

Disciple **YOUR** *Children*

BY PASTOR MARK JESKE



TIME OF
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MINISTRY

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Direct quotations from the Bible (NIV) are printed in **bold**.

I enjoy reading stories about the development of the American West. One of the most amazing is the story of the 49ers. I don't mean the NFL football team. The original 49ers were people who were bitten by the gold bug after gold was discovered in California. At John Sutter's Mill outside of Sacramento, gold was found in such quantities that you could scrape it right off the ground and pan it right out of the streams. People flooded into California. San Francisco was a small trading port in the 1840s, but in 1849 and 1850, its population tripled from a few thousand to about 30,000 seemingly overnight.

Can you image what life was like in that town? The stories of those first few years are incredible. There was no social structure of any kind. There was no police force. There were no churches and no city hall. It was you and your gun and your knife. Everybody was armed to the teeth because of the thieves, gamblers, prostitutes, drunks, and social chaos; it's amazing that anybody survived.

Life back then was nothing at all like what you experience on a day-to-day basis. You are protected everywhere you go, really. Not to say that there is no risk to living here in the 21st century, but your life is

nothing like what it was like to live in San Francisco in 1850.

Wherever you go there are regulations protecting you. This is true of almost everything. Every aspect of your life—food, transportation, construction of public buildings—is governed by the ordinances of your city to guarantee your safety and your convenience.

But, you know, there's one aspect of our lives that is hardly governed and regulated at all, and yet it's of huge importance: If you want to have kids, you don't need a pregnancy license. Isn't that amazing? What decision made by human beings is greater than the decision to engage in the behavior that is the prelude to pregnancy? Think about it. Any two people who hit puberty can make a baby, a male and a female.

Once you have a child, however, the state has an interest in certain features of the physical well-being of that child. Child protective services will be all over you if you abuse the child. If your attempts to correct stray into abuse, you are legally liable. If you deprive your child of clothing, food, or shelter, you might lose custody. But our state does nothing whatsoever to protect and regulate the transmittal of

spiritual values. When it comes to transmitting faith and a connection with God, you're on your own. That is both a freedom and a tremendous responsibility. It's one that we aren't good at by nature. And it's one that does not automatically occur to us to do. It's something we all need to choose to do. It is a learned behavior.

When you watch the way animals develop, you see that they get good at what they need to do to survive because God preprinted circuitry in their brains to take care of all that stuff. Birds know how to migrate without having to go to bird school. Leaves fall off trees at a certain time of year because they are programmed to do so. Animals and plants know just what to do; people don't.

And no matter how wonderful and strong a believer you may be, you cannot transmit your faith into your offspring biologically, the way you transmitted hair texture, skin texture and color, or your tallness or shortness. Your children's faith is not automatic. The knowledge of Christ's redemptive work, the Holy Spirit's power, and the fatherly love of our Creator is not

present in our lives when we're born. We must rededicate ourselves to the concept of how we transmit our spiritual life to the next generation. Hopefully this will shake us awake and show us that this tremendously important thing does not happen by itself. It's hard to do; it's time consuming—it takes as long to transmit faith as it does to grow up a kid physically.

I think that God keeps people physically vulnerable for a long time, unlike the animal world. Mosquitoes can get up to drilling speed very quickly, can't they? Just days after hatching they know just how to extract blood from you. But people take a long, long time. And I think maybe God slowed that physical development time down to maximize the amount of time that kids would have with caring adults who transmit not only food scavenging skills, foraging skills, and employment skills but also the spiritual things that they will need to have happy lives on earth and even more so to have a happy eternity.

I want to tell you a very sad Bible story from 2 Samuel chapters 18 and 19.

If I asked you to list the five greatest heroes of the Old Testament, not very far down your list of top heroes would probably be King David.

David knew that he had been chosen for great things. He was aware of a special relationship that he had with God. God said, “He is a man after my own heart. Here’s somebody who’s just like me in his feelings and desires.” Wow!

But . . . David was a lousy dad. He didn’t pay attention, and he sank his energy, his planning, his resources, his intelligence, his treasure, and his heart into all kinds of other enterprises and did not take enough care in his family life. First, I want to tell you one of the miserable things that happened because of his recklessness. Then, I want you to think about what went wrong, and I want to discuss with you what we need to do better.

