



Let's Talk (Part 1) – Family Discipleship (Time, Moments, Milestones)

Matt Chandler – June 18, 2017

Good morning. It's good to see you. Really, for the first time in the last decade, the Flower Mound Campus is completely off-stream. All of our other campuses across the Metroplex are doing their own series this summer, so it will just be us for the next six weeks, hanging out. I have put together some of that, and you have put together some of that.

Coming off of three weeks on marriage, we're going to turn our attention this week to family discipleship, and then we have a sermon on the role of joy and celebration and rejoicing in the life of the believer. Then we'll have a sermon on singleness. Then we'll talk about the Trinity, one of the more confusing doctrines of Christian theology.

From there, we're going to do three weeks on progressive sanctification, or how the Spirit makes us more and more and more like Jesus over a period of time. Then we'll all be back online with one another come August 16. That weekend, we'll all be back. We just get the summer to kind of contextually dive in where we are. I'm excited to do that.

We're going to talk about family discipleship today in our time together. When we talk about making disciples, the word *disciple* simply means learner. We've been called by God to make disciples. We're not after making converts; we're after making disciples. You make disciples, and converts follow. The goal of the Christian church is not to make converts but to make disciples, to create, by the grace of God and by the Spirit of God, followers of Jesus Christ.

The way we do that is by embodying the story that you and I find ourselves living in. Here is something a lot of people don't really talk about. Everyone you know is living out of a worldview. They are participating in a story. As Christians, we have a story that we're actively living in and out of. That story is usually framed like this: creation, fall, redemption, restoration.

Let me take that and kind of embed it into how we as Christians see the world. I won't contrast with atheists or Buddhists or others, but I want to show you how this story kind of shapes our morals and ethics and shapes how we live in and out of the story in the world in which we live. Let me put this on the screen so you can get a sense of what I'm talking about.

When we ask ourselves as Christians the question...*Where did I come from?* everyone is going to answer that question. The atheist is going to answer that question or just ignore it. The Buddhist is going to answer this question. The Muslim is going to answer this question. Here is how Christians answer this question. We were created by the creator God of the universe. We were made in his image. That's where we came from. We were created by God, and we've been made in the image of God. Now that immediately begins to shape and inform our morals and ethics.

Being made in the image of God by a creator God means we have dignity, value, and worth that is beyond the rest of the creative order. That doesn't mean that we look at the rest of creation with disdain, only that we understand that humankind, regardless of their socioeconomic status, regardless of their intellect, regardless of their physical capabilities, is more valuable than the most expensive racehorse out there.

I just get that you love your dog and that your dog is like a member of your family. Look at me. Your dog is not of equal value or worth as another human being. As Christians, we would not slide that scale and go, "Well, they're not fully human because their intellect is here. They're not fully human. They're not fully of value or worth because of this disability or because of this socioeconomic status." Our worldview is shaped by man and woman being made in the image of God.

They hold high value. They are more valuable than sea turtle eggs. They are more valuable than the white spotted owl. It's not that we don't care that those things are endangered. It's that we say humankind is far more valuable. We've been created in the image of God. That leads to the second question that, once again, everybody has to try to answer...*What went wrong?*

Now, the Christian believes that sin, entering into the cosmos, fractures the cosmos, doing two things. First, it bends the human soul toward iniquity. If you have kids, follow me here. No one in this room needed to teach their kid the art of lying. I'm guessing that you didn't, around the time they were 3 or 4, go, "Hey, come here. When I ask you a question, here is how you completely lie to me. That was a terrible..."

It's this crazy thing with your kids. A story I have told before is I had one who will not be named. It was just me and that kid at home. We were the only two home. I went in and made a sandwich. I came back, and we had gotten this package. There were these packing peanuts, and they were shredded all over the floor. I said, "Hey, why did you do this?" That kid said, "I didn't."

"No, you did."

"I think it might've been Audrey."

"Audrey is out of town. It's you. It's me. I went to the kitchen to make us lunch. That leaves you."

"Yeah, I don't know."

"I think you know. I'm just going to be bold here. You did it. Now, you're lying."

