

Faithful in the Early Years

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- [0:00] The other speakers officially from the front here for the foundation and the groundwork they laid throughout yesterday and the night before. I appreciate the principles and everything else and I thank you for stealing so much of my content that I could get to something I really wanted to get to for sure.
- So I do appreciate that thoroughly. As mentioned, my subject is faithfulness in the early years. Primarily the concept of faithfulness when you're raising up those little ones.
- Now, if you're beyond that stage, bear with me because a lot of the things that are true in that stage are true through every stage. So even if you don't have little ones you're dealing with at the moment, there's a lot of consistencies here.
- So, as we get into this, I wanted to first take a look at the idea of faithfulness. And I was tempted to go two different directions with this because when we talk about faithfulness in the early years, if you've parented young children, we do rely on the faithfulness of God to get us through some of those days, don't we?
- Especially the evenings, maybe the nights. There's some long ones where we are taking care of that. There's also the concept of the faithfulness of the parents and how they live their lives and conduct themselves in regards to raising those children.
- [1:20] I'm going to start with the first one and transition a little bit to the second one. First of all, what is faithfulness? Faithfulness comes from the idea of being trustworthy or reliable.
- Just a passage to get us kick-started here. 1 Corinthians 1. When we think of somebody who is faithful, we think of somebody who you can count on to get the job done.
- I don't know if you've ever been in one of those situations or maybe you're a sports fan and you get towards the end of the game and you need that one player that you know can pull through for you. You have faith in that individual because he's demonstrated himself faithful.
- The Apostle Paul refers to our God as one who is faithful. 1 Corinthians 1.9 God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Faithfulness is a little more than just information. I mean, sometimes we can put data to it and see the statistics and everything that makes a person like, oh yeah, that's good.
- [2:29] But I've come to find that faithfulness is relational. And one of the things that we've heard already throughout this weekend is the fact that when it comes to raising kids, when it comes to family life in general, it's all about relationship.
- God is asking, and I also want to thank Tim because he used a phrase that I really appreciated on Friday night. When we have kids and families, we are stewards of our children and our families.
- That was a concept that was introduced to me years ago and I appreciated that thought, that drive of your kids, your family, they're not yours at the end of the day.
- God has entrusted those individuals to you to bring them up in a way that's pleasing to him. And we want to break that down. But, how many of you here have a really good grip on what being a faithful parent looks like?

Alright. I'm not raising my hand because I know. I'm raising my hand because I'm gesturing. So, I'm gathering you've all questioned this before. How many of you kids wonder what faithfulness looks like?

[3:37] Anybody got a pretty good grip on that? Alright. So, we're all in the same boat. Well, I don't know if I'll be able to answer all your questions for you this morning, but we're going to take a crack at it. I think God expects a faithfulness or is requesting a faithfulness from us based on how he has been faithful to us.

And I want to take a little journey here real quickly. Let's drop all the way back to the book of 1 Kings chapter 8. It's interesting that as God called the peak nation of Israel, starting with Abraham, out of the land of Ur the Chaldees, and he starts making Abraham promises, and then he promises things to Isaac and Jacob and through the prophets and Moses.

And when God makes a promise that he's going to do something, you know, these folks, they didn't have their Bible that they could go back and look, and oh yeah, sure enough, he did that.

Now, they were looking forward to something God said he was going to do, sometimes with no evidence of how God was going to manage that or make it happen. But as he started to show himself trustworthy and reliable, as he came through, this became something that they could look back on and count on.

In 1 Kings chapter 8, I'm sorry if I said 9, 1 Kings chapter 8, Solomon has just finished constructing the temple, and they're having the dedication service. And I'm not going to go through the whole dedication ceremony, but when we get towards the end of it, I'm going to start in verse 54.

[5:02] It says, And it was so that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

And he stood and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised.

There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. What is faithfulness? It's making a promise. It's saying you're going to do something, be something, perform something, and then doing it.

And Solomon's looking back and saying, God has kept his word and kept his promise. Let's look at another one real quick. Romans chapter 4. We're moving forward in our Bible, but back in historical context here.