Here’s some background: David had many wives and many concubines. Now one of the aching questions that people ask me sometimes is, “Why did God let all those guys in the Old Testament have all those wives; I thought there’s supposed to be one

man and one woman?” Abraham, to his great shame, embarrassment, and pain, had two women in his household, which is one too many. Jacob had four, which is three too many. David had eight wives, at least ten concubines that we’re aware of, and at least 18 kids. Did God let these men get away with having multiple wives? I don’t think he let them get away with anything. Did God want marriage to be between one man and one woman back then too? Yes. And every time you see polygamy happening in the Old Testament, even by the so-called heroes of faith, in every case there was family bitterness and misery all over the place. The women were at each other, and the kids resented each other and plotted against one another.

In David’s own family, one of the bitter fruits that he harvested from the mess he had in his home was that one of his boys, Amnon, began to lust after his half sister. Amnon rigged a little system whereby he got her alone and raped her and then dumped her. And her full brother, Absalom, became enraged and plotted coldly and carefully to have Amnon murdered. Once the murder was committed, Absalom had to flee.

In exile Absalom hung out with his grandfather, the king of Geshur, who was an unbeliever. One of David's earlier messes had been to marry a woman named Maacah, who was a non-Israelite. She was not a believer either. And so, the spiritual upbringing given to young Absalom was terrible. And Absalom, after living for a while in exile, contrived another one of his tricks to get himself readmitted to the Israelite court where he could once again be a prince.

But in the meantime, Absalom had learned to despise David, his father, and he had learned to despise David's God. I'll tell you what, all you who are parents, all you who are going to be parents, listen up—your children will experience God first through you. No kid will ever learn to respect God the Father if he or she cannot respect you as a father. If you as a mother have not taught your child to respect his or her parents, that child cannot learn to love and respect authority from heaven.

In a sense, parents are God made visible to their kids. And David failed miserably. Absalom became a rebel, and he came to despise David and David's God. He began to plot how he was going to get rid of the

old man. Absalom out-hustled David and out-organized him, and David was too much of a sap of a parent. If he didn't see what was going on, he was a bigger fool than I think possible, or worse—he saw what was going on and in a kind of paralyzed love, like many weak fathers, let the kid run wild.

Absalom built an organization with the prime goal of getting rid of David. Absalom picked his moment carefully and at his chosen time had himself declared king in Hebron. David had to run. A terrible civil war ensued. Only because God intervened to save his foolish friend David was Absalom defeated.

The Lord intervened and swung the battle of the civil war David's way. God bought him a little bit of time so David could get organized, and on one ugly day, there was a slaughter as big as the battle of Gettysburg in our own Civil War. Twenty thousand people were killed, and the prime cause was David's poor parenting.

In 2 Samuel 18:31, David was eagerly awaiting war news. A Cushite, an African, arrived. He said, **“My lord the king, hear**

the good news! The LORD has delivered you today from all who rose up against you.” David knew a brutal slaughter was going on in the distance.

“The king asked the Cushite, ‘Is the young man Absalom safe?’ The Cushite replied, ‘May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man’” (verse 32). Which is to say, “O King, Absalom is dead. The civil war is over.”

“[David] was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you’” (verse 33). At which point you might say, “What? He was trying to kill you. Wake up, David! You are so confused about your parenting that you let him walk all over you. When the Lord mercifully spares you from being killed by your son and stops the slaughter, all you can do is lament for your poor boy!”

“Joab was told, ‘The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.’ And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that

day the troops heard it said, ‘The king is grieving for his son.’ The men stole into the city that day as men steal in who are ashamed when they flee from battle” (19:1-3).

These people had risked their lives. A lot of men were dead because they put their bodies in front of arrows meant for the king. These guys had lost friends, comrades, brothers, uncles, dads, and sons on the field of battle, and David was making them feel like losers.

David cried all day. Joab, who was David’s commander in chief and a ruthless and smart warrior, went into the house to the king and said, **“Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines** (verse 5). If you can’t care about yourself, at least the women whom you had to leave behind in Jerusalem are not going to die.

“You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that

you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the LORD that if you don't go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come upon you from your youth till now" (verses 6,7).

