

Parents and Children in Proverbs
Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Select Proverbs
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This is a Father's Day and to some degree, Mother's Day sermon. I want to make sure we understand that everybody here can have a leadership role in the language of Scripture. Anybody here can be a father of a kind to the people who could learn from you, people who are under your leadership to some degree. So although this is a Father's Day sermon, it's a sermon from God's Word for everybody.

And I'm going to ask if you would stand as I read portions of God's Word to you today. First is going to be from Deuteronomy 6 and then 5 or 6 Proverbs that will study together. The first is about God's character because God the Father is the model for all fathers. And then we'll read particulars that teach us practical things. God's practical guidance about how to be a good parent. Here's God's word:

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts and impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Deut 6:4-7

And then particular proverbs on provision. Proverbs 13:22 says, *A good man leaves an inheritance for his children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous on instruction. It says, listen, my son, to your father's instruction, do not forsake your mother's teaching. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.*

And then a word about associations. *He who walks with the wise grows wise but a companion of fools suffers harm.*

That's part of the reading God's word.

Let's pray together for a moment.

Heavenly father, I do pray that you would give us ears to hear what you're saying to us about your life. As a father, the way in which you model all father and Lord, give us, I pray, ears to hear your wisdom and also to know that wisdom never brings us perfection. And so take us, as always to your gospel.

We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

So I'm a dad, like most fathers here, and in my view, I had my children at home on a kind of a long term loan, a 25 year loan from the time my first child was born, till the time my last child went off to college, 25 years all together. Blessed years. When I first thought about becoming a dad, when my wife was carrying our first child, I was quite naive about what was coming. I thought I wanted to be a good dad and therefore I will be a good dad. What more is required? I have good intentions. Somehow it hit me how deeply wrong that was when our third child was born.

It's kind of a long, long birth process. And when she emerged and I held her in my arms, I kind of thought, what have I done? Because she's out and she's never going back. And I know how hard it is now

and we're outnumbered. We're going to have to play zone defense from now on. Somehow the third child is the one that frightened me.

Now, of course, it's very sensible to be frightened because our first thought is so far away from that. Right? Our first thought is there are a few basic rules... you read an article in *Better Homes and Babies* that gives you the main ideas. And then you hear a sermon and that's all you need. Because it's easy to be a good father.

Somebody I read a long time ago said this. *When I was young, I had no children and six theories about the proper rearing of children. Now I have six children and no theories.* There's a lot of truth in that. And we do think maybe at an early age, when we're 22 or 25, when we see a baby wailing on the floor or a toddler wailing on the floor of a grocery store, these poor, benighted people, if they'd just come to our Sunday school last week, they would know how to control this child.

And then you mock your younger self when you were a little bit older. Of course, the Bible does give us practical wisdom, but practical wisdom starts as always, not with lists of do's and don'ts of being good parent. There are techniques to being good parent, there's no doubt about that. But parenting depends far more like everything in life on who you are, not what techniques you've mastered and who we are as men and women and children.

Create an image of God begins there. So the first thing, the most important thing I tell you is that God the Father is a model of every fatherhood. In fact, in one place in Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul says, *I bow my knees before the father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth has been named.* That actually could be translated -- I bow my knee before God the Father, from whom every fatherhood is named in heaven and on earth-- And this is every form of father. There is a physical, literal father, surrogate fathers, grandfathers, uncles, godly leaders at work, kind leaders in our lives. These are all fatherly figures and in every fatherhood we can think of is based on the fatherhood of God, who has compassion on his children and disciplines his children.

In fact, in Hebrews 12, it talks about discipline, and the fact that fathers should discipline their children rests on the fact that God disciplines his children. Here's what Hebrews says -- *the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and he disciplines those whom he accepts His son as sons.* God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? So when a hardship comes your way, you think my father in heaven is disciplining me. And that's why we discipline our children, because God disciplines us.

Furthermore, we can actually look at good earthly fathers. And I know some of you had great earthly fathers and some didn't. But you can look at a good earthly father and learn about God by looking at a good earthly father, because they reflect in the character of God.

Psalms 1 and 3 says it this way as a father has compassion on his children, as a human father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. You want to know what God is like? The first answer is Look to Jesus. The second answer is you can look at really good fathers and learn from them as they have learned from God.

Now, the core of being a good father, then, is to know what God is like. And we're going to put a scripture up here and I'm going to read it to you, and I'm going to ask you to notice the prominence of love and of justice in this passage. Look at it with me. *The Lord pass before him (Moses) and proclaim the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger. He has a*

sense of justice, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty that does justice again, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and their children's children to the third and fourth generation.

