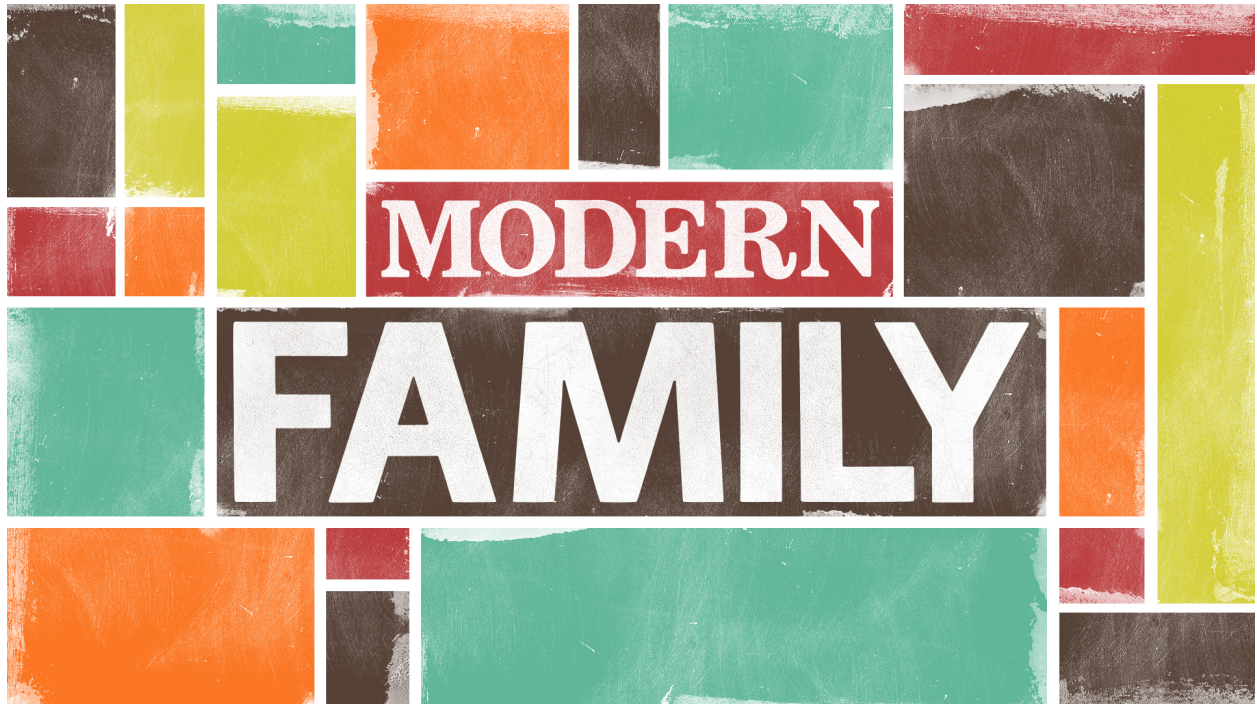




HILL COUNTRY
BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN



The Fine Art of Parenting

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Parenthood Movie Video Begins: Kids playing baseball are sitting in the dugout.

Steve Martin: Good job. We're going to need a new second baseman. Now which one of you outfielders wants to try second base? Huh? Huh? How about you Kevin, do you want to try second base?

Kevin: Okay.

Steve Martin: Alright!

Matt: Ahhh (rolling his eyes and his head).

Steve Martin: Ah Matt, come on, none of that we're a team. Let's be a team. Now come on, get out there and hustle. Let's go.

(Kids get up and run out onto the field except for Kevin)

Steve Martin: Hey Kevin. Remember, the word is fun. So just go on out there and what you catch you catch and what you miss you miss. Okay?

Kevin: Okay dad.

Steve Martin: Okay.

(Kevin smiles big and runs out onto the field with confidence)

Steve Martin: Way to go Kevin.

