

Parenting Seminar (1hr 39 min)

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, looking at marriage in God's creation, man and woman as image bearers. The opening chapters of Genesis introduce us to the creation of the world, the heavens and the earth, and it has a singular import, of course, on the creation of man and woman, of Adam and Eve, and you have two aspects of that creation story in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

The most important thing about that is that Adam and Eve distinguish themselves from the animal kingdom by being image bearers. They actually distinguish themselves from the angelic kingdom.

Angels are not made in God's image in the way in which humans are, that man and woman as image bearers, and that image bearing character and quality of humankind is significant because that is the most fundamental link between us and God.

Everything is created by God, so everything is dependent upon God, but we're in relationship with God, and we're able to have that relationship because of our image bearing character and our image bearing qualities.

So, what Adam and Eve are given, they're given a number of commands in the Garden of Eden. They're told to till the earth, to till the garden, so there was work to be done.

[1 : 2 4] They're told to work for six days and rest for one day, and there, even in the Garden of Eden, you have a sabbatical structure of a six and one. So, Adam and Eve don't have an endless succession of days.

They've got a rhythm and a cycle of six days and one, six days and one, six days and one. And the reason for that seventh day, that Sabbath day, as you record in Genesis 2, after God had created the heavens and the earth, He rested on the seventh day.

So, six days of creation, then He rests on the Sabbath day, and that Sabbath day is a day in which He enters. That's the Sabbath rest. And the purpose of giving the six day and one rhythm for Adam and Eve is to provide them with an eschatological prospect of entering into God's rest.

And that prospect, that future dimension, you see, Adam and Eve, the Garden wasn't their final destiny, if I can put it that way. It wasn't the place of finality for them.

It was a temporary place in many ways. So, the Garden of Eden is not the picture of heaven, but it's actually pre-heaven, if I can put it that way. It's pre-rest. Because one of the characteristics of the Garden of Eden, of course, is that Adam and Eve were able to be tempted.

[2 : 3 7] When we go to heaven, the new heavens and the new earth, temptation won't be there. Adam and Eve were created with the ability of not sinning, but also with the ability of sinning.

Again, the wonderful prospect that we'll have in heaven is we won't have the ability of sinning. But Adam and Eve were given, in a sense, it was like a probation. It was a testing ground for Adam and Eve. It was a creation in this world with the prospect of entering the world to come.

So that eschatology, if I can use that awful sort of Greek word, which really means the end times, eschatology was built into creation. Irrespective of redemption, eschatology is a substructure of creation.

Adam and Eve were looking forward to that. But in this world, in which God created them, Adam and Eve were given work and rest as mandates. They were told to have dominion over the earth and they were also told to be fruitful and multiply.

And what they would do in that multiplication, in that bringing of children into the world, is that they would actually reproduce image bearers. So it's very interesting if you look in Luke's gospel, the genealogy, it talks about the genealogy of Jesus.

[3 : 52] It goes backwards rather than Matthew going forwards. And it comes back to, and it goes to all the sons of, and it comes to Adam, son of God. Very interesting description of Adam as son of God.

That image bearing character of Adam, which continues for all humans, although of course, with the events of Genesis 3, sin taints our image, but doesn't destroy our image bearing character.

And in Genesis 2, 24, you have those words, a man shall leave his father and mother, he shall cleave to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. And there in a sense, you get the definition of marriage, the earliest definition of marriage.

And marriage in itself is a relationship, husband and wife, where children don't define marriage. Marriage is defined by the relationship of leaving, cleaving, and what we might call weaving, in terms of one flesh.

Di and I had thought this would be a lovely verse to put on our wedding invitation. We were married many years ago, and so we thought Genesis 2, 24 would be a great verse to have there to remind people of the earliest understanding of marriage.

[5 : 01] Unfortunately, the printer, or I should say, I didn't proofread it properly, the printer had put Genesis 2, 14. They put the text there, but Genesis, or I think in Genesis 2, 14. And an aunt of Di's thought, oh, she'd better look up this text.

And she looked up Genesis 2, 14, as opposed to Genesis 2, 24. And Genesis 2, 14 says, and the Tigris meets the Euphrates. And she was trying to work out who the Tigris was.

That was kind of obvious. But nonetheless, it was a very interesting verse to have in terms of a marriage. So I had a friend from America wondering if my marriage was legal because I had the wrong verse there.

But Genesis 2, 24 is that marriage concept. And so marriage has a public aspect to it, leaving. It's interesting, of course, Adam was, of all people, the one who didn't leave his mother and father because he didn't have one.

But Adam is created and this pattern of leaving means a new entity is formed, a new relationship is formed, a different family structure is beginning. and the leaving is a symbolic way of saying something is happening which is different from my birth, my natal family.

[6 : 11] But leaving is public too. You see, marriage is a very public aspect in our society. Notice that there was no minister involved in the marriage. From a biblical point of view, two people marry one another with vows.

The minister is just there to witness and to pronounce God's blessing. That's the most significant thing a minister does in the marriage service is to pronounce God's blessing on the couple that they are truly married in accordance with God's law and as Jesus says in Matthew 19 those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

God's the joiner of the couple. As long as the couple is appropriate they'd be married. They're not married to someone else for example or they're not brother and sister or in a close family relationship with a kindred and affinity.

If ever you've looked up in one of those quiet moments in the service that table at the back of the prayer book with a kindred and affinity of those whom you're not allowed to marry well that all reflects laws from the Old Testament where there are certain rules about who you can marry and can't marry and that's why we have in our marriage service today if anyone knows any good reason why these two should not be joined in marriage let them speak now or forever hold their peace.

That's what's called a marriage ban that is it's an announcement saying these two are going to get married if anyone's got any reasons why they shouldn't of course they might be married to someone else for example and no one knew then that certifies the public character of marriage.

[7 : 36] Years ago in the Anglican Church you used to have four marriage bans and a week three weeks beforehand every week beforehand you'd announce that so and so and so and so were getting married in three weeks time or something those are called the marriage bans we've got rid of those early ones but we still have the last one the fourth one in the marriage service.

It's public leaving it's cleaving a man shall leave his mother and father cleave to his wife that cleaving is the relationship of seeing that yes we can start a new relationship as husband and wife it's a cleaving it's a knitting of souls if you like it's a relationship we talk in the modern days of courting and perhaps of falling in love the Bible's language of cleaving is a way of actually coming together and in a sense making vows together that this relationship is going to be permanent and exclusive exclusive of all others and for life and then of course the one flesh is the sexual aspect of that marriage which symbolises the union of two persons in a physical way and of course through that sexual act God brings children to the world.

