



Message **Transcript**

A Loving Father

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One thing we believe here is that God's word is always at work. God is changing lives. God's changed Brittany's lives. God's changing people's lives all throughout our church and our city and our nation, our world. And we love his word.

Would you do me a favor this morning and welcome our Broomfield campus, who's worshipping along with us. So glad that you're here. Special day up there today. Dale and Tracy, who went up to the Broomfield campus two years ago. This is their last Sunday there as we transition to Pastor Michael and just so excited for what they've been able to do.

Would you do me a favor? Would you thank Dale and Tracy for their service to the Lord at the Broomfield campus? We love you guys. Love you, love you. And are so excited about all God's doing in our church.

So can we prepare our hearts this morning to hear God's word directly to us? Let's pray. So, Lord, we pause this morning. We pause because we want to prepare our hearts. We want to have good soil.

Because we know your word tells us there's nothing ever wrong with your word. It's only our hearts. And so, Lord, we bring our hearts before you right now. We confess any known sin, Lord, we confess any distractions that we may have, Lord, anything that may be getting in the way, anything that's hardening our relationship to you. And, Lord, we just confess it.

And we claim the blood of Jesus Christ, who is able to forgive all of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So, Lord, now take your living and active word and implant it deeply in our hearts. Lord, let us hear you clearly. And, Lord, have your way with us. Lord, that's our prayer.

Change us individually. Change us collectively as a church so that we would represent you well on this planet and all God's people that were ready to hear his word, ready to receive it, and put it into practice very loudly, agreed, and said, amen. Amen. I encourage you, open up your bibles to first Corinthians, chapter four. First Corinthians, chapter four.

We're going to begin in verse 14 today. And as Paul has been spelling out to the Corinthians about how they can grow stronger in their relationship with Christ, as we've been talking in this series about the first seven to nine verses or so have been really encouraging. And after that really became Paul's rebuke and admonition and what are you thinking? And you're living carnal and you're being selfish and all these different things. I mean, even to the point where Paul at times has been sarcastic or ironic in his conversation.

And where we get now at the end of chapter four is he's going to tell us why he's been talking this way and why he's been sharing the things that he's been sharing. And what he's going to let us know is he's been talking to us as a good father. He's been talking to us as a loving father, as a caring father, as somebody that genuinely cares about the soul of the people that he's pouring into. Now, when we talk about father, I just got to say, for many of you, when I say the word father, it gives you an emotive experience, just the word father. Because for some of you, it's just like, ah, yes, love, peace, joy, gratefulness, thankfulness.

That's what a father is. For some of you, it elicits other emotions that come out of you, like fear or anger or bitterness or abandonment or frustration. I get it. So what

we're talking about this morning when it comes to fathering is what is our heavenly father like? I mean, if there's anybody that Jesus enjoyed spending time with, it was his father.

It's why he always spent time in prayer. It's why he always talked about his dad. It's why he said, I only do what I see my father doing. He loved his dad all the way to the end. I mean, even when he's in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, what's he doing?

He's talking to his dad. He loves his dad. He's always talking about his loving father, what Paul is representing as a spiritual father to the church in Corinth, what a spiritual loving father looks like. And what he's going to do is he's going to highlight four things that a spiritual father is. And as you hear this today, what we're going to hear is who our heavenly Father is to us and who the men in our life that spiritually shepherd us, what they should be for us.

And Paul is going to highlight those things. And because it's such a short passage, what I'd like to do is just read through this and then we'll unpack these four

things together in one corinthians, chapter four, starting in verse 14. Here's what Paul says. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, you would not have many.

For in Christ Jesus, I became father through the gospel. Therefore, I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason, I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church now, some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon if the Lord wills. And I shall find out not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power.

For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? And in these short verses, we really hear the heart of a loving father. We really hear the heart of a spiritual shepherd.

And Paul is going to explain to the corinthian people, hey, here's why I've been so harsh and strong in my words to you. And the first is this, four things we're gonna talk

about this morning. The first is this. A loving father issues warnings that consequences are imminent if behavior doesn't change. That's what a loving father does.

A loving father issues warnings that consequences are imminent if behavior doesn't change. Notice what he says in verse 14. I do not write these things to shame you, but to what? Admonish you. I'm not writing to shame you.

He goes, I haven't been saying all this stuff to you so that you walk away and feel bad. I'm not trying to heap guilt on your head so that you have shame. I mean, Paul is also the same guy that wrote in romans eight one. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul is saying, I'm not writing this to heap up guilt and shame on your life.

That's not why I'm doing it. I'm doing it for this purpose. I'm doing it to admonish you. Admonish means I am bringing this to your mind to warn you that the direction that you're going is not a good direction. It's a direction that's not helpful for you, and it's not helpful for the church.

And I love you enough to admonish you. I love you enough to warn you. I love you enough to tell you that you're not on the right path. Every loving father does that for his children. Did you know that?

I mean, if you're a father and you have children and you say, I don't care what you do, I don't care how you speak. I don't care how you treat your mother. I don't care how you treat our house. I don't care what you say to other people. As long as you get to do whatever you want to do.

I'm happy with that. You are not a good father. Would we agree on that? So to admonish means I care about you enough and I love you enough to speak strong words into your life, to show you the direction you're going is not good and there's consequences for the direction that you're going. That's what Paul's saying.

He goes, I'm telling you this because I love you. Notice what the next words are. He says. He says, you know, I'm not telling you to shame you, but to admonish you. As what?

