

# Restore Fatherhood

*Vision*

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**Bible Text:** Genesis 1-3  
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*Father God, would do praise you and we thank you for your grace. Lord, we thank you that we can gather here this morning, this Father's Day, and remember your grace, remember your goodness, remember your fatherly love and strength, remember who you are and remember what that means for us in our daily lives. We thank you for your mercy and grace. We ask, Lord God, that you would have mercy on us, that you'd open the eyes of our hearts that we would see good things from your law, that your Spirit would teach us and instruct us and guide us and show us in the way that we should go. Father, we do thank you for what you've shown to us in the gospel. We pray, Lord, that you'd show us still more, show us still more of our sin, show us still more of who you are and how we fall short of your word that we may repent and not repent as the world repents but with godly sorrow that repentance would lead us to us a more firm faith in you, root out unbelief, that we would put on the new man that is being renewed, put on Christ and all the fullness of the dimensions both as individuals, as households, and as a church, that we would know the height and the depth and the breadth that we know the love of Christ that passes knowledge certainly as this relates to the subject of fatherhood and how it relates to the relationships that stem from fatherhood. Father, I pray that you remove barriers and wrong perceptions of fatherhood and ultimately of you, our Father, that we would understand how you created these things to function and how your love holds them all together. Lord, strengthen our hearts in faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Happy Father's Day. Father's Day is always a special day for us that we have to set aside and remember the importance of fatherhood. So it was on Sunday, June 21, 2009 is when a courageous group of you men stepped out on faith on a warm Arizona Sunday morning to make a solemn commitment, it was a commitment expressed as a covenant to restore biblical fatherhood. That commitment is something that we always want to go over. I'll read it for you. It says, "I saw only do commit before God, this assembly, and my beloved family, to restore biblical fatherhood in my home. I will persevere in the strength God provides by faith to provide, protect and to direct my household in the ways of the Lord. I fully accept this as my responsibility before God and humbly employ his divine help to obey his commands." And so that's our fatherhood commitment, the covenant that we made together as men. Most of you men are part of that, several of you men have not been a part of that. It's a voluntary commitment. You don't have to, but we certainly do encourage the thinking and the response to obey that.

So we're going to look at the text that, there's several texts that back that up, but one text is a primary passage. It's Genesis 2:15. So turn with me to Genesis 2:15 and let's lay out the background for these key elements, the key elements for restoring biblical fatherhood. And the key components there are, as far as the responsibility as a man, is to provide, protect and to direct your household in the way of the Lord. I would say the key element is faith, but the key responsibilities are provide, protect and to direct and. So let's look at Genesis 2:15 to 16 and see how these things relate to us today. We look. At Adam as a type of father and we look at the responsibility that God gave to Adam as the first father, as a type of father that carries that application for all fathers of all time. And so for those in the equip meeting, you know, we're studying typology, so this would be an example of that.

So we see in Genesis 2:16, "And the LORD God commanded," let's back up to verse 15.

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." 18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

And so we see from the very beginning God makes the man and God commissions the man. God makes the man and he makes the man, and Adam opens his eyes and he sees God. The basic fundamental issue of being a man is the ability to relate to God, is a face-to-face relationship with your Creator, with your God.

So God makes the man and then he commissions the man. He makes the environment that the man is going to thrive in, and that's the creation, and he puts the man in a garden and he tells the man to work in the garden. Now this is before the Fall so we know that this is going to be an aspect of responsibility. It doesn't matter. Work is a good thing. It's created before the Fall. The Fall makes it harder, but certainly work is an essential part. He is to tend the garden, that he is the work. A man's primary responsibility, he is to work

so that he could provide for his family. And so we see the principle there from the very beginning, the first command given to Adam was that he's to work. He's to work to provide good things for his family. Men are to be men who work. They are to work hard. Men are to do hard things. They are to lift heavy things. They are to sweat. They are to labor. They are to apply diligent effort into accomplishing tasks, and those are physical tasks and they are mental tasks. And men are to be engaged in both physical work and mental work. They are to labor at doing things. The most important concept, I think, is producers. Men are created to produce, not consume. Produce, not play. They are to work, not to be playboys or lazy boys, or game boys. They are to be work men, workers, work horses. Men are commissioned to work.

The scripture says a lot about labor in Proverbs 10:16, "The labor of the righteous leads to life, The wages of the wicked to sin." Proverbs 13:11, "Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, But he who gathers by labor will increase." How many times have you known, how many men have you known who they gained labor through dishonest gain? They gained a lot of money with a little bit of work. What happens to that man? It destroys a man's ability to manage his money, to identify even self-worth because he knows he's gotten it unethically. So it is only through hard work that true labor increases. Again, wealth gained by dishonesty, it'll be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase and his increase will be here a little, there a little. It will be step by step by step by step. Hard work in every step, that's what builds a man. That's what God calls men to do, to be about the business of working, of laboring, of sweat, and of toil.

