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**The Orange Series**  
**Part 3 – Partnering With Parents**  
Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're finishing the summer today and we're finishing this three part series called *The Orange Series*. We are going to look very specifically at partnering with parents.

Wasn't last week a fantastic week with Carey Nieuwhof and what he had to teach us? I had a lot of takeaway. But the big takeaway for me was that family voice. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? I have a family voice. Raise your hand if you have a family voice. And it came out about 13 or 14 times last week. I decided I need to change that around so I started calling my children "blessed children" and that didn't work. So I'll have to go back and figure it out. I thought it was going to totally change our home and everything.

But I sat down here with Amy and my takeaway was this: I have to focus more on the influence in the relationship I have with my children rather than being too concerned with the relationship my kids have with each other. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? How many of you find yourself having a perfectly good day and then the kids start squabbling... I have a 10 and a 12 year old and, every now and then, they don't get along. I find myself coming down to that level. Everything changes about me and my tone and my mood and I go into that rather than continuing to focus on my relationship with Jesus. I'm going to allow that relationship to influence my relationship with my kids. How many know what I'm talking about? I've determined this and I think you would say this: We're in a good mood to start the morning and it's our kids who put us in a bad mood. We're great parents. Let's just give ourselves a hand for being great parents. You should not be applauding yourself; we got lots to talk about and lots to do.

We're partnering with parents. Here's what we looked at in the first part. We looked at these four phases and we walked through each one of them. Embrace is all about love and safety (0-5 years old). We want to teach our kids that God loves you, God made you. All we want to do is wrap them up in that 6 month stage and hold them after a bath and let them feel the warmth and care and the love coming from us. Carey said something last week. He said this is really the only phase where you have complete control. At first I thought that was brilliant, but then I thought I would argue that point. Some of you have a two year old. Complete control? You have complete chaos.

Then we move to Engage and this is where we have to start getting on the floor even more and we have to get the Nerf guns out and we have to do the Legos. We are playing with our kids and in that moment of play, important life questions will come up and we will get to answer those questions as we move into the Affirm.

The Affirm phase is where our junior high students begin to wrestle with identity. They begin to wrestle with who they are. This is the hard phase for me as I'm entering into it right now. Your children begin to move away from your voice and they begin to listen to the voices of their friends. To them, their friends' voice can begin to matter more than yours, but it's at that moment, Mom and Dad, that our voice matters the most. We can't stop influencing our kids. Then we ultimately Mobilize them. Moving them out, letting them know they are gone.

We've got the marbles this week. If you have a new born, you multiply 18 times 52. You are going to get 936 marbles. You have 936 weeks with your kids. Our challenge around this church and community and with our families is that we would make this time matter; we would be intentional with every marble as we pull one out week after week and toss it out. We know as they go through out from birth, as they get a couple of years old, and as they move towards the last year... How many of you have a senior in high school? Guess what? You've got 52 weeks left. How fast are they going to go? Go ask that family who just said goodbye. They would tell you those 52 weeks went like that. It goes fast.

I love when I hear parents say "We've got a big senior year planned" and senior year was gone so quickly. We are here to encourage you on your journey as a parent today. Carey said this last week and we added another layer in Part 2 of this series. He said "**Every parent is on a journey from control to influence.**" That's good stuff right there. Every year, I'm losing control, but I hope every year, as I lose a little of control, I'm replacing it with influence. That's what we want to talk about today. How are we going to do that?

## Happiness

In all of these phases – Embrace, Engage, Affirm, Mobilize – how do we lose control and gain influence. How do we do this? What's the plan? I think we need to look at our motives as a parent. Our motives seem to change from day to day and from phase to phase, but we tend to look at our kids and realize we have to have a good strategy. We have to make sure of the schooling and the discipline in the home and what we are teaching them and that all these phases are taken care of, but what's under all of that is what we want to discuss. A lot of parents have this as a primary motive: happiness. We want to raise happy children.

