

Help! My Family is Crazy!
Discipline
Pastor David Brown
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Has it ever felt like you were going to lose it as a parent? Or is everybody under complete control? God has brought families to our church beyond our imagination. We had all the families with children stand up in the last service and all but about three couples stood up. In the next six weeks we are going to talk about some things that we really need to know if we're going to live for Christ and part of it's on parenting because there are so many parents in our church and then we're going to talk about marriage and how to find the right one and how to be the right one once you're already married. It's going to be an incredible time as we go into Easter.

We're going to start out with discipline. Discipline is an important topic; it always is. Now, I'm not going to get into a debate with you today about whether or not to spank your kids. I have quoted this a hundred times; how do you raise a good kid...you beat the hell out of them. I know I've said that over and over and over but that's not what we're talking about today. We're not going to talk about corporal punishment because some of you've read a book and we don't want to hurt their little psyche and so I understand and that's okay. Spanking only really hurts their little bootie, but with all that to say, we're not going to talk about that. A study came out last week that said that children that are disciplined with spanking are highly functioning adults and their marks and scores are better than those of you that don't spank your kids. The teenagers didn't like this sermon at all today. I want you to understand that this parenting thing is the most important thing that we do and discipline is not an option. We have to discipline. Some of you are aggressive at disciplining; some of you are more passive at disciplining. The problem I have today is those of you who have no discipline at all because without discipline you are heading down a path that will destroy your family and your child. So today we're going to look at the bible and we're going to see how this bible tells us what we need to do to discipline our children. Of all the relationships God could have picked, he decided to call himself our father. That's how primary parenting is. He decided that he would be called our heavenly father because the parenting role is the most important role in the life of our church and in the life of us as we relate to God so we need to understand this parenting role and what it's about and we need to learn how to discipline. This morning we're going to look at God's word and see what it's all about. We're going to start with this verse straight out of Proverbs 19:18, ***18 Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.*** Do you see that? If you do not discipline your son and daughter there is no hope for them. Discipline is not an option, if you do not discipline your son and daughter, there is no hope. Some of you that want to be friends with your kids, listen they can make friends. They need parents and you need to be that parent that disciplines and brings structure and order. We had a 15 year old girl as a guest today, and we're talking about discipline and she leaned over and told the people that brought her I wish my parents were here. Children want structure and boundaries. They feel safe within the security of discipline. There is hope when we discipline our children. If we do not the bible says in this verse that you

are a willing party to that child's death. Think about that for a minute. How many of you would be a willing party to your child's death and not when you're mad at them, I mean normally. He says if you do not discipline you will watch your child have a slow, painful death. You will watch your child go off course and have a slow painful death. Today as we talk about parenting, discipline is not an option. You've got to learn how you can have discipline. In our society when our children make mistakes and when our children begin to fail we always look for somebody to blame, have you noticed? It's the school system; that teacher doesn't like my child. That's why they went into teaching because they don't like children. Something is always failing and it's never our children's fault and I'm telling you I've had a parent actually look at me and say, my child never lies. You are out of your mind. That child is the most intelligent kid I've ever met in my life. My child never lies. Let me break it to you quickly, every child lies. Let me get even more personal. Everybody lies. Have you lied, anybody? If you didn't raise your hand, you're a liar. Kids need this discipline and that's what we're going to talk about today.

