

The Sufficiency of Scripture and Family Integration **sermonaudio.com**
Sufficiency of Scripture 2009
By Kevin Swanson

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The National Center for Family Integrated Churches welcomes Kevin Swanson with the message "Scripture is sufficient for your education decisions."

Well, here I am to give the final word on the Family Integrated Movement. Now, you know, as we started a church nine years ago, we had no label for it, we just said, "Hey, let's do church," and then later on Scott Brown told us we had a Family Integrated church so we're just going to go with that and as we begin to think about the Family Integrated Movement, I'd like to encourage you to think about who we really are and what we're really trying to do. Labels are sort of helpful but I want to get down to what the Bible says about family integration because that's the topic of this morning's presentation.

Now, we are more than family integration. It's important to bore down into foundations of what we're really all about because, you understand, there could be a homosexual Family Integrated church too, so one day you might find somebody saying, "Hey, we believe in the Nicene Creed, we believe in the Chalcedonian Creed, we sing Amazing Grace." And, by the way, these homosexual churches do sing Amazing Grace. Did you know that? They come together in their big conferences and they sing Amazing Grace just like we do and they may have their own Family Integrated church so it's important for us that we establish the foundation of what we really are and one of the ways to do that is to bring out a more bottom line principle like the sufficiency of Scripture and say, "Okay, we believe Scripture is sufficient for every aspect of life."

Now, it's important not just to develop a foundation for it but you've got to incarnate it as well. Sufficient for what? Even homosexuals could say, "Yeah, I believe the Scriptures are sufficient," and then in the process, the sufficiency of Scripture in the area of ethics dies the death of a thousand qualifications. "Yes, it's not sufficient in this area. It's not sufficient in that area. We don't really apply that text to this. We don't really apply this text to that. We have a way to explain this. We have a way to explain that." And before you know it, the authority of the God who speaks is dissipated by a thousand qualifications. That happens all the time and I really believe that what we are trying to reform in the 21st century is the centrality of God in the area of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. That is, our world view, the way we look at the world around us, has become increasingly humanistic. We step forward throughout the last 200 years in the

church and we said, "Yes, we believe in God but he's not entirely sovereign over reality. Okay, birds and bees, maybe even hurricanes, maybe even the kings of the earth, but not my salvation. He's not sovereign over my salvation. I'm going to retain a little bit of man-centricness, man will be the hinge point in salvation in this area of life, but I'll allow God to be sovereign over other areas," but over time he really wasn't all that sovereign.

He lost his sovereignty in the area of reality. Then he lost his sovereignty in the area of truth when the scientists, the really smart ones, came out of the laboratory with the white lab coats on and said, "I found a rock 4 billion years old. Trust me on this one. I did the radioactive dating. I've got it. It's 4 billion years old." And then God comes to us in Exodus 20 and says, "For in six days I made the heaven and the earth and all that in them is." And we said there's a conflict here in 1960. Two brave men, they were scientists, this was important because we had been bowing in the temples of epistemological scientism for 120 years, it was important they be scientists. They came out of the laboratory and they said, "We are Christians. If God said it, we're going to believe it," and they wrote a book called, "The Genesis Flood," and the rest is history. You are here today largely because of Henry Morris and John C. Whitcomb in the 1960s. So, again, is God going to be the one who tells you what to believe about origins? About psychology? About all these other things? Is God going to tell you what to do in the area of ethics and politics, economics, education and so forth? So is God the authority? Does God speak with authority? Are you going to listen or is all of that going to die the deaths of a thousand qualifications?

Well, that's who we are. We believe in the centrality of God. We're bringing it back. We bring it back in the area of sphere sovereignty and when Doug Phillips says this whole Family Integrated Movement is just trying to emphasize the importance of the spheres as defined ethically in the word of God, he's dead on. I believe this is a sphere sovereignty movement in what we're saying. Back it up one more step: we're saying is that God is the one who determines who does what and what power they have to do the things that they do. God is in control of these things.

Let me give you a history lesson just for a moment. We're going to go back into history and talk about sphere sovereignty. Five hundred years ago, and this, by the way, the way I came to this conclusion was by reading our brother Scott Brown's book, "Family Reformation," on Calvin's influence in the area of the family, an excellent book, by the way, and he spurred me on to bring out this particular little morsel that I hope will be helpful to you as you understand what happened in history. You start out in the 1500s and the civil magistrates economically consumed about 5% of the people's income, less than 5%. In fact, most governments have never exceeded 10% of the people's income. The Roman government never took more than 7% of its people's income. Now, today, you understand, we are far beyond that but prior to the Reformation, the state had a problem. The king could not aggrandize himself and could not fight wars because he was always running into the problem of the lords. We had a massively decentralized system in most of Europe for a long time. That's what Christian government and Christian ways of thinking do, and until we got the Holy Roman Empire, until the church and the state ganged up against the family and began to tax people, and then prior to the Reformation,

about 5% of the people's income consumed by the state, but the church consumed some 35% of the people's income because the church had the right of inheritance to many, many of the celibates. Twenty-five to 30% of the young ladies were not getting married and so the church took full advantage of this and because a lot of the monks weren't getting married either, family inheritance rolled over into the state, into the church, and the church was aggrandized. The church became very powerful in the lives of families. Of course, they used other means by which to bind the consciences of men as well, but the fact of the matter is, the church was huge. It was 35%. The people only made up about 65%, the families consumed about 65% of the people's income and then after the Reformation, the Reformation itself, granted, it provided a lot of good things: the truth got out; the word of God was being translated and brought into the languages and we've got some precision on many, many doctrines. There are some good things that happened within the Protestant church but one of the things that benefited the state was the fact that they confiscated church lands, especially in England, and the state was incredibly aggrandized to the point where the state after the Reformation by about 1650, consumed some 15-20% of the people's income. Now, the church was back down to the right size, at least in the Protestant nations of roughly 10% of the people's income and the families were somewhere around 70%.

