

God's Love Changes Your Family
Children Obey your Parents
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Ephesians 6

July 1, 1898. Cuba. Spanish-American War. At the bottom of San Juan Hill, Lt. Colonel Teddy Roosevelt prepared to lead the charge against 750 Spanish soldiers ordered to hold the heights. Just weeks before, he had resigned from his civilian job with the government to join the active military. He said, "Someday I want to explain to my kids why I did fight in the war, not why I didn't." So on that July morning, Teddy strapped on his boots and led his Rough Riders regiment up the hill under withering Spanish gunfire and on to victory. For his courage, he was eventually awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. June 6, 1944. Normandy, France. World War II. Sitting in the troop transport ships offshore, sat Brigadier General Teddy Roosevelt, Jr, He was preparing to lead the D-Day attack on the most heavily fortified coast in history. His father President Roosevelt had four boys and he poured his life into his four sons—telling them stories of great American heroes, teaching them how to hunt and fish and box and ride a horse. Sometimes they needed discipline. One time the four boys went traipsing through the Executive Office Building next to the White House, left muddy footprints all over the hallway, and the government staffers yelled at them, "Get outta here!" That made the boys mad, so they retaliated by going next door, standing on the White House lawn and using hand mirrors to flash blasts of sunlight in those office windows, right in the eyes of those staffers. Their father found out, and pretty soon a military aide is striding across the lawn to the four Roosevelt boys. He said, "Pay attention to the roof of the office building."

Suddenly a soldier appeared on the roof of the office building with semaphore flags used for military signals. The soldier on the roof started signaling, and the military aide standing down on the lawn is translating the signals for the boys. Here was the message: "YOU UNDER THE TREES. ATTACK ON THIS BUILDING MUST CEASE IMMEDIATELY. CLERKS CANNOT WORK. GOVERNMENT BUSINESS INTERRUPTED. REPORT WITHOUT DELAY FOR YOU KNOW WHAT. THEODORE ROOSEVELT." And so they reported for you know what, and Teddy Roosevelt made sure to teach those boys about responsibility and manhood and leadership and patriotism and duty. So it was no surprise that in 1944, Brigadier General Teddy Roosevelt Jr. requested to lead the D-Day invasion. At first, his superiors at the Pentagon denied his request: "You're 57 years old. No other general is going ashore with the first wave of troops." But he insisted. He said, "It will steady the men to know I'm with them." Finally after his third request, they agreed. So on that June morning, Teddy Jr. strapped on his boots and led the charge up the beach under withering German gunfire and on to victory. For his courage, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, just like his father. I saw a poster once that said, "One day your children will walk in your shoes. Make sure they're pointed in the right direction." If you are a parent, you are leaving footprints your children will follow, you're leaving shoes for them to fill. Every parent is leaving a legacy.

My wife Katie was the Lamar, Missouri High School homecoming queen. My wife is a beautiful woman. In high school, she was a cheerleader. Everybody knew her, friends with everyone, especially the forgotten kids. For her senior prom, she could've had a date with just about any boy in school, could've gone with anyone, but instead do you know what she did? She rounded up some of her friends, girls that did not have a date, she bought a mannequin, named him Herb, dressed him up in a tux and they all took Herb as their date to the prom. She said Herb was a better dancer than most

