



## **Intentional Parenting**

### **Part 2 – Two Combined influences are better than one**

Pastor Ted Cunningham

So many reminders yesterday online to set your clocks ahead. How many of you still have to do that? You know your technology does that for you now? We're glad you're here, we're glad you woke up. Welcome to all of our guests – those out in the lobby and a lot of people in the courtyard right now, over at the chapel, and everyone online. We're glad you're here. As part of our worship, we take an offering at this church. We are in a series on parenting, so I think it's fitting to just share.

At 50 years old, I tithe to the church because of a dad who I remember if I made ten dollars mowing the lawn, I would have to go down to his desk with that ten dollars. He created the envelope system long before you heard the name Dave Ramsey. There was a tithe envelope, a missions envelope, a savings envelope, and then a spending envelope that was always empty. When you see that over and over and over again, that's what we talked about last week – the influence of a parent. You see everything, you hear everything, you remember, then you repeat. And if that wasn't part of your childhood, we encourage you with generous and cheerful giving and we say thank you for it.

There are four ways to give – there are offering boxes located in the foyer, you can go to the Church Center App, you can hit "give online now" at [woodhills.org](http://woodhills.org), or text any amount to 84321.

We are in part 2 this week of *Intentional Parenting*. How many of you grew up with a singing mom? She sang early in the morning. My mom would walk in and throw the curtains open. She had two songs. "This is the day; this is the day that the Lord..." or the other one was "Rise and shine and give god the glory, glory."

You know what teenagers want to do at 6:00 am. "Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory." I just want to encourage parents. Your teenagers are going to say they don't want it, but deep down, they want you waking them up in the morning with song, I promise you. So, sing loud and in charge in your home.

Last week, we talked about the influence of the parent. You are the primary author of your child's heart. Today, as part of our series, we're talking about how the church joins you in your child's spiritual journey and how two combined influences are better than one.

Remember we ended last week with no guilt trips. This isn't about going on a guilt trip. Delete the narrative that says it's too late, it's my fault. We don't feed our regrets at this church; we ask Jesus to

redeem our remaining days. I heard from a friend after the last service. He said, "I wish I would have had this 30 years ago. And you know what's cool? Here's what's cool. In this room, and across this campus, and online, there is so much influence here right now.

If you feel like you blew it as a parent and you have a lot of regret as a parent, and you still have breath, the scripture says, if you are among the living, you have hope. And you are part of a church, no matter what your age, no matter what your stage of life, and you get to be a part of influencing the next generation. And for that, we say thank you. So, be a part of what god's doing at this church. Over 500 kids will be on this campus today. Hundreds of volunteers serving them, but all of us, through our resources, our time, our energy, the way this campus is prepared, you get the opportunity to invest in the next generation.

I also look around the room at a lot of seniors. I was with a friend on Friday night who was sharing with me about his dad. He said, "My dad was not a good dad. He was an alcoholic, not available for us as kids. When he wanted me to go in one sport, I remember asking him, "What sport do you hate the most, Dad?" He named the sport, so that's the sport I chose." That's the home he grew up in.

He said, "But my dad, 20 years before he died, gave his life to Jesus, and he became my hero, he became the greatest influence. So, what we are saying, and I hope you get in this series, is it is never too late to disciple a child, so please hear that.

We are going to start today with some questions. I'll be honest. Most of the questions we've received are going to be in next week because of that adult child/parent relationship. The majority of questions we received were from parents with struggling relationships with their adult children or adult children trying to figure out how to be a good child to their parents in their senior years. We're going to talk about that next week.

I'm going to start with this question today because I'm grateful for the young man who sent it in. I think just by sending in this question... I just want you to hear it from me and I speak on behalf of this church. We are proud of you just for the question. A young man with his first child and separated from the child's mother. He just asked this question: "As someone who has struggled with the realization of my own responsibility in life to this day, how do I begin to steward my child into responsibility and adulthood while still struggling with it myself?"

How many of you agree with me that that is a fantastic question? That question alone shows that you are on the right path and that you are going places.

