

# The Christian Man

## Session 5: A Dad Who Really Makes a Difference

Edited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning men. If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 19 verse 3, and as you are turning, let's go ahead and welcome a new group that we have. Like Christ Loved the Church is the name of the group. Mike Jennings is the leader. Cedar Rapids, Iowa is the location. This is a group of men. They meet on Wednesdays at six p.m. in Mike's home, and Mike writes, "We are men who want to do more than just have a series of emergency meetings with Christ when Christ shows up in our lives." Gotta love that. "We want to grow closer to Christ, and as a result, strengthen all of our relationships."

So we are honored to have you men with us. Would you join me in giving a very warm and a rousing welcome to Like Christ Loved the Church. 1-2-3. Hoo-rah. Welcome.

All right, so we are in this series, *The Christian Man*, and the message for today has to do with children ... A dad who really makes a difference. And so, the goal for this message is basically to talk about how we can break the cycles that push our kids away and especially through fathering by performance.

So, the men who helped story-board the content of this series and the book, some of the questions that they have asked: Should I be pushing my young son/daughter to get saved? What does quality time with kids look like? Does this change as they get older? What are the attributes and qualities of a good father? How do you know when you're doing it right? What are some real life applicable things I can do with my children to ensure they are raised to become Godly?

So, some of you have children. Some of you do not. Some of you have grown children. Some of you have grandchildren. So, these are life principles. In fact, I was thinking this week ... I kind of worked myself into a stupor yesterday. It started yesterday morning working on this message at 4:30 a.m., and at 4:30 yesterday afternoon, I was so tired I said ...I bowed my head to pray. No words came to my mind. I was that tired.

But it's interesting. It's not because I was really trying to come up with anything new. I mean, I've written books and chapters on this before, so what I was really trying to do is distill down what is the real kernel, what is the real essence of the message on fathering our kids, and so I think I have it. Maybe I don't. I actually have much more than I could present today, but I'm going to try and just really give you what I think is the meat of the coconut here. All right?

### THE UNDENIABLE IMPACT OF A FATHER

And so, the first thing I want us to look at is the undeniable impact of a father. When my father was two years of age ... Some of you have heard this story. When my father was two years of age, the youngest

of four children, his father decided to abandon the family. So, my dad grew up in a home not impacted by a father. He never knew his father. They were poor. When my dad turned six years of age, he had to go to work. His older brother, Harry, had several jobs, and so he went to work with his 10-year-old brother, Harry. He would get up at three a.m. every day. They worked a bread truck, and then he had a paper route. So my dad actually had two jobs when he was six years old.

And as he came up and became a man, he had to decide would he follow in his father's footsteps or would he try to break the cycle. I'm thankful that my father wanted to be a cycle breaker, but he had a problem. What it meant to be a godly father, man and husband, had never been exemplified to him, and so he was basically left to guess at what normal looked like. He had never felt the scratch of his father's whiskers. He had never heard the soothing sound of his father reading him a bedtime story. He had never had his father tussle his hair or wrestle with him on the ground. Never thrown a ball in the background. Never smelled his work clothes. Never heard a truck door slam at the end of the day signaling that his father was about to re-enter the family. Never heard his dad say, "Son, I love you. Son, I'm proud of you." And so, my dad was left to guess at what it meant to be a godly father.

I am who I am today, largely because my dad decided not to be the man his father was, so I will always be so grateful to my dad. But I was young and foolish because why? All people who are young are foolish. And my dad did not know how to father a foolish child because he had no training, he had no instruction, he had no discipleship. He had never been through a Bible study class like we have here where he would learn things to be more effective as a dad, and so I had folly in my life, and I really ended up with a huge chip on my shoulder, and I basically would dare people to knock it off.

I remember the time I beat up the ... I was in the 10th grade, and David Boon was our senior running back football star, and he had dropped his girlfriend, and I had picked her up, and then he decided ... As soon as I picked her up, then he decided he wanted her back, so he accosted me in the hall one day, and I beat the crap out of him because I had this huge chip on my shoulder. By the way, nobody ever messed with me in that high school after that. It's not that I was that tough, but it's just I don't think he was expecting somebody to come after him that quickly because I had this big huge chip.

And so I quit high school in the middle of my senior year. My father drove me down to the Army enlistment office. Great move because the purpose of going into the Army and going through basic training is basically to knock the chip off, which they're very effective at that.

And so, because of being disciplined, I've had a very different experience as a father, but I also have discovered that my children were young and foolish, and so they needed to have certain things built into their lives, certain things extracted out of their lives. The impact of a father is undeniable, and so this text that we have here today, I want to focus on this problem that I've raised. Proverbs 19 verse 3, "A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord."

