

WARNING AND WARMING HEARTS

(The Shepherding Heart of a Biblical Father)

Proverbs 13:24, 17:6, 21,25, 29:15,17, Hebrews 12:5-11, I Thessalonians 2: 1-13

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Some years ago, a man and his wife visited an orphanage where they hoped to adopt a child. After looking over all the children, they chose a young boy they asked to interview. They told him the kind of life they had to offer, with many clothes, toys, and his very own bedroom in a luxurious home. The boy looked at them, and said, “If you have nothing to offer me except a good home, clothes, and toys, why, I would, just as soon stay here.” The woman looked at him and asked him, “What on earth could you want besides these things we’ve offered you? The boy sadly said, “I just want someone to love me.” I would imagine if every boy or girl, every teenage son or daughter, or if every single or married adult man or woman would be asked, “What do you most want from your dad on Father’s Day,” it would probably be, “I just want to hear him say, “Son or daughter, I love you.”

Today is an important day for me. On Tuesday, June 14th, our fourth daughter, Audrey gave birth to our 27th grandchild, Lander McClay Ross, on June 16th, Thursday, Jinny and I, celebrated our second wedding anniversary apart as we celebrated 55 years of marriage together, and today is Father’s Day. It’s been a week of three celebrations, and for each one I praise the Lord. Isn’t God good! A song I’ve sung hundreds of times comes again to my mind today, by the Australian singer, Darlene Zschech, called “Shout to the Lord!” The words are words, Dads, that I would like to give to you at the outset of this message to encourage you to take for your own praise to God in being a father. The song goes, “My Jesus, my Savior, Lord there is none like You, All of my days I want to praise The wonders of Your mighty love My comfort, my shelter Tower of refuge and strength Let every breath, all that I am Never cease to worship You Shout to the Lord all the Earth, let us sing Power and majesty, praise to the King Mountains bow down and the seas will roar At the sound of Your name I sing for joy at the work of Your hands Forever I’ll love You, forever I’ll stand Nothing compares to the promise I have In You.”

Today, I am aware of one of the big differences between Father’s Day and Mother’s Day. For whatever reason, on Mother’s Day, Moms are lifted up, encouraged, and crowned with praise. Amazingly, fathers on Father’s Day in our upside-down world are often challenged to step up to the plate to be fathers, and most Father’s Day messages bear down hard, forgetting that God has a remnant of great fathers that need cheered on today, encouraged, and motivated to keep faithful in what they are doing. I had the joy, a week ago, last Saturday morning, after spending the night at Travis and Amanda Ross’s home in Eaton, Colorado, to wake up to a glorious waffle breakfast Amanda made, and then seated around the table was our full band—Greasewood Redemption, who also stayed in their home. Travis took out a great devotional book by Bob Schulz, written in 2006, called, “Created for Work, Practical Insights for Young Men.” He read a chapter about maintaining our equipment, our toys, our tools, our cars, our homes, our marriages,

our relationships, and there sat Preston Ackerman, Aaron Folks, Colton and Dayna Yeager, Andrew Kneeland, Caleb Kneeland, Rolland Ross, Abram Ross, and Amanda Ross. I was so thankful to God that Travis took time to read devotions, to ask questions, and to pray with all of us. That's great fathering. Then last Monday, I visited in a home of one family among us. When I arrived, the Dad and Mom were just finishing supper, and with their children, they were discussing the coming of the Lord Jesus. It thrilled me. Today, I am coming to encourage us, Dads. Yes, I want to challenge us also, but I have no desire to discourage even one of you, but I am praying, rather to motivate each of you fathers, whether you are dads, grandpas, great grandpas, or even single men praying for a wife to marry—I want to challenge you all that there is special thrill in taking up the challenge to be a godly father. The Lord gave me the title, "Warning and Warming Hearts."

Both of these two words captivate much of what a father is called to do. Dad's, I dedicate this message to all of you, and I challenge everyone of us here today, to become a cheering section, to become praying partners, and frequent encouragers of all the fathers in our church, that each of us will finish the course, keep the faith, and fulfill God's plan us as fathers. Today, there are two parts to this message—the challenge to be a father with the moral courage to **warn hearts** in our family to hold fast to the Lord, and to lead them in doing so. The second part is the challenge to be a father with the moral courage to **warm hearts** in our family to reach for the goals God has for us, and to lead in pursuing God's goals for us. Let's talk about it.

