

Ask Jeff 11.15.17

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sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Wednesday, November 15, 2017

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Alright, ladies and gentlemen, this is your three second warning. Alright, let's start.

Tonight, hopefully as you entered into what we know as the 316 Center, you picked up this blue sheet of paper known as the Circle of Concerns. This is our prayer list here at First Baptist, Opelika. You will see there are those that are in hospital scenarios, assisted living situations, at home. Most of what you see on the front side are physical concerns and issues and diagnoses that we want to continue to pray for. As I do all or every week, please don't throw this away at the end of the evening. Make this a part of your prayer life throughout the week. On the back side, you'll see at the top an area for sympathy for those who have lost loved ones in our church family, as well as thank yous for those who are just very grateful to our church family wrapping their arms around them in difficult situations. At the bottom of the back page, you have our missionary partners as well as those that are serving in the military, particularly with Veteran's Day being this last weekend, we do want to pray for those who oftentimes find themselves great distances away from their family in hardships physically, emotionally and mentally, and that's not just the military, those are the missionaries as well. And so we want to continue to pray for those. Reminder, if you know somebody or a situation that you want us as a church praying for, please let us know and we will put it on our Circle of Concerns as quickly as possible.

Let's pray and we'll get started.

Lord, tonight as we gather, we are burdened for those that are on this sheet as well as those that are on our heart. Lord, we know that it's not easy getting a difficult diagnosis, it's not easy caring for a loved one who requires around the clock care, it's not easy hearing certain phrases from experts and professionals in their field, Lord, it's not easy being away from family, it's not easy being in a land where you question sometimes what your purpose there may be. So Lord, we lift up every person in every situation, you knowing that you said very clearly in your word that we could cast our cares upon you for your burden is easy and your yoke is light. So Lord, that's what we're doing tonight. We pray that where healing needs to take place, you would be a healer. Where comfort needs to take place, you would be a comforter. Lord, where healing needs to take place as far as emotionally or spiritually, you would be a redeemer and a restorer and that, Lord, you would be any and all things to all situations. Lord, tonight as we open your word, may you be the one who guides us and directs us to what we need to know and

what we need to learn so that we can better live for and serve you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Well, I do want to welcome you tonight to Wednesday nights here at First Baptist, Opelika. Tonight is a very special night and I know some of you, now Baptists as a whole and I know not everybody here has a Baptist background but a good majority of you do, Baptists as a whole do not handle change real well, and for some of you, you're not handling it real well that there was not an outline tonight, okay? And for that, I apologize. Allow me to share with you why you do not have an outline and kind of something fun we're going to do tonight. There is a ministry that is a very frequented ministry here in our church body known as Mom to Mom. Mom to Mom is a ministry where those that may be a little bit further in the stage of parenting come alongside those who are a little bit newer at that stage and just doing Bible study together and praying together and praying for each other, and just sometimes just needing a shoulder to cry on and an ear to hear. They meet on Monday mornings and they meet here Wednesday night at this time of the hour.

Well, Monday they had called me in to come and just do kind of an Ask Jeff with these moms. That's right, it was just me and a bunch of women. It made me kind of nervous. But my wife Tracy was in the room so that helped a little bit. But we had just a great time of Bible study. We didn't get to all the questions and one of the things was, well, what about the ladies on Wednesday night? And I said, "Well, I can't be in two places at one time." They said, "Well, what if we come to you?" I said, "That's great." And so tonight we have a very special opportunity that our Mom to Mom ministry have submitted a series of questions tonight and so tonight is the Mom to Mom addition, alright? And so all of the questions are coming from this ministry within our women's ministry that they help one another via Bible study and prayer, and so tonight it's their questions and I have been given, now we have the opportunity to do follow-up, of course, but I've been given eight of these questions and I made these ladies a promise that we'd get through all eight of them. Now do you know why you don't have an outline? Yes, because I do not want to be the recipient of the phone call that says, "You said that you'd get through all eight of these."

So that being said, I'm just going to go in order. I received an email today with a list of these questions. I'm just going to go in the order of which they were given and, by the way, they're not all "mothering" questions, I promise you that.

So question number 1. It says can we hear from God in our dreams in modern day? I frequently have very vivid dreams. They usually involve overcoming a fear or sometimes they're encouraging, can cause fear, and then there's this list of various scenarios and situations. And so the question is, is having a dream today in the 21st century, is that a viable means by which the Lord can or does communicate to his people?

Now the answer is yes and no. Let me unpack that for just a moment. Let me give you kind of a biblical survey of God utilizing dreams in scripture. Now I'm not going to go through every scenario but just work with me. You've got Joseph, remember Joseph in

the book of Genesis? The Lord came to him very vividly about his dreams. How did his family, what did they think about his dreams? Did they just respond in overwhelming acceptance? No, not so much. That one didn't turn out well, but nonetheless the Lord spoke very clearly so much to his dream that when you get to Revelation 12, his dream is alluded to once again.

You have a little-known prophet by the name of Daniel who was the interpreter not of his dreams but of whose? Nebuchadnezzar, who was not even a believer and the Lord communicated a very strategic prophetic message through him even in his state of unbelief but was utilized to call the people not only of Babylon but of Israel to belief.