So that's marriage as we see it in Genesis 1 there is order and there is harmony and let me say that marriage is for all people it's a creation ordinance it's not a church ordinance it's not a redemptive ordinance we not every not every member of the Antigone Church seems to realise that I've just been to a general synod meeting last week and there was a one of the strange rules in our church which is that for a person to be married in Anglican Church one party has to be baptised it's very strange because to think that that's necessary and there was a move to try and change that general synod but the general synod unfortunately in the house of bishops failed to pass that it passed in the house of clergy in the house of lay the bishops some of them have a misguided understanding of marriage thinking that marriage is a sacrament that marriage is not a sacrament at all there are two sacraments baptism and the Lord's supper they're the sacraments that Jesus instituted marriage is a creation ordinance it's actually God's purposes and God's plans for everyone for every image bearer now we as Christians have got a heightened understanding of marriage with regard to

Christ's love for the church and the imagery you find in Ephesians 5 but that is a heightened aspect of our understanding of marriage but marriage in itself is for the good order and harmony of the world and even in a marriage service it says as St Paul says marriage is to be held in honour by all not just by the church but by all people well of course that's marriage in Genesis 1 and 2 when Genesis 3 comes on board on the next screen we'll see that we find marriage in a fallen world we find now that the image bearer is tainted the image bearer the image characteristic is not lost but it's sullied it's tainted it's spoiled and we find now that there is where previously it's perhaps hard to believe I'm sure many a mother would have liked to have been in Eve's situation to have born children without pain we disassociate childbirth and pain in our world but it wasn't always so it was a curse that God put upon our world where the mother bearing a child will now do so painfully and that whole relationship there of disorder and disharmony comes in no longer is the ground going to cooperate with Adam as he tills the ground the ground is now going to frustrate

Adam's purposes so that the creation is itself in bondage and the creation the ground is cursed interestingly the ground is cursed the serpent is cursed Adam and Eve aren't cursed but there are significant aspects of the four which affect them affect their relationship with the earth in terms of thorns and thistles their relationship with their purpose of being made as man and woman husband and wife in terms of bearing of children and their relationship between themselves too so that you have that interesting aspect in Genesis 3:16 in fact we might actually look at that now because that's probably where we'll go to you get an interesting reference with regard to your desire shall be for your husband yet he shall rule over you and people have often understood what wondered what that desire will be for your husband here I'm looking at chapter 3 if I can see that in chapter 3:16 to the woman he said I'll greatly multiply your pain in childbearing in pain you shall bring forth children and your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you it's very interesting that word desire there which some commentators thought might be some reference to a sexual desire as if somehow that was a curse or a bad thing to happen the sexual desire was actually part of

[13:16] God's good order purposes for them the word desire only occurs one other time in the book of Genesis one other time in the Pentateuch actually and the next occurrence actually is in chapter 4 and if you look there in chapter 4 on the story of Cain and Abel when Cain is having problems with his brother and gets angry with his brother God says to this is in chapter 4 verse 7 if you do well will you not be accepted and if you do not do well then sin is crouching at the door its desire is for you its desire to have you it's very interesting there that desire there is a desire to rule the desire of Satan to rule over Cain is what the author of Genesis 2 is saying at this point so the desire in Genesis 3 verse 16 is actually a desire of the woman to rule over her husband and to actually upset the relationship in terms of the submission of a wife to a husband in terms of the order and the harmony that God had established in

Genesis 1 and 2 and that now becomes sin becomes a disordering aspect in relationship of control in a marriage and desire of one to rule the other and so that relationship is affected and where Paul talks about the relationship of the husband's love for the wife rather than the husband's tempting being tempted to manipulate and control the wife but rather to love the wife and the wife's reflective and respective position whereby she's to submit to her husband in an orderly way in the way in which the church submits to Christ.

Well that disorder occurs but it's interesting if you go back a bit further in verse 15 where it reads, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Now this is, here this is a reference where God is talking to the serpent and if you look at the next slide, this is what I call the battle of the seeds.

If you look at the, it starts off by saying, I will put enmity between you and the woman, that's the less, okay, between the serpent and the woman.

[16:10] And then it says, I will put enmity between your seed and her seed. So in actual fact what you've got is, here is the enmity between Eve and the woman.

You'll recall that Eve had been deceived with regard to the serpent and she is the one who then gave it to Adam.

And that deception, which Paul speaks of in 1 Timothy 2, I can come back and talk about later if you want to, that deception means that she's being addressed in this in the first instance. Although the responsibility for the race falling, as it were, is Adam's responsibility as the head of the race, Eve is the object here.

And because Eve is also the woman who will bear children. So the word seed is a very significant word in the Old and New Testament, the concept of seed, sometimes translated descendant in our English Bibles.

So it's between the seed, that is the fruit of the woman and the fruit of the serpent. They might think, well what would the seed of the serpent be? What would the fruit of the serpent be?

[17 : 18] And the seed woman, well here, this is the, this if you like, is the woman of faith. We see that clearly in the next chapter when Eve has Abel, she has a child with the help of the Lord.

That's an aspect of Eve's faith. To see the woman here as the one who's in relationship with God, she's sinned and of course God forgives them both. You notice the day in which you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on that day you will die.

God doesn't bring that judgment upon them straight away. God's mercy and indeed forgiveness comes to Adam and Eve. Yes, they're cast outside the garden and now put into a world of thorns and thistles, but Adam and Eve are actually forgiven by God.

Very important point, a point we don't often think about. So the seed of the woman now is the seed of those, the image bearers seeking to honour and glorify God. There's going to be battle between her seed and the seed of the serpent.

What's the seed of the serpent? Well the seed of the serpent are interestingly also going to come through from the fruit of Eve. They'll be children, human children, but they're going to be under the control of Satan rather than being God's children.

[18 : 37] What's very interesting is you see in the next chapter you see this battle taking forth. Abel, the seed of the woman of faith, Cain, the seed of the serpent.

So in actual fact this battle begins and if you trace it throughout the scriptures you get it again in chapter 6 with Noah and his family being the seed of the woman and the rest of the world basically being the seed of the serpent.

And the battle that takes place is if you like a battle of the seeds. You see, have you ever noticed in John chapter 8 when Jesus is talking about Abraham and he says to the Jews that Abraham is not your father?

Yes, now Abraham is our father. And then Jesus says your father is not Abraham, your father is the devil. Very interesting, isn't it?

He's actually using this language from Genesis 3 to describe those who claim to be part of God's people, Jewish people, but in actual fact those who are under the sway and the power of the evil one.

[19 : 46] And what they do is evil. Though they may claim the inheritance of Abraham, in actual fact they're evil and they're under his sway. And that battle is being fought out interestingly between Jesus and his disciples, seed of the woman, and the Jews opposed to his ministry, seed of the serpent.

You see it in the Old Testament of course throughout Jacob and Esau, seed of the woman, seed of the serpent. You see it in terms of the, with regard to Ishmael and Isaac.

You've seen a whole range of things throughout the history of Israel down to the section in John 8 that I referred to. Now this battle of the seeds, you see that actually explains how the gospel is frustrated in our world that we're often encountering the seed of the serpent.

Pretty strong language to use but that's the language of the Bible. That's just as Jesus. See sometimes church officials, yes even Anglicans can be the seed of the serpent, not the seed of the woman.

And sometimes our battles are actually intra-ecclesiastical battles where people are moving away from the authority of the scripture and with all the affectation and heritage of Anglican church are actually doing things which are opposed to the kingdom of God and are in line with the serpent and Satan's agenda.

[21 : 06] But then the next thing is, if you're looking back in 3.15, I'll put image between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed and then he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

The interesting thing is we've gone from the seed collective to the seed singular. There's a very interesting argument in Galatians with regard to Paul's use of the word seed.

He says the promise was to you and to your seed. And Paul says it doesn't say seed plural, it says seed singular. The problem with that of course is in English and also in Greek and also in Hebrew, seed is a collective word.

It's like sheep. If you have one sheep, then you have two sheep. If you've got goats, you've got one goat, two goats. But you don't say one sheep, two sheeps, do you?