GOD CALLS US TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO WARN HEARTS TO HOLD FAST TO THE LORD.

(I.) The Bible lays before us as fathers, the challenge, admonishment, and warning to accept our tough assignment to be men who know how to lead by example and to warn those under our charge to stay strong for God. How do we do this? Turn to I Corinthians 16: 13-14. **(1) Warn with love.** Let all you do as a husband, father, worker on the job, and neighbor, be done in love. We read here, "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." A huge part of acting like true men of God is the willingness to accept Paul's warning not to do anything that is not done or said in love. Being a man's man for Jesus is not about stepping outside and shoving someone's face in the dirt, one of our sons, one of our fellow-workers, or one of our fellow-members in the household of God. It is rather doing all things in love. Every father must warn his children, but we fathers must use love to warn. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6: 4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the nurture, discipline and instruction of the Lord." Part of warning may at times include disciplining our sons and daughters, but it can never be done in anger. Any warning we give our children is not speaking down to our children with a domineering, thoughtless, arbitrary spirit that treats our children as lesser. When we warn our children to get in bounds, and to stay in the boundaries of love, respect, honesty, and obedience, our sons and daughters, ought to see in our eyes and our speech they have a dad who would die for them, who loves them.

(2) Warn with tears. Let all warnings you give as husbands, fathers, and leaders be done with heart felt love, emotion, and tears. Turn to Acts 20: 28-32. Listen to

Paul warning the Ephesian elders in Miletus. He warns them, saying, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn/admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” Men, we don’t cry as easily as our wife, but there are times when our heart is so into our warnings, our discipline, and our reproof, that our children see tears in our eyes. They won’t forget it. I can’t tell you how many times as a dad with seven children, and six other teens we took in to raise, that I had my children say, “Dad, don’t cry!” God uses discipline and He uses not only the rod, but reproof, speaking the truth in love. Proverbs 29: 15 is clear, “The rod and reproof give wisdom.” But God also uses tears, men. Paul wrote in Acts 20: 18-19 about his way of life, saying, “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.” When Paul warned the church in Corinth, he let them know he didn’t want to make another painful visit. He said in II Corinthians 2: 4, “For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love I have for you. The tears of dads and spiritual dads with their sons and daughters or spiritual sons and daughters leads our sons and daughters to cry with us—those tears are not in vain. Paul wrote to Timothy in II Timothy 1: 4 to his son in the faith, “As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. When we weep over our wayward children or those we are mentoring, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

(3) Warn with patient firmness. Let all warnings be firm, but patient and encouraging to the faint-hearted. Turn to I Thessalonians 5: 14. Paul writes, “And we urge you, brothers, warn/admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” Men, our words can bring life or death to our children and to others, right here in our church. Proverbs 18: 21 is a huge warning to us all. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it, will eat its fruits.” Fathers, our words carry extra weight with our children. Our words can shape them as they grow. If our children grow up with our criticism, they will learn to condemn, but if they grow up with patient firmness, praise, and encouragement, they will learn to appreciate life, and they will have confidence.

(4) Warn with diligent loving discipline. Here is where we are tested as dads with children at home, whether they are pre-school, middle school, junior high, high school, or college/career age. If we buy into the world’s methods of child rearing, the day will come when our homes are out of control. God tells us in Proverbs 13: 24, “Whoever spares the rod, hates his son/daughter, but he who loves him/her, is diligent to discipline them.” If you deny this truth, remember the Word of God in Proverbs 30: 5-6 which is clear. “Every word of God is tested. He is a shield to

those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you and you be proved a liar.” God says in Proverbs 19: 18, “Discipline your son, while there is hope, and do not desire his death.” Fathers and mothers, be certain if we ignore God’s word for us to love our children with firm, loving discipline, we are signing their death warrant, and turning them over to the foolishness and sinfulness of their own hearts. God adds in Proverbs 29: 17, “Discipline your son/daughter, and they will give you comfort/rest. He or she will give delight to your soul.”

(5) Warn with passionate words of release and a promise to faithfully pray.