Now you get to the New Testament and you have a man by the name of Peter, pretty well-known individual, that in the book of Acts, particularly chapter 10, he finds himself on the top of a roof and the Bible says that he has a vision, a dream, he's in a trance and he has this picture of the Lord descending with a sheet that's tied on four corners with all these various animals, communicating to him ultimately, "Do not call that which is clean unclean."

Those three events as well as many other dream encounters in scripture is that the Lord spoke to Joseph and the Lord spoke to Daniel and the Lord spoke to Peter, the one thing they all three have in common is when the Lord spoke to them via a dream, it was in a time period when the word of the Lord was either not available or scarce at best. Think about that for a moment. You and I are very blessed to have the word of God. We have his words. He can communicate what he desires in our life. Joseph didn't have access to this. Daniel, even though he was in exile in Babylon of which what we know as much of the Old Testament, the Lord had already given, they had been ransacked. In fact, when Ezra goes back 70 years later, they find the scrolls and revival takes place and Peter in the book of Acts, what we know as the New Testament was not circulating in print as of yet. And so what we see is that the utilization of dreams both in a corporate but individual level is most recognized when the word of God is scarce and/or rare or not available at all. Think about that for a moment. Just kind of mark that down.

Secondly, the utilization of a dream by God is not to give you something that nobody else knows but to confirm what God has already communicated. God uses dreams to confirm something, not to "bring something new." Even Joseph's dream was something the Lord had already spoken about their family and their structure. It was now vividly portrayed of this is how it's going to play out. Daniel's prophetic dream, the idea of this tree that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about and all the dimensions, even though the particulars were new, the concept was not. And obviously with Peter as well.

So when we speak of God speaking through or by dreams, number 1, God can speak anyway he wants to, anyway or means he wants to, but he will never speak in a way that is contrary to his word that's already been spoken. 2. The use of dreams on a mass scale is when the word of God is not as readily available.

Now whoever asked this question, I am presuming that you have access to the word of God in your life, and so it is quite possible that the Lord is allowing dreams and/or what we might call visions in your life to confirm that which you already know from the word of God, or quite possibly to encourage you in your study and going forth with the word of God in your life. Dreams are not to be in addition to but a supplement or encouragement thereof.

Now one thing I do want to encourage you because when it comes to dreams and, by the way, I'm not an expert in dreamology or whatever word we would use, but I did hear this advice some years ago and I think it's valuable advice. If you are struggling with dreams, if you're struggling in the capacity of what you dream of or maybe what happens in the night, so to speak, with or without sleep, so to speak, the advice was given that the last thing that you put in your mind and your heart before you go to sleep is the word of God. Let me tell you what I do every night. I fall asleep listening to sermons. I do. I may be the only person in the room that's put himself to sleep at night. I really have. Hey, it's true. There are times where I want to go back and listen to this morning's sermon and if it happens to be me and I happen to fall asleep. I mean, so it's okay. You can fall asleep too. It happens. But what is happening there is whether it is the strict just reading of the word of God or the teaching and the preaching of the word of God, that's what I want to be the last thing in my mind when I close my eyes and it tends to eliminate the difficulty/hardships via dreams and/or lack of sleep.

So any dream questions? We won't chase too many rabbits tonight because of time but I will do if we need to. Go for it.

[unintelligible]

I knew somebody was going to go there. It's, yes....

[unintelligible]

In Joel 2, it says that in the last days, it says, your young men will dream dreams, your old men will have visions, and then when you get to Acts 2, the Apostle Peter in that famous Pentecost sermon says about Joel, that this is that. The last days is a time period scripturally from the ascension of Christ to the return of Christ. In context strictly of Joel 2, it's very, I know it's a big word, eschatological end times revelation type events. The idea that you get is that when you get closer to the end, that the utilization of visions and dreams will be more prolific. Per what I've already said, why would that be? Do you think that when the Antichrist comes to fruition, do you think when this mass worldwide rebellion takes place, do you think the word of God is going to be a, well, common, quoted, prolific thing? Of course not. In fact, I read a little book years ago, in fact, I've read it multiple times, called "Fahrenheit 451," Ray Bradbury's book about the destruction of literature and books and what was the prized item in that story? A Bible. It was the contraband.

And so as the word of God gets diminished, eliminated or not cared for, then obviously and, by the way, we pray for our missionaries every week but if you ever get the privilege of having conversations with those who serve in the mission field in what we call the 10/40 window, areas that are typically unreached, unengaged, have never even heard of Jesus or a Bible, a lot of individuals in those contexts will admit and claim that they've heard the gospel and then that night they have vivid vivid dreams of Jesus. They don't have a copy of the word of God. They don't have a pastor that they can go to. So doesn't it just make sense that the Lord is going to take what's been given and testified to them and confirm it and lots of individuals that I've had the privilege of meeting that have that as their testimony. I bet that wasn't yours and it's not mine. The Lord didn't need to utilize a dream in my life because I had a testimony and witness around me, not only the word of God.

