

PBC20060513PM

Text Parenting

[Pastor Graham did his version of this the following day]

Proverbs 22:6

May 13, 2006 • Saturday 6:00 PM • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, Text Parenting]

That is a great and a wonderful old hymn and a..., I love that new arrangement of it and I love the fact that it just challenges us to go to Jesus and a..., every time we go to church we're not goin to the building, we're gathering with the church, but I pray that every time you come to worship you are going to Jesus and that our eyes, our heart, our attention are being put on the Lord. I'm so glad to see you here tonight, thankful that you are in this Saturday evening worship and I want to learn a little bit about you tonight and the way that I wanna do that is that I want to put a series of codes and symbols up on the screen and as I do I want to ask you if you recognize any of these. Any of these look familiar to do...to you BFN, SLAP, A3, LYLAS, MOS, PTL, PU, 404, M8, LD, ZZZZ; any of those look familiar to you? Well, let me just say as you are looking those over and thinking about that, that SMS, commonly known as text messaging has changed our world and whether you are familiar with some or all or none of these there's a world right now going on around us where some of these very same symbols and codes are being used to send messages. Now, just so I don't leave you in the dark let me tell you what all of these are, I thought that might be helpful if you could see them.

Bye for now!

Sounds like a plan!

Any time, any place, any where! A3

Love you like a sis!

I love this one...**Mother over shoulder!** MOS [congregation laughter]

Way to go moms, you not only have Mother's Day, you've got your own symbol on the text messaging a..., with your kids and a..., I want to commend and applaud mothers who are over the shoulder. I think that's great and if your kids are using text messaging you better be over their shoulder some, that's all I can say tonight.

A...PTL...**Praise The Lord!** That's one we use around the church.

PU...**That stinks!**

404...**I don't know!**

M8...**Mate!**

LD...**Later dude!**

And a..., then the last one ZZZZ, which is of course...**Sleeping!** And many of you do that in church as well.

So anyway just a..., helping you to catch up on some of those symbols tonight, but it's all a part of the world of SMS, short messaging service, or ~~what we con...con~~ what we often call today text messaging. I was a..., reading about this just a little bit in the past week and was fascinated to learn that this popular technology emerged and really become public a..., in it's use around the a..., new millennium, around 2000. By 2004 there were a rate of 500 billion text messages being sent per year and of course, today, 2 years later it is just exponential adds the zeros even to that. And the funny thing about text messaging is something that's done on your phone. Rather than using the phone as we often have used the phone for the voice, sending and receiving a voice message, it is actually sending a...a text message, a...a short message and it's almost like when the kids are doing, in particular, it's almost like watching them play a...a video game on a mini keyboard. They're able just to move their fingers and to send a quick message. Maybe some of you have gotten good at that as well. I was reminded of how incredible this technology is, not long ago, when my wife had gone out to run a few errands and a..., she turned the corner, a..., my wife by the way, my near perfect wife, I didn't say that, she's here tonight but I just wanna say that publicly, the mother of Joseph and Liz, my wife is...is an incredible person. She was out running some errands, turned the corner and just as she turned a police officer put his lights on and started coming down right behind her. Well, one of my daughter, Lizzie who's 16-years-old, friends saw this happen and so guess what she did? She quickly text messaged Lizzie at home and said, "Hey, Liz, your mom just got pulled over by the cops." [congregation laughter] Liz in turn picked up the telephone and called and said, "Hey, mom are you okay? I understand you've been pulled over by the police." To which Connie replied, "No, sweetheart, I was not pulled over by the police, I pulled through an intersection, the police came up behind me, passed me and pulled over a truck that had gone down in front of me." And Lizzie said, "Oh, well I got a text message from one of my friends and heard that you had been pulled over by the police." To which Connie replied, "Tell your friend to be more cautious driving and not text message while she's behind the wheel." And so anyway, all of that to say text messaging is changing our world and changing our lives. And, of course, it's hitting and impacting every area of the world