All children grow up finally, and God’s command in Genesis 2: 24 is, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave/hold fast to his wife, and they together/twain, shall become one flesh.” I urge you and warn you, by my own example, that none of us can have back the going away of our children. God led Jinny and I to have a formal release of our children before marriage, and each of our children got a steak dinner, or a dinner out at their favorite restaurant, where we finally and formally released them from our hands of discipline, but never from our hearts of love and faith and prayer. We have attempted to honor our release and not interfere in their lives. Interestingly, when our children come to crossroads, they have at times, asked for our input. We give it, but prayerfully, never insistingly. They must live by their own decisions. The main job of every parent after our children are released is constant and daily prayer. Have we warned when asked for input? Yes, but it is always following God’s command in Ephesians 4: 15 to “speak the truth in love.” Whether in child-rearing, living with adult children, or in being concerned for fellow-Christians, know that God rebukes any warnings that call out the warning, decrying wrong behavior, but fail to back up our warnings with daily prayers of love, and with a tone in our warnings that follow our five warning patterns. God calls us as dads and moms, but dads, especially, I call us to lead the way—to warn with love, with tears, with patient firmness, with diligent loving discipline, and with passionate words of release. Many of you are doing this. If you aren’t, are your children at home? It is never too late to begin obeying God in warning these dearest hearts we love for His glory. Secondly,

GOD CALLS US TO HAVE COURAGE TO WARM HEARTS TO REACH FOR THE GOALS GOD HAS FOR EACH DEAR HEART WE LOVE (II.)

How do we biblically become dads and fathers who warm the hearts of our sons and daughters, and of all those we love and respect and honor? Here are five ways!

(1) Set a goal of being more than a physical father, be a spiritual dad. Turn to II Corinthians 4: 14-16. Paul tells the church in Corinth, “I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to warn/admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.” Dad, never be satisfied to be just the physical father of your sons and daughters. **(a) Be their father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.** To be a spiritual dad, we must live out the heart of a Shepherd that Jesus gives us. That means we show unconditional love to our children. Remember, Jesus is our example and He is the friend of sinners—and was criticized for it. If our children go astray, we certainly should call them back to the Lord, but we should never ever

deny them our presence. Shunning each other is not what Jesus calls us to in His great command in John 13: 34-35. Sometimes, I have gone after men I am mentoring, and that has meant going into a bar in town, and carrying them out. Jesus touched the lepers to heal them. We must reach out and touch those who we are spiritual dads to. **(b) Invest time with our sons/daughters and spiritual children.** Those we father and mentor spell love with these words—TIME. **(c) Pray for the lives of your sons and daughters to be filled with Jesus so they can touch others for Him.** Dads, be willing to see your sons and daughters pass you up in following Jesus. Our goal is for them to see Jesus in us, but for them to follow Jesus even more than they follow us. Make it your heart-warming goal as John in III John 4, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

(2) Sacrifice your life every day for your children. Turn to I Thessalonians 2:8, which is Paul saying, “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you, not only the Gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” Or as Paul said of the church in Philippi, in Phil. 1: 7, “It is right for me to feel this way about you all, (warm) because I hold you in my heart.” Men, if you intend to be spiritual dads, there will be a sacrifice.

(3) Stretch yourself by holy, righteous, and blameless conduct to call your sons and daughters to walk in a manner worthy of God. This is what Paul did. Listen to I Thessalonians 2:9-12. We read, “For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy, and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” It’s heart-warming to see Dad stretch for us.

(4) Send out your sons and daughters to follow after you in keeping the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. What an example Abraham is in Genesis 18:19 in his fathering. We read, “For I know him/I have chosen him, that he may command (literally, **tsavah** means to order or to send out after him), his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness, and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has promised him.” Proverbs shows this is sending out by how we train and mentor our sons and daughters. Proverbs 22: 6 states, “Train up a child/son or daughter in the way they should go; even when they are old, they will not depart from it.” It’s warming to see Dad’s send out sons/daughters for God’s glory. That’s the Great Commission.

(5) Strive to always give God the credit for any success you have as a father. This is our daily Dad decision as we practice the presence of Jesus—to give Him all the glory for any of our successes. Turn to I Thessalonians 2: 13. “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers.” Dads, this is God’s divine design and blueprint for us as we father. Be encouraged to keep on til’ we see Jesus’ face.