Now, again I ask you to notice that love is twice their steadfast love. Faithful love, ongoing love is found twice, but many of the rest of the terms are actually descriptions of the way love operates. So the Lord is merciful. That could also be translated compassionate. That is to say, he's kind and gentle. Compassion. Mercy is the feeling of love.

When life goes against our little ones. Afraid of the doctor? They're four years old. They're crying. They don't want to go to the doctor. They are seven years old and they're playing something really hard and they fall and they get hurt significantly, and they begin to cry. And you think, my son, you're seven years old. Stop being a baby. Stop whining. No, a father is compassionate. And if your child is crying, your child is crying. If your child is afraid of the doctor, we're kind to our child. And if our child, the age of 13 says, I have no friends, we don't say, don't be ridiculous. You have nine friends. You say, I know what you're saying. I feel it with you. Give your child the dignity of their feelings you feel with them. That's compassion. Now grace is love's capacity to shower gifts on children, whether they deserve it or not. So up north, I would say grace is taking your child out no matter what time of day it is, so they can see their first snowfall, or showing your child their first Christmas tree, or showing your child the first cluster of fireflies, or the first lunar eclipse, and just delighting and showing things to your child.

Grace is also given to your child, whether they deserve it or not, whether they kick the winning goal or let the winning goal dribble through their legs, you take them out for ice cream if they scored the winning goal or if they forfeited the winning goal. That's what grace does. Grace is unmerited favor, unmerited love. And then, of course, God is also patient with his children. He is faithful with his children. He doesn't demand too much right away. When our children were little, they somehow had the idea that they wanted to help set the table starting around the age of four. Now, a four year old, as you may know, doesn't know the difference between right and left. And so they're not going to be real adept at setting the knife and the fork and the spoon in the right place. And so we told our children, now, kids, the knife and the spoon are friends. And so they go together by the plate on the right. And we have a little booboo on your right hand. So you put it on the side where your booboo is, okay. And, and the fork stabs things. And so the knife and the spoon do not like the fork. So the fork is all by itself far away from the knife. And the spoon. And you know, this registered for a four year old. But the problem is they might put the spoon upside down and they might put, despite your instruction about boobos, they might put the fork on the right side and the knife and the spoon on the left side. And a patient parent like God does not say, you messed up. We say, good for you. You remembered that the knife and the spoon are friends and then you work, you know, slowly on more advanced forms of table setting.

Love is compassionate and it is gracious. Love is patient. God is also just. And we see that a couple of times. Justice is essentially giving people what is their due and what the Bible says about what parents owe their children is pretty straightforward. They owe them food and clothing and shelter and instruction and preparation for a life together, that is to say, an education. So they will have, an ability. We'll talk about this in a moment, an ability to provide for themselves over the years. That's your responsibility. Now, when I say instruction, if you come up with a list of God's rules, you know the Ten Commandments that works really well. We said, look, in this house, the most basic rules are the Ten

Commandments and honor your father in your mother's prominent there. But we have a couple extra rules. We have three extra rules.

Extra rule number one is tell the truth all the time. Truth is a coin of the realm. If things go wrong and you don't tell us what's going on, how can we help you? Truth is, the coin of the realm. Tell the truth. That's rule number one.

Rule number two is always respect everybody. Don't despise or mistreat or scorn anybody in this family or anybody in our house.

Rule number three is don't hit your sister unless she clearly deserves it because once again, our kids really did deserve something.

All right, so those are the big pictures. Let me get practical with you and follow the book of Proverbs, which we've been looking at to some extent this summer. The first basic piece of instruction to fathers of all kinds is provision. A good man leaves an inherited house for his children and for his children's children. Now over in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul comments on this in Second Corinthians and he says children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents save up for their children. So how does that saving up work?

Well, in the ancient world, it was by taking good care of your farm so that it was ready to be used well by your children to have an ongoing living. Very few people are farmers today, and so we say we provide for our children by preparing them for a fruitful life, above all through preparation to work fruitfully all through the years. That's number one.

Number two, we'll take more time with this. One is instruction in the Bible and the Book of Proverbs. It says dozens of times, listen, my son, listen, my son, my son, my son whom I love. Listen to me. *Listen to your father's instruction. And do not forsake your mother's wisdom.* Proverbs 1:8; *Listen, my son and accept what I say in the years of your life will be many.* Proverbs 4:10. *Listen, my son, be wise and keep your heart on the right path.* Proverbs 23:19. Listen, my son, listen, listen now, of course, for the children to listen, the parents have to have something to say, and we have something to say if God is giving us wisdom.