So you have this man who has a chip on his shoulder. He's got this raging heart. He's this angry man. Whether that's directed at God or trying to direct it at not believing there's a God. Whatever it is. A man with a chip on his shoulder, that's what it's talking about here in this text, and what does it say how that happened? A man's own folly ruined his life. The man's own folly ruins his life. Well, how did he end up becoming a man with folly? We know that young people are foolish, but how does a man end up being foolish? Well, look at the second verse that I want us to take a look at here. That's over a couple of pages. That's Proverbs ... What's the next one? 22:15, something like that. What is it?

23:24. Proverbs 23:24. Whew. I'm so glad you're here. Wait a second. Did I say 23:24? Well that's a real good one. It's not the one I wanted to use, but that's a really good one. Oh yeah, yeah. We'll come to that some other time. 22:15 is the one I want.

All right. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child." You see that? "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child." It's just part of what it means to be a child. A man's own folly ruins his life, so what that means is that the folly which is bound up in the child somehow is not unbound, so that the man grows up to be foolish. And then it goes on and says, "But the rod of discipline will drive it far from him." Now this word discipline in the Hebrew translates about half the time is discipline and about half the time as instruction. I would encourage you not to get hung up on what the rod means. Nobody really has a definitive answer. Some people feel very strongly that it's a physical rod, and it probably is, but is it a staff like a shepherd's staff that guides, or is it some kind of a big stick? I wouldn't get too hung up on that? I would really get hung up though on the idea that what your children need is they need you to instruct them. They need to have you discipline them. They need to have you disciple them in the same way that you come here and get disciplined or wherever else you go to get disciplined.

Think about this. Think about how your life has changed because of discipleship. Think about how the lives of your children can change through discipleship. Are your children being disciplined? Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and discipline, discipleship, instruction is what will help them overcome that folly so that when they become a man or a woman, that they will not be raging against the Lord because folly has ruined their life.

All right. So, that's the problem that we're trying to solve. The challenging mission of a Christian father is to provide enough structure to drive out the folly while never having your children doubt that you love them unconditionally and accept them as they are. And so, the Big Idea today is (and I poached this) from Larry Crabb. When our children were maybe just out of diapers, my wife and I attended a parenting seminar, and Larry Crabb was speaking. I remember this one thing that he said because it really has impacted my life, our life, our family, and it is the solution, I believe, so it's very practical. It's the solution to how we drive out folly, and this is it. The Big Idea is, **"Yes I love you, and no you can't have your own way"**. Yes, I love you, and no you can't have your own way.

And if you think about this could form a matrix of four possibilities. Yes I love you. No, you can't have your own way, which is the right way. Yes, I love you, and yeah you can do whatever you want. Permissive parenting. No, I don't love you, and no you can't have your own way. That's the great Santini I suppose. And then the fourth is, no, I don't love you, but yeah, you can do whatever you want.

So, almost every error that we make is in getting one of these two things wrong. So, with that in mind, what is it that our children really need from us?

### **WHAT DO OUR CHILDREN REALLY NEED FROM US?**

So, if you would, I'm going to just breeze over this next section, so just kind of ... These are the broad strokes because I really want to spend time by giving you some practical ways to do these things, but ... So the antidote to folly is unconditional love and structure. So unconditional love ... There are many Bible texts that talk about this, although none of them say specifically, "Love your children" which is very interesting.

One of the men used to be a table leader came to me one day, and he was telling me about his dad, and he said, "You know ..." And by the way, he left Florida, moved out West. He's a llama or a "yama" or however you pronounce, llama farmer, and I think a lot of that has to do with his relationship with his father, and his father was a prominent business man where in this town, and he said, "You know, no matter what I ever did, I couldn't make my dad happy." "No matter what I did, I just could never make my dad happy."

Did your father give you the sense that you were unconditionally loved and accepted? It would be enough for me to ask you, please, whatever else you do, do what you need to do to make sure that your children feel like you unconditionally love and accept them.

And then, the other part of this is structure which is the part that's a little confusing because there's a tendency to think when we do provide structure that some how that's not loving our children, which of course, they are two different things that are related.

Dr. James Dobson once told an illustration about an elementary school where some of the more free-thinking educators thought that it was restricting that the children, at recess, had to play in this fenced in area. And so, they were able to successfully get the fences removed. And whereas when there were four fences there, the children played with great freedom, great confidence, but when the fences were removed, they basically huddled in a little mass in the center of the playground because they didn't know where the boundaries were.