Proverbs. 21:25 says, "The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor." All men have a desire for the gain of labor and that gain of labor is not just material gain, that gain of labor is mature masculinity. Mature masculinity is the fruit of hard labor in the trenches, just, you know, gut level labor. And that produces because in labor, as Proverbs 14:23 says, "In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty." So in labor there is profit. The lazy man desires to have what the righteous who have labored their whole life has, but he will never get it. Why? Because he's too lazy to put his hand to the plow and just work and set a goal and keep working, and when that goal isn't reality, he keeps working at something else because sometimes a man works and it doesn't produce. The farmer puts the seed in the soil, but not every harvest is a plentiful harvest, but he keeps working and working and working and trusting in God and God does bring the increase. That's how you gain little by little. And it's imperative that men understand the value of work, the commission to work, the good part of work even if it doesn't produce everything you think it should.

It's the work that has value even especially spiritually. You know, it's work to know God. It's work to study your Bible. It doesn't mean you have, boom, all wisdom is the moment you first start studying, but you'll work at it and there's value at that work. There's value in study. There's value in pursuing truth. There's value in working in all manner of work, intellectual, you know, scholastic academics, certainly labor in the fields, labor in whatever God has called you to put your hand with. I think it should involve, I think there are two components of work: a man should be working as hard as he can with his mind and with his body. I think it should be both, and depending on your specific application,

you may have more mind work, well, then you should find a way to have physical work, and if you're primary physical work in your occupation, then you need to find a way to have your mind working because we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. That includes our mind and our bodies, everything is geared towards working to producing. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. The seventh day, there's one day set aside where we have a day of rest. That day of rest is a time for our souls, body and mind, to reflect on the work of Jesus Christ, and that's the gift God gives to those who are redeemed. Amen? But work is very important. It's essential to understand this.

Now men are to be men who work, but they are not men who work alone. Okay, God calls men to work as the leaders in their families because they are responsible to provide for their household, but those working men in their household, the scripture says if a man does not care for his own, he's denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. So if a man refuses to work, if a man will not labor, neither let him eat. It's very clear in scripture. So the motivation for working is food. So if you need food to eat, what does a man do? Well, in our culture, men say they cry because they believe they have an entitlement. "You need to help me!" No, you need to get on working. You need to work and whatever you can work at, that's what you need to work, even if it's just flipping stones off of the driveway. Whatever you can find your hand to do that, that's what you do, and you gain little by little, and if you do that well, and you do that well, and you dig a ditch well, and then you can maybe water something, then maybe you can move something, then maybe you get the kind of backhoe. There's the stewardship, the principle is work hard with what you're given to do.

But men are not to be working alone. They are, then, to be leaders in their homes to provide for their families and to see that their family as a unit is working. Okay, so the household is an economic unit. Men carry the primary responsibility to see that the family is provided for, but along with that they are also given the responsibility to see that their family is working because families are to be producers, not consumers as well. So, you know, sometimes we think of the man as the breadwinner, and he's the producer, and the family is just the consuming end of things. So he brings the paycheck home and the family consumes it, and there's some element of that, but the whole mindset needs to be that the father is producing with his family and he's encouraging his family to produce as well.

Now what does that look like? Well, that could look like a lot of different things; not everybody is doing all the same thing. It doesn't mean that at all. Wives are very industrious as they work in the home doing their duties as women. Sons need to be working if they can alongside their fathers. That's going to be very important. That's why the physical aspect is important for children to be able to have something meaningful, something physical to do with their time because our culture is saturating, trying to pull people away into the video games and into the electronic escape world, which is really for men, it's an escape world that helps them escape from the call to work. You're just sitting there doing this, which is really, I think if playing video games has got to be the definition of doing nothing. I mean, when you're playing a video game, you're doing

nothing. You're moving little electronic dots around the game board. It's nothing. You're producing nothing, right? So you don't want to be caught up in a consumerist mentality when it's just about, you know, playing around. We want to be teaching our sons to work. So they're seeing their fathers work, and fathers are training their sons to work, they're training their daughters to work so that the household is working. And the responsibilities that the father sees, "I see gifts in my children. I think you should work at this or work over here." And he's plugging his children into wise applications to be able to work with a view to produce something good and that's purposely less general, because I don't know, what I mean, what I'm producing in my family, I mean, right now we have over 100 chickens, we're trying to produce some good there. We've got a bunch of goats we're trying to produce something good from there. We've got a growing garden, we're trying to produce something good from there. We've got our fruit trees. We've got rabbits. We're trying to produce some good there. I've got a workshop. One of my sons who has a workshop in my garage and is continually taking over my garage and making a mess of it. He's trying to produce something good there. So we're trying to produce something good. My daughter, she's always trying to take care of the younger ones. She's trying to do something good there.

