

Walking the Path: Journeying Together
by Bill Aumack

Families are weird, right? Families are weird. And if you have a family, and you think your family isn't weird, that's weird. Right? Because families are weird. We all have this perfect idea of what a great family should be. Maybe as many different ideas as we have people here this morning. But our families never quite live up to the ideal, right? Maybe with your family, you wanted all boys or all girls, for children. But you didn't get that. Linda and I always giggle at the families you see what they've got, like five or six boys. And then there's a girl. They kept trying until they got that girl. Maybe you thought the perfect family would be a place where your grandparents lived close by but life didn't work out that way. Maybe you thought, probably never thought, that overbearing in laws would be a good thing. But sometimes we get that right? Because it's never our parents. My parents are fine. It's my spouse's parents, and those guys are weird. Right?

And families are weird. And there's always that certain somebody in the family that you know, family reunions or holidays don't say certain things, right? Don't bring up politics when Uncle Joe is around, or there's going to be a fight. Right? And we don't want to do that. Or maybe aunt Susie got a divorce and it was nasty and ugly. And so do not mention the ex's name. Otherwise, there's going to be a meltdown. I know a family where you couldn't mention making money. Because if you did, one family member would pull out these emails from scam artists. About if you invest in this stock, you'll be rich. Of course, that family member wasn't rich. So I'm not sure why they always thought that would work. But they were pretty convinced that that needed to work. And so our families are weird. We have issues. We have problems and strangeness from our family. And chances are your family is at least a little bit weird.

When I started this, this message, I was thinking about what this proverb say about families. And first I'm thinking, I don't even know what Proverbs says about families. That's not the the go to book I think of about families. But as we've been reading through it, Proverbs actually says a lot about families. I hope you've been reading the chapter a day and keeping up with that. It's been, I think it's been enjoyable. So hopefully you're doing that. And proverbs talks a lot about families. The first seven chapters, he starts out with "my son." And he gives advice. That's about families. There's all kinds of great bits of advice throughout the book about families and how to behave and how children behave and how spouses behave.

And finally, Proverbs climaxes in chapter 31, with over a chapter about what? You guys know what this chapter 31 is about. A very famous chapter about a noble woman, There are whole Christian ministries based on Proverbs 31, about a nobal woman, and how she helps the family and all the great things that she can do. And there's like I said, there's Christian ministries for women based on this chapter. And I want to tell you, they got it wrong. Because that chapter is not about how women should behave. It's about how men should behave. And if you read it carefully, it's not telling women, you should do this, you should do that you should do this. No, it's a look at the woman. And she does this, this and this and

men, you should do this, that and the other. We're going to talk more about that. But Proverbs has a lot to do about our family, what to say about our families.

And some of you may be getting ready to tune out, I don't have a family, it's just me, I'm single, or the kids are grown and moved away. And so you know, our families, it's kind of over. And nothing could be further from the truth. It doesn't matter whether you're old, maybe you haven't gotten married yet. Still talking to you. Doesn't matter whether you're single, whether you're married, whether you got 50 kids, when you have no kids, this can all apply. Because sometimes, if you don't have blood family around, you'll replace that blood family with another family. And you may not be blood relationships to them, but they will become your family. And I've talked about here several times about members in this congregation with treated Lind and I like family, because we're all family here. So this applies to all of us.

I'm going to give away the whole message of the sermon right here. Because I don't want you to miss it. Sometimes we think that relating to our families and our spouses and our kids, right, we could go to a marriage seminar, and we can improve our relationship with our spouse, we can go to a parenting seminar, and become better parents. And those things are okay. There's nothing wrong with that. It's not a sin. But that's not the primary way, you get a better family. It's not working on your horizontal relationships, to get to a better family. It's working on your vertical relationship with Jesus, to get to a better family.

And if you don't get anything else I say today, please get that. We're gonna talk a little bit more about that in just a minute. But I want you to get that. So I gave away the whole message right there. So hopefully, you'll stay with me the rest of the time.