The role of parenting; the way we need to do this is ask what is the ultimate goal for a parent? How do we know we've succeeded as a parent? Let me tell you what the ultimate goal is not. First of all, the ultimate goal is not self fulfillment. I've heard this so many times, when I have a child I'll be complete. If I could just be a mother; if I could just be a daddy I'll be complete. I understand where that pressure comes from sometimes because when you're young and you get married, people really don't look at you as an adult yet. When Dawn and I married at 12 and 13 people were like, ya'll are kids still. But when we had the kids at 15, all of a sudden...I'm kidding. Dawn was 17 which doesn't sound any better does it? I was 19 and so when we were young like that people would look at us like, aw they're cute. When we had a child, it was like now you're there; now you're a parent. I understand why sometimes having a kid fulfills us but that's not why we have kids. In fact, that self fulfillment part of parenting is one of the problems we have in youth sports. Being my age is really fun to go and watch people. I went and watched 7 and 8 year olds play basketball yesterday. That was hilarious! I've never watched the court, I watched the crazy parents in the stand. I just watched the parents. There was one parent standing back and the other 7 year olds are scoring and he's really angry. He's stomping his feet and walking around mad because the other little boy is scoring. He's mad and he's like ya'll got to guard him, you've got to stop him! Wow, you guys have some serious problems. So if you're raising your kids because you weren't the star athlete and you want your child to be, if you're raising your daughter to be a cheerleader because you weren't a cheerleader, folks, you're heading down the wrong path and you will destroy your children. Having kids is not for self fulfillment. It's also not for retirement planning which I wish somebody would have told me before I had five! I remember when I was young and I was having kids people would say oh man you'll be set when you get old. You'll have all those kids to take care of you. Maybe your kids! If I moved in with my oldest son he would torment me just for fun. Don't have kids for your retirement. You better take care of that yourself. Having a bunch of kids isn't going to help you when you're old because you think you'll have people to take care of you, yeah; you'll have kids complain about having to go see you that's what it's going to be. You're laughing...don't judge me. You know you've said the same thing. The ultimate goal is also not fixing your marriage. Too many times I have people tell me if we just had a kid it would take the pressure off our marriage. All we need is a child then we'll stop focusing on each other and we'll have something to bring us together. The worst thing you can

do is bring a child into a broken marriage because let me tell you, it's like taking a magnifying glass and holding it in the sun. Children bring a magnifying glass into your marriage and heat it up so if there is a problem in your marriage and you have a child, it's going to make that problem even worse so please do not do that for your sake and for the child's sake. So if those are not the goals, what is the goal? The great thing about the goal of parenting is the exact same goal we have in the church. Our church bases everything we do on one thing. To bring irreligious people into fully devoted followers. That's what we're about; everything we do revolve around that. The great thing is that the ultimate goal for a parent is really to do the same thing. God has given you a little heathen in your home; a little pagan and your job is to bring them up and help them become fully devoted followers. They are heathens and we have 20 years to fix them. They come in like that and our job as a parent; the ultimate goal as a parent is the same as the churches, to bring them into fully devoted followers. That doesn't mean that they will stay there. I wish it did. I wish the verse said train up a child in the way it should go and he will never depart, but it doesn't say that. It says when he's old he'll come back. In other words, our job is to simply raise them to the point that they know how to live for God and then they reach a point on their own and we'll talk about that more next week. I want you to see what our church does to help you be the parent you need to be to help your kids be fully devoted. Lee Coleman is our family minister. He is in charge from 0-18+ so I want him to kind of give you our goal as a church and our agenda to help you be the parent you need to be.

Thanks David. As our Family Pastor I see everyone 18 years and down. With our family ministry we started off thinking we've got a lot of people who are going to be coming to this church and a lot of people who are already coming to this church with lots of kids. Many of you may realize this but our preschool and children's ministry by themselves are larger than the majority of churches in our town. You guys are doing great with that bringing kids into the world thing but with that in mind, unless we have one volunteer dedicated to each one of those children for their entire lives, how are we really going to be able to disciple them. They live with you, that's God's call on your life. That's what you're supposed to do with children. It's not to raise a bunch of boys so you can have your own basketball team. Your job is to lead your child to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. As we looked at this a few years ago we realized the statistic which many of you may have heard, 70 to 80 percent, right in that range, of students who are in college or are out of college who were raised in a Christian home went to VBS, went to church, did that whole thing all of their lives up to 18 and then they went off to college, they left the church and 70 to 80 percent of them never come back. That's an alarming statistic. That's scary. That means that all your friends that are home this morning that grew up in church or that you were in youth group with back in the day, they're not here this morning because they decided this wasn't for them. What went wrong? We had to start looking at this as a staff like how are we going to help change this dynamic? What are we going to do to help turn that and the answer is that God brought us was family ministry, realizing that Melissa in our children's ministry, Aaron in preschool and then me in our student ministry, there is no way individually we can accomplish as much as we can together so we brought our minds and hearts together asking how can we impact the family. The answer was found in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4-9. If you have a bible with you I would encourage you to mark that spot. This is a familiar passage to a lot of you. ⁴ *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our*

