



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Modern Family - March 25/26 2017 - Matt Glezos
Loving Discipline - (Colossians 3:21)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

This morning we have the opportunity to be back in God's Word. We are continuing on in our series called *Modern Family* and this morning the topic for us is *Loving Discipline*. I have a family. A wife of about 15 years and we have five children. We have five boys, so we are no stranger to discipline [laughter] and I don't know if that's why they gave me this topic but... Discipline is a regular occurrence every minute of the day, it seems like in our house. In thinking about this, it reminded me of a time at the beginning of our parenting career, just as we were expecting our first child. I think my wife and I, we entered into parenting with a fairly high level of confidence. I was a school teacher at the time (an elementary school teacher) and my wife taught preschool, so we kind of thought, "You know, I think we've got this. I think we at least know what we're doing." For the first little bit it went really, really well. Our first child was a piece of cake. Partly, it was because he slept a lot. He slept like 10 hours every night and then had a good, solid four hour nap in the middle of the day and we thought, "See, you just have to know how to parent and then things will happen like that." [laughter] Also, the thing that helped with him is that he got very, very large very, very quickly. Like physically, he was like a balloon baby, so the first year of his life, anywhere he went we would sit him on his back and he would be like a turtle. He couldn't do anything and it was great because we could go anywhere. We could go out to dinner, we could go to a friends house, we'd just sit him there. He didn't crawl until he was about a year old. He didn't walk until he was about four or five, I can't remember when, but it took a while [laughter]. But then of course, it didn't stay that way.

We had a couple more kids and before we knew it, we were a lot more tired than we thought we would ever be. We also were a lot more frustrated than we thought we would ever be. Not just with the sin of our children, but also with our own sin. We realized that we were far less patient than we thought. We came to a point of exasperation far more quickly than we thought. We were driven - not just to our knees, but we'd just be laying on the bed, kind of comatose, praying, "Lord, please just...anything. We need help." That's the reality of parenting. It's an overwhelming task, but one that has been given to us by God. We are called as sinners to lead other sinners into what we hope will be a life following the Lord and it's overwhelming.

Today we are going to be looking at a text that is sort of a compliment to a text we hit a couple weeks ago. A few weeks ago, Greg preached on Colossians 3:20, looking at the command of God to children to obey their parents. Now, we're looking at Colossians 3:21 and then we're going to jump over to



Hebrews a bit later. That's really the instruction of God to parents on how to raise their children well. So, the context of this verse, just so we're clear, Paul is writing to the church in Colossae and he is writing about what it means to live the Christian life. Here in chapter three, he's really focusing on the Christian family and he identifies the three major relationships in the family at that time. There were husbands and wives, parents and children, and also slaves and masters. In all of those relationships-- It's interesting because Paul, what he highlights is there is a reciprocal nature there. There's a tension in that relationship. So what I want to do to read it, is not just read verse 21, but start at verse 18 and see the first two relationships that he talks about and see how that relationship exists. Colossians 3:18 says,

“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

It's interesting to note, that culturally speaking, the part of those instructions that we would probably take issue with or pause over, are the first parts. “Wives submit”, “children obey in everything.” And yet, at the time this was written, those would have been assumed. That was just part of cultural life. It was assumed that wives would submit wholly to their husband and for fathers to have complete control of their children. In fact, there was a part in Greek and Roman law called the *Patria Potestas*, or *The Power of the Father*. Fathers had complete dominion over their children. They could instruct them any way they want, they could discipline them any way they want, they could beat them, they could sell them into slavery, they could even take their life. It's interesting how God's word counteracts that heavy handed rule. The command of God is for husbands to *love* your wives and for fathers *not* to provoke your children. That word *provoke* - it's translated sometimes *embitter*, *exasperate*, or *aggravate*. And the word *discouraged* - it means, simply, to lose heart. So here, I think we see God's word very clearly speaking against any kind of physical or emotional or verbal abuse on the part of parents to their kids. It's very clear that is absolutely contradictory to what God intends in a family. He intends for parents to act in love and to discipline in love. But simply because parental authority is abused doesn't mean we should get rid of it all together. In fact, that's not what this verse is saying, it's not what God intends. He intends in family that parents would have a Godly authority and a loving responsibility towards their children. So fathers (and mothers - the word there can be translated *parents* as it is at certain times in the New Testament.) --So parents do have a God-given right to have authority over their children, but they also have a God-given responsibility to love their children well. To parent them in a way where they are led to a soft heart, rather than a hard heart.

