

11. The Secret of an Understanding Heart (Rev 2)

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Family Matters

By Robert Rohlin

Bible Text: Proverbs 24; Psalm 128:3

Preached on: Sunday, May 5, 2013

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I don't remember anything about his sermon except for this one thing and that was he said, "The main thing is to make the main thing the main thing." Now, that sounds so simple and very redundant but it's actually very profound and that is that we as parents need to know what the main thing is and then our main thing ought to be to make the main thing the main thing. So let's look at that and I remember a number of years ago, we went to a wedding and at the wedding, I think my son Arthur was one of the, I guess, the ring bearer. He had been asked to do that and we knew the family and we went to the wedding but there were so many things at the wedding that just bugged me personally. Now, weddings tend to bug me anyway. I remember when I first got into the ministry I thought, "Oh, I want to perform weddings and not do funerals." I now dread weddings and would rather do funerals because people actually listen to you at your funeral. They don't often listen to you when they are getting married. You know, I've got 5 more daughters yet to get married so I imagine there will be more weddings in my future but I'm not trying to rush that, by the way.

But I remember going to this wedding and there were several things that were wrong. The young lady was marrying a man who really wasn't qualified for marriage. He had already been through one marriage and had a divorce and the divorce was due to some character issues. Do you know that first-time marriages fail 55% of the time, second time marriages fail 67% of the time. Why is that? Because the character flaws that cause the first marriage to fail usually have not been dealt with yet and sure enough, I'll go ahead and tell you that they are divorced now, this couple that we went to their wedding and it didn't last that long because those character flaws became apparent. There were several other things and I just remember thinking to myself, "I don't want that for my children. I don't want that kind of failure for my kids and, God, how can you raise," and this young lady had been raised, she had been homeschooled, she had been taught principles, she had participated in ministry opportunities and then really ruined the start of her life with a bad marriage and really has fallen away in many respects from the Lord. I think, what's the deal there?

Then I looked at this verse in Proverbs 24. Now, Proverbs 24, a lot of chapters in Proverbs have a verse here and a verse there about different things and they just seem to be disconnected but most of Proverbs 24 has as its theme how to build the foundations of

a strong family and I want you to listen to these verses. "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." Now, the writer of Proverbs here is discussing 3 different attributes of the godly home. He says first of all, wisdom edifies or builds up the family. So we're all about that. In our particular homeschooling curriculum, our monthly books that we use are called "wisdom booklets" because they teach you how to look at linguistics and science and history and medicine from God's perspective and so we go into each of those different things every month and we look at them and we look at it from God's perspective, see what God's word has to say about it and we tie every bit of knowledge back to the Bible because the Bible needs to be the foundation for everything in life, not what's happening in the political climate or anything else but it's got to be the Bible. So when you home educate your kids, you probably are doing so because you wanted the opportunity to teach character or to give wisdom to your children that they would not get from the world. Wisdom edifies.

Well, that's pretty good but how many of you know that you can build something and it can fall down? I remember when we were building our house in Mansfield, it was the first time I had built a house so it was my first time to interact with contractors and whatnot and so one day, I walked into the house, of course, it's just in the dry so there's walls up on the outside and you could walk in and there's a roof over your head but there is no sheet rock or anything yet. I went in to the area that supposed to be my office and I thought that this one 2 x 4 that was in the wall going to my office immediately inside the front door, I thought that 2 x 4 looks just a little weird so I gave it a gentle shove and the 2 x 4 broke in half. Now, I didn't think I was using my super human powers at the moment so I wondered why a light shove would cause this 2 x 4 to break in half and if you don't know this, they don't use solid 2 x 4's anymore. What they do is they take little scraps of wood and they do kind of a dovetail cut and they fit one piece of wood onto the other and they glue it together. Most of your studs are actually glued together bits of 2 x 4's and if the glue isn't strong there, you can shove on it and it snaps in two. And I'm thinking to myself after that 2 x 4 snapped in two, "I'm not really sure I want that in my wall." So I called the builder and I said, "Do you know that there is a 2 x 4 in my office wall that just snapped in two when I barely shoved on it?" Of course, I don't think he was real happy to hear that I was shoving on stuff but anyway, he says, "Okay, we'll take care of that." Then I learned that there were other things you had to do to constantly be vigilant for when you're building a house to make sure quality work is being done.

Now, I will tell you something I have learned in the 10 years since we moved into that house: it's more work taking care of a house after you move in it than it was before because when things go wrong, you can't just call the contractor and complain and get it replaced, now you have to pay to fix it. So we recently had a problem in our kitchen and it involved tearing out a whole bunch of stuff and tearing out sheet rock, tearing out walls because of a plumbing problem we had. Home ownership, by the way, a lot of people aspire to it and they get all excited, "I want to own my own home." Let me tell you something: it's not all that exciting. You are still paying for it but this time you can't call anybody when stuff breaks so you'd better be prepared for that reality.

