

Level One—Come!

Level Two—Come!

- Look over *Living Hope* chapters 15-17.
- Begin thinking about writing a blessing for each member of your family (this is a special and powerful part of our weekend when all families will take ten minutes to gather and mom & dad will read a short blessing of how they see and pray to see the Lord at work in each child's life as well as in their partner's life).

Level Three—Come!

- Look over *Living Hope* chapters 15–17.
- Read *Living Hope* chapter 15 daily as a family/couple the week before the retreat (April 8<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup>).
- Begin thinking about writing a blessing, and actually write out a blessing for each family member.

Level Four—Come!

- Look over *Living Hope* chapters 15–17.
- Read *Living Hope* chapter 15 the week before the retreat (April 8<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup>), and read chapter 16 the week of the retreat (April 15<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup>).
- Begin thinking about writing a blessing, and write a blessing for each family member.
- Commit to write out a daily prayer list for each member of your family; meet as a couple and talk over that area and find a verse that targets that prayer area in your family member's lives that you are asking God to work on in their life and yours (the enclosed "How to Pray for Your Family" card gives examples of target prayer areas and verses).

Level Five—Come!

- Look over *Living Hope* chapters 15–17.
- Read *Living Hope* chapter 15 the week before the retreat (April 8<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup>), read chapter 16 the week of the retreat (April 15<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup>), and read chapter 17 the week after the retreat (April 22<sup>nd</sup>–28<sup>th</sup>).
- Begin thinking about writing a blessing, and write a blessing for each family member.
- Commit to doing the daily prayer/list.

- Start and continue regular personal and family devotions beyond just this retreat time.

This weekend is a call to all of us from the Lord, to renew our servanthood.

The best husband is the greatest servant, the best wife is the best servant, the best children are those who have servant hearts—the same goes for marriages.

If you want to excel in whatever you do—be God’s servant.

### **Servants of God: Last for Ever**

This evening, each of us here no matter what our age, are given an opportunity by God to be great in His sight. Greatness in God’s sight is really all that ever will matter here on Earth and forever.

Open with me to **Matthew 20:25-28:**

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 **And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—** 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” NKJV*

Now turn over to **Matthew 23:10-12:**

*And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 **But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.** 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. NKJV*

Jesus says that the way up is down. The way to the top is the bottom. The way to greatness is servanthood.

### **Servants of God: Live for Others**

So Jesus calls us to be the greatest possible people we can be for Him. He defines greatness in relation to servant hood. So the way we are great to God is to be His servant. Let’s apply that principle.

- To be the greatest husband: be the greatest servant of God to your wife.

- To be the greatest dad: be the greatest servant of God to your family.
- To be the greatest son or daughter: be the greatest servant of God to your parents and your brothers and sisters.
- To be the greatest wife: be the greatest servant of God to your husband.
- To be the greatest mother: be the greatest servant of God to your children.
- To be the greatest Christian: be the greatest servant to God.

And how do we do that? How do we learn to live for others? The greatest example of how to serve others comes to us from the greatest servant of all, Jesus Christ. And as Peter reminded us, He left us an example of how to follow 'in His steps' ([1 Peter 2:21](#)).

### **Servants of God: Look like Christ**

Jesus said, greatest is the servant; and the greatest servant was Christ. How did He serve? His entire life was as a servant who served. Jesus knew and confessed that He did not come to be served, but He came to serve ([Mark 10:45](#)) and to give—give His life, give His love, and give His encouraging blessing!

- **He gave His life**; and so as His servants we are to be a living sacrifice.
- **He led His disciples**; and so as His followers we are to be servant leaders.
- **He encouraged His own**; and so as His servants we are to encourage and bless those we love and serve!

So the greatest thing in the entire world is serving God—it is what we shall be doing forever and should be doing now! This weekend at Family Camp I am especially asking some fathers to be servants to their families. You will have the opportunity to serve them spiritually by serving them communion, serve them humbly by washing their feet, and serve them deeply by blessing them.

### **What was Christ's Final Action on Earth**

What was the last sight that all the disciples had of Jesus. Remember when Jesus ascended into Heaven? What was He doing as He left? Have you ever noticed that little insight Luke gives us? Turn to Acts 1 and see the Ascension account in v. 8-12:

**Acts 1:8-12** *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* 9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.