So there's a lot of ways they're trying to produce something good, right? We have ideas. I'm all for using the internet and harnessing its resources. We have ideas to produce something good there. We have a lot of ideas that we're trying to work at producing good and trying to manage those ways. That's my household. I mean, it's different. It just depends on your gifts and abilities and where God has you. It can be producing a variety of things. It may be producing, you know, I don't know, it is purposely general. The focus is it needs to be producing something good, okay, in contrast to consuming. So we want to produce good and I really think that's the understanding of wealth. Wealth is the ability to produce. Poverty is the inability to produce. So it's not how much money you have. I mean, think about it, money is just paper. What can you do with paper? Nothing but burn it. I mean, really. I mean, it's just paper. Now we know that people have faith in that paper and that works for now, and so we have a value for paper that we can buy things, but really we want to use that money so that we can buy things to produce and part of that production is, you know, we need to have a place to live. We do purchase food and we do purchase things and I'm not against that, but that's a proper use of investing, but the focus and the mindset is not...you see, the consumer mentality is I have money so that I can consume it and that's an end in and of itself.

So I'm consuming things for myself so that I can have things that I enjoy, and really that's the end of. I have a job. I have to bring home a paycheck. I use the money to consume things and I buy the things that I enjoy and that's the end of it. It's like no, I work to produce and as I produce I'm seeking God's blessing in that production so as that grows and yes, I need to buy things so that I can produce more so that I have more to honor the Lord with, to provide for my family, and to give to those who are in need. So it's a completely different way of thinking about resources and how you do that. I mean, and I look out at the audience and there's a lot of different ways that you're seeking to produce and God has a lot of different gifts and abilities that you're plugging in different ways. That is crucial to understand how has God gifted me? What are the talents God has given

me? How can I produce with them? And then my prayer and my focus for my household is, okay, what can I produce with? A shovel is a great thing, isn't it? And you know what? So is a computer. A computer is a great thing to produce. So it's not like we all have to go back to the farm if. If you're gifted in computers, that is a wonderful way to produce good things. You could produce software. You could produce, I mean, all kinds of things. I mean, the markets of the world come to your home through the internet. That's amazing. That's amazing.

So I mean, I'm purposely being general, but production is very essential. Who is given the responsibility to see that the family is producing? Men. And that man better be an example of being a hard working man, or he'll never be able to lead his family in that. Okay, that's the first key responsibility for being a biblical father, and even a biblical man. The second key responsibility is, as the text says, to keep the garden and that understanding the concept there of "keep" has to do with guarding. Keep it, you know, guard it, guard it from harm. You want to keep it from breaking, or if a storm comes, you need to manage that. It certainly has the idea of guarding, the same word used there in other contexts to guard.

So he has the responsibility to protect his family. Men are responsible to protect their household, okay? Men know that there are evil men who are seeking to destroy their households, and they know that there are evil men who are seeking to destroy their household, and that ultimately those men are being influenced by the devil. 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober. Be vigilant." That's the same concept. Keep. Men are to protect their family. Men have to be sober. They have to be vigilant. Why? "Because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him steadfast in the faith." So how do men protect their families? They remain steadfast in the faith. The way you protect your family is by faith, that is, being a man of faith and using the weapons of faith. Ephesians 6 says what is that defensive weapon given? The shield of, what? The shield of faith. And so the shield is the defensive weapon, so men are to take the shield of faith, that is, faith believes the content of scripture. That's what faith is. Saving faith is I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and the implications of saving faith is now my heart is opened by the Holy Spirit to believe the content of scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit. And so, when the devil lobbs his missiles at your family, you are there to take the shield of faith and extinguish those lies and those missiles.