But notice that it's not important to just build a house or edify which is what the word "edify" means but look at the next phrase, it says, "by understanding it is established." In other words, understanding is what keeps the home built. It's what keeps the walls up. It's the bracing, if you will, that keeps things in place and that's what I want to focus on this morning is how do we have understanding that establishes and strengthens the home? And then, he says, "Once you've got the home up and it's firmly established, the good news is that knowledge fills it with many pleasant riches."

It's so cool for me when the kids learn something new because then they share it and then I learn something. So this week I had picked up some videos about Christian martyrs and the kids, I came home the other night and I had an emergency flight to Montréal, Canada this week and I went up there and I came back and international travel just takes the wind out of my sails. So I got back on Friday night and I thought, "I've got to go to bed." So I went to bed at like 8 o'clock and meanwhile the family goes up and they watch this video on Samuel Morris. Now, if you haven't read about this young man, he was a prince in an African tribe. He was captured by another tribe. They were going to kill him. God gave him a miraculous deliverance. He came to America to learn more about God. He ended up leading a lot of people here to the Lord and forever changing the course of a specific university. If you haven't read the biography of Samuel Morris, you ought to read it. He only lived to be about 20 years old but he used every moment of his time from the time he met Christ to tell others about him. It was phenomenal.

So the next day, I had not really ever read that biography. I'm a big fan of Hudson Taylor, George Mueller and some others I'm more familiar with but the kids were just rattling on all day long about Samuel Morris. I had to go and watch a cartoon last night which if I can get educated by watching cartoons, that's right on my level and I like that concept. But you know, I love it when they learn because I get to learn and those things we learn become treasures and I think this verse in Scripture is such a beautiful verse describing the family.

So God's principles edify. The word "wisdom" here in this verse is the word "chokmah" which means "to see life from God's perspective." So if you want a successful family, you can't build it on whatever Dr. Spock said. I remember when I was growing up, there was a guy named Dr. Benjamin Spock. He wrote a book on child rearing and he was considered an authority. He got on all the talk shows of that day so my mother tried to raise me by Dr. Spock and that's why when I was a teenager she said, "I have to give up and give you to God because nothing else has worked." Mom was a good mom but Dr. Spock was bad advice, okay?

So we need to just throw out the world's methods of child rearing. What does the word say? And we need to build things on the eternal principles. You see, eternal principles don't change, okay? And then we need to use some other tools. We have the ability to give every one of you here access online to the basic seminar so that you can view the basic seminar. It's a week-long curriculum and you can watch it in your home and it explains to you how life works. If you are interested in that, send an email to the email address in the front of your bulletin and I'll make sure that you can do that.

Then these wise life pictures. There are a lot of teachable moments in life. My kids will tell you that even if I'm getting the oil changed, I can find an analogy about a spiritual truth to give them.

Then choose wise heroes. Watching somebody like Samuel Morris is a great way to give your kids a wonderful hero, teaching them about Hudson Taylor and George Mueller, Christians that really make a difference.

Then I just want to encourage you dads, you may not feel like you're a Christian hero in the order of one of these guys but you are your kids' hero. When kids are little, they think dad can do anything and I'm going to tell you something, kids plug your ears, I don't want you to hear this. We want our kids to think we can do anything, don't we, dads? I remember Melody, one time she came in and she was just a little tyke and she came in and her favorite rubber band had broken so she wanted daddy to fix it. She hands me this rubber band and there are these little sad eyes looking up at me because her pet rubber band was broken. Do you know what I did? I said, "Oh, what's that over there?" And I gave her a new rubber band. Why? Because I thought, "Yeah, she'll figure out one day I can't do everything but we can perpetuate the myth just a little while longer anyway."

So we want to be their heroes. Do you know what? You don't have to be perfect or be able to do everything but if you as a dad are moving in the right direction toward God, your kids will look at you as a hero. They will say, "Something has changed in my dad and he is moving in the right direction. He's doing things now he hasn't done before. You know, he reads the Bible to us or he prays before meals or he doesn't cuss anymore. He's going to church." Any move in the right direction makes you a hero to your kids and they are watching you, I promise you that.

Then, communicating God's perspective satisfies. Your family needs a spiritual leader. Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." My family and I did a study on this verse to find out what the meaning of all the Hebrew words was and we created a Rohlin family paraphrase: "Where there is no prophetic oracle from God," that's what it means to have a vision, "the people become unbridled and undisciplined and opportunities for blessing slip through their fingers," that's the meaning of the word "perish," "but he who guards and protects and keeps God's law enjoys his blessings." I'll tell you what, that is a wonderful, beautiful verse because it means if you really want the most out of life, do it God's way and you will have just some incredible blessings.

So we need, families need a dad who first of all is an intercessor. Richard, I think your life verse is from Ezekiel, is that right? Ezekiel, there's a verse that says that God looked for a man to stand in the gap but there was none. And Richard has purposed to be that man that stands in the gap for his country and for his church and for his family. To be the man that intercedes for all of those things and who makes up the broken spot in the wall, as it were. We need dads who will engage in prayer. They are to pray by themselves. That's called closet prayer. To pray with their wives, that's called chamber prayer. To

pray with their kids in the house, that's called cottage prayer. Then to come to a place like this and engage in congregational prayer. We need men who will pray in those areas of their lives and we need dads who will keep their vows and live their lives by strong convictions.

