

# Child-Raising

*Recalibration*

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Well, we're covered up with children in this church, that ought to be obvious to everyone and so what do you do about that? Well, we're going to take a little bit of time to speak of it. I'd like to begin by reading a statement in Proverbs 4. Proverbs 4 contains some of the most important counsel for parents in raising their children and what we want to do in these next few weeks is really try to recalibrate our congregation on a number of really important matters and one of those matters is the raising of children. You may be single here today, you don't have children yet, but some day you will. You also stand as a son or a daughter so this is very applicable to you. There is really no one from the youngest to the oldest that doesn't escape the gaze of the passages of Scripture that we'll be dealing with here in the next few minutes.

Proverbs 4, I think, captures the beauty of all the child raising commands and principles that we find in Scripture in the form of an example. Solomon is a father giving instruction to his son about what it means to be a son.

1 Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding; 2 For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law. 3 When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, 4 He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live. 5 Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth."

Here a father is recalling his own days of his sonship, "When I was tender in the house of my father." That may be you today. You may be one of those tender in the house of your father, I see you all over here. This is you. You are also here as well. You may be a father yourself and you may be a grown son. You know, the honor that God requires of sons doesn't disappear when they get married. It's a lifelong thing. I know it's such a joy to have my own father in our church. Here Mike M. has his father here today as well and it's such a blessing to be able to live with a father and to be able to just continue to learn, continue to try to grow in all of these things.

So we really desire to unify our church around a number of principles that are very critical. You know, every speaker should tell what his motives are in whatever session he is engaging and I've told you 1: we really want to recalibrate our congregation. But I also

want you to know that my prayer before God is that you would be terrified today. I want to terrify you, I do, by understanding the importance of this issue. A second thing I want to do is I want to present Scripture as a guide. Scripture is our only guide in this life and to have Scripture today to be your eyes, to open your eyes to the flaws in the raising of your children. We all have flaws. To miss them is a gigantic tragedy. So I want to use Scripture to guide and then finally, I really want to have us be comforted by biblical answers that God has given us so clearly and so helpfully.

Now, how important is this? I mean, to answer the question, maybe another question should be asked: how important is the family? I mean, really? How important is the family? And so I'm going to make it my aim to try to persuade you that your family is one place where the Gospel is meant to rule and reign. God has designed the family so that the Gospel would be demonstrated. That's one way to think about how important the family is. If you don't understand the Gospel, you cannot understand child raising, you cannot understand your home, you cannot understand the rod, until you understand the importance of what the family was designed to carry and that is the message of the Gospel. It's difficult to understand how important the family really is.

People generally want a quick fix in these matters and they want some practical tool to solve the problem, bam, bam, bam. The popular child raising books are like that. I actually have dozens of them. I even buy the bad ones because their titles just totally crack me up. They're absolutely ridiculous but they show you how lost and astray evangelicalism is in this whole matter of child raising. The popular principles, the quick fixes really are not where we ought to go and so we want to go to Scripture.

Now, you may be here today and maybe you feel like you've got it whooped; maybe you feel like all of your child raising problems are behind you. You've really done it. You've nailed it, you know. But you may be observing warning signs and maybe you are getting terrified. If you're not terrified, I want you to be terrified. Maybe you are exasperated and frustrated with your children. That's a warning sign. Maybe you're repeating instructions and you're making threats to your children. Or maybe you're conditioning your children to respond to harshness because you speak to them harshly all the time and you're just creating a harsh child in your own image. You may be involved in bribery. You may be allowing excuses to run your household. Have you ever seen a house run by excuses? Your spanking may not be working. I've spoken with dozens of people, I've actually been one of those people who have said, "The spanking isn't working." Why do I see so many nods up and down? I'll give you some answers to that. You may actually find that child raising is a battleground not just with the child but with your spouse because you don't agree, you weren't raised the same way, you haven't been reading the same Bible. You've been reading the Bible of your own brains so instead of being unified on what the Bible says, you are worshiping yourselves and your own feeling about it and that leads to problems.

I mean, there are dozens of questions to consider and we'll have some time to discuss those; there will be as much time as anybody wants to answer questions today. But issues of unity between husband and wife, you know, what does it mean to have your child's

heart? How do you deal with rebellion? What do you punish for? What popular method should we steer away from? What about threats? Should I count to 3? Should I use timeout? What do I do with tantrums? What do I do when my children say they don't like the food? How can I deal with what's going on in my family?