Now that's protection. Now we don't trust in protection. There's something called protectionism, and that would be when a man trusts in his ability to protect and not God's ability to protect his family, and I am against protectionism, protectionism is, "I just have to keep my family and protect them from all the harm," and trying to keep them behind your shield, right, rather than the shield of faith because if you want to understand protection, a Roman soldier just didn't have a shield of faith, did he? He had a sword, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And so to protect your family, the best way to protect your family is the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, is to assume primarily an offensive posture, that is, you're doing battle, you have the shield of faith to resist the lies and the sword of the Spirit to disarm the enemy, and I think that's keeping right there. That's protection. It's you're going to defend your family with the word and

protect them with the word and it's both arms together as you're doing battle. Faith and the issue is faith. Faith. Not faith and protection or not just saying, "I'm not going to protect my family," and being a derelict dad and just throwing the shield away and letting whomever come in and destroy your family. It's the shield of faith.

Men are responsible to protect their families. Men are the gatekeepers. They must stand at the gates of their families and sift through the influences that come into the home through the media and all of these outlets that Satan has overtaken and seeks to come into your home and influence your home. Men are called and given the primary responsibility to protect. Psalm 101 states,

1 ...To You, O LORD, I will sing praises. 2 I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness. 5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure. 6 My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, That they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me. 7 He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence. 8 Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.

I think it's a great passage to apply in your home. I mean, would you allow a lying, deceitful individual to come and communicate with your children? No. Would you allow a wicked perverted man or woman to come and communicate with your children? No. Well, that means the media as well. There's many wicked, perverted individuals all over the internet singing songs with all kinds of meanings and horrible music, that will seek to go bypass the fathers to get to the children to influence their ways of thinking, to draw their hearts out, to draw their hearts out after rock music. You know, rock music is the primary way that Satan uses to just get into the beat. It's a fleshly carnal beat and if your kids get hooked on that beat, it draws them out. And many fathers are trying to protect their families while they're allowing these things just to come in and take their children's hearts. Then they get a little older and it gets a little carried away and you try to apply, "Whoa," and it's like, yikes, can't touch that subject. What's going on there? Well, it starts from a father not protecting his family from these influences. And that's just one example. It could be rock music. It could be obviously pornography or immorality, or I mean, all of this stuff is just crammed down our throats through the media. Very few men would allow, you know, an immoral person just to come and make jokes in your family. You'd be like, "Hey, that's not appropriate. You need to stop that." But yet, you know, if a child can take a device and access that stuff online, if a child is not responsible enough in the gospel to protect themselves and have the moral discernment to say no to these things with a proven track record, they should not have the ability to do that until they have proven themselves in the gospel and maturing themselves through many different father led tests where we set our children up in a certain way and see how they respond in a way

that's not going to tempt them to do evil, and as they consistently pass those tests, then they gain the responsibility to have more freedom. But until they have earned that they should not have access to these horrific, you know, demonic storehouses of evil.

Fathers, you're responsible to oversee that whole thing in your family. It is your responsibility. You stand as the guardian of your child's heart and if you're blowing it in the area of protection, and I'm talking faith-based protection, I'm talking primarily having forward-looking, you're not protecting your family. And protectionism, "Oh no, have to run and hide from everything." No, that's not it. That's not it at all. I mean, I purposely expose my boys to what I want them exposed to at the ages that I want them exposed to with me there, which means this, and I have a pretty high standard, I don't want to see anything evil myself. Media, I don't mess with that stuff. You know, so, but they follow me and, you know, if we're out witnessing to people and they see people, they see women that are very immodest when we're witnessing, but we're communicating Christ to them, and I talk to them about it. And you know, very immodest. Not like their clothes but there's context there that gives them the context of evil so they can have the moral discernment to say, "That's evil." You see, media is so dangerous because it switches it around. Media makes evil look fun and enticing. You see, in reality evil is evil and the consequence of evil is sin and death. And if your children can put those two together and see that light of the gospel and love people that are evil, and that are depraved, and that are in sin, and can show them their need for Christ and the gospel, Amen. That's the offensive posture. That's the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. We don't need to fear evil. We overcome evil with, what? Good.

So we run to that, people that are evil, and share Christ with them and love them. We don't need to run and hide from people, but when there's a fanciful temptation, do you see the difference? That's where we need to run from. I'm telling you, sometimes we mix that up. We run from the people and Paul says, "I don't mean separate from people, the immoral people of this world." He didn't mean that. He meant from maybe the brother in the church that's practicing immorality. That needs to be dealt with, right? Or the fanciful temptation on TV. You can't confront the television, you know, there's no... it's they rule it from beginning to end. They write the narrative script and they communicate what they want to communicate and if you watch that it bypasses your ability to reason and think and goes right to your emotions. That's dangerous. That's very dangerous.