Now, a number of years ago, one of my friends came up with this chart that describes 4 kinds of men and I think this is a wonderful thing and you'll notice that in the bottom left-hand corner, we have a guy here who's, he doesn't really know God's word and he's not very loving, he's not very affectionate. He's just, you know, he's neither one and that's what the Bible calls a carnal person. This is a person that maybe doesn't, probably doesn't have a relationship with Jesus Christ and he's not very loving. He's just in life for his own stuff. That's all he wants to do. The Bible actually says in 1 Corinthians 3 that if you know a carnal person, stay away from them. Okay? You share the Gospel with him but don't make them close acquaintances.

Then you get the top left-hand corner, you get the Pharisees. These are the people who are really high in their standards and their morals and they create all kinds of rules to live by and they want everybody else to live by their rules too but they're not very loving. There are a lot of parents like that. They want to create rules for the kids and have their kids operate by rules all the time and have strict rules and boy, if you violate the rules, bam.

Let me ask you to do something: would everybody in this auditorium who has a mustache, please stand right now. If you have a mustache, stand up. Come on. I see you there. I want all of you looking at these men. I want you to keep them away from the town of Eureka, Illinois. Do not let these men travel through Eureka, Illinois. Do you know why? It is illegal in Eureka, Illinois for a man with a mustache to kiss a woman. I kid you not. That's on the books. Okay, you can sit down. I know I've changed all your travel plans now. But if you go to Springfield, Illinois where the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum is and then maybe you are traveling on your way to Indiana, Indianapolis, you will pass through a community called Eureka, Illinois and there is a law on the books that says it's illegal for a man with a mustache to kiss a woman and that's on the city law. Now, I want to ask you: how many people do you think that have mustaches in Eureka, Illinois actually worry about that law? I doubt they do. I doubt anybody has been given a ticket for it, anything else, but let me tell you something: if you really were worried about keeping that law, I guarantee you that you'd be looking at your bride and saying, "Honey, let's get out of town. Just half a mile but that's good enough. Let's get out of town." Why? We don't keep laws that we don't have to keep and if there is nothing associated with the law, we say, "I don't want to have to keep that law," so we don't do it. If you raise your kids by a set of rules then the minute you're not around to enforce the rules, guess what? They won't live by them anymore. You can't give your kids rules, you have to give them unchanging principles that go into their heart.

Now, on the bottom right-hand corner of this diagram, you have what is a gentleman like Apollos, they are called faithful men. Apollo in the New Testament was out preaching and he was pretty close to the truth. He had a wonderful heart and 2 people by the name

of Aquila and Priscilla saw Apollos and they said, "Do you know what? You're close. Boy, you're close. Why don't you come in here and let us do some Bible study with you and we'll show you what the Bible calls the more excellent way." And they brought Apollos in and they enlightened him and they taught him about Jesus and then Apollos suddenly went from being just a faithful man to actually being a servant leader because now he had the truth and he was loving.

Now, I want to ask you a question: if you looked at those 4 squares and you're a dad, I'm going to give you a choice, the choice is, this is kind of a weird choice, you can either be on the top of the chart or the right hand side of the chart. Now, I'm not going to give you, you can't pick which square, I'm only going to say that you can pick the top or you can pick the right hand side. Now, of those 2 choices, which is probably the better choice, guys? The right, somebody said it, because listen, the top left is no good, right? Either one of the 2 right things is not a bad thing. It's okay to be a faithful man. Do you know why that works like that? Because the axis that you see there is mercy or love or the Hebrew word is "chesed" and the other axis is truth. You can have all the truth in the world but if you can't teach it with love, it won't make a bit of difference. But if you communicate love to your children, you might not know all the things you need to know, you might not communicate all the things you need to but if you really love your kids, they'll turn out okay. Now, ultimately where should we all want to be? That top right-hand corner. That's where we need to be. So we want to be in that particular spot and the way we do that is to teach principles and then give people love.

So Proverbs 24 has a warning for us, though, and it says that we need understanding to establish our family. So we need to look a little more in detail at what that means for us to do that and I want you to look at a verse that I think is misinterpreted a lot of times and it's a verse that we think is about working hard or about diligence. But let me talk about what it means to have an understanding heart and I want you to know that there are 4 different Hebrew words for understanding so we're going to look at these 4 words real quickly. The first word, and by the way, if you have the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance at home, those numbers you see in parentheses up there are the numbers for the Hebrew word so you can go home and look these words up yourself. But the first word for understanding is a perceptive heart. It's used in Isaiah 33:19 which says, "Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand." God made the children of Israel a rather interesting promise. He said, "Yeah, you're going to go into captivity because you mess up, you forget me and you go into captivity but you're still my chosen people so do you know what? I'll never let you go into captivity that you won't be able to learn their language. I'll always make sure that you can learn their language." So when they went into captivity with Assyria, guess what? The Jewish people picked up Assyrian rather quickly. They learned it. God had promised. In other words, it's understanding facts and being able to communicate so it's meaning to have a perceptive heart.