If you Google this for books, you are going to find books... If it's not the title, it will be the subtitle: "How to Raise Happy and Healthy Children." I remember the first time I saw that on a bookshelf. I asked Amy if happy and healthy children are our goal. We think it should be healthy, but we don't know if happiness is the primary goal.

Let me make this point here. I want to show you a picture of a cute baby. Is this not a precious baby? Does it get any better than this? This baby is so happy. Can I tell you the difference two seconds makes. Do you want to see the difference two seconds makes? Now this same baby is crying and screaming. Is that not true? I think it's at the preschool phase where you recognize you don't have control of your child's happiness. No matter how hard you try, they scream for no good reason. This is why when you were growing up, you're parents told you "I'll give you something to cry about."

It's all about perspective. The comedian Brian Regan says if you've ever been at a park and you see a kid lose the balloon... They go freaky over losing a balloon. Mom and Dad are like "Knock it off; I'll get you another one." He said "Just once what I would love to see is some dad's wallet leave his back pocket and start floating away." Isn't that a good point? Dad would be screaming and crying. It's just perspective.

So we start strategizing. How do we move about in the home and do the song and dance and do all of our parenting strategies so that they remain happy? You are going to find out quickly that is the most exhausting pursuit any parent can take on – making sure their children are happy at all times. These are real pictures. These are not stock photos. These are Taney County, Stone County examples. We had to keep it here in our community. Let me show you another picture of a precious child. What's going on here? We need to start asking you to put captions with them. She is lying on the floor crying because she didn't like the size of the orange that her mom peeled for her. We thought that was a perfect tie in to the Orange Series.

I remember the first time I wanted to teach Carson how ridiculous a fit looked. We went to Walmart and I went back to the back with all the big screens. I asked Amy for something and when she said no, I fell down on the floor like that. Carson thought it was embarrassing and I said "Welcome to my world. Get your hind end off that floor." I want to show you this child happy. Joe and Laura gave us permission to use this picture. Mesa Mitchell said I had permission to use this. The same child is happy, reading a book in the library, but you'll notice she is in a shirt like one of her brothers. She's happy because Mom simply says in the caption "Pick your battles." Remember when your mom used to say that. This wasn't one worth fighting over. "If you want to dress like your brother and go out in a shirt down to your ankles... I ran out of parenting strategies on Thursday and it's now Friday, so we are just going to try to get through the week."

Have you ever been to Walmart and judged the parent of the kid that's in a diaper and cowboy boots? Does anybody know what I'm talking about? That's a parent who is picking their battles. "If you want to go out as the naked cowboy, go for it. We're going to let you do that because we are done fighting you." How many parents can say amen? Happiness is not the primary here.

## **Comfort**

How about the next one? It's not happiness. Shouldn't we make sure our children are comfortable? I go back to what the flight attendants say on the plane. And I love when the pilot comes on to remind you of why the flight attendants are there. They are there primarily for your safety, not your happiness or comfort. They don't say it like that; that's my paraphrase, but that's really what they are saying when you're pushing the little call button to get somebody.

Comfort... Is it making sure my children are in the right environment at all times? Is it making sure there is no trial or loss or difficulty or pain that comes into their life? Is that my goal? We do this as parents. We create environments for our children to succeed rather than teaching them to succeed in environments they can't control. So we are constantly manipulating their little world so they can be happy and comfortable.

I have to tell you something. For Ron Cunningham, my father, these were not two of his chief ends. It was really bottom line. My dad couldn't care less about my comfort. I'm 41 and I don't remember once him asking me if I was comfortable. I remember driving home from the store with a lawnmower on my lap in the back of the Plymouth, Volare. I'm like "Dad, I think this blade in my face isn't safe." "Dad, do I have to wear a seatbelt on the trip?" "No, son, sleep in the back window of the car." Comfort wasn't the primary.

## **Companionship**

You see we're moving through the phases: happiness, comfort, and now companionship. I want my kids to be my BFFs. We're just going to be best friends and whatever it takes to maintain the best friendship with my kids... Boy you find out quickly that doesn't work. It's actually kind of weird for a teenager to be best friends with a parent. "I'm your dad and I'm going to influence you as a father and I want you to have friends." Typically, your friends are your peers.