Now, the most basic wisdom for parents comes from Deuteronomy 6:7-9

I'm going to read a little bit of that to you right now, It says, *I command you today. These are the commands I give you in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up, we'll go that far.*

So what does the law of God say? It says, Or the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And then you teach that to your children as you live your life. So, people sometimes ask questions of pastors or spiritual leaders. How do I discipline my children? How do I guide my children, how to instruct them in the faith? And the answer is all the time.

So in the morning, before the day begins, it's good to go to God's Word and say, here's wisdom for the day. And at lunchtime. Make midday corrections at supper time. Review what happened throughout the day, and then bring it all to the Lord in prayer and commentary about life with a child and nighttime. Of course, we all know that at night, children who won't tell you anything about what happened all day,

what happened at school today, nothing is the answer. We did nothing for eight hours. But then, somehow, at 8:22, when you're talking to your child in bed, suddenly they remember what happened. The defenses come down and you'd have a wonderful conversation with your little ones. So every time of day is a good time to talk to your children.

I have a grandchild who has learned the power of the words **I need**. She has learned somehow (she's two and a half years old) that **I need** is more potent than **I want**. So when she means to say I want blueberries, she says I need blueberries. I need macaroni, I need grapes. These are not true statements. And so the parents are trying to say, you know what? We need to help you distinguish between needs and wants. At the tender age of 30 months, she's learning to distinguish what most people spend a lifetime trying to distinguish. And so we teach our children and all for life, whatever the moment, whatever the opportunity might be.

Now, competition often gives us a great chance for instruction, could be an athletic competition, could be an academic competition. And people sometimes give the idea they may not say the words, but they give the idea you're somebody. If you win, if you win the math contest, if you memorize the Westminster Shorter Catechism, if you score the winning basket in basketball, you're important. Nobody may say those words. And so parents have to say to their children, you know, you came in seventh in the math competition. That's really good. And you played your very best. You did not. You weren't the star, but you played your best. You played the man. You played the woman. You did well. You never quit. You were a good teammate. You did your best. That's what counts. You tried. And by the way, those moments when you didn't try. God loves you and I love you also. So we teach our children, of course, when they're teachable. Now there is a very important passage. We focus on a great deal. Proverbs 22:6: *...train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Now, the first thing I want to tell you is if for some reason almost no translation has a little word in there, and the word is **his** in the original. In the Hebrew it says train up a child in **his** way in which he should go. And that leads to a riddle or a question. What exactly does it mean that a child should grow up in his way? And if we meditate on that a little bit, it will alleviate a burden we sometimes feel. And the burden is if and only if I train up my child properly, they will love the Lord. And if they stray from the Lord, it's my fault. And if they follow the Lord and follow the Lord's way, that means I was a good parent. I mean, I just some I have to tell you something. Nobody here is a good enough parent to say before God, I was such a good parent that God owes me the salvation of my children.

The book of Ezekiel makes it very clear that a godless man can have a godly child, and a godless woman can have a Godly child. Furthermore, the one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You can't make your child call on the Lord, and you can't make them not call on the Lord. You discipline you treat, you teach, you do the best you can, and everybody stands before God alone. This is not an iron law. The book of Proverbs has wisdom. The Bible, read holistically, makes it very clear Adam had two sons, that we have names for Cain and Abel. Adam raised Cain and Able and literally one was a wonderful son and the other a terrible son. Same man, same instructions. And Isaac, who was a pretty good dad, not a great dad, had two sons, Jacob and Esau, in case you know, in the Bible story, Esau was a ne'er do well, violent, indulgent man, and Jacob became a very good and godly man. Same parents. So we stand or fall on our own. We still want to do a wonderful job. And generally speaking, that's how Proverbs usually works. If you train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from it. That's the way it usually works. But it's not an iron law. We all stand before God one by one.

Proverbs 22:6 says, listen, don't stand with the scoffers. Don't listen to violent people who think they can rob and deceive and destroy. Don't spend your time with gluttons and drunkards and prostitutes. These warnings are over and over and over. Instead, my son, heed my instruction. Listen to me 22:5 the previous verse right in front of it says, in the paths of the wicked lies thorns, and snares. But he who guards his soul will stay far from them. So you guard your soul. And by the way, parents, you have a responsibility too. And that is to train up your child in the way you should go in his way. Now, when people study train up a child in his way, the way he should go, they ask people, I mean scholars, pastors, theologians, and then they notice that his way could mean one of two things.