of the boys anyway, and instead of sitting at home that night, all those girls got a story to tell their kids someday, because of Katie. On the Friday night of her high school homecoming, do you know what she did? Before she went to the game where she was crowned queen, she went to the nursing home in her formal dress to go visit some of the older ladies. Can you imagine the women in their wheel chairs in that nursing home watching as she came swishing down the hallway like something out of a fairy tale? Smiles, and oohs and ahhs, “So pretty.” She talked to Mrs. Bink and Miss Alta and Miss Mabel. That’s my wife. Beautiful girl, but she got nominated because of her heart. My daughter Lydia is 23, got married in January, but when she was a senior in high school, she was nominated to be Homecoming Queen. Now my daughter is beautiful, was part of the cheer squad, everybody knew her, friends with everyone, especially the forgotten kids. When she was a junior in high school, she started a thing called Potluck Fridays. She got permission to bring a crockpot of home-cooked food to the school cafeteria every Friday—she’s a great cook—and she would feed her lunch table which was a mix of some popular kids and some kids with nowhere else to go. In high school, one February, Lydia had the idea to go Valentine’s Day caroling to the older lonely widows in our church. So we took our whole family—we have six kids, so we’re our own little choir—and we grabbed a few other friends, loaded up in our white 15 passenger van, and just showed up on these older widow’s doorsteps on Valentine’s night. We sang a couple songs, and then Lydia handed them a rose and a bag of cookies she made and gave them a hug. And we saw tears that night more than once. That’s my daughter. Beautiful girl, but she got nominated because of her heart just like her mama. Every parent is leaving a legacy.

The apostle Paul knew that. If you’ve got your Bibles, open them to Ephesians 6. Over the last several weeks here at The Creek, you’ve been in a series called God’s Love Changes Everything, and you’ve been walking through the book of Ephesians. You know that Paul’s been writing about this incredible salvation God has given us in Christ, and when God’s love gets poured into your life, it really does change everything. It changes your city, your identity, your church, your lifestyle. Last week in Ephesians 5, God’s love changes your marriage, and today in Ephesian 6, God’s love changes your family. Let’s read Ephesians 6:1-4. Paul writes, **SLIDES 1-2** “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:1-4 ESV)

Now I would love to stand up here and tell you that as a father, I am leaving a perfect legacy for my children to follow. But, that wouldn’t be true. My wife Katie and I have six kids—ages 25 to 12. Can I take you back to when they were all a little younger, and can I tell you what Sunday mornings are like at my house? I would like to tell you that Sunday mornings are this focused time of joy and preparation. I would like to tell you that my alarm clock goes off at 5:30 and that I wake up with a smile on my face. I would like to tell you that I then roll over and kiss my wife with minty fresh breath and say, “Good morning, dear. It is the Lord’s Day. Let us arise and worship.” I’d like to tell you that I then hop out of bed and do 100 pushups and 100 sit-ups and then barely winded, I go into the bathroom to comb my hair. But lo, it has not moved during the night. I would like to tell you that I then walk into my closet, put on my three piece suit and walk into the kitchen to squeeze oranges with my wife to make homemade orange juice as we recite memory verses to one another. I would like to tell you that then my six children—ages 18, 16, 13, 10, 8 and 5—all walk into the kitchen having dressed themselves and with smiles on their faces, they say in unison, “Good morning, mother. Good morning, father. It is the Lord’s Day.

Let us arise and worship.” I’d like to tell you that we then all get into the van and we drive the 15 minutes to church, singing together as a family, “How Great Thou Art.”

I’d like to tell you that, but it would be a big fat lie. Instead, Sunday mornings at my house are crazy. They are rush and hustle and it doesn’t matter how early we get up, it seems like we’re always running late. I hate being late. So I’m just being honest here - I can begin to lose my cool. I’m slapping the cold cereal in their bowls on the table and the milk is spilling out and I’m hollering at them: “You, eat your breakfast. You go get your clothes on. You stop hitting your sister. You, stop crying. Yes, you have to wear clothes to church. You, go get your Bible. Come on, hurry up, let’s go! We’re going to be late for the church. Get out the door now and get in the van. We’ve got to go to church and LEARN ABOUT THE LOVE OF GOD. HURRY UP!!!” I’m just telling you, I can lose it. And I’m driving 185 miles an hour to church and smoke is pouring out my ears. I’m fuming. I can’t believe we’re going to be late again. And I come skidding into the parking lot, slam open the van door, “Come on, kids, let’s go, go, go.” Hollering at them, but then you know what happens. There’s always that greeter at the front door. “Come on, kids, let’s hurry, go, go, go. Good morning, brother. Praisalujah. It is the Lord’s Day. Let us arise and worship.” And I get into the sanctuary and I sit in my pew, and my blood pressure slowly begins to drop and I begin to cool off, and that’s when I realize: I blew it again. These are my shoes, and I brought this pair because they’ve got holes in them. I wish I was leaving my kids a sterling legacy, but too often it’s a little ragged, and that scares me.

