We're in this series right now called Modern Family, and we're talking about lots of practical things. By the end of today, we'll talk about some more practical things. But I want you to understand the point of parenting. Just understand what this family issues all about. I want my kids to grow up and say lots of things about me, lots of things about their home, things about the way they grew up. I don't want them running and saying, "That was awful. I very survived." We want our kids instead to grow up and go out into the world and look back and go, "My home was safe. My home was stable. My home was peaceful." All these things. But when I think about if they could just say one thing, if my children are adults someday and they can just say one thing, I would want it to be, "I knew I was loved." And that's more than just a mom and dad saying it. It's the way we show it. So we're going to talk about that today. But I knew I was loved.

I can look in scripture and know I am loved, and that's life changing. Let me just reassure you, if you came in today as a mom or dad or even grandparents and you're trying to sort through all kinds of parenting issues, discipline issues, discipleship issues, how do I walk through the tough questions, how do we navigate teenage-hood, all those kinds of things, if you're wrestling with those questions, you just got to understand that God wants you to win in this. He's on your side. He assigns you, he called you to this, and you can do it. If God called you to it, he will see you through it. Amen?

So I want to just sort of dive in. If you're a guest here today, I'm so thankful you've come. For everybody in the room, there's a card, a communication card, you can fill that out, drop it in the box at the end or at one of the baskets that goes by. If you're watching online, hello. Thanks for doing that. You can comment, tell us who you are. But I just want us to dive in this morning and talk a little bit about this question of discipline or discipleship and how the answer is yes.

When I talk about parenting issues, people want to know about discipline. It's the most common question. What questions do you have about parenting? And there are these two or three questions that always come first, especially when I'm talking as a pastor or we're talking about the Bible because people, "What's the Bible have to say about this particular issue? Should I do this? Should I not? Does this work? Does it not?" And so the questions rise to the surface. When we talk about the word discipline, we start talking first about this question. Should I spank my kids? That's like the number one question. I wonder why it's the number one thing on our minds. Like it's the priority. What do you want to do know about parenting? How to get them into a good college or how to shape them to be well-formed adults? No, can I spank them? What's the Bible say about that? And does it work?

So there are all kinds of opinions, and what I find is that when you get into the opinion of now you're wanting to know how I feel. So when we get into the opinions, people feel very strongly about one way or another. So we'll say things like parent in a store will be having trouble with their child. We'll whisper things like, "Yeah, when I was a kid, my momma used to... You know what." We go into this diatribe of how effective that was and that kind of thing. But I don't think should I spank or not is the ultimate question, and we're going to discover why in just a moment. I'm not even going to answer the question. I'm going to run right on.

Second question we want to know is is timeout effective? Again, people get so opinionated about this. They're like, "We didn't get timeout when I was a kid. We got a count to 0.3 and then it was..." So people wonder does timeout work or not? And again, if that's your number one or number two question about parenting, stick around through this message because we're going to understand that discipline is perhaps not what we think it is.

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Third common question is duct tape legal? No. It is not. It's not advisable. It is not legal. No your limits, okay?

Here's the thing I want you to understand about today is that discipline and discipleship are closely related, and we're going to talk about why and we're going to talk about how. People love to debate what the Bible says about the finer points. The Bible a few times in the Old Testament mentions corporal punishment or physical discipline. You can spend all day debating whether that was cultural or how it fits today or how we translate the principles or do we just adopt the practices. You can spend all the time you want on that, but I think when you look at the New Testament, our guidebook for living like Jesus, I think there's a much, much bigger issue than just correct because the problem is when we think about discipline and we equate it with correction, what we're usually wanting to know about is how do I correct the behavior that has now been committed. So it's in the past whether it's 10 seconds or 10 days, it's now done. So my kids have done something, and I want to know what is the best way for me to address what they've done? How do I correct what they've done?