(Steve Martin looks up into the sky as if he's looking into the future. The scene switches to a university graduation ceremony)

Graduation Announcer: And now it is my great pleasure to introduce our valedictorian Kevin Buckman.

(Everyone clapping as Kevin walks up on the stage)

Kevin: Thank you. You know when I was 9 years old I had kind of a rough time. A lot of people thought I was pretty mixed up, but there was one person who got me through it. He did everything right, and thanks to him today - well I'm the happiest, most confident, and most well adjusted person in this world. Dad, I love you. You're the greatest.

(Audience claps and the camera searches the crowd for Steve Martin. An older Steve Martin stands up while everyone is giving him a standing ovation. He wipes a tear from his eye.)

(Scene immediately cuts back to the baseball game with the opposing team up to bat.)

Other Coach to his player: All right, we've got bases loaded and we're only one run down. You can do it, get up there. Come on now. **(Batter reluctantly goes to the plate)**

Steve Martin: Please God let them win one game.

(Pitcher winds up and throws the pitch. The batter hits a high fly ball right at the second baseman. Kevin drops the ball. The crowd starts yelling because Kevin missed the ball and one of his teammates throws his glove down in frustration.)

Teammate: You stink Buckman.

A Dad in the Crowd: He had no business being out there. No business.

(Crowd yelling and being unsportsmanlike. His teammates walk off the field in disgust. Steve Martin walks out to Kevin.)

Kevin (crying): Why'd you make me play second base. **(Kevin walks off the field)**

Video Clip Ends

So what kind of dad is Gill Buckman? Is he a hero or is he a failure? Is he the dad that makes his kid play second base and completely humiliates himself or the dad that makes his kid stand on the platform at graduation and talk about how well adjusted he is? And while we're asking that question, what kind of parent are you? And you say, "Well I'm not a parent." Well if you're not a parent here, let's spend a little bit of time kind of processing in your mind what kind of parents raised you? What were they like? Because the characteristic of our parents and how they approach the parent raising or the parent/child rearing process lays a foundation for many of the things that we believe about life.

And so today we're going to be talking about parenting in this Modern Family series. We've been looking at the Modern Family. And there was a time when parenting was a bother it seemed. Children were supposed to be seen and not heard. Life was an adult world; people were busy. It took a lot just to put food on the table and a roof over their head. And so oftentimes children in the past were kind of neglected, left to fin for themselves. That's changed, however, as our society has gotten more and more affluent and things come a little easier to us. Parenting today is often characterized by an over attention to our children where many people spend their lives so vested in their children that when their children go off to college that mom and dad look at each other and they go, "Who are you? Who are you, where's the person I married 25 years ago? I've not seen you in 25 years." Well we've been together, but we've been looking at our kids.

And so today as we talk about this concept of parenting, if you're a parent we're going to be talking directly to you about what it means to raise the kids in the way that God wants you to. If you're a young person, maybe you don't have kids. The best time to work on your parenting is before the kid comes. Seriously. Like once the diapers and the feedings and the staying up all night and all that starts to happen, like it's good to have thought this through in advance. And for all of us, as we process the way we were parented, what are the things that our parents did in raising us that have actually shaped the way we view the world today.

We want to start in the Word of God, so I ask you to grab a Bible and turn to Ephesians 6. We're going to look at one verse out of Ephesians 6 as kind of our theme verse. I encourage you to grab an outline out of your bulletin, or pull it off online and go along with us because there's going to be a lot of content I'm going to be covering today. You are really going to want to see this and you're going to want to take notes on it because it's going to be really helpful for you. You can also tell that I'm kind of losing my voice a little bit, so third hour may be watching me on video, and what makes it worse is I'm speaking at Hyde Park

Baptist Church tonight for their evening service on Explore God. They're so excited about it, they wanted me to come down and speak to them so you guys can pray real hard that my voice comes back because I'm going to do that if I have a voice or not. So anyway, verse 4 of chapter 6. What's really interesting here is in this whole discussion of men and women, husbands and wives, children, there's only one verse devoted to parenting. So there's a lot in this verse. We read in verse 4, it says:

