

# Five Weeks to Live

## Finding Respect and Honor at Home

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good Morning, men. Open your Bibles, if you would, to Colossians chapter 3 verse 21. While you're doing that, let's do a shout out. Pretty excited about this group that we have. They just started. They're eight men. They're meeting at 10:00 AM on Wednesday mornings at a homeless shelter. These are homeless guys. It's organized by Men of Purpose, Mount Signal Missionary Baptist Church in Brunswick, Georgia. Jackie Goodwill is the leader of the group. Man, we're so glad to have you with us. I was just reminded that the Wheaton football team was doing a Man in the Mirror group and that we had done some prison groups, but this is the first time we had a homeless group. We want to welcome you to the Man in the Mirror. Would you join me in giving these men a very warm and a rousing Man in the Mirror welcome? One, two, three, hoorah! Glad to have you men with us.

Five Weeks to Live. That's the name of the series. The doctor, the idea behind this, the premise, the doctors have said, "I'm sorry to tell you this but you have five weeks to live." The question is: What would be important to you? What would you want to do and with whom would you want to do it? Your priorities, your tasks, and your relationships. The first week we talked about finding a deeper relationship with God. That would be the most obvious thing for a Christian Bible study. The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the god or gods that we want and start seeking the God who is. The second week we talked about the most important, deepest, most mysterious human relationship, marriage, finding a new best friend in your wife. After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority. Now we come to the third realm of five realms, five weeks to live. We're going to talk about children. The title of the message: Finding Respect and Honor at Home.

There are a lot of situations that you may find yourself in. These are some of the situations we're going to address this morning. Obviously you can't address every situation. Some of you don't have children yet. Some of you will never have children but perhaps nieces and nephews or friends who have children. Some of you have adolescent children, very young children. Some of you have teens. One of our leaders said to me one day, "Having teenagers has brought out the worst in me." That's a difficult time. Some of you may have college aged children. Some of you may have children who are recently married. Maybe you have become a grandfather. Maybe some of you have been a grandfather for a while. Some of you, I know, are estranged from children. Some of you don't even know where your children are. Some of you have children who will not let you see your grandchildren. There are all kinds of different situations. Now the idea is you just learned you have five weeks to live. What can we do about that? It's what you do next that counts.

If you would, let's talk about, first, what is the greatest need of our children? In Colossians chapter 3 verse 21, we read this, "Fathers, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged." The word discouraged is interesting. Everybody gets discouraged, right? The sense in which we're talking about discouragement here is this long-term kind of dull discouragement. It's the kind of

discouragement I went through as a young man. In high school, it's just a long story, but I can give you the Cliff notes. I quit high school in the middle of my senior year. You can just imagine the long-term turmoil and discouragement that a young man would have to go through in order to quit high school. I didn't just quit high school, I was angry and I quit high school. I was an angry young man. That's one of the things that happens. That's why it says here, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, do not exasperate your children." Some of your versions might say, "Do not provoke your children to anger or they will become," what? Discouraged. You know that this is a huge problem that we have in our whole country but hopefully it's not a problem you have in your family, but it is very likely a problem that you will encounter at some level in your family.

Now turn, if you would, back two pages to Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4. The backdrop of all this, I put Ephesians 5:25. I told you to Ephesians 5:25 your wives but also your kids. I don't have time to talk about everything, but the idea that we're to love our wives as Christ loves the church. Christ is in his office as the messiah, the prophet, the priest, and the king. We're to love our wives as her prophet, her priest, her king, but also by extension, our families, the fruit of our loins, the fruit of our union, to love also as prophet, priest, and king. Then, Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4, "Fathers, do not," and in my version it says, "exasperate your children." It's either to stir up to anger or to provoke to anger. "Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." There you go. There's this admonition, this instruction to dads, to bring your children up in the training, in the instruction, the knowledge of the Lord. In the process of doing that, don't exasperate them, don't make them angry.

What is this situation that's called these two texts into existence? There are very few instructions to fathers in the New Testament. In fact, these are the two principle instructions in the whole New Testament specifically given to fathers. Notice that they both deal with not making our kids ticked off. What is the situation that has called this text into existence? Well, first of all, is that you are created in the image of God and then God gave you the ability to create someone else in the image of God. Your father created you in the image. Likewise, you have created. There is some sense in which God has delegated to us this creative power to make a human life, made in the image of God, but God wants to make sure we all understand while they are our children, they're really his children. His intention is, his desire is to adopt our children to be his children to be with him long after we're gone. It's a huge responsibility he's given us and certainly what he wants us to understand is that he wants us to be in right relationship with our children so that they can be in right relationship with him as his children. It's a great responsibility that we have.