That is the one we remember most, but there is a second account that gives some precious details we have often missed. Turn back to **Luke 24:50-53**:

**Luke 24:50-53** *And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen. (NKJV)*

Those men would never forget walking with Jesus for 3 ½ year, they would never forget Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; but what would be riveted in their minds? It would be that incredible moment of the last time they saw Him here on Earth.

Their friend, their Savior, their most precious Lord of all left them in a most touching way. He lifted up His hands and touched them with His blessing! Think about that. Jesus was very careful what He did as He left His disciples, and the picture they would have deeply etched in their minds is Christ's loving, prayerful blessing raining down upon them as He was lifted upward and out of sight.

Those words of blessing raining down upon them must have been remembered over and over in the days ahead. Words have such power for good or evil. What kind of words do you “rain down” upon those you are speaking to in life? And what are those who listen to your words remembering? Are they “blessed” by what you said?

Please look at what Peter told us in I Peter 3. After talking about the basic building block of society and the church (marriage and family) he concludes with an incredible postscript:

**1 Peter 3:8-9** *Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling (spoken curses), **but on the contrary blessing**, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

This weekend may I challenge you to renew and expand your use of the...

### **New Testament Ministry of Blessing Others**

In the New Testament a “blessing” we offer to a loved one is basically a prayer of encouragement for them.

**2127 eulogeo is a verb used 44 times in the New Testament that means:** “to praise [your loved one], to celebrate [them] with praises [that] invoke [God’s] blessings and consecrate [your loved one] with solemn prayers [that] ask God’s blessing on [your loved one] to cause [them] to prosper, to make [them] happy, to bestow blessings [that they be] favored by God.”[1]

That is why Peter says to the church so strongly, watch out for how you “rain down” your words upon others.

**1 Peter 3:9** *not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, **but on the contrary blessing**, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

So Peter basically says, “Sow words of blessing and you will reap a harvest of blessing.” What a powerful motivation to primarily use our words, mouths, and voices to bless others in Christ's Name! And that is what we get from nearly every one of the 44 times the work “bless” is used in the New Testament (14 x in Luke). Here are some of the key verses:

- **[blessing often involves touching]** **Mark 10:16** *And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and **blessed them**.*
- **[blessing often points to the future]** **Luke 2:34** *Then **Simeon blessed them**, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is*

*destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against*

- **[blessing is usually hard but always very rewarding]** **Luke 6:28** *“bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.*
- **[Jesus ends His earthly ministry with the most vivid memory of blessing for His disciples]** **Luke 24:50-53** *And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He **lifted up His hands and blessed them.** 51 Now it came to pass, **while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.** 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and **blessing God.** Amen.*
- **[lest we miss it Paul repeats the habit of blessing as part of Christ's church's mandate]** **Romans 12:14** *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*
- **[there was a Spirit-prompted work of blessing in the early church services]** **1 Corinthians 14:16** *Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?*
- **[heroes of the faith made it their last act like Christ's to stretch out their hands and bless those they loved]** **Hebrews 11:20-21** *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

In the early church there were many pressures, many burdens—but that was far outweighed by the sweetness of the fellowship of other believers. There were many who like Barnabus (**Acts 4:36**) were characterized by encouraging or blessing people around them.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** *And let us consider one another in order to **stir up love** and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but **exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

In the verse above, the word exhort is the Greek word **parakaleo**. This happens to even be the name of God the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter or Paraklete. This word is found 109 times in the New Testament (# **3870 parakaleo** verb) translated in the New Testament as ‘beseech’ (43x), ‘comfort’ (23x), ‘exhort’ (21x), ‘desire’ (8x), ‘pray’

(6x), 'intreat' (3x), and 'besought' (1x). All of that to say, that 74x this verb is used as a verbal expression. We are called alongside of other believers primarily to say things that encourage or bless them. The Greek dictionary even defines this word as; "to call to one's side for exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; to admonish, exhort, to beg, entreat, beseech; to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort".

So, tonight I want you to focus for a few minutes on giving an encouraging blessing to each member of your family.

