



Prayer

Women's Discipleship Class – November 9, 2017

Verses Covered This Week

Matthew 6:5 – 6

Luke 6:12 – 13

Matthew 14:10 – 13

Matthew 26:36 – 46

Mark 6:45 – 48

Nehemiah 2:1 - 4

Mark 1:35

Luke 10:38

Isaiah 30:15 - 17

Go to Matthew 6:5 - 6. When the Bible says in Acts 13 that the Holy Spirit spoke to the church, they were engaged really in three activities between being called and sending out Paul and Barnabas, they're worshipping, they're fasting, and they're praying. So we looked last week at fasting. We're going to look today at prayer. Now we're going to look at what Jesus says and then we're going to look at how He did that in His life and what that means for us. One of the best things you can do with the Bible is actually do what it says. So you want to throw out all the discipleship material you've heard. I've heard all my life in all the discipleship material I've got to have time each day, I've got to have a certain amount of time, I've got to do it a certain way, so we're going to chunk all that out today and look at what Jesus did. Now listen to Matthew 6:5 & 6. Here's His statement in the Sermon on the Mount.

⁵“When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by others.

We still do this. My wife hates it when I do this, but when we go to the Convention and some guy is droning on in his prayer, when he finishes I will say out loud for everybody to hear, “Nice sermon.” And then we'll go on with the deal. I can't take these guys, and I'm telling you, at the convention you give a guy a chance, he gets his five minutes at the mic, he will take his five minutes and pray and I just literally want to, I hate to confess this, I just want to bury him in Shiplap.

⁶But when you pray, you go into your room, you shut the door, you pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

So He says you find a closed off place, you shut everybody out, and you pray to your Father. Now we're going to see what He does in His own life. Look at Luke 6:12. Now we're going to watch Jesus and what He does. Now before we read this verse, you have to always remember Jesus, we have sin in our lives which blocks our ability to totally grasp who He is and what He says. Jesus had no sin. He has no sin nature. So He has perfect fellowship with the Father. Look at this.

¹²In these days He went out to the mountain to pray, all night He continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, He called His disciples.

So I simply want you to notice; He's alone, He prays all night. It takes all night for a man with perfect fellowship with the Father to discover who His twelve apostles were supposed to be.

- Luke 6:12 – He's alone, He prays all night - *to find apostles*

Now we're going to run through some Scriptures and then we're going to go back and look at them. I want you to go to Matthew 14:10 – 13. Watch this. Jesus loved John the Baptist. As a matter of fact, He makes probably one of the most amazing statements in the New Testament when He said, "Of men born of women, none is greater than John." John had a ministry of maybe, it's hard to decide the timeframe, but he had a ministry of maybe six months to a year, and he dies. And yet Jesus said he was greater than King David, or at least as great, as Jeremiah, as Isaiah, as Ezekiel, and as Daniel. So it is a staggering statement that He makes. He was in love with John. So watch what happens. This is when Herodias dances, Herod doesn't want to do it, but He winds up cutting off the head of John and gives it to Herodias's mother on a platter. It says:

¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²His disciples came and took the body and buried it; and they went and told Jesus. ¹³When Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself; when the crowds heard it they followed Him from the towns.

So we have Jesus alone for an unspecified time. Again, He's alone with no specified time.

- Matthew 14:10 – 13 – alone, unspecified time - *grief response*

Look at Matthew 26:36 - 45. Most of us are familiar with this passage. It's Jesus somewhat alone, it's the only time that Jesus ever makes a personal request of His disciples which, of course, being the little guys that they are, they miserably fail. It says:

³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. ³⁸Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." ³⁹And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is

possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”⁴⁰ And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴²He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” ⁴³Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. ⁴⁵Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Get up, let us be going; behold, my betrayer is at hand!”

He gets alone again. He has a request for assurance that the only answer for the world is Him on the cross. He gets that request answered.

- Matthew 26:36 – 46 – alone, request assurance - *Unspecified time, couldn't have been more than an hour.*

Again we have, He's alone but we have an unspecified amount of time. It couldn't have been more than one hour. They grab Him. Remember Judas has already left and gone. So we don't know how long.

Then go to Mark 6:45 – 48.

⁴⁵Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. ⁴⁶After He had taken leave of them, He went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and He was alone on the land. ⁴⁸He saw they were making painful headway for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them,

So He prays from sunset to 4 A.M. and He's alone.