God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

God set this up a long time ago and the deal is a lot of us have relegated the duty of discipline our children to the church. I'm not that good. Melissa is awesome at what she does with our children but she's not that good. Aaron is awesome at what she does with our preschoolers, but she's not that good and our volunteers are incredible but there is not that many of them to impact every single child the way that they need to be impacted that's why you come into play here. We want to team up with you, mom and dad, because we believe if we do this and we will approach this as a team that the discipleship of your children, their growth process in becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ can be accomplished. It can happen. You're going to be sitting with your kids around the Thanksgiving table and Christmas table or whatever for years and years to come. Me, I haven't been invited to any of your houses for Thanksgiving. I'm not going to come and sit at your table and be the designated prayer. There has to be somebody who over time steps up and becomes the spiritual leader in your home, dads. When is your son going to take that role, what's going to happen? We as a church want to help you prepare for that. We want to help you as a church to move into that. So families, this is what we've done. We have in our family ministry developed based off this passage of scripture we just read, developed a thing called the seven milestones. The milestones of The Avenue Family Ministry are stage points at a student's or child's life that we want to help train you for parents, so you can walk them through these stages and you can develop them spiritually. These seven things we teach at two events called Parent Summit. Some of you may have attended that last fall. We are having another one this spring in March or April and our goal there is to take you into one of these classes where ever your child ages are and we train you how to walk through that particular life stage. So here are the seven milestones we teach at parent summit. The first one is the birth of a baby. That's a big milestone; that's a big deal. We want to prepare you as a parent how to lead your child even as an infant. Even as an infant they can learn things about God and know about his presence. The second milestone is the faith commitment. This is grades third through fifth; many of you don't feel prepared right now to talk to your child about their faith in Jesus Christ. You would like for me or Melissa or Aaron or David or somebody to talk to them about knowing Jesus which we would gladly do, but how much better would it be for you to walk through that process with them so we want to help you know how to do that. We want to train you to do that. The third milestone is preparing for adolescence. Listen, we do this in fifth grade. Today's fifth grade is yesterday's eighth grade. Things are so different now than the way that they used to be. Kids are so different so we want to prepare them for adolescence somewhere in that fifth grade time range and then in sixth grade we want to help them come to a place of commitment of purity. That's another milestone of ours. We're not talking about sexual purity like true love waits and those kinds of things, which that's good but we're talking about purity as a whole person. Who has God called you to be? So we want to help you know how you can train your child to walk through that and be a part of that. Then we have a passage to