Three Shanks, the world of academics, in 2002 the University of Maryland during the final exam week a..., there was an accounting exam that was given and a whole group of students, who some were even in their graduating semester, ended up being disqualified from graduation and some of them a..., ultimately getting a failing gra...grade in the class, because during the examination they were passing the answers back and forth using text messaging at their desks. There was another example not long ago in 2004 in the realm of politics, I know many of you remember the bombings in the train stations in Madrid and apparently following those bombings a group of those who were in Spain wanted to bring about a demonstration and the way that they mobilized the political public demonstration was to send text messages via their cell phones to tell people where to gather, what to do and ultimately they called the public demonstration, the night of

short text messages. That's what it was called! It literally caused an entire public demonstration and upended a city, Madrid, because of the impact of that. And then, of course, it's impacted our social and legal world. I was interested to learn that in Malaysia 2003, there was a provision made, by law, for a man to divorce his wife via text messaging, as long as it was agreeable to both and was inequitable in its application of the divorce. Just send a text message, it's done, amazing. And then the medical world, recently there was a little girl by the name of Brooklyn Levinson who was spending some time, she was 9-years-of-age, she was spending time with her grandfather who was 78 and his wife had recently passed away. He's been grieving and so the little girl went over just to spend the night and to be with her grandfather and apparently the next morning while they were sitting at the breakfast table having breakfast her grandfather became somewhat unresponsive. The little girl knew that something was wrong, she texted a message to her mother who in turn who was able, not only to text, but to take a picture and to send it, just like that they were able to get the paramedics there, he was having a cardiac arrest, to save his life. So I say that to say it's phenomenal and amazing what is happening. Certainly the criminal world...the criminal world has been impacted in this way.

There was a man several years ago, a Philippino, who was an immigrant living in Belgium, he was arrested because he sent a joke, a message to some of the law enforcement officials claiming that he was Osama bin Laden and a..., so obviously there was a surprise there. And then, of course, the church world, let me just not leave us out of this. The church world, you know and I know that some of you are texting even as I'm speaking tonight and it goes on, on Sunday's I can watch it happening all over the congregation. Now we know that we have cell phones ring, but I know that there's text messaging goin on and I know most of the time those are late prayer requests that are coming to you for the service [congregation laughter] and you're just tryin to keep up with your friends and help them and you know we understand that. No, what you're really doin is keeping up with your kids sayin here's where we're gonna meet, here's what we're gonna do, you better be there and a..., I know what's goin on, but...but the text messaging system is changing the world. But as all these things are happening and as communication continues to move and to evolve and to change, the impact is...is significant not only in the social arena and the moral and political and all of those, but it certainly is very significant as it relates to our families. And I'm thankful tonight that I can stand here and say to you that God has not ~~left us~~...left us without a text message for those of us who are involved in the journey and the experience of parenting.

You saw tonight all these beautiful couples and these new babies as they were here and I had the joy last weekend of meeting with some 92-93 families who are gonna be dedicating children over the 3 services this weekend, just a phenomenal thing. And, of course, these are at the immerging, the new beginning of life with their young children and others of you are in all different stages and seasons of life. But, one of the things that I'm so thankful to tell you tonight is that God has given us a

message and while text messaging is sending all kinds of messages around the world, God has given us one very specific, short message as parents, that we need to take, that we need to embrace, that we need to digest, that we need to apply in order to be the people and to have the families that God would have us to...to have. We're, of course, involved in a series of messages that we're calling *Smart Homes, Wise Families* and tonight I want you to open God's Word to a single text Proverbs chapter 22 in verse 6. It's a short message, it's a text message and in this text tonight we're going to look at 4 simple words that God gives for what I want to call *Text Parenting*, because really ladies and gentlemen whether you are parents or grandparents, maybe you are aunts or uncles, certainly many children who are looking to their parents today, I think it's very important for us to understand what God's Word, what the text has to say about parenting and so we're gonna look at God's short message to us tonight and we're just gonna take it and take it apart and apply it to our lives so that we can be the people that God would have us to be. Let's read together Proverbs chapter 22 in verse 6, *The Bible* says:

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Let me read that one more time, in fact, why don't we all read it out loud together, ready?