Any other dream questions? No more dreams? We good with dreams? Alright, so go home tonight, pull up the church website and I'll put you to sleep. It'll be good.

Alright, here we go. Next question. It says what are some suggestions for helping children keep the focus on the true meaning of Christmas, focus on the gospel, not on presents and all of the worldly distractions?

Well, for those of you that don't know, I am in the process of raising children, notice I said process, I have not completed raising children so I don't have a clue what I'm doing. However, I have gone through particularly those earlier stages of raising children and this is one of the most difficult things in our culture to do, is a season that is supposed to be focused on Christ that has oftentimes rarely done so. The trappings of Christmas and, by the way, let me give you a little history here and, by the way, a little facts before history, I do not want to break your little Baptist heart but you do know that most likely, probably, I can almost guarantee it, Jesus was not born on December 25. I'm sorry but the facts are the facts, okay? The reason that we, the church, celebrate what we know as Christmas on December 25 is that in the 4th century AD when Christianity was declared the official religion of Rome, the "Christian church" was allowed to circumvent and take over all the pagan celebrations and holidays, and so that which was originally a pagan holiday, that which was originally a heathen holiday now all of a sudden instead of celebrating that god's birth, we're going to celebrate the one true God's birth. And so Christmas was just put in place of hedonism and heathenism. Isn't it interesting that the world has taken their holiday back? It was never originally a celebrated scenario, in fact, the Christian church in the first three to four centuries before we were made the official state religion, we didn't celebrate the birth of Jesus much, what did we celebrate? The resurrection, death and resurrection, because without the death and resurrection of Jesus, it doesn't matter when he was born. I mean, that's what makes the difference, and so what we know as "the trappings of Christmas" were an overlay of Christianity onto secularism, a thousand years after the fact is when it really picked up steam and the last couple of centuries, in particular, the traditions of man, the impact of secularism has run amok if you'll allow me to say it.

So these are very simple guides that I have for you when it comes to the upcoming Christmas season. 1. If there is an opportunity either in your home and/or at the church to attend a Christmas celebration that focuses on Jesus, I would attend. I would go to something that focuses on Jesus and not the trappings of Christmas. We can be very strategic about that. So when we're going about our lives, let's keep that one focused.

2. The way that we emphasize Christmas in our home can communicate what we think about Christmas. I know a lot of us have different traditions. I've known people that have like nine Christmas trees and all kinds of different things. But I will tell you this, the Meyers house, the thing that we've done throughout years and don't necessarily think you have to duplicate this, but our Christmas tree topper is a crown of thorns. It's just a little subtle reminder in the midst of all of everything of why this is even important to begin with. Now I'm not telling you that's what you have to do. I grew up in a home that we had what we'd know as manger scenes everywhere and it's wonderful because it focuses on Jesus, if that makes sense. So keeping the visualization on what the real meaning is.

Last but not least, I wish I could tell you I came up with this idea on my own but somebody gave it to me years ago when ours were still in diapers and it's one of the best ideas I ever heard. The statement was made Jesus only got three presents, why should you get more? It's pretty good, isn't it? Now become a Pharisee and don't get legalistic on that. And my wife, if there's one thing she loves about the upcoming season, my wife does stocking shopping 12 months out of the year. She'll see something a little for the boys, by the time we get to there and I hope, well, hopefully the guys aren't watching right now. Guys, turn it off. By the time we get to Christmas, she's got enough for two stockings per kid basically because she's been, I mean, she just loves, that's kind of her gift, she loves to give. But one of the things that we've tried to do, particularly as they're getting older, is generally speaking we give them three gifts, you know? And that's just kind of one of the things that we've done. We don't get there and say, "That's right, Jesus got three, you get three too." We don't do that but we just try, once again, to place the emphasis on the real reason and the meaning.

This allows me to give a very shameless plug for our Christmas Eve services that are coming up this year. What a great way within 24 hours of all the presents, within 24 hours of all the food and basketball, this year Christmas Eve is actually on a Sunday, you know, and so one of the things, just go ahead and let you know how we're going to do that this year, Sunday at 11 AM and at 5 PM, we're going to have our traditional Christmas Eve service and at 3 o'clock that day will be our family service on that Sunday. So you have three opportunities that day whether traditional morning time, 5 o'clock evening time, or 3 o'clock with your family, to come and to focus again on the true meaning of Christmas. So every family will have different ways of doing what I just shared with you, but what's best for your family particularly talking about kids, is somehow in the midst of all the worldliness of Christmas is somehow keeping the focus on the "Christ" of Christmas in the midst of all that however you find best.

Any Christmas questions? No Christmas questions? By the way, on December 20, which will be our last Wednesday night of this calendar year to do Bible study here on

Wednesday nights, we're going to have a special Ask Jeff Christmas edition. That's right, we're going to ask questions and answer questions about what's tradition and what's biblical, when did this come to play, why do we do it this way, why did people start doing this? When you start thinking about the traditions of Christmas, very little of that is actually found in Scripture, most of it is found in tradition so we want to talk about kind of what those are and delineate.