The first one could be God's way. And there's no question the Book of Proverbs tells us we should train our children God's way. In fact, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And here his teaching, his precepts, is the overarching message of the Book of Proverbs. Follow the way of wisdom, the wisdom of God. And so we follow his way, God's way in which he should go.

But it's also true that (I'm going to do a tiny bit of exegesis here) if you look at it carefully, train up a child in his way in which he should go. The word **his** has an antecedent. Antecedent is child. Train up a child in the child's way also makes sense. So globally, train a child in God's way. But in this particular moment, it also has a mind that each child has his or her own way.

So one of my children would just hear stuff and remember it, and as a consequence, she did not have to study vocabulary. She just heard it and remembered it. That was that. And so she could learn Spanish and do very well in about five minutes a day. And so I said to her, honey, have you thought about Mandarin? Have you thought about Arabic? Because you obviously have a God given knack. You have a way. Your way includes memorizing things effortlessly. And so God may want you to use this linguistic facility. You had to learn other languages because we need Americans who can speak Arabic and Russian and Mandarin for the good of our country.

Maybe that's your way, and then maybe you have a child who likes to study algebra, and they say things like algebra -- It's so beautiful. It all makes perfect sense. And trigonometry blows my mind. You just get one angle, everything works out. It's just magnificent. In geometry, we just have these foundational... What are they called? I don't even remember. But, you know, they're theorems or axioms or something. But once you get them in your head, it just it just all flows. It's just magnificent. And you say to your child, your boy, your girl, have you thought about engineering? Have you thought about architecture? This may be the way that God made you. He gave you a facility in this realm of life. But it's not just what are you good at? We train up our child to not quit. Perhaps your child is not linguistically or mathematically fascinated. Maybe they're good at music and they love the piano. They sat down and banged on the piano or played a guitar, played the clarinet, picked it up and it just was beautiful. And now either your child is 11 or 12 or 13 or 14, and they're moving up to more advanced teachers and they get a teacher who's just awful, mean, harsh little instruction. Your child says, I quit, I give it up and you say to your child, no, no, no, you're a musician. God's given you a gift and a love for this. You can't let one bad teacher stop you. I'm going to help you endure this year with this teacher. You're going to keep your love for music, because that's the way God made you -- train the child in this way. By child, of course, is clear by now that I mean not just a two year old or five year old. In fact, the Hebrew word for child covers up to the age of 18 or 19 or 20. So you keep on teaching your children the ideas. Dedicate, consecrate, instruct doesn't just mean say words you, you, you inculcate deeply the path of God and you might inculcate ideas like working hard or preparation. You know, every, every year there are people who

come to the idea that the best way to live is to live under the pressure of a deadline. I really start working when I've got a deadline and I say, that's a horrible way to live. Of course, some people sometimes have to do things under the pressure of a deadline, but preparing, it's so much more fun. You do so much better when you have time to prepare properly. My child. And so we care for our children as they go through life. Train up a child, train up a child.

I had a conversation probably ten years ago by now with a young woman who who's 22, maybe 23 years old, she's been out of college, maybe eight months, probably 23 years old, I guess. And she had a job that had some slight significance. And through a variety of events, you know, vacations. July 4th, there was a meeting, and she was the only person who could take notes and help make a plan with her CEO and the CEO of another firm. Eight months. She's with two CEO's. She's the only other person in the room. And we talked about it and she said, you know, for a second I was really freaked out but then I remembered the time years earlier when somebody famous came to our house and my dad said to me, we're going to have somebody famous at our house tonight and, I don't want you to be nervous about it because a famous person is basically like everybody else, except they're really good at one thing. They're just a person. We're all just people. And somehow I remember what my dad said to me, you know, I was 12 years old or something, and it just helped me calm down and enjoy the moment with these two CEOs. What's that called? That's called listening to the counsel of your father. Train up your child in the way he should go and he will not depart from it when he is older.

Number three is more briefly, choose your companions. Well, when we had children especially in their teenage years at home, one of the proverbs I repeated to them over and over was this one. He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm. And then there are several proverbs on the negative side of that. One says, he who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth. Another one says, A companion of gluttons will suffer shame, a companion of drunkards will suffer shame. And so you, you talk to your children. You say, you say, listen, choose your friends well. Proverbs again... the glutton and the drunkard will come to poverty and drowsiness, will clothe a man with rags. Choose your posse. Well, who do you listen to on your Spotify list? Do you listen to somebody like Sandra McCracken? Or do listen to somebody like the Beastie Boys? Now, you may have never heard of the Beastie Boys, but just the title gives you an idea of what kind of people they are.