I didn't need to teach that kid there. It was there. I'm guessing you didn't teach your kid how to bite another kid when they didn't get what they want. We believe that we're bent. The natural drift of the human soul is not toward its Creator, but it's away from its Creator. It is toward rebellion. It is toward self-righteousness. Maybe you're a firstborn, type A person who, the way you play this game, is by trying to order your world in such a way that you don't need God. You've got it.

The lying, cheek-biting kid, and the one who does everything in order to please their parents, are both, in a very real way, trying to rebel. One uses order, and one uses disorder, but they both rebel. This is the bent of the human soul. On top of that, what we see in the Bible is that demonic forces and spiritual realities have some freedom in this world because sin has entered the cosmos that make things messy.

Once again, this begins to shape and inform our morals and ethics and how we see the world. Although we're good citizens, although we love order and process, we know there is a limitation to what education will bring about and what law will bring about. It's not that we're anti that thing. It's that we have, in our mind's eye, in our worldview, that those things are limited in their ability to shape the hearts and lives of humankind.

We don't believe that the answer to the human problem is greater education or better laws. It's not that we disdain those things. In fact, we would lift both of those things high, just not as high as

maybe someone who is living out of a different story. That becomes our next question...*How do we fix the problem of sin?*

Well, we would fix the problem of sin via resting and trusting in the redemption Jesus brings. We believe the only thing that can make the heart whole, that can heal us at the deepest possible level, is repentance and submission to Christ as Lord. This is called redemption. Then living the way of Jesus. If you think that's too ambiguous, I would say I don't have time for it, but Matthew 5-7 is the Sermon on the Mount.

Again, we believe that the answer to sin and death, the brokenness of the world, will not be found in a self-help book. We think it is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the story we're living in. That leads us to the last question...*What is my purpose?* The one who has been redeemed by Jesus out of sin and death, acknowledging they've been created uniquely in the image of God, is now a part of God restoring all things. Once again, this begins to shape our worldview.

That means our work has purpose. We don't see our work as just something we're doing for a paycheck, but we can see our work, whatever domain we're in, as part of the divine. If you're a police officer, according to Romans 13, you're participating in subduing evil and holding back darkness. This is you, being used by God to work toward the end of restoration. It's not just police officers and teachers and businessmen and salesmen. I think even those who get their hands dirty and calloused, ordering the world around us, are participating in God's plan to bring order to chaos.

To get to my house from here, you have to take Chinn Chapel. Chinn Chapel has been under construction. Bless the name of the Lord on high. They're almost done. I drive a truck, and that is Texas cred since I'm originally from California. I just want to lay that out there and tell you I drive a truck. I have a rifle. I'm not carrying a pistol, so that's a knock on me, but maybe one day. I'm not going to do it now.

I'm going down that road before they paved it. I got anxious. I thought a couple of times that I might have to drop that truck into four-low. If you don't know what that means, don't worry about it. Now, they have ordered it. They have straightened it. I saw those brothers out there just sweating and bleeding and tearing that thing up and paving it.

For those who are born of redemption, they're participating. Their work has purpose. There is something behind it. This is the story you and I are living out of. Discipleship is about telling this

story and retelling this story and living in this story and communicating these stories and applying this story. This is the lens through which we see the world.

Now, if you're not a Christian, you're living out of a story too. I don't know what that story is. I wouldn't even presume to guess. I think the way you answer these questions... "Where do I come from? What do I think went wrong with humanity? How do we fix it? What is my purpose?" You're living out of that story. I'm just trying to explain what the Christian story is.

My guess, in my experience, is that most people haven't thought about the story they're living out. They're simply being swept up in the times in which they live. It's important for us to get this as Christians because this becomes the basis of how disciples are made, formed, and how we understand how to teach others to consider and marvel at the beauty of God and Christ.

I want to take us to Deuteronomy 6 because I think in this, you begin to see God's big plan of making disciples in our homes. I think a healthy home where discipleship is taken seriously makes up the cells that make up the tissues that make up the organs that ultimately lead to a body of human flourishing. That's how I think about it.