All right, question 3. It says how do we teach others, particularly our children, about the things they will face in school and in our world today, for example, homosexuality, transgenderism? Nice easy topics there, thank you. And what specific scriptures are helpful when talking to them about these things?

Now this may have been asked about how do we teach children. You don't have to raise your hand but how many adults are going, "I need the answer to that one, you know? I've got a coworker, I've got a neighbor, I've got a family member." Now the interesting thing about this question is, how do we address these very culturally sensitive and pertinent issues scripturally? Now hear me clearly, this question is being asked and it's going to be answered from a perspective that allows scripture to be a final authority in our lives. Not opinion. Not the latest fad. Not what So-and-so who happens to be very popular and has who knows how many followers on social media says, but what does the word of God say.

So what does the word of God say? Go to Matthew 19. Matthew 19, from the words and the mouth of Jesus. The question at hand is actually those that oppose Jesus, their questioning him about the Mosaic law and its relevance to what we know as divorce. We're not going to talk about divorce in this question, but in the context of speaking about marriage and divorce, Jesus speaks very clearly to the issue not only of genderism and male and female but the homosexual issues of our culture in regards to marriage and union. In verse 4, Matthew 19, it says, "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them," however they want to identify. Just making sure you're reading. "He made them male and female, And said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh?" Now in those two very simple verses, Jesus addressed the gender issue and he addressed the marriage issue very clearly. He said from the very beginning it's been male and it's been female, and the man shall leave his mother and father and shall cleave to his wife.

Now go back to the very first chapter of scripture, the book of Genesis 1, it says "have you not read," well, let's go all the way back to the very beginning. In Genesis 1, we have what we know as the creation of humanity. This is day six, you and I as humanity find ourselves as the crown of the Lord's creation. The animals have been formed, the stars, the sun, the moon have been formed, vegetation is there, all is good. Verse 26, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," to identify however they so choose.

Nope, "he created them male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so." And listen to this, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Isn't that interesting, that day one, the light comes forth, that's good. Day two, there's a firmament, he doesn't even say that's good, that's a whole other sermon study. Day three, there's vegetation. Day four, there's lights, the sun, the moon, the stars. He says it's all good. But once he creates humanity, what does he say? This is very good. So from the very beginning in chapter 2 it alludes that when the Lord breathed life into man and he became a living soul, from the very beginning God said it is very good that there is male and female. It is very good that the two come together in one flesh.

So what happens is when we allow ourselves to adopt positions or opinions that may be culturally popular today but are biblically erroneous, what we're saying is we want to settle for something less than the very best. God has designed us to be very good when we allow him to determine who we are to be versus who we think we better could or should be. So very culturally sensitive issues, I know. For the majority of people that I've had conversations with that are either A, struggling with this, or B, have someone very close to them that are, the majority of those people say, "Well, I don't care what that book says, this is how I feel. Or I don't care what the Bible says, this is what I think." The problem with that is if we live our lives according to feelings or thoughts, we're going to be very disappointed people over the course of time. And the three, I will give you three words that all start with "f" on this issue and others. We have to look at what are the facts, what are our feelings, and how do we need to exhibit faith? The facts are that God made us male and female. The facts are that marriage is between a man and a woman. Sometimes people have feelings that are contrary to, but we need to exercise faith that the God who formed and fashioned us knows more about us than we will ever know about ourselves.

So the struggle is believing that God has a plan greater than we could ever imagine, and one of the things that I try to communicate to people who are either A, struggling with, or B, know people who are, is I don't come out and just hit them with the board of judgment, I say, "Do you know what saddens me about this? It saddens me that God has a wonderful very good plan for your life and you're willing to settle for something substandard when he's got something so much better for you." And so one of the ways not only with children but even with adults I communicate on this very difficult issue, is the Bible is very clear on this issue but the Lord describes it as very good, he describes from the beginning this is the way I formed and fashioned it. I never want to settle for second best. I never want to live life less than what I could have or could be. And so on all subject matters, not just this one, the way that God has laid it out is the best for me. I

have to have the faith that my feelings may not match up with the facts but I have to have faith that the facts are what is best for my life and not just my feelings.

Very very difficult subject matter, particularly today when there are children's books and there are curriculums and there are commercials that are consistently propagating these concepts in every form and fashion. It is very difficult today to watch any kind of TV at any hour without seeing the subject matter right there. It's difficult not to have it in whatever school environment a kid is in, at some level somebody in that school, classroom or in total either has it a part of their family or it's a part of the conversation sometimes, and the sad part to me is we've not become a culture that accepts it, we've become a culture that wants to celebrate it, and the problem is we're celebrating something that is less than what God said you could have as the very best and what we're doing now, the very best, male and female, husband and wife, we're no longer celebrating biblical marriage, we are no longer even really accepting it, we're condemning it as not being culturally in vogue.

So Isaiah warned us years ago in Isaiah 5, he says, "Woe unto the people who call evil good and good evil. Woe unto the people who call up down and down up, black white, white black." He says, "Woe unto those who have reversed," and that's the environment we find ourselves in today. So when you communicate with children when you communicate with each other, we've got to be very careful to clearly communicate in love that God has a plan better than what the world is propagating.