[Four keys to Loving Discipline]

So the big question for us today is how is that possible? How is it possible to discipline and teach and instruct your children so that they will end up with a soft heart towards the Lord and towards you and not a hard, bitter heart. I think, primarily, this is an issue of proper discipline. So that's where we're going to look this morning. We're going to look at four keys to loving discipline. And as I said, we're going to jump over to the book of Hebrews, because in Hebrews there's a fantastic passage. Hebrews 12 starting in verse 5. It really outlines the way in which God disciplines us. So, if you're here this morning and you're not a parent, and you're not planning on being a parent, there is still something for



you in here as God reveals to us how it is that he treats us as sons and daughters. How he disciplines us and that that is really the pattern which us as parents (those of us that are parents) are to follow. So, we're going to go through Hebrews a section at a time and we're going to pull out some principles for us. We should know here, the writer of Hebrews is writing to a group of Christians who are feeling weary because of the discipline of God. So, here's how it begins. Verse five:

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.’”

1) Loving discipline is about love

So, the first principle that we want to draw out of there is that loving discipline is about love. Took me a while to think of that one. Loving discipline is about love. By that I mean it's not about anger or frustration or annoyance on a part of the parent. It should be about love. Notice there's a causal connection there in our text. It says *because* God loves us, he disciplines us - he chastises us. God, who was perfect, looking down from heaven, looking down upon his wayward children, he sees that we are heading in sin, we walking in sin, and so he acts to deal with it because he loves us. He is concerned for us and so he does something about it. This is the *why* of godly discipline. This is the motivation for any parent to work in the lives of their children because you love them. Because you see that there is something that needs to be dealt with. God wants the very best for us, and the very best for every sinner is to have clarity about the severity of their sin and then to find forgiveness at the cross. God isn't annoyed with us. God isn't frustrated with us. He isn't up in heaven saying, “Again with the coveting? Again? I know your neighbour got a new truck, but common, I've got things to do...” That's not how he is. He loves us. He has patience for us. He sees us. He sees that we are heading down paths and he knows will lead to our destruction, so he acts. That is the same thing for us as parents. We need to recognize that God didn't put us in charge of our family so that we can make things easier for ourselves. He didn't put us in charge of these children so that we can mould them into our image so that we can make them into great athletes or great piano players or great in academics. That's not the purpose. They are not there for us. We are there for them. So, we need to hear this - all parents, but maybe dads in particular, need to hear that heavy handed discipline, harsh criticism, a pattern of verbal beration - that will lead to a child that is angry and bitter and God's word is speaking against that.

I was reading some commentary on the passage in Colossians and Kent Hughes, he's a pastor, and he was writing on this, he spoke about his childhood. He grew up in California around some ranches and he said he learned as a child that there were two ways to break a horse. The first way was the progressive use of a halter, a bit, a blanket and a saddle. He said it took time, but at the end, what you were left with, was a lively but obedient animal. But there's a second way, another way, and that was to simply take a 2x4 to an obstinate horse and to beat it to its knees. To assert yourself over the animal. Here are his words: he says,

“A horse, it is said, can be tamed this way, but with great cost. You will have a spiritless animal, an animal though 'obedient' but one that will never be what it could have been.”



There are children like this. There are children that have been so criticized, so beaten down (verbally or otherwise) that they are just a hollow shell of what God intended them to be.

I was speaking with Ron Friesen, who is the youth director here, talking to him about these issues of discipline and teenagers. We don't have teenagers yet, our oldest is almost 13, so I was asking, "You know what is it that needs to be said? What counsel would you give to parents?" And he said, "Well, there are three things that every child and every teen needs and that's affection, affirmation, and attention." Affection, affirmation, and attention. Really, those are expressions of love. He says, "If a teenager doesn't have those things at home, they're going to look elsewhere for them. That's especially problematic in the lives of teenage girls if they're not finding that love and attention at home, they will look elsewhere for it. But when a child or teenager does have that in the home and there is a climate of love and there is affection and attention and you're spending time with them, then discipline is just another expression of that love because they know that you're for them. They know that you're with them. You have a connection with them, so when you bring discipline, it is a genuine expression of love. So parents this starts with us.