See sheep is a collective, it actually carries a finger and a claw in it. The same with seed. See if I had a bag of wheat seed here, I said I've got a bag of seed.

[22 : 17] But you don't think I've just got one seed in that bag. I've got lots of seeds in that bag, haven't I? Okay. But if I said I've got two bags of seed here, wheat and barley, then I'd actually have two seeds.

And then the word seeds plural actually tells you not the multiple number of seed that I've got in the bag, but the different kind of seed. That's the point that Paul makes if you want to read that section in Galatians about why it's seed and seeds.

So you might have the seed of Ishmael versus the seed of Isaac coming from Abraham. So now we move from, so you've got two seeds, seed of the woman, seed of the servant, but that now comes down to a singular seed which is Christ.

And he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Here, this is sometimes called the proto-evangelion, that is the beginning of the gospel in Genesis 3.

Here is a reference to the seed of the woman, namely Jesus, hence the genealogy of Luke's gospel which goes back to Adam. Here is Jesus coming from the woman as the image bearer and he is actually going to conquer the serpent.

[23 : 33] This battle will take place between the seed and the seed of the servant and the battle will sometimes go one way or the other. Sometimes the serpent will get the upper hand like Cain kills Abel.

But here it will come to a definitive resolution with Christ's conquering of the seed of Satan. namely the conquering of Satan himself. Just look up Romans 16.20.

Romans 16.20 actually picks this thought up in a way which you may think is surprising. In Romans 16.20, Paul just talking to the Romans with regard to the obedience of the people of God, being wise to what is good.

And then he says, at the end, then, in verse 20, then the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Interesting.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. This reference to the crushing of Satan is a reference to this verse in 3.15. And you'll notice, though, it actually has a movement because he will crush, he will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

[24 : 56] Christ is the one who conquers Satan on the cross. But what this next verse says is that all in Christ will actually conquer Satan.

Notice that? The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. If you're in Christ, if you're on the seed in Christ, then you'll participate in the judgment of Satan.

I never thought about that. At the last day, when God opens the judgment books and all those in Christ are acquitted and justified, we will then participate in the judgment of angels.

That curious verse you get in 1 Corinthians 6 with regard to, don't you know you're going to judge angels? Well, we're going to judge angels. We're going to judge the evil angels, the angels who are part of Satan's seed, if you like, his cohorts.

But also those who are outside of Christ in that seed. And that all comes here so that Satan might bruise his heel, he might wound Jesus in terms of his death, but Jesus rises victorious and crushes Satan's head.

[26 : 12] And so you get that aspect of we will participate in crushing Satan where? Under our feet. The Roman Catholics are very cute at this level.

They have an ancient translation of the Old Testament called the Vulgate. It's in Latin, about 4th century. And when they translated it, you know what they did? Instead of saying he, they said she.

And you might think, why would you put she in there? Well, if you're a good Roman Catholic, who would you think of if you said she will crush Satan under her feet?

The Virgin Mary. If you go to look at particularly old style Roman Catholic churches, and you often have a picture of, or a statue of Mary, more often than not, you look at her feet, and under her foot is a serpent's head.

Has anyone ever noticed that at all? I don't encourage you to go into our Catholic churches, but if you happen to be visiting, go and have a look, and you will see regularly in St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, for example, there she is with a serpent.

[27 : 29] That's a symbolic misunderstanding of this text. It's not Mary, it's actually Jesus. Now, of course, in one sense, you could say, well, Romans 16, 20 has got Mary there too.

She is a woman of faith. I mean, she's appalled at what's going on on the earth about venerating her, but nonetheless, she was a woman of faith. But, and yes, but we'll all be involved in that, not just Mary, in some kind of singular misinterpretation of Genesis 3, 15.

So, what we then find is that this battle of the seeds outlines for us an undisturbed grief, an undisturbed grief, outlines for us the way in which faith and unbelief work in our world.

And so that obedience and disobedience are all reflections of either faith or unbelief. And this battle that takes place, disobedience towards God, is because of a lack of faith or disbelief.

And what you've got is the conflict of the flesh and the spirit. And that's something that we sometimes experience in ourselves, but we certainly experience in terms of these two things.

[28 : 35] It's very interesting in Galatians chapter 5, chapter 4, sorry, in Galatians chapter 4, Paul talks about Ishmael was born according to the flesh, Isaac was born according to the spirit.

And here you've actually got these two types of children with regard to being born into the world and then how we're going to address that in our upbringing.

Let me move on to the next slide and we'll see how we go from here. I think what I'll do is, well, we'll see how we go. The Old Testament then sets for us how is God going to redeem families in a fallen world?

He continues with families. So you find, for example, Noah and what's called the covenant preservation. Noah was a righteous man.

It means if you look in Genesis 6, it says, Noah found grace with God or favour with God and was a righteous man. Noah's righteousness is related to God's grace.

[29 : 52] It's not that Noah was good and upright in himself. He was responding to God's grace. The covenant dynamic in the scriptures, Old and New Testament, is grace response.

The response of obedience is never in a vacuum independent from God. That's self-righteousness. The righteousness that God is looking for comes from a relationship with him where God actually brings his favour.

God's favour rests upon Noah. Noah then responds with covenant faithfulness and covenant righteousness. And that happens with regard to his family. His family comes into the ark.

It's very significant. I mean, God could have just put in Noah and Mrs. Noah and started again as he did with Adam and Eve. But now he brings in his three children and their wives.

No grandchildren yet. I mean, it's very tough being 600 years old and no grandchildren. But anyhow. So here's Noah and he's going to start off with a new nucleus.

[30 : 57] Now there's some problems, of course, when they come out of the ark, as you probably know in Genesis 9. But that relates, interestingly, in 1 Peter 3. Peter describes that as a baptism. He describes Noah's and his household.

And Peter makes the point, Noah and his household, that family principle, are saved by God and this corresponds to baptism. That might be, that's kind of curious for us, isn't it?

How do you think it corresponds to baptism? I mean, doubtless the spray would have hit Noah and Mrs. Noah and the family on the deck when the waters were there. Interestingly, those were fully immersed with the evil ones, but we won't go there.

So here you have this sense, here's a baptism taking place. And it's a baptism, it's a signature, a symbol of salvation. And it's a salvation of families, notice that.

Very silly. Families, notice that families. If we come back, of course, come on then to Abraham and the covenant of circumcision. Abraham, of course, has two sons.

[32 : 04] But the first son is a son he shouldn't have had. Can I say it that way? You ever notice in Genesis 15, God makes a covenant with Abraham.

And he'll be the father of many nations. His name is changed to Abraham. And in that, Abraham says, well, I'm the father of many nations, but my wife is barren.

In chapter 17, you get the sign of circumcision. Now, if you've got chapter 15, the covenant, and then chapter 17, the sign of the covenant, why didn't God give the sign of the covenant when he made covenant with Abraham?

You get the sign of the covenant with the rainbow, with Noah, at the end of the salvation. Why then do you have covenant, Genesis 15, and circumcision, Genesis 17?

Well, as you think about it, the answer is most likely to be in chapter 16, in between. What happens in chapter 16? Abraham looks at Sarah, 90 years in the shade.

[33 : 19] He's been to all the fertility clinics in the ancient Near East, and nothing's happening. It's inconceivable that any fruit will come forth.