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Now I think it's interesting that he addresses this specifically to fathers, which mothers, that doesn't mean you're off the hook here. The reason why he addresses it to fathers is because as we've been talking about how God has created the family and designed it, we know that men have been given the responsibility to initiate this. And so there's a heavy burden layed on the fathers, but men can't do it alone. In fact, we saw clearly that the Bible teaches that men are missing a lot of important ingredients. You already knew that, right? And so God created woman because woman has a lot of the ingredients that man doesn't have and vice versa, and together they make a team. We've been learning that life is a team sport. And God intended us to live together and to work together as a team. That's a picture of the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Spirit are part of a team. They work together, they have a relationship that makes them one. And so when we come to the relationship of the family it's a team sport, and so we've got men here who are supposed to initiate. Here's what happens. You can follow this throughout every relationship. Men either take responsibility or they do nothing. That's just the way they are, so if a man takes responsibility it's easy for a woman to join him and together they partner to lead their family. And if a man doesn't take responsibility and a woman steps up to take all the responsibility the men will step back and watch and critique. And you've seen that, right? Some of you feel that.

And so, as we look at this passage he says there's a positive and a negative way to approach this. He says, "Fathers do not exasperate your children." The word exasperate there literally means to irritate to the point of anger. Now the word does not simply imply or does not imply that if your children are ever upset with you that somehow you have blown it as a parent. In fact, momentary being angry with you is probably a key component of you parenting well because there's going to be times when your kids want to do something that's just not helpful for them and you're going to say no and they're going to get mad at you. And if you're afraid of your children getting mad at you you're probably not going to parent well. That's not what this is talking about. The word here has a forward motion in it. In other words, it's the habitual behavior

of a parent that irritates their child to a point where there is a deep-seated anger that begins to seethe within them. In other words it's an approach that time and time again in the child's life leads them down a path to where they begin to internalize these negative feelings. And we know that depression, despondency, acting out, addictions, many of those things actually spring out of a root of anger in an individual. So you can do things that take your kid down a path that sets in motion a pattern of anger for their life.

The flip side of that's very positive. It's the upward - in fact he says, "instead bring them up." So we've got the exasperate which brings them down and we've got the bring them up. What does it look like to bring them up? He says it looks like two things: "Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Now the training there is experiential learning. This means modeling the right kinds of things for your children. This means entering in and doing things together with them that are positive in nature. This means processing experiences and coaching them and helping them understand and work through life. It also says, bring them up not only in the training, but also in the instruction of the Lord. If training is the experiential learning, then instruction is the explanatory learning. The explanatory learning, it's the mouth, it's the verbal where you begin to communicate. You teach concepts. You encourage with your words. You set correction in place, and those are the things this kind of a life, experiential learning by doing together and explanatory learning by verbally encouraging and communicating and speaking. You're supposed to bring them up in a direction. Notice the direction is very important because this is key. He says, "Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." In other words, here's what he's saying - this is very important; that you bring them up in a way that they understand the reality of God's world. In other words, there are lots of philosophies and thoughts and ideas about how the world works that are just not true. Bringing them up to understand the way God wired the world, the concepts of cause and effect which God built into the world, the ideas behind honoring God which God built into the world. If you honor God, listen to him and do what he tells you to do life works. If you disobey him and push against him, life breaks down. There are all kinds of ways that God has wired the world. How has he wired the human soul? How does our depravity or our sin nature affect that. That's all teaching your children to understand how the world works. The second part of that is the will of God. How does God want your child to live in that world. How do you build relationships, how do you connect with friends, how do you honor God with your body, with your mind, with your soul. How do you do those things? A parent is responsible to teach a child and model for a child those kinds of things which will lift them up.