Wow! Joab was so disgusted that he was risking being fired or, at the very least, was risking a fistfight. He said, "This has to stop. You're wrecking us by your bad leadership. Your fathering skills are so dysfunctional that you're going to plunge the whole nation into further chaos."

"So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When the men were told, 'The king is sitting in the gateway,' they all came before him" (verse 8).

Please forgive me for leading you through such a downer of a story. But God put it in his Word for a reason. What can we learn from it? What can you learn, Dads and Moms? Single gals, as you're prospecting for who might be a good mate, what are you looking for? Are you thinking about

what kind of dad a man might be? Guys, does having multiple wives or girlfriends sound like a good idea? Does marrying someone that doesn't have the same faith as you sound like a good idea? What does the spiritual life of your kids look like if the people nurturing them don't fully believe in what you believe?

This is important!

Children do not know of their spiritual state at birth; we are all lost and condemned sinners. Children by nature can see that something's broken, but they don't know why. Why is the world so bad? Why is there hatred? Why is there war? Why is there fighting in our homes? Why is there stealing and quarreling? Why are there betrayals and lies and so much cheating and cruelty? Explain it to your children. Tell them the sad plight of the human race. Tell them that we need God's help because we're broken. We're all sick with sin. And sin kills; it's killing our bodies and souls slowly. We don't get better on our own spontaneously. The only way to inner healing is by God entering our lives.

Children do not become believers in God or have spiritual lives begin to flow into them spontaneously either. It needs to be taught and demonstrated. The African proverb is right: it really does take a village. I've been talking to parents a lot, and some of you are single and maybe thinking, "Well, this message is for somebody else." No, it really does take a village. Even those of you who are maybe 70 or 80 and childless, we need you too as grandpas and grandmas in an honorary sense. We need all of you to say, "God has put children into our lives, and we are responsible for doing what we can to nurture, discipline, and disciple them because it does not happen by itself."

Children do not learn about Christ Jesus by themselves; they need to be told of his loving forgiveness, his great compassion, his horrible suffering, his bloody death, and his triumphant resurrection. And you and I are part of that process. And as long as God has given you life, you can become part of this. Even from your nursing home someday, your prayers can reach around the globe. And the offerings and gifts that you give will keep the Word moving. Your gifts of money keep the Word moving; they are accelerators of the telling process.

Your mouth also plays an important part in this—share the good news of God’s forgiving love. All of us need that forgiving love because in one way or another we’ve all dropped the ball and we’re all guilty of being poor parents, poor uncles and aunts, poor grandparents. We’ve all got a thousand things to be ashamed of, and I don’t want what happened to David to happen to us.

I think that by the time Absalom launched his civil war, David had given up any sort of responsibility for him anymore. He thought it was too late. And all David did was fret, “O Absalom, O Absalom, my son.” Why didn’t he get in the young man’s face and straighten him out? Because he gave up; he thought it was too late.

But it’s never too late. Never give up. Go to God for forgiveness for your mistakes and failings of the past. Be cleansed and let go of the guilt of what you’ve been dragging around. Draw new strength from him and ask him to show you how to be a good leader and discipler of the next generation. God will transform you to be better than you were yesterday. Call on him for the strength you need to be a spiritual role model. Don’t be like David, who had such

a twisted collection of feelings for Absalom that he could not act; he was paralyzed. The Lord will give you strength so that you will not be paralyzed when you need to be talking.

Encourage one another too. This is the most precious thing we can do with our time and our treasures. Because I'll tell you what, all the things that you collect are going to be taken from you sooner or later. And there is only one thing that can be in heaven with you in eternity, and that's people.

I encourage you and invite you and challenge you to renew your passion for the concept of Christian education in your home, in congregations, and in Christian schools. These places do not take care of themselves but need you. Please join me in telling the younger generation the bad news about our need and the good news about the rescue of Jesus Christ and the mercy and love of God our Father.



STRAIGHT TALK. REAL HOPE.

“Go...and teach all nations.” This command from a resurrected Jesus Christ to his disciples over 2,000 years ago is the driving force behind *Time of Grace*, a multimedia, Christian outreach ministry dedicated to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with all people, especially those who have not heard it. Founded in May of 2001, *Time of Grace* primarily uses television to share the gospel with people across the country in an expanding number of markets. (See complete list on the following pages.)