So, I want to talk about some good gifts you can give your children. I'm going to give you almost a dozen good gifts you can give your children and I'm going to focus on 2 of those gifts but I'm going to give them to you fairly quickly because I want to be like a race horse going for these last 2. The first gift are 5 texts, give your family 5 texts that explain the importance of this subject.

Text 1: Genesis 3:15. If you're raising children, you need to know that the raising of your children is about a cosmic war that is going on. It's the battle against the seed of the woman. You need to understand the importance of it. Child training is war. You need to realize that.

Text 2: Genesis 18:19 where God tells Abraham that the very purpose of his life is that he would command his children and so this defines an enormous responsibility that takes tremendous focus, tremendous commitment, time and the abandonment of dozens of other good things.

The third text is Malachi 4:5-6 where we understand that the relationship between parents and their children is either an effect of the Gospel or it's an effect of the hatred of the Gospel. That the condition of the rule and reign of Jesus Christ is the heart of fathers turns toward their children and the heart of children turn toward their parents. That's a mark of the Gospel. If the hearts of your children are not turned toward you, it's a sign that the Gospel has not come to their hearts. If you as a parent, if your heart has not turned toward your children, that you're still so interested in everything else, it may be a warning sign that the Gospel has not come to you. The Bible says that when the Gospel comes that the hearts of the fathers will turn and the hearts of the children will turn toward one another.

The fourth text: I'm going to call it the book of Proverbs. That's the fourth text and here we find the importance of child discipline and many, many, many details. My suggestion is: make sure your family reads the book of Proverbs all the time. All the time. Don't stop. I don't care how old they are, keep reading it. Have you grown past the need of Proverbs if you're 40, 50 or 60 years old? I don't think so. I'm not. I'm way underweight on really understanding Proverbs.

The fifth text is Ephesians 6:1-4 and this text speaks of the necessity of securing honor and obedience in your home.

So give your children gift number 1: the critical child raising texts. Now, within that, I want to suggest that you as parents and with your children, that you have in your arsenal what I'm just going to call the top 10 child raising texts in Proverbs. There are so many of

them but there are some really, really critical ones. We're going to go over some of them this morning or this afternoon.

Now, this principle of honor and obedience between parents and children really sums up so much of what the Bible says about the whole matter. In the parent-child relationship, the Gospel of Christ is displayed. The authority of God is demonstrated and it's either hated or its loved and the success that God desires for children is illustrated there and the whole generational vision is perpetuated in what we read in Ephesians 4. So that's really what we are about.

So, these gifts for your family are so important. You know, Jesus said that if a son asks for bread from any father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a snake instead of a fish? And the answer is no, that your heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts to you and I pray that what we are given here are truly good gifts. So the first gift is the gift of the critical texts on child raising. Please just let me urge you to know them, communicate them, memorize them and make sure that everybody in your family understands them and they should get those from the time of their youth up.

Gift 2: a revelation of God. Homes have one divine purpose and that is to bring glory to God and it is for parents to see that their number 1 objective in their family life is that they are responsible for the declaration of the glory of God, the God who created everything for his glory. The prophet Isaiah says, "Bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name whom I created for my glory." Your family has that very purpose. Revelation of God, that's another gift.

A third gift: the confession of sin. The Bible says confess your sins to one another. The confession of sin in a family, it destroys self-righteousness, it protects children from having wrong thoughts about God. It identifies poisons. It empties the family of sins. It makes a happy family and it centers a family on the cross of Jesus Christ.

The fourth gift: expressions of heartfelt affection toward your children. God talks of a father who pities his children. You know, be tenderhearted, forgiving one another. This is the heart of love that God has designed to be invested in a family. It's a great gift for expressions of heartfelt affection toward your children in the midst of your discipline.

Number 5: the vision of genuine conversion. A vision of repent and believe in the Gospel. Bring forth deeds in keeping with your repentance that there is an understanding of genuine conversion, that children understand the difference between just rote obedience and genuine love in their hearts toward their parents.

Number 6: the practice of authentic believers' baptism. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized. When we baptize, we need to understand that often many children wake-up in their teen years and they realize they were never really converted when they were baptized when they were younger. That happens all the time and it's because there is a lack of understanding of believers' baptism.