So what I want us to do today is review some categories that I've shared with you guys before. Categories of parenting or approaches to parenting that actually exasperate your children. **Approaches to Parenting that Exasperate.** Now as we talk about these concepts that exasperate your children, let me just say that I realize a couple of things are going to happen right now. Some of y'all are going to get extremely defensive, and what I'm going to ask you to do is laugh at yourself a little bit, okay? Because if you laugh at yourself a little bit then you'll listen and the Holy Spirit can kind of prompt you to work through these. Some of y'all are going to check out because you're going to say, "I don't have any kids so why would I listen to this." And you're going to start daydreaming, you know, thinking about life beyond and what's going to happen today. You're going to check out. Let me challenge you, this is very important for everybody to understand because how you were parented shapes how you view God's world and how you view God's will. It actually does. You may be 47-1/2 and I guarantee you that there are things that come out of your parents parenting into you that still kind of tweak in your head. Now let me also say that as we talk about some of the corrections, here are things we're going to work on, some of the things that are challenging to us, there is a reality here that all of us are broken. None of us are going to get all of this right, we just aren't. I mean it's not going to all work out for us. Some of us are off track and we need to get back on track, but let me just tell you young people. If you're a teenager, young adult child here let me just tell you that it's real important that you understand that no parent ever stands in the delivery room, having gone through 12 hours of labor and all the nasty stuff in the delivery room. Believe me I've been there four times. And picks up their little son or little daughter in their arm and looks them in the face and says, "I just can't wait until we get out of the hospital because I am going to ruin your life." (Congregation laughs) Nobody ever sets out to do that. Most of what we do wrong in parenting is actually out of good motives, but if you do the wrong thing out of good motives the affect on the child still is the same. And that's why it's important for us to lighten up, listen, pay attention and see what God has to say to us.

So five kind of humorous ways that we operate as parents that are not helpful to our kids. Let me give you some descriptions. The first one is the helicopter parent. **Helicopter Parent: Hovers.** Now a characteristic of the helicopter parent is the helicopter parent hovers. The helicopter parent is always there, always there. Even if the parent's not there he's still there or she's still there. Always involved, always paying attention in your emotional world, in your physical world, in your spiritual world and whatever you're doing is somehow connected. The helicopter parent knows all of your friends on Facebook and actually is friends with your friends on Facebook. Not friends with your friends on Facebook because they're trying to keep an eye on you so you don't have any bad friends, friends of your friends on Facebook because they really believe

they are your friends' friends. (congregation laughs) Like they really believe that. Like they're involved in every aspect of your life. That's the helicopter parent. The helicopter parent looks at childhood as an experience to be shared. This is something that mom and child do together, and so whatever's going on with you I'm involved in it.

The second type of parenting that exasperates our kids is the drill sergeant parent. **Drill Sergeant Parent: Commands and Shames.** The drill sergeant parent is the one who gives commands and you either live up or you don't. And if you live up you're wonderful; if you live down you're shamed. The drill sergeant parent looks at childhood as boot camp. In other words, "Someday you're going to be an adult and you're going to have to go out and fight battles and so right now while I've got you for these 18 years I'm going to whip you into shape. I'm going to make a man or a woman out of you." That's what childhood is all about. That's the drill sergeant parent.

The third type of parent is the 911 parent. **911 Parent: Rescues.** The 911 parent rescues. So if there's an ouch or an injustice in a child's life, the 911 parent views their responsibility to come in and eliminate those things to move in and save the person, save the child, fix the problem, make the ouches go away, make all the injustices right and make sure everything goes well. The 911 parent, when that parent looks at childhood they look at childhood as a dangerous, fearful time. And little Johnny is so little and so innocent, and the big bad world is so big and so bad. "What I have to do is I have to make sure I save my child from every ouch that could come his or her way."