So, I want to start with a text we talk about often here and understand the scripture only speaks about two seasons of life – childhood and adulthood. And Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13: 11 speaks about the child five times. **11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.**

Have you ever tried reasoning with a toddler? That's a lot of fun, isn't it? When Carson wasn't even two years old, we were on a plane one time, and he was kicking the back of the seat in front of him. I'm one of these that I never want to be a bother to anybody around us, so I kept restraining him. I'm just talking to him about why we don't want to bother people around us. And every time I'd move my hand from his legs, he would just kick the seat again. I put my hand on his leg, and I was like, "Carson, no

more kicking the seat!" I'll never forget him sitting there, waiting for me to remove my hand. He looked over at me as he kicked the back of the seat again." Reasoning doesn't work with small children. That's why we said last week, "If you have small children, this is the most control you'll ever have. You're moving from control to influence, reasoning. But how many of us in adulthood think like children, talk like children? What are the favorite words of children? Me. Mine. I want. I need.

Then he says this: "***When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.***"

So, to answer your question, I would start with this. A lot of it has to do with stuff and I always want to encourage my 20-something friends with this. 1) If you are trying to figure out how you deal with the entitlement that I know grips your generation? The easiest way I can put this is stop trying to accumulate in three years, what your parents have spent 30 years accumulating.

Some of you are like, "I can't believe where interest rates are at, I can't afford a house,"

I just want you to hear this. It's okay to rent if that's what you can afford. You're like, "You should see the cruddy car I drive with 250,000 miles on it. I just want you to know that Dave Ramsey is proud of you. You don't have to drive your parents' cars, you don't have to live in their houses, you don't have to wear their clothes, and you probably can't afford to go on the vacations and the trips that they're going on. So, part of accepting responsibility as a young person and now with the care of a child... I just want you to know you don't have to accumulate so much stuff.

2. I would encourage you with this. Give yourself permission to learn and grow just like you want your son to learn and grow. And now you get to walk alongside him. And here's what I would say as your small child starts to grow up in the home. Celebrate and cheer them on when they do take on responsibility.

We had an ash tree. If you know anything about trees, ash trees are really dense. I could have taken it down with a chainsaw, but I sent Carson, when he was very small, out there to take it down with an ax. He wacked on that thing for two hours and got just a little way into the tree. I came out and went, "Way to go, Son, keep going, you should have it by tomorrow, I'm convinced." But celebrate when they take on responsibility. Celebrate when you take on responsibility. Give yourself the same permission to learn and grow as you do your child.

3. I want to encourage you. If you want to put away the ways of childhood, take little steps that adults with adult money take. I know everybody... I get so much pushback on this, but it's such a simple application point. The next time you go out to eat with your parents, you pick up the check. That's what adults do. I know some of them are going, "My parents are loaded. They don't need my money." That's not the point. You're not picking up the check for them; you're picking up the check for you. You're like, "How often do I have to do that?" Like once every five to ten years is all I'm saying. But as a parent, I'll speak on behalf of a lot of parents in here. My daughter and her husband will do this. They'll be like, "Dad, we're taking you out to dinner tonight and we're paying." Okay, I'm not really hungry. I'll go, but I'm going to do water and a side salad. I don't want to inconvenience you.

But take some adult steps.

I just want to say I'm proud of your question because Proverbs 23... A lot of parents you meet today are wanting to raise successful children. Understand the influence we are talking about isn't just raising successful children. We want children who know Jesus and follow the Lord. That's the joy that comes to us. "The father of a righteous child has great joy. A man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him." And there's no greater joy for a parent... 1 John says, "When you see them following the Lord." "May your father and mother rejoice and may she who gave you birth be joyful."

Let's move on to another question... several of them. And then I'm going to take a turn in the message.

I'm currently going through a divorce with young kids. I still pray over their future spouses and try to paint a beautiful picture of marriage for their future. Any other ways to help them succeed in marriage with God at the center?

