

Your Home, A Refuge

Luke 15:11-24

February 11, 2018

Read Luke 15:11-24

This morning I would like to talk about creating a safe home. What would be some of the first things that come to mind when you think of making a home safe? Outlet covers for the electric plug-ins. Dead bolts on all the exterior doors. Cabinet locks (which adults cannot seem to open either). Smoke detectors and so forth. Unfortunately, no matter how hard we try it is probably impossible to make our homes completely accident proof from physical injury. Being physically safe is important, but this morning I want to look at our homes as being a place that is emotionally and spiritually safe for our families.

Over the past several weeks we have laid the foundation that our calling and primary responsibility as parents and grandparents is to impress the hearts of our children with a love for God. This is our most important mission in life. It is a mission of the heart, and the heart of your child will only communicate with you and relate with you if he or she feels safe with you—physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Last Sunday for Sermon on the Steps I think we had twenty some kids up here on the steps. Before we know it, we are going to blink, and they are going to be teenagers. Most Sundays we are blessed to have several teens. Our church wouldn't be the same without them. Then all of us here today have been teenagers at one time or another.

So I'm going to describe a situation, it is completely hypothetical. No suggestion at all that you have ever experienced this.

Your teenager flops into the front seat of the car, and you ask, "How was youth group tonight?" Or "How as school today?" "Fine" "What did you learn?" "Stuff"

There is an awkward silence the rest of the way home. This conversation repeats itself, in one form or another, day after day, week after week. What's going on? Why do teens bristle when Mom and Dad gently ask personal questions, especially about spiritual things? I believe these to be moments of intense spiritual attacks. It's OK to open up with friends or teachers, but don't be completely honest with your parents.

At the same time the wisdom of the world says, it is normal, natural, and good for our children to go through an extended period of time called "adolescence." Usually between the ages of twelve to twenty-five where your kids are going to be aloof, selfish, immature, and disrespectful. They will likely reject you, reject your faith, reject your church and experiment with sex, drugs, and alcohol, and if you can just endure these turbulent years, just accept it as a part of growing up, parents just keep your distance and let it happen, it may be possible to have a normal healthy relationship with your children when they become adults.

God's plan for the teen years is very different from the world's picture of how things should go.

The truth is that the teen years are vital years for parents and kids to be close. These are the years when your kids are making decisions that can affect the rest of their lives. The teen years are when you people need their parents more than ever. This deep heart connection

between parent and teenager does not just happen. You have to have a vision for it and actively work to achieve it.

If you want to have the opportunity to impress the hearts of your children with a love for God, we must do all we can to keep them from feeling lost and threatened in our homes.

How do we ensure that our kids do not feel lost? We do this by leading them. When a person is being led by a competent and experienced guide, you feel safe and there is no fear of getting lost. Imagine that you have chosen to climb Mount Everest. You have paid "\$60,000 to your guides. After a few days, you finally arrive at the 26,000 feet mark and you are preparing to enter "The Death Zone." If one is going to die on Mt. Everest it is most like to happen between 26,000 feet and the summit. Up to this point, you have been climbing well and feeling good. In fact you have been doing so well that your guides inform you that because of your excellent physical condition and great mountaineering skills, they are going to head back down to base camp and let you finish the climb on your own. How would you react? You would be furious. You didn't pay \$60,000 to get from sea level to the 26,000 feet mark. You paid to be guided through the death zone.

If we fail to guide our kids through the challenges of the teen years, we are no different than the guides who decided to leave the climber alone for the hardest part of the climb. If we are disengaged from our children or are overly-permissive with them, they will end up feeling unsafe, cheated, abandoned and angry.

Life is hard. We will experience hurt and rejection. We all need a place to hide. In Psalm 32:7, our Heavenly Father reminds us that we can always hide in Him. "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

If God is a hiding place, a place of safety for His children, then we, as parents, should be a hiding place for our children. Where do your children run when they are hurting? Where do they hide? It should be home to you. Our homes should be a safe place; the perfect hiding place for our children. This is not just a vision for parents with small children, but for parents with adult children as well. We need to reject the modern philosophy of parenting that teaches "when they leave, we are done."

