air. It meets us on the ground where we are. We're being observant. We're prepared enough to have the conversations. We also want to be...

3. *Genuine*. Here's what I mean by being genuine. Parents (specifically, religious parents) have a tendency to use the Bible and religion to seek to control their children. God has not asked us to control our children but rather train and grow our children into a knowledge of him. It's not that behavior is not important. It's not that grades aren't important. You need to be really careful when you use the Bible like a hammer. You need to be really careful when you do that.

My mom shipped me off to vacation Bible school. Again, that was not because we were religious people. It was because I was a little out of control. If she could get rid of me for four hours, that was just a win. One of my earliest memories of church and stuff is singing to an upbeat tune about how God hated liars. I mean, that sounds more like a dirge, doesn't it? Like a lament. I just feel like you should bring it down a little bit if you're going to be singing about how God hates you.

At the end of the day, the Bible is clear God does hate liars, but the purpose of the law in its primary sense is to reveal we need a Savior, not to just make us feel overwhelmed and damned in a second but show us, "Hey, you need a Savior. God has made a way."

"I don't need a Savior."

"Are you a liar?"

"Yeah."

"Well, God hates liars. You need a Savior."

Do you see what I'm saying? The law is an MRI; it's not the cure. It's an x-ray; it's not the surgery. We don't want to use the Bible or religion to manipulate or seek to control but rather to try to shape and encourage and build up in the Lord. When I'm talking about genuine, here's what I mean. Regardless of how much or how little we're having to discipline, our children are confident we love them, and we know them. That's what I mean by genuine.

As I was prepping for this series, I read an article by a woman named Diana Baumrind. She said, in her article, that there were two predominant styles of parenting. Here's what they are. One is *authoritarian*. Here's how she defined it. Authoritarian parenting expects their kids to follow the rules but don't enter into a dialogue with their children to decide what those rules should be.

Now when she writes about authoritarian parenting, she doesn't condemn it or say it's the wrong way to go. She is saying, "Hey, there are rules. Those rules have been clearly defined. The punishment for breaking those rules has been laid out, and a parent acts on what they set." She is not vilifying that. She is saying that's a predominant style of parenting.

Then the second type was what she called *consultative*. She said in consultative parenting, parents have high expectation for their kids' behavior but are willing to discuss the rules. Let's do this. I'm going to set this over *here*. This is kind of Bible over *here*, and I'm just going to walk over *here*. Okay? Bible over *here*. Opinion over *here*. Are you tracking? I need you to nod or something.

The authoritative Word of God can be fully trusted...the thoughts of a 42-year-old with a 13-year-old, 10-year-old, and 6-year-old. That's what you're getting. Authoritative Word of God...things we think might be working. I would encourage you to consider the consultative approach to parenting rather than the authoritarian approach, although in her data, which I trust her data...

She is not a believer but very wise and schooled in childhood development. She doesn't condemn authoritative teaching, so if that's your bag, just keep your bag. I'm just saying I want to encourage you toward consultative. The reason why is I think children feel more valued and understood if they can be heard. Not *agreed with* but *heard*. Let me give you a couple of things with a 13-year-old, 10-year-old, and 6-year-old we've learned.

The first thing on consultative parenting (and this is all about being genuine) is we like to do what we call "peacetime contracts." Here's what that means. If you think about strife in the home, it almost always occurs when emotions are elevated, doesn't it? You get shocked. You feel disrespected. You don't know what to do, so things elevate. Then things start getting hotter. You start saying things.

Now the issue you actually started fighting about (whether or not it's the room was messy again or they didn't turn their homework in or whatever) has now escalated to you being aware of all of their weaknesses, and them feeling squelched because they don't know why you're freaking out like this. They just thought this. Now there's all this other damage that has to be kind of backtracked and addressed so you can get back to the heart of the issue.

We saw that happening in our own home, so what we decided to do is at the beginning of every school year we sit down and we talk about expectations for school. Lauren and I are polar opposites when it comes to our schooling careers. She was in the National Honor Society in high school, graduated *summa cum laude* from college in three and a half years (no summer school). Literally. She made two B's her entire life. Kindergarten through the end of college, she made two B's. If she were here, she would tell you why those B's were not her fault.

The only thing they said at my graduation from high school was, "Matt Chandler." Then they handed me the thing. There was nothing before it. There was nothing after it. They might not have even put the "-er" on my last name. They just said, "Matt Chandler" and gave me the empty thing. I did graduate. They mailed me the thing. Then I was in college for six years, and I am not a doctor. I graduated college with a 2.7. You needed a 2.5 to walk. That's Lauren and me.

Lauren and I, first, as a married couple had to navigate this space where, for her, grades mean a ton. For me, I'm not lazy. I can remember almost everything I read. I just didn't test well. It really wasn't for me. I don't like regurgitating. I'm like, "If you're going to discuss the Protestant Reformation in an hour, I'm going to struggle with that because you're going to pique my curiosity, and now you've lost me because I need to dig into this and figure it out."