Romans chapter 4. As Paul's breaking down our faith and how we respond to God in faith, he uses the story of Abraham as an illustration of faithfulness and the fact that God was trustworthy.

[6:13] And just as Abraham could put his trust in God, we can also trust God. And the story goes back to when God promised Abraham would have a son. I don't think I need to break down all those details for you. If you're rough on them, Abraham and Sarah were well beyond childhood years.

For those of you who are parents, how would you like taking that duty on at about 100 years old? You know, it's interesting. I started it, so now I've got to do it.

I look back at, you know, when you're younger 20s, mid-20s, and you start having kids, and you're like, oh, thank God he gave, you know, starts that at a younger age a lot of times, because I don't know how I do this when I'm older.

I'm just behind Tim here. A little after this upcoming weekend, I will turn 44. So you got me by a year, I guess. But at any rate, I have a two-year-old.

And I look back, and I'm looking at him some days and going, I don't have the energy to keep up with this anymore. What is God thinking? Letting people who are in their 40s have kids. This is crazy. And I looked around at all the other kids and the older ones, and oh, that's why he allows it to extend.

[7:18] You've got help at that point in time, but boy, when it starts, it's a doozy. So anyway, sorry. Squirrel, I think that's the... Romans chapter 4.

And we're going to start in verse 18. And he's referring, talking about Abraham here. It says, Why?

Verse 21. And being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. He was convinced God would be faithful.

Faithfulness starts with God's example. Faithfulness starts with what God has already shown. God's not asking us to do anything he hasn't already done and demonstrated.

And we can take heart and encouragement and direction from the faithfulness he has established. But it's not just faithfulness that shapes these things. And I want to... This will come around here in a second, but bear with me.

[8:37] We have faithfulness, but part of God's faithfulness that is significant, especially to the conversation we're having right now, is love. The two elements of relationship that are going to be most critical.

And once again, I think honestly in any aspect of our life. But when you're raising kids especially, when you're developing and building that relationship, it's your kids can count on you and that they know you love them.

And love for God is the start of these relationships. Let's drop back to Mark chapter 12. This is one of those stories that for years I had read.

I've heard of it. It's the young man who comes up and asks, what's the greatest commandment of all? And I've even talked about it and preached on it. And it wasn't...

Sometimes I look out and I ask my wife sometimes, did you know this before? And she's like, well, yeah, I've always thought that. I don't know where I was the last 20 some years, but it took me a little while for this to click.

[9:38] But Matthew chapter 12, starting in verse 28, it says, And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, which is the first commandment of all?

Another way of asking this is, what is the greatest commandment? And I'm sure you guys could tell me the answer to this question, but let's read exactly how this plays out.

Verse 29, And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

This is the first commandment. And I found that interesting, in a way, because if you wanted to take the law, and sum it up into one statement, and we focus on, it's our God over all the other gods, and idols, and everything else, but it boils down to loving him.

Interestingly, it doesn't say, Obey the Lord your God, with all your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength. Why would he not say that? You know, obedience is just following a list of rules, and there's no relationship there with obedience all the time.

[10:54] You can get obedience through fear. Governments have done that from the beginning of time, correct? You obey the laws because you fear the consequences.

God's desire is not that we fear him. Even under the law, God was not trying to establish a relationship through fear, but through love. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Verse 31. And interestingly, the scribe did not ask, what are the first two greatest commandments? But Jesus gives him a bonus one. Two for the price of one.

Verse 31. The second is like, namely this. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. From other references, we know that Jesus says, you can sum the law and the prophets up in these two things.

Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor as yourself. We already saw God demonstrated faithfulness. It should be a no-brainer if I ask you, has God demonstrated his love for us?

[11:57] Let's take a look. Second Corinthians chapter 5. The Apostle Paul, beyond just as we appreciate his ministry as being the apostle of the Gentiles, was an incredible individual who went through numerable sufferings and persecutions.

And we could read you the list out of, you know, later, but I'll let you do that at some point in time. But what makes an individual willing to go through all of that? Second Corinthians chapter 5, starting in verse 14, it says, For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

Now, I realize there's two trains of thoughts on this verse. Is it Christ's love for us that constrains us, or drives us, motivates us to do what we do? Or is it our love for Christ that performs that task?