Okay, now, fast forward it to where we are today. Where are we today? The state is everything. The state appreciated the Reformation. Henry VIII loved it. They used the Reformation in order to aggrandize itself and at the same time, remember, Francis Schaeffer talks about this in many of his writings, I would recommend his writings on the history and the development of the modern state. But what happens is, you have two lines that are moving through history: the Reformation line and the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and the Renaissance and the Enlightenment won out through Rousseau and Voltaire and others, the right wing Enlightenment in Scotland. They won the universities. The battle was in education. They won the universities. The universities were started 1100-1200 and this was the growth of the humanist Renaissance. This is why the humanists won; they captured the colleges and the universities. That's why the recent presentation I gave on education is the key presentation. That's the strategy. That's how the bad guys win, they get control of the universities' method and content, they do not use the discipleship method you find in the word of God, and then they develop their huge centralized empires and now some 60-70% of the gross national income in America is consumed by government spending, 60-70% of our lives. Our lives are constructed by statism. Our social structure is statist. People are encouraged to worship the government and to trust in the government because of its vast control over the resources of the nation, and the church makes up about 2% of the people's income. That is those who attend church in America, which right now is at about 40%, but in America, we only tithe 2% of our income which is the lowest level that anybody has tithed that since the Great Depression. Americans care about their church none at all. The church is irrelevant to the average American, so if the church is 2% and the civil magistrate is 60-70%, the family makes up about 25-30% of life.

What does the word of God have to say about sphere sovereignty? Personally, I think 1 Samuel 8 is authoritative. I have always taken it as authoritative. It speaks worlds to what

government, what the civil government is bound by the word of God to do. You say, yes, there are exceptions. Joseph is an exception. Joseph is an exception. God can make an exception any time he wants to by divine revelation, but the standard he has given us, the eternal standard you're going to find in his word that is the standard we need to hold our governments to, our civil governments to, is 1 Samuel 8 and there Samuel says any king that taxes its people more than a tenth of the people's income is a tyranny and people are pressed to cry out to God for deliverance from such an evil, evil state. And that is precisely the situation we're in today and have been since 1913.

In the American government, I have all of this in my "Second Mayflower," American governments did not tax its people more than 10% of the people's income until roughly 1913 which was the establishment of the Federal Reserve and the Internal Revenue Service. Prior to that, it was well within biblical guidelines but ever since 1913, the last 90 years or so, the state has become all of life for us. And, of course, it has a great deal to do with Benjamin Franklin's statement, "Either you'll be governed by God or, by God, you'll be governed." That is either you'll be governed by God's laws and God's morality, either you'll live by the laws of God, or God, by his sovereignty, will see that you are tyrannized. You will be tyrannized. This is pretty much what has happened in your country for the last 200 years. The only thing your children really need to know about American history over the last 200 years: Americans have become immoral and so they have been tyrannized. They refuse to submit themselves to the laws of God.

Okay, so this is the sphere sovereignty issue and our effort, I think our mission, I think what Scott Brown is doing, what this is all about, what the Family Integrated Movement is all about, is to revitalize, re-relevantize the family and the church in the 21st century. We are up against 500 years of the growth of the state. The church is nothing. The church is irrelevant. Church is 2% of life. And you look at the mega-churches and you say, "Well, those mega-churches, wow, they still look relevant, big buildings." They're irrelevant to the average person. Irrelevant. Irrelevant to the social systems of our world. A church is nothing. What we have been commissioned to do, I believe by God, is to get out there and re-relevantize the church and the family.

Now, our detractors have come to us and said, "You are emphasizing the fathers, the family, in your Family Integrated church, and in consequence, you are degrading the value of the church." And I disagree with that, but strategically in history, this is where we are. Please understand: the state did incredible things to try to persecute and to control the church through the 1500s and 1600s. Do you know why John Bunyan was in prison? Do you know why this nation was founded? Pilgrims and Puritans came over 400 years ago and anybody have a clue as to why they came here? Liberty. Liberty from what? Liberty for the church from the state. The state was trying to control the sphere of the church. Not by means of the laws of God, the state abandoned the idea that God is going to determine the law. They denied *lex rex* as the laws is king, God's law is king, and they asserted *rex lex*, that is, the king is law, and the king believed that he was all things and he could decide all things in relation to what he could do on earth. Meantime, God says 10%. God says, "My church will not be controlled by the king," Old Testament as well as New Testament. You know that. The king in the Old Testament, Uriaah tried to get

involved in the church; he went into the temple and tried to do some sacrifices; God struck him with leprosy, "You have no business in the church. You are king. These things are to be separated." There is a strong sense of separation between church and state throughout the Scriptures, Old and New Testament. Don't get the idea it's just a New Testament concept, it goes all the way through the word of God. But their battle was right there. Their battle was liberty for the church and they gave their lives for that.