If you're a single in here, and you're not married, and you're like, "Great, another talk for married folks," I would just encourage you that you did not spontaneously combust in the scene. You come from a family. You have a family of origin. You are currently (we'll cover this more in a couple of weeks) revealing to the world the breadth of God's love as you walk seriously with your community and make disciples even in your community. 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."

Look right at me. Here is one of the counterintuitive realities about family discipleship. It does not and cannot start with the child. It can't. You're starting in the wrong place if you look at this child

and say, "I want this child to follow the Lord. How do I get there?" You're already starting in the wrong place. According to Deuteronomy 6, it starts with mom or dad or mom and dad, depending on how your family unit is made up right now, loving the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, and soul. Mom, dad, family discipleship starts with you.

Children have been created by God with this military-grade hypocrisy radar. It literally puts to shame anything our military has come up with. "Oh, you can see invisible jets? Well, your kid will spot your hypocrisy in the womb." If you start to think about world religions, if you start to think about stories, did you hear the command of our God? "If you want to make disciples, here is a list of 72 things you'd better do, or I'm going to get upset."

No, one command. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your might." What is the command? Give yourself over to a love relationship with Jesus Christ. I think one of the things that happens so often in the South where there is this vague religiosity is that many of us just kind of buy into a story that is not the story we believe. It is one of rule-following, behavioral modification, moralistic deism.

Instead, what the Bible is about is, "No, no, no. You and I are to have a love relationship. I'm going to make a way so you might be reconciled to God, that you might be redeemed, and the love relationship might form that would shape everything about the world around you, how you see, and how you interact." We give ourselves over to this love relationship with God.

Now, what does that look like? There are two things I want to lay out. The first thing it looks like is you taking a real serious stock on what stirs your affections for Jesus and what robs you of that affection. What is it that when we give ourselves over to it, really stirs that up? I've been teaching this for 15 years here. What is it that when I'm around it, it really stirs up my affection for Christ?

It becomes very difficult to be legalistic about that because we're different. I can tell you that I know people who are night people. My man Michael Bleecker who was leading worship, that brother loves the evenings. I can tell you this about me. If I'm not in REM sleep by about 10:15, I'm probably upset about that. I want to be deep into my second dream about the time Bleecker starts thinking about shutting it down and going to bed.

He can feel real close to the Lord and in a real prayerful state with the Lord late at night. If I try to pray late at night, that leads into really deep meditation, if you're following. I'm an early morning

guy. My alarm goes off at 5:00, and I'm out of bed. I love early mornings. That doesn't mean you need to. That quiet, that coolness, that French press coffee starts to stir my affections for Jesus. I want to fill my life with those things, and I want to be paying attention to those things that rob me of that affection.

It is almost always now, 25 years into following Christ, morally neutral things that distract me from being serious about cultivating a love relationship with Christ. It's not black tar heroin that makes me trip up. It's not like I'm going to be walking to my car, and some guy is going to be like, "Say, man, do you want to buy some weed?" "In the church parking lot? Should I? Hold on. Let me write out a pro-con list. This is illegal. I'm hungry."

It wouldn't be like I would build out this pro-con list. I know the answer to that question. "No." Yet, these morally neutral things nip at my affections. Good, not ultimate, things distract and take away from cultivating this love relationship with the Lord. I have a friend. I'm going to use him as an example because he personally convicts me.

I have a friend named John. Two years ago, he just said, "I'm anxious about this. I'm going to give it a go. I just want you to hold me accountable to this. What I have found is that I can cultivate this relationship with the Lord, but then I get into my house. I turn on Netflix. I turn on the TV. Then immediately, all of it falls off of me, and I'm just distracted. I just feel led to get rid of my TV, and I need to stop watching television." I was like, "Bro, good luck."

You just start asking, "What about... Do you not watch games anymore? What are you going to do about games? Are you going to watch the Super Bowl or the NBA Finals or March Madness? Are you crazy? I think this displeases the Lord. You're going to give up March Madness?" He did it. He said for the first two months, he literally went through withdrawal. He would nearly have these panic attacks. He would get to his house, and it would just be quiet, and he would be like, "Oh, my gosh. What am I supposed to do?"