Unity in the home, this is another gift that comes from heaven that God desires for parents to establish. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Nobody ever hated his own flesh. You know, it is the responsibility of the head of the household to secure unity and oneness in that home. If you're not one as husband and wife, you're going to have a lot of child raising problems that flow out of it. Most of the time when people come to me and they talk about the issues of raising their children, almost every time this is one of the problems. Sometimes it's the problem. A husband and wife are not unified, they are not doing the same thing. You know, one of the parties is letting their children run wild and the other is being driven crazy by it and both of them are confused about what to do. It's the head of the household's responsibility to unify the family around the principles and if your family is not unified, men, you need to get it unified because you're going to have all kinds of fallout from this. That's a gift, unity is.

The eighth gift: protection from worldliness. The dangers of creating love for the world in your children are enormous. What you sow, you will reap. What Charles was talking about this morning is a very real and important issue that it is tempting the Lord your God to allow worldliness to enter into your family in any form. Any form at all. And the Bible says do not love the world or the things that are in the world because the devil is going to eat dust and he wants you to eat his dust with him. Protection from worldliness.

Number 9: love for the church. Sowing a love for the church, wrapping your family around the family of God. God has designed it so you have a family, a biological family, but your family is meant to be also absorbed into a larger family where there are other brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers. Yes, it's true, God wants to broaden your children beyond yourself. I'm sorry, that's just the way it is. You're not enough. You're not smart enough. You're not godly enough. They need more than just you and so love for the church is critical.

The tenth gift is discipline and this is where we're going to slow down now. We're going to talk about discipline and then we're going to talk about the evidences of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your family. Those are the 2 things we're going to talk about from now until the end of the time. So I want to talk about discipline and there is much to say about this. There is no way we can cover everything but discipline with love, discipline in faithfulness, discipline in severity and discipline in completeness are sort of the main categories I want to address here.

I want to talk about the importance of obedience because God has commanded parents to secure obedience from their children. If your children aren't obedient, then you need to understand something: you are not being obedient to God because God is requiring you that your children be obedient. Does that make sense to you? If God has commanded you to do something and then you find that that something is not happening, then something is wrong there and so we want to deal with that. The importance of obedience is illustrated in many places, particularly in the book of Proverbs and we're going to really focus on the book of Proverbs here in the next few minutes. Proverbs 6:20-24 speaks of how obedience is really meant to be a way of life, the normal way of life.

20 My son, keep your father's command, And do not forsake the law of your mother. 21 Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. 22 When you roam, they will lead you; When you sleep, they will keep you; And when you awake, they will speak with you. 23 For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

I'll say it again, "Reproofs and instruction are the way of life." In other words, they are the pathway to life to keep you, to keep you from evil.

Solomon also tells us that they are the way of gladness in a home because a wise son makes his father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother. This is how important it is. Many of you husbands have wives and their lives are grievous and it's because you have not taken responsibility for protecting them by securing obedience and honor in your children. Your children are a grief to your wife because of it. But on the contrary, discipline is the way of gladness. If you want to make your wife happy, help her by securing honor and obedience in your children.

We understand that neglect of it causes shame. Proverbs 19:26 says, "He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother Is a son who causes shame and brings reproach." Allowing dishonor and disobedience to survive in your home means that there is reproach down the line. That's where that trail goes. Now, you may not want to take action but you have got to know where that train is going. It's going to a destination and that destination is called shame and reproach.

More than that, the failure in it actually destroys the child. Proverbs 20:20 says, "Whoever curses his father or his mother, His lamp will be put out in deep darkness." That's where that train goes, deep darkness. You are softhearted, you don't want to discipline your children, just know where it goes: deep darkness, their lamp will be put out.

Proverbs 30:17 says, "The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it."

Proverbs 28:24 says, "Whoever robs his father or his mother, And says, 'It is no transgression,' He is a companion to a destroyer." That's why the Bible says, Listen to your father who begot you and don't despise your mother when she is old." I don't know if you have noticed that in almost all the passages in Proverbs I've quoted, it's both the father and the mother. Often it's true, fathers require obedience to themselves but they don't require it to the children's mother. But failure destroys the child. Can we agree on that? I hope as a church we could be unified on this principle that refusing or failing to secure honor and obedience destroys your children and it will be like their eyeballs being plucked out by ravens and their lamp going out and they're living in deep darkness. That's what it means. So I pray that we are properly terrified by this.