As my beloved children. He's saying, I'm telling you something's wrong because you're my beloved children. I mean, to Paul, the corinthian church are not just parishioners. They're not just people that are showing up. How does he view them as my beloved children.

What's my. There's a personal significance. There's a personal relationship. It's not like any other place. Like we belong to one another.

I mean, you're special to me. And what are you? You're beloved. That means you're chosen and you're dearly loved and you're significant and you're special. Why?

Because of the gospel of Jesus Christ and we share the same father. And you're my children. What are children? Children is I'm responsible for you. I'm called to feed you and love you and admonish you and see that you get on the right direction because where you are is not ultimately where you're going to end up.

And I have responsibility to see that you grow in the maturity that you need to grow in for the sake of the gospel. The same is true in the church as it is in life. I mean, there's nothing like seeing new life. I mean, I love it when some of you young families or even older families have infant children, right? And you bring them to church and we get to see, and they're like, oh, beautiful.

I mean, they all have the same head as me and, you know, they're just cute and we love that and love seeing them and talking to them and it's beautiful and it's a wonderful season. But that's not the end game, is it? I mean, we realize we've only got a short amount of time and that God has more planned than just to change their diapers and feed them that over time, God wants to see them grow, and he's given them purpose and uniqueness. And our job as parents is to shepherd that and help them go in a way so that when they're on their own, they can live lives and find success and flourish in whatever God's called them to do. Right?

That's what spiritual parenting looks like and spiritual fathering. And sometimes, because you love your children so much, you'll do what? You'll warn them. The way

you're going is not good, and there's consequences to the way you're going. And I know you don't like to hear that, but I love you enough to tell you.

But, dad, nobody else is being told that. But, mom, how come they. Because they don't love you like I love you, right? That's what Paul's saying to the church in Corinth. I love you enough to tell you that you're in a way that's not going the right way.

And isn't this true? Even when Paul tells Timothy to preach the word, I mean, we hold up God's word, and we hear the father talking through the word about his son. I mean, he tells Timothy to preach the word. He says, what? Reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

I mean, two thirds of those things, when we hear the word, it's reproof, which is, I'm correcting. I'm making some tactical corrections in your life, or I'm reproofing. Like, you're totally going the wrong way. Turn around. Or I'm exhorting you, like, hey, good job, but keep going.

You can do a little better. That's what the word of God does. That's why when we leave church, sometimes we feel reproved. Sometimes we feel like, you know, that's a course correction. I needed to hear that.

Sometimes we feel rebuked, like, holy cow, that was a hard one. I feel like I just got spanked this morning. Cause God told me to turn the other way. Right? And other times, we feel exhorted where we hear the Lord say, good job.

Just keep taking that next step. You're doing really well. That's what the word of God does. And at any given time, in any given sermon, all those things can be going on in the body of Christ. Amen.

And Paul's saying to the people in Corinth, he goes, I love you enough to tell you the truth. Cause I'm your spiritual father. I literally care about you. Let me tell you something about admonishing people do. You know, the Bible tells us to admonish one another to warn one another.

Being a spiritual father is not a passive duty. I mean, nobody wants to warn anybody else. Let's just let everybody else do whatever they want to do. But even in the body of Christ, we have a spiritual responsibility to admonish one another. It means when we see something in somebody else's life that's off course or going the other way, if we love them, what will we do?

We'll tell them. We'll tell them. Sometimes we don't like it when other people tell us those things. And I have found in my life, when people tell me those kind of things, they need to give me some time to process those kind of things just like anybody else. Okay?

And we need that too. But when you admonish someone, you're doing what the body of Christ is called to do. Now, when I say admonish somebody, I don't mean that you stand with the Bible in the lobby every Sunday and kind of look for people. Yeah, we need to talk. This is you.

You're totally off course. God wanted me to tell you. Oh, by the way, hold on,

hold on. Don't go anywhere. This is you, and you're wrong.

That's not what it means to admonish somebody. Admonishing is those people in our sphere of influence that we have a relationship with, that we know what's going on, and we love them enough that we actually want to see the change, willing to walk through the changes if they were willing to turn. It's not just pointing out sin. It means, I love you enough to point these things out. And I love you enough that I'm willing to walk through.

And I can tell you, when you admonish someone, oftentimes you really find out what's truly going on in their heart. Oftentimes, you really find out what their character looks like when they're being admonished. I mean, even Paul says in Hebrew or not Paul, but in the book of Hebrews, it says, no discipline is pleasant at the time. I mean, nobody likes being admonished, let's be honest. I mean, even those of us who would say, feedback's the breakfast of champions.

And I love it when people tell me. Cause I can get better. No, you don't. Nobody likes it. I mean, it's not fun, but we can appreciate it if we know that somebody really

loves and cares for us.

And proverbs, chapter nine and verse eight. You can write this verse down. It really talks about how people respond to admonishments. It says, do not reprove a scoffer or he will hate you. Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

In other words, the one reason we really don't like to admonish other people, and when we have opportunity to do that, if you really are being called of God to admonish somebody, let me tell you, you're not going to want to do it. I mean, if you like, I look forward to the day I get to admonish people. There's something wrong with you. Okay. God.

It shouldn't be an enjoyable experience. It should be that we're doing out of obedience to Christ. And the reason we're fearful to do it is because we don't know how people are going to respond to us. Like, I know if I say that to them, they're going to get really upset with me and they're going to gossip behind my back and they're going to slander me. So I'll just let them go their own way because I don't want to get hurt by showing them the truth in their life.