He would literally have to leave his house and just walk around the block and pray to quiet down his soul. That, in and of itself, reveals a problem, doesn't it? To have a panic attack to come home and there not be a television reveals that we might have some addiction issues. Now though, two years later, he talks about being able to give himself over to prayer, give himself over to studying, give himself over to communing with the Lord in ways he wouldn't have imagined two years before.

I thought, "Man, maybe I should give up my TV." Then I thought, "Oh, man. The Finals are about to start. Maybe I'll give up my TV later. Oh, wait a minute. Fall kicks off football season. Maybe I'll give up..." Right? This is a keeping stock of what stirs our affections and what robs us of our affections and being serious about implementing those things. That is how we cultivate this love relationship with the Lord.

I want to add this caveat because I said everybody would look different. Everyone's will include the Bible, will include the Word of God, and here is why. The Bible is God's self-disclosure of himself to us. The Bible shapes and forms our understanding of who God is. If that is not true, then you and I, by our nature (remember the story you're in), our bent away from God and demonic powers will have us create a God in our own image, and we will become the creator, and he will become the creation, and it will be interesting.

I will just give you this test if you don't view the Bible as authoritative. My guess is if you don't view the Bible as authoritative and still ascribe to some sort of spirituality, a god that is out there, my guess is the god of your imagination looks a lot like you and rarely disagrees with you. Look, man. I love you. I'm sure you're sharp, but how pathetic is your god if he looks identical to you and if he never disagrees with you and never confronts you and never tries to shape you or mold you or reveal wrong thinking in you?

What kind of god is he if you and he are on the same intellectual plane? I'm impressed with you, but I would not follow the god of your imagination. The Bible confronts. The Bible offends. The Bible is going to step into these spaces and confront us, and it's going to be uncomfortable because nobody likes being wrong. Remember our story. It's part of the fall. It's part of what is going on inside of us, that wildness being subdued and ordered by the Word of God via the Holy Spirit to shape us into those who have been set free to cultivate a love relationship with him.

Why is this so important when we're talking about family discipleship? God's plan and design for moms and dads or moms or dads to disciple their children is so ingrained into biology, neurology, and the other sciences that you are discipling your children whether you want to or not. Look right at me. You are making disciples. As I'm talking about this, if you think, "Man, I don't want any part of that," it's too late. If you have a kid, you're making disciples.

The question is, what kind of disciple are you making? Now, quickly here, the way you're living life and the way you're ordering your life at home is communicating to your children what is of utmost

value. The question you have to wrestle with on top of this love relationship with Christ is what you're communicating to your children is ultimate.

Let me tell you some common pitfalls in the suburbs of Dallas. Grades. The belief that grades are of the utmost importance, and if you get these kinds of grades, you're going to be the smartest kid. You set the child up for such a horrific letdown when you set up the idol of grades and achievement via marks as the god of your home. Or sports. Don't get me wrong. I'm sure your kid is a superb athlete. My guess is they don't have a future in professional sports. That's just my guess.

I don't know. We've had one kid here in 15 years who actually made it to the league. Maybe your kid will be the second out of 15,000. Those aren't terrible odds. They're not great either. What happens when you order your home, order the discipline of your child, reserve all of your praise or all of your criticism around athletics or grades? You're teaching and disciplining your children that this is of supreme value.

Now that I have a high school student (I can't believe I just said that), what I have noticed... We have been here for 15 years. My family knows no other place but this place. What I have noticed with my oldest kids is that when we were younger, it was, "We want to cultivate their souls. We want to develop them as followers of Christ." Then, all of a sudden, this other passion is interjected. It's a good passion.

Let me just say it for the record. I've already outed myself. I love sports. I yell at the TV. I'm embarrassed for how I behave at times. Don't make a noise on this. I love the Ags, so you know I am a tormented soul. In the middle of it, I am embarrassed by how I behave sometimes around athletics. The fact that I can be emotionally affected by what a kid does with a ball haunts me. I'm for sports. I see the beauty in it. I want it to be celebrated and rejoiced.