Now, the other thing is that we also learn from Proverbs that discipline is fruitful and it's really interesting that so many of the child raising commands have this very consistent principle behind them: they actually speak of cause and effect. There are people who say, "Well, you can discipline and it may or it may not work." But actually that's not what the Bible says. We may in our human observations may see that in different kinds of ways but Scripture is actually very cause and effect. I think that's disturbing to us. It's not formulaic exclusively but it does have...some of the passages of Scripture that speak of really the success that comes from discipline, they almost sound formulaic.

Proverbs 19:18 says, "Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction." The King James says, "And let not thy soul spare his crying." Now, Proverbs 19:18 tells you that there is a time when there is hope and there is a time when there is not hope. I don't honestly believe the writer of the Proverbs is saying that there is a place where there is no hope at all. It's a proverb, it's a generality, but if you miss the window, you've missed something. So you have young children, thank the Lord that you have them young because there is a time when there is not as much hope for them. There is much more to undo. My own experience bears that out in my own family and I believe it absolutely is true. Chasten your son while there is hope. Now, if they are older, you still need to chasten them and it's a hopeful thing to bring the chastening but it's harder when they are older. A lot harder.

Proverbs 29:17 says, "Correct your son," that's what you're supposed to do, "and," the result is, "he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul." So it's fruitful. If you engage in proper correction, then you will have rest. You know, how much of your lack of rest comes from the lack of obedience of your children?

Proverbs 17:25 says, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, And bitterness to her who bore him." That's sort of the opposite of rest.

Proverbs 19:25 says, "Strike a scoffer, and the simple will become wary; Rebuke one who has understanding, and he will discern knowledge. Cease listening to instruction, my son, And you will stray from the words of knowledge." These are all sort of cause and effect principles that are in Proverbs 19. Strike the scoffer and he will wise up. Strike the scoffer and he will wise up. That's a principle of Scripture. There is cause and effect.

Proverbs 20:30 says, "Blows that hurt cleanse away evil," blows that hurt cleanse away evil, "As do stripes the inner depths of the heart." So the principle here is that God actually designs that the blows hurt. Nobody wants to hear that. CPS doesn't want to hear that. But the Bible actually makes it very clear that it should hurt and I would just like to suggest, if it doesn't hurt, you will never secure honor and obedience in your household. Two of the greatest problems in families in our church and everywhere else I've ever been in my life, 2 of the greatest problems are: 1. There is not consistency in first-time obedience. 2. Severity is not enough. Those are the 2 problems and most of you can fix most of your child training problems with those 2 things. If you say spanking doesn't work, I'm just going to turn you to severity and also consistency. That means that the place gets locked down until honor and obedience are secured.

The King James version actually translates the last part of this phrase in Proverbs 20:30 a little bit differently. The New King James has "As stripes do the inner depths of the heart." The King James version says, "The blueness of the wound." The blueness of the wound. The blows that hurt cleanse away evil. So the blueness of the wound cleanses the evil. So severity really, really matters.

The use of the rod also is spoken of very clearly in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom." Now that again, you have another conditional kind of clause. The rod does something, it has an effect. It gives wisdom, "But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases; But the righteous will see their fall. Correct your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your soul. Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law. A servant will not be corrected by mere words; For though he understands, he will not respond." What Proverbs 29 is saying is that not only does the rod give wisdom but mere words aren't enough. Mere words are not enough. Some parents think, "If I just speak sternly. If I just get that tone of voice that gets their attention." No, no, there are some things that cannot be dealt with with words.

I mean, my perspective on child raising is that you should do the things that are in the Bible. Trust that. You know you're on the right track. You know, you can buy dozens of child raising books that give you all these tricks and I won't talk about some of them that I've read about but the Bible, I think, gives us enough. Scripture is sufficient for this. We don't really need anything else.

But here, Proverbs 29 says that words aren't enough. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." Actually, Solomon believed that if you didn't use the rod, you hated your son. Most people in America believe that it's an act of love to withhold the rod. God says it's an act of hatred so if you're not using God's methods, you're actually hating your children.

Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Again, cause and effect. There is foolishness and you can drive it from him with the rod of correction.

Proverbs 23:13-14 says, "Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell. My son, if your heart is wise, My heart will rejoice - indeed, I myself." I mean, Proverbs 23:13-14 are of tremendous significance and you should memorize this. Your children should memorize these as well. You know, children really need to understand what's going on. They need to understand why you're doing it so you need to disclose to them the passage of Scripture that you're actually implementing. They should know it. They should know where it comes from. My suggestion is: have them memorize the critical texts that are in Proverbs so that they are rational, they are reasonable when they consider what's happening to them. But do not withhold correction from your child, if you beat



him with a rod, he will not die. Now, we don't want our children to die but we do want to drive foolishness from them.