Whose lyrics fill your mind as you go throughout the day. Choose your companions wisely, choose them well and parents and mentors. This also means you should be a friend and a companion of your little ones. And if you're a boss or a leader, a mentor to people, spend time with people you love. There is a myth that sometimes goes out, and the myth is that parents need to have quality time with their children. Now, it's not about quantity time. It's about quality time. Here's the story. Quality comes through quantity. You know you can't schedule with your children at 2:45 next Wednesday we're going to have quality time. No in quantity time comes quality time. So, one time I spent an entire day with one of my children. She was 10 or 11 years old, and we ended up spending about ten hours together. We did all kinds of things. She doesn't remember any of it. except maybe somewhat remembers one little part. Here's the part. She remembers a tiny bit, and it went like this. We went to a baseball game. We're from Saint Louis, and so the Saint Louis Cardinals are usually a very good team. The stadium is usually very full. And this time we happen to have a seat where you want to get a seat where you can get a foul ball. And we were sitting in this spot and, and I said, you know, probably should have brought a baseball glove today because there is a hard throwing right hander, a lot of right handers in the lineup, a foul is going to

come just right over here. And if it comes, it's going to come hard and without a glove. Whoever tries to catch the ball is going to be unable, no matter how good they are, because the ball comes with so much spin on it, it's going to hit the hands and roll off and somebody else will get it nearby. The very next pitch, the next pitch was a fastball and the batter swings a little bit late. Foul ball coming off this way. Hard right to the guy in front of me. And I'm thinking for an instant, this is great. He's going to burn his hands. The ball is going to fall into my lap. I'm going to have a ball. And it's screaming toward him right there. My hands are like this.

And then he ducked.

And fortunately, I threw my hands up just in time for it to hit the fat of my right hand and dribble off and go to somebody ten feet away. And my daughter said, oh, daddy, does it hurt? And I said, honey, it hit the fat of my hand. You know, that's where the meat is. And I'm fine. She said, no, I mean, did not catching the baseball hurt. And I said, yeah, it did hurt. And then we had a long conversation, 45 minutes, of which she remembers about three seconds. She remembers a little of it about disappointment and hopes and getting what you want and not exactly getting what you want. And through the hours, we had this extraordinarily important time together.

It's also true that a good parent corrects their children. Now, for those of you who are wondering about it, there's always a temptation. Avoid tough topics. And I would love to just say, you know, the Bible talks about words and example all the time, but on five occasions, five occasions the book of Proverbs mentions the rod. And so I'm going to say a word about discipline. Now, the first thing I want to say is parents should never strike their children in anger. And I think a parent should never use the hand. That's my view. My view is, and our practice when our kids were little was to get the lightest possible spanking. Spoon probably weighed less than an ounce, and it was more physical discipline theater than it was actually physical discipline, if you know what I mean. It's time for you to get your spanking. You know, it hurts like this. But if they're prepared for it, it's agony. And so we did use on rare occasions, physical discipline for our children. And the idea behind it is something like this I love you too much to let you think that what you've done has no consequences in this world.

I love you too much to let you go down this path, which will hurt you and the people around you. For your sake, I need to impress upon you, because I've tried to say it to you and you haven't listened. And now we're in a stage of rebellion. Need to tell you this is the way of death. So this tiny little sting is going to be just the tiniest reminder of the pain that comes when you behave in certain ways. And I do it because I love you now, I couldn't I don't know how to be more emphatic than to say, never strike your children heavily or with anger. It's terrible. The Bible says, fathers, don't exasperate your children. Do not exasperate your children by striking them in anger. And if you know somebody or your life has somebody in it who's doing that, seek help from the people around you. It's one way in which we discipline children. It's not the main way. And people have always known that there is a place for physical discipline in the army. If someone is letting their unit down, they have to do things like run ten miles with a heavy backpack on or do 200 pushups. That's physical discipline on a football team. If a player misses the calls over and over again, the coach may say, run up that hill 15 times and run back down again. That's physical discipline. But most discipline is not physical. Most of the time in the Bible, God wants discipline to have the form of justice. And it goes like this. Personally, most of the time we use banishment from civilized society, you know, grounding and deprivation of privileges. That's what we use most of the time, occasionally physical discipline. And one of our children at one point was misbehaving pretty badly. And