So, she suggests, why don't you take Hagar? That's not Hagar the Horrible, that's Hagar the Handmaid. And so he takes Hagar, and he goes in, and what does he do?

He seeks to fulfil God's promises in the power of his own flesh. Rather trusting in God, and producing an heir through Sarah, his wife, he takes the handmaiden, and takes her to bed, and Ishmael is born.

Have you ever wondered why God chose circumcision as a sign? Kind of odd, isn't it? Why not just a ring in the ear?

Or even a ring in the nose, you know, I'm part of God's people. But for a male to say, look, I'm part of God's people, I can tell you why. I'll show you where the mark is. Well, no thank you.

[34 : 30] Why circumcision? See, Abraham in chapter 16 tried to achieve in his own strength, rather than trust God's promises.

The very place of his power, the very place of his potency, is what God cuts back.

Phallic symbols, of course, were a great sign in ancient worlds and ancient cultures, and indeed even in modern cultures, of potency and power. God says to Abraham, that very member of your body, I'm being very discreet here, that very member of your body is what is cut back.

So, Abraham is cut back through circumcision, and it's a circumcised Abraham that begets Isaac.

It's not that suddenly there'll be an immaculate conception. It's not as if, you know, there'll be a virgin birth with regard to Sarah. It's not as if Isaac can be born without the normal process of intercourse between husband and wife, but this time he'll be trusting God, and that'll be displayed in the very part of his body which enables the begetting of Isaac.

[35 : 54] It's interesting, isn't it? You see, circumcision was never a sign of pride. It was always a sign of humility. In the first century in Jesus' day, the Jews said, we are the circumcised.

We're proud of that fact. And of course, Jesus says, no, no, no. You're not the circumcised. Your father's not Abraham. Your father is the devil. Paul says to the Romans, you think you're circumcised?

If you don't keep the law, your circumcision will be like uncircumcision. See, circumcision was a sign of cleansing, a sign of humility. So, the prophets talk about circumcised lips and a circumcised heart.

Circumcision was the cutting off of the flesh in order that the trust might be in God. And when Jesus' death in Colossians 2 is described as his circumcision, the circumcision of Christ, is the place where he is cut off, cut off from the land of the living.

Circumcision, therefore, becomes a sign and seal of the righteousness that comes by faith. That's what Romans 4.11 says. The righteousness that comes by faith.

[37 : 11] But why then would you circumcise an eight-day-old boy, namely Isaac? Because Isaac hasn't exercised faith yet. Why is Isaac given the sign and the symbol of faith?

Because he's part of the covenant family. The promises belong to you and to your children, the Apostle Peter says, because Peter understands God's covenant promises to his children.

It's interesting. In Genesis 19, 18 rather, when you read through the instructions about circumcision, if a boy is not circumcised on the eighth day, do you know what happens to him?

He's cut off. Very interesting. The language is deliberate there, cut off, because you cut in circumcision. You're now cut off. If you don't have the symbolic cutting of circumcision, you'll be completely cut off.

And why is the boy cut off? Because he's broken my covenant. That's strange, isn't it? I mean, not many eight-day-old boys put their head up and say, oh, circumcise me, circumcise me.

[38 : 15] But you see, the relationship of that child to God is very significant in the obedience of the parents. The parents bring that boy for circumcision.

If that boy is not circumcised on the eighth day, the child is cut off. But notice this. He's broken my covenant. That tells you that circumcision doesn't bring the child into covenant, but it signs and seals the child as being in covenant.

So you can't break covenant with God if not in it. An eight-day-old boy is in covenant the first seven days of his life. Indeed, the first nine months of his gestation.

He's in Christ. He's in covenant. He's in relationship with God. And in the Old Testament, the sign of circumcision was to sign and seal that very reality.

A reality on the outside which was to picture what takes place on the inside, namely a circumcised heart. When you come to Moses and the covenant of law, I look at my watch and I say, we can't come to Moses and the covenant of law because I was supposed to give you 10 minutes of questions and we've got a schedule here.

[39 : 33] We've got morning tea at half past 10. So I'm just going to pause here. You're probably wondering how on earth I'm going to get this all done to get to families. I really will hope to get there, but I will pause here and allow you to ask any questions.

Who are the ones who died? Actually, it was all the adults.

It wasn't the children. All those who are 40 years and older are the ones who died in the wilderness. The children coming out of Egypt, they're the ones who went into the promised land.

It's not a cognitive ability enables you to take the Lord's Supper. It's a spiritual reality. And my view is, the Bible teaches that our children ought to be participants in the Lord's Supper.

Why? They belong to Jesus. When you baptise a child, you're saying that child is in covenant relationship with God. That child's sins have been forgiven.

[40 : 34] That child's been washed. Well, you don't bring the child into the front of the house and never invite them to the dining room. Never feed them. Never nurture them. And the whole business, you see, the difference between baptism, baptism is a passive sacrament.

You don't baptise yourself, you are baptised. That's why infants are baptised. But the Lord's Supper is an active sacrament. Take, eat. Jesus doesn't say, you know, I'll feed you.

Open your mouth and I'll stick it in, so to speak. No, you must take and you must eat. It's an active sacrament, a sign and symbol of nurture, of growing and feeding and drinking Christ.

That's what's taking place. And so here it's very interesting. Circumcision is surrounded by two baptisms in the Old Testament. Have you noticed that? Baptism of Noah, baptism of Moses.

Notice in both cases who are the ones who get fully immersed and you'll notice that both cases you've got households involved. Clearly children in Moses' experience and the whole, when this all comes through to Christ, Christ's death is not only called his circumcision, it's also called his baptism.

[41 : 50] So circumcision comes to an end in Christ when he's cut off from the land of living and that baptism into his death becomes a symbol of and sign of incorporation into Christ for all God's people or for his people and their children.

That's why Apostle Peter says, the promises to you and to your children in covenant relationship with God. Well we'll talk more about that after morning tea but now it might be a good time to end and if you've got any questions you can chat to me at that morning tea.

we've all now got some handouts I've apologised for that and I've also been told by a number of people to speak more slowly so if I do start to wind up and speak more quickly just put your hand up and tell me to slow down or something like that I don't mind you doing that at all because sometimes I get excited with this material and realise our time is a bit shorter but let's see what we can do with making the most of this next hour or so together.

Are there any questions people want to ask before I move on to anything from what's been said beforehand? Right, okay.

I've been talking about families being in covenant what I call covenant relationships and it's very significant those Noah, Abraham, Moses covenants have all got families involved in them and that comes and even the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel has a concept of sonship in terms of Jesus' sonship.

[43 : 43] When you come to the New Testament God doesn't stop working in families. That reference to Acts 2.38 I mentioned where the promise is to you and to your children. In 1 Corinthians 7.14 the other verse I referred to you have God speaking about the children of believers as being holy.

that word holy is the same as the word saint at the beginning of Ephesians 1.1 to the saints of Ephesus to the holy ones of Ephesus. If you come to in Corinthians and also in Ephesus come to Ephesians chapter 6 it says there that you might want to get the passage out actually just open up the passage of Ephesians 6 it says children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.

Notice there that the first thing to notice is he's writing to the saints at Ephesus he's written to husbands and wives he's about to write to masters and slaves and now he writes to parents and children.