That's why I didn't do well. I've always been of the belief that school is important, but it's not of the utmost importance. The first thing that had to happen was Lauren and I had to figure out, "Okay, how are we going to navigate this space as husband and wife?"

Then we would sit down with the kids at the beginning of the school year and say, "Here are our expectations. I have no expectations that you're on National Honor Society, but here are my expectations. You're going to work hard. You're going to be responsible, which means our homework is turned in on time. We've given it our best go. If we studied well and did all we could and we only make a C, then I'm okay with that, but I think you're probably smarter. We might have to look at how we're doing life and tweak maybe when you go to bed or how much time..."

All that is in play, and we build out the contract of what happens if we fall short of expectations. We write the expectations, and then I give it to the kids. They go back and come up with the punishment for the infraction. Here's what I learned. Year one, they were far harder on themselves than I would ever be. I got Audrey's contract. "If I fail a class, I should be grounded from the barn for

six months." I was like, "Dang, girl! How about this? Red pen. Strike it. How about four days? Daddy edit. Okay, on it."

I get Reid's. "Okay, if I fail a class, I should throw away my Xbox." "Okay. No. How about we're just grounded for two weekends (because we only play it on the weekends)? How about we're grounded for two weekends from the Xbox?" Then once those contracts are done, just to have fun, I bring them up here, and I have one of our administrative assistants notarize it. Then I bring them back home (a copy). I'm like, "It's been notarized by the state of Texas. I'm just saying now it's done."

Then here's what we've learned. Here's what we've learned! When something has happened, when there are no emotions involved at all, we've already decided what we're doing. They already know. Year one, I mean, I'm a hero. We could've thrown the Xbox away. Instead, it's just two weekends. We could have been grounded from the barn for six months! It's just like a week.

Now remember I think it was last week or the week before I said kids are a little bit like velociraptors. You know, they're going to keep testing the fence until they can get through. So year two when we did this, they were like, "I should be grounded from the iPad for three hours." I'm like, "Well, nice try. Stick with four days." Still what's happened is when they fall short, they helped decide the punishment.

We agreed when I'm not angry and they're not angry at what's fair. I am not offended by disrespect when we're making these decisions. They feel heard and like they get to speak into the process. If nothing else, they know their daddy loves them, and the reason we're doing this peacetime contract is I never want them in a heat of some sort of passionate disagreement for them to think anything other than, "Daddy is for me and loves me."

The second thing (and I've done this quite a bit) is really and only at this point with my 13-year-old. I have very recently (and it's been picking up steam) had to go into Audrey's room and say, "Hey..." Oh, I'm not allowed to use her nickname.

"This is my first time with a teenager. I don't really know what to do here. This is the issue. What should we do? How am I supposed to approach this? This is what I need to happen for your good, for our good, for us to function as a family, but I don't know what to do. We've had this conversation

a couple of times, but we're not getting anywhere. I don't want to fight you. What do I do? How can I help you? How can I come alongside of you?" Every time she has said, "I don't know."

So then I have pulled back. I've called other friends with kids who are older than mine and said, "Here's her personality type. Here's how she kind of works. How should I approach that?" I've tried to get some advice, and then I'll build out a plan and go back and go, "Okay, here's what I decided." I don't go, "What do you think of this?" That's not what I'm doing. "Here's what I've decided now. Here's how we're going to approach that. Do you think that's fair? Okay, that's what we're going to do then. We're going to give this a try."

Here's what I know. They sat in last night, so this was a good debrief for us after the sermon. I wanted to just make sure the way I'm seeing it is the way they're seeing it. Regardless, here's what I know my kids know about me and their mama: we love them. We just love them. It's fun because we've had some conversations so many times that my oldest is starting to share those conversations with my youngest.

I was in the car (this was just very recently...in fact, in the last couple of weeks), and Norah asked when she could get an iPhone. I don't even have an iPhone. I said, "Well, you're probably not going to get one." "Why? My friends have one." She is a first grader. "These are my friends with one." Audrey, in the front seat, said, "Well, Dad is not their parent. He is *your* parent, and he is sorry he loves you so much that at times he is going to say *no* and make you upset to protect you and lead you in such a way that you become the woman you want to become and he wants you to become."

I was like, "Yeah!" and gave her five. I mean, literally she quoted me to her little sister. I thought, "That's a win. Let's just chalk that up as a win." When we're talking about being genuine, whether you're on the authoritarian thing... Again, this child psychologist says there is nothing wrong with it. At least there are rules. You'd be surprised how often there aren't even rules and how unsafe kids without rules feel.

If you're more comfortable in that authoritarian role, I don't want you to back off of that. You be you. But I'm telling you, at least consider some sort of consultative parenting where you're like, "Okay, how do we navigate this?" because you don't have all the answers, because no one has all the answers.

Okay. I want to kind of close our time together with a quote and an illustration. That's all you have left. "How long is the illustration?" Not long. This is a quote from Paul David Tripp. "In his wisdom, God has crafted a life for us that does not careen from huge, consequential moment to huge, consequential moment." Praise God. Can you imagine how exhausting that would be?