So, giving your children structure is an extremely powerful way, not of expressing that you don't care, but expressing that you do care. The Big Idea today is "Yes, I love you, and no, you can't have your own way". We need to have boundaries, and so actually discipline, instruction is a form of love in itself.

### **"YOU CAN DO THEM TODAY" IDEAS**

And so we can move into some applications, the third circle today is what are some you can do them today ideas? And I've got five, and I'm going to dive into a couple of them, but I'll give you all of them.

So, the most possibly, it's hard to say ... Certainly, one of the top five ... Well, because that's how many I got. Well, the top five high-impact ideas is that the best predictor of healthy children is a healthy marriage.

So, Patsy and I went to a Catholic marriage encounter. I think it was like our first year of marriage, and the cussing, smoking priest that was leading the ... I thought that was funny that I went to a marriage encounter weekend with a priest who wasn't married. But, he was brilliant, and there's a Catholic saying ... I think it's Catholic. It could be somebody else, but the most important thing you can do for your children is to love their mother. The most important thing you can do for your children is to love their mother.

This is family systems theory 101 by the way. This is very academically substantiated and authenticated and proven and researched and all that. But, if I could just sort of summarize this. Family systems theory 101, page 1, first paragraph, first sentence ... First sentence family systems theory is that if you get the marriage right, then basically the nuclear family, it'll be all right too. I'm paraphrasing. But if you get the

marriage right, then basically you get the family right. So that's the first thing in being a dad who really makes a difference is to really love their mom the way that we've been talking about in this series.

Second thing is training and instruction. There are some really beautiful verses which we're not going to look at, but I have them listed there. Deuteronomy 6 verse 1 to 9, and then Psalm 78:1-7. So, just listen to a few ... Don't even turn there, but just listen to a few of the verses from Psalm 78. We will not hide them, these things that we've heard from our fathers from the children. We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done. He has decreed statutes which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children so the next generation would know them. Even the children yet to be born. And they, in turn, would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in the Lord and would not forget his deeds.

So, disciple your kids. Love their mother. Disciple your kids. So, we talk about the great commission is making disciples. I think that in our generation, we need to upend to that, that the great commission is making disciple-making disciples starting in the home, starting in the home.

It's a side bar, but I've really been perplexed that the idea of disciple, first of all that it's so confusing to so many people. I don't get that at all, but the idea that when people get the discipleship bug, they want to go and do it somewhere else instead of in their own homes, so disciple your kids. That's the second ... Lots of ways to do that. Personal devotions. I've talked about these things, written about them. Not today we're going to do it, but lead your family in devotions a little bit before school. Pay your kids to do devotions. Say grace before meals. Transfer the responsibility for being in church to your children. If you don't make it to church that's fine, but then you don't go out next Saturday night either. Things like that.

The third you can do them today idea ... So love their mom, disciple them into the gospel of Jesus, and then give them time. Give them time.

So, I was talking with a man one day at a seminar I was teaching, and he said it was interesting. He said, "You know, I always wanted to be able to provide for my family, so I started a company, a trucking company, one truck. Short hauls around town. I'm the only employee. Business was good. Business started picking up. But I was doing this because I really wanted to provide a better life for my family. My family was my top priority, and so I started the business with the goal of making a better life for my family." He said, "But then business picked up, and so before I knew it, I was getting up before dawn, while it was still dark out, and then getting up at night after sunset. It was dark. So I'm leaving in the dark, getting home in the dark." He said, "One night, I came home. My wife met me at the door, and she said that our three and a half year old son, Shawn, when she was putting him to bed that night, sat up right in bed and said, "Mommy, where does Daddy live?"

And you chuckled, and he chuckled at first, but then as he thought about it, he said, "Oh my gosh. I've gotten the ends of the means mixed up. This business was going to be the means by which I could meet the goal of providing for my family, but instead, now, my family has become the means to reach the goal of building the business." He said, "How did this happen? How did this happen?" And so, he decided that he would unravel that.

You know how long it took him to unravel that? Two years. Two years it took him to unravel that. Men, give time to whom time is due. Relationships, they create responsibilities, and the chief responsibilities

of relationships is time. If you don't have ... Watch this. Watch this. If you don't have enough time for your children, you can be 100% certain that you're not following God's will for your life.

So, set some work boundaries. You're going to set some boundaries for your kids. Set some boundaries for yourself, some work boundaries. So, some of you have flexibility to do that. Some of you don't, I know, but me, I just basically, 6:00 p.m. I never ever once, that I can remember, ever once, worked past 6:00. I just wouldn't do it. I would just basically pack it up and go home. Didn't work weekends either. Again, not everybody can set their own hours, but I could. But I set those boundaries because I am, by nature, I'm a bit of a workaholic, or could be a workaholic. Well, am a workaholic, recovering workaholic. Whatever the right way we say it is.