Now does correction have a place in parental discipline? Absolutely. Absolutely. Is it the sum total of what discipline is? Absolutely not. So let me give you just a big point today that we'll kind of uncover throughout the morning. Our big task as parents is to align our children with their God-given destiny and purpose, lovingly offering correction when needed to help them learn how to stay on the path of purpose. So correction has a role but discipline is about much more. Discipline is about finding the path toward God's purposes and leading and guiding our kids on that path and where correction plays a role is in their earliest years especially helping them to be corrected back to the pathway. Like teaching a kid to ride a bike for the first time. They get their hands and they start to roll a little bit, and then they go like this. Where are they going to go? Off track. So you reach up and you steady the wheel and you get them a little bit further. And then they go shaky again. You steady the wheel. Eventually if you're like my dad, you just shove them and just you clean up the bruises and blood later.

But we want to steer them back onto the pathway toward what is healthy and what is right and that is the point of correction. Correction is not about venting your feelings. Correction is not about making things right with you. Correction is not about you feeling better at the end of the day that you put your foot down. Correction is about them. It's about God's purposes for the kids and correction is about helping them align with God's purposes and to know who God is. And God is about way more than just discipline. Scriptures clear that he disciplines us because he loves us. God does that. That's a scriptural reality, and discipline sometimes feels heavy and it's hard and it's hard to walk through and it's part of God's plan to correct us. But if I said my relationship with God is all about how he disciplines me, you'd probably realize really quickly no, that's just a small piece of what it is to relate to God. That's such a small piece of parenting. So let's sort of expand a little bit.

There's a verse in scripture a lot of people are familiar with when it comes to parenting, and it's Proverbs 22:6, in The New Living Translation it says this, "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they're older, they will not leave it." Now I want to explain something about this verse. I'm about to get in trouble here. I'm about to like decimate what some of you have been saying for years. This verse is not a promise. It's not a promise. It's not intended to be a guarantee. It's inspired by God as part of what the Old Testament has as what we would call wisdom literature. Wisdom literature is not the same as prophecy. Wisdom literature is not a bunch of facts that are thrown out or a bunch of promises that I cling to that are always going to come to pass. Wisdom literature is wisdom.

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So sometimes we'll pick out a proverb that kind of fits our personal opinions and agendas, and we'll quote it. That's a promise from God you can count on. Well, it's inspired by God. It's good. It's perfect, but the purpose of it isn't necessarily to give us like a money-back guarantee on our faith. Instead it's meant to guide as wisdom. So you can't look at this because the reason I'm pointing that out is because a lot of times I'll hear people quote that. They'll say, "Well, my kids are doing such and such. But I trained them better than that. I taught them better. That's not the way I showed them about life. That's not what I told them about life. And so I know based on what Proverbs says that even though they've stayed for a time, they're going to come back around because God promises if I just train them up."

And one of the big issues with that is we tend to think that training is all about what I've told them. It's about what I've told them, and it's just not. I want to unpack that for a second. Let me give you a little bit more specific understanding of the connection between discipleship and discipline with this next big truth.

Discipleship is this. It is life on life training by both example and message. Very important to remember that teaching our kids is not just telling our kids. It's not just making sure they know a certain list of facts or data or rules or written values or things that... It's more than that. It is life on life, heart to heart, relational in the trenches, walking through tough things together, being there for them, connecting soul to soul, touching and encouraging and sharing life. That is the kind of discipleship that Jesus did in his ministry, and that's the kind of discipleship that he entrusts us with as parents. Life on life training.

And so the problem is sometimes we do things as parents that hurt our relationship with our kids. We do things that show them a poor example of what love is all about, and I'm standing here as one who's done that. I'm not saying you guys. I'm saying we do this. There are things I promise you I'll be apologizing to my kids some day. I'm just trying to be real here. All of us are going to need to do that. There are things that we just need... We talk about this last week. It's part of repair, and so I know someday my kids are going to come knocking on my door, "Dad, I need to talk to you about some stuff that I dealt with back when I was seven. You remember I threw that game at your head, and you got..." I go, "Yeah. My reaction to that wasn't so..." We're going to have to walk through some apologies and all that's great.