Now, in the modern age, I don't believe we're fighting for the liberty of the church as much because the state destroyed the church; it was successful in what it was doing in the 1600s and 1700s, especially in England and in Europe. That's why the church is nothing as far as its influence in people's lives. I believe it was the state's responsibility for the demise of the church. The same thing happened in Germany. The church in Germany, nothing. It has no influence on people's lives. Why? It was under the auspices of the state. State controlled the church in the process destroyed the church in Europe. In America over the last 150 years, the battle has shifted from the church to the family. The state has done everything it can to take more and more of the income that should be funding and controlling the aspects of the family and welfare and education, and in the process has destroyed the family.

It's interesting. Let me give you one illustration to help you understand the battle we're up against. In Colorado, and this has happened in a number of states around America over the last 20-30 years, in Colorado we had a battle for the compulsory attendance law. In the past, it's been 7 to 16 years of age where the government has come to us and says, "We will control the family. We will tell you what your children are going to go through. We're going to force a little 5, 6, 7 year old boy to be bolted to a chair for 4 to 5 hours a day to do our curriculum because we know what's best for that little boy. Whether or not he's got ADD, ADHD, American boy disease, ABD, whatever it is, we will control that boy. We will be sure that he will be tyrannized, he will be in that chair nonstop 4 hours a day 7 to 16. The government knows best. The government loves your children. The government will tell you what your children ought to go through."

Now, that's reprehensible to people like me, so when they tried to broaden that from 7 to 16, they did it two years in a row, to 6 to 17 in our state, we were down there, we as homeschoolers were writing our letters saying, "Do not, do not tyrannize the compulsory attendance law in our state." We sent our faxes. We shut down the phone systems. We all crowded into the hearing down at the legislature and the guy, the sponsor of the bill, takes a look at the crowds and says, "You homeschoolers are driving me nuts. What I did was I cut out an exception for you. We will exempt the homeschoolers in the state of Colorado from the 6 to 17, we'll keep it at 7 to 16 because you guys are such a pain. So there." So after he got up and spoke, I got up and I said, "I'm speaking in opposition to this bill," and the chairwoman says, "And you're a homeschooler, aren't you? We already took care of you. Sit down." I said, "I'm here for the rest of the parents in the state of Colorado. I understand. I understand that the public school parents, none of the Christian parents, the Christian school parents, not one is here. I know that. I know they're not in the battle. I know they think we're stupid. I know they say, 'What's this tiny little issue bugging you about?' Well, that's the same thing they said to the people of those churches in England

that went to the gallows, went to the flames, because they didn't want a candle in their worship service." And people said, "Why did they give their lives?" For liberty. The battle for liberty is fought and won on these issues. On these issues. And these people understood something: if the state controls the church and the family, it will destroy it. It will destroy it.

You're fighting for the life of the family in the 21st century. The life of it, and every battle is important, and by God's grace we'll win these battles because, I'll tell you what, there are a lot of little boys that shouldn't be bolted to that chair at 6-7 years of age, and there are some dads and moms who know that. They'll take them out to the fields and they work with them, and they read to them at night, and then when they're about 14-15-16 years of age, teach them how to read, and I say, praise God, they can do whatever they want as long as they love those children and teach them to read and understand and love the word of God. Alright, my friends, this is a battle for liberty.

Some people say God doesn't really care. Government consumes 60%. You see, I ran for Governor of Colorado in 1994. Mark, do you remember that? Mark A., I think, was one of the three people who voted for me. No, I got about 40,000 votes, but I went all over the state of Colorado saying, "We're tyrannized, 47%," I remember saying, "47% of the GNI taken up in government taxation and spending. That's a problem. That's up from 10% in 1913," and the average person just went, "So what's wrong with that?" I could never understand it. 1. People love tyranny. They don't want to be free. 2. God says 10%, they say, "Who cares?" It's really what it boils down to. That incenses me and it caused me as 30 year old boy to run around Colorado trying to run for Governor and pretend like I knew what I was doing.

God's word counts for something and God tells us the restrictions of what the family, the church, and the state will do. Now, you see, what I'm saying is I believe the regular principle of life. You've heard of the regular principle of worship and, again, this is where many of my brothers part ways with me: I believe the Bible regulates all of life. All of life. Every decision. The boundaries for power, for family, fathers, church, and state. And unless you say that, then you have no business whatsoever, guys, nobody here has any business whatsoever going up against a Social Services Department that walks into your house saying, "You bruised the kid on the buns. You gave him a little owie. It looks like it's a little red right here. I'm taking your children now." God's law calls that tyranny. Why? Because of the lex talionis, and if nobody here knows lex talionis, that's a problem. I think everybody needs to know lex talionis because it is the law of God that establishes our liberty as parents: eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. Lasting harm, the civil magistrate gets involved. Lasting harm, permanent damage. That's the line in stone laid down by the finger of God and that is the line over which that civil magistrate can walk into your family sphere. We've got to know this. We've got to know this otherwise we're subject to tyranny, and make no mistake about it, they will come after your children. Getting more aggressive all the time. All the time. All the time.

Okay, what can we say about the church family? Which is more important? Which is more basic? Well, we have this question about household voting. What's important in

terms of household voting? Let me read to you from the word of God. Well, first of all, before I do that, let me read to you from the internet. This is a man who writes for "World Magazine." He's a Presbyterian and he argues against patriarchy and household voting. He says, "In the transition from Moses to Christ, we have a transition from tribalism to cosmopolitanism. The New Testament language describes the church as a real family, indeed the most important family would demand that we cease treating the church as a collection of households." Now, again, you have got to get down this idea of Old Testament, New Testament discontinuity, continuity and this plays into this question. And I have studied this and I continue to study it and I have differences with my brothers in this movement on this issue and let me say this again before we get into the nitty gritty of this: I love my brothers who are trying to bring back the relevance of the church, I love my brothers who are trying to bring back the relevance of the family, but intermurally we're having these discussions and disagreements and they get a little hot sometimes on the internet, you know, our presbyteries and our church organizations, and that's a problem, but as I read the Bible, I do not find that the New Testament is more individualistic or less tribal than the Old Testament. That's my conclusion.

