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Leon Tucker

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Brian Frost: Well it is great to see you Providence and to worship with you, and if you're a guest here with us, welcome. We are really glad that you are here. I want you to know that on a day where we sort of pause from John and focus in on this idea of parenting, that you and I will never have a greater parent than God almighty. He is a friend, he's a love-giver. He's a teacher and a mentor. He's a leader and a visionary, and he is your greatest protector and defense. He loves you, right? And here in this place called Providence, there's only one hero and that's Jesus Christ, who gave us the opportunity to come back into a right relationship with God almighty as our father. And so he is our one true hero, but there are certain people who walk the face of the Earth, that we have the opportunity to meet and touch, who have a special influence in our life. To point us to Christ and to point us to God the father, and Leon Tucker, who is here ... There's a lot of you who have heard that name and it's sort of like a legend. But he's right there, okay? That's the legend, Leon.

He and his family were here for 16 years, seven years ago they actually left to, now for the last seven years, plant a church, Broughton High School. And we're so incredibly grateful for them. And what you need to know about them, one is as I think about them, on the context of Rene, his wife, I think of an incredibly godly woman, a loving mother, grandmother, but also a faithful mentor to a lot of people. And so we're so grateful for her. Also though, her influence, in particular, in Leon's life, made a good man into a great man. And so, she's an amazing lady and as I think of Leon, I think of a family man, I think of a pastor, and I think of a gentleman.

And as I think back in my own personal life, just how blessed I've been, how God has brought individuals into my life, outside of my own dad who I love and really respect and who's an incredible mentor in my own life, the man who's probably had more influence in my life as a family man is Leon Tucker. We celebrate Jesus Christ alone, but the greatest compliment that I can share to you and with you about Leon is that when I observe how he lives his life and how he leads people and how he loves people, it makes me inspired to want to walk with Christ even more. And so, it's actually been seven years to the day since Leon has been on this platform and so if you would, would you help me to welcome him back?

Leon Tucker: Thanks Brian. Oh. Well, good morning to the Providence family. It really, when Brian asked me if I'd come and do this, such a privilege and this church has meant so much to me and I remember when we moved here. We moved here 23 years ago in one week, one week from now. And so, it's been a blessing to be a part of this and then to be sent out to start the Capital family. They send their greetings and it's a privilege to be here. Our friendships go deep with David Horner and Dave, Owen, Brian, John and George and I should stop, but everybody. I see faces out there and it's a blessing to be back here and to enjoy this time with you, especially on this particular topic, because this parenting role I believe is the most important role that God instituted. The parent role. And so we're going to address some of those essentials.

As Brian said, my wife is Rene. She was my sweetheart in high school and we have dated for two years and then college, got married, and then this November we celebrate 42 years. And we have three boys. One's 37, then 35, then 33. And now have seven grandchildren, and so, the oldest two gave us two boys each and then a little girl, and then Eric, our youngest, gave us a little girl. I should say his wife gave us a little girl. All of them, but and she's three months old. So we have been blessed on the family side.

Well, this parenting responsibility is a great privilege, but it is a phenomenal responsibility. And in our culture, there are so many things going on that are attacking the family and this parenting role. I listed 10 here and I want you just to hear some of the responsibilities going on that are taking place. The challenges and the issues. How do you live with balance in life as a parent and with a family? How do you have effective discipline? How do you handle the financial costs? How do you deal with consumerism that is rampant? Developing healthy values in your children? Developing healthy expectations for them to know, "Hey, what should I expect in life that would be a healthy expectation?" Which is critical for healthy living. Developing independence.

And that's one thing with independence that is just a crazy thing, because these are some, these top 10 issues given to us by the social scientists, and it's right there where we got a issue right off the bat. And I see Ben [Hamsho 00:06:32] over there, seven years ago, Ben was like this tall and now he's like 6'8" or something like that. I know you're visiting the family, but I had to say that man, I saw him there and was like, "Oh my gosh, he's a giant."