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

God's Word to parents, *Text Parenting*, and in this short message there are **4 CRITICAL INGREDIENTS** that every parent needs to see, perceive and understand; things that we need to understand about a biblical perspective and a biblical model for parenting. So what are they?

Well, the first one is this, it is that if you're going to be parenting according to God's text, then parenting must be **INTENTIONAL**. Intentional, that is a key word biblically for us to focus on and understand when it comes to the concept of parenting.

Train up a child...

Train up...

That is take action, do something deliberate, make a decision, because parenting is something that requires an intentional effort. It's not accidental, it's not casual, it's not circumstantial, it is to be intentional. And when *The Bible* says that we are to:

Train up a child...

The Bible is calling us as parents to engage in an active role and to engage in decisive action, giving attention to the needs of our children and their spiritual development. Back in the book of *Deuteronomy*, chapter

6, we find and read what's commonly known in the *Old Testament* as the *shoma*. *Shoma* is the Hebrew word for hear and therefore it was given to all Hebrew families: [verses 4-7]

⁴*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one!* ⁵*And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, all your mind, all your strength.*

And then it says:

'These things you are to teach your children diligently...

The Bible is very clear that God's plan in order for His people is that they are to teach children diligently. We are to be intentional and we are to train our children. Now the idea of training our children is the idea of giving attention that sets them apart, giving focus that helps to strengthen who they are and what they are. There's almost even a...a ring of militancy in this term, when you speak of training you think about training physically certainly for a race, but you also think about training as it has to do with military training. We wouldn't want to ever think of men and women serving in the armed forces who have not been trained and equipped for the combat that they are going to engage and in very much the same way the Bible is saying to us as parents that we need to understand that we have to train our children, to prepare them, to equip them, to discipline them, to shape them so that they are ready to engage in the challenge of a world that is at war. We do live in a war. We live in a world that is in conflict and there are conflicting worldviews and conflicting values and the cultural war is intensifying for our families today like never before.

Just this week I was reading that *Life Way Resources*, *Life Way* is the publication, printing company of The Southern Baptist Convention, had been doing some research and in that research they've had some of the largest level of responses and respondents ever in research that they've done on the family. And one of the things that their research revealed was the top 10 things that families were concerned about, were struggling with. Let me share them with you.

- #10 was materialism.
- #9 was balance of work and family.
- #8 was negative media influences.
- #7 was lack of communication.
- #6 was financial pressure.
- #5 was lack of discipline.
- #4 was absent father figures.
- #3 was busyness.
- #2 was divorce.

But the #1 thing that all of these families said was the ultimate issue for them was trying to rear their children in an anti-Christian culture.

Can you relate to that? Do you see that? Do you understand that, that this

world system, politically, educationally, socially, morally is at war with the very values and the very virtues that are given to us in the Word of God for rearing our children. And there are two opposing views of the world; one view of the world says God is, therefore God is, and because of who God is and what God demands therefore we're to live our lives according to the standard and the authority of God. But the opposite of that is simply a standard that says man is, therefore; in other words man is the center of all things. In a Christian worldview we start with God, He is sovereign, He is absolute, His is our authority, His Word is our guide and therefore everything we do in life flows out of that. But you see the contrary view is that man is, that man is the focus and man's opinions and man's decisions and man's dictates and mankind's values and mankind's desires are what are going to dominate and that is the collision, that is the conflict that we have in the world today. That's why according to God's Word if we're going to do *Text Parenting* we've got to be intentional.