adulthood. Sixteen years old. Any of you in this room, you already think you're an adult but you're not. A lot of sixteen year olds in their minds mentally they are there. So we as parents have to be prepared to walk them through that process even though they think they are there, how do we help them get them spiritually and every other way to adulthood. Then we have high school graduation is another milestone and there are some cool things that we have set up that you can do as markers there and memory things that you can do to help that make it a cool time in their life. Their life in Christ in their college years, it doesn't end. You know that parenting doesn't end, it goes on and on and on and with that we teach those milestones in this parent summit course and all of that helps us tie into the three main ideas that we teach in our Little Avenue, Kidz Avenue and our 633 Student Ministry. In order for it to be simpler for you at home to lead your children spiritually, we've tried to simplify what we emphasize what we teach here. So we have three main ideas for each age group. Within those three main ideas, we have created tools for you to take home with you every month for you to be able to continue to emphasize those at home so that you're saying the same things at home that we're saying here and so we're working together as a team and they're growing along the path. Here's what we do in Little Avenue. Three things we want the children that leave the preschool area knowing; God made me, God loves me, and Jesus wants to be my friend forever. Those are really important to us and I know as a parent those are important to you as well. So we help them experience that on Sundays and Wednesdays and at home. Kidz Avenue, our children kindergarten through fifth grade, we want them to understand these things; I need to make wise choices, I can trust God no matter what and I should treat others the way that I want to be treated. Those are all good principles right but how do we teach that? Through scripture we help them understand things through God's word and we help you have tools at home to emphasize these things. Then in our Student Ministry, our goal on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings is to help students to wonder about who God is, to discover about who they are and then to have a passion for sharing God's love with other people. Those are the main ideas that go across all of our different age groups so we have a step process to know where our students are and where families are and we help you walk through that. That take home stuff that we create; we do this so because we only teach them for 20 or 30 minutes maybe a week. You've got them a lot more than that. Like the bible said when you walk along the road, for us that's driving in the car; when you sit at home, turn off the TV and sit together for just a little while. When you do life together talk about these things, that's what Deuteronomy was talking about and that's what we should be about as well. Here's what we create for our preschoolers. It's called Small Talk. Isn't that cute? It's got little horses and animals and stuff on it. My favorite things on here are the memory verses. Our children memorize scripture on Sundays and you have an opportunity to emphasize that at home. My daughter, Lilly is four and she knows more scripture than any of her siblings because we're doing this on Sunday mornings and she also is in our daycare so she gets it every day here also where they go through these passages and they memorize them and it's so cool. I will say, Lilly what's your memory verse for this month and she'll say it and I'll tell her you're the best child we have. It's great to just watch that happen and what we have here is the bottom line for the month and bible story summaries from every Sunday and so this is an incredible tool if you've not picked it up. These tools are available for preschoolers, for children as well as for your teenagers in Guest Central. There is a place called parent central and then in the family check in there is

another thing on the wall and that's there for you to pick up these tools every month. For our children in Kidz Avenue we have these cards, one big one that goes on the refrigerator so you can keep your eye on what's the main idea and then you have these little individual cards. Five of them for each week and it reemphasize what we talked about on that previous Sunday and Mary Grace, my daughter who is elementary; she will not let me miss doing this with her. She will feed her hamster, brush her teeth, get her bible and bring this to me every night and I'm wiped out, it doesn't take very long but it is invaluable. It's incredible to have her come and bring it to me and I don't say here's your card, you can read. We do it together and it's one of the sweetest times that I have with her. Then for our teenagers it's different because there are not a lot of sweet times with them. This is what we have this month for our teenagers and what this has is suggested questions and topics to discuss with your teenager, things to talk about around the dinner table and in the car when you're driving them to practice or taking them to school or whatever, ideas on what you can discuss in regards to what they're hearing on Sunday morning and on Wednesday nights. Now bare this in mind parents, if you start talking about this stuff and you're like did you guys hear this on Sunday, if they aren't here on Sunday then no, it's not going to make a lot of sense and if they're not here on Wednesday for our teenagers and you start talking about this stuff going on at 633 it's not going to make a lot of sense. So we have to team together at home and here with the different things that we're doing and guys we want to walk with these people through this. These young men and women as they grow to know Jesus Christ and become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. That is so important. We have to do this as a team so I want to encourage you to do that and as David continues to teach today remember those beautiful things you can do that will matter more than anything else.

Thank you Lee, we appreciate you coming up and sharing with us. Listen, the family ministry children 18 and under are larger than most churches in Waxahachie and Ellis County. They have over three hundred kids that they deal with on a weekly basis so it's an exciting ministry. That's why we want to help your children turn into fully devoted followers. What I'd like to do now is go to the how. How do we discipline our kids at home to help them grow to be what God wants them to be?