Now, you may be one of those families where you have either A: the softhearted and the disciplined spouse or maybe both of you are the softhearted. I'm actually going to use something a lot nicer than what I'm going to call it in a minute. I'm calling it softhearted now because you know what I'm talking about. But if you call it softhearted, you may say, "I'm not the strong type." Now, what that really means is you really don't mind giving your children to the devil. That's what that means. Proverbs 23:14 says that the use of the rod will deliver his soul from hell. So if you say, "I'm not the strong type," then I'm sure you won't mind it when you get to your older age and you're the person in the prayer group who is crying out for your children who are living a debauched life and you're that person who has 3 or 4 or 5 children that are out there in the world just destroying themselves. If you say, "I'm the soft type," that may be where you're headed. You need to know where you're going. You need to know where that train is going. Proverbs tells you where that train goes.

The deliverance from hell is actually what is on the table here. You know, I was talking to Deborah about this and she reminded me of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, killing the prophets." Jesus says, "If you had only known the time of your visitation. If you had only known." I've seen many parents who had a time of visitation but they just ignored it.

So if any of this has been terrifying, I thank the Lord because the Bible has so many terrifying things to say for those who neglect it. So discipline. Discipline, the use of the rod. And now I want to turn to the eleventh gift, the tenth gift was discipline, the eleventh is the work of the Spirit in child raising and I would like you to open your Bibles to Ephesians 6:1-4. Again, this is one of the flagship passages on this subject.

1 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

So I want to bring this passage to us because it is a gift. It's very calibrating and very helpful and I want to just give some observations about this passage before we begin to dissect it. First of all, this reveals a secret of home life. The work of the Holy Spirit breeds all manner of expressions of love. This is one of the expressions of love that the Spirit of God works in a family right here. These verses here show you what a Holy Spirit directed family looks like. You know, you may think that the Holy Spirit, if you raise up your hands and you get all emotional about things, that that's a sign of the Holy Spirit, well, it may but there are lots of ways that you can see the work of the Holy Spirit and here is one of them right here in this passage. What we find is that the work of the Holy Spirit in a family is the most critical factor for success in those children because success is what's on the table here in this passage. And we also find in this passage a perfect

balance of authority and tenderness in the home. There is a supreme authority as parents play that role and that authority must be honored but the authority is not a harsh authority either, that you might find in slavery, but rather you find a fatherly affection and you don't find the provoking of children to wrath through harshness.

So it really provides a really beautiful balance and it explains the kinds of feelings that should exist in the home. It helps you understand what you're seeing in your children when you consider honor and obedience. You know, those are 2 critical words that are there. It gives you sort of an evaluative grid to understand what's going on in your home. When you see one thing, you know what's going on. When you see another, you know what's going on. But here you find these 2 things joined together in a beautiful composition of love, of discipline and honor and lack of exasperation.

There are usually 2 extremes that you find in home life. On the one hand there is harsh subservience, just evacuated of fatherly tenderness. Most fathers find themselves in this place from time to time and they need their dear wives to say, "Hey, check your heart." On the other hand, there is this sweetening of love. So they are both joined together: it's loving fear and it's fearing love as William Gooze says it is, what is the ground of this kind of child raising. Now, notice as well that what's here in Ephesians 6, it follows the same pattern of the passages I just read to you in Proverbs. It is directed to father and mother.

So the whole context of Ephesians 6 is it's part of a larger exposition of what it looks like to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it look like at work? What does it look like in a marriage? What does it look like in all kinds of different spheres of life. What does it look like between friends? There is a submission you have between one another. Well here, what does it look like when you're training your children? The Holy Spirit marked child training and the fruit of the Spirit being borne out in it and what we find here is that the 2 things that are commanded are honor and obedience. Those are the 2 things that we have to pay attention to and anybody who has tried to train children in obedience knows how hard it is. It's the hardest task that human beings ever engage in. It requires enormous focus. It's very difficult and you cry out to God because things go out of control quite regularly. But you are there to command and to direct it. But God has created a very difficult training process that's designed to cleanse children of rebellion. It's difficult because the problem is gigantic and highly, highly dangerous. So when you see how hard it is, you need to understand what you're dealing with. You're dealing with the forces of hell going after your children and that's why it's so hard. The devil is there in the details.