And so we passively back off. But a good spiritual father or a good spiritual mother will do what? Hey, I love you enough, and I know this may hurt your feelings, but I need to tell you this, and I love you enough, and I'm willing to walk through, but. But this is what I've seen, right? And what you find when you admonish a Christian, how they respond shows you where their level of heart is.

Because when people get squeezed, their character really comes out, and it comes out as really sweet nectar, like, wow. Or it comes out as sour grapes, kind of a lemon, like, who do you think you are? Why you talk, you know? Right. And so if you're going to admonish someone, here's what I really encourage you to do.

Pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray for them long before you ever do it. And pray, pray, pray for how you're gonna deliver the admonishment and how you're gonna warn them and what you're gonna do. Paul knew the Corinthians well. I mean, the words he's using are cutting right to their heart. But he has a relationship with them in such a way that he can do that because he would agree with John.

How? John says in three. John, four, I have no greater joy than this to hear of my children walking in the truth. I mean, what did Paul want to see? He wanted to see all the Corinthians walking in the truth of the light of the gospel and being freed up and having hope and having joy and having peace.

What do I want? As your pastor? I want to see you freed up in Jesus. I want you to love him. I want you to enjoy him.

And oftentimes what that means is I'm admonishing from the word. Like, here's what the word says. There's a course correction here. There's something God wants to do in your life just a little bit differently. And all of us would admit, I'd admit, all of us would admit we haven't arrived yet.

All of us would admit we got some growing room to do. So we shouldn't be surprised when the word of God admonishes us and God's issuing warnings that consequences are coming if we don't change. Why? Why would God do this to us? Because undisciplined and carnal believers cause harm to themselves and cause harm

to the body of Christ.

I mean, there's all sorts of things in the Bible that God talks about, and God lays out standards for, like, what sexual purity looks like and what it looks like to forgive somebody else when they've wronged you and how to have a pure heart and how to have a wise mind and all those things. Why? Because if you don't live in line with that, you can really get hurt. I mean, how many people, by show of hands, would admit, hey, there was some sin that I sinned in my life that actually hurt me and maybe even other people around me at some point in my life, right? We all have.

If you haven't raised your hand, it's just because you're not paying attention to the question, right? All of us have, right? Every single one of us. And so what Paul's doing is saying, hey, I care about you enough. Don't hurt yourself, children.

I'm just telling you, sometimes when your parents are telling you things about man, you just don't understand the times. Not only do they understand the times, they understand how stupid they were when they were your age and they're trying to help you because they don't want you to go down the same path that they did because they

love you and they don't want you to experience the pain that they've experienced or the pain that they've caused others. That's what a good spiritual father or mother does.

They issue warnings. They admonish.

They say consequences are coming either from me or from someone else if your behavior continues in the way that it's going. And when you know that and when you know you're loved. You can hear the words. What does Paul say? Verse 15.

He says, for if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, I became your father through the gospel. In other words, he says, you've had many people teach you about the gospel, and that's great. But who led you to Christ? It was me.

Who's your spiritual daddy? It's me. We have a special relationship because I led you to Christ. I mean, can you remember who led you to Christ? I remember who led me to Christ.

I have a special relationship with Gordy Smith because he led me to Jesus Christ. He's my spiritual father in the faith. You know, I have a guy that led to the Lord when I was in college, he'll call me on the phone and he'll say, hey, dad, what's up? Right? Because I'm a spiritual father in the faith.

And that's what Paul was to them. But even more than just leading them to Christ, what did he do? He parented them. He loved them. He fed them.

He lived his life among them. He poured himself into them. He goes, I think about you in a special way because I'm your father. I mean, when I get to go speak at other churches, that's an easy gig. I'm just telling you it's an easy gig because I can take all my favorite stories and all my best stuff and package it.

It takes me about five minutes to prepare a message, and it's easy. But I don't love the people that I'm speaking to in the same way that I love this church. Why? Because I know you and we spend time together, and I see your flaws, and you see my flaws, and we pray for one another and we build one another. So there's something

special that happens here, and there's a way deeper love that I have for the people in Denver, Colorado, in our church than anywhere else in the world.

Cause I'm your spiritual father, right? And that's what Paul's telling the Corinthians. And so he's issuing warnings that consequences are imminent if their behavior doesn't change. That's what a loving spiritual father does. Let me tell you the second thing he does.

A loving spiritual father provides a personal example to follow and teaches others to do the same. He provides a personal example to follow and teaches others to do the same. Notice what he says in verse 16. Therefore, I exhort you, be imitators of me. Be imitators of me.

That literally means mimic me. That literally means I walk my talk. Don't just do as I say, but do as I do. That's what Paul's saying. Be imitators of me.

Now, when it comes to Jesus, that's an easy one. I mean, when Jesus calls his

disciples in Matthew chapter four, and Matthew chapter four, verse 19, he said, come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Well, that's Jesus. He's perfect. In other words, when Jesus says, come follow me, it's an easy gig.

Cause he's like, I'm perfect. Just do what I do. Say what I say, pray like I pray, and everything will go good with you. But Paul's not Jesus. Paul's a sinner saved by grace.

Even long after Paul's conversion, when he was writing to the Romans, he was saying, I don't understand what I'm doing. Cause the good I wanna do, I don't do, but the evil I do, I do. And why the heck I don't even get what I'm doing sometimes. So he's not writing as a spiritual perfectionist, saying, I got it right. Imitate me.