But, the idea of independence, that's our problem, is independence. We started as being independent from God and then he wants us to come to dependence upon him to allow him to forgive our sins, make us a part of his family, and to be dependent on him to guide us. But then he wants us to move even past that to interdependence, dependence upon him, but then we need each other. The family of faith. He said we all have a part to play and so we need to be interdependent, because when we're not understanding what our roles and responsibilities are, the church can't be what God intended for it to be. But the culture, they move from dependency as a baby, to interdependency, to where you start to wean them off of their dependency on their parents to independency. And it's driven our culture to a mindset of autonomy. They don't want any dependency, they just want to run their own show and it's an incredible thing to see the conflict between a Biblical view and a cultural view.

Also dealing with anger. Massive issue. We deal with it everyday and it's killing our families because we don't know how to handle it from a Biblical standpoint. Bedtime issues, that's from babies to college students and even to adults. You know, going to bed and sleep deprivation and what that causes and then guarding against technology influence. You know, when you think about these responsibilities, it is an awesome task and I heard a comedian say recently where he had his fourth child and he said he was with some of his friends and they said, "Man, what's it like to have four children?"

And he says, “Well, it’s like, it’s kind of like you’re drowning and they throw you another baby.” And I heard that, I was like, that’s an interesting perspective. But it is awesome, and the thing is this, if you don’t have God to guide us, to show us how to do it from a Biblical standpoint, then you’re going deeper into the hole, because he’s the only one that has the truth and the power to help us execute that responsibility.

One social scientist said this, he said, “The dilemma that we are in in our culture is this,” says, “The average young person in America has no picture, no mental or emotional image of what a normal or healthy home looks like.” There’s not a healthy model that’s put out there for us. Not in our schools, the media outlets, even in our institutions to understand the confusion as to what even makes up a family now. Just the sexual identity confusion and all of this. And so it has gotten bad. We have always needed God’s directives and power to guide us, but man we need it now as much or more than others, because in this culture, we’ve moved into a post-Christian view. We’ve got a post-Christian environment. And man we need God’s touch to help us to move and have recovery and there is such an amazing amount of stuff to say.

To come here and speak this morning and then this evening, to come back and just say, “God, what would you want me to say?” I want to give you what I believe is the essence of parenting. And so, as we’re looking from this view of parenting from a different view, we have to have a Biblical understanding. We have to do it from a Biblical standpoint. I want to give you these essence of parenting and for the first hour, I read from Deuteronomy, but Brian just read from it, I’m not gonna read it again. We’re gonna go back to it, but I want to give you instead from Ephesians, chapter six. This is what it says as Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus and he’s talking about the relational environments that we function in and the roles as husband and wife and then as parents, and he says there in verse one of chapter six, Ephesians and I’m gonna read through verse four.

It says, “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” The child’s responsibility to the parent’s authority and then to the parents. “Fathers do not exasperate your children, instead bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord.” Or as some translations would have, “The nurture and instruction of the Lord.” So as we look at these, this essence of parenting, that it must be a Biblical effort, I hope that you would take what I’m gonna share with you as things that are making a difference in my life still to this day. I’m sharing with you these three key areas that I have tried hard to go after as a parent all of these years and now, still continue to do it as parent to my children, as a grandparent to my grandchildren, as a pastor and a family of faith and have tried to do that even when I was in the business world. Because these particular responsibilities apply in any particular setting.

So if you would, let's pray together, let's ask God to guide and to give us something that we can take away that we can put into practice, even this week. So would you join me? Father, we bow before you. We just thank you lord for who you are, that you are really the good, good father. And we are so glad that we are in your family through Christ Jesus, that even when we rebelled against your plan, you, because of your love for us, came to rescue us, allow us to come into your family, and to be a part of your kingdom work. But that we can call you not just king of king, lord of lords, but that we can call you father, papa and we are glad for that privilege and we thank you for what you have given to us to guide us and our responsibility. And we just pray now Lord, that you would speak to us this morning as we bow before you, to hear a word from you. May you use me as you would desire, but may your spirit go to work. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

When we think of the word essence, we're really talking about the essential element of a circumstance or a situation. The core element. The core of the situation. And so what are the essential ones for parenting that we would do it the way God would intend for us to do? And he gives us the specific instructions as how to do it. The whole book of the scripture is an instruction guide on how to live relationally and we're to learn how to do that in the family environment. That was the first institution that he created, was the family. Then the family of faith and then civil government to help us take care of those responsibilities and protect them.