There's a couple of things I wanted to point out. First, is husbands and wives growing together in wisdom. And if you're a grammar nazi, this sentence or a statement should make you shudder. Because you can read it two different ways. It's imprecise. Are husbands and wives growing towards each other, growing together in wisdom, or are they growing in unison in wisdom? You can't tell. Because it's like, two points in one. I worked hard on that. So you should appreciate that. It's an extra bonus for you this morning. It's both. We want our husbands and wives to grow together. We want to be closer together. We also want to grow vertically in our wisdom. So it's both.

Look at what the Bible says Proverbs 31 says a wife of noble character who can find she is worth far more than what rubies, her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. Interesting. We're not gonna take time to read all the Proverbs 31, although it is a profitable read. But if you look back at some of the ancient languages of this was written in Greek, when it talks about a woman of strength. The actual translation, if you want for a very literal translation would be a manly woman. I don't know about ya'll, but I prefer to have my women, the womanly and not manly. But it's talking about a woman of strength. And she's not going through some sexual identity crisis, where she can't

decide if she's a woman, or if she's a man, or one of the other 32 genders or whatever the number is. That's not what's happening. But she is a woman of strength. And she she sets about doing things. The chapter goes on to talk about She works hard, she makes money. She's kind to the poor, she's fearless about the future. She enhances her husband's reputation. She speaks wisdom. And she sets about her work vigorously, and her arms are strong for the tasks, ok. A woman of noble character who can find she is worth far more than rubies. And verse 11, that same chapter says the husband lacks nothing of value. And this word value again, if we look at the original translation, this kinda means the loot, or the spoils of war. Why would it use such terminology? See, because she doesn't live in some idyllic paradise, where everything is easy. And things are just handed to her. She has to work for it. It's a struggle. And she brings home the spoils of war, the loot.

I have seen so many women behave in manners like this. And it doesn't even matter whether they were married or not, or they were moms or not. Women just sometimes behave like this. They are givers. They give, and they continue to give. And they take care of things, and they improve the things around them.

And some of the women may be thinking right now, you know, I'm feeling a little defeated. Because my standards haven't been that high. And then maybe I don't feel like I've been that strong. Life is kind of beat me up a little bit. I just want to say one thing to you. When Abraham wanted a wife for his son, you remember the story he sent off to a far country to find her and bring them back. And when God wanted you to find a husband, he reached across the vastness of space and time to arrange the flow events on earth for you to meet the husband that was perfect for you. And I don't think we talked about that enough. I don't think we talked about that enough. God has arranged for you to be with these people, with the children that you have with the husband or the wife that you have.

And some of us men may be feeling like, I haven't lived up to what proverbs 31 says, and I haven't treated my wife in this way as she deserves. And, you know, we need to talk a little bit about that too. Because like I said, Proverbs 31 is primarily for the men. What does the word husband mean? Anybody know? Ever heard of what the people call their take care of the vineyards? Husband, right Husbandry to take care of the plants. It's to cultivate, to help it to grow to take care of it, husbands, what are we supposed to do for our wives? Help them grow. Take care of them. Not because they're a weak pansy. It's wilting on the wall and they can't make it without us. No. We are to help them grow and bloom and become also they can be. Ever noticed that the plan to take care of do better than the plants who ignore the house. Right? People say I'm not a green thumb. Well, you know, water the plant once in a while. Husbands, take care of the plant, water in a little bit, help it to grow.

Let's look and see what Proverbs 31 says. This is verses 28 to 31. It says her children arise and call her blessed her husband also and he praises her. Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be what? praised. honor her for all her hands have done and let her works bring praise at the city gate. What do you think the

key word is in this passage? praise. What are we supposed to do with the women? praise them. Not so that we can build up some kind of pride. But when they do these things that help us so that we can honor them appropriately. Right. Think about it if you're sitting at home When somebody does something nice for you, they bring you a cold glass of lemonade on a hot day. What do you say? Thank you. Right? Not it's about time. What took you so long? I'm dying over here? Right? You say thank you, you praise her for her thoughtfulness. Okay? No, no put downs, no fault finding. God wants to fill our homes with praises. I want you to think about that. How different would your household be, if it was full of praises? Some of us may even have a hard time imagining that.