Dads, you and I need a perceptive heart. What is a perceptive heart? Well, it's speaking the same language as your family. Do you know that there is a, one of my friends, Brother David Dixon, went down and he was in Honduras and there is a group of people

down there, about a quarter million of them, that's all there are, called the Garifuna people. The Garifuna people have an unusual language and that is the women speak one language and the men speak another language. And you thought you had trouble communicating. So all kids grow up speaking the mother's language but when the boys reach about 12 or 13, they have to suddenly switch overnight and go from the girl's language to the guy's language because it wouldn't be manly to keep talking mama's language anymore and so they have to start speaking the man's language. So when he went down there, he was trying to translate the Bible and he hears this dialect and he's writing it down and he gets all these dictionary words and he starts giving them a little passage of the New Testament only to find out that half the people didn't understand him. The kids couldn't understand him because he was learning the language from a man and the kids hadn't really adopted that whole man language thing yet. He found out that when you build a Bible, you're going to have to put it in the male language and the female language. Wow, that makes life interesting, doesn't it?

Do you know, I have noticed and we're not Garifuna but at my house, my wife and my daughters and I've got 6 daughters, they do sometimes speak a different language than I speak. How many of you men can give me a witness and say amen? Okay. So you know. They speak a different language than we do sometimes and their language has little nuances and adjustments and things you have to do. It's just not easy and you have to learn how to navigate that kind of language and know what's behind the words they say.

So the question is: do you seek to try to understand them? In Proverbs 3:5 it says, "lean not unto thine own understanding," or literally, not unto your own perspective. Guys, we've got to quit making decisions based on our own perspective only. Turn to your wife before you make that decision and say, "Honey, what do you think about it?" If you do that, that will impress her. You say, "What do you think about it?" You may still not understand it because you may not have learned her language but at least you will gain some brownie points by saying, "What do you think about it?" All you men, repeat after me: what do you think about it? Okay, those are vital words. You need to understand that.

Another thing about this is: do you listen so that there is 2 way communication? Okay, this is getting tough, I know. Listen to what they say. See if you can say it back to them in words you can understand and then say, "Did I get it? Did I get it?" And then listen again. That would be a wonderful thing. Now, if you want to impress them, this isn't just a brownie point, this is like a whole package of Fig Newtons if you can do this, this is awesome. Proverbs 18:13 has a warning for all of us guys. It says, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." In other words, if you answer your wife before you really hear what's on her heart, you're an idiot. Okay? That's what it says. That's the Rohlin Standard Version, RSV.

So we need to have a perceptive heart and so do you seek to get wise counsel? If there are major issues, don't just make the decision by yourself, get counsel. Seek out someone else who is wise. Maybe somebody else who has learned how to communicate with his family. Proverbs 1:5 says, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."

Let's look at the second Hebrew word. The second Hebrew word for understanding means an insightful heart. In other words, this doesn't just know that it's hearing properly but now it has insights. In Proverbs 2:2 it says, "incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding." This means that when you read your Bible and I know a lot of us don't really understand our Bible but pick up a Bible and try this, guys. Maybe you're not a Bible reader. Pick up a Bible one day this week when nobody's looking and read, but before you read, just say, "God, show me one thing out of here that makes sense to me," and just read until you find it. Read until you hear one thing that makes sense to you. That's called insight and all of a sudden something will leap off the page and you'll say, "Oh wow, that's something I can do in my own life." When you get insight, you have gotten one form of understanding and that's what we need to do. By the way, the chief enemy of insight according to Scripture is anger. We get angry. It says, "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding." In other words, if you're slow to get upset, then you have great insights. But he says, "he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." Do you know what happens? We often fly off the handle before we can learn what it is God is trying to teach us. Why? Because sometimes the lessons come the hard way, right?

So we need to gain insights so Romans 7:18 it says, and this is what it says about my flesh by the way. I've been pastoring 33 years and over that 33 years there have been plenty of people that criticize me and they won't stop now but let me share something with you: it doesn't matter what you want to say bad about me, it's true. Do you know why? Because this verse says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." It basically says: "Hey, down deep inside, I'm a depraved sinner. I don't really know how to do what's good. That's the way my sinful nature is but that's not who I am in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, I'm born again. I'm a child of God. I'm a saint that sometimes sins instead of a sinner that's just saved by grace." And that's important for us to understand.

So the keys are: we need to seek, every day spend as much time as it takes in the Bible, it could be 5 minutes it could be 15 minutes, just say, "God, I want to read until you show me one thing I can put to action in my life." You can stop when you get that one thing, guys. But go that far. Then we need to, when we're talking to our kids, don't just bark out the rules, explain the "why." Why is this important that we deal with this issue in your life? And be humble about it.