But I want to go back to Ephesians chapter five and give you these first two verses as we look at the first essential. Starting in verse one, it says, "Be imitators of God therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." If we are going to follow God's directives, then we have to understand we must imitate God as our parenting model. That is what he lays out for us. When you think about Jesus's instruction to us as the God in the flesh, God incarnate, he was the picture of God the father, as he was here, God the son. And he lays out for us an example that we are to follow.

When he was with the disciples before the crucifixion, he in that Last Supper setting, he said, "I want to show you the full extent of my love." And then he washed their feet, and then he says, "I've left you an example that you would go and do likewise." So for us, we are supposed to go and do like Jesus. That we would go and imitate God as dearly loved children. He sets that out for us. Paul then, in 1st Corinthians chapter 11, verse one, he says, "You follow me," as he's writing to the Thessalonians, he says "You follow me," I mean as he's writing to the believers in Corinth. He says, "You follow me as I am following Christ." And then, he says to the church in Thessalonica in chapter two, he says, "I have looked after you," As he's following the model of God, "I have looked after you like a mother has looked after her children." Like a mother with the child at the breast, as she has tried nurture and care for them, laboring day and night for them.

And then he goes on and he says, “Like a father, I have been out there to instruct you and guide you and model it for you. To live a upright and noble life, to instruct you and to inspire you to live right.” So this parent model is significant to us. At the heart of it is that we would be like God and his first point of character to us, the first element of his model is that he would be as Brian shared this, that he would be a an unconditional friend and love-giver. Now, when I lay these out to you, these are things that I have sought to do as I said earlier, in everything that I do. Is that I am making choices now as a 61 year old adult, I’m still coming back to say, “Man, I want to practice love and care for all those that I would engage.”

Jesus said back in that chapter 13, he said, “This is how they’ll know you’re my followers, by the way you love one another.” That’s our badge of distinction. We never lose that, we come back, we can not forget that and God does it unconditionally to us. Romans chapter eight, starting in verse 35 there, that man, as we enjoy the love of God, it is unconditional. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. It is gonna be constant and even when he disciplines us, to correct, the essence of discipline of correction, he’s going to do it in a loving way. So he never has love displayed to us in a conditional manner, it is always unconditional. We need to do that with our children. That we would understand how love behaves. And so everything that we do, Paul writes it later to the Corinthians, when he says in chapter 16, he says, “Make your stand for God. Live upright and noble and do everything in love.” And for us, that has to be the actions that are characteristic of our life, especially as we deal with our children.

You know this passage, I just want to read it to you briefly and give you a summary here. Starting in verse four, “Love is patient, long-suffering. It is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is never rude. It is not self-seeking or easily angered. It keeps no records of wrong. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts. Always hopes and always perseveres. Love never fails.” That’s the one thing that our children have to see from us at all times. That we are unconditional lovers and caretakers. They don’t earn our love, it is freely given to them and all that we do as we interact with them has to be marked by those characteristics. And we can know if we’re following the pattern of God if we’re following those directives.

If those distinctives are not marking us, then we’re not practicing love and friendship at that time. And for us, that is something we have to never let go of. Look, when I say this to people, I’m teaching a parenting class right now at Capital, and as we were going through some of these things, when I said that about being a friend to your children, I had one of the parents, one of the dads, raise his hand. He said, “Man, I don’t know. I don’t know. I have a problem with that. I’m not sure that my parents need a friend, I think they need a parent.” And I said, “What do you mean by that?” And he was saying, “Man, I think they just need to have someone that can show them the way and hold them accountable to it.” I said, “Absolutely.”