What's he saying? He's saying, in everything I'm doing, I am doing my best to walk my talk. He goes, here's what he's really saying. He's saying, I live what I teach, and I teach what I live. There's congruency.

And the one thing that you would have seen in Paul that you didn't see in Jesus was confession of sin, repentance, right? I mean, Jesus forgave others. Paul would have forgiven others. But at other times, Paul needed to ask forgiveness for the way that he asked, for the way that he acted. Jesus never needed to ask forgiveness.

Ask forgiveness for what? He never did anything wrong. He's perfect, right? Here's the question. In the church, we can say it's important for us to go out and share the gospel.

But when we share the gospel with people who come to Christ, can we honestly look them in the eye and say, hey, over the next year, just follow me in the same way you see me. Follow Christ, and you'll be good. Mimic me. Mimic my marriage, mimic my parenting, mimic my preaching, mimic my lifestyle, mimic the way I handle money, mimic the way I handle people that are hard with me. Mimic the way I treat other people.

Kind of mimic me. And most of us as believers in Christ. No, don't do what I do. I

mean, I know what. Just don't follow me.

Follow Jesus. No. They need a living example to follow. How are they going to follow Jesus if they can't even see Jesus in you? And one of the biggest detriments in the evangelical church that I see are people who call themselves by the name of Christ but don't live it.

And then there's other people that are watching saying, you're saying this, but you don't live this way. And I want nothing to do with that because you're a hypocrite, right? Paul is saying, hey, follow me in the same way I follow Christ. It's not the only place he said it. In one corinthians, chapter eleven and verse one, he said almost the identical thing.

He said, be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. In other words, I am trying to follow Christ and imitate him. And in the ways you see in me, imitating and following Christ, do that. Do that in me. In Philippians four nine, he says something very similar.

He says, the things which you have learned and received. In other words, when you've heard me talk, what you've learned from me and what you've received in me. And then he goes, the things you've learned and received and heard and seen. In other words, and what you've witnessed in me and what you've watched in me and everything about me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. In other words, here's Paul's testimony.

Just do what I do and you'll get the gospel. Can we say that that's what a spiritual father is called to say, right? Mimic me. Now, if we're really honest with ourselves, we see all the sorts of holes in our life. We see all the ways we don't measure up.

I totally get that. But is the blood of Christ filling those holes? Is Jesus like filling those things up? Cause if you had to wait until you were the perfect husband to get married, or you had to wait until you're the perfect wife to get married, we could only have singles. If you had to wait until you were the perfect parent to have kids, we wouldn't be allowed to have children.

If you had to wait till you were the perfect pastor to pastor, we couldn't have churches. I mean, that's not what he's saying. What he's saying is, to the extent that you see me walking out the gospel in my life and growing in Christ and loving Jesus, and it's pouring from me, imitate those things and the God of peace will be with you. That's what he's saying. And that's what he's telling the corinthians.

He's like, I've lived among you. I've modeled this among you. You've seen me. You spent time with me, and I'm exhorting you, be imitators of me.

Notice what else he says. I don't really have a personal example. I've been teaching others to do the same thing I have. He's saying, I have a personal resume of people I've taught who live Christ like. Like verse 17 says, for this reason, I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord.

What is he talking about again, kids, my beloved children, I have Timothy. And he will remind you of my ways, which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere and in every church. In other words, I'm the same in Corinth as I am in Philippi as I am in

colossi. I'm teaching and living the same way. I'm not a christian chameleon where I act Christian here and I don't act Christian there.

I'm a Christian no matter where I go and what I do. And I've been teaching the same things everywhere I go. And now I'm going to send Timothy to you because Timothy knows my heart and I have no one like him. I mean, when Paul writes to the Philippians, when he's going to send Timothy to the Philippians, notice what he says about Timothy in Philippians 220. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father? In other words, Timothy welcomed Paul's teaching in his life and grew as a child to the place where Timothy was now fathering others. When we're called to make disciples, it doesn't just mean sharing the gospel with people. It means when we share the gospel with people.

And there's people who have come to Christ and they're young in their faith. It is

our responsibility to see them grow up. It's not simply a pastor's job. That's the pastor's job. Just go to church.

No, it's our job to walk alongside them so they can see a living model of what it looks like to see Jesus Christ living in and through you. Do you have people in your life like that? Do you have people whom you've spent time with that know, like, okay, this is what it means to love Jesus. And this is what it means to walk it out. And let me tell you what that means.

I mean, even on our staff, I mean, guys that have been with me and gals that have been with me for about seven years, I'll watch them coach some of our newer staff and they'll start talking to, I'll overhear conversations sometimes. Like, that's not quite how we do it here. And here's how we do it here. And here's why. And I'm like, that's exactly what I would have said.

Right? Because they get the culture. I see it in my kids. I mean, this week, this just happened two days ago. This week, I'm backing out of my driveway and all three of my kids are in the back of my truck, and my oldest is ten.

And she's talking to my four year old about how to respond when you're given a gift at Christmas. She's teaching her what we've taught our kids because I don't know what it's like in your family, but sometimes we have to go over things more than once. We've had those experiences where we've gone to somebody's house for dinner and we've taught our kids, hey, no matter what they said in front of you, here's what you say. You say thank you, and then you eat it no matter what. And then we go to a person's house and we sit down, and one of our children has said on an occasion, oh, I hate that I'm not eating any of that stuff.