The next parent is the fun parent, and we'll call it the Barney parent. (congregation laughs) **Barney Parent: Entertains.** I mean you guys know Barney, right? I love you, you love me - you know to Barney everything is nice and everyone is fun, and everything is purple. (congregation laughs) The Barney parent looks at childhood and believes childhood is supposed to be fun. "When you grow up life will get hard, but now it's about you having the best experiences, all the fun stuff, life needs to really go your way. And if there's ever a time when you feel bored, somehow I'm failing in my parenting because my job is to entertain you. If there's ever a time when you run into a conflict with another person, I'm just going to pull you out of that and get you around nice people because the world should be nice. People should be nice."

The final one is the AWOL parent. That is the absent without leave. **AWOL Parent: Ignores.** Now there are some parents who just kind of have the idea that the best way for a kid to grow up is to learn from their own mistakes and the only way they're going to learn from their own mistakes is if they make their own mistakes. And the only way they're going to make their own

mistakes is if I just do my deal and leave you alone and let you bumble through. Now personally I believe that most AWOL parents didn't set out to be AWOL parents, but they got so busy in their life that they just adopted an attitude that now they believe something that just actually isn't true about their kids, but they think it is. And so when an AWOL parent looks at their kids, their kids are - childhood is a bothersome time. It's a bothersome time. It's a time to get through it and when you get to adulthood then we'll have a relationship.

Now in order for us to personalize this in a really positive way of course, I want us to take a couple of scenarios. Let's just paint a couple of scenarios and let's see in this scenario, first of all if you find yourself, and secondly, if you can identify which response belongs to which of these five types of people. And if you don't have any kids think about your parents and think about what their response would have been, and let's see if we can guess these together. So here's the scenario: *Your third grader got in trouble at school for hitting another child. You would: start sitting in the classroom to make sure your child is being treated fairly?* That would be the helicopter parent, always hovering. *You would inform the teacher that your child is very creative and needs the freedom to express himself.* Now what kind of parent would that be? That's kind of the Barney parent, right? *You would not know about the incident because mom handles the discipline issues with the kids.* That's the AWOL parent, right? *You'd sue the school for mental pain and anguish.* (congregation laughs) Talking about the 911 parent here. *You would yell at your child in front of his classmates and make him drop and give you 20.* (Congregation laughs) That's the drill sergeant.

Okay, different scenario: *You discover your teenager has visited an inappropriate website. You would: You're tied up with ministry commitments and you don't really know that your kid is doing anything on the computer.* AWOL, right? Okay. *You would tell them that they can't be trusted and install better internet filtering software.* That's the 911 parent. *You would ground the child for 6 months coupled with several days of the silent treatment.* Kind of the drill sergeant approach. *You'd start attending the student ministry events to see if the youth pastor is teaching enough on the dangers of the internet, call the parents of each of your child's closest friends and tell them that their kid has been a bad influence on your kid.* Hear the wings of the hovering helicopter beating over your child? *You'd resign yourself to the fact that kids are curious and hope they grow out of it.* I love you, you love me - Barney.

Okay one last one. This is relevant to a lot of people because school's starting up right now. *You've just dropped your child off in the dormitory for their freshman year at college. You're next step would be to call them on their cell phone as you drive out of the parking lot.* That's the helicopter parent. The

longest umbilical cord in the world is the cell phone. (congregation laughs). Just seven digits and they're reattached. And young people, let me just let you in on a secret. If your parents are helicopter parents that cell phone and you telling them that you need their help is like an opiate, it's a drug. They get high on that. And so letting them fix things for you, solve your problems, tell you what to do, get you through all of the conflicts you're having with your roommates, whatever it is, they love that. They eat that up. So you just keep feeding it to them and they'll stay addicted to you. Second, *you dropped off your child for their freshman college year and you go immediately to the administration building to switch their roommate whom you don't approve of.* It's like the 911 parent. Okay, here's one. *You have a beer with them to celebrate the start of college --* (congregation laughs). You guys didn't even let me finish. (congregation laughs) *And you tell them about all of your partying while you were in college.* That's Barney. *My kid started college? AWOL You remind them to email you their daily activities to ensure they're not wasting the financial investment you're making in them.* That's the drill sergeant.