The first thing we have to do to discipline our children is we must know that discipline must be motivated by love. It really must be motivated by love. It can't be out of anger, it can't be out of stress, it can't be any of those things and the entire definition of discipline is for us not to punish our children for the things they've done, and I know a lot of times that's what it feels like that it's punishment but what discipline actually is that they have done this action and we want this consequence so the next time they're tempted to do that action that consequence comes up in their mind and they're like, no, cost benefit, I enjoy this but I don't want to have to pay this consequence. That's what discipline is about. That discipline should always be motivated by love that we have for the child. Now, don't misunderstand me because whenever I say discipline must be motivated by love, a lot of you think yes, we should sit down with our children and we should look them in the eye and we should talk in calm, soft voices and we should rationalize with them. Have you rationalized with a three year old? Have you ever tried to rationalize with a sixteen year old girl? It's not going to happen. So I'm not saying that every time we discipline it has to be one of those soft, gentle knee to knee, eye to eye and talk through the problem and understand, I'm not talking about that. Sometimes it's okay to

change your tone. I've been trying to tell my wife that for years. The tone sometimes conveys more than anything else. It's okay to really get out there and do it differently. It doesn't mean you always have to be quiet and soft. I'll give you a great example. When I was a young boy I played baseball and I played for my dad's team which is probably the worst thing you can do but my dad was coaching and we had this good little team and we had the two best pictures in the league and I was the catcher and so they pitched and we did really well. We got to the championship game. Well the day before the game those two boys' parents call my dad and say their going on vacation and neither one of them are there so my dad says David; you're going to have to pitch. Now, how many of you pitched when you were growing up? I was not a pitcher. I was a catcher. I could throw the ball very hard but I never had any clue where it was going but I could throw it. So my dad said you're going to have to pitch it and I am upset thinking I can't pitch, I don't want to pitch, it's a big game, everybody's going to hate me. So I stood up there and the first batter gets up and I kind of throw that ball over the plate and smack, the guy hits the mess out of it. Next guy gets up there and he's got two balls so I throw it really easy over the plate and smack and I'm thinking this is going to be a long game. I hate to admit it because there's no crying in baseball but I'm starting to tear up and I'm thinking man, I don't want to be doing this and my dad called time out and he walked up to me and he said son, throw the ball as hard as you can. Okay, the next batter stands up and I wind up and I throw that ball as hard as I can, two or three feet behind the batter. The catcher couldn't even get close to it. It hits the fence and rings the mess out of the fence. The ladies in the stands had a heart attack, it was way out there and I look at my dad and then I wind up and throw it as hard as I can and it's a lot closer this time. It catches it right in the middle of the back. It looked like he got shot with a gun. He falls and crumbles on the ground, can't even take first base, they take him to the dugout, he's crying, his mother's looking at me angry and I'm like, I don't know, what am I supposed to do. My dad walks out and says; now throw it over the plate. So I lob it over the plate and not another batter gets close to it. They won't hit it and I'm just barely chucking the ball over the plate and nobody's getting close to the ball because they know that they could be damaged if I threw it hard so we ended up winning the game with somebody who can't pitch that was able to throw a wild pitch. Sometimes with your kids, a wild pitch is necessary. Sometimes you've got to change it up in the discipline so they know you are for real especially when your children hit those teenage years and if you've ever raised boys there is going to be a time that your boy starts bowing up to you. I'm not for physical violence but when your boy bows up to you you're going to have to throw a wild pitch occasionally. I remember with my oldest son, he was about 16 or 17 years old and we were sitting at the table having dinner together and for some reason he said something I don't even remember what it was but it was very disrespectful to his mother and I don't remember much after that. I remember grabbing him by the arm pulling him off the chair, taking him down the hall, upstairs to his bedroom, throwing him on the bed and looking at him and said you will never talk to my wife like that again is that clear. Yes sir. I walked back down, finished dinner because big boy doesn't skip dinner, and I'm sitting there and probably ten minutes later he comes down and one of the things with discipline when it's motivated by love is once the discipline is over, it's a hug and love and in your lap. He comes down and he doesn't get in my lap because he's 17 but he sits down by me and he starts talking to me and he's got this look in his eye and he says dad I'm really sorry. I'm like good. He says, I need to tell you when I was

going up the stairs my feet never touched one stair. My ten year old son, anytime I go to spank him and looks at me and says, but daddy I'm scared and I'm like you ought to be. He says, but you're going to kill me! I'm thinking not yet but keep jacking around, keep this up and in about five years I will kill you but right now I'm just going to spank you so turn around. So I want you to understand that you need to throw a wild pitch occasionally. Motivated by love doesn't mean that you're always talking quiet to them. It's not always about the calm gentle correction. Sometimes throw a wild pitch at your kids but motivated always by love, never out of anger. If you spank out of anger you need some counseling and you need some help because that is never appropriate but discipline in love.