Because the Bible says that the impact I have on my kids is multi-generational. I’m not just influencing my kids - my parenting will ultimately influence how my grandkids are raised and their children and their children after them. **SLIDE 3** In Deuteronomy 5, God says, “I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.” (Deuteronomy 5:9-10, NLT) My decisions as a parent have generational repercussions. When I make mistakes, my mess gets passed on from one generation to the next. Look at the families in Scripture. Abraham was a liar, deceived Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Abraham’s son Isaac followed in his footsteps, lied to the king of the Philistines. Isaac’s son Jacob after him was also liar. Do you remember that story? Jacob and Esau, twins, Esau the oldest was to get the father’s blessing, but Jacob wanted the blessing, so one day while Esau was away, Jacob killed a goat. His father Isaac was old and blind, so Jacob put the goat’s hair on his arms so he would feel like his hairy brother, put on one of Esau’s coats so he would smell like his brother, and Jacob tricked his dad into giving him the blessing. He deceived his father with a goat and with a coat. Fast forward many years, now Jacob is a father to 12 sons. He gives his favorite son Joseph a coat of many colors. The other brothers are jealous, one day they ambush Joseph out in the field and sell him off to slave traders. Then they take Joseph’s coat, rip it, kill a goat, put the blood on the coat. They show it to Jacob, “Father, look, a wild animal must have got him.” They deceive their father with a goat and with a coat. From one generation to the next: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob’s sons—a legacy of lying.

And this isn’t just in the Bible. In 1900, an educator named A. E. Winship published a book, a sociological study entitled *Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity*. It compared two fathers and two families—the Jukes and the Edwards. On the one hand it followed the family tree of Jonathan Edwards—probably the most renowned theologian America has ever produced, Puritan early 1700’s, helped start the Great Awakening, eventually president of Princeton University. Jonathan Edwards was a godly man, loving man, family man. He and his wife Sarah

had a remarkable marriage, 11 children, and he was very intentional about passing on his love of God, his work ethic, responsibility to his kids. The book is published 150 years after Jonathan Edwards' death, and it traced his 1400 descendants and found that there were more than 100 lawyers, 30 judges, 13 college presidents, one hundred plus university professors, 62 doctors, 100 clergyman, missionaries and seminary professors, 60 published authors with millions of books sold, 75 army or navy officers, 80 elected to public office, including three mayors, three state governors, several members of congress, three senators, one vice president of the United States and one first lady of the United States. An amazing legacy.

On the other hand, Winship's book then traced the lineage of a man to whom he gave the alias "Max Juke." Max Juke lived during the same time period as Jonathan Edwards. He lived in New York, and was known as a likeable fellow, jolly, but a hard drinker and a vulgar talker. He too had several children including a few illegitimate ones. He wasn't faithful to his wife, and Max Juke had no use for school, no use for hard work and no use for God. Of course his children saw this, and 150 years after Max Juke's death, the book traced the 1200 Juke descendants and found that 310 were professional paupers (they abused the welfare system), 60 became thieves, 130 did time in prison, 128 prostitutes, 7 murderers, over 400 alcoholics, 67 contracted syphilis, 300 died early in life. They were vagrants. They avoided hard work. Of the twenty who learned a trade, ten of them learned it in a state prison, and it is estimated that, up to that point, the descendants of Max Juke cost the state of New York \$1.25 million.