Any thoughts, issues, concerns, questions? Most of y'all are going, "I ain't going there." That's all right. We've got a bunch of more questions here. Here we go.

The next says what are some suggestions and are there any good scriptures to turn to when learning to control anger when disciplining your children?

Proverbs 23, a parent's best friend. Now Proverbs 23 is a verse that I probably had heard at some point, it's probably a passage that I don't know in what capacity I had heard, but you know, sometimes you hear a lot from the Bible or of the Bible but it doesn't really sink deep down inside and, oh, I guess this was probably about maybe 12, maybe 13 years ago. We were going through that stage, y'all know about the terrible 2's, right? All right, those of you that have young children, it's not terrible 2's, it's the 3's now. I don't know what's going on. I don't know how we are doing as humanity, or maybe it's just, you know... then there's the terrible teenagers, it just keeps going. But we were going through that stage with one of our children, of course, we went through it with all of them, and the church that we were serving at in Texas, there was a retired couple, this was a retired music minister that was in our church, he and his wife just the sweetest, and I loved his wife, Miss Gray, I loved her because she was shorter than me. I loved Miss Gray and she was a lot of fun and just one of those couples that had been through life twice over, had seen so much and had so much wisdom. I remember one day just in the context that Tracy and I were having a conversation with them and she pointed us to this verse. Proverbs 23:13 and 14. It says, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt

deliver his soul from hell." And I remember Miss Gray putting her finger in my face and saying, "Do you see what the Lord promises?" And I said, "No, what is it?" And she said, "It says that if you beat him for the right reasons, you can't kill him." That was pretty good advice.

But that passage we've all heard the phrase, spare the rod, spoil the child. Yes. In this passage, it makes it very clear that the process of the rod, the process, shall we just be vague, discipline, okay, in general, that the purpose of discipline, it's not going to kill them. It's not going to kill them to miss out on that activity. It's not going to kill them to sit by themselves for a while. It won't kill them to miss a TV show. It won't kill them. In other words, it's not so much saying that when you utilize the rod there is no way you could physically kill them. I don't think that's what it's saying. I think it is saying is what you think will be so horrible and destructive in their lives is actually for their own good.

Then verse 14, it says, "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." And I'll never forget Miss Gray looking up at me and says, "Do you know what, Jeff? When you discipline your children, you're telling them you don't want them to go to hell." I had never thought of it from that perspective before.

So how does that play out in real life? Even to this day, my oldest child is almost 16 years of age, there is discipline that happens, now it's a little bit different at 15 than it is at 2, of course, but every time we have a disciplinary issue with our children, when that discipline takes place, we always leave with this statement, we look at them in the eye, typically we hug them, they don't want to be hugged but we do it and we say, "We love you too much to let you continue to act this way." Now did they enjoy the ramifications? No. Did they enjoy the discipline? Of course not. But we do, if I didn't love them, I would just let them do what they want to do. If I didn't love them, I would say, "You know, I'm too tired." I mean, there have been times, come on parents, where you know there's a situation you've got to discipline and you're like, "Seriously? I am so tired. I don't want to deal with this tonight." Have you ever noticed that if you don't deal with it tonight, you never end up dealing with it? And what happens? It ends up perpetuating itself.

Now I want you to go to the book of Hebrews 12 and I want you to see what the Lord says about this. You say, "Well, the Lord said what he said in Proverbs 23." Oh yeah, but we're about to get off kids and start talking about you because according to John 1:12, if you believe on Jesus, you are now a child of God which means the roles have been reversed. That's right. In Hebrews 12:6 it says, "For whom the Lord hates he disciplines." I just want to make sure you're awake. You know, that turkey has that enzyme in it that makes you go to. "Who the Lord loves he chastens," or disciplines. You read the rest of Hebrews 12 and let me give you the New Revised Jeff Version, when the Lord stops disciplining you, he has stopped caring about you. When the Lord disciplines you, when the Lord says, "I don't think so. There's a consequence there." I know it hurts in the moment but he's actually saying he loves us and he cares for us.

Now part of this question was, okay, that's great but how do you control your anger? All right, go back to the book of Ephesians 6. By the way, I'm not here to give parents any advice, I don't have a clue what I'm doing but the Bible does. In Ephesians 6 it gives a variety of roles of how humanity deals with each other. Verse 1 should be memorized by all human beings, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." And everybody said, "Amen." That's right. Verse 2, "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Listen to verse 4, "And you fathers," and we could say mothers too, "do not provoke your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." What that is saying is that discipline, whatever that may look like, whatever form, is a response to ill or bad behavior, never a precursor to it. It says, "Parents, don't provoke your children." In other words, you don't discipline just because you've got nothing better to do, I'm just going to make their life miserable. That's not what it's saying. It's saying that discipline is a byproduct necessarily of when correction out of love must take place.