Proverbs 13:24, ²⁴ *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*" We've got to be careful in our discipline and that careful in the discipline is one area I have trouble with because we need to pick our battles and I'm one of those black and white guys, there's no picking battles for me. If I tell you to do something that's the law and I've got to learn as a parent and we've got to learn as parent's to be careful with that because there are something's we've got to let go. There are some things that are just not that big of a deal. I'm going to be honest with you, when your kids hit teenagers, if their room is a pig sty put oink oink on it and shut the door. They are going to be gone and that room will be clean. Listen, I have three children out of my house now and their rooms are clean. I walk by crying I wish it was dirty; I wish I could holler at Chase for throwing his clothes on the floor. Let some of the things go. Be careful and pick a few things that are very important for the life of your child. Pick a few things that will make a difference in their life and be consistent because listen discipline is consistent and if you have these kids that are growing up and they don't know what the rules are, they don't know what the boundaries are, one time they get in trouble for this, the next time they don't get in trouble for it, they are living a schizophrenic life and they cannot function because they need set boundaries and you need to be consistent with those boundaries. It doesn't matter whether you go out in public, it doesn't matter if you are at the in-laws house, you need to be consistent with certain things in your life and you need to pick your battle well, but once you've picked your battle, you cannot lose it. You've got to stay strong and stand your ground. A few years ago I was at Golden China and I was paying for my meal and I looked back behind me and this sweet little four or five year old boy said, mama, I want a piece of gum. His mama had the audacity to look at him and say no. That sweet little boy turned in to Satan incarnate. He began to scream, I want gum! His mother said not right now, we're going to get in the car and I don't want you to drop the gum in the car because daddy doesn't like it when you do that. He was screaming, I want gum, I want gum! I'm like man somebody needs to smack that kid and she's just trying to reason with him and she takes him by the hand and the next thing I know he's wrapped himself around the gumball machine. I'm thinking to myself, do you want me to smack him because I'll take care of that kid for you. She's just trying to reason with him and she's pulling him and by this time his legs are off and he's hanging on with his hands and she's still talking in that sweet calm voice and she's pulling on him while trying to rationalize with him and pretty soon he pulls the gumball machine over. The gumball machine hits the floor and crashes and gumballs go everywhere and that little monster picks up a piece of gum, looks at his mama and puts it in his mouth. God restrained me because I'm thinking if you're not going to do it I am; spank the mess out of him. He would have popped that gum out so quickly. She simply scooped him up

with tears in her eyes and ran out the door. She's a willing participant to that child's slow, painful death and he's going to leave a mess behind just like those scattered gumballs that somebody else is going to have to pick up because his mother won't parent him. It's your job. Be consistent. Stand firm. Listen, no discipline is fun in fact in Hebrews 12 it tells us no discipline seems pleasant at the time, verse 11, it's painful. It's hard to be a parent and when your kids hit the teenage years and you take their car away from them, that's just more work on you because you're a taxi. You take their phone away and you can't get a hold of them and tell them what to do. It's miserable. It's painful to discipline your children but I want you to understand, later on it says however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. It is our job as parents to do the painful things because listen, our kids do not need friends they need parents in the home. Parent your child. Yeah there will be times they don't like you. There's going to be times that they say hateful things to you. They're going to tell their friends you're the worst parent that ever lived. That's okay. Continue to be motivated by love; continue to be consistent.