That's the next point that we're gonna get to. But, they have to be first, as God is our model, they have to be friends and love-givers. When Jesus speaks to his disciples and he lays out for us in John chapter 15, he tells us that "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." And he says that he has laid down his life for us and we are his friends. "I don't call you my servants. I call you my friends. I have made known to you what the father has revealed." So he is God who is love and he is out there practicing that love to us, not as the authoritative God he is, king of kings, lord of lords, but as a friend to us.

So, to that parent, I said, "Hey, we've got to be first of all, love to our children. We've got to practice that. We've got to be friends. And then secondly, then we hold on to our authority." But the first one is love. So we say, "Are we doing that? Will we follow his model?" Our kids need to see that and never doubt that so that they would know that everything that we do is driven by our love and care for them. But the way we do it is so important. Because if we say we're doing it in love, but it's not characterized by this ... If we're rude to them instead of being kind and careful and gentle with them, we are harsh, now, instead of working with God, we're working against God because we're violating his truth and his guidelines. Important that we get that.

The second one is that God is an authoritative leader and a visionary. When I think of that, I put down in my notes, you know, Psalm 23, to where we see him as the king who is the shepard. He is out there looking after his people like a shepard would take care of his sheep, with forethought, thinking ahead of time what is necessary to be able to provide for them a place to eat, to lay down and rest. To protect them from evil that would seek to attack them. So he is out there as the God who is leading his people and he is out there casting that vision for them, so they would know what God is up to, what he thinks should take place and what could take place if we walk according to his ways. That is what he does and he does it from a truthful position as the authority. So his way is the way. Anything outside of his way is wrong and it is sin.

So for us, if we're going to follow his model, then we want to make sure that we seek to be those kind of authoritative leaders that know the truth and are committed to follow it and then to cast that vision, so our children, those that are under our care, would know where we're going and what we are doing. It's not just do it because I say it. No, do it because I love you, I care for you and there is a plan and there is a partnership that's supposed to be taking place. And we want you to partner with us in that effort. Brian just said that as those parents were making their commitment to raise their children in the nurturing and instruction of God as laid out in Deuteronomy chapter six.

So that's what we want to seek to do and we never let it go, because here was the issue with this father. It is to say, Hey we definitely need to be the parent, that is the authority over our children. That's a God-given responsibility, but at the same time, we are to be a friend and a love-giver, just like God. How do we do that? We live, as one of the issues, a balanced life before God. He strikes that balance. He shows us how to do that. And we live in a fallen world, I'm a fallen man and there were times when I would be too loving or too authoritative and then have to come back to get it back into a balanced picture.

To be out there holding on to both, practicing friendship, never letting go of my authority at the same time, teaching them how to do that.

When you look at what we are dealing with in this world, I said earlier, the idea of independence. Part of that is a lack of understanding authority and a healthy picture of it. Dr. Leonard Sacks, who was a psychologist 27 years up in New York, wrote a book called *The Collapse of Parenting*. And one of his essential premises is, is that the parents have lost the picture of their authority and how to execute it in a healthy manner. He says this, a question, “Why are kids today out of shape, disrespectful, and in charge? Why is that? Families are facing a crisis of authority. Parents have given up their parental authority and don’t know how to execute it if they were to hold onto it.”

So what he’s saying is now the parents aren’t the one running the show in the family, as God would design. He doesn’t say that, I don’t even know if he’s a believer, but he’s come to this same conclusion. But, that instead of the parent being out there as the leader and the visionary, the kids are out there doing it. They’re the ones that are making and calling the shots and to see it happen, you see it in so many different ways and it’s sad. Because I watch it happen even when I’m in a store and I see the way the children treat their parents. One British observant came and said with regards to Americans, he said, “It’s just amazing how obedient the parents are to their children in America.” And you say, that is even from an observer to see that.