Notice these are all subsets of the saints at Ephesus. He's writing to these children as saints see the children are not in some kind of neutral zone waiting to become Christians they're actually part of God's family they're already holy that's why we baptise infants and when he writes to the children he says children obey your parents in the Lord he's actually recognising they are in the Lord and their obedience to their parents should be in the Lord see when you raise children and you teach them right and wrong if you think of your children as not being Christians you think of your children in some kind of halfway house or worse as pagans in need of conversion you will instil that model in their own minds if you treat them like pagans they'll grow up like pagans but in actual fact when you teach them right and wrong you need to teach them forgiveness and repentance you need to help them understand that they're loved by

God and that God has forgiven them and because of that forgiveness that's why they can repent of their doing wrong and continue in the path of obedience that's the obedience of faith you see you engender in your children you raise them as being God's children and here this particular commandment is to the children notice children obey your parents and the Lord well this is right see when you teach your children the Lord's prayer you don't say this is the Lord's prayer mummy and daddy's father in heaven hallowed be his name no you teach your child our father in heaven God is their God their father and you're teaching them to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us you see if your children were not in covenant relationship with God every time you required obedience of them you'd be requiring that obedience in the flesh as if they could do it in their own power in their own strength and therefore you'd just be endorsing for them a humanistic centred way of looking at things as if you can do things in your own power and strength that was a problem with

[47 : 19] Abraham back in Genesis 16 but because if you do treat your children as being in the covenant as Christians then you can teach them you can ask God's help to obey him and God's help to obey your parents and you can ask for his forgiveness when you do do things wrong it's very interesting we never think for a moment that our children will choose their family name my two daughters have the family name of Davies because that's the name I didn't wait until they were 13 years of age and say well what name would you like no they were given the name of Davies it was a gift they've grown up knowing the Davies family values I've taught them my wife and I've taught them our family values which of course are hopefully God's values as well they don't come to a point in which they say oh I think

I'll become a Davies they are a Davies they've grown up as a Davies now what's possible is quite possible they could break away and choose to disown the name of Davies they could break ranks if you like break covenant that's a theoretical possibility but they were born and nurtured as Davies family in the same way if you if you're born in this country you're an Australian citizen if you're born outside this country you need to become an Australian citizen if you're born in this country you grow up as an Australian citizen and you don't have to go to any citizenship ceremony you don't you don't have to say I am an I'll become an Australian you are an Australian what you then need to know is how do I what does it mean to be an Australian citizen what are the responsibilities and the rights and the privileges of being an Australian now it's possible you could choose for whatever goodness no reason become a New Zealander and disown being an

Australian I mean you wonder why there's no one here born from New Zealand but that's ontologically possible that's theoretically possible but it's yours by right it's a gift so it is in the kingdom of God God gives you the gift of being part of his family see it's interesting if you look at in verse 2 of chapter 6 of Ephesians honour your father and your mother this is the first commandment with a promise that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth did you notice how Paul changed the fifth commandment how does the fifth commandment go honour your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God has given you namely Canaan but if you're living in Ephesus you're living a long way from Canaan so what Paul does he brings a new covenant perspective on the fifth commandment he says honour your father and mother that your days may be long upon the earth so he's actually as it were put it through the prism of

Christ and reflected that commandment into its application for people living in Ephesus or people living in Australia the commandment still holds true the ten commandments we don't obey the ten commandments under their mosaic construct but we obey the ten commandments under their new covenant construct if I can put it that way and the obedience to parents just as the relationship of children to parents trust you still love that child and as you bring your child up in your family values that child will by the spirit of God love you in return that's such a beautiful picture of God's love towards us we love God not we didn't first love God but he first loved us that's why we love him grace response that's the covenant dynamic God's grace is prior our response flows and the response of covenant of the covenant child is faith and obedience the obedience of faith now in the next slide one of the it might just

I'll explain this one of the problems that people often find isn't it colourful is the concept of covenant and election being good Anglicans I'm sure you know that the election God's decrees of election what we sometimes call predestination God knows before the foundation of the world who will be his he chooses us in Christ before the foundation of the world the Jews of the first century tended to see and that is the world and that circle people as those who were saved in other words there was the world as it were and I'm thinking of saying the Old Testament there was Israel God's people and that was the world and that was a very simple thing they're not saved out there and those are the ones who were saved we are the elect we are God's chosen as it were that was the language of Israel and in a sense quite rightly but it's a bit more subtle than that it's more subtle than that because in the next screen you'll see that well I'm just trying to work out where the colours are the colours have changed on it anyhow if you look at that if you look at the large circle that's what we might call God's covenant people and this is

[53 : 19] I should say this diagram is not to scale but the inner circle down there is a picture you see on my notes it looks similar it's actually a dotted line see the dotted line on the notes there's the world outside or that sort of speckled part there is the big circle of the covenant people and then you've got a dotted line which is what I'm describing as those who are saved from the perspective of God's decrees when Paul writes to the Romans he says not all of Israel are Israel what does that mean it sounds like it's a logical nonsense not all of Israel are Israel if I said not all Melburnians are Melburnians not all Australians are Australians what does that mean it doesn't make much sense except what Paul is saying is those who claim to be

Israel are not really true Israel or those who claim physically to be Israel the circumcised are not inwardly Israel the inwardly circumcised our problem is this that we know that God has his electing decrees before the foundation of the world but we don't really know who the elect are I've got no means of election detection like a little Geiger counter which will go working out who the elect are we know in the Bible that certain people are elect we know of the twelve apostles eleven are elect and one is not elect namely Judas we read the Gospels always knowing in the back of our mind that Judas is the betrayer but if you were there in the first century you would have had no idea that Judas was going to betray him he looked like all the rest you know remember when

Jesus says in the last supper one of you will betray me we tend to think they also said yes it's Judas we know it's Judas they didn't did they they said Lord is it I they had no idea why because Judas portrayed all the outward appearances of being a follower of Jesus Judas was one of the twelve Judas preached the gospel Judas performed miracles in Acts 1 Peter describes Judas he was one of us he shared our ministry he was one of us but it became obvious at the end actually only when he betrayed this Jesus with a kiss in the garden of Gethsemane and shortly after he hung himself that Judas heart was not right but the other apostles had no means of discerning another person's heart as

Christians we only know of one person in this room who was elect and that's you it's not the bishop just in case you thought that you know you're elect because the spirit of God bears witness with your spirit that you're a child of God 1 John 2 you have the anointing of the Holy Spirit but the spirit of God doesn't bear witness with your spirit that I'm a child of God he doesn't do that he doesn't even do it with your spouse if you're married does that mean that I think that my wife is a Christian or maybe not a Christian do I cross my fingers hoping she is not really sure no I work on the basis of the covenant I work on the basis of what God has declared to me and therefore

I treat my wife in full assurance that she's a child of God I just don't I haven't got access to the decrees as I treat my wife in that regard I treat my children in that regard Di and I have always seen our children as being Christians not people waiting to be converted from conception they were in Christ so neither of my girls and our adult children have ever had a conversion experience any more than they've had a citizenship ceremony they've been confirmed they were baptised as infants they've been confirmed and they've owned the promises for themselves certainly they've never been converted they've never been a non-davies waiting to become a davies they've grown up that way and they've owned the family values see if I asked to ask my children when did you realise I was your father well you could probably say cognitively my daughter didn't know