Here's the first thing I would say, and we say it often around here. If you're going through this situation, keep scripture in the driver's seat, not your experience, not your emotion. As you talk about it, keep scripture in the driver's seat. If you are going to paint a beautiful picture of marriage, start with what the scripture says about marriage. Do what Jesus did in Matthew 19 when he said, "**Haven't you read..**" And then he quotes from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. He says, 4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife..."

*He says this is where we start. We have the US Bus here. I'm not denying your experience and the pain that you're going through as part of your story and it's part of your emotion. I'm just going to encourage you. Keep your emotion out of the driver's seat of the conversation with your kids. You be the voice of calm in the home. In other words... I can't say it any clearer than this. Never bash your ex-spouse at home or online. Better yet. Don't even talk about your marriage online. I think some people this week have seen it. I bet some people have seen someone sharing very publicly about something that's very intimate. And we've all had that moment. We don't hit the like button, we don't comment, but we're just like, "Ew... No. Not the forum for that."*

So, how do you paint a beautiful picture? One of the best ways to teach your children to honor God, others, and you, is to honor each other, esteem one another as highly valuable.

"How do I find a balance between showing my children grace and understanding while trying to stay consistent and raise obedient followers of Christ?"

That's a really nice way to say what I think they are really asking. "Ted, how do I show the love of Jesus and bring the hammer down at the same time?" "Ted, how do I just walk in grace in this home and bring the hammer down when they do something dumb?"

That is the struggle of every parent. If you're not struggling with that, I don't think you are doing parenting well. Gary Smalley shared this chart years ago. Amy and I took it in for raising our kids in the Key to Your Child's Heart.

There are two extremes in parenting. You have the permissive parent. There are no rules, there are no consequences. You do what you want. You live how you want. You just come and go in this home. Be whoever you want to be.

And then on this side is the dominant parent. Most parents I experience, if they grew up in church, lean toward dominant – “It’s my way or the highway. There are rules in this home. You’re going to follow them” and it’s just that ruling with an iron fist.

And you know, if you go to extremes in this chart... beyond permissive, you’re going to get to neglectful. Beyond dominant, now you’re into that authoritarian style of leadership. Gary said the tension for every parent is to live in the middle and be firm and loving. Paul brought this very clearly to the forefront for dads in Ephesians 6: 4, ***Fathers do not exasperate your children. Do not provoke them to anger.*** Don’t be unreasonable in your parenting is what he is saying. Do what we talked about last week. I hope, as you read the scripture, and every time you see parenting and family discussed, you see the emphasis on Deuteronomy 6: 4-7, where he said, ***“Don’t be unreasonable with your kids. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*** There is a God, there is only one God. He is the Lord, and he is our Lord. And we will love the Lord.

Psalms 78 is a great text. We are only going to look at three verses, but I want you to know the context of this. This text leads to speaking. In Verse 8 you read it. You stubborn and rebellious ancestors... Don’t be like your stubborn and rebellious ancestors who neglected instructing the next generation about the Lord.

***He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, these commandments are to be upon your heart. Impress them upon your children. so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born...*** It’s the desire and heart of this church for the next generation to be walking in the way of the Lord

***...and they in turn would tell their children.***

***7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.***

So, with that, we want to be very practical with how do you take the influence of the home, how do you take the influence of Mom and Dad, the primary author of a child’s heart, and how do you bring in the influence of the church? Because we all in here right now, and across this campus and our church family watching online, we all have a role to play in this.

For the last 18 years, this church has been blessed with a family ministries director. Her name is Stephanie Watson. She has been very nervous today so here’s what I would like. When she steps out, I would like her to step out... I want it to feel like Arrowhead and pretend Mahomes just found Kelsey in the endzone. Would you please help me welcome Stephanie Watson to the stage.

Stephanie: Thank you. Thank you, Ted.

Ted: She loves that attention.

Stephanie: I do. Yes, thank you so much.

Ted: We visit a lot of churches in the country, and we are not competing, we're not comparing, but I can tell you this. Stephanie has given the better part of 20 years to researching family ministries to researching family. Her passion is what we're talking about today. The combined influence of the church and the home. She is almost like a private investigator online. So, if you think you're getting away with something online, she has probably found it. She is so well-researched, but she has a passion for families at this church and you. She has a lot of responsibility. And you break it down to a simple outline of you, we, us. So, take us through that outline and then we are going to look at some very practical ways that the church can join in on influence.

Stephanie: Well, the first one is the "You" and that's the parent. Ted already hit on this a lot last week, but we have to prioritize our own spiritual journey. That's the best way that we are going to be able to help our kids' faith grow is to show them what that looks like. So, you mentioned last week that they are going to be having a front-row seat to what we're doing, they are going to be modeling themselves after us. And that is a huge reason why we want to prioritize it. But also, we are going to need the help of the holy spirit.

When it comes to parenting, all of us are kind of doing it for the first time. We don't know what we're doing. I used to tease my boys and tell them that they were kind of like a science experiment. But we need the help of the Holy Spirit because every kid is different. We want to ask people for help, but we have the source of the greatest help, so we really want to just dig into that.

The other thing is when you are prioritizing your own spiritual journey, you are going to have stories that you are going to be able to share with them like the way that God is showing up for you, the way that he is answering your prayers.

Last year, when we were moving, my daughter, Emma, was helping me clean out this prayer closet that was under the stairs. It was a really cool moment because one of the pieces of paper that had fallen off of the little bulletin board had on it that I was praying for Lucy and Emma to become friends. Anyone who knows my kids now always comment on how they love seeing how my kids love one another. But that was not always the case, thus the prayer request. So, when Emma saw that, she was like, "Mom, we need to do something with that." I hope I saved it. It was a tough time trying to get out of that house. I tried to save it. We needed to do something special with it because it was just a faith-building moment when she could see that God had answered that prayer in a really big way,

Ted: Yeah, and so we say it often here that the worst marriage on the planet is a husband and wife connected to each other as the source of life. The best marriage on the planet is a husband and wife firing each other as the source, plugging into the true and only source, and then spending their days giving each other the overflow. With our children, we need to know who our source is because our job is not to plug our children into us as the source. Our job is to point our children to the true and only source each and every day, constantly pointing them from the time we get up to the time we go to sleep at night, as we walk along the way, as we sit at home, we are pointing them to the source. We have fallen for this faulty input/output theory of parenting that says, "Whatever I pour into my child is what I will get out of my child. It's just not true. Your job, Mom, and Dad, is to continually point your kids to the Lord. So that's the "You."

Stephanie: Then it's the "we" and that's the church. We want to make the one hour that we have every week with the kids count. We take that hour really seriously. So, we want to lean into where they are, developmentally, so we really look at what kind of phase they are in and where they are. With babies, it's really about the parents. We want parents to come in and be undistracted in their worship, so we want to give them a really safe environment for their kids. We know the best thing we can do for babies is let their parents be fed spiritually.

When it comes to preschoolers, those kids are all about repetition and role play. Anyone who has been around a preschool has watched the same episode or movie hundreds of times. They know every single word. So, we just tap into that whenever we're working with our preschoolers. We just kind of hit them in different ways with the same message all morning long.

And then when we get into the elementary years, that's wildwoods and then crew. We are going to lean in on their love language which is fun. They are also starting to develop friendships as well, and those relationships matter so we do lots of competitions and games but then also give them plenty of time to be able to connect with one another and their small group leader in their small group time.

Ted: Yeah, that's the Mom and Dad role. That is our role on Sunday morning. You say it all the time. How many hours?

Stephanie: We get one hour, and Mom and Dad get 50 to 60 waking hours.

Ted: So, we said it last week. Mom and Dad, they have a front-row seat to your marriage, they have a front-row seat to your parenting, they have a front-row seat to your driving. a front-row seat to your faith. They have a front-row seat, so everything we do in that hour is to consider what's going on in the 50 to 60 hours.

Stephanie: Right, and we want to build a lifelong love of the church. The church is the bride of Christ, so we really do want to make their time here fun and that's why we talk about teaching Jesus at their level because we know fun is what's going help make it stick and we want them to look back at their time in church fondly when they get to be grown, and not feel like it was torture to be there. If anything, we want to make sure that they are going to drag their parents to church even when they are tempted to sleep in an extra hour and watch it online.

Ted: So, that's the "you," the "we..."

Stephanie: ...and then there is the "us." We call that the Power of Us. It's what we do with the rest of our resources and our time. And that is to give parents tools so that they can be intentional at home. Many parents didn't grow up with Christian examples, so they don't have anything to model after. They would love to be intentional with their kids, but they don't know how to do that. So, we want to give those tools to them in a way that they can easily incorporate them into their lives.

The first way we do that is just simply cheering them on. I have had so many people send me the same meme. It's hilarious.

"Every family has secrets until a Sunday school teacher asks a group of kids if they have any prayer requests." So, we've got your back parents, we expect the best and we keep confidentiality.

Ted: You say you have our back. When our kids were small and I was teaching my son about his body, we used anatomically correct terms in our family, so we taught him about his body and then he's talking about it with people and everything. I remember picking him up in Critter Street and the teacher goes, "Pastor, can I talk to you for a second... I think she had our back though.

Stephanie: I think so. I'm sure there was no judgement there.

Ted: I felt she was a little judgy...

Stephanie: Well then, the next thing we do is we equip leaders to become part of your tribe. We know that parents need others to come alongside them, and we figure they already know all your secrets, so you might as well bring them into the inner circle. So, keep them close.

And then we actually give some tangible resources. One of the ways that we try to partner with parents in a tangible way is through social media. On Saturday night, we'll put what the kids are going to be learning in all of our areas on Sunday morning, so just in case you ask them what they learned and they don't remember, you can give them something to prompt that conversation.

Another way we do that is what we call God Time Sheets and that's a daily devotional that the kids can do over the course of five days during the week. Those are those drops in the bucket that add up. If you spend five minutes, five days a week, that's 16 ½ hours in a year. And that is a huge discipline that's going to be formed in a kid that's going to be something that they can build on for the rest of their lives.

Another way that we do that is through our Family Resources. We started a table talk box back at the beginning of the school year. That is something that families can use around the dinner table or at a picnic, in the car, as they are enjoying a meal together to be able to be intentional with that time to start a conversation. I brought this one. I don't think Ted remembered it, but he and Amy gave us this along with a fondue set that we had lots of fun with about 10 or 12 years ago. It really helped us change the way that we interacted around the family table. Before that, the boys would be talking about football, or their practices and the girls would be having other side conversations.

When we started having just a fun conversation starter, it really kind of let us learn more about one another and it kind of got us all talking together. That really inspired us when we started thinking about how we could help families around the table. So, each month, we've been adding more conversation starters to that. We even had to put some games in there. Parents like the conversation starters better than the games, we've found out. So, more of those to come.

We feel like if we could get your kids to start talking with us when they're young, they're going to keep talking to you when they're older and whenever it really matters. So, those are some of the ways that we really prioritize getting resources into the hands of parents.

Ted: So, the combined influences... The Watson Family... You have four kids. One of the reasons she's up here is not just because she's our Family Ministries Director, but she is a great mom. I don't know how to say this. You're also great at being a grandma. You have five grandchildren and four of them were born how many days apart? It was 38 days apart this last summer.



Ted: So, she has been very busy. But one of the things we love... The Watson family and the Cunningham family... This is what we hope happens in our church among families. But the Watson Family and the Cunningham family... We raised our kids together. One of the traditions we had every summer was we went to Family Camp, 13 years in a row. So, we got to see their parenting, they got to see our parenting, and we got to see how successful it was in some situations and not in others. They got to see how successful it was in some, and not in others.