Why then did the Holy Spirit preserve this text? Well, there's some things that only you can do for your children. David Delk and I have written an entire book called *The Dad in the Mirror*. I'm going to condense it down to one big idea for you. Actually, you'll never be able to penetrate and plumb the depths of this big idea without the book. Go get the book. That's a joke. Seriously, you don't need the book. You just need this big idea.

Here you go. Here's the Big Idea today. **Our children's greatest need is for us to father their hearts, not their performance.** The thing that provokes our children to anger, exasperates our children, is when we only focus on their external behavior and not their hearts. Now, they will never be able to express this themselves, that what I'm missing is that you're not paying attention to my heart. If today, if I could tell my mother and my father, if I could sit down and have a rational, mature conversation, I would say, "Mom and Dad, the problem that we're having here is that you, Dad, you're fathering for performance here. You're not fathering my heart. You're not tutoring my heart. You're not mentoring my heart.

You're not bringing me up in the training and instruction of the Lord. As a result of that, I'm being exasperated and frustrated and discouraged." That's what our kids would tell us.

What is fathering for performance? Fathering for performance is very simple. It's the use of threats and promises. It's, "I promise that you'll get this reward if you behave in this way and I threaten you with this punishment if you behave in that way." That's fathering performance. It's focused on the externals of the child. Fathering the heart looks much deeper into the heart. In fact, this text in Colossians 3:21, which in my version it says, "For do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged." The actual word is lose heart. They will be disheartened. That's the actual Greek word, means lose heart. Do not provoke your children to anger or they will lose heart because it's about fathering the heart. That's the principle. That's the Biblical principle. Do you understand what I've just said? Nod your head if you understand what I just said.

Now, many of you, of course, have heard this message in the past. We did a whole series on it. You've gone out to execute it and it is what? Hard. Why is it hard? The reason that it's hard is that even though we are made in the image of God, we also have our sin nature. It's difficult for us to do the right thing, to father the heart all the time. What I want to is I want to help a little bit in that area as well.

What are the some of the things that our kids need from us as we father the hearts? What are some of the things that we're trying to impart to them? Just throw out some ideas. Information. What? Prayer. Encouragement. Support. Financial awareness and a little help too if they need it. What is it? Acceptance. Truth. Passion. Friends. Time. We could go for about three or four more minutes. Honestly, here's what would happen. We would have a list of everything you would ever need, everything a child would ever need. We can actually create that list in three, four, five minutes. What does that tell you? It's not knowing what needs to be done but it's knowing how to do it. The way to do is to learn how to father their hearts rather than to father for performance.

Some of the other things. I just made a list up too and it only took me a few minutes. I put protection, safety, values like integrity and excellence, relationship with God, structure, freedom, some things that have already been said, guidance, purpose, sense of purpose and meaning, imparting wisdom, love, rough play.

I was thinking about that this morning. I spent too much time thinking about it this morning but even daughters, with sons and daughters, but we've got a little dog. Our kids are grown and gone so I was thinking about the dog. My wife pets and cuddles the little doggy and the little doggy just loves, but at night, we do rough play. For about five minutes, I chase her around the house and then I let her chase me around the house and she barks. If she doesn't get that rough play, guess what. In the middle of the night, she wakes me up for rough play. Children are like that. They need to have somebody, a dad, who will wrestle with them on the ground, who will do outdoors things with them, who will tussle their hair, these kinds of things, things that a mom doesn't do. It's part of their maturing experience. Anyway, I got a little off on that.

There are things that deal with masculinity and there are things that deal with femininity that only a father can impart. A child can not really be fully developed in masculinity without certain impartations from a father. A young woman can not be fully developed in her femininity without certain impartations from a father, a father who's not fathering for performance, but a father who is fathering the heart of their child.

If you have a twelve-year-old daughter or a teenage daughter, from twelve years old on, when she begins to develop as a woman, there was a tendency for you to withdraw physically from her. Let me tell you, men. You better lean in and hug your daughters as they develop into women. You want to know why? Because if you don't lean in and hug your daughter when she's developing, she's going to find somebody else who will lean in and hug her as she's developing as a woman. These are the kinds of things that we just need to talk about as men. I'm only saying that because I felt awkward myself but I decided, well, I'm going to substitute what I think I need to do for lack of feeling that's what I want to do and work it out.

A lot more could be said on this but let's move on. Let's talk about what discourages our children's hearts.