It just makes a really crummy god. If you're not careful, you're going to spend all of your money and all of your energy and all of your time cultivating this athletic thing at the expense of souls. What I noticed is as Audrey got a little bit older, some of her friends got into soccer, got into lacrosse, got into swimming. What happens is over successive years, church becomes less and less of a priority. Spiritual formation becomes less and less of a priority. This other thing takes center stage.

A question I hope haunts you is what happens when that thing you put in center stage is gone? It eventually goes away, no matter how good they are. No matter how good they are, it eventually

goes away. What is left? Yesteryear? What kind of disciples are you making? This is a huge, huge question. We're cultivating a love relationship with the Lord. Imagine what kind of environment that creates.

You give yourself over to loving the Lord. You're adding things to your life that stir your affections. You're kind of shunning or putting away from things that rob you of affection. Could it be that home is far more stable? Could it be that there is a lot more patience there? Could it be that there is a lot more grace there? What happens when you give yourself over to a love relationship with Christ? Now, once we're there and continuing to cultivate that, we move to verses 6-8.

"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."

Now we're to the children. Isn't it funny? On this process to make disciples who live out our story, it starts with mom and dad and then moves to the child. It's like there is this overflow out of the love for Christ that we have that begins to kind of permeate our family. If we could be real honest here, as parents in 2017 in the suburbs of Dallas, we feel stretched thin. I have three kids. All of them do stuff. We only let our kids do one thing at a time, and it's enough to stretch us thin.

My wife is singing today. We'll get home. She's going to take our oldest up to Tioga, Texas. If you know where that is... Wow. She has a little lesson up there for barrel racing. Then she'll come home. She has V-Games tonight, which is our middle school fun night over at Doubletree Ranch. Then I have two others. We just feel stretched thin.

You start to try to lay this on top. "Oh, my gosh? When am I supposed to find time to do that in the midst of the chaos that is life with smaller kids?" That is why I love that the Bible always kind of meets us where we are. The Bible rarely, if ever, paints a picture of reality that is inconsistent with how you and I experience it.

Notice that what he has done here is not added anything to our lives but rather repurposed our lives as we live them. Look back at the list. He says, **"You shall teach them diligently to your children..."** When? **"...and shall talk of them when you sit in your house..."** Did anybody sit at

their house this week? Okay, so it's just about repurposing that. "**...and when you walk by the way...**" "We don't walk. We're in the 'burbs." We do drive.

Have any of you driven your kids around this week? It's summertime. I'm like an Uber driver. We're driving our kids everywhere. "**...and when you lie down...**" Did anybody put their kids to bed at night? Did anybody see them get up in the morning? Yes. What the Bible is saying is that you are to repurpose these everyday moments to have spiritual conversations with your children to help them line up and see the story we're caught up in.

I know some of us are like, "Man, I'm not ready for that. I'm a mess myself. I just don't know that I can do that." Here is where we as a church want to come alongside of you, Mom, come alongside of you, Dad, come alongside of you, Mom and Dad. We want to give you every resource available to help you not only cultivate your own love relationship with the Lord but also begin to have spiritual conversations intentionally with your children.

Let me give you a couple of examples of that. If you have a 3-year-old through a kindergartener, right now, at this moment, they're learning that the Bible is God's true Word, under the foundational truth that God wants to talk with us. When you go pick up your 3- or 4- or 5-year-old, right next to their room is going to be this sheet. Here's what we have done for you. We have a small, little paragraph that is just kind of an overview of the lesson and seven questions for your ride home.

Because I love you and I know you get anxious, we put the answer in there. You have this. Now you know what your 3- or 4- or 5-year-old learned. You can ask this question. "Hey, buddy. What weapon did Paul talk about in the armor of God?" If they're like, "I don't know. What?" I'm not jamming you up like that, fam. "Oh, gosh. I thought you knew." No, we have the answer. A sword. So you can say, "Hey, buddy. Was it a sword."

"Yeah, a sword."

"All right. What weapon does God give us?"