The third Hebrew word for understanding, there are only 4 so we're nearly there, is the word "sekhel" which means "planning, preparation, cunning, prudence or policy." So listen to these words from Proverbs 3, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee." By the way, do you know that in the Bible, every time it uses "mercy and truth" in the same verse, mercy is always first? Do you know why? Because love is even more important than truth. If you love your kids, that will do. You can give your kids truth but without love, it doesn't help but if you give them love, that makes up for a multitude of things. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man." This means to have a heart of mercy and truth.

One of the things, guys, we need to do is, our children need to know it is safe for them to come and talk to us. Our wife needs to know it's safe for them to come and talk to us. Now, I sometimes don't think of myself as an angry man but I sometimes get under a lot of pressure. I mean, when your boss calls you Monday at 2 o'clock and says, "I need you in Montréal tomorrow," and you say, "Wow, what in the world is this about?" Suddenly everything you had planned gets thrown out the window and you're rushing to the airport trying to get on a plane to go solve a problem somewhere. That adds to my pressure and sometimes I can tend, when I'm in a pressure cooker and having to deal with decisions very quickly, that I can get a little snappy. How many of you guys have ever been snappy? Okay, the rest of you are lying. So we get a little snappy sometimes and sometimes we don't mean to be angry but it's like, "I've got to deal with this quick," bang, bang, bang and so we treat our family like we would treat our subordinates at work. By the way, that's not how we should treat our family, right? And so we kind of bark things out and sometimes when I'm that way, I've had children who have found it a little hard to come and approach daddy and I've had to take them out later and say, "You know honey, you need to know that you can always come to me and share with me even if you think it's going to upset me. Come to me, I promise when you come to me, put your hand on my shoulder and say, 'Daddy, can I talk to you?' My promise to you is that I will not react to you in anger. That will be my signal that I need to chill down for just a minute and listen to you." So you need to make sure that there's a safe place. Your family can't share their heart if they don't think it's safe, if you're like a volcano.

So what does it mean to have a safe place? Well, you've got to have 2 key elements: you have to have mercy and then you have to have humility. Mercy means unconditional love. It means you're going to listen. You're going to hear. You're going to speak the same language. Now, we had a little mishap at our house this week and, you know, I could go into all the reasons why it happened and I could explain to you how it could have been avoided but the fact is, by the time I found out about it, the damage was already done. So I had a choice: how am I going to react? I didn't react to anything. I didn't actually address the situation. I didn't go out and tell anybody, "Well, this is why it happened," and I just wanted to, but I wasn't happy about it. Sometimes we need to just be merciful. It is a glory for a man to overlook a transgression, the Bible says. You don't have to jump on every single mistake that your kids make. Jump on the things that are in direct violation of God's will and talk to them about it in love but don't jump down their throat for every mistake they make. I'm still learning that. It's true.

Then in humility. Remember that you yourself are a sinner. God doesn't jump down my throat for every mistake I make. If he did, I'd have a throat that never got to close, I guess. It would be a bad thing. We need to trust in the grace of God. By the way, I met a guy last week or whatever week we were in Big Sandy. A lot of us went there for the conference and a guy came up to me and he's heard me speak before and every time he meets me, he says, "I remember you're the guy I heard about ziklag from." I guess that's the one thing I stick in this guy's memory about is about ziklag but there is a story in 1 Samuel 30 where David and his men have gone out on kind of a raid and when they come back, the Philistines had conquered their camp and had taken all their wives and all their

children and all their goods and burnt their tents and they come back and their families are gone, their tents are gone, their possessions are gone. So do you know what happened? David's men who had sworn an oath of allegiance to him, they wanted to stone him to death. Why? Because they had put David up on a pedestal and then when he didn't live up to the reputation of his pedestal, they just wanted to throw rocks at him. Have you all ever known anybody that really let you down after you had kind of built them up in your mind? Boy, you were just disgusted. Disgusted when they let you down. I've known pastors like that that had moral failure and you were so upset about it and congregations were devastated by it. Let me explain something: in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I'm going to promise you right now so you won't be shocked: Robert Rohlin will let you down at some point in time if I haven't already. Okay? I forget stuff. Stuff goes on. I'm human. I sometimes don't always react on the even keel that I should be famous for. If you want even keel, go see my wife. She always has an even keel. I don't.

She's a great balance for me. The other day she was saying, "You know, women ought to just learn how to love, forgive and go on." And I said, "That is such a perfect balance for my philosophy which is shoot first and ask questions later." I said, "God brought you into my life for that reason, you know." So we're really a good great balance for each other. But let me tell you something, guys: if you don't humble yourself before your family and admit when you're wrong, one day they're going to want to throw rocks at you, dude. But when you humble yourself, your kids are going to say, "Dad, I appreciate the fact that you're honest about your flaws, the fact that you're honest about your faults." That's what you want. You want to avoid that ziklag experience.