But for us, we’ve got to hold onto our authority, do it God’s way, in a loving way, so that we have the blessing of God as we move forward to shape our children. And we do that as a guiding teacher and mentor. You see that all through the scripture, to where you see God seeking to guide his people. Old Testament specifically. And as we do that, we have to understand that, I mean, we have free will, we have free choice and so we have to do it God’s way, but we have to know that our children have to choose to respond. If they don’t, we seek to hold them accountable to help them move in the right direction. But they still have to make that choice.

God was doing it perfectly with the children of Israel, because he is the perfect good father. But they chose to rebel and when they did, they suffered consequence. But then God wanted to hold them accountable to seek them, to get them in the right place again. And so for us, we have to understand, man, as we do this, we can put forth our very best effort and know that we may not have the response that we would prefer or that God would prefer, but for us, if we know we’re going in the right direction, then we can do it with hope and we can do it with confidence. Hope, that God will be at work to help shape our children. Hope that he will shape us as we are trying to guide our children and with confidence that we are moving in the right direction. That’s what he would desire for us and as you look at Psalm 119, here’s a picture of God as a guide and a mentor and he is out there laying it out.

You read through that passage and it's an amazing chapter. Set in the middle of the Psalm which emphasizes the unfailing love of God, that is the theme of Psalm, the unfailing love of God, and then how he then guides and instructs us in the middle of it. If you look at Hebrews chapter 12, starting there at verse four, he says here, as Paul is addressing these Hebrew believers that are in the midst of being scattered and as he addresses it in chapter 10, man, they're ready to quit. And he says, "Don't quit. No, draw near to God. Hold onto his promises. Gather together, inspire and cheer each other on." And then he comes back to chapter 12 and he says, "Have you forgotten the word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. My son do not make light of the Lord's discipline." And that word for discipline there is not the word for punishment, but the word for coaching.

That his whole idea of being the disciplinarian, he is the discipler. He is out there to instruct. To encourage. To inspire. To guide us in the right direction, and he is definitely there to correct us when we step out of line, but that is only one element of the discipline. What he wants us to understand is he's doing it because he loves us and he says if we will respond, it will produce a harvest of righteousness. That's what he is seeking to do, to be a teacher and a mentor and to do it, you've got to spend time with your children. There's no other way to influence or to mentor someone or to guide them unless you spend the time for them. So we've got to find balance from a Biblical standpoint of wisdom that God gives to know how we have the time with our kids to pour into their lives. Will we do that?

Let me give you the next one. Number four. God is a faithful protector and a defender. He is out there to protect us and defend us from harm and from attack. Outside attack, verbal, physical, psychological, spiritual, all of those things, because we are in a spiritual battle and we've got to understand that and know that we have a responsibility to armor up. Put on the whole armor as he says in Ephesians chapter six, starting there in verse 10. And as we understand how to fight it, then we also come back and depend on God to work because as he concludes that segment there, he's saying pray, pray, pray, pray, pray as he lays it out there five times for us.

So we've got to understand what our responsibilities are if we are going to execute those responsibilities. To know clearly where we are going and what we are doing with our children. As we are seeking to be that kind of person ourselves, that we would transfer that to them and give them a model that they would follow. Everybody wants a model to follow, we've got one in Christ. Now will we take that model? And will we follow that model? As parenting from a different view, it's got to be God's view and we've got to do it according to his ways.

Let me give you another essential here. The second one is we must view our role and our children as blessing and not burdens. In Psalm 127, a lot of you would be familiar with this. Man, we've got to see our kids the way God sees them and see this responsibility the way that God sees them. He says there starting in verse three, he said, "Sons are a heritage from the Lord. Children are a reward from him.

Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gates." This word for heritage means reward. That they are a reward from God. It's a gift that he gives us. A bonus on top of following our responsibilities.

