



Conversations: Listen More, Talk Less
Part 3 – Understanding Your Child
Pastor Ted Cunningham

We've been in this series for two weeks and this is our third week: *Conversations: Listen More, Talk Less*. We're going to become great listeners. Is anybody having any success so far becoming a great listener? We have two more parts that will hopefully take you there.

I was at an event last week and I used the illustration of the "take the knee" and just listening. It wasn't a light-hearted moment, but it was in a light-hearted set. I said, "Is it okay that we just listen?" Again, listening doesn't mean agreeing. It just means listening. All we're doing is listening to someone. With that picture on the screen, I said, "Is it okay that we listen?" A guy yelled out from the back, "NO!"

Another guy came up to me after one of the punch lines I use where I just say, "To those of you who watch Fox News 24/7, you might want to try CNN from time to time." It's a simple little joke. A guy came up to me with a lower lip quiver, saying, "How dare you tell people to go and listen to CNN!"

I laughed because I thought he was giving me a hard time and I said, "Sir, it's just a punchline, you know that."

He goes, "I know what it was, and I don't care what it was!" If you're listening today, just bring it down a bit, my brother.

Here's where we're going with the series. A healthy person can listen to someone else's opinion without being threatened. Healthy people can listen to what other people are thinking and feeling without being threatened with what you think and what you feel. That's called a conversation. You share some things and then I share some things and a healthy person doesn't get upset. That's where we're trying to go. Maybe we bring it down a notch in our culture because we're all getting so angry. From social media to watching television and having conversations with family and friends, we're at a point where we just said "Okay, let's hit some different relationships, but let's get back to having healthy conversations."

Today, we're talking about *Understanding Your Child*. Raise your hand if you have children at home. Raise your hand if all your children are gone. Raise your hand if you have a difficult time still, at times, understanding your child. Be honest. You see, it doesn't matter whether they're at home or they're not at home, understanding our children can be a challenge. That's where we're going today.

We want to start this message honoring all of those in this church that, week after week after week, serve the children. Would you help me thank those who minister to our students and children here at Woodland Hills?

A picture hit our social media feed and I asked Corey and Stephanie to send it to me, and I love this picture. It's of Tina Cooper, who works every week in our second service. Her favorite thing is to push children around. I love this shot because her passenger in 3B ain't very happy; I can tell you that. I'm like, "Tina, you should probably get him a Jack and Coke..." No, I'm just kidding. We would never give your children Coca-Cola in the nursery; you need to understand that. That would never happen here at this church. But, what we are giving in the nursery... They're starting to pass out noise canceling headphones to the other children. Do we have a progressive children's ministry or what at this church? Again, help me thank all of those for serving. It's some of the most important ministry we do at this church.

If you've been at Woodland Hills for any period of time, you know there's a conversation we have often. It's found in Deuteronomy 6 and it says, **4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!** There is a God, there is only one God, he is the Lord, and he is our Lord. **5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.** Your heart is the key to your child's heart because it's your heart that influences your child's heart. You impress what's on your heart onto your children. Then here's the conversation. "There is a God, there is only one God, he is the Lord, and he is our Lord. We will love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength."

And in the process of trying to impress these upon our kids, it's this simple; we talk about them. **7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** May the conversation of the Lord, all throughout your day, be the priority of your home. Will you agree with me that this is the priority conversation? Our desire as parents is to keep this conversation going. And there are some things we want to look at today, some pointers for parents that I've been challenging myself with this week.

A lot of this is like personal therapy today with a 12 and a 14-year-old who are in new phases of life. Making sure that as a dad, I'm a great listener. Making sure as a dad that I'm understanding my children because I want to lead my children well. As a parent, we sometimes think listening to our children is going to usurp our authority. Like if I sit down and listen to what my child is thinking and feeling... Getting to the bottom of why they do and say what they do... I want to understand that because as a parent, we know that, according to Deuteronomy 6, the heart of my child is more important than the behavior of my child. That's because the behavior flows out of the heart. I want to win my child's heart. I want to be constantly attuned to what's in the heart of each one of my children.