Use this definition of the Greek word for "blessing" that we have been learning about. Plug in some genuine loving expressions of what you see that you can praise in their life.

**2127 eulogeo is a verb used 44 times in the New Testament that means:**

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Often we forget that strengths and weaknesses are just the two opposite ends of a characteristic we exhibit. For examples someone who is anxious and worries has just misdirected their meditation onto problems instead of blessings. There are so many character flaws that we can encourage the positive side in a person. Just as Peter was encouraged by Christ's loving ministry so can we encourage prayerfully those we love. Here are a few of the two-ends of the same trait:

<b>Positive Character</b>	<b>Negative Character</b>
Alert and sociable	Overly curious, nosy
Sensitive	Touchy
Resourceful and creative	Manipulative
Thrifty and stewardship minded	Stingy
Expressive and dramatic	Overly talkative
Enthusiastic, vivacious	Flighty
Sincere, earnest, with strong convictions	Too serious

Strong convictions and uncompromising	Bold and inflexible
Strong disciplines and convictions	Rigid
Confident and assured	overbearing
Creative and imaginative	Dreamer and distracted
Organized and efficient	Too fussy

## Old Testament Blessings

One of the key descriptions of how God wanted His people blessed comes from the instructions to the priests. In the Jewish community the priests were the public servants, they inspected for disease, they protected the food supply, housing, dealt with domestic issues, and of course represented the people to God. In the New Testament we are to all be priests, and in a real sense, we are called like them to bless those around us.

### GET BIBLE NOTES

**Numbers 6:23-27** (NIV) *“Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “‘The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.’” “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*

**Numbers 6:23-27** (NKJV) *“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’ “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”*

This idea of the blessing of the people was so woven into the fabric of the life of God’s chosen people of promise the Jews that they began to make a specific verbal blessing time to be part of the private family Sabbath meal.

One of the most moving Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) traditions is the blessing over the children given on Friday night. There are many variations on how the blessing is made. The most common custom is for the father to put his hands on the child's head and recite the blessing. In some homes the blessing is followed by a kiss, and in other homes it is

followed by personal words of praise as the father walks around the table and blesses each seated child.

Why should we learn to share a blessing with our families? Because a blessing shared, and the whole expression of love that it gives helps those we love know in a visible way that we love them. Blessing those we love is a memorable way they can remember feeling and hearing our love.

Do you ever remember your father telling you out loud, in a clear and loving voice that he loved you and admired some qualities he had seen in your life? Those words just stay in our hearts for a lifetime. My own dad has often told me how much he sees the Lord's Hand in my life and what great things he believes God will do in my life—and has been saying that for a quarter-of-a-century!

### **How to Bless Your Wife, Your Husband, or Your Children[3]**

Do your loved ones in your family *feel* your love?

Many husbands think that their wives admire other men more than them as they relate how, "So-and-so's husband does this and that with his children or for his wife...". Those **men do not feel the respect and admiration** of their wives.

Many wives feel that their husbands think other women are either better at caring for their husbands, prettier, or better at caring for their families than they are. Those **women do not feel the love** of their husbands.

Many kids hurt because they sense that their parents don't even *like* them.

- A struggling student watches his parents gloat about his sister's straight A's.
- A boy strikes out in a softball game and notices his father's disappointment.
- An overweight daughter is told, "Stop snacking so much if you even *care* about your looks."

This absence of marriage partner or parental approval, or *family blessing*, can lead to untold pain; whereas loved ones who feel approval and love face the daily challenges in their world with eagerness and confidence.

**Paul Blessed Timothy**

One of the most beautiful testimonies to the power of encouragement (or blessing) in the New Testament is in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul explained to Timothy that he was:

- “A true son” ([I Timothy 1:2](#));
- he told Timothy he was “an example to the flock” ([I Timothy 4:12](#));
- that he “had a gift” and needed to “stir it up” ([I Timothy 4:14](#); [II Timothy 1:6](#));
- and he reminded him of his incredible spiritual heritage “and that from a child” ([II Timothy 3:15](#)).