And it's a cleansing process to help children know how to love and parents know how to love as well. Here's one problem that every child has and you children have this problem, this is your problem: you have imperfect parents. This is God's design. God for some reason did not give you parents that had everything perfect in their child raising. He gave you parents that have different problems and that too is meant for your sanctification. God has designed this to sanctify both. It makes parents cry out to God because they have come to the end of themselves and they need to be obedient. It makes children understand

that they have to learn how to obey imperfect authorities because for the rest of their lives they're going to be around imperfect authorities. Nobody ever gets to work with perfect authorities. Nobody does. So if you're a child and you say, "Well, I don't like the way my father does it," welcome to the good club, the club that you're going to be in for the rest of your life. You'll never escape it. You don't like the way your father and your mother discipline you? Guess what? If you don't learn how to deal with it now you'll never learn how to deal with it and you have a small window of time to learn how to do it and there will be a time that if you don't learn it, there will be blows and wounds coming to you and you will be running against the wind. You'll be beating your head against the wall if you can't learn how to honor your own imperfect father. That's what's going to happen to you. Then you're going to be set free and you're going to feel so free and then you're going to find out that there are authorities everywhere. Everywhere. Nobody gets out from under authority. Not for a second.

So this whole process is designed also to shape the character of a child so that they can survive, not just survive but actually prosper, and that it will go well with them. You know, some of you, it's not going well with you today and one of the reasons it's not going well is because you did not learn that in your parents' house. There is a bunch of wreckage in your path because you didn't learn it back then. Please don't let your children be that way. Your parents let you do that, don't you be that parent. Do not let your children get by that. The suffering is enormous. The heartbreak is more than you will ever want to bear with your children. Dealing with it now is better than when they're 20 or 30 or 40 or 50 or 60.

It cleanses a child of a rebellious spirit that they need so much in life. This is why the commands for honor and obedience that are here cannot be soft-peddled. Do not play pattycake with these. You are responsible to bring honor, that's something that is in the heart, and obedience, that is something that is outside. So you're not just dealing with the heart, you're dealing with outward appearance as well. God gives you both. God is wise. He understands how he wired the world and you have to deal with both. If you say, "I'm only dealing with the heart," you're only getting part of it. If you say, "I'm only dealing with obedience," you're only getting part of it.

Now, this really brings us to the necessity of first-time obedience in a family. We live in a culture of dishonor. Proverbs 30 says that, "There is a generation that curses its father, And does not bless its mother. There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness. Oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their teeth are like swords, And whose fangs are like knives, To devour." This is the condition of a child's heart and the indispensability of first-time obedience is very, very important in attacking this problem in your children. Every child has this problem to some degree. Some children cover it up better than others. Some children are just naturally nicer in disposition. They seem sweeter but they still have that problem. You know, Christian homes are the first line of establishing a prevailing culture of honor. I say prevailing because if you don't get a culture of honor in your family, you won't have it in the church and you won't have it in the state and you won't have it in the workplace. It's a prevailing culture that you're dealing with when you're talking about obedience the first time and if

it's obedience the second or the third time, if you're counting to 2 or 3, you are spitting in the face of Almighty God and his command for child raising. If you think you're smarter than God and you can let disobedience continue, then you have to know where that train goes.

This passage of Scripture here is drawn from the Pentateuch. It is both drawn from Deuteronomy, the 10 Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 and as they are communicated in Exodus 20. "Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." That's the promise. When you think of what happens when you allow dishonor to prevail in your house, you need to understand the weakness that it brings into your children's lives. It makes them weak. While you're being softhearted, you're weakening your children. Proverbs 25:28 says, "Like a city that is broken into and without walls is the man who has no control over his spirit." That's why Solomon cries out in Proverbs 23:26, "My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways." My son, give me your heart, that should be the appeal of all of us with our children. Proverbs 23:22 says, "Listen to your father who begot you, Buy truth, and do not sell it. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice. My son, give me your heart."

Proverbs 13:1 says, "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." At any given moment, a child is either wise or a scoffer and the line needs to be drawn in a home so that it can be drawn later on.