Jim Brawner, who I think is an excellent dad... Travis, would you say he's an excellent dad? He gave the thumbs up to that. We think all three of their children would say he's an excellent dad. He was in a café in Amsterdam this week and he sent me this picture. He said, "I'm letting you use this in the sermon" and I love it. It says, "We don't have WI-FI, we talk to each other." It's just one of those places that says, "When you're in here, just put the device down for a little bit."

I know we're in a new world and I know this is the new way of communication and I'm not going to be that legalistic, fundamentalist dad who tries to resist technology altogether and go back to the stone ages. I want to at times; that's in my heart.

But, getting back to talking to each other as a family. This week is Thanksgiving; it's the family table. May your family table will still be a sacred place, a sacred space where it's tech-free, so you can have great conversations. I like what Dr. Chuck Swindoll said. He said, "*Family is where life makes up its mind.*" It's because your heart, Mom, your heart, Dad, is the key to your child's heart. Your words and your behavior that's flowing from your heart is on display every single day to your children. If you're kids have left home, you not off the hook on this one. Grandma and Grandpa, I wish you could be off the hook, but you're not. The kids are still watching. The grandchildren are watching. And family is where life makes up its mind.

So, as we keep this conversation going today, I want to start with some parent/child conversation killers. These are four that I know I deal with and I'm wondering if you deal with them as well.

1. Screaming, yelling, and arguing. Being the loudest voice in the room. How many of you have ever done that? Raise your hand, every single parent in this room. You maybe did one of the three.

I was reading a book this week by a good friend of mine, Jim Burns. I think he's a parenting expert. He has a book called *Understanding Your Teen*. He has a whole chapter in his book that says, "Hey, it's this simple. Just make the declaration you're never again going to argue with your child."

I heard that and I was like "What? What family doesn't argue! It can't be that simple."

He said, "Oh, it's that simple. There's a word that will save you as a parent and that word... it's the most important word for a parent in the English language. It's the word *nevertheless.*" He says as you listen to your child, as your child is sharing their opinion and their thoughts on what the new direction needs to be..."

Does anybody have a child like that? "Here's where we're headed as a family, this is what we're going to do and this is how it's going to work." You listen, you understand, you validate, and after you've done all that, you simply say, "Nevertheless, here's where we're going. I'm still the parent. I'm still the parent, but I can parent without screaming, yelling, or just being the loudest voice in the room.

2. I solve my children's problems before they finish sharing. I don't struggle with this one. They're talking and they're halfway through and I'm like, "I got it. Here's what you need to do." Be quiet and listen and let them finish sharing. If your kid ever says to you, "Let me finish" that's your clue right there. I don't know how you get any clearer than that. If they have to tell you, "Let me finish..." I've had my children tell me that on more than one occasion today.

3. Turn everything into a life lesson. Mom and Dad, do we do this? I was reading this week and a 17-year-old was sharing her thoughts about her parents. She said, "I don't talk to my parents too much

anymore because even if I try to have a lighter moment with them, even if I tell them a joke, even if I try to be funny, and I share something funny, my dad turns it into this lecture and life lesson.”

I think this is something we parents have to discipline ourselves with. We have to be able to sit in a lighter moment without turning it into something bigger. You launch into this big life lesson. They try to tell you something that happened at school and you’re like, “Well, what was your take away from that?”

They’re like, “I don’t have a take away. I’m just telling you. I don’t need three application points on this. I’m just simply trying to share with you what happened at school today.”

If we turn everything into a life lesson, they may start sharing less. That’s not what we want. How many of you have a gabby kid right now? You have a two or three-year-old who never stops talking. Let me tell you, I know you want it to stop and it one day will, and then you’ll be wanting that back.

4. Remind them how it was when we were children. They’re sharing something about their life... I’m here to tell you, we were not raised in our children’s world. It is a different day. I could walk home from school through cornfields with the combine in the field, harvesting the corn. As long as I kept ahead of him, I could make it home. Parents today would never let that happen. We live in a different day. Many parents in here didn’t have to discuss when to buy a mobile phone. You didn’t have to discuss how long is too long on a device. You didn’t have issues of screen time. Your kids had that little Pac Man or Frogger game that they bought for \$19.95 from K-Mart and they played it for 30 minutes and got bored. It’s a different world, so we can’t just tell our kids, “When I was your age...” Part of understanding and listening to my kids is that I want them to share, and I can actually learn something about the world that they’re growing up in. It can actually help me lead them.