The problem is some of us have sacrificed the connection, we've sacrificed the relationship but we go to Proverbs 22:6 and say, "But I told them all the right stuff. I told them what they ought to believe. I told them how they ought to behave. We don't have a relationship, but I taught them. God's going to bring them back around." Let's talk today about what really matters, and that is a relationship that guides them toward healthy, fruitful adulthood, the kind of connection that they need.

Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, do what your parents tell you." Now parents, you can say, "Amen." Well, four of you are excited about your kids obey. I mean, come on, this is your chance. "Children, obey your parents." Amen? Yeah. This is basic. So if the kids were all in here today instead of over there, my sermon would be to them, "Obey your parents, period." You're obligated. They are in your life as authority figures. They are like a little bit of Jesus to you. They're the authority. They're the leader. They're the guide. They're showing you God. They're showing you life. They're teaching you stuff. So you got to obey them. You're obligated to obey them. There's no child who between now and adulthood gets to say to mom and dad, "I disagree. I don't like your opinion about this, so I'm going to do my own thing." That's rebellion. And so the command to kids is to obey.
But Paul's not finished. It's not just that he speaks to kids say, "Obey your parents." He said, "This is right. Honor your father and mother." It's the first commandment that has a promise attached to it. Namely so you'll live well and have a long life. So your parents won't kill you. So obey and you'll live longer. In other words, if you listen to mom and dad who are looking at for your safety, you will live longer. So again it's kind of an issue of I live a life of obedience in submission to authority, that's going to help me on down the road in my adulthood when I'm working for a boss, when I'm living under a government, when I'm driving down the road and a police officer's nearby. My respect for authority that starts very young carries me much further through life than rebellion ever will. So that's a great promise to begin with.

But then he says in verse four, "Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the master." So some of us, again, we think we've done our job because of the duct tape, the timeout, and the spankings, or because of the things we told them they should believe or that they should do. I said all the right things. I told them what they ought to do, what they ought to believe, and so surely they're going to come back around. But that is not the whole role of parenting. It even says, "If you just come down hard on them, if you sacrifice the relationship, and you no longer have a connection with them, you're going to ultimately push them toward figuring out how to do this on their own without you."

Let me be really clear about something, none of this is 100% universal. In other words, if you had a child that did things wrong, that doesn't necessarily mean it's because you parented them wrongly or poorly. So this is not like a guarantee. I mean, I have a brother, he and I are very different. You've had siblings. You know that you grow up, you take different pathways. People make different choices. So sometimes you can do the best you can and kids still make decisions that you wonder where in the world did that come from, and that doesn't mean that you're just a total failure. And then there's some parents in the world who, let's just be honest, are not good parents. They don't connect. They don't discipline. They're just hands off, if they're even in the picture at all. And yet those kids will grow up to be well-adjusted, mature achievers. So none of this is like a universal rule. This is wisdom. This is scriptural wisdom about how to parent and what Paul says is if all you do is come down hard on them, you will exasperate them. You will cause a sense of anger and aggression. You will create bitterness and resentment in them if you come down on them hard.

Now some of us in the room are used to thinking negatively about phrases like that. Well, we should come down on our kids hard, right? Yeah. Absolutely. I'll give you an example of when it's very appropriate to do so. When my boys are around each other, they're wrestling. I mean, that's just a rule. If they're in each other's vicinity, somebody's getting smacked or pushed. And then it's all fun and games until somebody gets a little hurt, and then it's the blame game and we're sorting that out. And they love to do this between the store and the car in the parking lot. And so there's cars whizzing around and backing out of spaces, and here they are shoving each other. In that moment I'm like, "Boys, stop it. One of you's going to get hurt." And I'm coming down hard on them. Why? Because I'm mad and I have a right to? No. Because one of them is going to get hit by a car.