What are your priorities as a parent? What's your motive for everything? Here's what will trump all: love and safety trumps happiness. We have to go back to the phases, back to the priorities. "I want to make sure you know I love you and you're safe, but if you ain't happy about it, that may change in a couple of weeks or months, but that's alright. Happiness isn't the goal. You're going to find there are going to be seasons in your life that are difficult and challenging and the good news is that as your parent, I get to be here with you as you go through this one and we get to work through it together."

## **Character Trumps Comfort**

Now just because of the news lately, we're trying to put the word trump in as many places as we can just to throw the democrats off a little bit. I just remember this is my dad. My dad was character over comfort. I can remember when Coach Schnabel threw me out into the hallway in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the door slammed. Remember those thick wooden doors they used to have in school with the glass on them. You couldn't really see through the glass and they had the numbers on them. He threw me out in the hall... That's when teachers could still do that. I sat there scared to death.

Students used to stand in the hall and think *Man, I hope this doesn't get back to my parents*. Isn't that how it used to be? Why were my parents always siding with the teacher? About a minute later, the door flies open again... How the glass didn't break on that door, I have no idea. My books, my bag, my coat, my pencils, in no sort of order at all, came flying out and against the wall. I went home and I had to share it with my parents. My dad would automatically take the side of the Coach Schnabel. I would ask him if he wanted to hear my side and he'd say "No, I want you to learn how to shut your mouth in class, son. Do you not see the pattern? Your mouth has gotten you in trouble for years." I'm glad that's changed. That's because I've grown. But character trumps comfort.

## **Relationship trumps companionship**

I want a relationship with my children that has influence, not the BFF, we have to hang out all the time. And down the road when they are well in years we'll spend time, we'll hang out, we'll do family

vacations. I want them to look back and go “Dad didn’t spend his years and Mom didn’t spend her years trying to be my best friend. They knew their role as a mom and dad.”

Here’s where we are going today as a church, desiring to partner with every parent and every grandparent: “I want Jesus to be my child’s priority relationship, not me. I want everything I do in the home to point back to Jesus as the primary, Jesus as the priority, not me.” As Jesus becomes the priority relationship, let’s look at what Matthew 10 says. Its some of the strongest teaching we have from Jesus in the scripture.

**34** *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”* What this text is going to be sharing is if you have undivided allegiance towards Jesus, if you place faith in Jesus and you take up your cross and you follow Jesus, if you’re a wife who chooses to do that married to a husband who doesn’t, there are going to be problems. If you are a son who follows me and a mom and dad choose not to, there are going to be problems. If you are a parent following the Lord and a child chooses not to... Jesus is saying the decision to follow him is going to impact all of your relationships. He says “Don’t think I’ve come to bring peace; I’ve come to bring a sword and when you make the decision to place faith in me and you make the decision to follow me...”

**37** *“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...”* Commentaries and pastors and leaders try to dance around all of that, but Jesus is saying “Listen, your allegiance is to me first, not a parent. Your calling is to follow me.”

*“...anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”* And we love our kids. I love my kids. I love spending time with my kids. But is the priority spending time with, is the priority building a companionship and best friend relationship with me or is the use of that time, the time we spend together... is someone else at the center? The same is true of this church. It’s Jesus at the center. And it’s Jesus at the center of our families.

**38** *“Whoever does not take up their cross...”* An instrument of death, a torture device, a crucifixion device. *“...and follow me is not worthy of me.”* Who is your priority relationship? Is it a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Is it a spouse?

If you have not seen the movie *War Room*, you need to go see that before you do anything else. Don’t see another movie until you’ve seen *War Room*. It’s a fantastic movie. We saw it as a family yesterday. When my son finds out we’re having a long meal, there is always this dread for him. He’ll ask how long the meal will be and we’ll say “We have nothing to do tonight; it’s going to be a long meal with lots of conversation.”