And while I appreciate their candor in the moment, it's probably not the best thing to say. So we work on this stuff, and that's what a spiritual father does. You don't just tell somebody, you work on it over and over. So we're backing out of the driveway the other day, and we taught our kids at Christmas, no matter what you get, you just say thank you even if you don't like it. And I'm listening to my ten year old talk to my four year old, and here's what she said verbatim.

And I about ran into the garage because I was laughing so hard. She says to my

youngest, she's like, now, now, Elle, here's the deal. If somebody gives you a Christmas present and it's poop, what do you say?

And my four year old says, yuck, I don't want that. And she says, no, you say, thank you very much. And I turn around, I'm like, seriously? I'm like, I'd say, yuck, I don't want that. I mean, we've kind of gone to a little bit of an extreme here.

But this is what Paul's talking about with Timothy. Timothy spent so much time with Paul that he knows his heart and he knows his mind, and he knows what Paul is going to say and how Paul is going to say it and how Paul has lived and what he has done so that he can model that and think about Jesus and his disciples for a minute. It is not just like they went to church with him for three years on a Sunday for an hour or an hour and a half if they went to a church like ours. But here's what he did. He spent time with them.

They went deep sea fishing. They went on big picnics where miraculous things happened. He healed the sick. He went to the poorest of the poor, the riches of the rich. He spent time in every situation.

So when it came to go into all the world, they had already done it. They'd already been with every kind of person and watched how Jesus interacted with every kind of person, with really needy, hurting people and with prideful religious people. They'd seen it all. So what does God want from us? God wants us as spiritual parents, spiritual fathers, spiritual mothers, to model what it looks like to show the love of Christ in so many different environments that our spiritual children, our own personal children, the people were disciplings.

Like, that's how you do it. I remember when I was young in my faith, and I was 24 years old, and I was a youth pastor in a church, and I had this guy I met. He said, have you ever been discipled? And I immediately said no, because for me, discipleship meant sitting down and just teaching me the Bible. And nobody had really ever done that for me before.

So I said, no. She's like, I'm going to disciple you, brother. We're going to go out to breakfast. I'm going to disciple you. I'm like, cool.

I want to learn the Bible. We went out to breakfast. I'm about halfway through this breakfast, and I was thinking to myself, I never want to come to this breakfast with this guy ever again. Because all he did was like, here's what it says. Here's what it says.

Here's what it says. Here's what it says. It wasn't fun. And I was praying about it for a period of months. I'm like, lord, how come I've never been disciplined?

And don't you care about me enough to put somebody in my life that disciplines me. And I remember one morning I was having coffee with a couple kids in my youth group, and I was sipping coffee, and I was asking them about their life and what God had been doing in their life, and I'm listening to their story, and all of a sudden, it just clicked in my mind. And God showed me, he goes, you know what? This is what Bob used to do with you when you were in college, and he would ask you questions about your life, and you processed who you were, and you grew in Christ. And isn't that exactly what you're doing now?

That's what discipleship is. It's modeling and replicating who you are in Christ. And I was like, I've totally been discipled. Right? See, we get the wrong idea of discipleship.

We think discipleship is a certain style or a certain way. We get wrong ideas about marriage and parenting because we think it's a certain style in a certain way. No, it's about glorifying Jesus Christ in all that you do and modeling what that looks like. So when other people see you, they see the light of Christ in you. That's what it means.

You follow after him. And a spiritual father or a spiritual mother or a mature disciple provides a personal example. And they're constantly teaching others what that personal example looks like. In other words, I'm living this life. But let me teach you why I'm living this life.

Here's what I do. Let me tell you why I do what I do. Some of you guys in the business world, I know this to be true about you because you've told me. You tell young business entrepreneurs, hey, this is what I do. Let me tell you, this is why I do what I do.

This is how the Lord has led me to do this. Hey, I tell young guys, this is how I. Pastor, this is why I. Pastor, this is how the Lord has led me to do what I do. It doesn't mean that you're the only business person that's got it figured out.

Doesn't mean I'm the only pastor that's got it figured out or that you're the only parent that has it figured out. It means, in your sphere of influence, this is why you're doing what you're doing for the Lord, so that other people see Jesus Christ in you. And here's where God's growing you. You may be young in the faith. I totally get that.

Welcome to Harvest. Glad you're here. You may not even trusted Jesus yet. Welcome to Harvest. I'm glad you're here.

But let me tell you something. If you know the Lord God's desire in your life is to grow into spiritual maturity in such a way that you're discipling others by modeling for them and teaching them what it means to live, like, as a follower of Jesus Christ. And it's not just a what and why. Like, here's what it is. Here's why I do it.

It's a, here's how I do it, right? I mean, I could read to you about five passages in the Bible to tell you, here's what a good marriage looks like, and it's so deep and so rich, and you'd have everything you need to know. But I found in my life that it's good not only to know what the scriptures teach, but to find five, six, seven other couples that I see the love of Christ in and say, how do you do that? And why do you do that? I remember when Kim and I got married, we were going to premarital counseling, which is so easy.

Premarital counseling is awesome, I just want you to know. And they made us bring a couple in with us so that we could talk about things. And, you know, before we got married, I mean, we were perfect. I mean, there's nothing wrong. And so we went to premarital counseling, which was great.