So let me get to the final word which is the big deal. This is the main thing and this one blows my mind and that is in Proverbs 24:30-34. Now, find those in your Bible because I'm going to have you underline something here and I'm going to have you write something in the margin of your Bible. I know some of you think it's a sin to write in your Bible. I think it's a sin if you don't. Okay, but let me read this passage to you. I always thought this was just about being a hard worker and I'm a little bit of a workaholic. I like hard work. I like to see hard workers. I was so proud of all the people who came up and worked hard yesterday and most of them worked all day long. But listen to this, "I went by the field of the slothful," and see, I'm already upset because I don't like slothful people, "I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding." Underline that phrase because I'm going to tell you what it means in Hebrew in just a minute. Underline "void of understanding." And here's the consequence of having a man who is low on understanding, "And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man." So let me tell you the way I always read that verse, I always read the verse that if you were slothful and you didn't get up and do your job, eventually you would come to poverty so guess what? Work hard and that is certainly one of the meanings there. But let me share something with you about the Bible: the Bible says that it is the glory of the king to

conceal a matter. It's the glory of God to conceal a matter, it's the glory of kings to search a matter out. God hides stuff in Scripture that you won't see unless you dig deeper.

So let's dig a little deeper to find out exactly what this passage really means. Notice, there is a warning here of how things are going to turn out and really, at first glance, this isn't just a passage, it looks like about diligence but it's not just that. Now, we have spent about 4 weeks on Psalm 128:3 which said what? "His wife," talking about the righteous man, "shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of the house: and his children like young olive plants around the table." We've talked about what that meant and we studied all about olives and found that if you knew how to raise olive trees, you knew how to raise children and those sermons are on the Internet if you want to go and hear them. Now, that passage was about olive trees and a vine next to your house and it was a picture of the family. So guess what? Here in this passage, we have what? An orchard. We have a vineyard. We have a place where they are growing vines and trees. If that was a picture of the family in Psalm 128 it's not invalid for us to use it as a picture of the family here. So let's look at this and see if it could be something about the family because that's what it means in Psalm 128 certainly.

So what happens according to Proverbs 24, if you do not have an understanding father in the family? It says, "Look, it quit giving its increase." He says, "This vineyard, this field, the vines, no more crop." Why? Because the guy wasn't diligent to get out there. He was void of understanding. So if you have a father who is void of understanding and I'm going to tell you what that means in just a minute, the first consequence is that there is going to be lost productivity in his family. Now, why do you raise kids? In the book of Revelation 4:10, the Bible tells us why we're here on the planet. If you don't know why you're on the planet, you need to memorize Revelation 4: 10 because it says that we were created for God's glory. Do you know why I'm here? To glorify God. Do you know why you're here? To glorify God. Do you know why I raise children? To glorify God. They're not there to serve me although it's pretty cool when they bring me iced tea or mow the lawn or something but that's another whole story. But they are here to glorify God and if my children don't grow up glorifying God, then I have failed as a parent. So I want them to glorify the Lord, that's the main focus. So guess what? It says that this land that the slothful person owned was grown over with thorns, the fruitfulness of it was choked out by the weeds that grew up, they had lost productivity and so a family can go through all of life and then not do anything for the kingdom of God. They miss doing something eternal. Souls aren't being won to the Lord. Labors are ineffective. Financial reproofs come. Let me tell you something: when Faith called me from Taiwan and told me she had had an opportunity to lead a young man there to the Lord, that was so exciting to me. It was the most exciting thing I can think of is for my kids to go out and win souls and bring people to Jesus Christ because if they do that, that accrues to my benefit as well and the people that you lead to the Lord, when they go and lead people to the Lord, that accrues to your benefit.

Let's look at the second thing that happens when a family doesn't have an understanding father and that is they have lost protection. Proverbs 24 says the walls were broken down. So they put walls around the vineyard to keep the animals out, to keep other people out,

to protect their crop and he says, "Hey, the walls broke down." We've got a fence in our backyard that really needs replacing and I keep pulling one little board down and putting up another board because I'm hoping that I can keep enough of the fence standing until somebody, God moves on somebody's heart to say, "Brother Rohlin, we're going to put a new fence in your backyard," or something like that or one magically appears or trees grow up in a perfect straight formation that form a permanent living fence or something. You know, I'm trying to hold that fence together as long as I can and I'm losing the battle. But do you know what? If you are a dad who doesn't have an understanding heart, the walls of protection around your family will be broken down. Your kids will start to be under the influence of the world and their enemies are going to attack them and they are going to get through and they're going to steal the hearts of your children. Dad, you need to be a man of an understanding heart and children tend to become just like the world once the walls are broken down. The family becomes more easily exposed to the dangers of bitterness so they lose the protection there. So the walls are broken down and you lose the protection and lust and immorality and bitterness, all that comes in.

Now, what else happens? The phrase and here's where you can write this down so write where you underlined in your Bible "void of understanding," here's what you need to write down: the words literally mean "void of heart." Basically it says this, "The slothful person, he was a man who had no heart." The father who lets his family's productivity and protection go away is a father who doesn't really have a heart. He's void of heart. He has an empty heart. Proverbs 10:13 says it this way, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod for the back of a hymn that is void of understanding." In other words, he says, "This guy is going to get God's reproofs." That's just going to happen to him. He's going to have to learn all those lessons the hard way and yet he's still going to be so thick skulled that God didn't quite get through and so guess what? He has to get more reproofs. He has to get more reproofs.