The only thing worse than that... I told him yesterday that we were going to a movie and his first question was “We’re not going to an inspiring movie are we?” Isn’t that great? He’s thinking Hallmark and Candice Bergman. So yesterday was torture for him because we went to an inspiring movie, *War Room*, followed by a long meal. That movie nails this. That movie has a senior lady mentoring a younger lady, played by Priscilla Shirer who has written books, made videos and Bible studies.

The marriage is falling apart and all this lady mentors her with... She tells her to go clear out a room. I encourage you to do this. Clear out a closet and turn it into the war room. Satan has his crosshairs on your family. Satan has his crosshairs on your children and on your marriage. He is lethal and he has a great strategy to take you out. This senior lady says that war room is where you go in and you and the Lord begin with a strategy of turning over everything to Him. Let Him fight for you. Make Him the priority.

And then when they meet back together it was so much fun to watch because we see this all the time. She wanted to rant about her husband. And this lady would let her know she was missing it. It's not about him. She starts writing out the prayers that she has for her husband. It's so great. You have to go see it. It's almost like I'm going to require it before any marital counseling takes place at Woodland Hills. It gets you to the right frame of mind to be like "Okay lord, you're fighting my battles. You are the priority relationship in me, you're the priority above all else, and I want this to be true of my children. I want children who look to the Lord." That means I, as a parent, have to remove myself as the most important relationship in their life, whatever that takes.

### **The parent is the primary voice, not the church**

You are the primary voice in the life of your child. You're the primary voice with the most hours and the most influence over every coach, every teacher, every pastor, every student director. You are the primary voice. You have the most time, the most opportunity to influence your child. Where we get the idea of Orange is that the church is yellow and the home is red and together we make Orange. We want to come alongside you in the 52 hours a year we have with your kids. We are a secondary voice. You are going to drop your kids off at school tomorrow and hundreds and hundreds of hours will be poured into them by a teacher. Please don't forget even with those hundreds of hours, you are still thousands of hours. You're the primary voice.

Proverbs 1: 8 says ***Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*** Our family and the teaching we are going to share in just a moment of what we want to get into the heart of all kids of all ages is flowing from this right here.

We are taking our kids through Proverbs this year and as the dad instructs and the mom teaches, I want you to picture where that is. It could be on the side of a bed. It can be in the minivan tomorrow on the way to school or in the car ride home from church. That's where your week can start. Your week can start with what they learned today? "I've got these resources they gave me and I have Parent Cue app. I have all sorts of stuff I can go through with you and we'll spend all week doing that in the car, at bedtime, or in the morning," but it's the father's instruction and the mother's teaching.

We are just in Chapter 1 as a family right now, but on Friday, I told the kids where we are going with it. Pretty soon, as we go through Proverbs, I'll be instructing and Amy will be teaching them about adultery. That's pretty early in the book of Proverbs. I'm going to be teaching my son, at ten years old, to rejoice in the wife of his youth. I'm going to teach him "may you be blessed as we think about our future marriage. A lot of what we are going to teach and instruct you on is going to be to prepare you for that day, so we are going to talk about marriage."

We're going to talk about money as we get through proverbs. We're going to talk about how to spend and how to save and how not to spend everything you've got and how to be a hard worker and how to be someone who is willing to roll up their sleeves and do dirty work. We're going to talk about how to abstain from drunkenness. We get very clear in the Proverbs... We are going to look at a passage where there is a hangover. We are going to talk about what a hangover looks like and that this is what happens if you choose to go that party and get drunk. That's instruction and teaching and who is the primary voice on that? It's not the church. It's you. It's every day influence. You don't need a book to go through. You don't need a whiteboard. You don't need a Power Point presentation at dinner. That's not the strategy. The strategy is to take the truth and just reinforce it over and over. Repetition is the key to learning.

So let's walk through each of the phases and what our desire is here. Let's start with the Embrace phase. This is birth through five years.