So Paul “blessed” Timothy, and used tender and encouraging words to help his son in the faith Timothy. He doesn’t belittle him for his weaknesses and tears. Paul also told Timothy he had a “treasure” entrusted him ([I Timothy 6:20](#)); and that he was “gifted”; and that God was “going to use him”. These exhortations were tenderly given to a struggling man.

These type of “blessings” when seen in God's Word often involve several elements: ***Meaningful touches with*** (like Jesus blessing the children)... ***Spoken words that have*** (like Jesus when He left for Heaven)... ***Expressions of high value*** (like Paul’s for Timothy and Epaphroditus) ***and ...Point to a Blessed Future*** (like Christ's and Paul’s for those they disciplined) ***with...Your personal commitment to be a part of their life and growth towards that goal.*** (“Lo I am with you” Jesus said. Paul said he labored in prayer daily for ALL the churches.) Make sure your loved ones in your family receive your blessing. To help them receive and be touched by your love, we can try to use those several key ingredients that we see above, which always help us to communicate blessings and encouragement.

- **Use meaningful touches with them.** That is what Jesus did ([Mark 10:16](#)) when he blessed the children, He was always touching those He ministered to. He could have healed them with a word, eight times in Mark alone Jesus touches those He served. So should we! The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth and affirmation. It is even essential to physical health. Be generous with your hugs.
- **Prepare special words for them.** Paul used tender and encouraging words to help his son in the faith Timothy. He doesn’t

belittle him for his weaknesses and tears. We should always remember that hugs aren't enough. Tell your loved ones how you feel about them! Those who are left to fill in the blanks often feel worthless and insecure. At best, only confusion can come from silence. Far too many of us are really not that encouraging. It's not that we have a critical spirit. Rather, we just say nothing. Our loved ones are not mind readers. We can do better than just expecting them to know we are in their corner, loving and admiring them silently. They need to hear it! Make an effort to catch them doing something good, right, thoughtful, considerate, well done, etc. and point it out. Highlight it! "Hey, you really handled that situation very well."

- **Attach high value to them.** Paul also told Timothy he had a "treasure" entrusted him; and that he was "gifted"; and that God was "going to use him". So should we also tell the ones we love about the qualities you admire in them. One of the best ways to do this with children is to liken them to a physical object (like calling your daughter a "pearl" or "precious jewel"). With your husband this is communicated by saying your husband is such a "wonderful dad, husband, friend" or such a "faithful leader, provider, diligent, hard working, thoughtful, etc.". With your wife this comes in the form of "you are so beautiful I think about you all day long; I can't wait to see you; I know how hard you work all day and can't wait to get home to help you; there are so many things I want to talk over with you; I'd rather spend an evening walking and talking with you than anything else even sports, friends, golf, etc."
- **Picture a bright future for them.** Paul told Timothy about a "crown" that was awaiting him as he ran the "race" set before him; and that the Lord was going to "reward" him. So we also should express what God can do with them as they follow Him in their life. How they can shape the lives of the children (wife), launch wonderful children into life through their faithful example (husbands), or become the greatest servant of the Lord in what ever field God has gifted them (children). Explain why you think their gifts and character traits will be useful throughout their lives. Avoid negative admonitions; inspire self-confidence.
- **Make a commitment to walk through life with them.** Stand by your loved one through the months and years ahead to help make

your words of blessing become a reality. Express ways you want to be a deeper part of their life (monthly dates, weekly prayer studies, nightly prayer times, on going shared prayer list, etc.) Don't quit as soon as you miss a scheduled time because of a conflict or your loved one hurts or discourages you, or your child fails in some area.

### **What are The Benefits of Meaningful Touch[4]**

Hold your wife's hand and look into her eyes smiling. Put your arm around your husband, run your hand through his hair (whether he has any left) and stand close to him for a bit. Touse your son's hair or wrestle playfully with him. Pat your daughter on the back. Give everyone in your family (even the reluctant 7th-grader) a quick hug when you come home. Such meaningful touch, given appropriately, makes people feel loved and appreciated. Touch offers:

**Symbolic meaning.** It sends a message both to the person touched and to anyone who witnesses it.

- A father rests his hand on his son's shoulders and draws him close under the umbrella while they wait for the school bus in the rain.