So men, if you can think of a way your wife should be praised, praise her. Tell her. God has called on you to bring her to excellence. Is your wife becoming magnificent, because of the time and effort you pour into her? Wouldn't it be great if she could look back at the end of her life, And say I had a wonderful life? My husband helped me to grow and become all I could be. That'd be awesome, wouldn't it? See, and then this isn't just a pep talk. How you see God will inevitably show up in how you treat your family. Okay, because you can fake it at church. Right? Especially that we all got masks on. Nobody knows that you're frowning and upset or whatever, right? It's easy to hide. It's only an hour, once a week, I can cowboy up and put on the smiley face for an hour, once a week, you might even be able to fake it at work. But you can't fake it at home. You can't fake it at home, and how you see God will inevitably show up and how you treat your family. A. W. Towzer says "the essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God and that are unworthy of him." See, the key point of idolatry is us thinking thoughts about God that are unworthy of him. Seeking sometimes, you may not have a problem with God. God's fine. I've even heard people say God and I have got a deal. He does his thing. I do my thing. We leave each other alone. Such thoughts are not worthy of God. And you may even think that God has, you know, he's okay. He's the Savior, you know, Yay. but you don't feel the passion that he feels for you. And so how can you show that passion to anybody else? how you view God will affect how you view your family in a huge way. And if your thoughts are not worthy of God, your thoughts about your husband or your wife are not going to be worthy of them. And your thoughts about your children are not going to be worthy of them. Here what I'm saying? Make sense? Okay.

Sometimes the root of the problem is we don't know who the real Jesus is. We don't realize what he did for us. The truth is that Jesus got pretty passionate for us. And pretty radical for us. He died on a cross for us. And so are we feeling that same passion? It'll affect how we deal with our our family members.

Now some of us may have even grown up in a home where there wasn't a lot of love expressed. Okay, especially from dad and especially from dad to sons, okay? Because women, you don't have a problem with this, right? You ever been somewhere in a crowded place, you could be in the mall at Christmas time, you know, shoulder to shoulder. And we haven't done that in a while. And we've forgotten what that's like. I still have nightmares about it. But you know, you can be in the most crowded place ever. And if some woman sees a friend that she hasn't seen in a while across the room, what happens? <scream> And they run across the room blowing people out of the way. And hug and dance. And they're happy. And they don't care who knows. I joke, but I'm envious. Because if guys if you see somebody that

you love it to guy across the room, what do you do? Nod the head. And ladies, you will never figure out the head nod. Don't even try. Because the head nod to me about 57 different things. And only we know what it means. And men, we haven't shown the love the way we ought to show the love. We feel the love. I feel like I love my kids. I feel like I love my wife. I feel like I love my parents. We haven't showed it and said it enough. And so that's an area that men we need to work on because the women do that better. And no, I'm not suggesting and throw up your hands in scream and run across the room, but there's a way to show that love appropriately and still be still be a manly man. Okay.

We have to get radical and change. And some of you may say I don't know how to do it. Start today. There's no better time than today to start. Do you believe that if God has asked you to do this, and you say, God, I'm gonna follow what you've asked me to do. That he's gonna leave you hanging? No, he will be with you. He will help you start showing the love today.

Alright. Children and parents growing together, also growing together in wisdom, right? How do our children and parents relate to each other? Here's just a couple of texts. Proverbs is full of the stuff. I just picked out a few here. A wise son brings joy to his father. But a foolish man despises his mother. If someone curses their father or mother, their lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness. That one is scary. May your father and mother rejoice may she who gave you birth be joyful.

Every one of us have a mom and dad. And so we're speaking to all of us here. How do we grow in wisdom towards our parents? We saw the word despises. And the word curses there. And those are kind of opposite of what God wants. What has God asked us for? Remember the fifth commandment what does he tell us? honor your mother and father, right? So he wants us to honor he doesn't want us to despise or to curse. I want to talk about those words a little bit. When you despise somebody, what does that mean? What does that mean when you despise somebody? You don't like them. They're they're less than me somehow. Right? Don't despise your parents. And when it talks about cursing, it's not talking about swearing. Don't swear to parents, although I'm sure that probably applies. But who would you put a curse on? The people you despise, right? You're saying that you are somehow less than me. And you're treating your parents in this way. Okay.