[58 : 56] I was the father when she first came out of the womb but experientially there's never been a time when she's not known me as her father when did you first know Jesus to be your savior there's never been a time when my children have not known Jesus to be their savior that's the way of the covenant see the baptists say oh you can't baptise someone until they're adults until they've confessed Christ because we want to be sure what they're trying to do is they're really saying baptism is a sign of election baptism is not a sign of election it's a sign of covenant it's a sign of being in relationship with God if we were to only baptise the elect we baptise no one because we never know God hasn't told us who the elect are we think we're fortunate we know who

Judas is but Peter James and John they weren't told until the very end Jesus knew he knew exactly what he was doing when he chose Judas a son of tradition see if you have an evangelistic event in your church and Andrew Reid calls people to come forward and you are a counsellor and you're talking to people who just put their faith in Jesus for the first time what do you say do you say oh it's wonderful you've become a Christian look so many friends of mine have become Christians and they fall away and it's a tough road and I wish you all the best I could flip a coin hedge you in tails you out who really knows because life's so uncertain but have a nice day I mean you wouldn't you wouldn't counsel something like that would you what do you say you say you're put your faith in Jesus praise the

Lord wonderful you're a Christian you have the hope of eternal life your sins are forgiven a place is guaranteed for you in heaven you might also say continue to trust God all your life persevere in the faith you might say a whole range of things but you don't deny the reality of what has happened but in so doing you're speaking covenantally and not decreetly very important you're speaking covenantally not decreetly decreetly means as if you had access to God's decrees covenant is what God has given us we must think from the covenant up not from the decrees down there's a beautiful verse in Deuteronomy 29-29 which says the secret things belong to the Lord our God notice that the secret things belong to God there are things he hasn't told us there are things he's told us that there are things he hasn't told us it's no secret

God's got secrets but the secrets of God are known to him alone but the rest of the verse says but the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children we might do all the words of his Lord in other words don't worry about the decrees God's given you the covenant work in the context of the covenant and raise your children in faithfulness and obedience if you look at the moon it was a beautiful full moon last night did you notice that in about a half month's time or thereabouts probably three quarters a month you'll see the first quarter and the first quarter is just a little crescent in the sky isn't it you know for the life of you you thought there was a full moon in the sky because you saw it late September but when you see the next first quarter it'll look for all intents and purposes as just a crescent in the sky that's a bit like

God's secrets we know there's more to be seen but he's just given us that crescent to look at we know that there's a decretal people we know that those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world we know those who are regenerate from within but we haven't got access to them we've only got access to the covenant people of God you see it's interesting Jacob and Esau were both circumcised even though Esau would grow up to reject God Jacob and Esau both had the sign of the covenant that sign was a reminder to keep faith it was a sign of righteousness which comes by faith it's a sign of being in relationship with God when we train our children one we should certainly baptise them remind them of their baptism tell them where they were baptised encourage them to say you've been washed you've been sanctified you've been justified your sins are forgiven therefore respond to

[64 : 17] God's grace in faith and obedience they didn't own or earn rather their salvation any more than they earned being born in your family they didn't earn the bed they sleep in or the room in which they've got their belongings it's all gift and you train them to respond to that lavishness of the gifts of the family as you do the gifts of God Paul's co-workers he describes as being his names in the book of life but in 2 Timothy Demas deserts him how can you have your name in the book of life at one day and not the book of life the next well you see the book of life is a covenantal book remember when God said to Moses after the golden calf incident when Aaron set up this calf and all the people bowed down and it was a terrible orgy and God was annoyed and God said to Moses

I'm going to destroy this people I'm going to block their name out from the book of life what does Moses say he say to God God you can't do that you're a Calvinist you can't block out the elect like that it just can't be done I've done theology 101 see God speaking to Moses covenantally and what does Moses do he implores God not to block them out and God responds to Moses request and he forgives he brings judgment on some and forgives others see God only God knows the hearts only God knows your spouse's heart and your children's heart but your job is to treat your spouse and honour your spouse as a believer and encourage and nurture them in the faith likewise with your children your children are God's children it's a very special gift he's given to you to bring up his children in this world so you'll train up a child in the way in which they will go and then when they are old they won't depart from it that's the language of covenant it is true of course it's possible for a person to fall away adults fall away

I imagine none of us here is not without the experience of knowing a person who became a Christian who now no longer professes Christ the question is where are they in that circle well you know they're no longer in the big circle the covenant circle they're no longer professes they're outside of that but you don't know whether they are actually out in the light purple whatever it is or in that yellow you don't know whether in actual fact they are still elect and yet to repent and come back in you see when a sheep strays from the flock you don't go out and shoot it you go out and bring it back church discipline is in order to bring people back into the fold in the old testament you've got examples of people who are actually in relationship with God but not in the covenant you think of

Rahab for example or you think of the widow of Zarephath in Elijah's time or you think of the city of Nineveh in Jonah's time they weren't part of Israel but they were part of the elect you see God has his own secret believers if you like people there who are yet to come into the visible unity of the people of God but whom God has actually regenerated or at least are elect and are yet to come in but we treat people within that circle as being God's people that's why Paul writes to the saints at Ephesus as the saints he doesn't write to the true believers nod nod wink wink we know who you are not the people in the back row he writes to the saints he treats them all as saints and encourages them to grow as saints and to persevere and to be nurtured and to he even pommels his body lest he be cast away that sense in which he recognizes yes we must continue in faith and obedience but for the true believer when you see those signs of warning you long to honor them and believe them we went up the Grampians not long ago and as you drive up the

Grampians you see these signs saying the road curves this way or be careful of cliff here because you want to get to the top of the Grampians you're going to follow that road if you disobeyed that sign you'd go off the edge you'd go over the cliff the sign is real it's not a hypothetical sign it's a real sign but because your heart's desire is to get to the top to see the view you'll follow the signs and you're grateful for the warnings the same with scripture the warnings in scripture are for believers to heed lest they fall under the snare of the evil one because our heart's desire is to follow the scripture we long to do so and our heart's desire is to follow God we long to read and heed those warnings so that we don't drive off that cliff but follow the way that God has asked of us I'm going to skip over the next page and I want to take you now to so not that one go to the next one and I think I'll come back to these things

[70 : 25] I think I'll go through this and come to the last page that's it good I want to share with you four models of bringing up children four models we've seen them all in the history of the church the first is what I call the sacramental model or you might even call it the sacerdotal model an Anglo-Catholic kind of model the sacramental model says when you baptise a child that child is saved nothing can ever go wrong everything's alright so everything's on the basis of that child and all you do is just nurture what is already there and it's there by virtue of baptism the baptism has actually brought this child into God's kingdom and God's family and so therefore everything is very ritualistic and the baptism is seen as a symbol and a sign of

God's grace being shown upon that child the catechetical model is to say is very strong in families and it's really an educative model therefore the child see in the sacramental model the child has got sin and the waters wash away the sin in baptism so everything's alright in the catechetical model more often than not the child is not sinful but actually just a blank slate and what you're doing is pouring education in so if you catechise this child this child will then grow up knowing God and you will educate this child into the ways of God the third model is the confessional model and that model is a bit like the baptists that child can't be in the kingdom until they confess can't get there you must have so therefore evangelism is the heart of this model and what a true believer in adult baptism or a true believer in non-pedobaptism that is not baptising infants would really see their child outside the kingdom and waiting to be nurtured and waiting to be saved therefore you keep evangelising that child the way in which some