The final thing is you need to accompany your discipline with grace. Dads you need to hear this verse very clearly. Proverbs 15 says a gentle answer turns away wrath. You don't always have to be the strong iron hand. Sometimes you can answer gently. Sometimes you can talk in that small, still voice. Don't always throw wild pitches or you don't get to play long. You get pulled and they lose respect. Sit down and look at them and love them. My sons favorite verse Ephesians 6:4, "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*" Dads, we carry a big responsibility with this discipline thing and it's important for us to not only be the discipline but to speak words of life into our children's lives. It's very important to us to season it with grace because if all we give is wrath then they're not seeing the full picture of God. We need to give grace. Now many of you know my dad had passed away many years ago in 1993. I was thirty years old. My dad was a strong kind of man, but he was a silent type of man I don't know if you know that kind of guy but just a strong silent guy. His words were not there but his actions were. I knew he loved me and I knew he was there but he couldn't bring himself to say the emotional things. In fact one time he almost ran over my mom with the truck and he wouldn't apologize. It was his fault, I think it was an accident but it was bad and my mom was crying and my dad would not apologize because he just wasn't good with words. So as I grew up I knew he loved me but the words never really were there and as a father your words need to be there. Your kids need to know when you're proud of them. If all you do is point out their mistakes, then they learn to be disillusioned and hurt and so your words need to encourage them. I'll tell you what happened with me. Fifteen years after my dad died I received a letter from my aunt who sent in that letter a letter that my dad wrote to her. I am 44 years old at this time and my dad's been dead for 15 years and I get this letter in the mail and I can read it now because I've read it so many times. I bring my brother over and we start reading this letter together. *David called yesterday and said that Mandie is crawling all over. They're doing alright. David has a 4.0 average for midterm. We're so proud of him. He's married with a child. He's working full time and he's still able to maintain those great grades. I know I'm bragging but it's hard not to. Chris is playing baseball for the high school team. He hurt his shoulder sliding into home plate. We don't think it's anything serious but we'll find out later today. He made some great plays and got a couple of hits. I know you're not a sports fan so I won't bore you any longer with that*

subject. We're proud of Chris very much also. He might get a scholarship in baseball, although his main interest is in music. Rock and roll that it. He plays guitar and drums. These words from my dad fifteen years after his death; they stirred me and made a grown man with children of my own brought me to tears because my daddy was proud. Dads you have that much power. Use it, don't always correct, and always love. Look at those kids in the face and give them grace. You have the words of life and death so use them wisely. I want to do something before we close. The first thing about being a godly parent, I'm telling you that you want your kids to be fully devoted followers, can I tell you something? That's not going to happen unless you are. You can't lead into a place you're not willing to go so today don't drop your kids off at church and pretend they're going to get it. Don't go through the bible at home and pretend they're going to get it. They're going to do what you do not what you say so whatever your life looks like that's your child's life so some of you need to make some corrections and changes in your life if you want your children to be fully devoted followers because they're watching you so do that first. Next thing, I want to pray for you. If you have children living at home and I'm not talking about those thirty year olds in your basement, I'm talking 18 and down. If you've got children living at home that are 18 and down I would like you to stand. Now look around. In the second service there were only about three couples not standing. That's how young this church is. That's how important it is that we do the right thing for this next generation. So I want to pray for you now. Would you bow with me? Father God, as this church strives to help people become fully devoted followers, God let that go into our children. God help our children not have the struggles that we had growing up. Help our children not to make the mistakes that we made growing up. God help our children not to make the mistakes that they'll have to live with for the rest of their lives because we've taught them what it means to be a fully devoted follower. My prayer right now is for each parent in here to take that next step to be that fully devoted follower in their life and God for some of them it's accepting you as their savior. It's praying God forgive my sins and come into my heart. For other's it's following you in baptism and making that commitment and stop looking around but follows you in baptism. For some it's just getting involved and studying the word and praying and getting in a Life Group. For some it's serving inside the church and out. God, help them to make that next step that is so important in their full maturity so their children can follow their steps and not their words but their actions. It's my prayer today. I'd like the rest of you to stand and join. I pray for all of us in this room to take the next step to be the fully devoted follower and those of you who were standing with children, we're praying for you. We're here to partner with you but it's your responsibility but we're going to do everything we can to hold you accountable. This altar is open and I'll be here in the front, the staff's available for you if you need to talk to someone.