We have to be clear that the authority that we have is borrowed authority from God Himself, there for the good of our children. When they're young, they are like young, stubborn horses - at least they are in our house. They gallop around, they run, they make noise. I don't know why, but we even have a horse costume and they wear it a lot, [laughter] and they run, and so we have to bring order. That's what needs to happen. So we discipline their stubbornness and their willfulness, but not because it's annoying to us, but because we see that it's sin and we know that it will destroy them if it's left unchecked. Sometimes I even talk about this with my boys before I discipline them. I'll say, "You know, I'm going to give you a consequence because of something you did and I don't love doing this, this isn't what I want to do, but this is part of what God has called me to as your dad and so I'm going to discipline you." One of my boys, just a little while ago, said, "Dad, this doesn't make sense. I don't want you to do this, you don't want to do this, why are we doing this?" [laughter] "Yeah" I said, "But listen, I'm doing this because I love you. If I didn't love you, I'd let you do whatever you want. I wouldn't give you any discipline, you could live your life, you could go off, you could grow, but you would have no sense of sin. You wouldn't have been led on the right path, and so I'm doing this - I'm disciplining you - so that you'll grow in self discipline. I'm doing this so that I don't have to follow you off to college and teach you how to be nice to people. I'm hoping that eventually you will grow in discipline and godliness and this is because I love you." He didn't quite buy it, but we did the consequence anyway [laughter].

Okay, at the end of every section, I want to ask some questions to the parents in the room. First question is this: When do you tend to discipline out of selfishness rather than out of love? Can you identify certain times? I know for me, it often happens when I'm tired, when I tend to react more harshly than I should. It's a selfish discipline rather than a loving discipline. I think it's helpful to try to identify those times.



2) Loving Discipline is active

Okay, the next section. Hebrews 12:7-8:

“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

So, the second principle of Loving Discipline, is that Loving Discipline is active. That you are actively engaged in the life of your child. See, every parent, we have a tendency to ignore the sin in the life of our children. If you have young children, you know what this looks like. You're somewhere quiet, you're reading something, you're on your phone, and then you hear off in the distance a disturbance. There's yelling and screaming and you think, “If I am just quiet, they won't know I'm here and it will go away.” But it doesn't go away. It gets louder and then you think, “If there's bleeding, they'll come find me” [laughter]. So you close the pantry door and you try to hide. Why do we do that? Because we're tired, for the most part. It's exhausting. We're tired and it's tough to continue on. Or maybe we're just not sure how to deal with this situation and so we don't do anything. Or maybe we're concerned about what it says in Colossians 3:21 - that we don't want our children to be provoked to anger, so we're not sure if we should wade into this environment (or whatever is going on) and bring discipline, and yet it's really clear that God's word says that a legitimate parent is one who disciplines their children. So, when we turn a blind eye to disobedience, to a bad attitude (whether it's for an afternoon or for a lifetime), really that's just another form of selfishness on our part, that we would rather care for ourselves than care for our children and that we are not willing to go in and deal with the sin that is threatening to take over our child.

What we need to recognize is that it's much easier to do this at a young age than at a later age. It's much easier to establish discipline and authority in the life of a three year-old than in a fifteen year-old. You talk to any Youth Pastor, anyone working in youth ministry, they'll tell you that they get phone calls from parents of teenagers and they are in crisis. They are saying, “Please, you have to come and speak with my son or daughter, they're doing this or that, and they won't listen to me.” There are a lot of reasons why that might be the case, but one of the reasons is because in that home, discipline has not been established. These parents have not been active, they've not been engaged, so now, when they really need to have influence in the life of their teenager, it's not there because it didn't begin long ago. That's difficult. God is calling us to be active. To be engaged. So, that's my question: What is one area that you should be more engaged as a parent? When you think of it --If you're married, maybe one the way home, talk about some of these areas. “Do we need to be more engaged there? Do we need to have a conversation there?” That's helpful to think about before you're in the situation.

3. Loving Discipline is focused on a long-term goal - holiness

Okay, Hebrews 12:9-10:

“Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short



time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.”