Last week when I met with our young couples who were here tonight a..., dedicating their babies I said, you know, one of the reasons that we do a baby dedication, a public celebration, is that we believe that if there's any group of people in all the world that ought to throw a party when babies are born it oughta be the church of Jesus Christ. Why? Because we believe in the sanctity of life. God is the author of life. Life isn't an accident, life isn't the product of conception, life is a gift from God. And because of what we believe about life and human life and the sanctity of life, we believe that if any group of people should celebrate life and recognize the creative power of God and the authority of God in establishing and placing children in families, then we are the group of people that ought to honor that and publicly celebrate that. You see that's not the view of our world. The view of our world is that life is a choice. We believe that life is a gift and that is a difference of a worldview, but that goes from the sanctity of life to the sacredness of marriage. Why do we believe that marriage is one man and one woman and that God's plan is for a lifetime? Because that is the way that God has established it in His Word. And the Word of God does not allow for redefining of marriage. Marriage is prescribed, planned and is ultimately outlined by God and therefore what we believe we believe intentionally and must transfer intentionally to our children in a culture that is constantly preaching a message of tolerance at the expense of truth. I'm not against tolerance, I believe that we as Christians need to express the virtues of the Christian faith, of love and kindness and goodwill to all people, no matter who they are, but I'm telling you we cannot compromise truth. And therefore we have to understand that that's something we have to teach our children, it has to do with sexual fidelity and purity, moral purity, preserving yourself for marriage, it has to do with a strong work ethic, it has to do with the value of self control, discipline and responsibility, honesty and integrity, the issue of profanity. We increasingly live in a course and a profane world. How are our children gonna know what's right and wrong in speech? Because we are to intentionally teach them what the Word of God teaches about the use of the tongue and the way that we communicate. And then of course when it comes

to substance use and abuse, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, a biblical faith for life, all of these things, we are transferring to our children, because intentionally we are training them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. Proverbs 14:26 says:

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge.

If you're a parent, if you're a grandparent, the most strategic thing that you can do, the most important thing that you can do intentionally is to teach your children the fear of the Lord. I didn't say to teach them to be afraid of God, I didn't say to teach them that they need to shutter and to somehow live a guilt ridden a..., oppressed life; what I said was the reverence, the fear, the honor of God, because if you will teach your children that they are accountable to God who sees and knows and hears everything in their lives it'll be a lot better than some hard nosed pressed down parent leaning over their shoulder. The greatest thing you can do is to intentionally teach them the fear of the Lord. And the Bible says when we teach them that they will have a place of refuge. I say all of this tonight because in a day when there are so many pressures, so many struggles, so many issues, so many things that are impacting and shaping and molding the lives of our children; it seems that we are also in a day where we have a lot of passive parents, parents who don't wanna take the role, who don't want to be intentional, who are casual, who want to be...have parenting be nothing but just an enjoyable experience, non confrontational, but we are fooling ourselves if we think we can rear godly children in a day like we're living unless we are intentional in engaging and equipping them for battle. I gotta tell you, you don't even just have to read *The Bible*, just watch *Nanny 911*. [congregation laughter] You've seen that show *Nanny 911*, *Super Nanny*? I mean, I'm telling you, if you got parents who cannot control their children, they are just terrors in the home and you can learn that from Nanny, that you just got to be intentional, you gotta establish boundaries and rules and standards and there has to be instruction and intervention and limitation, be intentional:

Train up a child in the way he should go...

That's God's first word on the text for parenting. The second word is be **INDIVIDUAL**, be individual.

Train up a child in the way he should go...

Certainly that he can apply he or she. It literally mean, train up a child in the way that they need to go. There's an old English Proverb that simply says:

"As the twig is bent, so grows the tree."

Today I was at a *Home Depot*, I was ahhhh, once again, tryin to do it myself and a..., I don't know why I ever try to do that, cause it always ends up