Hear me: your influence as a parent is multi-generational. You're not just passing on DNA. Whether you want to or not, you are passing along habits and beliefs and relational patterns and communication patterns and conflict resolution patterns and a thousand other little quirks and influencers that, for good or for bad, will cling to the branches of your family tree for decades, maybe centuries. Whether you realize it or not, you are literally shaping the lives of hundreds of people who are yet to be born. Every parent is leaving a legacy. So in Ephesians 6, Paul says, "Make it a legacy of godliness." **SLIDE 4** That's the idea of Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers—and he's talking about both parents here, fathers and mothers—he says, "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." That phrase "of the Lord" means teach your children to know the Lord, love the Lord, obey the Lord. Can I give you my sermon in a sentence here this morning? Here is what I came to say today: **SLIDE 5** your greatest legacy is a godly lineage. Can I say that again? Your greatest legacy is a godly lineage. That's what you're aiming for. I hear parents say, "I just want my kids to be happy or I want my kids to be successful or I just want to raise good kids." And those are all fine, but they don't go far enough. Set the bar higher. We are aiming for godly kids. Kids who know God and His Word, who love and serve Him with their whole heart. Practically speaking, how do we do that? How do shape a godly legacy in your kids? In Ephesians 6:4, Paul mentions three ways: **SLIDE 6**

1. PROTECTION: Be the shepherd.

That's the idea behind this phrase, **SLIDE 7** "Do not provoke your children to anger." One version says, "Don't come down hard on them." Another version: "Don't make your kids bitter." You've heard about tiger moms who push their kids to succeed at all costs, and we have to challenge our children, but this verse is saying don't be harsh, don't blame or shame, don't nag or humiliate your kids. No yelling or insulting or angry punishment allowed. And notice that **SLIDE 8** phrase "bring them up." That's a word in the Greek that means to nourish, to deal gently or tenderly with. Paul is saying children need to feel secure in their parents' love, so be the shepherd. Isaiah 40:11 says that our perfect Father "tends his flock like a shepherd: He

gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.” I used to raise sheep, and sheep feel safe when they know their shepherd is nearby and their shepherd cares. Your kids need to feel like your home is the safest place in the world. **SLIDE 9** Give them protection.

I have six kids, so finding one on one time with each kid was kind of a challenge, as you can imagine, but whenever I had one on one time with either of my two middle kids, I had a ritual I did with them. Middle kids often get overlooked, so when I was alone with my daughter Clara, the older of the two middle kids, she was 5-6 years old, here was my liturgy, my ritual with her. We’d be driving to Walmart on a Saturday morning, just the two of us, and I’d lean over and I’d say, “Hey, Clara, guess what?” What? “You know what?” What, dad? “Guess what?” What? “You know what?” What? And I’d keep asking her those same two questions over and over, the tension began to build, her excitement began to grow, and finally when she couldn’t stand it any longer, I’d say, “Guess what?” What? “You know what?” What? “I love you!” And she’d go, “Yaaaay!” Well I had never done that with my other middle kid, Carl. One day when he was three years old, it was just Carl and me, just the two of us walking down a darkened church hallway, and I decided to do this ritual with him for the first time. Now you have to picture: here’s Carl three years old, and even at three he was built like a little NFL linebacker, little barrel chest walking alongside me. He was sucking on a lollipop, and I leaned over and said, “Hey Carl, guess what?” What, dad? “You know what?” What? “Guess what?” What? “You know what?” What? I kept asking those two questions, tension began to build, excitement began to grow, finally when he couldn’t stand it any longer, I said, “Guess what?” What? “You know what?” What? I said, “I love you!” And he popped that lollipop out of his mouth and said, “Yep, you do.” I love that! That’s what I want. I want my kids to know deep in their bones that, if nothing else in the world is true, this much is true: their father loves them. I want them to live in that security. They are never outside of my love. Give your kids protection. Be the shepherd.
SLIDE 10