The principle is that Loving Discipline is focused on a long-term goal and that goal is holiness. I think this is one of the toughest things for parents, especially when your kids are young, like when you have a newborn, because all the goals at that time tend to be very short-term, very small. Some of the goals that we had for my newborn son --I didn't even know that I needed this goal, but the goal that I realized very quickly, what I wanted for my son, was that he would learn how to latch properly. I didn't even know what that was. I thought it was part of a door. If you're not sure, ask --maybe don't ask someone [laughter]. It's part of feeding. So, he wouldn't latch properly and I was like, "Lord, please, I just, I want him to..." because he was crying and screaming and then when he would latch, "Praise the Lord. Two hours are good because he's fed and he's..." The goals are small. We want them to feed. We want them to sleep. We want them to crawl and then walk. We hope, then, that they will learn to read. We hope that they'll do well in school and get into a good school and they'll be independent and get a job. These are all good goals, but we need to recognize that God has a much better goal for each of us and for each of our children, and that is holiness. Godliness. Spiritual maturity. This is the very best goal for each person because it only comes through new life in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, as parents, we should have this as one of our goals that we are praying towards from a young age. "God, I pray that my son or my daughter would come to know you. I'm not assuming that just because I'm a christian, that they are going to come to faith. I pray, God, that they would see their sin. That you would lead me to share the gospel and that it would be effective and that if they come to faith, that they would grow in godliness." This is the very best goal we can have for them.

Colossians 3:21 said to us that we should not discourage our children, and there are few things more discouraging than for a child to achieve all the goals that his parent has set out for him (or her) - a good job, good education, good life here on earth - and yet, they realize that ultimately all those things are not satisfying. That's incredibly discouraging. We have the gift. We have the ability to give them the gift of Jesus. To say, "Look, there are a lot of good things in life, but as a foundation, what you need is new life in Christ. And from that - from the understanding that you are a child of God - then you can discover what it is that God has called you to. Yes, business. Yes, career. Whatever it is, but it starts with new life in Jesus." We have that opportunity to have that goal set before them and to pray towards it. You may be thinking that, "Matt, that sounds like a theological goal and that's great, but right now we have toddlers and elementary school kids and I do want them to grow in that way, but we're kind of just getting through the day." The thing of it is, when you have this understanding that this really is your target, and that you want for your children to know Christ and to grow in godliness, it does actually help you in your day-to-day of your life.

One of our boys (a Glezos boy who shall remain nameless), was very difficult from an early age. He was one of those toddlers that was very verbal, very loud, very physical, a very willful and passionate boy. It wasn't long before we realized that we didn't really know what we were doing. We thought we knew how to discipline, we thought we knew how to parent, and then we had this child and everything was just out the window. He wouldn't listen, there was so much more screaming and crying - not just



from him but from us. We were so exhausted that we didn't know what to do. So, it was a real season of praying and reading the Word. We were asking for help from others. We were asking for others to pray for our family and during that time, one of the things that we realized, was that our goals for this child were far too small and they were often times about us. We were always praying, "Lord, we just pray for a good day. A quiet day. A day where he doesn't react. A day where he is compliant. Maybe he is a little more easy-going." We were always focused on the here and now and what God reminded us is that that's not God's goal. His ultimate goal is that this child, yes, would learn discipline, but that he would have a life with Christ and that our goal as parents wasn't to shape his personality so that he was easier to parent, but rather that God would get a hold of his heart. Because there are great things that a passionate, willful young man can do when he is sold out for Jesus. So, as we had that goal in our minds and our hearts, it didn't make the day-to-day any less difficult, but what it did is it changed our expectations. We weren't expecting that tomorrow all of a sudden all of our discipline would have an effect and he would just be this different kid, because we didn't want a different kid. We wanted this one. God loved him and we did too. We wanted him to know Jesus and then to be shaped by the Spirit of God, so that he would be used in the future for great things.

So, what are your goals for your children? That's my question for you. What are your goals for your children or for your child? Have you thought of them? Do you have something you are praying towards? And where do you need to pray for their holiness? Those are two things that are going to be helpful in the way you interact and in the way you pray for your children. Okay, our last verse. Hebrews 12:11:

"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

The principal here is that loving discipline must "hurt" in some way. Notice I use quotes, "hurt" in some way. I think here, we find ourselves at the crux of the parenting challenge that both Colossians and Hebrews is leading us to because on the face of it we have two verses that kind of seem to be contradictory. Colossians is telling us that we shouldn't discipline our children in such a way that they are angry or bitter, but then Hebrews 12:11 is saying that you need to make sure all of the discipline you give is, in some way, painful. So, you might be saying, "Look Matt, one of the reasons that I'm reluctant to discipline my children with any firmness is because I was angry and bitter as a child because my parents disciplined me so harshly, so I don't want any part of that kind of discipline." Yet, God's word is saying that all discipline - all loving discipline - must hurt some way to be effective.