So if you're talking about coming down hard on them in the sense of being steadfast and ironclad about certain rules and standards for their own good, yes, absolutely. But what Paul is talking about here is something a little bit different. When he talks about exasperating them and coming down hard on them, I think Paul understands that sometimes if we're really honest, we have a personal agenda in it. The behavior annoys us. The behavior bothers us. It insults my sense of authority. It questions me. I've told Discipline or Discipleship Yes! (Completed 08/19/19) Transcript by Rev.com
you before and you're not listening to me. You're not respecting me, and it becomes about me and about my opinions and about my way and about my authority. And it gets personal and I punish out of personal. And when I do that, what I create is a sense of resentment, not a sense of connection.

So he goes on, "Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the master." Now what I love about Paul, you'll see this in almost every letter that Paul writes. When Paul talks about behaviors in life, he doesn't point to an Old Testament commandment as the basis of behavior. He doesn't point to sort of a cultural standard of what is right and wrong. He always points us back to Jesus. He always says, "Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of Jesus, in the way of Christ." So my role as a parent is, again, to align them with God's purposes and to lead them by the hand in the way of Jesus, teaching them to know Jesus, teaching to them to understand Jesus, teaching them to know what Jesus was like and how Jesus made decisions and how Jesus treated his elders. So when I look at the life of Jesus, I get an example.

The Bible says about Jesus in Luke 252, it says he grew up in wisdom and in stature. So his mind and his body. And it says in favor with God and with man. So as he's growing up, he's growing in favor with man. Meaning, he has a grace from adults. Jesus was respectful to people around him that were older. It's the reason why when he's age 12 and his parents forget him and leave him in the temple, it's why the adults around start asking Jesus questions. He had earned their respect. And so that's a good example to point to that I'm leading you in the way of the master. Not just with a bunch of list of rules of does and don'ts and those have their place. I mean, last night I had to lay down the law because I was picking up popcorn out of the carpet in the toy room, and we had a new rule. No food in here ever for the rest of your life, till next week. It's just how the rules go, right? So there's a time for rules, but what I need to do more than anything else is introduce them to Jesus and just constantly lift up his example and show them his example. Show them his example.

Here's the bottom line. Let me just give you the bottom life. Real training happens through genuine connection in the context of relationships, not by simply downloading information. Real training because we think of the word training, we think of the workplace where we go to training and someone shows us a bunch of PowerPoint slides, and then we sign the manual. Yes, I know the rules. That's how we think of training. Or we think of school where I sit, open a book at my desk, and someone at the front lectures me, and I take down the information, then I'm tested on it. That's how we think of training. That's not how Jesus did training.

How Jesus did training was to say, "Why don't you come stay where I am? Sit around a camp fire at night and talk about life. And as we're talking about life, we'll talk about all kinds of things, faith and love and good works and ethics and history. We'll talk about all kinds of things as we do life together, as we spend time together, as our hearts connection, as we relationally are with one another. I'm going to teach you some stuff. I'm going to share some things along the way. We're going to walk through problems together. We're going to deal with different scenarios with one another. I'm going to show you how this is done. I'm going to walk hand in hand with you and teach you some stuff." All of that is important, but Jesus didn't think of training as merely lecturing about data, about information. It's always more than simply downloading information.

I believe, listen, I really believe strongly, and this is a big part of my heart, that we sometimes... Let me just put it bluntly. We're watching a generation walk away from church and walk away from Jesus statistically more than ever before. Not because we haven't given them information. But because we've
perhaps taught them here's the bulleted list of what you're supposed to believe and do. But I'm not
going to give you the roots of a strong relationship. I stick around where I have relationships. Where I'm
rooted in relationships with people, I tend to stick around even if I don't understand all of the
information. But what we do is sometimes we tell our kids, "Here's what you ought to believe. Here's
the 12 points. Here's the 28 things that you need to memorize. And when you get off to college,
somebody's going to tell you something different about God or different about religion or different
about who Jesus is or what he does. And when they tell you that, you don't believe them because I gave
you this information."