"I don't know."

"Is it the Bible?"

"Yeah, the Bible."

"Yeah."

We've got you, fam. We're trying to help you. We're just helping you do this. This is a spiritual conversation. Here is my guess. You're not making your 3- or 4- or 5-year-old walk home. That is my guess. My guess is having an hour-and-20-minute break from them, you're not going to pick them up and go, "You know what? I can't do it. Good luck," and just leave your kid.

That means they're in the car. They can't go anywhere. You have seven questions around what they learned. You're starting to cultivate spiritual conversations with your 3-year-old, with your 4-year-old, with your 5-year-old. Then maybe you're like, "Yeah, but my kid is in the fourth grade or fifth grade or sixth grade. That's not their thing. Gosh. It's all I can do to even get them to even talk with me."

We're going to try to come alongside of you and serve you. Every year, we create this. We add to it. It's an Evergreen resource. It's called the Summer Family Activity Guide. I'm going to put its table of contents up. The first thing that goes in summer is regular rhythms. Kids start to go to bed later. They sleep later, if God is merciful to you.

Nothing is worse than the kid who stays up late but still gets up at the same time. God bless you. Prayers. Rhythm kind of gets thrown out the window. There is an order to the school year that vanishes during the summer. We start out by talking about rhythm and things you might do to establish a healthy rhythm in the summer.

We know those kids are going to be at home a lot, so we talk about things you can do at home that are fun things oriented around spiritual realities that stir up conversations about the Lord. From there, we know you're going to be out and about, whether that's going up to the shops or up to the park to play. We want to say, "Here are some conversations you can have, some things you can do as you go out and about."

We know some of you will travel this summer. You're going to get on planes. You're going to get on car trips. You're going to head to the beach. We have this whole "On the Way" section. We have all of these appendices, a Bible-reading plan for the summer, how to read the Bible with your kid,

helpful resources to think about family devotionals during the summer, fun times you can experience as a family.

We're giving this to you in the hopes that you would take 15 minutes on a Sunday night and be really intentional about time with your children around the story of creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration. All of the things that are in this guide are built around those concepts, around our story. When we talk about family discipleship, we're always talking about three things. We're talking about *time*. We're talking about *moments*. We're talking about *milestones*. Let's talk about that.

1. *Time*. Family discipleship time is creating intentional time built into the rhythm of the family's life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel. This is just being intentional about those conversations. If you don't know where to start, your 3- or 4- or 5-year-old will have a sheet that you can pick up and just have that conversation on the way home.

If you have an older kid, I always just ask the question, "What are you praying for right now? How can I be praying for you right now? Where do you think you are in your relationship with Jesus? Do you have any questions about the Lord that Dad can answer?" I'm just going to ask those questions to my kids. It's not weird. It's not strange. I think it's honestly stranger that you don't ask them.

Again, you're making a disciple if you're talking about what they learned at football camp, but you're not asking what they learned coming home from church camp or what they learned in kindergarten camp or what they learned... You're reinforcing, "This has value. I want to know what is going on in your heart." This is time, intentional time.

2. *Moments*. Moments are capturing and leveraging opportunities over the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversation. Let's talk about this. One of the things we have experienced in the last couple of years is what I'll just call drama. What I get to do when my kids enter into conflict with other kids is we get to get into the story.

"What is really the problem? Is the person the problem or is there a bigger problem? Okay. Are you guilty of that same problem? Okay. Here is what we need to do. We need to be gracious. We need to be forgiving. We need to enter in with compassion." We're constantly reinforcing the stories as we get these moments to enter into. Most of the time, when I ask one of my kids a question, it's, "I don't

know." What I want to be able to do is, in these moments, enter into these moments and kind of help them see it via the story we're living in.

3. *Milestones.* Milestones are marking and making occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones and God's work in the life of the family and the child. The days are gone in our culture where rites of passage and ceremonies let us know when we're men and let us know when we're women.

Nobody ever told me when I was a man. I had to figure out, "Oh, gosh. I guess I'm a man now." There was no celebration of that. There was no calling to that. What we want to do in our household and what we're encouraging you to do is to mark significant spiritual moments and mark significant moments in their lives with something.