Have any of you ever experienced that where it's kind of like God was trying to tell you something and you didn't get it so he had to tell you a little louder and a little louder? How many of you have ever done that with your kids, by the way? They didn't get it the first time so you thought if you raised your voice a little bit you'd get through to them. That didn't work so you raised your voice a little bit and thought you'd get through to them. Okay? And sometimes God has to kind of get to the place where he's shouting. The fact is in Hebrews 12, it says sometimes he's thundering and lightning from on top of Mount Sinai and I'm going to tell you, you don't want to be there when he does that. And I am one of those hardheaded, thickheaded, stubborn people and God sometimes has trouble getting through to me.

Now, who is void of heart? So if we look just at this Hebrew word, where is it used in Scripture so we know what that means? Let's figure out what "void of heart" means. Well, in Proverbs 6:32 it says this, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding," literally, he's void of heart, "he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul." So in other words, if you commit adultery with another woman, you have no heart for your own wife. You have no heart for your own family. You're just a selfish blob of flesh that didn't care enough because you didn't have a heart. You were void of heart and

it says, guess what? It says you do it to your own destruction. You destroy your own soul. Here's the second time it's used in Proverbs 9:16, it says, "Whoso is simple," this is an adulterous woman talking, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." So he says if you lack understanding and if you are not aware of temptation, if you give into temptation easily, it's because you have no heart because guess what? If you had more of a heart for God, you could resist the temptation longer. So first of all, do you commit adultery? Secondly, do you have a heart that gives in easily to temptation?

There's another one, Proverbs 12:11. It says, "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread," if you work hard, you'll have food to eat, "but he that followeth vain persons," or empty persons, "is void of understanding," or has no heart. So if you follow vain people and have empty pursuits, you're void of heart.

Last one, Proverbs 17, one who becomes surety. Now get this one, if you cosign for somebody, you're void of heart. Have you all ever known anybody that cosigned for a loan? I remember years ago I was doing a little growing up out in a place called Slayton, Texas. Now, if you don't know where Slayton, Texas is, it's about 16 miles outside of Lubbock and we lived in front of a cotton field and whenever the cotton wasn't growing, every little puff of wind brought dust into your mouth. The fact is the dentist tells me I still have West Texas dust behind my back 3 molars that they can't get out. And we lived in a trailer home and when the wind blows out there, the trailer home walls do this and every time they buckle in, there are some little seams that open up and the dust comes in your house. It's a dusty place to live out there in Slayton, Texas and it's kind of a godforsaken thing. But I remember that we had a family that moved in. Nobody knew them. They moved into the trailer park and they got in there and they were talking about how they just moved from another state and they had 3 or 4 kids and they were living in this trailer. They said, "We've got this great job but we're having trouble getting settled," and so as they got to know people in the trailer park they said, "You know, could you just help us get settled? We just need a local credit card here so we can do our normal business," and so somebody said, "Yeah, I'll sign for that," so somebody cosigned for it. Then somebody else came along and they needed something and they convinced somebody else. Before they knew it, they had nearly everybody in the trailer park cosigning except for my dad. Now, my dad did not do a whole lot of things right but one thing my dad did is he didn't cosign for other people. Do you know that the Bible actually says, Proverbs 17:18, listen to this, "A man void of understanding," a man who has no heart, "strieth hands," that's the Hebrew words for "to cosign for a loan," "and becometh surety in the presence of his friend." There is another verse in Proverbs that actually says that if you cosign a loan, you're an idiot. Now, that's God's word talking, not me.

Now what do all these things have in common? Why is cosigning a loan, like adultery, like giving into temptation too fast etc., what is the root cause of all these things? Well, let's just look at a couple of these things and the root cause is competing affections. It's not making God our first love. So look at these. By the way, have you ever heard of these

expressions like, "Oh, that's the heart and soul of the matter." Or, "His heart is in the right place." These heart relationships are deep for us. Let me go back here. So adultery, for example, what do you do when you commit adultery? Well, you bow to the temptation, you bow to human pressure and you bow to fleshly urge. You give in and you choose an unworthy relationship, a relationship that is no good for you. And then you actually wind up at the gates of Sheol with property in ruin. Let's look at cosigning. What happens here? Once again, you're usually bowing to pressure because somebody has convinced you that you need to do this to be a good person and you value that person's opinion of you more than God's opinion of you. You also get pretty pumped up on your own judgment because you're willing to loan money to somebody the bank has already said, "Sorry but we're not loaning money to them." If the bank said it's not a good credit risk, why are you signing for it? Because you think you're smarter than the bank. You fail to see the consequences. The person who commits adultery fails to understand the consequences. It damages present relationships just like the adulterer does. It brings poverty and ruin just like adultery does. You see, these 2 things actually have a whole lot in common so what is that root cause? It's having those competing affections. Things that keep you from keeping God first place in your life. So your heart goes out. You know, when you say, "My heart goes out to them or my heart goes out to her," you're saying, "The deepest part of me goes out to them and hurts for them." It's our deepest, innermost motivations. It's the thing that pumps our blood, literally.