Courage is the state of mind or spirit that enables one to face hardship or disaster with confidence and resolution, right out of the dictionary. If that's what courage means, what does it mean to discourage? Well, to discourage means to take away the quality or state of mind or spirit that enables one to face hardship or disaster with confidence and resolution. It's to take away courage. Two of the biggest things to take away courage, and there are many more, number one is a lack of structure.

David, we know, King David was a pretty good king, made a little bit of a stink in the woman area, but he even made a bigger mistake as a dad. Did you know that as a father, King David was basically a dud? He was a dud. His son, Amnon, rapes his daughter, Tamar. In a fit of rage, Absalom, his son, murders his brother, David's son Amnon. Later, Absalom plans a coup and takes over his father's kingdom, short lived. Adonijah, another son, does the same thing and plans a coup to take over his ... His son, Solomon, becomes one of the most sexually promiscuous young men in all of human history with a thousand whatever they call it today, young men would call it today, scouts or marks on a belt, notches on a belt, whatever. 1 Kings chapter 1 verse 6 gives us a clue into why, talking about his relationship with his son Adonijah, it says that his father never interfered with him, asking, "Why do you behave as you do?" A lack of structure, 1 Kings chapter 1 verse 6.

That's a huge problem. That was my problem, a lack of structure. My wife has said many times, and I've said it too, I just had too much say. My parents just gave me too much say. I basically ran wild. I did what I wanted. I didn't have boundaries. I didn't have structure. I didn't have rules. I didn't have principles. I didn't understand what it meant to be a Morley man. Now, I'm not blaming my dad for that. My dad didn't have a dad, but that didn't change the fact that I had too much say. Having too much say, I just became more and more angry because I didn't know what the boundaries were. I didn't know what the purpose of life was. In a fit of rage, I quit in the middle of my senior year because I was an angry young man.

Larry Crabb, Patsy, my wife, and I learned this in our very first years of being parents. Larry Crabb has this great idea. It's perfect for fathering heart versus fathering for performance. Larry Crabb says that every child needs to know two things: yes, I love you and, no, you can't have your own way. Write that down. Yes, I love you, and, no, you can't have your own way. Every corruption in discouraging our children's hearts will come from a corruption of that concept. Yes, I love you. No, you can't have your own way. Healthy. Yes, I love you. Yes, you can have your own way. Permissive parenting. Not enough structure. Lack of structure. No, I don't love you and, yes, you can have your own way. Well, that's complete indifference. No, I don't love you and, no, you can't have your own way. That's the tyrannical father.

You can see that it's very easy to get into fathering for performance or just the complete discouragement of your children through a lack of structure. That's number one. Then, number two, too much structure. In this idea that we're to bring up our children in the training and the instruction of the Lord, it is very easy to quickly become a legalist and think, "If I can just help my children understand the rules, then everything will be okay," but that's not how it works. Fathering the heart is not about getting children to obey the rules, it's about transferring responsibility to them.

Our son, for example and I can give you many, he decided that he would just be lazy and late to school and make the rest of the family late for school too. I would drive the kids to school, two kids. He would just drag his feet. He was in high school, start dragging his feet. I was getting more and more upset about it and I decided one morning I was going to go in and drag him out of bed and throw him in the car and take him to school. Fortunately I didn't do that. Instead, had an idea. I said, "I can't father for performance here. I can't make him unless I physically get involved. What's going on in his heart?" What's going on in his heart is that he needs more structure. He needs to take responsibility for what's going on.

We worked this out with the school. My wife and I worked it out with the school that any one semester he could get six tardy slips. He could be late five times but on the sixth time, then he would have stay after school one day for two hours and work the grounds, clean up trash, and do work. Guess how many tardy slips our son had the next semester. That's right. He had five. How many times do you think from the rest of his career in high school he ever got six tardy slips? That's right. Zero. The fight was gone. Now, you have to have a little grace because teenagers, they're making them go to school at an hour when their bodies say sleep. Anyway, we had some grace built in the system. You could be late five times in a semester. He was never, ever late after that. We figured out what was going on in his heart and what needed to happen in his heart. That's pat pat on the back for that. I've got many others that didn't work out that well. That's one that worked out well. The reason I'm talking about this is because of the big idea, the big idea of fathering the heart.

I had lunch with a guy this week. His name is Rogers Kirven. He had a great idea. What he did with his kids when they were growing up, he made this thing called the Kirven compass. You can see he laminated it and everything. What he did was he just put his family, the big ideas for his family, his family values on the back of it. These are the things that he repeated to his family over and over and over again growing up, the things that made their eyes roll back in their head and the things that were important that they now are repeating back to their dad. You come up with your own but you get the idea.