But then we went to this thing called post marital counseling, where the same people came in afterwards and they were there for us when we were doing our post marital fee, which is not nearly as fun, right? But I remember that couple, they would sit us down and they would tell us how they worked out an argument. They sat us

down one night and pulled out their entire budget, showed us exactly how much money they made and how they line itemed everything in ministry to do what they did. We'd never seen anybody do that. I mean, they were just totally candid with it.

They talked about how they disciplined their children. They talked about the mistakes that they made. They made us feel so loved all the time. And every time I felt like a bonehead going into counseling, I remember Bill would be there and be like, I've done that, too, dude, it's really stupid what you did, but I did it, too. It made me feel good to know that I wasn't alone.

Right? That's called spiritual parenting and spiritual fathering. Like some of you guys that are a little bit older, some of you gals that are a little bit older, you're kind of waiting until you just know more of the Bible and can help people. Let me tell you about those that are younger than you. They don't need somebody perfect to disciple them.

They're not looking for perfection because they know they never will be either. They're looking just for your honest heart of seeing how Christ has manifested himself in your life, the good, the bad and the ugly, and who you are. And if you'll be a person

that can bring people alongside of you and just kind of let them see your life and be authentic about it, you will transform people. That's Paul saying, that's what I did. I modeled it for you.

I taught you. Now I'm sending Timothy to you. He's a classic example of somebody that's listen and follow my teaching, and this is what he's going to do when he comes to you. Third thing Paul talks about, he says, a loving father does this. And hear me on this one.

A loving father investigates behavior and willingly administers accountability and discipline. A loving spiritual parent, a loving father, a loving mother will investigate behavior and willingly administer accountability and discipline. Now, in verse 18, Paul says, now some of you have become arrogant. Arrogant means puffed up, meaning you're thinking you're better than others. And you might say, well, how does Paul know that?

Because he's investigating what's going on in the church. He's been sent a letter. He knows what's happening. And he's saying, some of you become arrogant, as

though I were not coming to you. In other words, you think you're going to get away with all this, but watch this.

But I will come to you soon. And he adds this, if the Lord wills, in other words, I want to come to you, and I'm planning on coming to you, but it's going to be the Lord's desire to bring me. Because if the Lord says, no, I'm going to follow the Lord, but I'm going to come to you if the Lord wills. And I shall find out not the words of those who are arrogant, arrogant, but their power for the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. In other words, what's discipleship?

Discipleship's not words. It's not what you can tell people. It's what you live, right? If you've come to church for at least a year or more, you can talk the talk, I promise you, and people can point at you and say, hey, man, I see this in your life. You seem really anxious.

I'm like, yeah, brother, you're right. You know, Philippians four says, do not be anxious about anything. But in prayer and petition with Thanksgiving present, your request to God. I'm just praying about that. When deep down you're totally anxious.

But you spin a Christian, a biblical scripture out there just to push people away so they don't get into your heart. I mean, you can talk all you want. It's one thing about talking about your christian life, and it's another thing about living it. And Paul's saying, when I come to you, I'm gonna find out who the mere talkers are and who's actually walking this thing out. Because there's a huge difference for me.

There's a lot of people in church that think they're spiritual because they can talk a lot about the Bible. I know a lot of people that can talk a lot about the Bible that don't know a whole lot about Jesus. I mean, the Pharisees would be the classic example. In Jesus day, they knew all about the scriptures, yet they refused to come to Jesus to have life. And the problem with people like that is it takes young, spiritual believers who really love Jesus and make them feel bad, like they're never going to get it, when they're actually closer to Christ than these spiritual, religious, pharisee kind of people that don't.

Right? That's what Paul's saying. And what's Paul saying? I'm gonna come investigate your behavior. You know what a spiritual father does?

I'll give you two words. A spiritual father is intentionally intrusive. In other words, I care about you so much that I'm gonna investigate your life. Cause I wanna know what's going on. Kids, if you've ever said mom and dad, that's none of your business.

Why are you in here? Cause I love you and it's my business. It's my business as your spiritual parent to know what's going on with you. Because if I don't, nobody else will. And that may make you uncomfortable, and that may make you upset, but I love you enough to be intentionally intrusive.

Does our heavenly father do that with us? Holy cow, he does with me all the time. Right? I mean, sometimes we don't like God being that intentionally intrusive. I mean, we can be going along in our quiet times, and we can be going along in our day, and we can go even weeks or months at a time.

And all of a sudden, it's like, search me, lord, just try me. And God shows us something in our heart that wounds us and says, yeah, you're prideful here. Or, yeah,

the way you speak to people, it's not good or hey. The way, I don't like that, but it's true. Isn't God intentionally intrusive with us?

I mean, I know how much God's changed me in the last 25 years, and I know there's ways that I'm not the same as I used to be, but I would be the first to admit that I know I haven't arrived either. So I know God loves me enough to be intentionally intrusive in my life. What should we be in other people's lives that we are spiritually fathering? We should be intentionally intrusive in theirs. That's why healthy, small groups, when you break out with guys, with guys and gals.

With gals should be what? Intentionally intrusive. I want to know what's really going on. Don't tell me I'm good praying. It's all good, brother.

Don't do that, because it's not all good unless you're Jesus. It's not all good. So what's really going on in your life? And how can I be a help to you? And listen, I've walked with the Lord long enough to know that when I get around people that are plasticky and fake and unauthentic, I just don't enjoy it.

I just don't enjoy spending time with people like that. I can handle the person that says, here's my sin, and I'm really struggling with this, and I don't even know how to get over it. I can handle that. Cause I get that, but I don't get the, everything's great. Everything's good.