my wife Debbie came to me and said, listen, I don't know what privileges to deprive her of. She doesn't really have many privileges. There's not much to take away. and if I, if I ground her, I'm punishing myself more than I'm punishing her. Because the problem is the way she relates to me, and, she's too old to spank. I don't know what to do. And I said, I'll get back to you on that. Like a good theologian, I came back to her six weeks later. That's literally correct. It was six weeks later because six weeks later, I was still on my mind, and I was, for other reasons, reading the book of Exodus, where it says, if two men are fighting and there's serious injury, you're to you're to punish the one who is guilty of evil fighting.

Eye for and eye and tooth for tooth, foot for foot, hand for hand, bruise for bruise, burn for burn. And I thought, I've got it. Now let me think, oh, I'm going off in the direction of violence. Not at all. Because in the ancient world is very common. You know you're not my tooth. I'm going to get some friends. We're going to knock out seven of your teeth. And so the idea is actually restraint and proportion. Discipline should be proportionate. So in our kids life for a while reasons I'll explain maybe someday, they had a spilling orange juice phase and there's just orange juice on the floor and on the table all the time. And so orange juice crime leads to orange juice punishment, right? And you lose your orange juice for a couple days if you spill it day by day. It's not they're not going to get scurvy or beriberi or rickets – we give them Flintstone vitamins. It's all going to be fine. But if they're spilling orange juice over and over again, you lose your orange juice, which they did, and they learn it somehow. Somehow they stopped.

And then the other one, of course, is book bags. And I assume you have book bags here in Alabama. Yes. And that it rains sometimes in Alabama and that sometimes in Alabama kids come through the door at the end of the day and they have their book bag on their back, and it's raining. Sometimes in Saint Louis it snows. That's when this especially happens. And the children come in the door and say Hi, mom. And they just drop their bookbag on the floor, in the puddle, in the coat. And then. And then another child comes in, hey, mom. And then they run off to do what they're going to do. And you're left with three coats, maybe a hat and three book bags or four book bags on the floor.

And mom shouts, get back here and clean up your book bags, you animals! I've told you about this 100 times by. But they're, you know, they're gone by now. It's a mom picks it up and the children learn that if they turn a deaf ear, they have a noisy maid.

And so I said, you know what, kids? Book bag, crime book bag, punishment. What do you mean? So? Well, if you don't take your book bags, you obviously don't care about your book bags. So, you're going to take your books to school in a in a Piggly Wiggly bag? Piggly wiggly bag? All my friends will laugh at me. Then pick up your book bag as simple. And so they left it, you know, four days later, here's your grocery store bag. That's what happened to my first child a little bit later happened to my third child. My second child said, this will not happen to me. She never took her books to school. And a grocery bag, book bag, crime book bag, punishment. It's the way the Lord. That's the way, that's the way the Lord does it take your time. Think it through. Discipline wisely because you love your children. Now, I said, and it's going to be brief. I want to make sure we put this in gospel perspective. So for that reason, I want to tell you my definition of discipline. If you take notes here it is. Ready? Here. Go get your pens out. Discipline is that process by which bigger sinners move littler sinners to mend their wicked ways. Bigger sinners induce littler sinners to mend their wicked ways. Why do I define it that way? Because we're all sinners. We all fail. You want to discipline your children? Remember, they got a lot of their sins from watching you, and they got some of their own. But they got a lot from you. You are not the perfect father. There is one perfect father. That's God, our father in heaven. We look to him not only for the way

to parent, but also for the remedy, the cure, the grace. When we fail, which we all do, we turn to God as our kind and loving and gentle and compassionate and gracious, saving and redeeming father. And that's our hope when we fall short as fathers and mothers and mentors in this world, we still strive, we strive, we aim to be as godlike as we can. And when we fail, we turn to our Lord Jesus in faith. Amen.

Let's pray together. Father, I Thado pray that you would give us a vision of what it means to be a good father, good mother, good mentor, a good father in the workplace, or teachers who are like fathers and mothers to their children, like those who have any responsibility for any group of people who look up to them. May we be fatherly, and by your grace, have more and more of your compassion and justice and love and mercy. We pray, Lord, that when we fail, we would not get down ourselves to despair, but turn to you, Lord Jesus, for mercy and grace and you would set us back on the right path and we pray in Jesus name.

Amen.