Listening is the secret to future conversations. This is why listening is so important. I want my kids to talk to me. It’s that simple. I feel like we all agree that the priority conversation is our conversation about leading our children to the Lord, and keeping the conversation going in our home about a love for the Lord, a desire to know that he is the boss. He’s the boss of me. He’s the boss of this home. If we want that conversation to keep going, listening is the secret. Allowing children to be a part of that conversation is key. Why? If you read a little bit further in Deuteronomy 6... I love this phrase.

20 In the future, when your son asks you... Now this is very important because right now if your kids are three, four, five, six years old, you’re laying down the rules, you’re the boss applesauce. You put the rules out there. They don’t fully understand the rules, they don’t fully understand why it is they’re told to do what they do. They don’t fully appreciate authority, but you still lead, you still put the rules out there, you still put the boundaries out there, you still explain the consequences for breaking those rules. You still do all of that even though they might not fully understand it.

But, the day is coming – and we call it teenagers – where they’re going to ask “Why do we do this? Give me the reason behind it.” Are you prepared for that? The scripture says, ***20 In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?”*** “All this stuff we’ve been doing since childhood, why do we do this?” “What is the purpose of going and fellowshiping at church on Sunday morning?” “Why have you wanted me to be a

part of a small group?” “Why do you read the Bible at home?” “Why do we pray before meals?” “Why do we not steal?” “Why do we not cheat?” “Why do we stay married?” “Why do we not have affairs?” “Why, why, why?” Let me tell you that “Because I said so” isn’t the answer. We’ve got to be ready. But, I want the conversation to continue as I’ve been pointing my children to the Lord for the first 12 to 14 years of their lives. And when he asks this question, I want to have an answer like this:

21 tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 Before our eyes the Lord sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. 23 But he brought us out from there...” This is the story of salvation. ***“...to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. 24 The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today.”***

So, we’re going to keep this conversation going and we’re going to use the outline we’ve used from the beginning: Bee quiet, Bee understanding, and Bee kind. How do we apply that as parents?

Bee quiet. It’s probably one of the hardest things to do as a parent because we think if we don’t say something right then, we may lose ground as a parent. But, is it possible to remain an authoritative parent and be a great listener? I submit to you the answer is yes. You can do both. Proverbs 17 says, ***28 Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent...*** I love that idea.

If you’ve ever been around what I call a sage leader, somebody in their 70s or 80s... We have a few of them in this town. The first one that always comes to mind is a man by the name of Jack Herschend. If you ever want to know what a sage is, he is a wise man and he influences a room without saying a word. If a point is made at the table... I’ve been at a couple conference room tables with him over the past summer. If a point is made, he’s sitting there in his coat... I think Jack is 84 now. He’s sitting there in his coat and if somebody says or does something that Jack thinks is a good idea or makes sense or is just honoring of the Lord, you’ll see Jack quietly clap his hands. It’s funny if something controversial is said or something that may be a little edgy... Every now and then, I say something like that in these meeting. But, everybody looks to Jack. They want to see what Jack’s body language is saying. Do his eyes light up? Does he flinch? And if he doesn’t flinch... That’s called being a sage. That’s just being a wise person and he can do all of that without saying one word. ***28 Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent and discerning if they hold their tongues.***

I like how one parenting expert, Joe Rosemond, says it, especially when in conflict with your child or teenager or even young adult. He says, *“The fewer words a parent uses, the more authoritative a parent sounds. The fewer words a parent uses, the clearer the instruction.”*

From control to influence. At Woodland Hills, we put this on the side of the jars and we want parents to really understand this and grasp this big of idea of from control to influence. As you’re moving from control to influence, your child is individuating and separating from you.