We do things that hurt the relationship, and it takes a professor sometimes about five minutes to cause
them to question everything. Unless when their life is falling apart, unless when they're home sick,
unless when they're struggling, when they're wrestling, the call they want to make is to mom or dad,
"What do I do with this? What do I do with this new information?" So we can scare them into believing
all the right things and they will walk away. Or we can take them by the hand and connect and be in
relationship. And as we said in the last two weeks, you can be in relationship and not connect. It's not
just about being in the relationship. It's about intentionally connecting with them because connection is
more important than almost anything else that having all the right rules and all the right rituals.

Now having laid that foundation, having put all of that out there, understanding that training is not just
giving them information, that training is life on life, teaching by both word and example, word and deed,
knowing that, what are the things I want my kids to know? I'm going to give you six. These don't come
out of the text. These are more general. I want the text to teach us what training is, and then I want to
give you these six general things that I want my kids to learn through the relationship that they have
with them, things that I hope they will know for all of their lives, and these require both my example and
my words in order for them to get it. So six truths that I want your kids to know, I want my kids to know,
and the first one is this.

God wants them in this forever family through Christ. I want them to know that, that it's not just a
religion they should prescribe to. There are plenty of those, and Christianity can just be one of them if
we treat it as such. I want them to have a relationship with Jesus. I want them to look back and go, "No, I
know Jesus." Not just, "I know the difference between truth and error." That's important, but, "I know
him. I've related to him. He has shown up in my life." So I want my kids to know that they can have a
relationship with Jesus and that the way they enter God's forever family is through Jesus Christ and him
alone that he is the savior, he is the redeemer, he is the one who has paid for their sins, and yes, they
are sinners. They need to repent just like we adults do. And so I want them to understand that first of
all. That they can have a relationship with their creator, with their savior, with Jesus. So they need to see
that in me. They need to know that that's what my life is built on, and they'll be able to tell. And they
need to hear it. They need to hear it.

As a pastor, often I have these conversations and someone will say, "Hey, my kid is asking what it means
to know Jesus. Can I bring them to you and you tell them?" In which case I always go, "Yeah. But I want
you there because I'm going to serve up some softballs to you, and you will be guided in how you can
tell them what they need to know because you're more important in their life than I ever will be and
that's the right way." They need to hear from mom and dad these most essential truths. Now if mom
and dad are not ready or not capable of doing that, absolutely. I have utmost compassion. Yes, we'll talk
about Jesus. But if any way, shape, or form possible. If you're a mom or dad and you're here, I want you
to know you can share the gospel with your kids. You can do this. You can do this. Sometimes we do it poorly. Sometimes we do it wrong.

I'm sitting in my office one day with a kid, and he wanted to trust Jesus. He said, "I know I'm a sinner. I've rebelled against God." I'm like, "Wow. That's profound." "I know Jesus died on the cross for my sins." All right. "I know he rose again, and I want to put my faith in him. I want to trust him as my savior." Well, that's bold. That's amazing. Why don't you go ahead and just express that to him. Just tell him that. You want to be saved. You want to follow him the rest of your life. And he did, "God, I repent of my sins. I turn from... I trust in Jesus. I believe in him. I'm giving the rest of my life to him." Now that's something that's beautiful that happens, amen. It's wonderful. Immediately when he said amen, his mom looked at him and said, "Do you feel any different? Anything happen in your heart? Was there any kind of emotion? Any sort of reaction?" And his smile just faded and he goes, "I don't know if I feel anything." And she goes, "Maybe you should pray it again." I'm back there going, "Get out." I didn't do that.

But I want you to understand when it comes to just sharing the love of Jesus with them, nobody can do that better than mom and dad. We're here to help. The church can help, but the church is not the primary vehicle for discipleship in your children's lives. It's one of our core values with our kid's ministry and our student ministry. We are not here to replace mom and dad. We're not here to be the disciples. We're here to help enable discipleship. We're here to partner. We're here to come alongside of but never to replace.

Okay. I've got five more of these and not much time. So let me...