Whether that's their baptism or their first Communion or their first Bible... For us, we've done all of that. The thirteenth birthday is a huge ceremony for us. We want to call out character traits we see, not things they do, but things we see in them that they are. We want to call them out. We want to bless them. We want to encourage them. Then we want to raise expectations.

We picked 13 because we believe at 13, you start to kind of get that pull toward adulthood. You start to want more freedoms. Those hormones have flooded you, and you're losing your mind. In one moment, you're embracing your childhood, and in the next, you want to be grown. "We want to just acknowledge that that is the space you're in, and we're committed to you, and we're going to enter that space with you. We're sure there is going to be some conflict because of this space.

You need to know we're for you. We love you. We see these things. We want to call these things out in you. We want to bless these things. Here are our expectations now that you have moved into this space. Where you fulfill those expectations, there is blessing. Where you don't fulfill those expectations, there will not be blessing. We will treat you more like a child than we treat you like a grown-up."

Our plan then is to probably do something at 16, because that is significant, and then something at 18, and I don't know after that. I don't know that you ever get to go, "You're a man now." We get to go, "We think you're a man. Time will tell. You're paying your own bills. Get out of my house." Right? We want to mark these milestones as significant.

Let me just end with these four things. Few things can bring out primitive feelings like being a parent. Here is what I mean by primitive feelings. Catastrophic sadness. To see your child rebel, to see them go wayward, to see them reject all of your hopes, knowing they've chosen the path of death. It's a primitive emotion. I don't know how else... I've tried to find the word. It is a primitive emotion to just feel undone.

Anger, loss, fear. To be a mom or dad is to give yourself over to the possibilities of these primitive emotions. Yet, one of the things I want to do... I think every time we teach this, parents who have children who have (I'll just use this phrase) wilded out, there is this kind of blame, this kind of revision. "Oh, I wish I could go back and do this. I wish I wouldn't have done that. I wish I was more of this in that time."

I just want to kind of release you from that and say that you did the best you could with where you were. It's not that you don't have things to own. It's that at this point, you shouldn't be incurring the blame of your child's poor choices. At some point, it's their choices, not your parenting. There are a couple of things I just want to lay before you.

First, as moms and dads, you and I need to embrace the ordinary. Parenting is not one explosive joy to one catastrophic loss to one explosive joy to one catastrophic loss. It is kind of a steady pace of normal, Monday through Friday, with highs and lows. We just need to embrace that God forms people over an extended period of time.

That leads me to my second thing. We embrace the ordinary, but we also realize we're playing the long game. Here is what I mean by that. When we were pregnant with Audrey, here is what I thought. "Okay, I have 18 years that I really need to dial in." Now that she's 14, I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. This is the rest of my life. This isn't 18 years. I'm going to be worrying, praying, crying out, hoping until I die."

If I live to be 80, I'm going to be like, "Man, I hope she's doing well as a mother. I hope she's doing well as a wife. I hope she's doing well." Right? I'm going to be concerned, wanting, thinking, hoping for her. I just need to know I'm playing the long game. If you don't realize you're playing the long game, you're going to freak out at every little thing. You don't need to freak out at every little thing.

Children won't usually open up to parents who freak out about everything. Don't think I don't know you're like, "Don't freak out. Don't freak out. Really? Okay. Let's talk about that later. Lord, help me

not freak out. Jesus, take this wheel. Help me not freak out. I just want to be calm. I'm playing the long game. I'm playing the long game. Is this that big of a deal or is it not that big of a deal?"

Third, grow as a parent. This thing doesn't come with a guide. I think that looks two ways. First, I'm trying to read books on parenting often. I just finished reading *The Tech-Wise Family* by Andy Crouch. I just could not commend *The Tech-Wise Family* more to you. There is a sociological experiment being played on our children with these devices. I'm telling you the first bit of research is really showing we have made a horrific error in putting them in front of the screens constantly.