That's fine. How can I pray for you? I don't get that because it's just not spiritual. It's just not godly. It's just not how God leads us.

A spiritual father is always intentionally intrusive. Paul's like, I've heard some of you are arrogant. I've heard some of you are mere talkers. But there's no demonstration of the love of Christ going on in your life. You're not living it out.

People aren't seeing the love of Jesus in your life. You're just talking about it. And when I come, I'm going to find out. And any loving father is willing to administer accountability and discipline. Notice what he says in that final verse of verse 21.

What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? Now, he's not talking about physical beating. He's talking about a spiritual one. But Paul had been beaten with rods I mean, he was saying, hey, listen, I will come and discipline you because I love you, and a good spiritual father is willing to exercise discipline.

Now, let me be really clear on this, because you need to hear this clearly. When you physically discipline a child, okay? It has to be done in love. It can never be done out of anger. It can never be done in an abusive manner.

It can never be done in a way where you're shaming someone. But the Bible says physical discipline is a part of parenting, right? I mean, if you don't believe me, just meditate on these verses. This week I wrote down five. They're all in the proverbs.

There's many others, but these are in the proverbs. You can write the verses down and look them up later. Proverbs 13:24. He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. What's the verse saying?

That if you don't spank your kids when they need it, you just don't love them. It's a fact. Proverbs 19:18. Discipline your son while there is hope and do not desire his death. In other words, spiritual fathers, you have a responsibility to discipline your kid.

Proverbs 20:215. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child. The rod of discipline will remove it far from him. Proverbs 20:313. And 14.

Do not hold back discipline from the child. Listen to this. Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. Okay. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol or hell.

How about proverbs 20:915? The rod of and reproof give wisdom. But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. I mean, what's the Bible teach? That there is a time for physical discipline.

But again, I reiterate, it has to be a unique time. It has to be done in love. But discipline is part of parenting. And I know we live in a day and age where we don't like to talk about that. I know we live in a day and age where we think that's politically incorrect and all that kind of stuff, but it's biblical and it's true and it's healthy.

You know, I was listening to the comedian Jeff Foxworthy one time, and he said, we didn't have timeouts for kids. When I was growing up, we had timeouts for parents. He said, my dad always took a timeout to beat my backside, right? Here's the truth. If you love your kids, you will discipline them.

You will. But you'll always, 100% of the time, do it because you love them, not because you're angry with them and not because you're shaming them, and not because this or that, right? Does God love us enough to discipline them? In the book of Hebrews, it says God scourges everyone he loves as a son. I mean, if you've never been spanked by the Lord, you don't know him, right?

You just don't know him because he loves us enough to not leave us where we

are, right? Spiritually, God spans his kids. He always does. And spiritual maturity, again, it does not equal knowledge. It equals a transformation by the spirit inside of us who's growing us.

And a loving father, he investigates behavior. He's willing to hold their kids accountable, willing to administer discipline if necessary. But don't miss this fourth part of a loving spiritual father. A loving spiritual father will always allow freedom and time for his children to decide how they want to be treated. This is huge because I can't talk about discipline without talking about this.

Paul asked him in verse 21, what do you want? Like, what do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? Like, how do you want me to come to you? Do you want me to come to you to discipline you?

Or do you want me to come and love with a spirit of gentleness? In other words, here's what Paul's saying. It's totally your choice. My preference would be to come in a spirit of love and gentleness. It's your opportunity.

You get freedom to respond. You get freedom to choose how I, as your spiritual father am going to treat you. Right. And sometimes I find that in christian circles we don't allow that time. We don't allow the freedom and time to allow our children to decide how they want to be treated.

I mean, even some books have been written where it says, hey, delayed obedience is disobedience. And I would say, yeah, that's true, but have you ever read the Bible? I mean, how long did God delay sometimes before he brought punishment? I mean, sometimes it was years. I mean, read through the Old Testament.

Judgment's on the way. How long is he waiting? Years, right? God's coming to judge the world. How long has he been waiting?

2000 years, right? He's on the way. He's gonna bring it. Parents, it doesn't mean that when you set standards and boundaries for your kids that they get like 30 seconds to respond. Sometimes they need a chance to own it and understand the consequence and why you're asking that?

And give them freedom and time. Does God give us freedom and time? I love that God gives us freedom and time. I'm glad God doesn't point something out of my quiet time at six in the morning and squash me at seven if I'm not obedient. I'm just glad for that.

I'm glad there's times God points something out at six in the morning and three weeks later he's still pointing it out. Two months later he's still pointing it out, and six months later he's still pointing it out. And finally, I correct myself and allow the Holy Spirit to take over when I repent and confess. Aren't you glad that our Lord is like that? So don't hear this message and say, hey, I'm going to set the standard.

And if you're not right, I'm punishing right now. That's not the heart of a father. What's the heart of a father? Paul's heart is I want to come and love and I want to get behind you, and I want to love you and exhort you and to be filled with the spirit so that you can walk it out. That's my heart for the church.

That's my heart for each and every one of you. Now, I'm a spiritual father. I'm willing to discipline you. I'm willing to come that way. Is that really what you want?

I don't think you do. If you do, that's how I'll come. But it's not my desire. My desire would be coming, love and a spirit of gentleness. If you enjoy disciplining your kids, you have a problem.

You really do. It should never be something that's fun or pleasurable. I don't like disciplining my kids at all, but I'm willing to do it knowing that I stand before the Lord for the way in which I bring them up. Right. Allow freedom and time for your kids to decide.