So we need to be aware of these things. This is the day that we live in, and you know, wicked men are doing that on purpose, and they are just chewing up the saints of God and spitting them out in the landscape of disorders because their minds are captivated by this world, by the philosophies of the world, by the thinking of the world. Fathers, it is your responsibility to do this. This is more important than, I mean, your faith and your walk with God is the single most important thing in the influence of your children. I would say even more important than homeschooling. And you know, I believe in homeschooling. But let's put these together now, whose responsibility is it to train up your children? Fathers. And so homeschooling is often tougher for education if fathers are not disciplining their children. It doesn't matter if you're homeschooling. Do you see that?

Why do you homeschool? So that fathers have a better opportunity to disciple their children with their wife with the context you have.

So this whole thing of the faith of fathers is critical, is absolutely critical to understand. Working, providing, protecting. Men are responsible to protect their families. Nehemiah 4:14, "And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.'" Men, are you willing to fight for your families? Are you willing to stand in the gap for your households? Are you willing to lay down your life? Are you walking by faith? The just shall live by faith. Ultimately, it is faith that protects the family, faith in God. That's the protection.

Third point: responsibility is to command your children to obey God, to command your children to obey God. God said to Adam in chapter 2, look what happens here. He put him in the garden, "You can eat freely." Then the Lord commanded the man, saying. Genesis 2:16, "the LORD God commanded the man, saying, " God commands men by speaking to them. Do you see that? Man, and he speaks to them and he expects that man to speak and to obey the spoken word of God to others in his family. And he speaks to the man, to Adam he said, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat." This is what you can do. You know, here's the positive command. "See all that I can make. Enjoy it. Go for it. Use it. Produce with it." This is the blessing and here's the test, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you should not eat for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." In that test there's a warning, "Don't do this." And the Lord said...I'll stop there.

So the third command is to take the responsibility to direct your family into the ways of the Lord. God gave this command to Adam before Eve was ever on the scene. She's not created. This is Adam's responsibility. He is responsible to take this word, to believe the word by faith, to obey the word of God by faith, and to do what God said, and to not do what God has forbidden. It's very simple and I would say this is every mature man's battle. Every perverted man has his own battle, but if you can get saved out of being from every perverted man's battle, you have every mature man's battle and every mature man's battle, every mature father's battle is to direct your family into the word of God. To direct your family into the word of God, and very few men will do this. Very few men will do this, but this is what God calls courageous men to do. This is what God is calling you men to do, me to do. And we all struggle with it, but we actually have to really tighten our faith in focusing on this.

Think of Abraham, Genesis 18:19, "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." Genesis 18:19. Was Abraham a perfect man? No, but did Abraham have saving faith? Yes. How did he evidence that saving faith? He obeyed the commands of God. And what was Abraham commanded to do? He was commanded to command his children and his household to keep the ways of the Lord. A father is given the

responsibility to command his family to obey God's commands, and God holds a father responsible for commanding his children to obey.

That sounds kind of strong, doesn't it? Well, I would suggest that God is kind of strong in the language that he uses. God is the authority. There are many rebellious men that hate authority, there are many rebellious sons that hate authority, and they hate it because they're rebels. I'm encouraging men who are born again who understand authority, that there is one Father and he commands and the Son obeys, and that we as men are under authority, his authority, and we do not have the right to make up our own rules. We are to submit to his rule, that by faith his law becomes our heart. His law is written on our heart. We have no other option but to either rebel or obey, and in the obedience part is to do this, we are to do this and not do this. There are what God commands to do, we are to do, what he said we cannot do, we cannot do, that God may do this, what is spoken. Every man, every father has to make this choice as Joshua said if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, and for some it will. For some it will be that's too much. That's too authoritarian. It's too hierarchical. It's too hard or it's too narrow, or it's too boring, or it's too flat, or it's too whatever, and the majority will reject this, if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, Joshua 24:15. Joshua looked at his audience. He says, "Yeah, many of them are going to think this is evil, okay, but I'm speaking to those who have faith. For those who have faith, you know, you know this is good. It is not evil to serve the Lord." So Joshua says, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your father serves that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." Many of your fathers raised you men in paganism or atheism or humanism or some mixture of the three, that man should be able to do what a man thinks he should do. And we're all raised in our own sin natures, and our culture telling us that, but when we're born again, which they know I was wrong for doing what I thought I could do, that I could do whatever I wanted. I repent of that. Autonomy. And now as Joshua says, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Every man has to make the choice. If a father chooses to serve the Lord, he also must choose, "as for me in my house, we will serve the LORD." Many men do not think they are given the authority to command their children to obey God. Now a man can't make his child saved, a man can't do the hard transformation. It's only the Holy Spirit. But men are given the authority to take God's word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, command children to obey. And if they do not obey, God gives fathers the authority to discipline rebellious children. That's a father's responsibility. It's all part of communicating God's word. God's word, a father must communicate God's law word in the way in which God said it should be communicated.