Here's the second one. I want them to know they are fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image. They're fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image. In other words they are infinitely valuable to their creator. I want kids to understand. It doesn't matter what they look like, doesn't matter what they're shaped like, doesn't matter what their physical tendencies might be. If they're athletic or unathletic or they're prone to being light or heavier, those are the things they're going to deal with for the next 18 years. They're going to have turmoil about those things. Body image and self image and competition and how my friends view me, am I good at sports, am I good at academics. Those are things they're going to wrestle with through all the formational years of their life.

What I want them to hear from mom and dad is you are beautiful no matter what. God made you. He gave you some unique gifts. You are special. You got some talents that God put in you that nobody else has your exact mix. When God made you, he broke the mold. You are valuable to him. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, and you'll always mean so much to him. So much that he would send his only son to the cross to die for you. Your worth and your value rests in him, and you matter. And God made you and God smiles you and he likes you. When you get bullied or picked on your pushed around or you get... Teachers are awesome, right? I like to brag on teachers, and 99.9% of them are amazing. But every once in a while you'll get that one that doesn't understand your kid, doesn't understand their heart, and it just, man, they knock heads all year. When that comes along, you want them to be confident that God smiles upon them even when someone else refuses to. They are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Number three, they are uniquely gifted and able to do big things. You are the chief empowerer of your children. Not just teaching them stuff but giving them the freedom to do things and to try things and to present a vision for them. You look in the Old Testament, which is great for examples of how to parent Discipline or Discipleship Yes! (Completed 08/19/19) Transcript by Rev.com
and how not to parent. There's a lot of both in the Old Testament, but one of the things that's repeated in generation after generation is fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers taking little boys and little girls and sitting them on their knee and portraying for them a beautiful future. Saying things like, "God is going to bless you." Giving them a vision about something beyond today. So you got to let them know they can do big things because they're gifted.

The next one, correction. I want them to know correction is an act of love, not an act of anger. It's an act of love, not an act of anger. Now I would say raise your hand if you failed here, but I'll just assume it's all of us. Correction is an act of love, not an act of anger, and we've messed this up at times. I've made this mistake. One kid punches another. We start to grumble and we start to get loud. And we start to become very imposing. But I want them to know at the end of the day that my correction is intended to guide them onto God's pathway. It's the way God disciplines his children. He does that because he loves us. If he didn't love us, he wouldn't discipline us. But he does love us, and therefore he cares enough to point us in the right direction. But I want them to understand that correction is rooted in love. It's not just rooted in my vendetta. It's rooted in their good. It's rooted in their future. Here's another one. There's always more grace available from God. There's always more grace available from God. I don't care how scandalous you think this is, it's true. In Christ, there's always more grace available than I ever will have sin. Grace abounds toward us. Paul made it really clear, it doesn't mean it's like a free license to go sin as much as I want. But I can know that when I sin, there's always more grace. When there's failure, there's grace available. When they mess up, there's grace available. And your kids are going to mess up. They're going to mess up. I messed up. I did things that my parents still tell stories about to this day, and I did other things that they don't believe the stories about. It's what we do. So your kids are going to mess up, and they need to know. They need to know that sometimes there is this discipline, this correction, this hard talk that we have to have, this consequence, losing a privilege or whatever it may be. There are consequences sometimes, but you also need to know that I still love you. I still love you.

Let me back one thing really clear, I don't care how stern you think this is or how good you think it might be. If you withhold love from your kids as an act of discipline, you are destroying how they should be viewing the father. You don't withhold love. You might withhold Cokes and movies and video games and nights out on Friday night. You withhold those kinds of things, but you don't withhold love. You let them know, "You're loved no matter what. There's always grace. You're going to have to stay in your room in a while. Can't come out, but I still love you. I still love you and I'll never stop. I'll never stop no matter what you do."