2. CORRECTION: Be the sheriff.

That’s the idea **SLIDE 11** behind this word, “Bring them up in the *discipline* and instruction of the Lord.” **SLIDE 12** Proverbs 13:24, “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” **SLIDE 13** In the Old Testament, Eli the priest and David the king failed to discipline their boys, and their grown-up sons ended up train wrecks, and in today’s culture, there are still parents who don’t believe in correction. Their parenting is child-centered, so the child is never told no, never corrected, never held to higher expectations. You get a trophy and you get a trophy and you get a trophy. In higher education, we sometimes call these people snowplow parents—because these parents are always out ahead of their child, clearing any obstacles out of their path. They don’t want their kid to experience failure or frustration, or the consequences of their own behavior. What snowplow parents fail to realize is that their job is to prepare the kid for the road, not prepare the road for the kid. If you don’t let your kids make mistakes or face obstacles or experience consequences, they never grow up. If you’re too hard on your kids, you can rob them of their childhood, but if you’re too soft on your kids, you rob them of their adulthood. They’ll never mature. Somebody said it this way, “If you raise your kids, you can spoil your grandkids. But if you spoil your kids, you’ll have to raise your grandkids.” And if you don’t really know how to do Biblical discipline, I’d recommend a book Heartfelt Discipline by Clay Clarkson. He says that yes, sometimes discipline is punishment, and like Teddy Roosevelt, you have to tell your kids to report for you know what. But he says that more often, discipline is correction—it’s speaking words of wisdom to them and holding them accountable and letting them experience consequences and make mistakes and

being there to guide them back on the path. He says the choices aren't just hands off parenting or hands on parenting, spanking them. It's hands around parenting.

One day when my kids were younger, I came home from work one Friday evening, and my wife Katie met me in the kitchen and said, "You better go talk to your son." Here's what happened: Luke was twelve years old, and as the oldest of six kids, he sometimes saw himself as the third parent. And one of his younger siblings had done something that he didn't think was right, and he thought he had the right to spank them himself and so he did. And that's why Katie said, "You better go talk to your son." So I sat Luke down and said, "Bud, listen, you see our family. We're like a town; we have that many kids. We're a town, and listen, I'm the sheriff. Your mom's the deputy, but I'm the sheriff. And if you see one of your fellow citizens doing something wrong, your job is to come tell the sheriff. If I'm not around, tell the deputy. But the one thing you do not get to do is take justice into your own hands. No citizen's arrests allowed. Leave justice to the sheriff. Got it?" Ok, I got it, Dad. After supper, we had an event on campus that night, so I left and I didn't get back home again til late - house was dark, and everyone's in bed. I'm feeling my way back to bed, and as I'm getting in, my hand brushes across something on the pillow. What's this? So I took it out into the hallway and flipped on the light. It was a plastic sheriff's badge and with it was a little note from Luke, "Dear Dad, I never knew a sheriff without a badge. Love you, Luke." Parents, your kids need this. Don't abdicate, don't relinquish your badge. Give correction. Be the sheriff. **SLIDE 14**

3. DIRECTION: Be the teacher.

That's the idea **SLIDE 15** behind this word "the instruction of the Lord." It means constantly proactively teach your kids to love and follow Christ. **SLIDE 16** Your greatest legacy is a godly lineage, and godly kids don't happen by accident. About fifteen years ago, I realized that I had never just sat down and written out specific goals for my kids. I get my kids for 18 years. That's 6,570 days that go like that, and when they walk out of my house at age 18, what do I want them to be characterized by? If you aim at nothing, you'll usually hit it. So what does godliness actually look like practically? I made a list of 20-25 things, but I thought I can't aim at 25 things. Aim small, miss small. So I narrowed it to seven and because I'm a preacher, I made it an acronym. Our last name is PROCTOR, seven letters, **SLIDE 17** and I tagged each one of these goals to a letter in our last name. I typed this up and I posted it on our fridge and I actually posted it in our vehicles where my kids would see it: Praying family, Responsible family, Obedient family, Compassionate family, Truthful family, Overcoming family, Rejoicing family. Those were our goals, and we started having our kids memorize verses that went with those seven traits and we starting to help them build habits and create experiences to cultivate those traits.