And so we're not supposed to despise we're supposed to honor our parents, and it applies to all of us for our whole lives. It doesn't say honor your parents while you live at home. It doesn't say honor your parents while you're younger than 18. It doesn't say honor your parents, if you had good parents. If your parents were good Christians. And they gave you all the stuff and they helped you grow to be good Christian, then you honor them. No, if you had parents that were jerks, you still have to honor them. And that's where it gets hard. That's where it gets hard. How do we do that? How do we do that? See, it puts the pressure on us to honor our parents. It's not on them. It says, honor your parents. No ifs, ands, or buts, reminds me of the George Carlin skit. Have a nice day? You can get into all kinds of trouble. Because there you are standing in line at the grocery store, buying a couple things and cookies and some ice cream. And you're getting ready to checkout. And some loose lip cashier will go, have a nice day. And

now all the pressures on you to have a nice day. Somehow in this horrible world, I'm about to go out and have a nice day. The cashier never says have a horrible day. That would be a whole lot easier, right? The pressures on you to have a nice day. The pressure is on you to honor your parents.

How do you do that one way as you thank them. Thank you parents for what they did for you. You don't have to be... your parents may have made some major mistakes, may have done some things really wrong. Well, you learn from it and you survive. So thank them for it. The pressure is on you. Okay, how do we thank our parents? And I want to be clear here, you know, some sometimes there are some really horrible, ugly family relationships, and I'm kind of avoiding them. Sometimes a little bit of distance is a good thing. Okay. But you still have to honor your parents, even in those situations. I know that's hard. I don't know if anybody here has experienced that. I know that it's hard. But we have to do that. That's what the Bible tells us to do. The second way you can honor your parents, and especially if they were Christians, and they helped to bring you up in a Christian home, is imitate their faith. Imitate their faith. You know, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 13:7, it says remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God, and imitate their faith. Don't imitate their style. Don't just blindly do what they did. Don't imitate their traditions. imitate their faith. Okay, you get the difference there? I think about why I grew up way back in the 60s and 70s. So long time ago, styles have changed. We don't do things the way we used to then. So you don't imitate their style. you imitate their faith, and help pass that along to your children. If Christ was first in your family, then show your kids how to put Christ first in your family. The way we honor our parents is in these wishy washy times is with an all out Christian faith that will stand the test of time.

What else is proverbs say? This is a very famous verse that probably all of us know. Train up a child and the way he should go. And even when he is old, he will not what?? He will not depart from it. I have a love hate relationship with this verse. Because I believe what it's saying. But we all know kids that did depart from it. Because eventually children have their own freewill and they get to decide. And this is not a promise from God. It's a wise saying. And we should know the difference. We should know the difference. But there's truth here. When you Train up a child. That word train up again means to dedicate now Sometimes here with little babies, what do we have in church? A dedication. Why? "I don't know. Because somebody else did. So I did one." No, we're training him or dedicating him to the way he should go. I always say the child dedications are not for the child. It is for mom and dad, that's who we're dedicating. They're the ones that are committing to raise the child in the way he should go. It's hard, it's hard. So we want to train them up. We want to pass on the passion for Christ to them that we have felt, and the passion that Christ has felt for us. Okay.

Now, sometimes as our children get a little older, you can hear jokes, maybe, about we're ready to have them leave the nest. You know, sometimes maybe know your child is 47 and still lives at home. You're ready for them to you know <move on>, You guys seen some of these eagles, and they push the baby out of the nest, they learn to fly. And somebody at work that was talking about that. It was pastor, one of our last meetings, maybe we're talking about the Eagles, they learned to fly at Sabbath School last week, I think, the Eagles learning to fly and how great is it that the daddy Eagle catches the baby? Yeah.