But my absolute favorite story from the Watsons was when we were at Family Camp and I'm on the front porch. Andy Watson, Stephanie's husband, is the most laidback, fun-loving... He doesn't say a whole lot, but I was sitting on the porch by myself in a lawn chair. He comes walking down the path and he's mad. He's not saying a whole lot. Roy, his son, is about 10 feet behind him. Andy walks by. He usually says Hey, or nods to me. He just blew right past me into his room. And Roy walks by. At that time, Roy had a little swagger to him. He stopped and looked at me. I looked at him and said, "Is everything okay?"

he goes, "Everything is great. We're just going into the room to have a talk about my "attitude."

Stephanie: That talk worked.

Ted: He's in ministry now at 1 Baptist Branson. Anyway, it worked. I love the idea of combined influences and when you have other parents walking alongside you. And you've been that for us. So, all of this we're talking about so far you not only taught that here, but you practiced that with our family and for that we are grateful.

Stephanie: One other way that we do like to partner with parents is just by creating events that are fun that they can just show up to and make memories. We had one last week with our Critter Street Storytime. It was a party that kids showed up to. They don't have to bring a gift. You get to pretty much enjoy a birthday party with all of the themes you can think of.

When we were planning our photo booth, someone was like, "Hey, we should have live chicks, and we all laughed. It was like absolutely - for 15 dollars, we can have a core memory for like a couple hundred kids. These so happen to be three of my four newest additions.

Ted: I was concerned for their safety, but they are only like three bucks each, so it's not that big of a deal.

Stephanie: The chickens were only mildly harmed in the making of storytime. But they are living a good life on a farm at this point. But we try not to miss an opportunity to have a core memory with the kiddos. But when we think about all of these, we don't want to overwhelm parents with what all we have to offer, with what all that they should do because we know that there is already a lot on their plate. It can be really overwhelming. I remember going through the Friday folders on Friday and just thinking about Friday folders gets me stressed out because there is just so much to do.

Ted: For those who don't know what a Friday folder is what is a Friday folder.

Stephanie: At the end of every week, you have to go through and decide which papers you keep, and which papers you discreetly throw in the trash. What permissions slips do you have to get back? I mean, it's a whole thing.

Ted: I just wanted you to do that because there are dads in here that kids go to school and they have no idea what a Friday folder is.

Stephanie: Support your wife with the Friday folders.

You've heard the Nate Bargatze joke where the school calls Nate to pick up his kid. He's like, "Why are you calling me?" Why are you calling the dad? They convince him to come pick up the kid and he's like, "Alright, I'll come get him. Where's it at."

Stephanie: it is true. That hits close to home. But seriously, we really want our resources that we're giving these parents to be in a way that meets them where they're at. We talked about social media. We'll give you lots of papers that may or may not make it out of the car or even to the car, but we try to give it in lots of different ways, so that parents can utilize them. We talk about being intentional. These are ways that you can sprinkle that intentionality into what you are already doing. You talked about Deuteronomy 6 where we're instructed to talk about these things as we walk along the road, as we lie down, as we get up. Every family has a rhythm, so if you can just incorporate some of these practices into what you're already doing, those little practices will add up. We don't expect parents to do all of the things because it could be a lot.

Ted: Yeah. And I like what you say. You don't want to add one more thing to our plate. It is truly your everyday walk along the road life.

Stephanie: Just like the title of this, if we could just be intentional... a little intentionality will add up over time.

Ted: This last one is a big deal, and you talk about the temperature of the home and how to take the temperature. And I love this next slide because it's a tough stat and I just want to call out something. Stephanie is a mom, a grandma, children's Family Ministry Director, but she's also an artist. So, what she does when you give her a really sad stat, is she makes a really pretty slide with it.

Stephanie: I can't take credit for that, but I did ask for it to be cute. It needs to be happier.

Ted: Explain the five common factors.

Stephanie: The five common factors of kids who stay connected to the church are:

1. Families who ate dinner together. That's why we did the table talk box. It's not about the actual food, it's about the connection.
2. They serve with their families in ministry. Again, that is a time when parents can model serving and doing that together.
3. Having one spiritual experience in the home during the week. That's something that we give you with those family resources.

4. Entrusted with responsibility in ministry at an early age. I love this one. We have a Student Serve program. Jared will be talking about that next week, but he and his team have taken it to the next level. We have about 30 to 40 students who serve in our children's ministry. They serve in other ministries as well, but just in children's ministries, there are 30 to 40 of them and they make a huge impact. And they have been entrusted with some really important things and they are like the life of the party. Ted: And you'll hear people say often the next generation is looking for a seat at the table. At this church, they have one. And that's in student serve. We'll talk about it more next week, but I love the fact that if we want Mom and Dad to serve, we are also wanting the young people to serve as well.
5. Having at least one faith-focused adult other than mom and dad. We've seen other studies that say four to five other adults and that's where our small group leaders come in for that tribe. But after you brought in the speaker that came in and talked to our staff a couple of months ago, he's from a really big church and they were just talking about what they saw in the young adults who had grown up in the church. What was a commonality that they saw with those who remained plugged in. He said it was fun, so we loved that. Yes, we are a fun church. Somebody called us the ice cream church. I don't think they meant it as a compliment, but we are the ice cream church.

Stephanie: So, we love the idea of a home that's fun, so when I thought more about that, it's like it doesn't always have to be just fun, but a home that warm. That's kind of the glue that makes all the other things. He didn't mean this in isolation. It's along with those other things that you're already trying to instill. If you have a rigid home, like what you were talking about earlier, if your home is cold and there's no grace, that is going to be really hard to have a flourishing faith to grow in that. So, we say take the temperature of your home. If it's not warm and fun, it's okay. You can make adjustments towards that because no matter what you're going through, there are families that are in different circumstances. And sometimes you're in kind of a trial. You can still have a joyful home even in those times.

Ted: I know you can't get to all of them, but you get a lot of practical ways to make the home more warm and fun.

Stephanie: Yes, one of the ways is to just allow grace when there are mistakes being made to be able to connect. Even when we have so many other things vying for our attention, go ahead and make that time together. Even if it's a movie night, you're all doing something that is focused on the same thing. Even now, if I have a movie night with any of my kids, if I'm on my phone during the movie, they'll be like, "Are you watching." You have to be doing things together.

I love the image because it's a dance party. This is a simple way to just turn on some music and have a dance party. I don't have any rhythm at all, so ours weren't pretty dance parties, but they were funny dance parties, so they were fun.

Then just celebrating milestones, big and small. I was thinking about one thing that we did when we first moved to Branson. I know we were on a budget. It was Valentine's Day that lined up with \$1.99 Happy Meal night. And it was awesome. We served those happy meals by candle light and we put their

root beer in Stemware. So, you can make a memorable moment, you can make it fun without it having to cost a lot of money. You could just turn on some music and have a dance party.

Ted: would you help me thank Stephanie who does a phenomenal job.

She was so nervous at 8:15 after I said to thank Stephanie, she just kind of left.

Ted: A Verse I keep coming back to is 3 John 1 ***4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*** And this is joy for our church what we're talking about today. Joy for our families. Even if you don't have kids at home, you're part of a church that takes this seriously. And I would say on this warm and fun. We take fun seriously. We take the truth seriously. We take the temperature of our homes, the rhythm of our homes, and, we take what we are teaching our kids to influence them seriously. On behalf of Stephanie and I both, we're very grateful for you. Thank you for your giving today that goes to support 500 kids on this campus. This is coming from an empty nester, but we are just grateful for all of your investment in the next generation. Next week, we are going to hit part 3, which is doing life with your teen and adult child.

Father, I'm grateful to be a part of a church that we don't ever have to defend this. We love to explain it, we love to cast the vision, but people get this. They understand the importance of it. We are taking the mantle of leadership and responsibility for those of us that are getting up there in years and have raised our kids. We find no greater joy than to be able to hand this off to the next generation to begin to lead in these ministries and to be able to partner with a whole new generation of parents. We want our kids to know there is a God, there is only one God. He is the Lord. He is our Lord. And we will love the Lord. And for that we are grateful. Thank you for this church.

We pray all of this in the authority of the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.