So God says train up a child in the way he should go. You need to train up a child in the way he should go. God says foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child, but by the rod and reproof it's driven far from him. So fathers are responsible to use the rod and reproof to drive foolishness from the hearts of their children. Fathers do not have the liberty to think some other way. This is a huge responsibility. We live in a generation where fathers have not been faithful to God. They have gone after idols and left their family to be destroyed by great evils. The Christian family is being destroyed from the

inside out by its men, by the fathers. Why are all these problems? Because the men, because the father's way worse, way worse, are the wicked fathers in confessing Christian homes. They way outnumber the great evil being done. I mean, just compare unbelieving or unfaithful fathers compared to what's going on in our government. I mean, the government can only do so much. Unfaithful fathers destroy the foundation. The government cannot destroy the foundation. The worst they can do is kill you. That's the worst. Can't touch the soul. And we're not even near that in our country. It's unfaithful fathers that are the backbone for good or for evil.

It was God, our eternal Father, who from the beginning established that men, that is men who would marry and become fathers, would be ultimately responsible to direct their households in the ways of the Lord. The great destruction that we see all around us is a lack of faithful men, and we need to understand there's a brochure on fatherhood back there has a lot of these statistics: suicide, the plummeting birth rate, divorce, anxiety, depression, immorality, drugs, abortion, poverty, apostasy, hypocrisy, socialism, corrupt leaders, they're all symptoms of rebellious men. All of the problems that we see in teenagers, they all link back to fathers. Homosexuality. Cutting. Why are all these things happening? Because men are not following the gospel. They're being rebellious men. They're being playboys, lazy boys. They're not being responsible men. They're believing the lies of the culture about man, about men. They don't understand responsibility. They don't understand duty. They don't understand glory and victory and honor and faith in the Son of God who endured all things for the sake of obedience to his Father.

Men died in honor and we need to raise up a generation of men who are willing by faith to die to their flesh and die in their body if need be by protecting their families. It's a lot easier to do that, I think, than die in the flesh, die to the flesh, turn the other cheek, not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. We are being destroyed. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." That's lack of theology. Men are to be men of the book, men of theology. Hosea looks out and sees the destruction of the people, they're being destroyed for lack of knowledge, "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame." The same principle here for priests, for leadership, spiritual leaders who would not preach the whole counsel of God and apply scripture and led the nation into apostasy, same for the priests, same for the fathers for if spiritual leadership goes, the spiritual backbone goes. The fathers, "Because you forgot my law," what happens? God says, "I'll forget your children." What's happening in our culture in the evangelical church? We're forgetting God's law. We're mocking his standards. We're rebelling against what God has commanded. And what's happening in the evangelical church? In the confessing church, we're losing our children. It's a lack of faith. It's a lack of men being men of faith to provide, to protect and to direct their families into the obedience of scripture.

How are men to reverse this trend? How are men to reverse this trend? Let's talk a little bit more about every man battle and be a little more specific. Again, if you're dealing with every pervert's battle, you're full time on that one. You can't even move forward

until you get out of that. But every mature man's battle is to speak the truth in love. That, I believe, is the catalyst for reformation in the family is when men believe the truth and speak the truth in love. You see, because every family has a problem. Turn with me to Ephesians 4. Your family has it, my family has it, there's not a family on earth that does not have this problem. Every church, and it's the same problem in the family as in the church, and the same solution given to pastors in dealing with the flock is the same solution given to fathers in dealing with their children. The context of this is done with elders but it's a one-to-one application. It's just the jurisdiction changes, but the activity remains the same. Every family has a problem in that their families have false thinking. How many of your families here would say you have false thinking in your families? You have false beliefs in your families? Yes, and scripture says in Ephesians 4:14, "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

So families are carried to and fro trying to find meaning, trying to find purpose, trying to find value in false doctrine, faulty thinking. Trying to find love without Christ. Trying to find security without faith in God. Trying to find emotional health through medication and not scripture. You see, all these are faulty thinking and our families are up and down and over, and it feels like sometimes, do you ever feel like you're in the waves of a crashing sea? That's because of the faulty thinking, the faulty belief systems that are in a father's heart, that are in a mother's heart, and that come intuitively to children's hearts. And fathers and mothers don't know how to deal with their children because they don't how to deal with their own faulty thinking in themselves, and they're getting beat up by their own brains. And the children come in, and then the noise just magnifies, and the house becomes a house of swirling whirlwinds. It's faulty thinking.