- Mark 6:45 – 48 – alone, sunset to 4 A.M. - *presence of God*

Now when you put all this together and you really look at Jesus and you pay attention to what He's said, get into your closet, there are certain things that are salient when you look at these four passages.

- Luke 6:12 – He's alone, He prays all night - *to find apostles*
- Matthew 14:10 – 13 – alone, unspecified time - *grief response*
- Matthew 26:36 – 46 – alone, request assurance, - *Unspecified time, couldn't have been*
- Mark 6:45 – 48 – alone, sunset to 4 A.M. - *presence of God*

There are others obviously. But when you look at these four, there are certain things salient about His prayer life that I think have to be about yours.

Number 1: Need Driven

His prayer life is partially need driven. His daily prayer life, He spends all night because He needs to know who His disciples are. He goes alone because He needs to talk to the Father in the middle of His grief. He needs to know that this is the only hope for the planet is that He dies. And here He simply needs, we don't know why, except He needs the presence of God. He gets them gone and then He gets alone; He needs His presence. So the one thing we understand, His prayer life isn't scheduled. It's driven, number one, by His need. So it's not a scheduled prayer life.

Number 2: Always Alone

He is always alone. Now I want you to listen to me carefully here. You cannot develop a prayer life with the Father with other people. You can pray with other people, that's great, but you cannot develop an intimacy with the Father with other people in the room. You have got to be alone. You've got to get away from people, particularly with women, y'all are much more social than man.

When you have other women, you're going to focus on them instead of the Father. So you have got to get alone. That is a key component. It's in every single one of these. He's need driven, He's alone.

KEY POINT

When you pray, you've got to get alone with the Father. You cannot develop an intimacy with the Father with other people in the room.

Number 3: No Set Amount of Time

There is no set amount of time. It varies every time. He prays all night in Luke 6:12. He prays here, Matthew 14:10, until the crowd finds Him and the ministry pulls Him back from His prayer time. He's alone for maybe an hour in Matthew 26:36. He prays until 4 in the morning, Mark 6:45, not all night, and so there's no set amount of time. As a matter of fact, go to Nehemiah 2:1 – 4. Listen to Nehemiah.

¹And it came about in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ²So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. ³I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?" ⁴Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

How quick was that prayer? Very quick. It is, what we used to call, an arrow prayer. He's just taking a shot. He's shooting something up to God and sure enough God honors the prayer because the king gives him every single thing he asks for which is to go back and rebuild the city. Ezra rebuilds the temple; Nehemiah rebuilds the city. And so God gives him everything he says with an arrow prayer. So you've got Nehemiah with this quick prayer. You've got Jesus all night praying until the crowd, the ministry, pulls Him back out of His closet. You have an unspecified amount of time here, an hour or less. And then we've got part of the night. So there is no set amount of time that the Bible says you have to pray. When you read these goofy little discipleship manuals and they'll say, "Well you've got to pray 15 minutes, you've got to pray an hour a day." There is nothing in the Bible about a set amount of time when you pray. Nothing!

Number 4: No Set Time to Pray

I grew up with all the disciple things telling me that I needed to pray in the morning because everybody's better in the morning which is not true. Look at Mark 1:35 and then look at Mark 6:46 – 47. Now look at Mark 1:35.

³⁵Arising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus departed, went out to a desolate place and there He prayed.

Now look at Mark 6:46 – 47.

⁴⁶After He had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷When it was evening, the boat was out in the sea,

So He prays here in the morning alone. He prays here in the evening alone. So there is no set time. There's no such thing in the Bible as you've got to start your morning with Jesus. Or you've got to end your day with Jesus. There's no set time. Jesus takes the opportunities as they come.

Number 5: No Distractions

You get alone so there is no distraction when you pray. You've got to find a place where there is absolutely no distraction. We won't go there, but Luke 10:38 is Martha and Mary. Whatever distracts you, you have to get away from. Now that means, ladies, no phone and no clock. You have a clock, you know you've got to be somewhere at nine, you're distracted by that timeframe. So no clock; no phone. You flush your phone. If your home is going to be a distraction, then you get away from your home. There are some of you ladies that are like Martha. You are "the entertainer", melancholy is the personality description, anal-retentive is actually the key phrase. There are some of you that fold your towels a certain way because you say to your husband, "They won't fit in the closet unless they're folded that way." Which is a lie from Sheol. It's a certain amount of cubic feet and you can shove those things in there. They'll fit. They won't look cute, but they'll fit. Peg and I had a couple stay with us that had come through Central, the wife had, and so she was one of these, some of you women it's obvious you're a melancholy, and so she was obviously that, and so their kids are teenagers, so I started asking her questions which I always ask melancholy, "Are the cans in your pantry all facing the same way?" And before she could respond, her husband said, "Man, they're not just facing the same way, they're alphabetized." That's Martha. You're the kind of person that you can't have your closet in your house because you're going to sit down and pray and go, "I really need to fix that." So you're going to be distracted. So you've got to find a place where there is no distraction. And if your home's going to be a distraction, you've got to get out of there.