I have a 12 and a 14-year-old that are pushing away from me right now. This is by the design of Almighty God. They’re becoming their own little people. I’m losing control as a parent and I have been since they

were very small. We say with every year of your child's life, with every week, with every month, you're losing control, but hopefully, you're replacing that with influence. When my children leave home, I want to still be a sage parent that is able to influence them. I want my kids to call home before they buy a car and ask me what I think. If they're not dating when they leave the house and they meet someone, I want them to say, "Dad, I want to tell you about this girl." And then my goal is to keep my mouth shut on the other end of the phone and just listen. When they're choosing a job or thinking about leaving one job and going to another job, I want them to call home. I want influence. I can't tell them what to do.

A lot of you in here today may be moving from obeying your parents to honoring your parents. When you're in their home, you have to follow their rules and the consequences that come with them. Obedience is key, but your transitioning out of that and you're moving from obedience to honor. We replace words like *obedience* and *control* and *rules* and all that with *honor* and *influence* and hopefully great relationships. The secret to listening in all relationships is being quiet, starting with just hearing, not solving the child's problem, not jumping in with a life lesson of your own, and not saying, "Okay, but when I was a kid, we didn't have that issue, we had this issue." No, I'm just going to listen. "I want you to share what's in your heart because your heart is the most important thing to me." As a parent, are you fighting for the heart of your child?

I have to tell you; your children are going to make some decisions that are going to drive your bonkers. Your children are going to make some decisions, say some things, do some things as they are moving toward being under your influence rather than control. This is on you, Mom and Dad, not on your child. Even if they don't listen, still be a person of influence. Even if it feels like they do the opposite of what you encourage them to do, then you tell them the opposite of the opposite. I don't want to get into too much reverse psychology this morning, but it's really simple. If they are in that stage... We're talking to the parents today more than the children, but I am going to mention the children in just a little bit.

Bee understanding. Proverbs 18 says, ***2 Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.*** I think this is the life lesson I want to share with the parent. "This is the way it was when I was kid and I wouldn't think that way and you shouldn't think that way and I'm so sorry your friends think that way..." Just be calm and try to get into the heart of the child.

There's a text in Proverbs 30. It might be interesting for you to turn there because it depends on your translation. I'm going to read a couple of different translations to share with you, but this is where I want to spend the bulk of the time because understanding a young adult can be very challenging. If you're the parent of a millennial, you're still scratching your head right now. You're trying to figure it out. You're like, "This is not how I was raised. This is not how I thought we raised our kids." But, they are of a very different generation, so how can we be understanding parents? I love this.

18 Three things amaze me, no, four things I'll never understand—19 how an eagle flies so high in the sky, how a snake glides over a rock, how a ship navigates the ocean, why adolescents act the way they do. This is Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this text. When I first read this, Amy thought I added this line. She goes, "Did you just throw that in there?" and I go, "No, that's Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this."

If you think about it, if you're ever watched an eagle... You see a bird flying and you're amazed. I don't deal too much with snakes because I don't spend a lot of time watching them glide over rocks. They're usually dead by the time I see them.

We were on a little skiff in Jacksonville earlier this year and we turned the corner to a battleship, a U.S. Navy Battleship. First of all, I don't know how we were right beside it; that was a little bit of an issue. I couldn't get through the Springfield Airport with a full pat down, but I can drive a boat up to one of our battleships. Try to figure that one out for me. But, I'm looking at this battleship and it's as far down as I can see one way and as far down as I can see the other way and my thought is *how does this thing float?* I've never been that close to one. This thing is amazing.

But, I have been to adolescents up close and why they act they way they do. Look at some of different... Here's what he's paraphrasing. The NIV says it this way: I'll never understand ***the way of a man with a young woman***. It's speaking here of when a young man falls in love. If you have a teenager right now that is smitten with love for the very first time, you're going, "What is going on?" It amazes me and I'll never understand it. It's probably the same feeling you had when you were smitten with love.

The New American Standard says, ***And the way of a man with a maid***. It's another way of saying woman. And the way a man and a woman fall in love. It's speaking here of when that individualization, that individuation from parents and that separation from parents and they start becoming adults. We call that season of transition from childhood to adulthood adolescence. It's speaking there of that time and that period.

Let me tell you, Mom and Dad, let us not forget they are trying to figure it out too. They're trying to understand. "I was 100% into sports..." You just saw it on the video there. Once you meet the girl, you won't be able to work. You won't be able to study. You won't be able to get anything accomplished. It's called young, budding love. It's amazing. It's not 100% completely understandable, but we get to be in that journey, influencing our children as we try to understand that with them.

It's a joke I always have with my son because we always pronounce the word puberty like Dr. Dobson pronounced it at Focus on the Family. He always pronounced it pooberty. It just makes for a much easier conversation when you pronounce it pooberty. About every couple of weeks, I'll ask Carson, "Would you like to talk about pooberty this morning?" and he'll respond with "I'm good." To which I say, "Nevertheless, we're talking about pooberty." I want to understand my kids, but kids today are speaking a completely different language.

One mom texted her son and said, "What does idk, ly, and ttyl mean? This was the son's text message back: "I don't know, love you, talk to you later." To which Mom responded, "Okay, I'll ask your sister." Do you see why it's so challenging understanding our kids?

I have a 14-year-old daughter, which means the group she hangs with is 14. I'm not going to embarrass him, but there's a lot of... We were standing there a few weeks ago and I saw a kid and I go, "Who is that?"

Corynn said that it was so and so. I said, "No, it's not." I hadn't seen the kid in about a year, but I didn't recognize him. I said, "Corynn, that is not him."

"Oh, that's him, Dad. Then as serious as can be, she goes, "Yeah, puberty hit him pretty hard."

This summer, we were on a trip and I said to my 14-year-old daughter, "I want to understand you better..." Things have changed and when she went to high school, I didn't know how things were going to change, but the responsibility of work that came upon her and homework long into the evening, it changed everything about our home.

She wrote this down and it was her being funny, but she said I could definitely share this. Here's what she wrote to me. These are her words. *Dad, when I am distant, don't assume I'm upset with you. Dad, when I am distant, assume I am upset with you. Dad, when I bring my problems to you, I don't need solutions. Dad, when I bring my problems to you, I need solutions. Dad, don't avoid me when I'm upset. Dad, avoid me when I'm upset. If you think I'm frustrated with you, I'm not. If you think I'm frustrated with you, I am. Dad, just don't listen to me when I'm upset. Dad, listen to me when I'm upset. Dad, don't ask me why I'm upset. Dad, ask me why I'm upset.*

So, parents, that's our challenge, to figure out where they are. But, if you love your kids like I love my kids, we will put the work in and when we can't get it just right... I told her, "I've been trying to figure out women for years. I feel I've learned some things with your mom. I want to learn some things with you, but I want to understand."

Here's the bottom line. If we want to keep the priority conversation that we all agreed on at the beginning... **If we want to keep the priority conversation going, we need to keep secondary conversations going.** What are secondary conversations? Let's look at a few of them.

Video games. I'm worn out by this conversation. Again, I don't understand. I don't understand that some of the number one videos on YouTube are videos of people playing video games. If you were in our digital parenting class last week, you know I got pretty worked up. But, I didn't get worked up at the content; I got worked up because I'm already exasperated by the conversation, but I'm also fighting for the heart of my child, so I'm taking this very seriously as we all should. My brain cannot compute sitting down and watching someone play a video game. Mom and Dad, there are a lot of you who are with me.

We never would have gone down to Block Buster, rented a video tape... We would get these tapes that were about this big. We would never have popped them in to watch someone play Pac Man, Frogger, Donkey Kong. I can't even fathom that, but it's not the world I'm growing up in. And, guess what? As exhausting as this conversation can be for me, if I want to listen, understand, love, and validate my kids...

Remember, I can have my opinions. I can even set the rules. In our home, our son plays video games in our home, but we have a limit on tech time, total screen time. I always want to cut them off whenever they're like, "Hey dad, can we talk..." but I need to be open to the conversation. Yes, watching a video of somebody playing a video game is tech time, screen time.

I'm fighting for the heart of my children and, Mom and Dad, we can't understand the video games, we can't understand why they want to sit in front of them for days and days, but be the parent. Set some boundaries with video games in your home. You determine the level, the maturity rating, the teen rating. It's up to you. Talk to your kids. One of the pieces of advice I got from Digital Parenting last week was "What's healthy?" We've turned every conversation into a right or wrong, but what's healthy?