The big idea here this morning, our children's greatest need ... That's a pretty big thing. This is something only you as a dad can do. There are many things that other people can do for your children, teach them English, how to throw a football, but there's one thing that only you can do and that's father the heart of your child. That's why the big idea and that's why the scriptures point to this, our children's greatest need is for us to father their hearts, not their performance. Fathering performance discourages them, makes them angry. They'll quit high school too maybe. Who knows? Maybe they did. It can work out. I worked out. Well, I think. I mostly worked out.

If that's what discourages our children's hearts, how then can we encourage? If courage is the quality or state of mind or spirit that enables one to face hardship or disaster with confidence and resolution, if that's what courage is, what then does it mean to encourage? Well, to encourage our children means to inspire them to have courage. How can we inspire our children to have courage? Well, we're not going

to do it by fathering the hearts. We figured that out. Lack of structure, too much structure, many, many other things. What will inspire our children to have courage is to father their hearts. What I want to do is I want to give you a couple ideas. These are just practical things that you can do.

Number one is spend time with them. There is no substitute for spending time with your children. The big thing has been it's not the quantity of time, it's the quality of time. That's utter nonsense. One researcher that Dr. Dobson reported asked fathers, "How much time do you spend with your kids?" The average answer was fifteen to twenty minutes a day. They put microphones on the kids. Guess how much time the fathers were spending with their children in actuality. 37 seconds a day. Not enough time, fellas, not enough time.

When I was learning this principle, my son was playing basketball and he's very diligent at it. He asked if we would go half with him and buy some flood lights so he could practice. You know, after practice, come home, set up the flood lights and work out back. He'd go out there and he would shoot 150 free throws and then he would go back and then he'd shoot 50 three-point shots and then he would ask my help. He said, "Dad, could you come out and bounce pass the ball as I'm going in for layups." Of course, I'd say, "Oh, great. This is some time with my son." You know, I'm out there watching him and he throws up a three-pointer and goes in, just swish, throws up another one, kind of rattles around, falls off the side.

I said, "Hey, John. Remember how you said you wanted to keep your elbows straight when you're doing that three-point shot? I think your elbow might have been off a few degrees on that one." He picked up his dribble. He said, "Dad, would you please not try to coach me?" I said, "Oh, no. I've done it again." My heart just sort of sank. The Holy Spirit was with me and gave me an insight. I said, "John, I love you so much and I'm so proud of what you're doing. Son, I am sorry. I know that I can't coach you. The truth is I really wasn't trying to coach you. What I was really trying to do is I was trying to encourage you." Encourage his heart. You see, fathers, what I was really trying to do was encourage you. It was one of those Kodak moments. It was a beautiful moment. This kind of ray beam of sunlight came down and it radiated the circle where we were standing. He understood and father and son bonded in a way that they had never bonded before. It was awesome. Then he said, "Dad, I'd still appreciate it if you wouldn't say anything when I'm trying to shoot." Again, much more could be said about spending time.

Basically one man back here named Farrell died. He was the first guy the Bible said he ever died. You know, we've been doing this for 30 years so some people die. You're too young to die, don't worry about it. He died. It was the first funeral I ever went to for one of our guys. Well, you know, I knew Farrell pretty well so I sat in the middle of the church. I've realized over the years since then that this kind of a pecking order of relationship at funerals. In other words, the people that really, really love and miss the person the most, they're sitting on the front row. Then you have the close, close friends and the people that they're doing stuff with on Saturdays, maybe playing golf or going out to dinner with their wives or whatever. You know, they sit in the next few rows. Then, the guys like me that see each other every week and chatting and love each other but we're not buddy, buddy, buddy, we're just buddy. We're sitting in the middle. Then, there are people who are just kind of acquaintances, you know, maybe work with them. They're sitting in the back, kind of a pecking order. The only people that were crying at Farrell's funeral were the people in the front row.

Here's the idea. Men, try to prioritize everything you're doing on the basis of who's going to be crying at your funeral. What a great way to weed out your priorities. You got five weeks to live, you ought to

figure out what's important to you, who do you want to spend it with, what do you want to do. Prioritize on the basis of who's going to be crying at your funeral. Big idea.

That's spend time. We could do more time but let's just give one more thing. We could give many more ways to encourage but I think these are probably the two biggest. Spend time with them and then encourage them with words. If you want to father the hearts of your children, encourage them with words. Now, there are two phrases that are in the Bible that are extremely important. I love you and I'm proud of you. This is what the Father said about Jesus at the transfiguration, at the baptism of Jesus, "This is my much loved son in whom I'm well pleased. I love him, in whom I'm well pleased and I'm proud of him." There's a Biblical concept here to tell our children that we love them and that we are proud of them.