Okay, maybe you feel this a little bit. Maybe you've experienced this a little bit. What I want to do is I want to make a shift right here and I'm going to turn to something that's going to require a little bit of thinking. Because this isn't just kind of cute fun here; this makes a difference. How do these parenting styles actually work in a child's life that habitually, over time they bring them to the point of exasperation or create an anger within them? Listen carefully. When it comes to the hovering helicopter parent, that style of parenting stifles responsibility. A child grows up to think that the world around them should never have any problems, and if it does, somebody else is responsible to fix them. "Because mom and dad always took care of me. They answered all my questions, they fixed my life, they did everything." And what's weird about this is that kids will push back against a helicopter parent and then adopt the mode of life that somebody ought to solve my problems. Now what do you think happens to an adult when they get out in the real world and find out that there isn't anybody to solve their problems? That they've got to do some of these on their own. What happens? It creates a deep-seated anger. It can lead to depression, discouragement, addiction, acting out. There's lot of things that can come out of that because the world is the way it is and if we don't teach our children how God wired the world and God's will, how to live in it they're going to bump in things that don't work for them and they get frustrated and it just creates anger, exasperation.

Let's go to the second one; the drill sergeant. The drill sergeant's command and shame style of parenting stifles freedom. It stifles freedom. A child grows up not thinking that there's not any bandwidth, there's no gray, there's no way to work with that. And so a child grows up thinking this, that the world is

made up for winners and losers. And if I'm doing well I'm a winner; pride. If I'm doing poorly I'm a loser; discouragement. Because I learned that the world is based on a series of rules and if you do the rules, you get it right then you're going to succeed. If you don't you're a failure. You think how that sets in motion a frustration about life when you find out that it isn't really like that and your identity in Jesus Christ makes you loved and cherished in His eyes whether you're doing good today or not. That's basic Christian doctrine.

The third type the 911 parent that always rescues their kids, that stifles adventure. Children grow up with no sense of adventure. They grow up believing that the world is a dangerous place and so avoid danger at all cost. Kids that grow up with that view of the world, they never are willing to venture out and try anything risky because it might not work. When you find out that if you never try anything risky life is not only boring, but you don't get ahead it sets in motion a deep-seated sense of exasperation.

The Barney parent teaches that life is entertaining, it's about fun. It stifles the concept of limits. Fun is fun, it's great to a limit. Entertainment is great to a limit. Self-indulgence has a place when you're eating dessert, but when you're messing around and you're married there's a limit there. It damages people and a child grows up thinking that my highest goal in life is to have the best time I can possibly have. And then they find out that life doesn't work that way and they're so depressed. "You mean everybody isn't here to party with me? Dad and mom rented a limo for my 6th grade dance. Now I'm getting married; you mean we're not going to spend \$150,000 on this wedding? What? Isn't that what this is about? Live within a budget, you're kidding me. That's no fun." Right? For those of you who are actually trying to do that you know that's no fun, right?

The AWOL parent tends to ignore their kids and they stifle camaraderie. And this may be the hardest thing of all - to go through life believing that in this world I am alone. I'm really alone and I can't count on people. I'm just alone, so I've got to find my way through it. God never intended, his world is not designed to be lived solo. The very nature of the Trinity is relational. We were designed to live in relationships, and so someone who tries to strike out on their own, being all alone, no camaraderie, never trusting anybody is a person that's destined to be frustrated in their life.

Now again, I don't believe that we as parents set out to do this. I believe we as parents set out to do well. To love our kids, to raise them in the right way, but if we don't follow the direction of scripture we can end up going in the wrong way. Now some of you here would say, "Tim I'm coming here but I don't really know that much about scripture and I don't know that much about God, and I

kind of like the idea of coming. I'm learning a lot of stuff, but I'm not that connected so this is pretty much over my pay grade." And what I would say to you is we're so glad that you're here. And we want you to come and learn in this environment where you can connect with God in a deeper way, and I would just challenge you, if you don't know how to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, come talk to us. Come talk to us. Email me, come visit with me, visit with one of our elders, one of our pastors, bump the person next to you and say, "Hey are you one of those people that can help me understand all of this." We want you to understand because we believe that when you understand God's plan for this world, God's plan for you, God's love for you and how he demonstrated that to you in Jesus Christ, everything changes. Everything changes and we want that for you.