Now, again, if some of you can find some areas where it's more individualistic in this area and that area, in the area of baptism, in the area of the Lord's Supper, an area of this, I mean, generally someone is going to draw the line somewhere and you've got to be careful where you draw that line. It's difficult. It's difficult, but as I read the New Testament, I find individual faith and corporate faith in both Old Testament and New Testament. In the Old Testament, there are "we" Psalms and "I" Psalms. That's why it's important in your worship service to be singing "we" Psalms and "we" hymns and "I" hymns and "I" Psalms. A lot of times American personal individualistic pietism is "me, me, me, me, me." You know, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, like me, me, me." A lot of your hymns tend to be it's all about me, all about me, instead of the corporate body coming together and singing the songs together. Well, the Old Testament has "we" Psalms and "I" Psalms, both of them, and so, again, I'm emphasizing the individuality and the corporate aspects. We find in the New Testament we are in Christ. We are in Christ. As we sing, as we recognize our brothers around us, we say, "We are in Christ." We also say, "I am in Christ." There is one "we" for every three "me's." There is one "we" Psalm for every five "me" Psalms, roughly. That's the ratio I find in the word of God. I find individual judgment, household judgment, and corporate church judgment in both Old Testament and New Testament. Both.

Again, household judgment. Anybody can think of any? Ananias and Sapphira. Household judged together. I see entire local churches ripped out of their candle stands in Revelation 2 and 3. Local churches treated as corporate body, ripped out. And then, of course, Jesus turns to individuals and says, "If any man from this church will hear my voice, I will come in and sup with him." So there is individuality, there is corporatism in Old and New Testaments. You find households fearing God: Cornelius; Lydia's heart was opened, she was baptized, and her household; Philippian jailer was baptized, he and all his; Crispus believed on the Lord with all his house; the household in Narcissus which is in the Lord, Romans 16:11, I talked on that on a previous presentation; 2 Timothy 1:16, "The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus who refreshed me"; "You know the

house of Stephanus, they have given themselves to the ministry of the saints." Households together as blobs. You find heads of households all over the place: the household of Stephanus; the household of Narcissus; the household of Kevin; the household of Bob; the household of John. I find that throughout the New Testament.

Honestly, I'm having a really hard time finding much discontinuity. If someone can point out some discontinuity, that would be helpful for me, but I see that the household is still considered in Scripture as being a unit. And it's interesting to me, I just think it's interesting, that somehow the idea of households and household voting went away as soon as liberal feminists brought suffrage to America. I just think that's interesting that suddenly, you know, we found a whole new way to look at the word of God. Wow. Incredible.

No, I think the word of God still expresses the importance of households, moreover, families are basic building blocks for the church and you find that throughout the word. Actually, there's an interesting story. The Gazette, the Colorado Springs Gazette newspaper did a story on the divorce rate in Colorado and found the highest divorce rate in the most conservative Christian county, perhaps the most conservative Christian county in all of America, El Paso County which is where Colorado Springs is, Focus on the Family, and all of these ministries. Okay, so we work our way to the mecca of evangelical Christianity. We take our voyage and we wind up on the shores of America and we wander all the way up to El Paso County and we're finally here in evangelical mecca and we find the highest divorce rate in the state of Colorado, so the pagan newspaper said, "What's up with that?" So he interviewed all these church pastors, these mega-church pastors in Colorado Springs, and one of my friends is a guy who pastors a mega-church down in the Springs, had a really interesting comment that just stood out to me in the newspaper, he said, "Man, I feel like I am rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic trying to shepherd these 3,000 people." Guys, understand, you get 3, 4, 5, 6 paid pastors running after 3, 4, 5,000 people, this is called an exercise in futility.

The church of Jesus Christ suffers today big time because we have dysfunctional families and in 1 Timothy 3, we get the basic and, I think the most important verse for the establishment of social systems or a social theory in Christendom. Now, again, I'm asking you for a moment to set aside everything you've learned from Rousseau and Marx and everything you've learned in universities about social systems, set them aside, go to the word of God, what does 1 Timothy 3 shout out to you when Paul says, "If a man cannot rule his own household well, neither should he rule in the household of God." This is huge. This is the defining principle and what Paul is saying is, "There is a building block for the family." There is a mini-flock that's there in our homes. It is our households and a man needs to rule his household well first before he can rule in the household of God. Elders are assumed to have their own mini-flocks.

I would say it ought to be very exceptional that a man without a family, a man without children, should be an elder in the church of Christ. Exceptional. Now, it's very interesting that the exception often becomes the rule. This was true with celibacy in the church, right? This is true with the rise of the modern state. This is true with singleness

today. Paul said, "I would that young women be married," in 1 Timothy 5, and yet there are 51% of women, marriage aged women, living by themselves in the modern age and that number is almost no different among evangelical Christians. Now, why is that? Because the exception of celibacy and singleness has become the norm.