Number 6: Nature

Along with this, I think you need to be, one key component in all these, you need to get outside. He could be anywhere. Every one of these places He's outside. He's in nature. Because there is a connecting point. You have been given an ability, because of your being made in the image of God, that nature can do something for you it doesn't do for any other being. I'm leaving tonight and going to the deer lease and I'll be back tomorrow night because I've got a breakfast Saturday morning with a couple. But when I go to the deer lease, one of the things I noticed years ago is I

get in there about 30 or 40 minutes before sunrise because I love watching the sun come up. I love watching it come down. I have never seen a deer or a cow or an armadillo watch the sun set. It's His painting for you. Now I understand science has explained all the stuff and I get that. You say, "Well I think you're overwrought saying, 'It's His painting for you.'" You know, Adam was by himself on this planet and it says evening and morning God painted and a sunset for one man. No animal that animal named ever paid attention to God's painting. He does paint for you. I don't care how many of us are on the planet, He's painting for you and I think you need to utilize this. I think one of the best things you can do is take your Bible, grab a sunrise or a sunset, doesn't matter because, again, you can pray morning or night, whatever is best for you. But I would grab a sunrise or a sunset and I would sit down and I would say, "God thank you for the painting." And then I'd get into the word.

Number 7: Focus

So I think Jesus certainly took outside because it impacted Him. I think it needs to do the same with you because you've got to focus. Let me tell you my deal, and this is mine, if I go to my prayer time and I've got a zillion things running through my head, my favorite two books of the Bible are 1 and 2 Samuel. So I will start in 1 Samuel and I would just read. I don't stop. I read until I sense I'm focused. And then I set it down. Now this is also going to be a key for you. Bible and prayer is going to be your combo. I've discovered in my own life, it's interesting, there are days when He makes me read this and I spend little time in prayer. There are other days, oddly enough, I'll start to read this and I'll feel a discomfort and I'll put it down and my prayer life will go off that morning. There is nothing in the Bible about how long you pray and how long you read the Bible. There's nothing in there. So I think you have to let the Holy Spirit drive these two things and so your focus some days will be on the Bible and some days it will be on prayer. But I think you've got to maintain a focus.

Look at Isaiah 30:15 – 17. Listen to what God tells him.

¹⁵For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength."

So two things. I get quiet and then I believe what I hear when I'm quiet. I either hear what I read, or I hear what the Spirit says to me. I put my faith in that and that is my strength.

But you were unwilling, ¹⁶And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses," Therefore you shall flee! "And we will ride on swift horses," therefore your pursuers shall be swift. ¹⁷One thousand shall flee at the threat of one man; you will flee at the threat of five, until you are left as a flag on a mountain top and as a signal on a hill.

He says, "I want you to be quiet and trust." But they didn't. They rested their horses which was a steed of valor, they put their faith in that. I think you've got to come to a place where you're quiet, you hear Him, and you trust what He tells you. So I think these are the prerequisites for prayer. I think it's going to probably be need-driven, except for one thing I'm about to tell you, it's nearly going to be need-driven. You've got to be alone. It doesn't tell you how long to be in there. It doesn't tell you when to be in there. It doesn't tell you at all how long. You simply have to get to a place where there's no distraction. I think you need to use God's creation. And you've

got to focus so He tells you whether you spend more time in the Bible that day or you pray that day.

There is one aspect that is not need-driven. The question is how many times a week should I do this? And the Bible does give you one answer, right. He gives you the word about the Sabbath. Now for you that have little children at home I understand the difficulty here. If you're married to an unbeliever, this is going to be hard. But if you're married to a believer you need to say to your husband, "I need one morning a week or one evening a week." Whatever it is for you, where he takes the kids and you get alone with Jesus Christ with a Bible and prayer and nature and you shut the kids out and you tell him, "I'll be home when I am done." And one day a week, the Bible only says honor the Sabbath day to keep it holy, it demands one day a week absolutely I focus on Christ. And I think there is that prescription. I think it's need-driven and the only time it is schedule-driven is one day a week. You're going to have these books that tell you you've got to spend every day. That's not what the Bible says. You have one scheduled demand and that is one day a week you need to focus here on Christ.