Phones. This is right behind video games. I've been asked this question so many times I've lost count. "When is an appropriate age to get your child a phone?" Well, don't you wish we had Bible verse for all of these? We've got no Bible verses. As parents, we're expected to have discernment, but I'm just not into setting a hard and fast age because my kid is different than your kid. Your kid is different from the next kid. Have the conversation. Every time your child comes to you, wanting to talk about it, don't shut down the secondary conversation because when you shut these conversations down, what are you doing to the priority conversation?

Curfew. We're not there yet, but they don't have vehicles and they don't like to sit out on our front porch for long periods of time. Some of you are in this right now. You're like, "We decided at the beginning of the school year what the curfew is; why are we still talking about this?" That's because this is our child's world. If you agreed with what was said last week when Travis spoke about understanding unbelievers and you agreed with what was said about understanding your spouse, let's think about it with teens. You can listen and you can have the conversation and at the end of it say, "Nevertheless, here's where we are." You don't have to shut the secondary conversation down.

Friends. Your child comes home and wants to share with you something a friend said or did or the time they are spending with a friend and what's going on in the friend group. Let me tell you, if you are in that little circle and conversation, you want to be in that conversation as long as possible. So, when he says, "So and so said such and such." You don't want to come back with, "Well you don't agree with that, do you?" Just let them share. Let them get it all out. I've learned this about kids. If you just listen and you're engaged with your eyes and you're leaning forward, they will speak volumes to you. But, if we shut them down, they'll think *This is not a safe conversation to have with Dad.* And then I want to talk to them about the Lord an hour later? They're like, "I'm still closed over the previous conversation."

Dating. We'll never talk about this one. Let's move on to the next one. This one you can shut down the conversation on; I give you permission to do so. No, I'm just kidding. I love all these ages. I don't know who came up with the ages. What's the number one age you think of when you think of dating? Who came up with 16? Somebody came up with 16 and it's like the new rule, the new law for dating. I get asked this question all the time. "When is dating acceptable?" Again, don't put an age on it, put maturity on it. Your child at 16 may not be ready, but, guess what? In a couple of years, they're out of your home. Again, you want the influence. You want to be an influencing parent to have this conversation.

School. Public? Private? Home? Christian? It's a conversation that a lot of parents will just shut down. Again, all we're talking about is having the conversation, letting your child speak and have a voice in the home.

Jobs. That's a simple conversation. Get one. Wouldn't it be neat if we just had two verses, kind of like Proverbs 30, that we just read in Verses 18-19? Wouldn't it be great if we just had two verses that addressed all of those? Here's how many hours you spend a week on video games. Here's when you get your phone. Here's when every child should be in or they're swiftly put to death. Here's how many friends they have and the quality of them. This is when you begin dating and the age you get married by law.

Do you know why we don't have them? It's because God gave us something else and it's called a parent. We get to be parents. We get to influence. First of all, we get to direct and guide and say how it is, but then, as they begin to develop their own personhood into their tween and teen and young adult years, all we have to do is listen. I think this is why some of you are struggling with this right now and resisting this. Just to encourage you again, listening does not mean agreeing. Fox News, you can watch CNN without your blood boiling. Just listen. Listening does not mean agreeing. Listening means I can listen, I can understand what you're going through, I can even validate the pain that you're going through, *nevertheless*. I can listen to my kids, I can understand my kids, and, at the same time, not allow my children to make major decisions for my family.

If I could just speak to the children and the students for just a second. Obeying does not mean agreeing. This is a tricky one for the young people in the room. You have to be able to have a conversation with your parents, hear the *nevertheless*, and if you claim the name of Jesus and you are a follower of Christ, you are called to obey your parents. After the *nevertheless*, still disagree with them, but you have to obey them. I could even put the word in there for those that are transitioning out of obeying...

And just to be clear here because some people get confused on this whenever we teach on this. Some people think you are to obey your parents for the rest of your life. I've had people challenge me on this. They say you never stop obeying your parents. You most certainly do because you have to get your own job, your own home, you're your own family. You never stop honoring your parents. What does the word *honor* mean? It means to esteem as highly valuable. You are to esteem Mom and Dad even if you don't agree with them. You're like, "I would never do that. I don't think like they do and they're saying this and they're doing this, that's crazy." Esteem them as highly valuable and you can do that without agreeing with them.