**Physical health.** Many studies have shown that touch provides a significant physiological benefit.

- Premature infants who are massaged gain weight faster.
- Elderly people in nursing homes who are given a pet to touch live longer.
- Blood pressure decreases among people who get appropriate touch.

**Emotional comfort.** Touch is the easiest way to communicate love and acceptance.

- What about when a doctor touches your shoulder as he explains his diagnosis?
- What difference does it make when a friend offers a handshake?

**Protection.** When children get loving touches from their parents, they are less likely to seek touch from harmful sources later in life.

- Women with repeated unwanted pregnancies have told researchers that they just wanted to be cuddled and held.

The Bible affirms this concept too. It relates this incident about Jesus:

*People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He*

*said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. ([Mark 10:13-16](#))*

One study has shown that it takes eight to ten meaningful touches each day to maintain emotional and physical health. If you can find ways to do that, your wife, husband, and children will be blessed.

### **Picturing a Bright Future[5]**

Communicating a special future to a child is such an important part of giving a blessing. When a person feels in his or her heart that the future is hopeful and something to look forward to, it can greatly affect his or her attitude on life.

In this way we are providing our children a clear light for their path in life. Instead of leaving a child to head into a dark unknown, words that picture a special future can illumine a pathway lined with hope and purpose.

Children begin to take steps down the positive pathway pictured for them when they hear words like these:

**“God has given you such a sensitive heart. I wouldn’t be surprised if you end up helping a great many people when you grow older.”** or

**“You are such a good helper. When you grow up and marry someday, you’re going to be such a help to your wife (or husband) and family.”**

On the other hand, if children hear only words that predict relationship problems or personal inadequacies, they may travel down a hurtful path that has been pictured for them. This can happen if they hear statements like:

**“You’d better hope you can find someone who can take care of you when you’re older. You’re so irresponsible, you’ll never be able to do anything for yourself.”**

During the years we have children in our home, the words we speak to them can wrap around them like a cocoon. What we say shapes and develops their thoughts and thinking patterns, making it possible someday for them to emerge as beautiful butterflies.

Two practical pointers, though, are in order.

- First, we must look at our past words and behavior to see if we are honoring the various commitment we made to our kids. Only with such a track record will words of a special future find their mark and extend a blessing.
- Second, we must honor our commitments to our children in the present. One of the most important ways to do that is to keep your commitment to your spouse strong and intact. It is so much harder (though not impossible) for a child to feel blessed when he has lost a parent due to divorce.

### **Make an Active Commitment to Invest in their Life[6]**

Words of blessing for our children are not enough. They need to be backed by the commitment of parents who work to see the blessing come to pass. Here are some steps:

- **Commit your loved one to God**, and let them know you've done so. Start a life-long prayer list with specific areas that you have learned from them need prayer, and then PRAY. Ask for updates. Celebrate answers. Pray together. We need all the help we can get, and much of what happens to us or to our children in this life is beyond our control.
- **Next, commit your life to investing yourself in your loved one's best interest.** This means time, energy and resources. As you do this:
- **Realize that each of us has our own unique set of needs.** It's possible to live under the same roof and still not know someone. Do you really understand each of your children's own thoughts, dreams and desires?
- **Be willing to do what is best for your loved one.** With your husband or wife that may mean sharing when you think they are overloaded or impatient—but in such a loving way that you share in their struggle. With children that may include appropriate discipline, which can seem painful for everyone. Dare to love your children enough to train and correct them rather than leave them at the mercy of their own willfulness.
- **Become a student of the one you wish to bless.** Watch them, share their ups and downs; know where they are in their spiritual

life, their school life, work life, home life. Find out who they are close to and who they are not close to—and why.

- **Take an interest in whatever seems to interest them.** Get into his or her world.
- **Be lovingly persistent in communicating with him.** That is, keep trying to set up times when meaningful communication can occur.
- **Share activities.** Go to the grocery store, try a family time camping together, or even just ask them to do what you are doing with you (cooking, yard work, running errands). It is always loving to want them, include them, and ask for them to spend time with you.
- **Take the initiative in asking questions.** Have an endless learning time asking about what they think, what they feel, what they like or don't like—and why. Learn their favorite flavor, favorite food, favorite activity, dreamed of place to go, and so much more. Write it down afterward to see what you remembered, and ask again until you do remember. Then surprise them with something they like!
- **Listen with full attention.** Let her see your eyes light up when they talk to you.