It's wrong doctrine, wrong ways of thinking but we should no longer be children. That's the problem. What's the answer? What's the antidote? And this is going to get, this is specific. This is not a general answer. The general answer would be the gospel. Okay, assuming the gospel, assuming you know we're in Ephesians 4, assuming the grace of God, chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, okay, now let's get specific. Here is a specific practical antidote for a family that fathers must apply in order to be consistent with the command how does the father command children to obey? How? What does that look like? It looks like this, "but," see, that's the contrast, "speaking the truth in love." Speaking truth in love. The very thing that every man struggles with, speaking. It's an activity of the lips. Guys, touch your lips. Make a noise. Now make a word. "Hello," that's speaking, okay? So men know what it means to speak. "What's your name?" Jason. I spoke. Speak what? Truth. What is truth? Scripture. Theology. That which roots in scripture from scripture. The truth of scripture, quote it directly, make the implications. Okay, do you know how to get exegetically from the meaning of the passage and understand the theology of the passage and make the application to the issues of today. That's speaking truth. To counter the specific faulty thinking in your family starting in your own heart, countering it in your family, men are commanded to speak truth and they're commanded to speak truth in a specific manner, with a specific heart, with a specific attitude and that's speaking the truth in love. What is love? Love is patient. Love is kind. It doesn't envy, doesn't boast. It doesn't seek its own.

Speaking the truth in love. There are some men that lean to speaking truth for their own selfish ambition without love. That falls, it doesn't count. That's immaturity. There's some men that clam up and won't speak at all. That's rebellion. There's some men that will chatter but won't speak truth. That's rebellion. There's thousands of ways to miss this and every man, every mature man's battle is to miss the middle ground and to live in the ditch. "I say the truth," but you are angry when you said it. "Okay, then I won't say anything. I'll love." But you can't have love without truth. Some men are geared to truth and devoid of love. Some men, "I really love," they have such as a tender heart for their children. "I couldn't bear myself to even bring that word," and they don't speak the truth. They have a love but they don't speak the truth, and they say nothing, or they'll show their love but they won't speak doctrine. You must speak doctrine. "Well, we'll just go out and bond doing an activity together." That's great. You need to bond and do an activity together, but if you haven't brought the truth to be a heart doctor to your child's heart, to your wife's heart, you haven't spoken the truth in love. You go from ditch to ditch and families are led by men that are the men that are going from ditch to ditch, they're ditch hoppers. They hop from this ditch to that ditch, and the family is right along with them. They're hopping from this ditch to that ditch and the ditches are full of sewage and it destroys families.

The antidote is for men to speak the truth in love. The antidote for the church specifically is for elders to model it and to speak the truth in love. When should this be done? All the time and that's Deuteronomy 6, "Let this word be on your heart." Deuteronomy 6, let it be on your heart and you speak of it when you get up, when you walk by the way, when you lie down. That means any point in every point that you can intersect with your family, men, you are to be living truth in love. Jesus was full of grace and truth. He's the perfect example and you're crying out, "Lord, teach me, help me, show me how to give the correction with patience, or know how to maybe I should withhold this correction right now in this context, deal privately with this child and come back later and deal with it." Okay, all of this is wisdom living, wisdom living. Not waiting years. Dealing with conflict. Setting again the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. We don't just run and hide and, "Oh, no, we're just going to protect ourselves and wrap ourselves up in ourselves. Everyone is evil, we're going to hide." No, we take the shield and we take the sword and we walk right out there, and we walk right down that center path. And, "Come on, family, it's okay, We're going to go do this." And if conflict arises on the way, you turn and you use that sword with gentleness because this is your family. You're not hacking off a head. Gentleness. But you use it.

How does a man get that ability to do that? Take the log out of your eye, so it's a call to remove hypocrisy. A hypocrite can never do this. You have to take the log out of your eye, Matthew 7, so you can, what? See clearly to remove the speck that's in your child's eye, because if you're guilty of the same sin, you're going to walk around and whack. Oops. And that's what happens to men and I know how many men and they do that and then they clam up and they don't say anything again through the rest of their life and their family is a mess. No, what do you do? You know what to do. You confess your sin, you humble yourself, you get back in there, you get on this truth and love road, you follow

Jesus Christ. Next time you know, "Oh, I got that log in my eye." You deal with your own heart first. You see, "Here I'm holding up the shield of faith, but I have a little work to do here." You resolve that tension, "Come on, family, we're going this way." And there's evil here, there's evil there. We don't run from evil, we walk on the narrow path. We have the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and we walk through it and we deal with our own hearts, double-edged sword cuts both ways, cut me. I humble myself in pride dealing with my wife, my family, and we're going this way. That's victorious Christian living. That's a victorious Christian family.