Now let me give you my own deal here. There's an old thing, an acronym, that this is how you organize your prayer life. You adore Him; You worship Him. You confess, which I think has legitimacy. You thank Him. And you have supplication. You have your list of people that you're praying for; and you pray.

Adore
Confess
Thank Him
Supplication

Now, you do need to adore Him. Confession, I think, here's what you have to do periodically. You have to have a house cleaning with the Holy Spirit where you sit down, you get alone, you're in nature, you're quiet, no distraction, and you say to the Holy Spirit, now this is painful, I wouldn't do it every day. It's painful. But you say to the Holy Spirit, "Bring to my mind anything I've done I haven't confessed to You." And it will be problematic. He will begin to bring things and you confess them. You thank Him. I would ask Him to tell you what in your life He's worthy of being thanked for. If you don't do this, you're going to become bitter because there's enough bad stuff, for example, you look at this church where these people got killed. They better had been doing this because if they have not been developing a sense of gratitude what's happened to them is going to overwhelm them. And then you're going to have your list, right, that you're going to allow, we've already talked about this, you're going to allow the Holy Spirit to tell you how to pray on the list. This is going to require focus and no distractions. Now this is the old thing.

This is my own personal deal. I think you need to do this. PACTS. If you're not careful, this can become a business agenda where I go into my prayer life and I go, "Ok. I need to adore Him. I've got to confess. I've got to thank Him. I've got my list; I've got to pray." And then I'm getting out of there. You're going to add a "P" to this. And that is, you're going to make your prayer life very, very personal.

Personal
Adore
Confess
Thank Him
Supplication

Now this is going to be weird coming from a man, but I look at God as my best friend. So I want to get in my closet and I want to lay out for Him everything I'm dealing with no matter how trivial. There is a tendency, I remember Peg and I were in seminary when we heard this preacher say in the sermon, "Don't ever come to God with anything trivial. You just bring Him the really important things." And I think you completely miss what He's done in your life. You need to make this personal, so you bring to Him everything like you would to your husband or your kids or your friends. I have, for example, a guy who was my best friend in seminary and over the last three years I lost his friendship. We've come to a place where we can't repair it. But we spent years probably since '74, so well over probably 40 years, where we attended conventions together, state and national, we've preached in each other's churches, we've been involved in a zillion things. We've played a lot of golf together, spent a lot of time together. So, for example, even when I drive to Fort Worth, we have a state convention next week so I have to go there. I'm on a panel with some younger pastors and so when I drive by, I'll pass a golf course that he and I played. And he will come into my mind and I just talk to God and I say, "Boy I sure do miss him, Father." And I try to bring every personal aspect of my life to Him as if He cared, because He does. And I think if I don't develop that personal aspect, this becomes a business agenda. If I do develop the personal aspect, I adore Him better because He's my friend. I confess better because I don't want to hurt His heart because of the friendship. I thank Him better because I'm grateful for that and I think I hear Him better so my prayer list is controlled better by the Holy Spirit. You don't want this to be a business agenda. And I think you keep it from that when you make it extremely personal.

I think it's the essence of His image in this. In Genesis it says, "Let us make man in our image." So you have communication inside the Trinity. If we're in the image of the Trinity, He created us for that same communication. We're to communicate with each other horizontally, but we're to communicate the very same way vertically with Him. If we lose that, we miss the whole point of prayer. I think if prayer simply becomes your list to deliver to God and you get out of there, you've missed everything. I think you've got to make it personal. You've got to do these things and I know they're hard for you. If you're a wife and a mom, it's difficult, but I think the best thing you can do is look at your husband and say, look, "I need Saturday morning, I need Saturday night, I need Friday night," whatever it is and you say to him, "I need time and it's not going to be set. I'm going without the clock. I'm going alone and I need to be away from you and the kids." Particularly because I think the hardest job in life is stay at home mom. I'm sorry, that's the second hardest. First hardest is single mom. But I think what you ladies do is the most difficult thing. I didn't believe that until the first weekend my wife first left me with the children. And I go to church and one of the ladies in the nursery, of course betrayed me and told my wife, she said, "Your daughter's dress is on backwards." And I looked at her and I said, "You know I don't dress and undress a lot of women, so I don't really know how this works." So it was one of those

weekends where you go, “This is harder than I thought it was.” So it would be good to drop them on your husbands. It’s not going to hurt him to have them for a couple hours once a week. But you need to develop two things in your life. When you have a need, you go to Him. Even if you’re Nehemiah. You go to Him for one thing. You throw an arrow prayer up. You do whatever you have to do. And you need to develop in your life a deep personal walk with the Father as your best friend.