And you need to have people in your life that speak these things into your life. Right? We need to have people in our lives because we can't have like a myriad of people that admonish us. Cause it'd be really hard to pick and choose which people we were listening to. Who are the people around you that you allow to speak into your life?

And are they worthy? Do you see them walking with Christ? Right. Like, I have a wife. That's awesome at this.

See, you see her on Sunday mornings and you see her sitting over there smiling and praying for me. And she's lovely and she's delightful, but nobody, but nobody speaks more admonition in my life than my wife because she lives with me. So she can speak into my life and tell me when I'm a total bonehead, right? And she can say, I don't like the way you're treating me, or, I don't like the way you acted today. I don't like the way you treated our children.

But when she says it, I know it's true, right? If other men in my life that I can have speak into my life that way, do you have people in your life that will do that for you? See, God wants us to have spiritual parents in our life. God wants us to have spiritual friends in our life. God wants us to be that for other people.

And the way that we grow in Christ is not just saying, oh, you know, Christ,

great. Have a great day. The way we grow in Christ is having some people around us that love us enough to say, you know what? That may not be the best way to go. And I love you enough, and I'll continue to walk through even if you don't change your behavior.

But, hey, listen, I love you, and I'm walking with you. And as we grow in Christ, here's what I find. You know what? As we begin to spiritually disciple other people, guess who grows the most? We do.

See, when I see my kids misbehaving, do you know what I see? I see my sin patterns replicated in them, and I see what I need to change. You know what I see when I disciple people? I see my sin patterns replicated in them and what I need to change. I mean, as Kim and I have done marital counseling, I don't know how many times, and we're sitting across from a couple, or I'm doing it, or she's doing it.

I mean, we're always, if we're together, we're always in the car on the way home apologizing to one another. If it's me doing the counseling, I've usually picked up the phone within five minutes of somebody leaving and apologizing to her, saying, you

know what? Here's what I do. If she's doing it, she says the same thing to me. Why?

Because when you're spending time shepherding other people, guess what you're able to say. It's like a reflection of all your stuff in your own life. And one of the reasons the enemy hates us discipling other people is he knows that's the best way we grow as christians, when I started spending time with other people, when I started leading small groups, when I started discipling other people, that's when I started growing the most. If I had waited until I had it all right, I still would be in the same place I was 25 years ago, right? God wants us to take steps and start shepherding and start discipling.

And when I read through this passage, I started thinking about our heavenly Father. And I said, you know what? This is exactly what our God does. This is exactly who he is in our life. He's a good, good father, isn't he?

I mean, he gives us warnings through his word and says, hey, this is the way you want to go. He provided a personal example in his son, Jesus Christ. You want to know what God's like? Just read through the gospels and see who Jesus is. He

investigates our behavior constantly, if we'll allow him, and say, hey, Lord, search me and try me, show me that.

And then he gives us freedom and time because he loves us enough. Say, I know you can't change right now, but through my holy spirit you can. Will you walk in this way? And even if you don't, I'm going to keep coming to you. Keep coming to you, keep coming to you, you know, and there's a place, and I don't know where it is on each thing or how God does it.

There's a time where God can bring discipline in our life and he does that, but he's so patient and so kind and so loving. And isn't it great to know we have a father like that, friends, that's the kind of father that I preach about every single week. And I want you to know, if you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, that's the father Jesus wants you to know. I mean, God demonstrated his own love by this. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God sent his own son to be slaughtered on a cross. God sent his own son to pay a penalty we could never pay for ourselves. He's already demonstrated his love for you

in that he let his son shed his own blood and die in your place, be buried in a grave. And then God the father raised him from the dead. And Jesus began to offer life to everybody and says, come to me, my dad's forgiven all your sin.

If you'll repent and come to me, you can have life in me and experience the same love with my dad that I have. It's open to everybody. Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal lord? And savior, is he the Lord of your life? If he is, that's the invitation to the father that you have.

And if you've done that, when was the last time you thanked God for being a good father in your life? When was the last time you stood in your feet and said, God, I thank you, you're a good father because, see, God wants to hear it from our lips because he's so good to each and every one of us. He loves us in an unconditional way and God wants us to give him praise like that. So the way I wanted to end our service today is in a minute. I'm going to have everybody stand on both campuses and we're going to pray in some groups, just thanking God for the good father he is to us.

Maybe today in the message, you're reminded of God's goodness to you in some

unique way that I talked about or didn't talk about. And you can just say, God, I thank you. You're a good father because. And fill in the blanks. Now, just a word to the introverts here.

Some of you have come and said, I really appreciated the last couple weeks because we've done it individually. I just don't. You don't know how hard it is for us introverts to be in a group. And I'm like, well, you had enough courage to come tell me and be extroverted enough to tell me you didn't like it, so you'll be okay. And everybody here loves you.

And so what we're going to do is we're just going to get in groups. 3456 wherever, and we're just gonna spend a couple minutes saying, God, you're a good father to me because. And we're just gonna give him some praise and then we're gonna end our service by singing the song. You're a good, good father. Amen.

So I wanna turn it over to the Broomfield campus right now. If everybody stand to their feet, I'd like to pray for us. So, Lord, we give you praise, glory, honor and thanks for who you are. And, Lord, as we get in groups, hear it from our lips, just our love for

you and our gratefulness to you. We give you all the praise and honor in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen.