



Father's Day Children Under the Influence (of a Father)

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today is a prevention talk. We're talking today about *Children Under the Influence (of a father)*. Dads, don't ever forget how important your instruction is. You are there to instruct and to guide. We talk a lot around here about how you provide for your family, how you take care of your family, how you save your family from disaster, but I want to focus today on the instruction that you give your kids and the instruction that can, according to Proverbs, literally save the lives of your children.

Proverbs 4 says, ***1 Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction...*** A little bit later on in the message, we're going to talk about how to listen. If you brought your kids here today, it's a great day that they would learn how to listen to Dad's instruction. ...***pay attention and gain understanding.***

When you get down to Verse 10 of Proverbs 4, it says it again. ***Listen, my son...*** We're going to talk about how to be an attentive son today. ...***accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many.*** You can actually extend your life when you listen to your dad when he tells you what to do and what not to do, and all God's people said... Amen.

My dad is an electrician. I asked my parents about this story. I just remember it from about 30 years ago and they said, "We don't remember that." Which doesn't mean it didn't happen; it just means they are almost 70. I got a used 1984 Mercury, Marquis, downsize, and it was awesome. Four doors, smelled like cigar smoke. The guy that owned it before me smoked cigars. My mom was the one that told me if you eat an apple and just throw the core in the back seat, the apple core will absorb smoke smells. I did exactly what she said. It made sense to me; I was trying to get rid of the cigar smell. Thirty years later, I realize that's what my mom told me to get me to eat an apple a day.

A neighbor two houses down had a buffer. I had always seen him buffing his work van. It has about this big of a wheel on it. It was a 1984 Marquis that was awesome, and I thought I should probably buff my car. I remember getting the extension cord out of the garage and I was buffing the car. I do remember this. I know it happened, Dad. I had the extension cord out as I was buffing the car.

I remember my dad walking out calmly and stopping me and pulling me out of the puddle that was under my car because you wash the car first and then you put the extension cord through the water... yeah, that's how you buff the car, so... There are multiple times I could tell you of my dad literally saving my life with instruction to teach me how electricity works. That's just one example of that.

I found this picture this week of a bunch of teenagers in a pool. They wanted to have some fun in the middle of the pool, so they put the power outlet on a pair of flip flops in the middle of the pool. When I see this picture, my first thought was *they have no father*. Where was the dad in this story to tell them, "You'll lose your life doing this?"

Here's another picture of a guy who didn't have a father. He's standing on a ladder, in a swimming pool, with an electric drill. He needs a dad. And all God's people said... Amen.

This was supposed to be fun and now everybody's worried about them. I'm sure he's no longer with us, so you can stop worrying about him. If he's doing this kind of stuff, he didn't make it long as a tradesman, I can tell you that.

We study this in the scripture so often at Woodland Hills. Exodus 20: **12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long...** Again, when you read this in Proverbs, when you read this in Exodus, God's speaking to the children of Israel. This is not a promise or a guarantee of long life, but when you read Proverbs, it's a tendency. Listen to Dad's instruction and you may get a few extra years. Pay attention to what he's saying so you don't do something dumb. This says to pay attention to your mom so that you may **live long in the land**, speaking now to all of the children. That our people would prosper in the land, honor your father and your mother **in the land the Lord your God is giving you**.

Dads, today, I just want to honor you for the instruction that you are constantly giving your children. Dad, you were the one that stood in the pool and talked your daughter into jumping into your arms. You were the first one to teach your daughter trust. You were the first one to say, "I got you. Go ahead and jump." How many of you had a daughter that just stood on the end of the pool for hours and wouldn't do it? Maybe you went entire trips to the pool and she would never do it. She would back out and you were like, "Maybe next time." You taught her how to jump. You taught her how jump into your arms. You were the first one to paint this picture of how we should look to a father and trust the Father.

You also taught them how to ride a bike. Remember the scripture is very clear that they listen to your instruction, pay attention, tune in. Stephanie just mentioned the difference between control and influence. As you lose control, hopefully you're picking up the influence along the way. In the scripture... Every time I see this, I'm reminded because Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Ephesians says, "Take your child by the hand. When you're talking about preparing your children for a life of faith, take them by the hand and guide them."

I think riding a bike is one of the most perfect pictures of this. This is control right here, but at some point, you let go and they take off. It's almost in that moment you move from control to influence because now you're still shouting commands. This dad has it right. When you learn to ride a bike, you do it in grass, and all God's people said... This is a smart father. Some of us had dads that taught us how to ride a bike on a road. This was a dad that knew she was going to fall and he wanted to give her as soft a landing as possible.

You taught your son how to fish. You gave him the instruction. I love this picture. How many of you think we need less Xboxes and more tackle boxes? Those are all the Pinterest ladies clapping because

you know I got that off Pinterest. But this one I made up: How many think we need less Fortnite and more waiting on a bike? Yes, getting back to teaching our kids.

That's how we want to start off Father's Day this morning, a little fishing competition. The prizes are great. If you want to be a part of it, I need a dad, a stepdad, a grandpa, and a great grandpa to participate in this. We're going to step out this back door in just a second. Actually, in the Chapel, I got the dad and the stepdad. I need someone right now to nominate their grandpa or great grandpa. We have grandpa over here. Grandpa, come up here. Do I have a great grandpa who knows how to catch fish? There are more great grandparents in the 9:00 service than all of Branson put together. We have a great grandpa? Step out into the aisle and follow me, my friend.

[They proceed outside for fishing competition. Nick Robbins cast lands in the gutter of the Cabin and competition is over.]

We told you to nominate your dad and tells us why your dad would love a guided fishing trip at Dogwood Canyon, where I'll take him out there personally for the free lunch and the guided fishing as well. We loved every response we got, so we talked to Chad Phillips out at Dogwood Canyon. If you nominated your dad, he wins. Every single dad nominated, I'm going to go out there with you to Dogwood Canyon. It's from right now and before, so you can't go nominate them right now. If you nominated your dad, call him and say, "Happy Father's Day; you won a trip to Dogwood Canyon for some fly fishing. The office will set up that time with you. Guess what, dad and stepdad over at the Chapel... Nick, if anyone needs casting lessons... Your take away prize is a day of fishing at Dogwood Canyon. The reason he was picked in the Chapel was he has fished three times and the last three times has caught no fish. I was like, "Really?" Now I get it. You have to actually get it into the water where the fish are at.

I'm in that teenage stage of life. If you're raising teenagers, would you raise your hand. This is all you need to know (the sign of the cross) with raising teenagers. I bought my son a mower recently and the primary reason I bought him a mower is because he will never be an illustration for Adam Donyes at Link Year. Adam Donyes sees 18 and 19 year olds all the time who show up to camp and they don't know how to start a lawnmower. Carson goes, "Don't we get the lawn mowed?" I go, "We do, but you're going to learn how to start a mower." We're teaching our kids, right? It's the little things all throughout life that we are instructing our kids with.

I have a daughter who is learning how to drive this summer. She's a good driver, but talk about influence and control. You're sitting there just trying to talk her through it. You don't want to take control of it, but there are a few times you have to get out of oncoming traffic and there are few times you've got to keep it out the ditch.

I want to keep with what we just shared with the parents (the jars of marbles). On the top... I know it's hard to believe when you have toddlers, but it's the most control you'll ever have. This is about where I'm at right now with my kids, but I've moved into pretty much into the influence, moving toward influence. Stephanie will just tell you she now has zero control. Think about that for just a second. They're gone.

You see, when our children are small, we get compliance, we get cooperation from them through control. If you're in a restaurant and your child is screaming and yelling, you pick them up and you take them out of the restaurant. If you're sitting at the table and your child is kicking the table, you use control. You put your arm down and say, "We don't do that." But, when they are older, when our kids grow, we replace control with influence. Cooperation, compliance, and obedience is secured through influence.

The context of 3 John 1 is very simple. It's a church leader who has people under his care and those under his care he refers to as children. I love this text in 3 John 1. He says, ***4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are...*** I'm not going to finish the verse because I want you to tell me. If you know the verse, don't share it yet. How would parents complete this today? I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are happy? I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are healthy? I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are on their own, earning their own money. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are bringing home grandchildren. Our culture is constantly feeding us this blank and what we should be looking for in our children.

But I like what this pastor says. ***I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*** That what I've instructed them, when it comes to the Word of God, they are now living it out. I still believe there is no greater way to honor your dad than to call home and with your life and with your words communicate to him your walk with the Lord. Those of us who get to this point right here where we are somewhere in transition to an empty jar, we just want to maintain that control. I believe the longer you try to hold onto control... It's like what I saw in a lot of my friends who had parents control them, trying to control their every move up until age 18 and then they went off to college and they lost their minds, or they left home and took a job at 18 and completely lost their minds because they didn't know how to handle responsibility.

I believe if you just want to maintain control, be in charge, and rule with the iron fist and influence isn't something that matters to you, there's a passage I have to be reminded of. As a dad of a 13 and soon to be 15-year-old, I want influence. I want to continue to instruct my children. I want to continue to teach them the ways of the Lord. I don't want Colossians 3: 21, that warning, to be geared toward me. I don't want to be one who aggravates his children. ***Fathers, don't aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.***

Don't aggravate your children because you don't want your children tuning you out. The bottom line of what we're going to see today in Psalms 78 is this: One day, you'll have no control. Some of you right now are adults and you have parents who are still trying to control your every move; you know it doesn't work. Then they may resort to manipulation to try to get you to do what they want. It doesn't work. Control is one day lost forever, but this is why we believe in influence when we're instructing our kids. ***Influence goes well beyond your lifetime.*** It can go throughout all of your child's adult years until the Lord takes you home. The powerful thing about influence is it continues long after you're gone.

Let's look at Psalms 78 as we see God's instruction on how you get truth into the heart of your child. What's the most effective communication method for getting truth into the heart of your child? Asaph says this in Psalm 78: ***1 O my people, listen to my instructions.*** Remember, when this psalmist is

speaking, he's not speaking his word. We believe, and Clay talked about this last week, he's speaking the very words of God. ***Open your ears to what I am saying...*** The word we use for open your ears is *incline*. Do you know what incline means? Better yet, what it looks like? Inclining your ears towards instruction means that your ears... It's actually referring to that of a dog or a horse when it hears a sound. We would understand this in the Ozarks as the deer that's grazing. If you make the slightest move or the slightest sound, their ears perk up. That's what it means to incline. It means to sit on the edge of your seat, to lean forward, and to hang on every syllable. Not just every word, but every syllable. That's what it means to incline.

You want to honor your father... If I can speak to all of those who are still at home and you still have marbles in the jar. When your dad is instructing you, when he's pouring into you and especially as we're going to see in this context, when he is teaching the ways of the Lord, sit on the edge of your seat, lean in, and receive. Incline your ears.

Incline is a different word from recline. Can I just encourage all the young ladies looking for a husband? You don't want to marry this (someone reclined back and not listening). You want to marry someone who is engaged and listening. This is the guy that will get a job and keep a job because respect for authority begins at home. You want to marry someone who knows how to listen to authority, who knows how to receive authority even when he disagrees with it. You want to know someone who inclines his ear and sits forward and is eager to learn.

2 for I will speak to you in a parable. In a story. ***I will teach you hidden lessons from our past...*** You're going to see why some call this a dark parable. It's going to speak to when you follow the instructions and the ways of the Lord and you live in the life, honoring your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon this earth. Or you can go, as we will see in 8, the route of rebellion, the route of a cold and callused heart. When you lean back and you don't want to hear what dad is saying or instructing, that's going to lead toward rebellion, but when you listen up and lean into the stories and lessons from the past... ***3 stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us.*** That has been God's plan for discipleship throughout all of history. The most effective communication to get truth into the heart of your child comes through the parent.

4 We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord... How he rescued us, how he saved us from bondage in Egypt. ***...about his power and his mighty wonders. 5 For he issued his laws to Jacob; he gave his instructions to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children...***

The great preacher Spurgeon said, "A Sunday school teacher, a pastor will never be a substitute for Mom's tears or Dad's prayers." That you and I would lean in and listen. ***6 so the next generation might know them—even the children not yet born...*** We study this all the time and it's the philosophy of ministry for our ministry here at Woodland Hills, our children's ministry: parents are the primary author of the child's heart. This church desires to be the echo of what Mom and Dad are teaching.

Psalms 78 is backing up Deuteronomy 6. ***...and they in turn will teach their own children. 7 So each generation should set its hope anew on God...*** Generation after generation after generation will turn

their hearts toward the Lord and will continue to walk in the ways of the Lord. ***...not forgetting his glorious miracles and obeying his commands.***

Verse 8 is what happens when you don't incline your ear to this, when you don't incline your ear to what dad is teaching. ***8 Then they will not be like their ancestors—stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.*** Dads, don't forget the power of your instruction, the power of you teaching your children. Yes, mowing the lawn is great. Yes, teaching them how to drive is great. Teaching them how to ride a bike is great. Teaching them how to fish is of the Lord, but what we're talking about today is the most important thing.

A lot of times, I hear dads tell me they just don't feel equipped to do what we're going to talk about right now. Years ago, we just challenged dads to pray with their child. If you've never prayed with your child, would you go home today and pray with your child. One of my friends in the community, Larry, came up to me and said, "I had never prayed with my children, but right after that message, I went into my teenage daughter's room. I couldn't even really look at her, but I just kind of walked in and kind of kicked my feet around." I can feel what's in his heart as he's going to do something for the very first time. He said, "As I was looking at the ground, I said, 'I don't know, honey, do you want to pray or something.'" I know if she would have hesitated for a moment, he would have been like, "No, that's good. Whenever you're ready, we can do it." But, without hesitation, she said, "Yeah, Dad."

We're trying to have a shorter service today. That's another gift for dad. Bacon, esteeming you as highly valuable, and letting you not be here too long. We want you to leave knowing what you're doing is so important as the leader of your home. Dad, stepdad, grandpa, great grandpa, start with it this simple. Speak often of your faith in Jesus. Speak often of how the Lord is working in your life. Walk into your teenage daughter's room that you've never prayed with before, kick the floor and say, "I don't know, you want me to pray with you or something?" Invite her to do that. Invite him to do that. If you have small children and you've never prayed with them, kneel down beside their bed at night... And I'm not going to go into the country song, but let's do it.

"I've been watching you, dad, ain't that cool? I'm your buckaroo, I wanna be like you. We learn this kid is watching and he's listening, he's remembering, and will one day he will repeat. He learned how to pray. He learned how to hold mom's hand. He learned how to curse. That's country. But, he learned that, dad, from watching you. You want to gain influence in the home? Speak often of your faith in Jesus, but here's the key. Walk it out.

You want to maintain control of your home? You want to send your children out at 18 to lose their mind. Create a bunch of cumbersome, inconsequential rules. Weigh them down with rules. Just pile it on thick. Yell at them. If that's what you want to do to maintain control, you'll never have influence. But, if you want influence, come home. You can come home tired. We all come home from work tired. You can come home tired. You can sit around the table. I know sometimes, dad, we think *Well, I'm going to take them on a big vacation this summer to kind of make up for all the times I've been away.* Don't overlook how important it is to just sit around the table and talk about the Lord. Don't overlook how important to sit down for 10 to 15 minutes and play Legos with your son. Don't overlook sitting there talking to your daughter about a relationship for even just a few moments.

Yeah, we can have the big times away, the time free from work, but when you get home, before you go to work, on the weekends, look for those little moments to speak truth into the heart of your children. Then, as you've been speaking about your faith and influencing your child's faith, don't forget... We love when dads do this. Invite your children to place faith in Jesus. Invite them to kneel down beside the bed and confess their sins before their Father in heaven. You be the one that leads them to Christ. It's one of our favorite times around here as a church. We love baptism around here, but our favorite part of baptism is when we see a dad baptizing his son. What I love about it more than anything is I know the stories. I know the stories of these dads and I know all of the generations that have poured into these kids.

One of our teaching team, Travis Brawner... I sent this picture to Travis and Jim Brawner yesterday (picture of Jameson being baptized by his father, Travis) and I said, "Do you know what I see in this picture? A little bit of influence from Travis Brawner and a lot of influence from Jim Brawner." I see a grandpa, a dad who poured into his son and this dad now pouring into his son. And Jameson, don't drop it. He knows what I'm talking about. We have a special relationship. He hates the Cubs more than anybody in Southwest Missouri. He is the biggest Cardinals fan on the planet, so I can tell him this. Jameson, you understand this. You get this. He's going, "Please move on."

Here's Tom. I've watched Tom baptize multiple children. Here's David baptizing Vivian. My son at the RecPlex. We baptize people anywhere we can find a body of water at Woodland Hills Family Church. I whisper in my kids ears when they come up out of the water, "Jesus is your priority relationship, not me." This is Carson knowing I was emotional. Every dad pretty much is, but he came up out of the water after and he stuck his finger in my face and said, "You better not cry." My daughter just raced down into the water at Dogwood Canyon, same thing. It's the most important thing.

Speak of your faith in the Lord often. Invite your children to place faith in Jesus. Then the key is **Model the behavior you want to see in your children**. Walk this faith out on a daily basis. When you stumble and, dad, you will, when you lose your cool and say things you shouldn't say, repent. Apologize before your kids. I repent and apologize before my kids all the time when I lose it and I snap. Carson said, "You know, Dad, your pretty stress free as a dad except when we travel." I said, "Son, you don't understand..."

He thinks it's a father/son bonding when I'm standing at the kiosk at the airport, punching in 42 different buttons and numbers to make things happen. He likes to come up behind me and then stand alongside me and pretend to be pushing buttons on top of my hands. I lose my mind. Or, he knows going through TSA is one of the most stressful experiences on the planet and he decides then to launch into a long story.

I'm like, "Now's not the time, son, to share a story. I need you to get your shoes off. I need you to get... Get your little baggie out with your... Get it out! Get it on the belt!" They're going to snap at us soon to keep the line moving. I tell them, "I'm trying! But it's this one right here. Frisk him!"

Do you know what he told me the other day? I said, "Carson, I can't wait to travel with you when I'm an old man. I'm going to get my hips replaced just to slow you down. I want you pushing me through the

airport in a wheelchair and I'm going to go up the kiosk while you're trying to get through and start pushing buttons and telling you stories about the good ole days going through TSA."

So, I'm a dad like you; I have my moments. We all have our moments and when our behavior doesn't reflect the life we want to live, that's when we stop and we say, "Will you forgive me?" It's usually when we get to our destination. We never repent in the car.

I don't know if you feel it today, dad, but you should. The responsibility we have of leading our children to the Lord, talking to them about the Lord. Don't allow teachers here and me and other teaching team members to be the primary voice into the life of you child. Please don't allow that. Let us be the secondary voice. You be the primary voice.

I'll end with this picture. It's one of my favorite pictures. This is my daughter, Corynn, with her Great Grandpa Lloyd. I'll never forget... Lloyd passed away in 2012 and we were able to be there at his bedside in Minnesota. We all just gathered around. We spent a day blessing him. We took the Lord's Supper together on his last day, just hours before he went to be with the Lord. We prayed together. We sang together on his final day upon this earth. I'll never forget him saying, "Goodbye everyone, I've got to go." He took out his hearing aids. They pulled out everything and stopped his pacemaker and oxygen and everything.