with Lord help and Lord I'm frustrated and a..., but I say that to say that I was looking at some beautiful Hibiscus trees and these trees they take and...and I guess from an early stage they've been wrapping them around a post and so they...they just curled and swirled around the...the post and all of that was there and there was a beautiful a...a spray at the top of greenery and flowers. But you see what they did was they went with the bent, they shaped it, they...they made it so that it began to move and to grow in that direction and *The Bible* teaches us that our children have different bents, they're not all the same. You saw some families here tonight with 2 and some even with 3 children, but can I tell you that none of those children are the same, even though they're in the same family, have the same genes and experience most of the same things in life. One of the hardest things about parenting is that kids don't come with a model number and with an owner's manual and one of the hardest things in the world is trying to connect with the interest and the chemistry of your kids, because many times it's so different even from your own. I have to tell you in our home, Connie and I've been talking about it, we believe that many times dementia in latter years has to do with the schizophrenia that goes on when you're a parent tryin to figure out which one your correcting and which one you're encouraging, you just can't figure it out and by the time you get to the end of it all you just, you know, your mind's shot, that's just all there is to it. [congregation laughter] You know, my wife says they just wear you out, they do, your know, it's just a fact. But I say all of that to say that parenting has to be individual. It means that it's something that we are to do according to the need of our children and therefore, as a parent, not only is it important for you to be intentional in providing principles and precepts and standards in the lives of your children, but it's understand that you parent them personally and that's the relationship of parenting, it's a personal relationship where you help to explore their interests and their gifts and their skills, you help to identify they're strengths and their weaknesses. And where there are strengths, you want to help to encourage them and where there are weaknesses, well as *The Bible* says, love covers and you'll want to cover them with love, you want to help them and aid them and support them. That's why in another place in Proverbs 24, Solomon said:

By wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches.

I love that! It's wisdom that fills the home and it's wisdom that builds the family and therefore every child needs parents who will give attention to their individual needs and if you are wise you will help your children answer 3 critical questions in life. Every child has **3 QUESTIONS** that they need answered, every child. Do you know what they are?

#1 **WHO AM I?** Not what is my name, what is my nature, who am I...who am I uniquely as I am in this world.

Secondly: **WHAT CAN I DO?** Helping that child to know and to understand what they can do. Some children are athletic and you need to understand that and promote that and encourage that. Other children are artistic and so

you need to let them answer are they athletic, are they artistic, some of them are academic, some of them are a blend of all of these so they could be athletic, they could be artistic, they can be academic, they can be airheads, I don't know what kind of kids you've got, but I'm just saying you've gotta help them know what they can do.

And then you've got to help them understand: **WHAT AM I WORTH?** What am I worth? Because children need to know their worth, their love, their value. What am I worth to God? What am I worth to my parents? What am I worth to others? You see so much time needs to go in to developing and shaping the...the need of that child and making parenting individual. I believe this is a biblical concept for parenting. Sometimes people get the idea that *The Bible's* just kinda this one big book, you just slap it on the kid and say that's it! No! *The Bible* says here are the principles and the precepts, now let's take that child and the personal uniqueness of that child and help to shape that child and point that child to the Lord. Now, I say that to say that it's very important to go through the process of helping em to discover their individuality, but don't do that at the expense of helping them also to understand that they are part of a family and they are part of a community. Yes, they are individuals, but they are part of a family and they are part of a community and the world isn't always going to celebrate their individuality. Don't let this go to sea, don't let this be out of balance. Yes, it is individual, yes it is personal, but life doesn't always accommodate our kids, so we have to help them to learn how to live, to relate, to respect others. We have to help them individually to become the young people that God wants them to be. So:

Train up a child...

That is intentional!

...in the way he should go...

That is individual!

...And when he is old...

That is **INCREMENTAL**! Parenting, according to the text is an incremental experience, it goes through different seasons and cycles and steps and processes and it's so important, especially for those of you who are right in the troughs of rearing your children right now, to understand that according to the Word of God, God wants you to look, not just at how your children are today, but what your children will be some day. You see the goal of being a Christian parent is not to have perfect children. And far too many Christians stress out trying to make their kids act like perfect kids. They're not perfect, but what you wanna help them to do is to become responsible adults and that's a long ways down the road in the future. You can't make them perfect children, but you can help them to become responsible adults. You can help to build the fear of the Lord, the principles and practices that I'm talking to you about tonight in their