Sometimes parents will come to me, "My child is grown. Now they're involved in this. They're involved in that. They're doing things that were illegal and scandalous in my day. They're involved in a relationship. My child is gay. My child is getting a divorce. My child's living with somebody. They're not married." And we bring these kinds of things. We're like, "When should I cut them off?" I want to go, "Well, when's the father going to cut you off? When's God going to cut you off?" Because this last one is this. Our relationship always matters more than their performance. Our relationship always matters more than their performance. You might disagree with them, but don't you ever cut them off from your love. Don't you ever cut them off from understanding how much you love them and how you would give your life for them because the father did exactly that for them. He went to the cross, he went to bat for us in the biggest way possible, and he loves us. Your kids are going to do things you don't agree with, and that's okay to disagree. It's okay to state your viewpoint and to do so from a position of authority.
It's okay to do so mixed with love, but don't cut off the flow of love to their lives because nothing matters more than your relationship.

Listen, the most tragic thing would be for us as parents to get to our grave and having been right and alone. Having been right and having no contact. Having been right and we haven't heard from them in years because the relationship is not there. Relationship matters more than anything, and you show them I'll fight for that relationship. The lifestyle that you might've chosen, it's not what I would choose. We can disagree. We can wrestle with that, talk about that, but I will never stop loving you because the father in heaven should have, for all intends and purposes, given up on me a long time ago. But he never has and he never will. It's just how he is.

I want this to lead us right into communion, and here's why. Jesus with his body and his blood the night that the disciples took communion with him, it was the first time they'd done it. It was the last time they got to do it with Jesus physically present until he returns again. One shot. One time, and he's with his disciples, and he's teaching them things that they don't understand. Within hours of communion, they will all forsake him. One of them will betray him. One of them will deny him. All of them will run away and hide. And Jesus knowing that, knowing he's about to be rejected, forsaken, and left for dead by his best friends, knowing that, holds the bread and the cup and says, "I'm about to give my body and my blood for you, even knowing that you're desperately going to need grace. You're going to need my forgiveness. We're going to have to talk about some things in the coming days. We're going to have to do some restoring and some repairing." Just like Jesus did with Peter on the seashore after his denial. He comes and reaffirms him.

But knowing that forsaking is coming, he says to them, "I'm going to give my body and my blood for you." And I think, parents, you understand this. You hold that baby in your arms and you realize, "I'd do anything for this kid. I'd do anything." Jesus has done that for you. So I want us to dwell on that as we approach communion.

I want you to bow your heads with me for a moment, and first of all, you got to know the father invites you into relationship with himself. He wants you to know him, and he does so through Jesus Christ. Jesus died for your sins and rose again from the grave. And he's coming again for his own. And he invites you to be part of his forever family. If you're not part of his forever family, maybe because you had a wrong picture of what God is like growing up, and you just saw him as hateful and demanding and exacting and not a God of love, not a God of tenderness at all. You need to know a scripture, the Old and New Testament says, "The father is tender." He's tender. He loves you. He touches your life. He cares about you, even if nobody else ever did. He cares about you. He invites you into his family.

If you're not part of his family, would you just right now come before the father in your heart and your mind with your head bowed, your eyes closed and just say, "God, I know I've sinned and I repent. I want to turn. I want to trust you. I want to come into your family, God. I want to be one of your children. I don't have anything to offer you. I can't pay you for this. I can't afford the gift of redemption, but I come and I accept it freely. I say yes to you." If you'll do that, God will save you and change you. You'll be born again. You'll never be the same.

If you're here and you're a believer, then before you approach this communion table, before you take this juice and this bread, you need to understand that God wants things to be right between you and him in your relationship. And he goes to great lengths to stay faithful to you. He stays faithful to his own.
But you might have something in your life to repent of, to confess, to get out before him. Father, I've been harboring this. I haven't talked to you about this. But, God, I confess it now, and I ask you to cleanse it from my life. I ask you to remove this far from me. Father, we love you today. We praise you. We thank you for this opportunity to celebrate communion together, to remember that Jesus knowing about our sin and rebellion, Jesus gave his body for us, he gave his blood for us. Lord, we praise you. In Jesus name, amen.