Questions:

Q. Do you think that journaling helps your prayer life?

A. Yeah, I think if you like to journal, journaling can help. I will journal periodically salient Scriptures that God brings to my mind. Although for me I tend to remember pretty well and so those things are kind of stand outs for me mentally. So I kind of have a list of those in my head. And I think journaling can really be good if you can. If you’re the kind of person that can do that, I think that’s great. I think it’s a wise thing. I just am not a writer. I hate this dissertation.

Q. Speaking of distractions, sometimes when I get in my prayer time I just feel like the enemy is taking me places.

A. Oh, the enemy’s going to take you everywhere. I counteract the enemy with two things. Number one: if he takes me somewhere, I just pray about it. I take it to the Father. And then the second thing I do is, seriously, I read scripture until I feel like I’m focused on Him. And there are times when you have to do that. And I do think, seriously, I’m not being funny here, although I do think it’s quite humorous. Men and women are different. We box in waffles, and women are spaghetti, you’re all over the place. So I think it is easier, actually, for him to pull you away. But I’m telling you, there are times when he pulls you away and you’re trying to focus on God and all of a sudden he pulls you away to your children, then bring your children back to the Father. Pray about that. Counteract what he’s doing in your mind. And it will really hack him off.

Q. I’m not sure I can totally articulate my question. I’m a little slow so this is part two of my question weeks ago. I’m still hung on this punishment/consequence/discipline/training thing. So David and Bathsheba, he clearly repents beforehand. But he still had the consequence of losing the child. And so it says right after that it says, “However because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.” So what’s the point of consequences....

A. The consequence wasn’t for him personally. It was because he was the king and he had damaged his entire nation. So the consequence was for the people to see you don’t get away with it. If I have an affair, I’m going to have the consequence of losing my ministry. It’s not because God’s going to, and God may additionally punish me so that the church as a whole understands “You don’t jack with My holiness.” But I don’t think that’s the consequence of what you’re speaking with. And I think when you deal with children you have to bring consequences in because they haven’t reached the point where they

understand the personal aspect of Jesus. They're in training and your job in training is to deliver consequence because they don't have the Holy Spirit in them yet to know right from wrong. So the pain's going to show them that. And then when the Holy Spirit comes in, they're still in training. It takes a while before you begin to live under His direction instead of having to have consequences. I think if you deal with your children, for example, with your children you have painful consequences when they're young. There actually comes a point, though, when you stop that and you begin to speak to them and not beat them. Beat's a bad word, although I think it's accurate. You do get to a point where you quit beating them and you can reason with them more. And that's not a consequential thing, it's a reasoning thing. And I think that's the same principal with you and Christ.

Q. Is that type maybe not actually a consequence, but it is true discipline in the sense of the word training so that would be, I mean it's the direct act that follows, but in the sense of, is it a purpose, is that what is....

A. No. Your kids do not understand sin. So the consequences show them sin. As they get older and begin to see sin, then they're not punished because of consequences. Now they begin to see this is against God's heart. They can't see that; they don't even see that it bothers your heart. So your consequences in their life are bringing them to a point where they see it hurts your heart. And then when the Holy Spirit comes in them now you're going to train them to transfer where it hurts God's heart. That's why you don't bring the consequences in when they're teenagers like you did when they were seven and eight years old.

Q. So what's punishment in all that?

A. Punishment is the wrong word. It's always discipline.

Q. Where do we see that? Or do we? Do we see that anywhere? I don't think God punishes other than, is that Hell? Is Hell the definition of punishment?