### **Embrace (Birth – 5yrs)**

- God made me.
- God loves me.
- Jesus wants to be my forever friend.

Everything they learn in Critter Street is going to reinforce these three truths right here and we are going to start early and we are going to say it often. We are going to send you home with resources, the Bible stories from the day, and it's going to all point back to these three truths right here.

### **Engage Phase (K – 5<sup>th</sup>)**

- I need to make the wise choice.
- I can trust God no matter what.
- I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

We have one in this phase and that's why we are going through Proverbs. We want our son to make wise choices. You want your daughter to make wise choices. We're going to teach them what the "do right principle" is as Jim Brawner has taught his kids. We're walking through that. We can trust God no matter what. He is going to go before us. We're teaching that confidence and that faith in our kids.

### **Affirm Phase (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>)**

- I will love God because he will never stop loving me.
- I will follow Jesus because he knows me better than I know myself.
- I will live out God's stories so others can know who Jesus is.

There are many ways that seem right to a man, but in the end they lead to destruction; they will lead to death. Now with my life and the identity I'm learning about and that's being affirmed in me, I'm going to go out and actually share this.

### **Mobilize Phase**

- I am created to pursue an authentic relationship with my creator.
- I belong to Jesus Christ and define who I am by what he says.
- I exist every day to demonstrate God's love to a broken world.

These are the high school years.

This week we sat down with our family ministries team, the ones who provided us with these four phases of notes. They are the ones who every week, all week long, are figuring out ways to partner with you to reinforce all of these truths in the home. Here is what they had to say.

[Video Plays]

**Stephanie Watson:** A big reason why we wanted to use Orange was because it's a lot of fun. We want kids to love coming to church. We want them to want to come to church. When their parents want to sleep in and watch the livestream we want them to say "No way, we are going to church." When I hear stories like that, those are the days that my heart sings. Another reason is because there is a comprehensive plan that begins at birth and ends at high school and there is a strategy and it's a building block and it's one thing after another. We're teaching with the end in mind.

**Mesa Mitchell:** When I think about partnership, I really think about that Bible story that they're hearing on Sunday and I think about Mom and Dad knowing that story before they ever walk through the doors. I love Mom and dad being the first ones to talk to their child about that story. Then when they come to church, they're hearing it from us and it's just like a high five to mom and dad. Their parents are smart; their wise. And we want to echo you in everything that you are speaking.

**Mickey Pitman:** A big part of this strategy is to affirm and mobilize student to go and be the church. One of my favorite things to watch on Sunday mornings is the older students volunteering to help out with the younger students. When you see that, it's Orange in action.

**Mesa Mitchell:** One of the most powerful things about the Orange curriculum is that it really, really sets the parent up as the primary voice. It's exciting to me that we get to be a part of that partnership on your child's journey.

**Stephanie Watson:** My favorite part of serving is being able to be part of something that is so much bigger than myself. I've been here for nine years and when I look... I'm thinking of some families that look totally different than they did several years ago. It didn't happen overnight, but its happening. And I think about my own family and the impact it's made on me as I prepared lessons and as I started to think about things that we are teaching our kids and I think I need that too.

**Mickey Pitman:** My favorite part is watching a student be all about themselves – “me, me, me” – and then learning about Jesus and all of the sudden they are all about other people. They love God and they love others and you can see it just click. You can see their passion for Jesus, their passion for the church, the idea that you have to actually be the church and do something significant grows in them. It’s awesome to see.

**Mesa Mitchell:** I like fun. I like fun; I think what’s exciting about what’s happening at Woodland Hills is there is opportunity here to create moments that are fun moments and it’s just icing on the cake that my kids are in there. They come and they tell me about it and it’s really sweet to be a part of something that makes learning about Jesus so exciting. My kids want to be here and that’s cool, that’s special, and that is most certainly my favorite thing about serving here at Woodland Hills.

[Video ends]

Would you help me thank our family ministry team at this church? We are grateful for them and for all of you who volunteer in children’s and student ministries. You’re like that coach. You’re like that teacher that we all can point to who walked alongside our parents and who we can point to that had influence in our life. I think about Coach Schnabel who threw me out in the hall in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the influence he had on my life all through junior high and high school.