"In fact, if you examine your life, you will see that you have actually had few of those moments. You can probably name only two or three life-changing situations you have lived through. We are all the same; the character and quality of our life is forged in little moments. [...] We just don't tend to live life this way.

We tend to fall into quasi-thoughtless routines and instinctive ways of doing things that are less self-conscious than they need to be. And we tend to back away from the significance of these little moments because they *are* little moments. You see, the opposite is true: little moments are significant because they are little moments. These are the moments that make up our lives. These are the moments that set up our future. These are the moments that shape our relationships."

Growing up, there was a series of TV shows on. In fact, I do not believe there was ever the glory days behind us, right? If you think there was a glory day... You're like, "Oh, *Leave It to Beaver*. That was such a golden age." No, no, no. There has been no golden age. If you think there was, you are blind to the sin and the brokenness of that generation. Our glory day is coming, and it's not yet been.

With that said, I think one of the things that at least was present when I was growing up is that the shows we watched on television (*The Cosby Show*, *Saved by the Bell*, *Full House*... Not *Fuller House*. Get that weak stuff out of my face. *Full House*, right?)... These types of shows, at the end of every one of the shows, there was a moral given. Do you remember this? At the end of every show!

Let's do it. Jessie (*Saved by the Bell*) was high-strung. She had to make the A. Her whole worth and value were built around her grades. So she found some uppers, and she started taking the uppers in order to get everything done and get all her studying done and take all her tests, write all her papers. Then if you remember, she crashed out and then missed her big test and ended up failing.

Then at the end of it, she woke up. She was a little hung over. Then there was like quiet music in the background. I don't know who she was talking to, but some other actor there. She was just like,

"Here's what I've learned. I've learned it's not really about the grades, but it's about friends, and it's about..." Then here we go. Here come the credits. Jessie in *Saved by the Bell* just taught us a moral.

Or Theo skipped out of the house one night and got with some of his friends. One of his friends brought some beer, and it was in the back of the car. They got pulled over, and they all got busted for MIP (Minor in Possession). Then he had to go home, and there was Bill waiting for him. Then there was this conversation about, "It wasn't mine, Dad." He said, "It doesn't matter if it wasn't yours." Then *boom!* Start to roll the credits. There was a moral presented.

In *Full House*, the same kind of thing happens. There's this kind of drama or tension. Then at the end, there's kind of some music. There's this conversation, and a moral is presented. Well, if you watch TV, that's gone. There can be no shared moral norms because they're offensive now. Because who would Bill be to tell his son he shouldn't be out with his friends with beer in the backseat? Right? I mean, this is the kind of world we've inherited.

Here's what I want to point out to you. Some of parenting and some of friendships and some of roommates will be these kind of epic kind of broken moments where there are tears and high consequences. You get to have the gospel talk.

Ninety percent of your gospel talks will come in these tiny, little moments, these tiny, little opportunities, where there was just a question asked, or there was something you saw or, "Hey, that's like the gospel," or, "If you're anxious, here's what God can do in our anxieties. Here's what God does and addresses in our fears. Here's how we should think about..."

These are conversations. "Here's what the Lord would have us do in this relationship that's difficult. Here's how the Lord would have us handle this. Here's how we should think rightly about our money. Here's how the Lord would be pleased with how we operate." When we are looking at godly character, we're not just those who point out what's wrong but who rejoice in what they do well.

I have yet to meet the kid who hates encouragement from their parents. Right? When my son does something gentle or sacrificial for one of his sisters, I want to point out that in that moment, he is becoming more like the man God would have him be. He pleased the heart of his dad, and he pleased the heart of God.

I don't want to just go, "Why are you always doing that to your sister? That's not the way the Lord would have you... What it means to be a man is *this*." I want to champion where they nail it. I want to be their biggest fan, but I'm not going to be their best friend, because I'm their daddy. I want them to have best friends. It can't be me. "Let's laugh. Let's play, but I'm your dad."

Moments are picking the low-hanging fruit of everyday life to turn those moments into an opportunity to talk about the gospel. Mom, Dad, you can do this. If you don't know where to start, you start when you pick up your kid. We've got you. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you again for the opportunity just to be together today. It's a good thing to come together like this. I thank you for just a simple idea of being observant, being prepared, and then being genuine and pray that would mark not just family discipleship here but really how we interact with one another as belonging to the household of faith.

So if we're single or we're married with no kids, that we would pay attention to one another in ways we might encourage and edify and build up. I pray as moms and dads, where we've fallen short, we would just be willing to own where we've fallen short and ask your forgiveness and ask forgiveness of those maybe we've sinned against and then just trust in your grace.

I pray where we need to become more observant, where we maybe need to set some boundaries on ourselves with how much we're drawn to technology, how much we're looking at our phone, how much we're watching TV and not engaging in paying attention, you would help us grow in what it means to be fully present in our families.

God, where we feel ignorant like we're not sure what to do, I pray we would dedicate 12 minutes this week to just looking at an attribute and considering a foundational truth and figuring out how to turn conversation to that. Help us, Father. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.