What is the catalyst? What makes all that happen? The scripture says not this but this, speaking the truth in love, that, what? So the truth may grow up. You want to grow up as a family. You've got to speak the truth in love. You will never grow up as a family until fathers carry the primary responsibility to speak the truth in love. Fathers, not their mothers, fathers, carry the primary responsibility to disciple their children. That is a manly thing to do. Fathers, you are the parent in that. You are the point man. Your wife is there to assist you in it. And sisters are vitally important to this process, but fathers are more important and they're more important because the position God has given them. And you need to understand that, men. That's not a slam on women. That's the reality of what it... and there's more and more statistics bearing that out. It's interesting. Some of them were in that fatherhood magazine. If a father doesn't go to church and a mother is consistent in going to church, I think there's a 2%, I think it's 2% that the children go to church studies have shown. But if the father goes to church and the mother doesn't go to church, it's huge, it's like 36% attend church regularly, which emphasizes the fact that it is the father's responsibility who carries the weight on these issues. God made it that way. The idea is that a father who is in harmony with his wife, that's the ideal. I'm stating that the father's role is essential because in many respects for the last, what 120 years in our culture, women have been understood to be the primary leaders and caregivers for children, not men. See we have reverse thinking at every level, at every experience in our culture. I think it was before the 1830s every book on parenting was written to men. Nowadays, almost every book on parenting is written to women with a couple of exceptions, those who are trying to break that mold. I just found a parenting book. I'm going to get a bunch of them for you guys. It's excellent. So excited about it. I haven't read it all yet so let me finish reading it, but it's really encouraging to me. But anyway.

Fathers are critical that they speak the truth in love that you may grow up. Do you see that? Do you see that in the passage? This is what elders do to the congregation. This is what fathers do in the family. And that growing up is Christocentric. Grow up in all things. Who is the head? Jesus Christ. What is the goal of this? Men need a goal and, men, here's the goal, the goal of speaking the truth in love, truth in love is the process, the product or the goal is Christ-likeness. So why are we doing this? That we may be like Jesus Christ, that our families may be like Jesus Christ, that we may follow Jesus Christ. This is this a pastor's goal for the congregation, as the scripture says, if you back up there to verse 12, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." That's why Christ gives pastors to a church and that's why God gives fathers to the family. What's the goal? Verse 13, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of

the fullness of Christ." My son, my daughter, are you trusting in Jesus Christ? As you go through the day, are you trusting in Jesus Christ? As they're sinning? It's a faith issue. The prayer is that they would be brought to the unity of the faith, that as you walk by faith, you will encourage faith in your children. Now we know who is the only one who can save our children is God. So a healthy faith perspective and belief in the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man is vital in this subject. Yes, we know that it is only God that can save our children, and we also know that it is God who honors faith.

So we want to be men who walk by faith and obey because God says that's the greatest influence you have in your family, but at the end of the day, we're crying out, "God, have mercy and save my children, give them faith," because the single focus, most important thing of a father's role is to see that his children have faith in the gospel, have faith in Jesus Christ, and his role is to fan that faith and command obedience to the faith, the scripture, and he uses every means given to him by God to secure that blessing for his children. What are those means given to men to secure that blessing? Well, one would be speaking the truth in love. The other would be prayer. I mean prayer, praying, praying, "God, have mercy on my children." I think loving your wife, unity in your marriage is critical. Unity in your marriage. Loving your wife, praying, discipling, touching, kissing, hugging, loving, connecting, feeding fishing, working together, farming together, whatever you want to do together, spending time together, riding bikes together, with the goal of building a bridge, to building a relationship life because you have a truckload of truth, a boatload of truth that you want to take over that bridge into that child's heart so that relationship serves as a bridge that you can speak the truth in love. Humility, confession of your own sins. "God, turn my heart to you. Turn my heart to my children speaking the truth in love."

We have the problem, we have the solution, we have the product, Christ-centered, we have the heart focus. The content of this kind of thing is men need to be comfortable in dealing with issues of their hearts so that they can deal with the issues in their children's hearts. And what's that going to look like? It's going to look like root and fruit.

My goodness I preached for an hour. Wow, do you believe it's been an hour? It's been an hour and four minutes. Whoa. I apologize. I'm convicted of being too long-winded. I really am. I'm trying to get my sermons down. All right, let's see here.

[unintelligible]

No, it's your turn to say. In fact, you need to talk. If I stand up here and talk all the time, you don't get an opportunity. I'm done, that's it. Turn this thing off, I'm done. Time's up.