When the reality of “We’ve got to leave this room and go to the next class...” I saw some relationships that were built between teachers, faithful volunteers at this church and students that are now leaving and moving through the phases. There were deep, emotional responses to that like people crying. This is a good thing. This is working. We want to be the secondary voice.

So you say “Okay we got the what. We got what to say. We’re going to have a plan as parents on what to communicate, but how do we do it?” Do you agree with me that sometimes we over strategize parenting? We make it more difficult that it really is. Deuteronomy 6: 7 puts it this way: What do you do with these truths? Teach them diligently to your children. It’s hard work. It’s for a season, but it’s a lot of work. We want to stay after it. We want to put the time in. We want to put the energy in. We want to make the most of thousands of hours. How do you teach them diligently?

**7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home...** You need to prioritize time together as a family. Around a family table is great or around a family room. Maybe it’s an outdoor setting. Maybe in the Ozarks it’s an inflatable pool or a trampoline. We’ve had many deep conversations on a trampoline. Raise your hand if you own a trampoline. ...**and when you walk along the road...** So as you’re driving, use the car time. Have the conversation. ...**when you lie down...** That’s at night, pray with your kids. Instead of maybe sending them to bed every night, pick a couple of nights where you take them to bed and tuck them in and have the conversations with them. ...**and when you get up.** How many of you are morning people? Raise your hand if you’re not a morning person, but you’re a night person married to a morning person. Isn’t that something how God puts that together?

My dad was the night person. My mom was asleep very early, but then she was always the one to wake us up. I had one of those moms that would walk into our room and grab the curtains and throw them open, singing *"This is the day! This is the day!"* How many of you had that mom? So you have one parent that's good at night and one parent that's good in the morning.

What's the conversation of your home? Who is the center of your home? What are you talking about from the time you get up to the time you go to bed and when you're driving around town and when you are sitting around your house? The scripture says, a little bit further down in Deuteronomy, that one day your son is going to start asking you the question "Why do we follow all of these stipulation, rules, and laws. Why do we do all this?" And you are going to be able to answer "Because the Lord delivered us from Pharaoh in Egypt. He brought us out of bondage with a mighty hand." You're going to be able to point back to the story of salvation, sharing with your kids your story in your home all throughout the day. Your family is writing a story.

So we know you are powerful and you have a powerful voice and this is the next part. As the primary voice in the life of your child, as a parent, you are the most powerful voice in the life of your child. Andy Stanley, when he talks to business leaders and church leaders, he says when you find out you're the most powerful person in the room... So if it's in your business or if it's in a meeting this week and you find out your voice is the most powerful voice in the room, it's at that moment that you leverage your authority to the benefit and the blessing of the others in the room.

This is true as a parent. I have the most powerful voice in my family. Often that means I'm the loudest voice. My mistake as a parent has been to just raise my voice to squelch all of the other voices. I have a powerful voice in the life of my child, but I don't want to leverage that to get my way or to have something for me. Leverage your authority to the benefit of your child, not you. Use the teachable moment in whatever phase your child is in to begin to build into their lives and to be able to instruct them.

This has been my takeaway from the week as I have studied this and I have read and I have prayed and I have thought about how there are a lot of places that I'm blowing it as a dad. I'm going to end today talking to dads because I think you get the struggle as well. I have a ten and a twelve year old, so I don't have preschoolers, so I can't blame sleep deprivation. You people parenting preschoolers right now, blessings to you as you try to sleep. And I will think about you tonight at 10:00 as we are all falling asleep in the Cunningham home. I don't have sleep deprivation to blame.