lives and as you do that slowly, progressively, cumulatively you begin to watch your child become an adult. Don't make a child try to act like an adult. Let a child be a child. People bring their children to church, I'm grateful you bring your children to church, but sometimes we expect them to come to church, sit here, shut up and listen just like an adult. They can't do that, most of them, I know that. Now if they're not doing that and they get loud doing that I hope that you've got enough parenting intentionality to get up and take them out. Okay, that something you need to do, because there are others who need to be able to hear. But you know what? Bring them something to read, bring them something to do. If they go to sleep, it's not the end of the world. You've fallen asleep in church a time or two. Remember I've talked to you about that earlier? I know, I watch you, I know what goes on in here. But you see help to shape them into being wise and mature. Parenting is always in the future tense. Parenting is always looking at the outcome, not just at the issue or the moment, but the outcome and some days that's just how you survive, you have to look at the outcome. Child rearing has to be comprehensive and it has to be consistent and that's why we set boundaries for them while they're young. We begin to shape them, we begin to mold them, we begin to move them forward in life and we establish them according to the way of the Lord. Some people don't want to have rules with their children, but you have to have rules. Some people think the more rules you have the more your kids are gonna rebel. No, rules help you see the rebellion that's in your child and then you begin to work with that little rebel and help them to begin to become the person that God would have them to be. That's why Proverbs 19:18 says:

Discipline your children while there is hope, If you don't you will ruin their lives.

It's an incremental process and you go through seasons and you go through cycles in the lives of your children. I love the words of Abraham Lincoln, he understood this, he said:

"You may not be able to do anything about your ancestors, but you can do a lot about your descendants."

He's exactly right. You may not be doing...be able to do anything about your ancestors. See, I know tonight there's some people in this room who you are first generations Christians. Your family are not believers and you're trying to get into the game and you're trying to do this and do it right and yet sometimes in the effort to do that you feel stressed and overwhelmed, because you think I don't have a pattern, I don't have a model, but no, here's the thing, if you'll do it intentionally, if you'll do it individually, if you will do it incrementally and keep that in mind then what you will begin to discover is that you can change the generations beyond you. That's a great perspective.

Well, there's the last part of this verse and I want to go there according to the text in parenting it's intentional, it's individual, it's incremental, but parenting is **INFLUENTIAL**. And God's Word says as a parent

you've got to understand the influence that you have in the lives of your children. Here *The Bible* says:

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Now, one of the most important things that I have to pause and to clarify here is that this is a Proverb, this is not a promise, it is a principle, it is not a precept. Every person in this room could pause and remember a name, a face, a place of someone that you know who loves Jesus Christ who was a sincere and a godly parent, some of you even sitting in this room and their children have chosen a path of rebellion against God and the values of the Christian faith and that is a heart breaking experience. But, parenting is not a guarantee. There are no formulas in the Word of God that is a guarantee, because the Word of God lifts the standard and the principle of what we are to do, but *The Bible* never violates the individual will and mind of a child of...of anyone for that matter. People make choices. People experience consequences in their lives and families, even good, godly, Christian families experience the crisis and the heartache, not of failure in parenting, but of living in a fallen world and the impact and the curse of sin. But I can tell you that while this isn't a guarantee, it is a guard and while it's not a guarantee that all...every child will turn out the way we want them to, I can guarantee you if you don't do these thing your children will not walk according to the way of God in their lives. And so *The Bible* says:

...when he is old he will not depart from it.

Let's just suppose tonight that we're trying to help to clarify this understanding of what this Proverb is saying and we're talking about engineering in a university, talking about a school of engineering in a university and in the manual, in the policy manual, in the...in the student manual there's a statement that says this:

"A student must take and pass calculus in order to graduate as an engineer."

That's an absolute statement of truth. That is a precept, you don't pass calculus, you don't take calculus, you're not gonna get a degree in engineering. But later in that manual they're talking about their students and it says:

"Students who do well in calculus make good engineers."