Sunday school teachers might teach their Sunday school class always wanting to bring their children to conversion which in my view is a wrong model now there are good aspects in each of those three baptism is important education is important understanding evangelism is important but the fourth model which not a natural is one I support the covenantal model actually recognises no your children are God's children by virtue of what your faith no God's promises it's God's promises that guarantee your children's salvation and you must have faith in God's promises and you must teach your children about those promises so yes you do baptise but baptism is not some kind of magic baptism is significant and serious and solemn why do we use water you ever know we don't use soap and water we just use water in baptism because the water is a way of washing away of sins it's a symbolic way of washing and what it shows is this child's sins are being washed away and we know of course the child as a covenant child is already in relationship with

God the baptism is a little bit like a coronation sermon when in 1952 when King George VI died his daughter Princess Elizabeth became queen it was a year later before she was crowned her coronation was not until 53 what was happening in the coronation was she becoming queen no she already was queen she'd been queen since the day her father died but what was happening we were symbolically signing and sealing her being monarch her being queen and that's the way the English do it of course so therefore she has this great ceremony to say and put a crown upon her head to symbolise her being queen that's what baptism does it's not at the point of water pouring the child's sins are being forgiven it's rather at that this is a symbol of what's taking place think of marriage when is a person married well there are three points you might say well when you put the ring on their finger that's the point of marriage or you might actually say when the marriage is consummated that's when they're married you know when they're married

I now pronounce you husband and wife that's the declaration of marriage now the marriage comes with fulfillment in consummation obviously but there's a sense in which the commitment to marriage they want to get married and then they go through this ceremony to establish that as a sign and a seal the ring becomes a sign and a seal in our modern day of what marriage is well so baptism is a sign and seal a symbolic statement and ceremony of our sins being washed away but we must continue to teach notice train your children bring them up in the fear and discipline of the law that's what the fathers are to do in Ephesians 6 so catechesis catechetical model has aspects there but it's not by virtue of if you just keep pouring information in everything will be alright but you do it in the framework of God's promises and the covenant likewise the confessional model of course you want your children to confess if you're a parent you long for your children to say they love you if you're a grandparent it's even stronger but if you're a parent you long for your children to express voluntarily they love you you don't want to manipulate that you don't want to say say this words after me

[77:19] I love you mummy I love you daddy I mean mummy and daddy are always waiting to find out what's the first word the child will say will be mummy will be daddy and strangely it's no is the first word they say and the second word is mine so that sense in which you've got a lot of teaching to do because that child is also a child full of temptations and living in a sinful world and is sinful although a saint part of God's family but needing to be trained to understand right and wrong so the confessional model of confessing Jesus is very important but you're not going to confess Jesus so you can be sure that they're in it's not for your sake you're going to confess Jesus because that is who they are you're teaching them in the same way you teach them that they're Australians that wasn't too difficult was it to teach them they're

Australians they don't have to say I am an Australian but eventually they'll say that at some point in time likewise with their growth in Christ and their growth in faith you do teach them it's a covenantal evangelism it's bringing the gospel to them in the context of being in relationship with God that's the covenantal model and let me just share with you some some thoughts with regard to just some practical outworkings of what the covenantal model might look like okay so the next one covenantal there we are that's it number one is the number one oh I think you've gone backwards instead of forwards wherever you are I can't see where the first name is pardon the last page after what didn't it come after the covenantal model or not have you all got pages that's the one yeah that's it good thank you great okay teaching your children to read the

Bible it's not going to come naturally your children will still have sin in their lives we mustn't make the mistake of thinking that our children are completely innocent but neither do we make the mistake that our children are only sinners now the interesting thing about the word sinner is that the word sinner only describes the Bible people outside of Christ as evangelicals we have a custom of describing ourselves as sinners but it's not the Bible's language the Bible actually is the word saint holy ones righteous we're the ones who are in Christ if you read the Psalms the sinners and the wicked are very different from the righteous but what you need to do is you need to train the righteous to learn righteousness and the way that's done is through the Bible so from your earliest time with your children is to teach the

Bible again the Bible's not magic it's not as if you read over an infant that suddenly the words by osmosis will sort of carry into their paws or through their ears or whatever no it's a cognitive response it's a cognitive response which is the normal way I should say of doing it I mean some children who might have some parents who have disabled children who are not able to understand and have the intellect of a two year old or a one year old in their adult life the wonderful thing about the promises of God is that God has still embraced them they're still God's children but for those in the normal stream you want to teach them the Bible so reading with children's Bibles or teaching them verses or having in our experience as a child grows up you've got to change the way in which you do things so when they were young and we would read the

Bible to them in their bed when they were infants before they went to sleep and we'd pray with them teaching the children to pray helping them to pray giving them ideas of what to pray before that ought to be a natural part of your conversation but a natural part which is seen in every it's not as if it's just a religious part of your life but it's every part of life in Deuteronomy 6 Moses says when you're walking in the way when you're rising up when you're going to bed teach them the words of the Lord the commandments of God that they might know how to walk in his ways it ought to be a natural part of your life so therefore reading the Bible as our children got older our Bible reading would be in the dinner table and we'd read a passage we used to have quizzes because our girls were competitive in terms of going through things I had a friend of mine they used to act out Bible passages they had a family about four or five children

[82 : 43] I think and so they would not just read the passage they'd actually go and live the passage out he said it was very difficult reading about the conquest of Ai and the lounge room looked a disaster area after that reading but nonetheless they were trying to give the children a real life experience of the Bible as it came to life so reading the Bible with your children and teaching them to read the Bible what was really difficult for me was as they grew up and especially through youth group as they did their own private Bible reading they were sometimes more reluctant to do Bible reading with us at the table and they said we already read our Bible at home and I'm trying to think well we still need to do it at the table so we had to adapt how we did that in the way we should don't be too static in your models for Bible reading be flexible allow your children to help you to understand them as to as you how you read with them but your aim is that Bible reading is a natural part of their life and it always thrills me when we have our family holidays together they all bring their own

Bibles on their family holiday one daughter is now married and has two children of her own another daughter is single but that's just part and parcel of going away they're going to take their Bible with them because that's part of their daily life teaching them to pray prayer needs to be real how many times have you lost something or your child's lost something can't find it is your first instinct to pray I'll tell you what the natural reluctance to pray is you don't want to pray and never find it as if you might be teaching your children you can't trust God but what we do is we never pray and then sometimes we do find it and then we feel really bad take the courage to pray for things which are real experiences for your children real problems they're having a problem with a child at school or having a problem with a teacher pray with them make prayer to

God the natural part of your conversation so that they see this is that God actually is concerned about them and their real life situation in school classroom playground with friends or wherever changing patterns of family devotions I think I've mentioned that so that there you actually see devotions as something which is going to change as they grow up in age and it's you know it's a it's something which again as I said needs to be reflected in the way which you relate to them and seeing them grow and develop and even giving them a chance to suggest how we read the Bible tonight give them some suggestions allow them to make suggestions rather than always being dictating from ourselves that would depend upon the age I mean the teenage years can be very difficult well we all know that but they're not they're not lost years they can be gained years but as long as you know how to relate to your children in those years modelling obedience sometimes we think our children are very sinful but the problem is they haven't learnt the adult sophistication of hiding sin but because you're so good at it as parents don't worry they'll eventually work it out and what we need to do is recognise and name sin and that's what you need to do as parents with your sin you need to model obedience in terms of when you've done something wrong to actually own it and to do so in front of your children ultimately although you may have been born into a family with a mother or a parent child relationship ultimately in