So what does this mean? This "painfulness", this "hurt"? I think it goes beyond any kind of physical consequence. The principal here, is that the discipline we give - the consequences we give - have some impact in the lives of our children. We know what this is like intuitively. If you were to get a fine for a speeding ticket, imagine you get pulled over and the officer gave you a \$10 fine, you would take that gladly and you would probably speed off into the sunset thinking, "That's not too bad, that's alright." But if you were to get a \$250 ticket, what do we say to our friends? We tell them about it. "Oh, that hurt. I felt that. That had an impact on me. I'm going to think twice before I speed again... on that section of road (wherever that is)" [laughter]. Right? But we felt that. Think back to any of those times



when you've been disciplined. Think back to a time when you remember the lesson that was given to you. Most likely there was some sort of consequence that was significant in your life. That was the way for me. I can remember clearly a time when I was being teenagerly. I was being grumpy, I don't remember what I was being, but my parents gave me a consequence, which was that I had to strip the wax off the basement floor. It took hours. I hated it. It was something I was supposed to do and I had been putting off doing, and before I could use the car they said, "You have to do this." I absolutely hated it, yet I remember it. I remembered the lesson. See, the pain of that time - the hurtfulness of it - it faded, but the lesson remained. That's the nature of all loving discipline.

So the question is this: can we as parents discipline our children in such a way that it "hurts" but doesn't lead them to anger and bitterness, but instead leads them to conviction over their sin? The answer is absolutely yes, but it's going to be messy. It's going to be difficult. That's because anytime anyone is confronted in their sin, they tend to react poorly, right? Isn't that the case for you? Can you think of times when someone has loved you enough to speak into sin in your life? And what has your response been? Sometimes we respond well. "Thanks, I needed to hear that." But a lot of times we are defiant, we're angry, we're indignant, "I can't believe you'd bring this to me after what's going on in your life." We start blaming, we leave the room, we hang up on them. But what do people do if they love us? What do loving friends, loving husbands, loving wives, loving community group leaders, loving elders, what do they do? They pursue us. They pursue someone in their sin because they love them. Because they know even though it's a difficult conversation, even though there is going to be drama and there is going to be sometimes explosive conversations, it's worth it. They know that we need to hear that, so they pursue us. It's got to be the same for us as parents. Which means that there are going to be times when you decide, for the sake of your child, you see some area of sin (maybe it's pride, maybe it's disrespect or disobedience) and you decide that, this is something we need to bring discipline into, and you commit yourself. We're going to discipline. We're going to talk. We're going to instruct. We're going to have conversations about this until our child comes to submission, and yes there is going to be screaming, there's going to be crying, there's going to be hard conversations, there's going to be, "I hate you," there's going to be doors slammed, but that's okay. That's okay because for the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but in time, it produces the fruit of righteousness. At a later time, not right away. We need to be willing to push through some of that anger that we're worried might stick, but trust in God's word that it won't. That if we lovingly pursue them, that they will come to a point of understanding and of repentance.

Just think about how God has disciplined you. Just think of how he's worked in your life. Just think of how many times, even though you've turned your back on him, you've continued on in sin and you haven't responded well to the conviction of the Spirit of God, and yet He's pursued you again and again. He hasn't left us. What would have happened to all of us if God had just given up and left us to our own devices? Where would we be? You may have heard --I think I told you that I was a teacher for a little while. I taught grade four and five in the Coquitlam School District and pretty much every year, every class I had, I would notice that there were some children that are not well loved. By that I don't mean that they weren't well cared for. They had food, they had clothes, they went on trips, they did all sorts of things with their families, but they weren't getting what they really needed. What they needed was for someone to tell them, "No." What they needed was for someone to say, "No, you can't do



that. No, that's not right. I love you, so the answer is no, you can't behave like that in this house. I love you, so here's the consequence. I love you, so the answer is 'no' and you can't play Xbox for a week. I love you, so I'm bringing discipline."