"Poverty and shame comes to him who disdains correction but he who regards rebuke will be honored." This means that some people struggle with poverty, one of the reasons for poverty is this right here, that it's a person that has disdained correction. Some of you parents are setting your children up for poverty, do you understand that? Not just hell later on but poverty tomorrow. Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction. Young man, young lady, do you disdain correction? Poverty is in your future.

There is such a lack of honor in our culture. I recall the family of Jonathan Edwards where the Edwards children had such a sense of heartfelt honor that when their parents or any older people came into the room of their house they would all rise. Imagine that. Imagine if you walked in, you'd probably have a heart attack if your children rose in honor to you. But Leviticus 19:32 says, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD." All of this is connected. The fear of God is connected with honor toward an older person.

My daughter Claudia and I have been reading the diary of Esther Edwards, Jonathan Edwards' daughter and she refers to her father many times in this diary and she always speaks of him in such tender terms. She speaks of "our honored father." Almost every time she speaks of her father, she uses language that really reflects honor in her heart. You can tell, the book just beats with honor toward her parents. That was the kind of home that they had and that's the kind of home that we ought to have as well.

Now, there's a wrong kind of obedience. Children can obey but still have hardness of heart. They can obey for fear when they basically fear the wrath. They can obey for bribery, for a bigger allowance. They can obey outwardly. They can obey grudgingly or mutteringly or disdainfully. They can obey rudely. They can obey pridefully by scorning their father and mother. They can obey but be blabbing their mouths with too much speech, shooting off their mouths. Or shortness, answering you while they are obedient as if they were equal to you. Or stubborn speech. Pouting. Walking off. Being overly nice but the heart has not been reached. Scorning the disobedience. Ignoring the parent's call instead of right away.

So there is a reason for this command, "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." So there is something very pivotal about family life and the pivot point for success in a child's life is his ability to honor and obey. That's the pivot point of success. Now, you may think the pivot point for success is teaching them business principles or whatever. That's not the pivot point. I'll never forget, I was invited several years ago to go speak to a campus group at NC State. They wanted me to speak to their graduating class about principles for success and the first thing I said to them, "If you do not have honor and if you have not honored your father and your mother, you cannot be successful. You cannot take another step in this life until you go honor your father and your mother. Flee, leave this place, make a beeline to your father and repent of dishonoring him because if you think that you're going to graduate with this degree and that's going to make you successful, think again, brother. God has told you what will make you successful." And here is one of the premier reasons for success: honor of father and mother. I've seen this in many, many ways. God just seems to bless men who honor their father and mother. I can't explain it. There is more peace with them. There is something about men and women who have honored their father. They have a success that others can never have. And you might be able to dishonor your father and go be wealthy if that's the kind of honor you're looking for but here, true success comes from honor and obedience. That's how critical it is.

Then we find the tenderness that ought to be in fathers. "Do not provoke your children to wrath but bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord." There are so many ways that parents can provoke their children to wrath. One of the primary ways that parents provoke their children to wrath is by not keeping their word or actually requiring their word to be carried out. That is one of the most exasperating things you can do with your children is to ignore their disobedience here and then address it there and ignore it here and address it there and they have no idea what's acceptable and what's not and you become that exasperating parent. Parents exasperate their children in many, many ways. By not keeping their promises. By not being around. By all kinds of things.

"My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck. When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, He also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain my words.'" Now, if your home would be a picture of the Gospel, then you would be a father who loves and disciplines his children. You would be a wife who helps and submits and you would be children who honor and

obey. This is the divine purpose of a family is to declare the glory of the Gospel through the relationships that are there, through the honor, through the obedience, through the love, through the tenderness, through the fatherly kindness. This is for the glory of God in the family and in the church and it absolutely spills out all over society and so we ought to pay attention to what God has said. I pray that God will help us to train our children right so that we might be as beacons of light in a wicked and a perverse generation, that we would have children different than the children that are raised according to the pattern of this world, but that we would be the people who trust in God. That we would be the people in these Proverbs who have happy children who are not a grief to their mother but are a joy and who live long in the land and who are successful in the land that God places them in.

Let's pray.

*Lord, we pray that you would give us wisdom and discernment. In our difficulties of raising children we realize our many failures in it and yet we cry out to you, Lord, for you to help us to obey the things that you have given to us in your word. Lord, I pray for this church that you would give them a mighty generation, that you would sanctify both parent and child, raising them up for all manner of success in this world that it might go well with them and with their children forever. Amen.*