The predominate position of Scripture puts discipleship of children in the hands of parents and, again, this is where we run up against our brothers. I remember having a discussion with a number of pastors one time and I'm in the unique position where I get to run into pastors who don't hang out with us. And I'm surrounded by these pastors, they have the light on my face asking me the questions about Family Integrated, "You don't have any Sunday schools. You don't have any youth groups. What's wrong with you?" And so, you know, I got the big lights in my eyes and I'm trying to defend what we're doing and I say, "Well, I went into the word of God and I looked up the word 'children' in the back of the concordance and I found Ephesians 6:4, 'Fathers, bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' I found Deuteronomy 6:7. I found Deuteronomy 4. I found Exodus 12. I found the book of Proverbs, chapter 1, chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. I found 1 Thessalonians 2:11. I found all these verses and it says fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, fathers, so I thought maybe we ought to go with it." And the guy comes back to me and one of the pastors comes back to me and says, "Yeah, but what about Acts 22:13 where Paul learned how to be a good Pharisee at the feet of Gamaliel? There's a Sunday school for you. Ah, proved it." I didn't know what to say. What do you say to that? Why do they go to Samuel who was adopted by Eli into his little shepherd center? Why do they go to the exception? Again, because they're driven by the exception and they will ignore the normative.

Well, 1 Thessalonians 2:11 is probably the most important verse, outside of 1 Timothy 3:17, but 1 Thessalonians 2:11, very important verse. Very important verse. Very important verse and here's why, Paul says, "I exhorted you, I comforted you, I charged you, as father does his children." Now, Paul uses the father in the family as the normative for his seminary. Let me say that one more time: Paul uses the father in his home discipling his sons as the normative for what Jesus and Paul and Kevin Swanson need to do in their shepherd centers. And if you have pastors that did not understand that the basic, basic building block of discipleship happens in the home and many of these pastors were never discipled in their homes by their own fathers, many of them have never had a tender father comforting, emotionally comforting that child, exhorting, rebuking, loving that child, coming into that child's life as the father does in the book of Proverbs saying, "My son, I love you! My son, don't go the way of the whore! My son, you're going to hell now! Come back! I said I love you. My son, come close to me and observe my ways. My son, give me your heart. Give me your heart." And the father wraps his arms around his son and loves his son. And sometimes the relationship is strained and the relationship is recovered and we learn the process of discipleship in the home. I'm just telling you, guys, this has happened to me in my own home with my own son for seven years and now with Chad R. for three. I'm understanding a little bit about the pattern and we've got to bring this into the church as well.

Well, let me close here with some of the implications, and these are just practical things that we have learned in our Family Integrated church and if you don't get these lessons down right, your Family Integrated churches are just going to fail so I've just made a list of the things that, the mistakes we've made and the things that God has taught us and make no mistake about it, we're going to fail. We're going to see a lot of failures in our Family Integrated Movement. It just happens. But here are some lessons we've learned and I just want to share these with you.

Number 1: pride. Pride. Pride will kill us every time. You see, once you've got something, once you've got a little sanctification going on in your own life, your family's life, there is just something about pride that shows up with the party hats for the celebration and it's such an insidious thing. We have this impression, this happens, by the way, in the public schools, it happens in liberal churches, it happens in our own churches, we have our little set of expectations that if you can bring somebody into your church, get them homeschooling, get them dressed modestly, and get them doing family worship, you're there, move on to the next one. You know, it's just, you've achieved it. Now, as I preach in my church service each Sunday, I tell my congregation I am coming to a congregation who ought to be made up as the sinner woman at the feet of Jesus where the Pharisee says, "Jesus, do you know who is here touching your feet? Do you know this woman is a sinner?" Jesus says, "Yes, I know she's a sinner but I've been here for hours and you never washed my feet. She has been embracing me. She has been washing my feet. She has been taking care of me. She loves me. She has been loving me since she got here." Those who have sinned much are forgiven much, and those who have been forgiven much, love much and to the extent that your people come into your church services and do not hear they are sinning, sinner, the sinningest, sinningest, sinningest sinners that have ever walked into that church, you need to have the love of God preached with power. It needs to slice into the hearts of those people every single Sunday, "Look at you. Look at you. You're the sinningest people ever but you are the forgivingest people ever. There is nobody who has been so forgiven as you therefore love. Love. Be the lovingest people that ever showed up in a church service. And if you love him, you'll keep his commandments. Which commandments? The commandments you broke before you came into the service."

So every message that is brought to your services must present the people for who they are, the sinningest people, the forgivingest people, the lovingest people, the most obedient people in the first use of the law, in the third use of the law, meet there at the cross of Christ and needs to, needs to, needs to every Sunday. If you haven't, if you don't do that, your people will become hypocritical Pharisees. The law of God must be preached, brothers, every Sunday. People say, "Oh, we just preach grace here." You preach nothing. You preach trash. Grace is trashy without law. Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught us that in his book on cheap grace. No, you preach law. You preach the law hard. Preach grace hard and they will love. They will love and they will keep his commandments. This is the Gospel. This is the Gospel. You'll find it at the feet of Christ.

Secondly, a lot of times our churches become all structure and no implementation. In other words, we bring everybody together, we say we've got a Family Integrated church,

we believe in fathers discipling their children, it's so much better than Sunday schools and youth groups and these other people, all the publicans and everything that they're doing, but we're here. You've arrived, you know. Now it's time to be a Family Integrated church. Brothers, so often the implementation isn't there. We've got the labels. Oh, we've got the labels. People go home, they don't do it. They don't do it and I tell my congregation all the time, "If you go home and you don't do family worship, go somewhere else." There are churches that will teach your children. They might even teach your children every day because that's the requirement. Go find a church or adopt your children out. If you don't have time, go find a church or adopt your children out to other parents who will obey Hebrews 3:13, "Exhort one another daily," every day, "lest any of you be hardened with the deceitfulness of sin." That's a command and, by the way, I've experimented with this so you don't need to: you go for more than 24 hours without exhorting, somebody gets hardened. Their hearts get calcified. They start opposing the faith. They start dishonoring mom. It happens. I've tried it, 24 hours, if somebody doesn't do family worship, Exhort your children in their area of sin and righteousness and the love of God, you're going to see some hardening.