That's what children are supposed to be. We've got to see our children from the perspective, that they are a blessing. They are a reward. They are an inheritance. They are not a burden or a bother. If we seem them as such, then we've got the problem because we're not seeing them the way that God sees them and the way that God wants us to see them. When people have jobs that they don't like, man, they get so irritated with a wrong perspective and man, they hate their jobs and it influences those that they work with. But you lose your job? And then you start to understand the privilege it is to be a worker and to have a job. And for us, we want to see our children the way God does and so, if we're gonna do it, then we must be careful who we're learning from.

Because the culture almost looks at children like pets, to where we have them, but then we give someone else the responsibility to take care of them and to raise them, even with regards to the church, to where we think that's the church's responsibility to grow them in the nurture and instruction of God. No, no, no. The church is a partner with us, but we have the responsibility. We've got to make sure that we're doing it God's way.

In my notes, I've got down James 3, we're not gonna look at it because of the time, but James three, starting in verse 13 through chapter four, verse three. And the idea of two kinds of wisdom. You've got worldly wisdom. You've got God's wisdom. And we gotta say, we follow the wisdom of the world and it ends in chaos. We follow God's wisdom and then we have the blessing of God at work, because even if, if I am seeking to walk with God and my children rebel at times, God still can be blessing me as I'm walking with him and seeking to honor him with my life. And so we want to make sure that we are careful who we are learning from. The primary roles of, influences with regards to our learning, is the media, then our peers, then our parents and then our educators. And then the church, always comes in last. But the first four, generally, are following a wrong pattern and those are the ones that we listen to the most.

Even when we grow up in unhealthy homes where the model may be wrong, we tend to default back to that. To say hey, you know like, man it worked a little bit with me, so I'm gonna try it with my kids. No, no, no. We've gotta make sure that we're doing it God's way and listening to him and walking in response to that. That we would see them for what God intends for them to be and that we would be learning from him and be encouraged by him in the process. I said this earlier, but we've gotta remember that we are in a warfare as we seek to raise them and that's that Ephesians six passage.

You know, Satan is out there seeking to attack and we've got to know that he wants to destroy the family. Because that is the essence of learning how to live relationally. It's in that environment. And if he can break that down, then that's when we lose sight of passing on our values as we see it in Deuteronomy chapter six. I'm gonna get there and just touch on it in just a moment. But you know, I want you just to stop and think, what is your attitude with regards to those that God has blessed you with, with your children? Or your grandchildren. Do we see them the way that God would see them? And not only just our children and our grandchildren, but anyone that we have influence on, because he desires for us to influence everyone like a parent would seek to influence their children, as I shared that illustration of Paul with the church in Thessalonica.

Let me give you the third one and the last one. This essential consideration is we must have an all-in commitment to our parenting responsibility. That is where we see that Deuteronomy passage is so significant. As Brian, shared, that we're to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. We internalize this. Our relationship with God is the priority and then from that flows our responsibility to influence our children. But it is an all-in effort. A total commitment to God first. That's what he desires here.

So we've gotta come back and say hey, where do we stand in our commitment to God? Look, this is so serious to say where are we in our commitment to God? Because if our commitment isn't all-in, we are missing out on what God wants to do for us and in us and then through us. It can't be just a half-hearted effort. Because when you get the half-hearted effort, you get distortion and that is what has happened. We got a distortion of life as God intended for it to be. We've got to have recovery, get back to what God intended and it starts with our commitment to God. Will we do that?

And then next is our commitment to our families. That's what it states there, is we made the commitment here with the parents, impress these values on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, when you get up. Tie them as cymbals on your hands, bind them on your foreheads, write them on the doorframes of your houses and your gates. That is an influence that permeates all that goes on in our homes. That everything that we would lay our hands to guided by God's word. Everything that we think about would be guided by God's word. Everything that we do in our homes on the doorframes of our home, the significance that this truth is gonna guide us. And on our gates, and our business. So that everything we do is a testimony to God's reality and his influence in our lives. Will we be committed to our families? Will we talk about it?