Originating from St. Marcus Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, *Time of Grace* broadcasts a half-hour program each week featuring Pastor Mark Jeske. He presents Bible studies in terms that people can relate to and apply to their personal lives.

We hope you will watch *Time of Grace* if it is broadcast in your area. Or—visit our website at www.timeofgrace.org where you will find recent messages of Pastor Jeske. We have a variety of booklets, DVDs, or videos available. You also can contact us at **1-800-661-3311**.

God's Blessings!

BROADCAST SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, 5:00PM CT

Daystar DirectTV Ch. 369 | Dish Network Ch. 263

For a station in your area visit timeofgrace.org and click on the Daystar logo.

SUNDAY, 2:00PM CT NRB DirectTV Ch. 378

ARIZONA

PHOENIX

KPHO CBS, Ch. 5

Sunday at 7:00am MT

ARKANSAS

BELLA VISTA

Bella Vista Cable, Ch. 16

Sunday at 8:00am CT

FLORIDA

ORLANDO

WACX, Ch. 55

Sunday at 11:30am ET

WTGL, Ch. 45

Sunday at 9:30pm ET

GAINESVILLE

WACX, Ch. 69

Sunday at 11:30am ET

TALLAHASSEE

WACX, Ch. 9

Sunday at 11:30am ET

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO

WJYS, Ch. 62

Sunday at 10:30am CT

INDIANA

SOUTH BEND

WHME Le Sea, Ch. 46

Sunday at 10:30am

KANSAS

GREAT BEND/HAYS

KBDK FOX, Ch. 14

Sunday at 7:00am CT

SALINA

KAAS FOX, Ch. 18

Sunday at 7:00am CT

WICHITA

KSAS FOX, Ch. 24

Sunday at 7:00am CT

MICHIGAN

FLINT

WSMH FOX, Ch. 66

Sunday at 7:00am ET

MARQUETTE

WBUP, Ch. 5/10

Sunday at 7:30am ET

ST. JOSEPH/BENTON HARBOR

WHME Le Sea, Ch. 46

Sunday at 10:30am

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS

KMSP FOX, Ch. 9

Sunday at 6:30am CT

NEW ULM

New Ulm Telcom Cable, Ch. 72

Sunday at 10:00am CT

Sunday at 7:00pm CT

Comcast Cable, Ch. 14

Sunday at 7:00pm CT

BROADCAST SCHEDULE *continued*

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS

KDNL-ABC, Ch. 30

Sunday at 9:00am CT

MONTANA

MISSOULA

Community Access, Ch. 7

Tuesday at 6:30pm MT

Sunday at 10:30am MT

NORTH CAROLINA

ASHEVILLE

Charter Cable URTV, Ch. 20

Sunday at 8:30am ET

TEXAS

AUSTIN

Austin Community Access, Ch. 11

Sunday at 7:00am CT

WASHINGTON, DC

WJLA ABC, Ch. 7

Sunday at 7:30am ET

WISCONSIN

BARABOO

WRPQ, Ch. 43

Sunday at 8:00 CT

GREEN BAY

WGBA NBC, Ch. 26

Sunday at 6:30am CT

WACY, Ch. 32

Sunday at 7:30am CT

LA CROSSE

WKBT CBS, Ch. 8

Sunday at 7:00am CT

MADISON

WMSN FOX, Ch. 47

Sunday at 7:00am CT

WBUW-CW, Ch. 57

Sunday at 8:30am CT

MILWAUKEE

WVTV-CW, Ch. 18

Sunday at 8:00am CT

WAUSAU

WSAW CBS, Ch. 7

Sunday at 7:30am CT

WISCONSIN RAPIDS

Solarus Cable, Ch. 985

Sunday at 12:00pm CT

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

ANTIGUA/BARBUDA

ABS Antigua Broadcasting Station

Sunday at 5:30pm

GRENADA, WEST INDIES

GBN Television

Sunday at 6:30pm

AMERICAN FORCES NETWORK

Airs on rotation. See www.myafn.net for program times.

For a complete broadcast schedule, visit our website:

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