A. Hebrews 12 addresses discipline in the life of a believer. It says if there is no discipline in your life, you're not a believer. But that God will discipline you. The bottom line, and we'll look at this in another session, but the bottom line is you have three agenda's, right. You have the Holy Spirit, you have discipline, and you have death. As a Christian, the Holy Spirit should bring you to a point where you're hurting God's heart. If you grieve the Holy Spirit and quench Him, Hebrews 12, God brings discipline. If I reject the discipline, 1 John 5, He takes me home.

Q. Is the consequence, for an unbeliever, is that the way to experience punishment? Or is punishment just a human term that we use like going to jail?

A. I'm not following your question. I think you do have to be careful. There is discipline from God in the life of a Christian, never punishment. Your punishment was taken on the cross. Lost people will endure punishment. Christians endure discipline. That is a distinction.

Christian never endures punishment. They always discipline. A lost person never endures discipline because they don't belong to God. They endure, at the end of their life, punishment.

Q. You're talking about discipline. Talking about your children, being in circumstances, how do you walk through that to know where, besides trying to listen, to know what God's purpose that has happened? I always go back to the thing, "What did I do? Is this punishment on me?"

A. Are you talking about your children not relating to you? Losing their fellowship? Is that what you're talking about?

Q. Losing their fellowship because, like you said, I know God never intended this, so where are they going to be, they're old enough now that they're going to have to deal with God.

A. Yeah, there's a point at which, with your children particularly, it's weird because this is actually part of Sunday morning's sermon, it's the second aspect that we'll look at in Proverbs. But with your children, you've got a period where you discipline corporally. You've got a period where you begin to instruct mentally, spiritually. There's a point at which you let them go. And now they have to decide how am I going to respond. The hardest thing, if you watch college kids, for example, they face their hardest decisions in life, they will make them in college. Whom do I marry? What's my career? And the third thing is, "Is the faith of my parents going to be mine?" And they have to make a shift there where they move away from mommy and daddy's belief to where it's their belief. And sometimes that occurs in college and sometimes it occurs when they're 55 years old. It's no way to answer that. I think that's up to every kid, how they play that out. It's difficult.

Q. What was reference you gave for the death?

A. 1 John 5. Right after he says here's how you pray, he says, "If you see a guy sinning a sin unto death, don't pray for him." It would be like if a guy likes Auburn University, don't pray for him. Or Oklahoma. Any sort of evil school.

Q. As a child who's about to go to college how do you make a distinction between your parents being your idol and God being your idol? Because at this point in my life my parents want me to do everything that they are doing and I want to please them, but if I don't feel like I'm doing anything wrong according to God's word, how do I make that distinction?

A. That is the excellent question. Where do I draw the line now that I'm going to college between pleasing my parents and pleasing Jesus? Here's the problem. If you're in college, generally you're still in a sort of quasi-I'm at home but not at home. They're probably helping you with stuff so you're in this quasi-thing. When you get out of college now you love your parents, but they no longer run your life. Now it's totally you and Jesus. You've got your parents here and Jesus. You've got Jesus and your parents. Now you've just got Jesus. I mean, seriously, that's the hard thing. When you get into college, and I do think that even in college, and the mothers are going to hate me in here, but here's the deal. Even in college, I can't tell you how many kids have come to me in my office and said, "I feel call to minister, my dad paid for me to be an engineer, I'm in my last year, he's furious that

I'm not going to be an engineer. What do I do?" And my response is always, "Buddy if you feel God calling you to preach, you surrender to Christ. You don't do what your father says no matter how much money he's put out in your life." And it's a hard thing. I came out of a home where we had no relationship. My wife came out of a home with deep close relationships. If you come out of a particularly close relationship like I know you have, it's difficult to go, "I really feel led here." And it's hard. And I think you have to feel your way through. For example, I have kids that come in my office that are Catholic. And they're attending Central and their parents feel like, and this is what I tell the kids, their parents are furious, but I say, "Look, they're mad because they feel like they failed or you'd be Catholic." So you want to make sure you communicate to your parents. If you decide to do something they're not OK with, you say, "Look, this is not on you. You haven't failed. You've succeeded in that," and this is what I tell the kids that go back to the Catholics, "Look, I'm going to church. I'm seeking out Christ because you taught me that." And so I would funnel it that way so they begin to go, "OK." It's hard on parents because, here's the hardest thing for parents which you will understand one day. You've got this kid in your house under your total control until Monday when they head off to college and all of a sudden on Tuesday, they're gone and now they're not yours anymore really. It's hard to change that in a 24-hour span for a parent. Until you get the first college bill and then you're glad they're gone.