God's sight you're brothers and sisters so therefore you've got to model what it means to be a child of God yourself if you're going to help them grow up to be children of God so you teach your children to pray how?

by praying audibly with them that's how they learn to pray you think of yourselves for all of us as we first uttered that audible prayer in the presence of someone else for some of you might have been such a long time ago you've forgotten it but to do that is a really big step but if you've been doing that in your family it's a very easy step once you get to youth group or Sunday school or scripture class or church whatever it might be so model that and model obedience likewise model forgiveness see if your children see mummy and daddy having a fight or a tiff or a disagreement over something if they've seen that they must see you forgive each other don't let don't let the forgiveness of each other be done in private so all the children ever see is just the fight they need to see the ones who have fought have actually come to reconciliation you model forgiveness by actually saying to one another in the front of your children where something has gone wrong and you've asked mummy's forgiveness and mummy's forgiven me and we're sorry for the effect that our fight might have had on you it's very rare for non-christian parents and it's sometimes rare for christian parents to actually say sorry to their children to actually ask their children's forgiveness we're so caught up in our own world that we're always right and demanding our own rights as being the parents and we're the ones who rule this place and not recognise that ultimately we're brothers and sisters in Christ yes God's given us a responsibility and a charge stewardship of our children but they're his children they're ultimately not our children and that's so important that helps you let your children go when they grow old enough to live outside the name

[89 : 06] I don't know what it was like for you but when you left your own natal family your own birth family I had a fairly controlling mother who never wanted me to leave and that sense of trying to make me feel guilty about leaving I eventually had to go overseas to leave and she said she could never go to sleep until I got home when I was in my mid-twenties I remember saying I'm going to America should I ring you up every night to see what time I got home so you can go to sleep or perhaps it's not true that you couldn't really go to sleep so that sense in which you let your children go if you've got bad experiences for your parents or maybe you've got good experiences for your parents maybe they've been very good at modelling that for you again for your children because they're ultimately God's children you don't own them and that'll be very obvious when they're adults and have children of their own and although the temptation is ever so strong to interfere in the parenting of your grandchildren resist remember what your parents and parents and all were like resist that temptation let the next generation do it in my view

I've told my children I said you must pick up the best from our parenting and remedy the worst so that our grandchildren get actually a better education than even our own children have if we can keep improving on that and it's amazing particularly our adult daughter we're both daughters really telling us of things in their childhood things which we never knew what their perspective on events were at various times is absolutely fascinating things which at the time they either couldn't or didn't articulate in their early primary years but now they've obviously lodged in their memory and now can come back and tell us sometimes to our joy sometimes to our sorrow sorry and I've gone out of order here protecting your children pray for your children remember Job in that first chapter it was his custom to pray for his children he'd offer sacrifices for children lest they might curse God in their heart it's a fascinating demonstration of a father's love pray that God would protect your children but as you have done your best in providing a covenantal education and framework for their growth well this is a spiritual activity that God actually might bring them and enable them to walk in the path of faith and obedience so they might know God's grace for a certainty in their own heart and mind and pray for the protection of the evil one will not take them away and that's something ultimately you always have to leave in

God's hands but it's something which there are covenantal promises for us it's very interesting that the promise the requirements for an elder a presbyter or a bishop in our church in the new testament in 1 timothy 3 is that the parent can manage the household and the children are believers in titus that's the model that ought to be but when I was growing up as a young boy most of my experience of clergy children where they tend to be with ratbags and disobedient and wild I think actually there's been a significant change in the last 40 years or so with regard to that and I think that and I believe that that ministers of the gospel have a great responsibility in the way that they model that family life for the congregation it's very difficult doing that when sometimes children will show evidence of sin and we just must be aware that they're so open in exposing their sin whereas as I said before we adults are so sophisticated in hiding our sin children are innocent in sin if I can put it that way and therefore their sins are more obvious but use those as training exercises but there's sensitivity here one of the hardest rebukes to hear as a parent is someone commenting about your parenting when someone says you know what are you going to do about that child whilst they're lying on the ground in the middle of Coles isle screaming while you're trying to get them up and get them home and out of public sight or if they're doing it in church I remember once I was in America and I was living there and

I was at a Presbyterian church and they used to have all age Sunday school before church so you'd have all age adults as well as children and then the whole family would come into the church so the children sat through the sermon and the whole service there was one father who was obviously a bit concerned with his son who was about eight years of age and he was a redhead not that makes any difference but I just remember it and the father and the church think of this child and there was an exit out there there was also an exit at the back but the father I presume wanting to make an example of his son rather than taking the son out quietly because he was wriggling around or doing something he didn't take him at the back he took him out the front he walked in down from the back right down front in the middle of church the son over his shoulder and I had this beautiful vision the father was walking out there stridently striding out the son is over with his hair with his red hair over the shoulder and he calls out to the congregation you all pray for me which I thought was a great example of the confidence he had in prayer but there's a sense in which he obviously knew he'd done wrong and he recognised he was in a state of a certain vulnerability but there's a sense in which he was all part of the family of God and he wanted us to be on his side but to pray for him

I thought it was an excellent thing an excellent opportunity which the minister of the time could have seized upon by actually doing just that he didn't I didn't have the wherewithal to think about as a young student but he should have actually said stop we're to pray for that father son relationship would be blessed through this discipline and not damaged rather than us all having views about whether we should have done that or not done that you've got to leave parenting to parents that's what God does obviously there are things in the church which we can do and if things get out of hand parents might need help in looking after children they might see some respite but there are ways in which we can encourage parenting without being critical of others in their parenting so protect your children by prayer and pray for God to bring them friends of their own age and mentors one of the great things about being part of the church is having your own age group

[96 : 46] I'm a great believer in having multi-generational services but there's only so much happens with that you also need the age related activities it's like Christmas day you know Christmas day is like the whole family sits around the table in my family growing up as the family got bigger my mother would set the table for all the adults and the children would sit on a separate table over there but we don't actually all be eating together but after we'd pulled the crackers and had the feast then the children would go up and they'd play themselves and the parents would sit around and tell the same stories they do every year at Christmas time and chat that way so you then had having had the whole family you then had your generational differentiation that's really that's really important for children to have that and we can forget that so children need that relationship with their own generation but they also pray for a mentor whether it's an older teenager or a person in the young twenties in the church situation a youth group or Bible study groups whom they can actually refer to and talk to as well as yourselves one of the great benefits of being a family and covenant of family is we're also a part of the family of God and to pray for people in that situation but also yourselves to take an interest in other people's children how many children in the congregation do you know by name now I know that children get awkward and they get all quiet and shy and things like when you speak to them but if you call them by name and you're seeing them week by week every

Sunday they'll grow up knowing you as someone who's actually an interesting man and do that not superficially but prayerfully recognising the whole people of God are part of his family and even the difficult children or the difficult parents are part of God's family so we might all grow up to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ but I'll pause there at 5 past 12 and give you time for questions minutes