Because our parenting mission is focused on the hearts of our children, we must do all we can to create safe relationships and to establish a safe home. Let's look at some principles for making our homes safe places.

Unconditional Acceptance Creates Security. The dad would playfully ask his three year old son each day, "Why does daddy love you?" Each day the three year old son would give the same two answers. "Because you love me!" and "Because I'm your boy!" Really those are the only two correct answers.

Have you ever wondered why God loves you? There are only two answers. He loves you because He loves you and because you are His child. It has nothing to do with what you look like, what you accomplish, or how you behave. It doesn't matter if you are a regular church attender. God knows everything you have ever done. He is aware of every thought you have ever had and yet he still loves you. His love for you is not based on you. It is based on His choice to love you and the fact that He chose to create you. When this truth finally sinks into

the deep places of our hearts, we are flooded with an incomparable sense of peace and safety and security.

It is God's desire for our children to experience this same unconditional love from us, so that their hearts will be prepared to experience unconditional love from Him. That's the kind of love we see in our scripture lesson this morning of the man who had two sons. The one son cause a lot of heart ache for his dad, even to the point where the son said, "Dad, I wish you were dead, so I could have my share of the inheritance." The father gave him his share and he took it and wasted every last cent of it. But the father never stopped loving his son and when the son finally came to his senses, the father was there, with arms wide open, to welcome his son home.

A parent's love for their child should never be performance based affirmation. A parent's love is unconditional. There are powerful words of encouragement that our children need to hear often:

"I love you no matter what"

"I am proud of you just because you are you"

"I will always love you no matter what you do"

"There is nothing you can do to make me love you any less, and there is nothing you can do that will make me love you anymore."

2. Stating and Living God's Order Creates Security. One of the best ways to create a safe home is to do all in our power to build our family with biblical priorities. The more our homes reflect God's structure for the family, the more the hearts of our children will be at peace. So what is God's structure for the family?

Moms, let's think of your role in the home first. As a mother, who is your first love? As we learned in the Great Commandment your most important role is to love God with all your heart. Your relationship with God is your highest priority. Then if you are married your second priority is to your husband. Then your children fill the third place in God's order for your life. Dads, your first priority is to love God. Our second priority, if married, is love our wives, as Christ loved the church and laid down His life for her. Our third priority is to love, pastor and disciple our children. The divine order is God, spouse, and the children. Talking about God's order for the home is important. Let your children catch you reading your Bible or praying.

3. Parental Blessing Creates Security and Peace in the Hearts of Our Children. We have already discovered that a great way to learn about parenting is to follow God's method of parenting us. One of the things that our Heavenly Father does throughout scripture is to give blessings to His children. The very first thing God said to Adam and Eve after he created them, was a blessing. "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." Genesis 1:28

When God blesses us, He is saying "I wish this for you. I give this to you. I desire this for you." Not only does God speak blessings to His children, He encourages parents to do the same for their children.

Many parents in the Bible understood the power of blessing their children. When Jacob was reunited with his lost son Joseph, who had become the prince of Egypt, he asked Joseph if

he could bless his grandchildren. This is what he said, “May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has delivered me from all harm – may he bless these boys, may they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth.” Genesis 48:15-16

Wow! What I wouldn't give to have a grandfather speak words like that over me. God has given the power to blessing to parents and grandparents. Taking the time to bless our children with words of prayer and affirmation can transform their lives. Start with Numbers 6:24-26

“The Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up the light of his face toward you and give you peace.”

There is a song I heard recently that I believe asks the questions that every child and teenager asks. Play “Love Me”

Who will love me for me? If this is the question our sons and daughters asks, let our answer be, Dad will love you for you. Mom will love you for you. You are safe here.