There are many kids that have no self-discipline and that's because no one has done the hard work of teaching them discipline. Our classrooms, our youth groups, are filled with young people who are powerless against the sin in their lives and that is because no one has loved them enough to push through all the screaming and the yelling and the difficult conversations to a point where you can teach discipline and self-discipline. What a beautiful thing it is that God has given us (those of us that are parents) that responsibility, that opportunity that we can love them so much that they will know what it means to submit to their Heavenly Father. It's a beautiful thing. It's a difficult thing, but a beautiful thing. Here's, not a question, but a suggestion: I suggest that you pray for wisdom to know what "painful" loving discipline looks like in the life of your child. It's different for everyone. Different kids respond in different ways. You know, there are some children who when you just look at them sternly and they are convicted. They weep and their crying, "I'm sorry I took the cookie, I'm sorry," and they respond right away. Others, it's going to take a lot more. We need wisdom to know how it is that we can lovingly discipline our children.

[Two Final Words]

Now, there are two final words that I think need to be said on the topic of loving discipline. Two, I think, universal truths.

The first is this: We need to remember that God is sovereign. God is sovereign over the hearts of our children. In a room like this, there are no doubt parents who have children who have left the home, and so you hear a message like this and maybe you are regretting or wishing you could have done things differently. You're wishing that if you had known things differently or just been different yourself, that things would have gone differently - would have gone better. What you need to hear is that God is sovereign. The heart of your child has always been in God's hands. It's not us who save our children, it's God. We are called to be faithful, and so, even now, some of you may be saying, "I did all of that. Matt, I did what you're saying and it hasn't gone well. They've left the home now and I'm not sure how close they are to God." You also need to hear that God is sovereign. Your child's heart has always been in his hands and so you still have the opportunity, the joy of praying for your children. Praying for their heart, praying that God would pursue them, that the Spirit of God would convict them, and that they would come home because the end of their story is not yet written. We have a gracious God, a loving Father. So, God is sovereign.

Second thing: The surest way to lead a child to bitter anger, is for there to be a lack of repentance on the part of the parent. Now look, we have a lot of different situations, family situations and I'm sure I wasn't able to speak into all of your lives as a family, but there is one universal truth and that is if we are calling our children again and again to be humble, to submit, to come to Jesus and repent of their sin, but they never see it in us, that's a problem because they are going to look at us and they are going to know that we have sin in our lives, unless they are young. I remember talking one time with one of my sons who was very young. We were talking about sin and discipline and how everyone



needs Jesus. He looked at me and said, “Dad, you’re not a sinner,” and I said, “Well, what do you mean?” He said, “Well, no one ever disciplines you” [laughter]. I said, “Well, your mom takes care of it later. You just don’t see it” [laughter]. But really, I was convicted in that moment. I realized that I hadn’t been faithful in showing my son what it means to actually live a life of following Jesus, which is a life of repentance. From that moment, I made sure that I would confess my sin, in particular, those times that I was too harsh with my words. When I felt the Spirit of God working in my heart and I knew that I had gone too far, I would go to them, even now, and I would say, “Listen, I need to talk to you about today. The way I talked to you, that was too much. That was too harsh and I shouldn’t have talked to you that way. I was tired and there was something else going on, but listen, I’m really sorry. Can you forgive me?” What a powerful thing it is to be forgiven by your child, by your son or your daughter. What a beautiful picture we are able to give them of what it actually means to live a life of repentance. See, we aren’t just called to teach our children the gospel, we are called to show them the gospel and to teach them that everyone - each one of us - we all need Jesus. Yes, discipline. Yes, teach. Yes, instruct. But most importantly, we don’t just point them to the way of the cross, we lead them there. Let’s pray together.

Lord God, we are thankful. Thankful God, for your word. Thankful God, for the help you give us. Lord, I do want to pray. I want to pray for all of the parents here, all the families represented. God, I pray you would give them strength and encouragement. I pray for the ministry of your Spirit and for your Word, Lord, that they would be reminded that you are with them and that you have called them to a weighty calling and that you’ve also come with them in it. So I pray God, that you would give them wisdom to know how to discipline, how to teach, and how to love their children well. I pray God, for all the children represented here. I pray that they would come to know you and to have a saving faith, to grow in godliness and Lord, through this, you might be glorified. We pray all these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.