### **Ten Attitudes that Make You a Blessing your Children[7]**

1. *Love them anyway.* Yes I know you love them. Most of us parents adore our children — most of the time. Yet, some parents have a way of regularly communicating to their children that they do not measure up. I'm thinking now about the young girl who grew up in a family where she was seen as the dunce. Now as a young woman, she continues to experience the same from her family. Children need parents who will believe in them and no matter what will love them anyway.

2. *Prepare them for the battleground, not the playground.* Some parents constantly buy their children toys, gadgets, candy, McDonalds, etc. The kids then get into their high school years and the pampering continues. Only now, the toys are much more expensive. What does that communicate to these children? Meanwhile, other parents prepare their children for life on the battleground where a spiritual battle is taking place. These parents realize that children need more than toys. They need to be equipped for life so that they will survive the difficulties and trials they will face.

3. *Deal with your issues.* There are no perfect human beings. Yet, if you don't deal with your own issues (your sins, your insecurities, your feelings of inadequacy, etc.), these can impact your children. They may end up having to deal with some of the very issues you would never grapple with.

4. *Take every opportunity to remind them of who they are in Christ.* They will, most likely, receive many false messages about their identity. They will be told that their worth is based upon their academic record, their physical attractiveness, their charm, their ability to make money, etc. You bless your children when you help them grow up with a sense of their real identity.

5. *Bless your children by giving them you.* There is no substitute for your presence in their lives. Your regular, consistent, emotional and physical presence means so much. I have known a few parents who seem to see their child as one more activity on the list of things to be done for the day. Yet one senses there is no real connection between parent and child. Being attentive and giving one-on-one time are priceless gifts to children.

6. *Say only what communicates value, respect, and love.* Choose to never say or do anything that will humiliate. Sometimes, families will tell embarrassing, humiliating, stories about their children. The child is embarrassed at this but then the parent says, "I'm just kidding." (In other words, "Since I think this is funny, you shouldn't let this bother you.") Listen, we all do things in our families that are silly, stupid, mindless, careless, etc. I have found that it is much better for me to tell about something silly or stupid that I did — not my children. Children need to know that homes are safe places where one's mistakes are not announced to the world.

7. *Be your child's greatest encourager.* Far too many parents are really not that encouraging. It's not that they have a critical spirit. Rather, they just say nothing. Children are not mind readers. We can do better than just expecting them to know we are in their corner. They need to hear it! Make an effort to catch them doing something good, right, thoughtful, considerate, well done, etc. and point it out. Highlight it! "Hey, you really handled that situation very well."

8. *Pray for your children.* If you are not praying for them each day, who is? Regardless of the age, they need you to lift them up before the Lord in prayer each day. Think about their day. Think about their

setting. Think about the people they will be with. Pray about these situations.

9. *Give them what they need not what they want.* Many of us are very busy people. We have a lot going on. So often, parents will feel guilty about how busy they are and so decide to give them a new "toy." Yet, we do our children no favors when we give them most everything they want. The point is this: Too many children grow up getting all the things they want while little attention is given to what they really need. Think about what your children really need if they are going to make it in this difficult world as obedient children of a loving God.

10. *Give your children something to look forward to when they come home.* Give them a beautiful home to look forward to. That's home — not house. Anyone with enough money can build a beautiful house. Our children need beautiful homes. Homes that are filled with warmth, laughter, and love. Beautiful homes are places where children can catch a glimpse of the loving God in the love of their parents. These homes remind kids that no matter how bad the day is at school or with friends, they can always *come home*.

When my children reached the age of graduating high school and going out into the big, bad world, I knew that of all the graduation gifts I could give them, nothing was more important than my blessing.

We invited our closest friends over to the house and one by one, they spoke a blessing over them. When it was my turn, I had written it out like a letter. I said things like, "I'm so proud of you. Your peers look up to you; you have set good examples for them. Whatever you do, I know you'll succeed." [email me and I'll send you a copy if you'd like].