Can I tell you one of my proudest moments as a dad? My wife Katie has in our house what we call the \$5 jar, and if you say certain unapproved words in our house, you have to put \$5 in the jar—of course, cuss words are \$5 words but there are other words not allowed. **SLIDE 18** My son Carl is a very good little athlete. Baseball, basketball, football. I say little, but he's not. He's 17 now, 6'1" 200+ plus pounds, football lineman. Here he is with his brother Conrad back when he was about 10. That's Carl on the right. You need to understand that football rules in our town. Webb City has won 10 state championships in the last 20 years. In Missouri, we are Friday Night Lights. So when Carl was 10, he was in football practice on evening, defensive line. It's scrimmage, the offense is running the ball right up the middle, jamming down the throat of the defensive line, pushing them back again and again, coaches hollering at 'em. I'm watching, and

I see Carl get his game face on. He gets down in his stance, literally pawing the ground, and nothing's going to stop him. The ball is snapped, and Carl fires off the ball. He breaks through the offensive line and tackles the running back just as he's taking the handoff, tackle for loss. It was a great play. After practice, Carl came up to me and said, "Dad, dad, did you see that?" I said, "Yeah, buddy, I saw that. That was a great play!" He said, "Dad, you should've seen it. When I was about to tackle the running back, his eyes got real big." Then he said, "And Dad, he said a \$5 word." I said, "I'll bet he did, buddy. That was a great play!" Now for most Webb City dads, that might be their proudest moment—seeing their son stand out on the football field, happy and successful and he didn't say the \$5 word. That's as good as it gets, right?

But I'll tell you when I was proudest of my son Carl the athlete. It was that same year on his basketball team. **SLIDE 19** We were at one of Carl's basketball games when my wife Katie suddenly turned to me and asked, "Why is Carl running with his hands together?" I looked and, sure enough, Carl was heading up the court with his hands clasped together . . . and his eyes closed. That's when I realized what he was doing. He was praying. You remember that acrostic PROCTOR? P is for praying kids, and Carl has developed the habit of praying. Carl has a tender conscience, and even at age 10, when he realized his attitude wasn't right, you'd see him bow his head right there. With eyes closed, he'd whisper a quick prayer of repentance. At other times, you'd catch him folding his hands for a few seconds, thanking God for something he's enjoying. Carl's not a perfect child, but he is a prayerful child. But I'd never seen him do it on the basketball court. It was a close game. Afterward, we had a talk, and I told him how glad I was to see him praying. I told him it was okay to pray with his eyes open so he wouldn't get bonked in the head with a pass. He was glad to know that, and I was glad that at least in one area with one of my kids, Katie and I were hitting the target. Because we're not just aiming for happy or successful or good kids. We're aiming for godly kids. Godly kids won't happen by accident. You'll have to be intentional. **SLIDE 20**

That certainly means bringing them to church. I hear parents say, "Well, I'll let my children decide for themselves when they get older if they want to come. I'm not going to force it on my kids." That drives me bonkers! You force your kids to brush their teeth, to do their homework. Guess what's more important than clean teeth and good grades? Their soul. Be the parent. Bring them to church. But raising godly kids means you have to teach them at home. You can't just outsource this to the church. If your kids are average Americans, then last week they saw 1,700 ads promising them lasting happiness out there in the world, and they need more than an hour at church on Sunday once a week to cultivate a deep love of God. They need you to teach them all week long. For several years, every week I've tried to do with my two boys what we call a He Man His Man club. For 30 minutes we do something He man together, good fun boy stuff. We'd shoot off bottle rockets or BB guns or play basketball. And for 30 minutes we do His man stuff together, we read a boy's Bible devotional. They're teenagers now, so this last year, we studied through a Biblical worldview book together. Teach your kids. Tell them your testimony. Teach them to how to pray. Get an age-appropriate Bible, and read God's Word together with them every day. Text your teenagers a Bible verse and quick prayer for them every morning. Put a basket in the middle of the dinner table with 3x5 cards with missionaries' names. Draw one out each night. Tell your kids about them and then pray for them. Invite Christian servants, leaders, missionaries into your home. For your teenagers, make a list of Christian books for them to read to instill a Christian worldview and passion for God. Pay them to read them if you have to. Ask your kids questions about what they learned in their class at church every Sunday. Make a list of verses you want your kids to memorize. Get God's Word into your kids. Their brains will never

be that soft and spongy again. They're wet cement. The impressions you make now will be permanent. So get them to memorize Scripture. Make sure your kids know what the Bible teaches about God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Satan, heaven, hell, the cross, sex, worry, money, anger, missions and salvation. I hope you talk about God and the Bible so much, that sometimes your teenagers roll their eyes, but 20 years from now, they'll remember. Map out what you want to teach your kids and be the teacher.