I know it is an easy fix, but I'm telling you that neurologically, sociologically, and even in regard to mental health, what we're learning about long-term screen use is catastrophic. Don't be like, "Oh, he's an anti-tech guy." I'm not. I'm preaching from an iPad. I'm not anti-tech. I love tech. I just think you'd better have a plan.

The Tech-Wise Family is, "I need to understand. I'm trying to get to the bottom of it." Their whole world is on those devices. It's not uncommon for me to watch my daughter and her friends all just stare down at their phones while they're sitting with one another. It doesn't surprise me that they're doing it because we're all doing it. Just grow as a parent. Just be humble enough to go, "Gosh, I don't know. We're just trying stuff."

I have always looked for men who have gone before me to seek advice. Brian Miller is one of the lead pastors here. He has two grown children. Both are married. He has grandchildren. It's not uncommon for me to call him and go, "What do I do here? Here is what I want to do." With no lie, 100 percent of the time, he has said, "Don't do that. You should not do that. What I want you to do is go to sleep tonight, and let's talk tomorrow. Just don't do that."

Isn't that crazy? That's 100 percent of the time. I don't have one story where he was like, "You know what? That's brilliant." It has just been like, "Don't do it. I have some regrets around that. Here are some things I believe I have failed at. Here are some things my kids have come back on now that they're grown up that I wish I would have been harder on them in, and here are some things..."

I'm just trying to learn from brothers who have gone before me. Gilbert Montez is one of those guys. He's at the Denton church now. We want to grow as parents. Lastly, as I end, one of the more beautiful, gospel-oriented things you can do is own your sin to your children. I have heard some

nonsense, and I'm trying to use that word on purpose. I've heard some nonsense about how if you show weakness to your children they'll burn down the Western Hemisphere.

I'm telling you that few things cultivate a heart that understands grace like Mom and Dad modeling weakness. Psychologically, here is what happens when you explode at your children. Your children, because you're Mom and Dad, never think it's you. They always think it's them. When you explode at your kids, your kids internalize, "Something is broken in me. Something is wrong with me. I don't know why. I don't know what I did."

They internalize. They begin to carry this unbelievable amount of pressure. When you own it, when you come to them and say, "Daddy needs to ask your forgiveness. I really freaked out, but that doesn't have anything with you. That had to do with me. Will you forgive me? Do you know how I'm always saying that we need the grace of God, that we need to trust Jesus? Daddy needs that too. Daddy is not beyond where you are. We both need the grace of God. Will you forgive me?"

What you begin to do is you begin to life the weight of self-hate and blame off of them. You model the gospel for them, and it creates a path forward. Moms and dads, this requires you facing your shadow, and shadow work is stuff nobody likes. Are you insecure? Do you lack patience? Are you prone to explode? Are you prone to check out? Are you prone to escape?

This is your shadow. You shouldn't ignore that. You should lean into that and let the Spirit of Christ work through that and in that to help heal. If you just ignore it and pretend that it's not there, you have a quick sentence that flies at you, "I hate that about me," without doing the hard work of trying to uproot it. You have to sow some seeds into your bloodline. You are making disciples, Mom and Dad. The only question is, what are you discipling them to?

Lean into the grace and mercy of God for your own life. Cultivate a love relationship with the Lord that it might overflow out of you and into the lives of your children. The last verse in the text we read says that it should be written on our gates and our doorframes, and the world might see that we have a Savior and that he is good. This is our story. God created it, and it was good. Sin has fractured it. Christ has redeemed it. The people of God will be used by God toward restoration until the return of Christ, who makes all things new.

This is what we're caught up in. I think (and I'm biased, of course) that we just have the best story. It shapes us in a way that leads, in a very real way, to human flourishing on all subjects. It's not

overconfident in humankind's ability to fix what humankind, after all of these years, has been unable to fix: the heart of humankind itself. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I pray a blessing over our mothers and fathers. I pray for supernatural strength. I pray that even in this moment, Spirit of God, that you would grant to them some clarity around their own relationship with you, around their own understanding of you, and I ask, Spirit of God, that you would stir up affection for you that flows out of ourselves and onto the hearts and lives of our children. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

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