Now it said but what about the anger? All right, go back a few pages to the left to chapter 4. I want to introduce to you one of the most important verses at least in my life with raising children. Verse 26, "Be angry and sin not." Anger is not in and of itself an emotion of sin, it's how we handle our anger. I'm going to be honest with you, there are times that I have been angry with my children and I have to cool down and I have to calm down and I have to keep my mouth shut, sometimes I have to go for a walk or a run for a while and get it out of my system before I get it out on them. So be angry and sin not. Do you think the Lord is thrilled when we sin? Do you think he's happy when we rebel? Of course not. He is frustrated, he is upset, but he loves us so much he says, "Fine, if that's where you're going to go, then this is what's going to happen." And we as those who have parental supervision in people's lives whether biological or not, we get to exercise the same love in our own children's lives. Much kind of like the previous question, it's kind of culturally politically incorrect, is it not? We now live in a world that says let people do whatever they want to do, and yet we claim it's a world of love. That's not a world of love, a world of love says just like Hebrews 12 says, that because he loves us he chastens us and he disciplines us.

You know, it's interesting and I know I'm a sports guy, but one of my favorite illustrations that I've ever seen in this realm and it's not strictly discipline but just work with me. It was a men's conference and I was watching this on television, I wasn't part of it personally. In this men's conference there was one of many speakers up there and there were two individuals that this man had stand up while he was speaking. One of them was a lifelong friend of his, one was a new friend of his. This lifelong friend, he said, "Sir," and obviously he knew him in advance and this was in front of thousands and thousands of people not only personally but on TV, he said, "I'm going to ask you a series of questions. Is that okay?" He said, "Sure." He was already miked up. They knew this was going to happen. He said, "Did you grow up playing football?" He said, "Oh yeah." He said, "Were you any good?" He said, "I was okay." He said, "But you played?" He said, "Oh, I played all the way through high school." He said, "What position did you play?" He said, "I played running back." He said, "Let me ask you a question. Did your coaches

really just get on you all the time, make you run extra laps?" He said, "No, not really. I was just kind of treated like everybody else. Nothing special. Yeah, you know, there were times but, eh, I was a player, I played, it was over."

Okay, the next individual. He said, "Sir, would you please state your name?" He said, "My name is Emmitt Smith." He said, "Did you grow up playing football?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "Where you any good?" He said, "I wasn't bad." He said, "Let me ask you a question, did your coach ever make you run extra laps?" He said, "All the time." He said, "Did your coach ever make you stay after practice and do things the rest of the team...?" He said, "Oh my. There were times I was so angry at the coach. I didn't understand why he was doing what he was doing." And then he brought it full-circle and he said, "Isn't that interesting that the one who was a marginal player didn't get any discipline and the one who was the great player got a lot of discipline." And here's his point, he said because the coach knew that inside Emmitt was something special that had to be brought out.

When God disciplines us or when we discipline our children, here's what we're saying, that God has something special for you that I need to come out of you so that you don't settle for how you're doing right now. That's a whole different perspective on discipline. It's not, "Hey, I want you to 'be quiet' so I can watch the ballgame." It's, "Do you know what? God has something special for you and I need that to come out of you and so I'm going to stop what I'm doing and make sure you understand that because I love you, I'm going to miss the fourth quarter of this game and we're about to go and have a talk." That's hard to do but it's necessary to do..

All right, I don't have a clue what I'm doing on parenting so no questions. All right, next. It says how do you explain death to children both young and old, the body is still there and the soul is not? I've learned throughout the years that children are just the ones who are willing to vocalize these issues. Adults, we don't own anything either, we're just ashamed to say anything about it.

Now what I'm about to share with you is very rudimentary, very elementary, and I admit from the beginning theologically these are very very weak examples, okay? So don't send me an email and say, "Well, that illustration breaks down." I know it breaks down, okay?

The Bible makes it clear in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, he says, "I pray your whole spirit and your whole soul and your whole body will be preserved unto the coming of our Lord." We just read back in Genesis 1:26 that he created us in his own image, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. There's three, there's one, there's a unity yet there's a diversity. That being said, the way I have illustrated not only the makeup of a human being but in the issue of death, I'll go the sports route and then I'll go a nonsports route. A football. A football has three parts to it: it has the leather outside, it has the rubber bladder, and it has the air on the inside, correct? When death occurs, it's as if the leather has been removed. Does it still retain its shape? Yes. Is it still an item of great use? Well, of course it is. In other words, even though I know we can talk about the difference in earth and heaven and being around the throne room, I get all that, but let's pretend that we're talking to a six-year-old here who

doesn't understand that that person they will never have a conversation with again, they never understand they're never going to have a meal with them again, but yet you want to communicate that as a believer they're in heaven with Jesus. They still retain who they are, they still retain the function and the life, it's just in a different place and without the trappings of the outside skin.

The nonsports illustration is an egg. An egg is three parts: it has the outside shell, it has what oftentimes people call the white or the meat, and then the yolk. If you take that shell off, now obviously you would hard-boil this first if you're going to do the illustration. Take a hard-boiled egg, you can remove the shell and guess what? It still retains its shape, it's still an egg and it still has productive function.