So, again, if they're not going to do it, tell them to leave. Please leave. Adopt your children out. Send them to a Christian school. Whatever. And whatever you do, do not castigate the Christian schools and the Sunday schools and the youth groups and things if you're not where you need to be. Praise God for those guys, at least they're doing something. We can neglect to teach the fear of God in our homeschools as well as anybody can in the public schools. We can do that too. We have the technology. We could fail to discipline and be accountable. And this is essential for our churches. We don't believe in mega-churches. The Bible says we're to shepherd the souls of those in our congregation to whom we will give account in the day of judgment. So church membership is essential. People just can't wander in and wander out and I have no idea who, I am going to give account on the day of judgment. That's why we have membership.

Now, you can do your membership different ways. We have four basic questions: do you believe the Bible; do you believe Jesus saves you from your sin; are you going to walk with the Lord as your Lord, repent of your sin, etc. etc.; will you be accountable to his church. So we have our questions. Now, you can do a week, you can do a handshake, a secret handshake, you know, a secret hand sign, whatever but something's got to happen where that person says, "Tag. I'm it. Tag, You're it. I'm accountable to you." And we have to be accountable, brothers, as elders and pastors in these churches and it is my commitment in our church that we not have a divorce in our church, and I preach against it and I guarantee there will be discipline and I say, I tell our elders and I tell the congregation that if we sense there is a little marital tension in some marriage in our congregation, we're going to crawl over six pews to get at you. We're going to wade into your life and there is no, no business for any pastor or elder to back away from any perceived problem at all. No. Under God, under Jesus Christ as shepherd of the sheep, we're responsible for these people. Now, I will say that there have been divorces of people who have attended our church, but the average is they get divorced 3.4 years after leaving our church. On average. On average, 3.4 years after leaving our church. I've seen

it many times. I can't count them all but I've seen it many times. People come, we preach, we shepherd, they say, "I'm outta here, baby."

So a godly shepherding church, I mean a real church, a disciplining church, should not have many divorces. There will be one occasionally. I believe that, but it won't be the dysfunctional chaos that you find in American Christendom. Guys, I think there are way, way more candles pulled out of those sticks than we think. Jesus yanks a lot of local churches because they're just not doing it. So how are you doing with this? How are you doing with this?

Thirdly, we've got to integrate the generations. We've got to integrate the generations. We're struggling with this but Titus 2 is pretty clear here: the older women teach the younger women; the older men teach the younger men. Titus is instructed to teach the younger men. The older women are instructed to teach the younger women. This has got to happen. It will happen in an Integrated church. We try not to overprogram the idea of women studies, even men's studies. We try not to do that too much. We really work for a more relational model. It's very difficult to do and this is by far the most difficult project that we're setting out to do because we are a fairly slotted church. You know, all of America is slotted. We're all programmed. We've all gone to public schools, most of us. I'm an exception to that rule, but most people have been to this slotted thing and when you get your Family Integrated church, typically, again, the 35-45 year olds who have attended this conference, I don't see many gray hairs, for example, in this congregation, and so we get the 35-45 year olds, they've got 4.7 children, +/- .7 on the Sigma on the standard deviation for those of you that like statistics, and that's our slot. And we have found when families graduate their homeschool children, we have the first 2-3 families do so, one or two of them left the church pretty quickly, the other two are barely hanging on right now. Why is this? Because our church doesn't represent their slot anymore. Now, it's going to take you a while to overcome this. I've talked to a lot of Family Integrated churches that have been doing this for 6, 8, 10 years and, remember, the mega-church is just a bunch of individual slots. Our little Family Integrated church tends to be another slot and until we can cross the boundaries, until we can begin to bring in the kind of relationships that God wants us to bring into the church, we're going to be in trouble in this area. And I think, principally, it has to do with understanding the importance of relationships. Now, you've heard the Emergent church say, "We're about relationships. We're not about rules." In fact, "The Shack," have you heard of "The Shack." "The Shack" has that comment. God the Father, she says, "I'm about relationships not rules."

Well, what does the word of God have to say about this? Okay, Joshua 22:5, "God commands you to cleave unto him, to serve him with all your heart, with all your soul, and showing mercy unto the thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." Deuteronomy 7:9, "The Lord thy God, he is God, faithful God, keeping covenant mercy with him that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." Is anybody getting a theme here? "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God," have a relationship with him, "keep his charge, his statutes, his judgments, his commandments forever. And it shall come to pass," Deuteronomy 11:13, "If you shall harken diligently to my commandments which I command you this day to love the Lord

your God, to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." 11:22, "For if you keep all the commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways." Deuteronomy 19:9, "If you shall keep all these commandments to do them which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, to walk after his ways." Deuteronomy 30:15, "I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments, his statutes, his judgments, and I said I beseech you, O Lord God of heaven." Nehemiah 1:5, "The great and terrible God that keeps covenant mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments." John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me." John 15:10, "If you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love." 1 John 5:2, "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments."