The best way to give time to your kids is in the way they want to receive it. So, if your kids like to play board games, play board games. If your kids like to go to movies, go to movies. If your kids like one of the ice cream places, gelato places, go for it. If they like you reading them books, read them books. If they want to play video games with you, play video games with them. Whatever way they like to receive it is the best way to give it to them, and then it's just really worthwhile saying this. Prioritize everything you're going to be doing on the basis of who's going to be crying at your funeral.

We did have one of our men here at the Bible study passed away. I went to his funeral. I sat in the middle because that was about where our relationship was. I didn't feel comfortable sitting up at the front. That's where the family and his closest friends, really people he was hanging with all the time ... We didn't hang. We liked each other, but we didn't hang. So, the people that he would hang with, they were right behind the family, and then there was me. And then at the back were the guys who knew him, but not that ... Well enough to come, but not well enough to ...

And so, up shot, there were only three people at his funeral that cried. His wife and his two kids. His wife and his two kids. Prioritize ... Try to prioritize everything you do, all your time, on the basis of who's going to be crying at your funeral.

So your marriage, disciple your kids, give them time, pray for your children regularly. You already know this, but you and your wife are likely the only two people in the world who would be willing to pray for your children on a regular basis, so if we don't do it, who will do it? I encourage you to pray for your children on a regular basis. More could be said on that another time.

Final, and I'm saving what I think is the most important of these five you can do them today ideas. Encourage them with words. Fathers, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged. What's the opposite of discouragement? Encourage. Encouragement is the food of the heart. All of these ways will encourage your children, but there are a couple of things you can do in particular, two phrases in particular, that I think were big enough to be the Big Idea. The Big Idea ended up being "Yes I love you, and no you can't have your own way", but it was a tie with these two other phrases that I'm about to tell you.

So, I was at a basketball game. Our son was playing in the high school game. Our son was playing. He was in the game at this point. He wasn't the starting guard, but he was in the game at this point, and it was the first time that my parents had come to a game. We'd invited them to come to the game. So I'm sitting here. My mom, my dad, my wife, and I said, "Mom, we are just so proud of John for the diligence that he's shown, being a team player, the leadership qualities that are coming out of this, his industry,

all of the fine things that are happening. We're just so proud of John." And my mom looks off into the distance, and she said, "You know, when our four boys were growing up ..." I'm thinking, "Mom, I'm one of those four boys. You don't have to talk like third person." She says, "You know, when our four boys were growing up, I don't think we told them often enough that we were proud of them."

Boom. Explosion in my mind. I wanted to scream. It took everything within me not to do that. To not go crazy, but I had these two competing thoughts blowing my mind out. That's right. That's right, you didn't. You never did that. Why didn't you do that? You could've done that. That would've been so easy.

I was like 47 years of age before I ever knew my dad was proud of me, and you know how it happened? When I was 35, I started taking him to lunch on his birthday, and 12 years later, when I was 47, on his birthday, I wrote in his birthday card, "Dad, I sure hope you're proud of me." He read the card, and he never looked up, and he said, "Well, you know I am." What it meant to be a father was not exemplified to him. I don't hold that against him. But what it means to be ... But it is now exemplified to you. So, you don't get the same pass that my dad gets.

It would've been so easy for them to do that, but of course, they didn't know how to do it because they'd never been disciplined like I'm encouraging you to disciple your kids.

And then a second thought was going off, "It's not too late. It's not too late. You can tell me now. You can tell me now." There I am. There I am in my late 30s, aching, yearning, longing for my mom to say that she's proud of me. My dad to let me know that they're proud of me.

Men, in the name of Jesus, I adjure you, tell your children every day, "I love you. I love you, oh I love you. I'm proud of you. I am so unbelievably proud of you." Everyday. Over and over. Repetitious, "I love you. I'm proud of you."

Some of you need to skip the discussion time and go make a phone call and tell somebody, "I love you. I'm proud of you." Don't let the day go by ... Every day ... Every day I text our son, and I say, "Son, I love you. I hope you have a good day." "I love you. I'm proud of you." Every day. Over and over again. Because these kids have folly bound up in their hearts, and these are the things that help drive it out. Yes, I love you. No, you can't have your own way. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, our dearest Father, we come humbly. Lord, we're here because we want to be all that you have created us to be in this area of being fathers and being fathered for that matter. Lord, help us to be the fathers that our children need us to be by building into their lives the things that will help them grow up to be adults who don't have folly bound up in their hearts, but rather that they walk in the wisdom of the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ in who's name we make this prayer. Amen.