Now please understand those are not good examples but when you've got someone who's really distraught of they're no longer responding, they're no longer going to have a conversation, what you want to communicate is that they haven't ceased, they're still alive, they're just in the presence of Jesus, not in the presence of us. So what you're communicating by those illustrations are the outside may no longer be there, the outside may no longer be visible, but who they are is still as real as they've ever been. Very simple illustrations. I'll be honest with you, if we were in a systematic theology class right now, I would have just made an F. I get that but sometimes we've got to make it real simple for all of us to grasp the truth. We do have a soul, we do have a spirit, we do have a body, and the Bible makes it very clear to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

So what we want to communicate to anybody is though they are physically no longer responsive on earth, they are physically still viable, they are physically still functioning, they are just with the Lord and not with us. And if you want to go the next step further, you can communicate the Bible makes it very clear that one day according to 1 Corinthians 15, we're going to get a new body. So you can take the same illustration and say, "Hey, this person who we loved so dearly, one day they're going to get a new shell, they're going to get a new leather cover," or whatever you want to utilize. It's just a simple way to explain that death is not the end, to be honest with you it's really the beginning, the beginning of eternity, not just the end of earth.

Any questions about death? Yes, sir. I know they were bad illustrations. I'm sorry. Okay, thank you.

[unintelligible]

Say that one more time.

[unintelligible]

Okay, the question is the person that died, what if they are not a believer in Jesus Christ? This is where the individuality of who I'm talking with is going to come in real handy. The child, how much, my own child versus somebody else's child versus random child,

versus random adult, how much do they know of the gospel and how much are they able to comprehend other gospel? Obviously I'm not going to tell a five-year-old, "Yes, they're in hell." I'm not going to say it that way. What I am going to communicate is the Bible makes it clear that when we believe on Jesus, we go to be with Jesus. The Bible makes it clear when we believe on Jesus, that we are in a place the Bible calls heaven. I want to focus on because they as a child may not be a believer, they as a child may be struggling with things. I want to focus on Jesus.

Yes, if the question is brought up or, yes, if they allude to it, I do want to deal with the opposite in a very understanding way to what I'm dealing with cognitively. Does that make sense? Not sense? I'm not scared of talking about it but I also want to utilize what am I dealing with, the tenderness of the situation here of the child if we're dealing with children. I want to communicate information that will make it very clear the difference that Jesus makes. I don't want to communicate information that makes the truth of the gospel frightening or scary to them. Now hell is a scary thing and it is a frightening thing and it is a theologically relevant conversation, but you could be dealing with somebody who is emotionally fragile to begin with, doesn't quite understand what's really happening here. If someone is sitting there going, "I just don't get what's happening, why aren't they here anymore?" I don't think that's the time for a doctrinal lesson on hell. Maybe I'm wrong but I don't see that as the opportunity. Maybe later. You've got to draw a clear distinction. I want to focus on what does Jesus do and how does Jesus come into our lives and affect our lives. I will deal with the other if I have to but only if it needs to go there. Does that make sense? I want to be sensitive to that area.

Now the older they get and particularly when we get to adults, once you're able to process and think cognitively, the Bible says this so what does that mean about? I mean, if it were you I were having this conversation, yes, I know you're very intelligent, you're probably smarter than I am but if we were having this conversation, I would go there with you about that person whereas I may not go there with the seven-year-old. And I think that's one of the injustices that we do among adults is we don't talk about hell. Jesus talked about it twice as much as he did heaven because it's real and we need to talk about it, but we need to talk about it in a way, it's kind of like the other issue, as horrible as hell is, our unbelief and hell as a result is choosing the road of least desirable versus God's best. God has provided the best road, forgiveness and salvation, and so we need to choose that road, we need to go down that road versus the other which is obviously a very horrific road.

All right, time is running. We've got a couple more questions. Woo, okay. Why are there so many translations of the Bible and which ones do you prefer and use?

I cannot answer the why question because there are over 300 of them and I haven't had the opportunity to interview all those committees that put them together. But pertaining to kind of the general topic of tonight not just for children but with adults, the question is [coughing] can I get some water? I don't know what just happened.

The question is which version do I use and why? All right, now this may shock some of you but I use old King Jimmy. Just old King Jimmy. There are "thees" and there are

"thous" and there are "beseecheths," and "thou mayest" and all these words and verses and concepts... and I'm about to get a fire hydrant from folks. Thank y'all. I have no idea what just happened but I apologize that it did.

Now without getting into a lot of textual and/or academic discussion, when it comes to tonight's focus, Mom to Mom, ministering to children, our families, let me tell you why I do in that scenario: it is easier to memorize. Period. End of story. Close the book. And I know what some of you are thinking, "Huh?" It is. I've shared with some of y'all this story, I'll share it with you again very quickly. You know that Master Life is approaching 2018. We are quickly approaching 1,100 people that are going to be a part of Master Life. So we've got all... When I took Master Life for the very first time as a college freshman, college freshman, I was loaded up with school, I was, you know, trying to memorize all the verses, and I was struggling and I remember saying to a very dear friend of mine, I remember saying, "I don't understand it. How can I make the grades I'm making in sociology and in history and I can't memorize John 8:31 and 32, what's wrong with me?" I remember an old dear friend of mine said, "Any chance you've got an old King James Bible laying around?" Yeah. "Pick it up. Try that one." And it was actually easier to memorize.