When they did all that, Lloyd just leaned back. Everyone gathered around his bed like this was it. I've been in enough of these moments to know this could take a very long time. It could take days or weeks. My daughter was just sitting there rubbing grandpas arm. After everything was turned off, Lloyd lived about another four hours, but she would rub his arm and about twice in that four hours, Lloyd came to. It's still one of my favorite stories. It's one of my favorite things to talk about because Lloyd came to and when he popped up, then you just saw it on him. He was like, "Oh, come on!" And then he'd go right back to sleep. He went home to be with the Lord.

Amy and I have talked about this day so much because I long for a day... Again, I know I talk about this a lot, so Father's Day is kind of my day; I get to talk about it again with my kids, but I've asked the Lord to allow me to go that way, where my family is gathered around and I'm able to speak blessing over them before I go. I long for that day. But, here's the bottom line. **We can't choose when we'll die.** Some of you didn't get that. I didn't get that with my grandparents. I didn't get to gather around their bed and speak a final blessing over them or for them to speak a final blessing over me. But here's the good news. **We do get to choose how we'll live.**

I think of my friend Bob Copeland right now and being with him. I was over there this week. I was able to say to Bob, "Bob, have you been thinking a lot about heaven?" Bob's at that place where his body is failing and his mind is still 100% there. Hospice has been called in. I don't know if they're watching this morning, but we were able to speak much about heaven and just in our prayer and our time together to just say, "Dad, you've taught us how to live. Now teach us how to die. Teach us how this works." I think about that from great grandpa to grandpa, to dad and to this generation.

Young people, you know our heart here at Woodland Hills Family Church is that you would take it over. I have such a strong desire. I hope that the person who replaces me is maybe even sitting in here right now. There is no greater joy than to think about our kids following the Lord and taking it on.

I know I kidded with you Jameson, but I hope you feel a huge weight leaving here today. Because I stood at Lloyd's funeral and I preached Ecclesiastes 7: 1-2. If you've been here for any time, you're tired of this passage, but it is the Word of the Lord. ***1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.***

To stand at Lloyd's funeral, to stand at my grandpa's funeral, my grandma's funeral, and to speak and to take to heart the death of a loved one and to be reminded... Again, I think one of the greatest tragedies of a funeral is that we wait until the funeral to speak words of high value over dad, over grandpa. Don't wait until a funeral to speak words of high value over your dad, your grandpa, or your great grandpa. Say it now, speak it now. The reason a funeral is better than a party is because when you go to a funeral, you learn great lessons. It should recalibrate your life. It should change the way that you live. I don't get to choose when I'll die, but I do get to choose how I'll live and what I will pass onto my kids.

I'm soon to be 45 and my dad has had no control over me for a long time. This part I love about my parents. They pretty much let my brother and I go when we were around 11. Really, how many of you parents know you've pretty much done all you can do, you've poured about all you can pour into...

Bobby lost his dad last week. I called a lot of folks this week who lost parents. A lot of people lost dads. We don't get to choose when we die, but you're glad you had a dad who chose how to live. I'm going to say this and walk down off this stage and Matt, you're going to take it from here. This is why you don't tell your dad you love him, right? It's hard. This is men. Dad, I hope I'm passing on to Corynn and Carson what you passed on to me and what your dad passed on to you. We joke a lot and have a lot of fun. My parents are a lot of fun to be around. My mom has made it very clear her wishes on this part here. She wants no extraordinary measures taken. She's like, "Don't plug me into anything; let me go." My dad has made it very clear he wants everything possible done to keep him alive. And that has nothing to do with... They are like Paul. They look forward to their reward which is in heaven, but we're choosing how we live.

Dads, especially those who have had parents pour into you, take it and run. Don't keep it hidden from the next generation. Speak it boldly to your children. Some of you are first generation Christians. You didn't have a dad, a grandpa, or a great grandpa who poured into you and you get to kick this whole thing off for your family. In a blended family, some of you have stepped in as a stepdad and you've replaced an abusive father, or you've replaced the father who is absent, or a father who was permissive, and God now is asking you to take it and run. Speak often of your faith, invite your children to the faith, and then model the behavior you want to see in them.