Look, 1st Timothy chapter four, verse 12 as Paul is writing to Timothy. He says to them, "Look, don't let people look past you because you are young, but instead be an example to them by the way that you talk, by the way that you behave, by the way that you show faith in God. By the way that you are loving others, and by the way that you are pure and noble in your righteousness and in your motives. That is what God wants to take place. That's what he wants.

That kind of influence. So that our children wouldn't look past us because we are their parents. No, God would use us to make a difference in their lives so that they would be able to say, "Man if walking with God is like my mom and my dad, I'm walking with God."

That has been a driver for me, that my kids, my grandkids now, those that I influence, the churches and the families of faith that I've served, and the business the world, to be able to say, "Man, if walking with God is like that man, I want to walk with God." This little phrase I'm gonna give you, for those that have heard me speak, this is big to me. This is big, big to me. That they would see Christianity as a trade-up and not a trade-down. And the problem with us? Is they see it as a trade-down. So for me, that is a commitment to say, "God, help me to be a tool. To show the goodness of what it means to walk with you and how good and great you are."

The last one is the commitment to a family of faith. That's what he says there in 24. "To obey all these decrees, that we would do this together and be kept alive." Be kept alive. Our survival depends on it. That we are to do it as a family of faith, together. This family of faith, for you that are involved here, man this has got to be the place that is significant. That what goes on here is important and we need everybody to be a part of it. We don't have the responsibility as families of faith, to raise your kids. Again, we are partners in that effort to reaffirm it. This church has helped me raise my boys.

Ryan came here, he was in ninth grade, Kyle in seventh, Eric in fifth and man, you guys helped me to raise those kids to love God and want to serve him with their lives. And they have been a blessing to me. One of them lives one block from me. The other lives two blocks from me. The other one lives six miles from me. But the ones with all the kids, they're the closest and it's so sweet for them to come knock on the door and say, "Hey Grandpa, you want to play?" And I want my grandkids to say, "Hey, if walking with God like my grandma and my grandpa, yeah, I want to walk with God." And that's what I seek to do as I hold out this model and then partner with them in the family of faith. So I'm involved. I'm one of the leaders in AWANA because I personally want to be involved with those little kids. But that's the role, that's the responsibility of the family. It's an all-in thing.

Let me close with this. We go to the men's retreat at The Cove and one of the activities is the zip line. It's just north of Asheville. It's massive and it's phenomenal, and it's expensive. But you go on it, and man, it's an all-in commitment. It's on the mountain and man, you are going a long ways down that mountain and you're going fast, but you gotta pay the price and then once they strap you in, there ain't no getting off halfway through. You are going all the way down. And you know what? You start and man, before you know it, it's over. It's a cool adventure, but it doesn't last that long. And look, to parent our kids? Man, it's like being on a zip line. You go down that thing and before you know it, it's over when they're in your home. But it can be a great adventure, if we do it from God's perspective and do it his way. By his power and in partnership with the family of faith.

So let's pray to him now and ask him to help us to be what he would desire for us to be. Lord, we bow before you. We just thank you once again for who you are, that you really are this good father. Lord, for the model you have laid out, you've laid it out clearly for us. You've given us instruction that, your book is just like a roadmap for us. And that you not only tell us how to do it, then you empower us by your spirit to accomplish it and that we can do it in the environment with our wives, with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and with even the greater community of faith worldwide, as we pray for each other. So Lord, we ask that you would help us to be the parents that you would desire. That you could accomplish what you intended when you first thought of it, that we might be a testimony to your reality and your goodness and your greatness. And so we ask, help us to be what you would desire for your glory and the transformation of people's lives. In Christ's name I pray, amen. Amen.

Before the band plays, I want to recommend one book to you by Dr. Ross Campbell. His first book on how to really love your child was phenomenal for me. This one here is printed, I think it's still in print, but it's called Relational Parenting. I would tell you find that book, get it, and use that as a compliment to God's word as we seek to accomplish our parenting responsibilities. So would you continue to worship with us?



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