Now is it a little harder to read? I'll give you that one. At times are there words that you go, "I don't even know what that means"? Sure. But I'm going to tell you, I have never forgotten, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present yourself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. I beseech you therefore, brethren." Why is that easier to memorize? Because that's not how I talk. Do you know how I talk? "Hey, I want you to do something. Come here." Not, "I beseech you therefore, brethren." It is just easier to memorize.

So for those of you in your own home as adults but those of you particularly tonight raising children, I promise you it is easier. Now if I had them up here and they would never come up here because that camera that is back there, but if my kids were up here, they will tell you that they've been in a variety of environments both in church environments, school environments and other environments where they have been asked to memorize scripture in other versions, okay? And they have come back to me and said, "Dad, why can't I do it in King James, it's easier?" Case closed. From the mouth of babes shall come forth wisdom. Even my own children recognize it's easier to memorize and according to Psalm 119, we're to hide the word of God in our heart so that we will not sin against him.

I could go on a long time but time is running out. Last two questions. What are some scriptures that help with work/home balance?

Let me give you two. 1. Exodus 20, you don't even have to turn there. The 10 Commandments. You know the 10 Commandments. Charlton Heston. You know what I'm talking about. The 10 Commandments. Think about it, what is the first commandment? Hello? All right, only have one God, correct? There's only one and he's the only one you pay attention to. 2. Do not have any graven images or idols to that God.

3. Do not use the Lord's name in vain. 4. Keep the Sabbath day, keep it holy. 5. Honor your mother and your father and your days shall be long on the earth. You say what does that have to do with this? The first four commandments are related to God, the fifth one is related to your family, and the rest of them are related to life in general. In other words, how do you balance work and home? Place God first and your family second and work will work out. The problem is when we get those out of order. By the way, sometimes we put our family above God and that's not biblical either. The first four commandments are directed toward God.

The other scripture I would guide you to is Ecclesiastes 2. Ecclesiastes 2, Solomon who we often claim is the wisest man to ever live, is saying that he went on this journey. He had all the money he could ever spend. He had all the power he could ever utilize. And in that chapter it says that he builds vineyards and he builds businesses and he has menservants and maidservants, and he has musicians and houses and pools and swimming pools and all these things, and at the end of the day you know what he says? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And at the end of Ecclesiastes 12 he says, "Hear the sum of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments." So even Solomon said that all of this work and all this stuff should pale in comparison to the God we love and serve and to our family who he has given us. So I think those are two big chunks of scripture. All throughout the Bible I think you see place the Lord first, seek ye first the kingdom of God and how many things will be added unto you? All of these things will be added unto you.

Last question. Boy, here we go again. If there is a sin someone is living in, it says, for example, homosexuality but we could list many of them, and they do not see it as a sin or ever plan to change their relationship, how do you witness to them?

This is a great question to end on and here is why. When you're witnessing to somebody, when you're sharing the gospel with somebody, they are lost, they are the Bible makes it very clear, separated from God, we could go through all those analogies. The first thing in order for someone to get saved, they have to recognize that they're lost. I mean, that is a pre-requirement there. You can't know you need to be saved unless you know that you're lost. Now I don't care what someone is struggling with and what they are defending. I know people who defend alcoholism. I know people who defend homosexuality. I know people that defend adultery. I know people that defend everything. Romans 3:23, "For the wages of sin is death." I don't care who you're talking to, what they're struggling with, we need to get someone to understand what sin is. What is sin? Well, there's a lot of biblical definitions. It's missing the mark. It's transgressing. It's going against the things of God, correct? Pretty simple definition there. All I want somebody to do is admit that they've sinned. Period.

Now they may defend a lifestyle, they may defend something in there, but all I want them to do is this, have you ever done anything that would be contrary to what the Bible says or contrary to what God would want for your life? It is a very rare a day where somebody admits they're perfect. Most people are willing to do so, right? "Well, there was this time or there was this event or, yeah, I remember there was a stage in my life where..." So people are willing to admit that, right? All right, so here is where I take them. Go to the

book of James 2. Here we go. James 2 and we'll close with this. And by the way, as we go to James 2, I want to thank the Mom to Mom ministry for the questions and thank you that you didn't ask me about raising little girls. That would have been an edition of Ask Tracy. Not that she's raised girls but she is one.

James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Here's what I want you to hear very clearly per this question, do I believe homosexuality is a sin? Yes. Do I believe adultery is a sin? Absolutely. Do I believe alcoholism is sin? Of course. I could go through a whole list of them but according to James 2, I don't need someone to admit that all those are sin, I just need them to admit they have sinned, and that if they have sinned, then what is the wages of sin? Death. And so what I want them to realize is not so much a hierarchy of sins like some people would claim and I obviously do not, if someone is lost and they're defending their lifestyle, they're defending an area of the life as being okay, they may think that area is okay but can I get them to admit there is another area that's not, and if that area is not okay, then I can get them to admit that according to the Bible they are lost and need forgiveness irrespective of what they want to defend. I think one of our biggest problems is we forget that Jesus says men are as fish, you catch a fish before you clean them up.