So let's talk about the positive side. What are the approaches to parenting that inspire. **Approaches to Parenting that Inspire.** I'm going to quickly, very quickly give you three of them and then wrap up with some application. All three of these are part of what it means to really build your child up, to inspire them to move them forward. The first approach is the teaching parent. **Teaching Parent: Builds Competence.** The teaching parent builds competence in their child. Now I'm not talking about competence like hitting a baseball or playing the violin or doing algebra well. We are really good at that. We spend a lot of money and a lot of time on those kinds of competencies and there's nothing wrong with that. What I'm talking about here is the competency in how to live your life. So have you taught your children how to have a quiet time? How to sit down and open the Word of God and learn how to pray and read the scripture and gain from that. Are you doing that? Are you helping them with that? Are you teaching them how to love their fellow man by taking them into situations where they can serve and watching you do it and helping them? Are you teaching them how to identify good friendships from the ones that lead them astray? Are you talking to them about their blind spots and their internal characteristics and working with them to become a whole person? Those are the things that a teaching parent does. You teach your kids how to live. In Proverbs 22:6 Samuel says this, he says:

"Train up a child in the way he should go -"

If you train your child in the right way, the right direction. Not train up your child in all of the measures of success by the world. Train them up in the path he should go,

"And when he is old he will not turn from it."

You're setting in motion a life of inspiration.

The second characteristic of a parent who inspires is a motivating parent. **Motivating Parent: Builds Confidence.** A motivating parent builds confidence in their child. Last week we talked about love. And as Russell was wrapping up the message he talked about that really interesting phrase where it says “Love always”, always, always what? Always protects, always perseveres, but one of those words in there is it always hopes. In other words it looks into the future and sees the possibility and projects it into the life of the child. You begin to teach your child that you can do this with God’s help. You can do this with God’s help. I love what Paul said in Philippians 1:6 to the Philippian church, I’ll put it up here for you:

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Now notice how he says - he doesn’t say that I’m confident that you, the Philippians, are going to get everything right and do everything right. That’s not where his confidence lies. He says confident that he, God, who started this work in you is going to complete it. He’s going to carry it on to completion. I’ll never forget one day several years ago - now I’ve raised four kids - I guess you could say raised. I’ve been the parent of four kids, let me just put it that way. I’ve made a lot of mistakes along the way. I’ve learned a lot, they’ve taught me a lot. I just remember at one point several years ago one of my kids was struggling. Now for those of you who’ve had four kids, unless you’re a perfect parent you’re going to find times that your kids struggle, and one of my kids was struggling. And I was meeting with a group of pastors and we were praying for each other, and I just mentioned, I said “My child is really struggling and I’m so worried about my child.” And I’ll never forget, Paul Ojeda, Pastor of Austin Powerhouse, a guy about this tall (indicates a height of about 5 feet), got in my face, like turned me around, almost like hands on the face, turned me around and looked in my face and said, “Listen your child does not belong to you. He belongs to God. God has a plan for your child and you need to see it. You need to start seeing it and he needs to know it. He needs to know that you believe that he has a plan for your child.” That was a life-changing moment for me. My job is to speak hope into my kids even when it doesn’t look very hopeful. Because with God there’s always hope, there’s always hope. And sometimes our kids give up because if mom and dad have given up on me then I might as well give up on myself. Speak hope into your kids.

Finally, a releasing parent. **Releasing Parent: Builds Commitment.** A releasing parent builds commitment. So a teaching parent builds competence, a motivating parent teaches confidence - I can make this with God’s help. And a

releasing parent teaches commitment. I can entrust my life to God. I'm going to share one more verse with you, Philippians 3:5-6.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him -"

Recognize his presence, his authority and his plan for your life.