I have business and loss of control. I've been nailed on this the last couple of weeks. I can't control a ten year old and a twelve year old like I would like to. So let me raise my voice and rule with an iron fist and shut them down as quickly as possible, so they can know I'm in charge. You've heard it. If you have to remind your kids that you're in charge, you're probably not. I'm moving back towards control or the desire for it more than I am actually gaining influence in the life of my child. So, Dad, the last verse is for you. The last exhortation is for you and it's for me because we have a tendency to get strong, authoritative, and let's just say it, to get angry, to get mad when we feel we are losing control.

I am asking the Lord “Don’t let me get angry. Let me gain influence. Let me take this moment to not provoke my children.”

The scripture puts it this was in Ephesians 6: 4. ***Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

My anger issues, my frustrations, my outbursts when things in the home aren’t going my way are my issue, not the kids’ issue. I don’t want to look at my kids and tell them they are making me mad. That is something I have to wrestle with. That’s something I have to deal with. I don’t want to provoke my children to anger because I am painting a picture of God for my children every day in the home. Dad, you are painting a picture every day of God and what it is to have a relationship with your heavenly Father in the home. The question for us is “Are we painting a picture of God where he is distant and angry or are we painting a picture of God who has delivered us with a mighty hand? Are we painting a picture of God our heavenly Father who loves us?” He gives us instruction. He gives us teaching for our benefit to bless us, to be a blessing for us and through us into the lives of others.

Dad, my prayer for you today is that you, knowing it is hard to balance work and life... Mom, it’s hard to balance work and life. We have many working moms in here. It’s challenging to go to work. We are spinning our wheels so fast at times and we feel like we just don’t have time. You don’t have to be at a place today where you have to throw on the brakes to everything you’re doing and quit your job. That’s not realistic. You don’t have to sell your house and buy a tiny house... You don’t have to stop everything. What if the strategy is as simple as recognizing it in your family, establishing Jesus as the priority relationship, hitting your knees before your family, with your family, declaring who the priority is, confessing your sin to them, and sharing with them. That’s our heart and our desire for you as a church. That’s my heart and desire as your pastor.

I am entering the teenage phase quickly and some of you are happy about that. I hope that you will be that church that partners with me as well as you partnered with me with toddlers and elementary age students. We’ve hired Mickey now as our student director. Mickey is here to partner with parents in the life of your child. He is not here to be the primary voice for your child; he’s here to be an additional voice in the life of your child.

So when you leave today... The first week we gave you oranges when you left. Last week we gave you Sunny Delight. We decided this week to not be healthy. There’s too much health going on in this church. We need to go back to being happy eaters. So do you know what they are giving you today? Do you remember those Push Ups from the ice cream truck? All the guys are so excited. You should have seen everybody leaving the first service. How many of you chased an ice cream truck when you were growing up? Those were the days. I wanted to be an ice cream truck driver. I didn’t care that those little Push Ups cost \$4.00; it was worth it. You are going to get one on your way out; enjoy it.

I have a new book out and we are giving one to every family. It’s called *The Power of Home*. I want to say thank you because Woodland Hills, you are in the book like you just wouldn’t believe. You’re going to be amazed when you read it. I just changed your name from Don to Ron. I changed from Sue to

Sarah. But I thank you because you give me so many great illustrations and I'm grateful I didn't ask permission for any of them.

Father, we are grateful for what you are doing at Woodland Hills. Continue to use this church as an additional voice in the life of children and students. I ask a blessing over every parent, grand parent, and great grandparent as they seek to influence their children through all of these phases and then even after their children leave home. I pray a blessing on Stephanie and Mesa and Mickey and the countless, hundreds of volunteers that faithfully serve our children and student ministries. We are grateful for them. We are grateful for what you do here. It is the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.

I'm just going to ask that you remain seated with your heads bowed. As the worship team is going to sing over you, I just want to encourage you to take this time, as they sing this blessing over you, for you to pray for your children whether they are at home... Call each one of them by name. Pray for your grandchildren; call each one of them by name. Pray for your great children; call each one of them by name, letting the Lord fight for you. If you have a child that's far from God, call them by name. Take this moment... this is your invitation right where you are to begin praying for those in your family – your children, your grandchildren, and your grate grandchildren.