Because then the eagle push his butt out of the nest, so that he's got to go catch him when he doesn't learn to fly. We forget that part. Oh he saved him, we forget the that he kicked him out of the nest, too. Right. And sometimes we got to do that. Bible says folly is bound up in the heart of a child with the rod of discipline will drive it far away. See, we need to discipline our children. And let me be clear here there's a difference between discipline and beating the living stink out of them. Okay, we are not talking about beating the child, we're talking about discipline. There's a difference. Okay, regardless of how you feel about a spanking, and how to spanking, you've got to discipline the children. And some children, all you got to do is look at them and they melt. I had two children, as you know, you guys know them. They were very different. One up, just say word and they snap to one, the other one took more coaching, okay. Children are different. You got to learn what it requires to get them in line, okay.

The word folly means the refusal to make moral choices. And sometimes we have children that they don't want to grow up and started adulting. Okay? And I'm not saying that some magic age you turn 21 you better. We all bloom at different times. But at some times, we need to encourage them to grow. To step out, you just can't live in the basement playing video games forever. Okay. And so we've got to, we've got to learn how to do that and to push them forward a little bit to help them go out.

Joshua was Moses assistant from the time he was a youth.

God called Samuel into the ministry when he was a boy.

David was anointed king as a young man.

Josiah, the reformer King started to rule when he was eight years old.

Daniel was a young man when he stood up to the world power Babylonian Empire, and made the difference that we still talk about today.

Timothy was young enough to be called my child by Paul. And Paul still handed over the church to him to carry forward with.

John Quincy Adams was appointed by Congress as a diplomatic secretary to the court of Catherine, the great of Russia when he was 14. A year later, he traveled for six months unaccompanied from St. Petersburg to Paris, stopping along the way in Stockholm to negotiate trade between the US and Sweden. 15 years old!

David Farragut, I hope I'm saying that right. Went to sea at age 10, fought in the war of 1812, when he was 11. And at age 12 had risen to the rank of captain, and commanded a captured British ship. 12 years old.

Charles Spurgeon preached his first sermon at age 15. Pastored a church at 16. Was preaching to crowds of 5000, and more by age 19.

Our children have the capacity for greatness. Just if we will let them grow, and help them grow. Help them get the immaturity out of their hearts, and the maturity for Christ into their hearts.

Proverbs 14:26 says, Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children in it, it will be a refuge. When your heart is with God. It's a refuge, not just for you, but for the children. You know this, children have a way of finding hypocrisy. Right? "Dad, you said do this, but you didn't do it." Right? They spot it. So when you have your heart secure the Lord, they will know it as well.

Last point. I want all of us to grow in wisdom from the Lord. Right? All of us are family here. Right? We pray for each other. We weep with each other, we laugh with each other. We're family. Hebrews 12 says. And this is quoting Proverbs, by the way. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as father addresses his son? It says, My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you. Because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chases everyone he accepts as his son. Enduring hardship as discipline, God is treating you as children, for what children are not disciplined by their father. When we suffer, it's easy to look at God as having abandoned us, as having left us. Maybe we even think of God as being brutal. Why is he doing this to me. That feels like loss. And nothing could be further from the truth. God has not left you. Maybe God is disciplining you. Maybe, I don't know.

But we know that God is with us. We know that God will never be far from us, because Christ suffered in a way we never will. At the cross, he was really rejected so we wouldn't be rejected. He was abandoned so that we wouldn't be abandoned, and we would always be held close. He was lost, so that we can be found. He was treated as an outcast and an enemy, so that we would be treated as family. And whatever else God is doing in your life today, no matter how painful it may be, if you are in Christ, and God is not forsaking you, he is not hostile towards you. He is not treating you as some outcast. He's treating you as a son. His love is taking you deeper. Because he accepts you. He rejoices in you. He values you, and he understands you. And he has a magnificent future planned for you. Will you trust him? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us to be willing to put our trust in you. To not be scared to not feel alone. Lord, we need to understand our relationship with you and to get our relationship with you right. And once we do that, it will be so much easier to get our horizontal relationships with our family and our friends in order. Help us to understand that. Help us to be brave enough to take the steps because those first steps are always scary. We don't know where we're going. We don't know how to do it. We don't know what to say. It may seem awkward to give somebody a hug. Lord, we want to be the loving kind of people, that you would have us be. So help us this week to show the love, to share the love, to spread your love, so that others may look at us and see you. Be with us now. Help us to make wise decisions and bring us back again. In Jesus name. Amen.