I could feel the emotion rising in me as something spiritual was transacted between us. Children need their parents' blessing in a daily sort of way, and they also need it sacramentally and publicly. It's a way of validating their identity before others. God showed us how it's done with Jesus: "This is my son in whom I'm well pleased."

When finished, everyone clapped and cheered. Our children weren't just finishing a course of study, they were becoming adults and being praised for the good choices they'd made. April and May is a season of graduation. Send out your invitations soon for not just a graduation party,

but a celebration of your parental blessing of a child in whom you are well pleased.

As parents we can choose to bless or curse our children. Choose blessings! The words we say to them, will be with them long after Christ calls us home. Make sure the words you plant in your child's heart and mind are ones you want to be planted - words of love, encouragement, support, belief and faith. Say things like, "I want you to know that whenever Christ calls me home, I am ready to go. I will be in heaven and I will be looking for you. Make sure you are there!", "I believe in you", "You are my favorite son in all the world", "God has a plan and a place for you", "God will make a way for you", "I know what you are facing is difficult and you would rather stay home and hide. I also know you are strong enough to go out there and face the world. You can do it", "Jesus is with you".

**Proverbs 18:21** Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit. (NKJV)

**Proverbs 18:21** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. (NIV)

### **Servants of God: Live for Spiritual Assets (to prayer message?)**

A servant of God has their heart set on spiritual treasures and measures life by the acquisition of spiritual assets rather than merely physical assets. Do you keep track of your ***Spiritual Assets***? Often we know our house value, our retirement investment value, the worth of our collections and treasures—but do you keep an inventory of spiritual assets? What are some of our spiritual assets?

These are things like:

- Knowing ***where your kid's are reading in God's Word*** so they remember when they grow up and leave home that you always cared how they were doing spiritually.
- Asking your husband or wife each week ***what they are finding in God's Word*** that is helping them to make it through the day. And, actually remembering what they said the last time because you care. This is a spiritual treasure because it forges a strong bond in your hearts of a shared spiritual walk.
- Finding and learning scripture ***memory verses that you share in common with your loved ones*** are a spiritual treasure. Not

hundreds or even dozens, but a handful that you all have learned and share in common. What a treasure to quote them around the living room when the power goes out, or an ice storm cancels church, or when you are traveling, to have this body of Scripture that you together as a couple and a family learned is a true spiritual treasure. Some of the more valuable passages are Psalm 23, the love chapter--I Corinthians 13, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, and key verses on the tongue and faith in James.

- Collecting **testimonies of salvation** is a record of each person's greatest treasure, isn't it? The only thing that lasts forever from this world will be people and whatever we send up to Heaven before we leave. So, who are you taking to Heaven with you? Have you heard, understood, and savored the testimonies of your family? Can you tell your husband's or wife's testimony? How about your children? What an incredible treasure is our salvation. Take a spiritual inventory of the status of each soul around you in those you love.
- Recording and remembering those **spiritual milestones**, have you started on this spiritual asset yet? Do you record your loved ones salvation date, baptism date, when they started the habit of personal devotional quiet times, what they are doing in that QT? Have you started yet to celebrate each other's spiritual birthdays? Do you keep a record of, share and celebrate any souls led to Christ by you or by loved ones, and then uphold them by prayer? Who can your family say that you as a family are "taking to Heaven"?
- Finally, one of the great spiritual treasures is a **lifelong prayer journal**. Even if you've never started, it is never too late to start watching God at work through prayer. Any type of list will do, just date it, hold onto it, and be specific enough in your requests—and there you have it—an actual record of the God of Heaven moving in and through your life by prayer. A list of family needs, specific challenges, hurdles, obstacles, great goals, and so on are all prayed over. As well the verses for Christ's formation in the lives of those you love are always such a tool. Just a sheet of paper, dated, written out and prayed over faithfully until it wears out and then a new one started will harvest great spiritual gains and treasures.

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[1] *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

[2] *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

[3] These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

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[6] These ideas are adapted from *The Blessing* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, Nashville) and *The Blessing Workbook* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, Nashville) by Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D.

[7] Posted by Jim Martin at January 16th, 2007 online at <http://www.godhungry.org/?p=592>