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

So here's one of the keys. From the time that child comes into your life, mom and dad, your goal needs to be to extract them from the orbit that they have around you and replace that orbit with them orbiting around God. In other words, if your child is still orbiting around you when they get to adulthood, they need your wisdom, they need your advice, they need your direction, they need your encouragement, they need your support. They need all of those things from you, they don't get that from God then here's how this verse would read: Trust in your dad with all your heart and lean not on your mom's understanding. Right? They need to begin that transition and we have to have that mentality that our goal is to turn these children over to their true Father, God himself. And so we are doing our part now, but we don't create a dependency on us, we create a dependency on Him.

Now anytime we talk about this there's always people that feel a level of frustration and guilt like, "What do I do? If I'm off base what do I do?" Let me give you four things, I typed them out there because I want you to have them to go home with. The first one is ask for feedback. Ask your kids for feedback. Ask your kids for feedback. You don't believe me? I'm saying this to you, ask your kids for feedback. I don't care if they're 5, 15, or 55, ask your kids for feedback and then shut up. If you're going to have trouble with that (Tim is holding a roll of duct tape), because the absolute worst thing you can do is say to your kids, "Give me some feedback on how I'm parenting you." And as soon as they start you cut them off and you tell them why they are wrong, and they're kids and they don't understand. In fact, I would tell you don't ask them if you're going to do that. Just don't ask them. So some of you may need a bigger roll than this and kind of go around about three times. You will be amazed at the feedback you get. You'll be amazed. You'll learn a lot, and even if you think they're wrong it's still their impression. It's still what they're picking up, so you want to know that. You say, "But my kids are adults." This is a great thing. It's a great thing to build bonds, to get forgiveness and healing there.

Second, ask God to identify any fear, pride or selfishness in your parenting. And really listen to Him. I picked those three, they're very important. A lot of us parent out of fear. If we really dug deep, down to the bottom of our soul a lot of why we do what we do as parents is because we're afraid of something. A lot of us parent out of pride. "How is this child making me look?" "How will the other people think about me as a parent?" A lot of us parent out of pride. A lot of us parent out of selfishness. There's something I want with or from my kids and so I'm involved in that and there are times when there's things I don't want and so I'm not involved in that, and really a lot of it has to do with just me doing what I want to do and I'm not really thinking about my kid. Those are the three big ones. Let the Holy Spirit probe your heart. Ask the question, "Are these three things influencing the way I parent?"

Third, confess and seek forgiveness. Confess. If your children tell you something that you've done that has wounded them, hurt them, damaged them in some way it's time to confess. Even if you don't fully agree with it, confess, ask for forgiveness. It's amazing what happens in a relationship when those kinds of walls are broken down. I've told my kids lots of times, like "Here's where I'm blowing it, where do you think I'm blowing it." I've gotten their feedback. We've talked about ask for forgiveness.

And then finally initiate change and secure support. Like "What am I going to do differently and who's going to help me do it." That's always the question. "What am I going to do differently and who's going to help me do it." So here's - it's real important. Like this week in your small group if you walked in and you told the small group leader, "Hey listen. The message this week just blew me away. I talked to my kids, they pointed out some things. Man I need to change, I've got some ideas, can I share those with the group and seek you guys' prayer and support?" I guarantee you that your small group leader would be willing to put aside the curriculum for one week to let you get to that level of honesty. And for those of you who aren't in a small group, that's what they're for, to get into one that will help you grow. Find someone that will help you take the steps. You only get to do this one time. You only get to do this one time.

So if you don't have kids yet, but you might in the future start preparing today. What do I need to be to parent my children well. If you've got them, the only way to fix the past is to change the future. Starting today it's going to be different for them. If your kids are grown and gone maybe there's a way to deepen that relationship by going back to them. In all these things we reflect Jesus Christ.