Parents, if I can encourage you as we close out. Be on your child's team, but be the coach, not a teammate. Be the parent. Share clearly. Let them know the direction that you have to take on behalf of the family.

We had that water issue I told you about two weeks ago. It got solved. My kids weren't stressed for one minute about it. I had a water leak that drained the water tank in our neighborhood. I don't know how much that cost per gallon or how many gallons the thing holds, but I'm kind of pacing the house, worrying about the situation, trying not to flush the toilets and monitoring the water pressure.

Carson goes, "Dad's pretty stressed."

I'm like, "You keep calling it stressed. Do you know what I call it? Being an adult. That's what this is. You're catching me in these adult moments where I have a responsibility... Do you like showering?"

"Nah."

"Well, you're going to love it one day, so this is part of just putting that out there. I'm on your team, but, guess what? As the dad of this house, I'm the coach. I'm going to be your coach, not your teammate."

To end this whole thing, coaches can listen and understand without becoming teammates. You can listen when your adolescent... When you can't understand your teen and you're just amazed... Oh, I love that word amazed. They say or do something and your response is, "What were you thinking?" You can still be the coach. We say it around here. Be the parent. As you say nevertheless, here's what I want to encourage you to do and it's the last bee.

If you are unfamiliar with this, we passed out bee stickers and I believe we still have some out there if you weren't here two weeks ago. I just put that bee on the back of my phone and it's just reminding me. Put it on your computer, put it on your rearview mirror. It just reminds me to be quiet, be understanding and this last one...

Bee kind. I just listen, I'm understanding. "I hope I didn't interrupt. I hope you saw from my body language and my tone that I'm engaged in this conversation. Nevertheless, here's where we're going." Whatever follows the nevertheless, may it be kind.

Proverbs 16 says this: ***24 kind words are honey, sweet to the soul and healthy to the body.***

Father, it's in the name of Jesus that I come to you. I think about moms and dads right now who this is not the pattern of the home for them. This is like the first time thinking through giving the child a voice in the home and how to do that while still being the parent and the coach. I pray they start today with the priority conversation, that they go home and establish that conversation in their home as the most important conversation above every other conversation. And then all the other secondary conversations that seem to take president, seem to run the show, now they kind of balance between the two and they understand "Okay, I'm going to have this conversation with you, but understand this is not the priority of our home."

I just pray for many families today that they're establishing Jesus as the priority relationship in the home. For the Mom or Dad that doesn't understand this, and they can't fathom the idea of listening to kids and giving an eight or nine-year-old a voice and trying to understand what they're thinking and feeling, I pray that they would first think about the parents' heart because the parents' heart is the key to the child's heart. I pray they would just be asking the question: "What am I impressing upon the heart of my child? How am I influencing my child?"

I just pray that this message and what we've looked at today in scripture will begin reconciling some relationships and guiding moms and dads back to the hearts of their children to listen, to understand, to validate, and to show kindness.

I thank you for this series. I thank you for the teaching team and how they've been guiding it and how you've placed certain messages on their hearts individually and how their words have influenced me. I want to be better. Leaders can be terrible listeners at times. I want to be a great listener and understander and validator, encouraging those that I come in contact with, starting with my spouse and starting with my children.

I just pray you continue to do a work. Call moms and dads by name. Call children and teens and adult children by name today. I pray that they would learn how to obey if they're still in the home and under Mom and Dad's direction. I pray that they would obey even when they don't agree and that from a heart that loves you, they would begin truly honoring, esteeming their mom as highly valuable even when they don't agree on the majors and the minors. I pray that they would begin esteeming Dad as highly valuable even when they don't agree.

We're grateful for what you continue to do at this church. We pray a blessing over families as many will be traveling back here to Branson after the holidays and many who are here today that will be traveling home. We ask that you cover them in the blood of Jesus, protect them from evil, and fulfill your purpose in their lives.

It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.