So dad, let me tell you what your family really wants. Your family wants a dad who listens to the Lord God. You don't have to be a seminary graduate. You don't have to know Greek or Hebrew, you just need to be able to pick up your Bible, find an easy to read version and read it and say, "God, show me one thing today that I can teach my family, one thing I can talk about, one thing that will help me. I just want to be a little better man today than I was yesterday. Would you help me do that?" And just sit there and read 10-15 minutes, suddenly you've got one thing and you say, "Oh, that's pretty cool." Do you know what? God wrote the book so ask him to explain it to you and just say, "God, would you show me one thing, explain it," or seek out counsel. Families want a dad who loves the Lord so much that he doesn't have room for anybody else so he has to ask God to love his family through him. They want a dad who is sold out to Jesus Christ and that understands that his family is his ministry.

Now, I just want to read you this poem and then I'm going to get you guys to recite something with me and I'm done but this poem is a Doug Phillips poem but it's still one of the best things I've ever read. Listen to this,

"More noble than the valiant deeds of shining knights of yore,
More powerful than earthly plights that make the rich man poor,
More kingly than a royal throne or a lion with his pride,
Is he whose babes sleep well at night sure Daddy will provide.
There is a spirit in this land and Jezebel's her name.
She's calling you to leave your home for power, fun, and fame.
She wants your wife, your children too — she'll never compromise,
Until your house is torn in two by listening to her lies.

But though a hundred thousand million men may fall prey to her lures,
And wives en masse leave home in search of 'more fulfilling' chores,
Though preachers praise, and friends embrace, her pagan plan of death,
Stand strong and quit you like a man with every blessed breath.
Stand strong and rise, O man of God, to meet this noble call,
The battle is not new you see, it's been here since the Fall.
Look not toward worldly goal or gain, or for your liberty,
Look only into their sweet eyes to find your ministry.
Protect, provide, and give to her your undivided life,
This is the dear one of your youth, your precious bride, your wife.
And rally to those tiny ones who trust you for their care —
A lifetime spent discipling them's a lifetime pure and rare.
For when they put their hand in yours and know a Daddy's love,
You're showing them a picture of the Father from above.
Look not toward worldly goal or gain, or for your liberty,
Look only into their sweet eyes to find your ministry.
Devote your heart and sacrifice and make your manly mark —
There is none so great as he who finds his call as patriarch."

That's an awesome poem and it's the most important thing we'll do. Dads, I want to challenge you and we all need to be understanding people but I would especially want to talk to dad's. What your kids need most and I know we talk about men needing to be a spiritual leader and yeah, we ought to do that and I know we talk about you ought to be men of the word of God and we ought to do that but before you do anything else, could you focus on being a man with an understanding heart that just loves your kids enough to read your Bible until you find one thing to help and that you'll be patient and not blow up at them. You'll bring them close. You'll hug them. You'll love on them. You'll actually say to your wife, "Now, what do you think about that?" before you make a decision and then you listen and say, "Did I get that right?" You'll be amazed how those little things can change and transform your family.

I want to ask you men to stand with me and we're going to repeat this Scripture. What I did is I took Psalm 128 that we have spent a month in now and I have put it in in the first person so I want you to read it together with me as I've got it written there on this slide and let's just say this out loud. "I am blessed as I fear the Lord: as I walk in His ways. I shall eat the labor of my hands; I will rejoice and it will be well with me. My wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the side of my house. My children are like olive plants roundabout my table. Behold, this is the life and blessing to all men that fear Jehovah. Jehovah shall bless me out of Zion: and I shall seek and see the good of my city all the days of my life. Yea, and I shall see my children's children and peace upon my nation." What an awesome prayer list.

Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer and I just want to encourage you. I appreciate your time and your attention. Can I just encourage you to determine in your heart today to be an understanding man? I'm not going to give an altar call today but it's always open and if you, let me tell you, guys, the place you've got to start if you've never done it is

you've got to ask Jesus Christ to be your Savior. I want you to know without him, nothing is possible. I honestly could not cope with my life if it weren't for Jesus. That would just be too much on me and the strain would break me in 2 like a brittle twig but with Jesus, I can do everything he asks of me and he never gives me more than I can bear. I'm so grateful for that. I'm grateful for men in this church who lead their families to God and bring themselves to church but I want you to know if you're here without Christ, would you invite him into your heart because life starts with Jesus and until Jesus is in your heart, you don't know what life really is yet.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. I'm going to ask Brother Dennis Conway if he'll dismiss us and then also ask the blessing on our time of fellowship and I do want to say and I haven't acknowledged it publicly but we have a number of guests here. Would you just make them feel welcome because they've been a blessing to us already? Brother Dennis, would you dismiss us, please?