Now, for the rest of your life, which is it, rules or relationships? Everybody say, "Yes." Yes. Everybody say, "Yes." Yes, it's about rules and relationships and we have problems with the Emergent church but I think we have equal problems with our reformed theonomy preachy, preachy, preachy, law, law, law, kind of church. Yes, we have a problem with both churches. We have those that don't understand there is a vital importance in this area of relationships and both need to be emphasized in our own churches.

The rich young ruler comes to Jesus and says, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus, according to the text, says Jesus loved him. Jesus agaped the man. He loved the man. He agaped the man. This is a problem for some of us when we're Calvinistic people. He loved the man and then he told him the most difficult thing he could ever tell him. He applied the law of God to him. And there are a lot of people who say, "Yeah, but that law doesn't apply to every single person, every kind of situation. But how did Jesus know to take that tenth commandment and apply it directly to that man in that counseling situation?" Because he loved him. The relationship was important. Jesus loved that man and then he told him the most difficult, difficult, difficult thing he could ever tell him, "I want you to sell all your goods. Give all your money to the poor. Go find a good walking stick and come and follow me." And the guy couldn't do it.

In our churches we must have relationships. We can't just be preachers. We can't just throw church discipline around. We have to love these people. Do you know what? This is difficult to do. A conservative seminary back on the West coast, a practical theology professor stood up one day and I heard this from one of the guys that was in the audience, and he said, "These people that come to your churches, they're not your friends. They will leave you. They will abandon you. They will say nasty things about you. They're not your friends. If you want a friend, get a dog." Well, I'll tell you what, Jesus called his disciples his friends and they left him and they despised him and they denied him and they walked away from him on the most difficult day of his life, so he went and died for them. That's love. These are the relationships that are important within our congregations, and I'll tell you what, they're difficult. They're difficult.

One morning in the middle of winter, this is just an illustration, the heater wasn't working in our house so we had to get the fireplace going so I went out and started to split wood. I've got a bad back, and I look up and my son, my strapping 14 year old son is upstairs drinking hot chocolate in the kitchen. I'm sitting there trying to split the wood and he's just got his feet up on the table and he's enjoying himself. I said, "Come on down here and help dear old dad, son. Come on down. I'm having a hard time here." My son came on down and he said, "Dad, why do I have to do this? Do I have to split logs in order to be your son?" I said, "No, son, you're already my son. This is what sons do." He says, "Dad, what do I have to do to merit your sonship? How many logs do I have to split before I merit your sonship?" I said, "Son, dads don't count logs." And I have people when I preach sometimes have come up to me and they've said, "Man, you preached the law of God. I can't believe how much I'd have to do for this Jesus." And I said, "This what?" I say, "What can I do for this Jesus? He's my Lord. This is my Father. I love my God." It's a relationship. It has to begin with a relationship otherwise people are going to be counting logs.

This applies to so many different areas of life. I have people come up to me and ask me, "I have a son who is not sitting still in church, or Bible time. I've got a 2 year old son who won't sit still. He's got ants in his pants. How long does my little 2 year old have to sit there with ants in his pants in Bible time? Come on, Pastor, give me the law here. Give me what the word of God has to say about this." I say, "I have no idea. That depends on how much you know him; how much you love him; how much he loves you. How long he was sitting there yesterday? How many ants in his pants were there yesterday versus today? It depends on your relationship with him." Your relationship is what is important. You cannot do rules. You cannot interpret the law of God. You cannot bring the regular principle of worship to bear without relationships, and whether you have candles in the service, a pastor wears a purple tie, whether there's a plant up front, whether there's this décor or that décor, everything is symbolic. This is where the regular principle breaks down. Everything is symbolic. I pick a tie, it means something. People receive messages from everything. They always do, and in order for us to know whether somebody is turning something into some form of idolatry, you've got to know them.

Now, the reason you have such strict systems that were put in place in the Reformation is because the king, these centralized governments, were trying to dictate what 100 million people did in their worship services and that's bogus. You can never and I'm not sure you've heard this yet in this conference but I think it's important: you can never interpret the rules in the area of worship without knowing your people, whether they are turning a plant sitting up front into some aid in worship and they're breaking the second commandment in the process.

Relationships. They're vitally important and this idea of separating them has been devastating to the church of Jesus Christ. This applies to birth control. Somebody uses birth control in the congregation, you'd better have a relationship with that family before you stand up and say, "Oh, and Mrs. Jones, she's using birth control." There is somebody in the church that says, "I am not adopting an orphan. I will not give a cent to the widow and orphan until I'm out of debt." How do you shepherd these people? You'd better have

relationships with them. Vitally important. This is how we make the church relevant in the 21st century, we bring back this notion of relationships and let me tell you this, I come from a reformed background and the reformed church tends to be the most proud, unloving bunch you've ever met. It tends to be. Now, not everybody but we've got our truth down, man. We've got our rules. We've got our theonomic structures. We've got our counseling manuals where you can go to page 475 and look up what you need to say to this person when. But without agape, it's nothing, right? Nothing. Nothing.

We want truth and I preach it strong in our church, believe it or not. I get the truth out as best as I can, but we need love. Oh, we need love, and there are so many brothers out there willing to die for the truth. They will put their lives on the line for the truth. I mean, right down to the matter of water to be used in the baptism. Man, they'll split a church on that one if they can. They'll die for the truth, but they won't die for love of brother, and Jesus calls us to both at the same time. If you've got a church and those brothers aren't willing to die for each other as much as they're willing to die for the truth, and I mean truthfully really, really gut, right down to the bottom of their heart, they are going to die for that brother; they are willing to die; they have demonstrated it 10-15 times already in conflicts they've gone through; they are willing to lay down their lives for that brother. They're willing to go to his house, camp on his lawn for two weeks to plead with that brother to restore a relationship with that brother, they have prove that they would die for their brother, now you've got a church.