And don't forget. Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the best way of teaching. It's the only way of teaching." Ultimately, your kids will follow your example, not your advice, so how is your own faith, your relationship with God? **SLIDE 21** Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ." **SLIDE 22** Hear me parents: you stay close to Jesus. Because none of us are good enough or smart enough to do this job on our own. But the message of the gospel is this: Jesus doesn't just give me forgiveness for my sins; He also gives me strength for my weakness. Jesus will help you to be wise. Jesus will help you to be patient. Jesus will help you to be loving. Jesus will help you to be courageous. Jesus will help you to be godly. So go to the cross, and go to the Word and go to the prayer closet, and lean on Him. God's love changes everything and it can change your family.

This last pair of boots belonged to my grandfather. My grandfather was a long-time farmer in Iowa, eighth grade education, a farmer with the ironic last name of Weede. His first name was I.O. Those letters don't stand for anything. It's just I.O. He grew up very poor. He told us that when he was born, his parents went to the name store, and they were having a special on vowels that day. "Well, we'll take the I and the O." He was a dog-loving, fish-catching, guitar-playing good ol' boy. One time he said that 1, 2, and 3 John were John Deere, John Wayne and Johnny Cash. On his farm, he grew corn and beans, raised sheep and three daughters, one of whom was my mother. He was a well-known prankster. He painted faces on his two big farm fuel tanks. One had a smiley face that said, "I've got diesel." The other had a frowning face that said, "I've got gas." A visiting evangelist once stayed the week at my grandpa's house. I.O. was always up early doing chores. At four o'clock one morning, my grandfather walked into the preacher's guest bedroom and flipped on the light. In his deep, booming voice he asked, "Bill, do you love me?" Preacher Bill wiped the sleep from his eyes and mumbled, "Uh, I guess so, I.O." Grandpa said, "Then feed my sheep!"

I would go up and work on his farm in the summer, and I can remember after a long hot day of work, he would come home at night and sit in his chair. And he had a book shelf right by his chair. He was a longtime elder and Sunday School teacher in his church, and on that back shelf he had his Bible and Bible encyclopedias and commentaries and he'd study for his lesson. 8th grade education, Ph.D. in the Word of God. Faithfully married to my grandmother for over 60 years. My mom said that when she was a little girl, my grandfather would get up from the dinner table, walk over behind my grandma, and say, "Girls, I married the most beeeautiful girl in all of Davis County." And then he'd kiss my grandma. He loves his three girls, would take time out to play with them even in the middle of haying or harvest season. My mom said one time one of her little friends came over to their house to play and afterward she said, "I wish I had a daddy like yours." My grandfather loved his kids and he loved his grandkids. My grandfather literally prayed for me by name every single day from the day I was born to the day he died.

If you look at my grandfather's lineage, you'll see his three children. His three girls all believers, all married believers, all active leaders in their churches. Look at my grandfather's

eight grandchildren—all believers. Five of them in ministry. Go to the next branches on the family tree, the great-grandchildren. The oldest one is a sophomore in Bible college. The next oldest one will be coming to Bible college next year. There's more on the way. His descendants have been church pastors, started Christian schools, Christian camp managers, church worship leaders, youth ministers, Christian authors, children's ministers, led mission trips, even a Bible college president. His descendants have literally touched hundreds of thousands of lives for Jesus. A farmer from Iowa with an eighth-grade education, who never spoke at conference, never wrote a book, never won an award, never made headlines, never made a million dollars. But he left behind a heritage of faith. Your greatest legacy is a godly lineage. 6,570 days. Start today.