That doesn't mean that there may not be some exceptions to that rule, but it simply means that students who do well in calculus make good engineers because calculus is a part of the principle and the formation of what makes engineering work. Well, you see that's what it is in this Proverb? It's giving us the statement, it's giving us the principle. A Proverb is a Proverb and what a Proverb says is:

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

There is influence that you have in the lives of your children and therefore intentionally and individually and incrementally influence those children to and for Christ. Now some of you tonight have had good and godly parents and I pray that if that's been the blessing of your life that you will take time, especially on this Mother's Day weekend, if you can call your mom, if you can write your mom, to say to your mom, mom thank you for your influence in my life. I hope that there're just some boys and girls here tonight, boys and girls if you'll just put your arms around your moms neck tomorrow and say mom thank you for loving Jesus and for loving me. I just...I think many of us need to understand that it never hurts to just say THX, according to the text message, "Thanks. Thank You!" But also for those of us who are parents I wanna remind you of how important it is for you, above and beyond all these things to pray, to be a praying parent, because prayer is not only something you do while you parent, prayer is something you can do even after your children are gone to have tremendous influence in their lives.

Most of you are aware of the fact that my mom passed away two years ago and I say you're aware of that fact because it happened over the course of a summer and for about 18 days or so I was traveling back and forth here and I was actually preaching a series during that time and was here on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings and back over at my hometown in Memphis during the weekend. I was actually sitting in a chair right there on Sunday morning July 18th when I got news, just a little after 9:20 in the morning that she passed away and so it was kind of a public thing that happened in my life. But I say that to say that one of the greatest things that I had in my mom was a prayer warrior, an intercessor. A..., one of the things that my brother and I have are a..., several journals that are filled with her notes of prayer for us and for our family and without a doubt I am here tonight in large degree, living for Christ, preaching God's Word, being a faithful husband, doing my best to be a good and a godly father because of the prayer and the influence of my mom's life. I have to tell you it hasn't always been that way. In my teenage years there are some chapters of life that I'm very ashamed of and there were days when I broke her heart, but by the grace of God and through her prayer and persistence, not only then, but even today, prayer is being answered. And I say that because a..., this is sort of a special Mother's Day for me. Most of you know, because it's in several places that I have just written my first book, I'm very excited about that book, called The Search For Satisfaction. But, if you see a copy of that book, you will notice that it is dedicated to my mother and the reason that it is dedicated to my mother is because the summer after she died I was writing in my prayer journal one day and I wrote the words of dedication that are in the front of that book and I simply wrote underneath them, some day I will write a book and I will dedicate it to her. Two months later someone approached me in the hallway and said I'm an acquisitions editor for a major Christians publisher, I think you have a book in you, would you write the book? And only in the providence of God could that journey begin two years ago and

be released this weekend on Mother's Day with a dedication to my mom. Now, I just gotta tell you that's a joy. I feel like I'm getting to give her a late Mother's Day card and I am so grateful for that and I am so thankful for her life and her influence. But as much as I'm grateful that I could dedicate a work, the book to her, the greater thing in my life is the fact that she knew, before she died, that my life was dedicated to Jesus Christ. A living dedication, because that's what she prayed for and tonight the greatest thing in any life, in any heart here is that you are dedicated to Christ. That's what matters beyond all else. Some of you are here tonight because there are parents who are praying, wanting you to dedicate your life to Christ, but you're kinda living on the edges. Oh, you attend church some and you come and you go, but you need to get in, you need to get connected, you need to get focused and I would just pray that tonight as we talk about parenting and as we talk about influence that maybe God would use this message tonight to influence you, to take the next step in your life and in your walk with Jesus Christ. For some of you it's the first step, coming to the place and the time in your life where you realize that your life is not complete apart from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the wonder of all wonders in human history is that God two thousand years ago stepped out of heaven, stepped into earth in the form of a baby, walked among us, lived and died on the cross as a substitute for our sin, was buried and rose again that we might have a new life. That new life is available in Jesus Christ and I pray that some of you tonight would see and know that you need Jesus and tonight you would call upon the name of the Lord that you might be save. There may be some boys and girls that say I need Jesus in my heart. There may be some moms, some dads, some senior adults who would say I need Jesus. Let tonight be the night. Let this moment be a moment where you don't simply come to church and here a word, but a message connects with your heart and the text of God brings truth to life in you and tonight you can be changed. So whether it's to trust Christ or to take the next step with Christ, maybe following Christ in Baptism or maybe becoming a part of this church fellowship, I wanna close this service tonight with prayer and then with opportunity for people to come to Jesus.