But this truth love relationship is incredibly vital if you dare to do a church in the age in which we live because the mega-church is a great option, guys. You water down the truth to the point where nobody disagrees with anybody at all and you don't get into any in-depth discussions, but you start a Family Integrated church, you get together with 6, 7 families in a pretty small congregation, you take the word of God seriously, there is going to be some heavy duty discussion on predestination and election and sovereignty and all these other things, you'd better love otherwise don't do it. Go back to the mega-church. Please, go back to mega-church. The only way you're going to survive is if you love. Love to the point of sweating it out.

We had a very uncomfortable situation the other day in our church, conflict, huge conflict. Can't give you an idea of what it's about because I don't want to give anything away. There was a conflict in our church and it was brewing. It was the worst we've had 8, 9 years in our church, and I was afraid this was going to a nuclear meltdown. I always tell people we're a nuclear power plant, keep the rods immersed in love, joy, peace, longsuffering or we're going to be in trouble. So this whole thing was coming down on a Sunday morning. We have Lord's Supper every single Sunday because we like to keep our accounts short and we want to confess our sins every Sunday and we want to renew relationships constantly. We want a vital church constantly feeding spiritually upon the Lord and communing with our Lord Jesus Christ and we want to be a one body, one bread as we do so, and so there we were, about ready to have the Lord's Supper and I saw both families walk into this congregation and I grabbed the men and I brought them back and it was about 10:45, it was time to start, but I said, "Forget the whole service. We'll put it off for two hours if necessary." I said, "Guys, we're going to sit down here. We're

going to have the Lord's Supper together." This was the most awkward moment I've ever experienced because you just don't wade into things like that and jump in head first like this. I said, "Let's talk. Is this guy your brother? Is this guy your brother? Let's start confessing sins now." Big silence. I just waited. Tears started to flow and these guys started saying some things. We didn't fix the whole thing overnight but by God's grace it's coming through. We're going to make it. We're going to make it. We're going to make it.

We are. It's possible, and if we have a church environment that has purged the opportunity for conflicts, for offenses and forgiveness to be functioning constantly, you will have no church. That is no church. Expect the offenses. That's why it made it into the Lord's Prayer. I mean, boil it down to five propositions, that's it. Jesus expects you to be a forgiving church all the time. This is what we are. This is what we are.

I've so much more to say. Hospitality. We have a 20 something program in our church, a 27, 28 year old lady walked into the church and says, "I just want to know more about this." So we started a 20 something program. She started living with one of the elder's families and then with another elder's family, and we just taught her the word of God; we taught her the principles of godly parenting and a godly wife. She had her Master's degree. She had just completed her Master's degree. She was all ready to go to work and get a nice little career thing and she said, "Well, you know, I just want to be a godly wife. Can I just come to your church and be part of your 20 something club?" We said, "Absolutely. Come on in." So she lived with a family, it was our 20 something program, and she lived there for a year or two years and then we had nobody for her to get married to right then and there but one of the elders started going around looking for the right guy and sending letters around to similar minded churches, and we found a young man. Then we put hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of hours into the courtship. He needed some work as well, and the hearts of these elders just poured out upon this man because they wanted him to be in a position where they could marry their daughter. I mean, the daughter and the Lord that was in their homes, living in their homes for a year or two, and so they put thousands and thousands of hours into our 20 something program and eventually she got married and now she has three children and they live in Wisconsin, and they don't attend our church. So that was the end of our 20 something program.

It's relationships. It's really, really, really stinking inefficient but I love it. God is doing stuff with this. Guys, I think it's a quality/quantity tradeoff and I'll just end here because I know I'm way over time. But it's a quality/quantity tradeoff. People wanted the mega-church, they wanted to go be big and they wanted to get all these people saved with their little conversion experience and on and on. Forget that. Jesus didn't call us to conversion experiences, he said go and disciple the nations, teaching them to observe, to do, to walk in everything I have commanded you, and the Bible is filled with commands. So our goal is to go out there and say, "You broke this law. You need to repent of this. Jesus forgave you. Tears running down your face, good. You're loving him, now keep his commandments. Okay, that's the first command, now let's go to the second one. Now let's go to the third. Now let's go to the fourth." And that takes years and years and years and years and we're willing to put that kind of time into people, build those kinds of

relationships and tell them the hardest things you've ever told them because we love them.

That, my friends, is how we're going to bring a relevant church back into the 21st century. And, by the way, at the same time, we're going to be working with widows and orphans a lot. I don't have any time for this. I wanted to spend ten minutes on this, but here, let me tell you this: come to our economics conference March 5 and 6 of 2010. A bit of a plug in. Oh, good, we've got a little graphic there. Guys, family economics, church economics, we're doing a church leadership track on economics, on the diaconate. 25% of your church's income, I believe, needs to go to the orphan and widow. Very, very, very important part of the church. 1 Timothy 5 deals with all of that and I don't have time to go into any of it but we've got to bring back the church and the family as intensely relevant economic institutions and the way to do it is to bring 1 Timothy 5 back into practice. Again, out of time. God bless you. Hopefully some of you can come out to Denver sometimes, at least to the conference. God bless you.