One day, again back to my son, my parents, I had invited them to come see their grandson play basketball. My mother was next to me, then my dad, and then my wife. I was bragging about my son, about how proud we were of him, his diligence, the industry that he was showing, the determination, the team concepts that he was working, the leadership skills that we saw developing, all these things. My mother is sitting there listening to this.

A couple minutes later, she says this to no one in particular. She just kind of out loud, just thinking out loud. She said, "You know, I think when our four boys were growing up, I don't think we told them often enough that we were proud of them." I'm thinking, "Mom! I'm one of those four boys. I'm right here. You could talk to me about this." The explosions were going off in my mind, "That's right! You didn't do that. Why didn't you do that? It would have made so much difference." The other bomb that went off was this, "You can tell me now, Mom. It's not too late."

Man, I adjure you in the name of Jesus Christ, tell your children every day, today, "I'm proud of you. I love you. I love you. I'm proud of you. I'm proud of you. I love you," over and over and over again. If you don't have children, get this tattooed. "I love you" on one side, "I'm proud of you" on the other. Whatever it takes, encourage your children with words. You ought to father the hearts of your children, meet their greatest need, tell them all the time how much you love them and how much you're proud of them. Even when you're not proud of them, there's something that you're proud of. Maybe when you're a young kid, you're on drugs now, you walked away from your family, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. You know, I've always been so proud of how much you care for other people. You know, there's something ... There are many things you could be proud of. You just need to think about what they are, right?

It was a great trip, a trip of a lifetime when Dr. Phil Littleford, a friend of mine, maybe some of you too, took his twelve-year-old son Mark on a fishing trip for salmon in Alaska. They hired a couple of guides who had a seaplane and they flew into this little pristine bay, parked their plane, and then waded up stream, caught salmon all day, came back, and when they arrived back in the evening with a full load, the limit, they were a little surprised that their seaplane was high and dry on a bed of gravel. The tide fluctuates in this particular bay 23 feet. They weren't going anywhere so they made dinner and enjoyed some of the fish they caught. Then somebody had the bright idea, "Let's sleep in the plane and then in the morning when the tide comes up, we'll be floating and we can take off." So that's what they did.

In the morning, they awaken and, sure enough, they were afloat so the pilot cranked up the plane and they took off. Too late they realized that one of the pontoons had been punctured with a piece of gravel and filled with water. Right after they took off, that weight threw the plane into a circular pattern and

the little plane careened back into the icy black water of that bay. Phil took inventory and found that everybody was okay but they had no safety equipment and no radios, no life vests, no nothing. They did have their waders so they all inflated their waders and then began the process of swimming for shore. As they started for shore, they soon realized that running perpendicular to them was a riptide that was pulling them toward the mouth of the bay of this little area. The two guides, both being strong swimmers, were able to make shore, the second one just basically able to grab the tip of the isthmus that was protruding out into the bay. Then the two of them watched Mark and Phil, son and father, be swept arm and arm out to sea as two little disappearing dots holding each other in each other's arms.

Coast guard reported that they probably would have lasted for about one hour, that hypothermia would set in, they would go to sleep. Mark, with a smaller body mass, would go to sleep in his father's arms and then the father went to sleep. It was a tragedy in this community at the time. There's not a man in this room who wouldn't be willing to die for his children. I know that. I think the bigger question is: If all of us would be willing to go so far as to die for our children, why is it then that we often don't seem to be willing to live for them? Five weeks to live, live for your children. Father their hearts. One of the biggest realms of a man's life.

Let us pray.

Our Father and our God, we come to you. We humble ourselves. Lord, we want to be godly men, but we also want to be godly fathers. Lord, some of our children need our blessing. Maybe they don't deserve it. They need it anyway. Lord, all of our children need to experience your presence in our person. We pray, Lord, that we would be faithful witnesses to the power of your gospel, Jesus. Some of our children need our physical presence. They may act like they don't want it. We need to do it anyway. We need to father their hearts. Some of us have children who owe us an apology. We need to forgive them anyway. Lord, some of our children need our forgiveness forgiving them. They don't deserve it. We forgive them anyway and we ask them to forgive us anyway. Both ways. Lord, show us how to meet the greatest need of our children and help us to live like we have five weeks left, not like we have fifty years. We ask these things in your name, Jesus. Amen.