I think both could be correct. In this particular case, though, I really think it was the Apostle Paul coming to the conclusion of understanding how deep the love of Christ was for him that drove him on.

Why? Because verse 15 seems to pick up that thread. It says, If someone's willing to go to die for you and all these things, it was enough for the Apostle Paul to give his life.

[13:30] But love, once again, is relational. It's something that's driving. It's something that creates an environment to create effects. And the Apostle Paul prayed that his followers would come to the same understanding.

Ephesians chapter 3. Sorry, we're doing a little Bible drill this morning, but it's early. It's been some late nights, so I figure if I keep you turning pages, it keeps you awake, right? At least I'm trying for that.

So, Ephesians chapter 3. And here's, I'm sure, a section many of you are familiar with. As the Apostle Paul hits the middle of the book of Ephesians, he starts sharing a prayer of his.

And I've come as I've gotten older to really appreciate when the Apostle Paul shares his prayers, his thoughts on behalf of the people that he was writing to. Here's one of those. We really get an insight into his heart and his mind.

Starting in verse 14, it says, For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

[14:57] I'm convinced you can't truly love somebody else until you really get a grip on how much Christ loved you, how much God loved you. And this was Paul's prayer.

Because when that love consumes you, it doesn't matter who you're coming in contact with, whether it's your two-year-old who is trying to figure out where the boundaries are endlessly, whether it's the five-year-old who asks you the question, why, constantly.

I think we addressed that one briefly yesterday. And sometimes you just want to put the child in a closet and close the door and walk away so you can get some peace of mind. But it's the love of Christ that gives us the understanding, the heart, the desire to put what we want behind us and serve someone else.

And we saw that Jesus' love for people wasn't just for adults. And in light of the topic, I did want to share the story that we, I'm sure once again, you're familiar with, but Mark chapter 10.

Jesus had a heart for the little ones too. Interestingly in this story, Jesus was the only one brought up or mentioned in the conversation that seemed to have the heart for the little ones.

[16:14] Little people hold a special place. Mark chapter 10, starting in verse 13, it says, And they brought young children to him that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

And for the record, society has taken the place of the disciples today, in my opinion. Send your kids to school so you can focus on your career.

Send your kids to daycare so that you don't have to lose time in your profession. Send your kids to events where other people will watch them for you so you don't have to be hassled with the presence of your kids.

I'll let you fill in the rest of those blanks. At any rate, as the children come, how does Jesus respond? Verse 14, But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.

For such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. Interestingly, Jesus flips the tables on him.

[17:26] You can learn something from these little ones. Verse 16, I like the image here. And he took them up in his arms and put his hands upon them and blessed them.

Jesus demonstrated a love. He demonstrated, God demonstrates his faithfulness. We've seen the love of God. We've seen the faithfulness of God. So as we talk about, now that I'm, that's my introduction.

Now as we get to talking about faithfulness in the early years, we have an example set. We have a, the principles are all there. God has shown us the way of doing this.

Now we need to take it and show it to our children. I believe this follows a larger principle. We are to image these realities, this relationship that God has sought with us to those around us.

Let's take another, one more quick journey. Back to Exodus. Exodus chapter 20. Exodus 20. Going back to that idea of stewardship.

[18:25] We're managing these lives for God. He's entrusted and given them to us to manage, grow into adults, to plant or to sow into them so that they can reap the benefits thereof later.

And it comes down to a concept that I think exists, once again, in every aspect of our lives. And we can go back to the book of Exodus for this. A brief context on my, my take on this particular thing.

Exodus chapter 20. Children of Israel have just come out of Egypt. They're standing at the foot of Mount Sinai. God is giving Moses the law. And previous in chapter, he's, he's given, he's offered Israel an opportunity to hold a very special place amongst the nations of the world.

He's offered to make them a peculiar people, a nation of priests, somebody that was going to be very special to him as a means of being a light unto the rest of the world. But that came with certain responsibilities.

And when we get to Exodus chapter 20, one of those we find in verse 7. It says, Now, the common interpretation and what I heard, remember, in Sunday school is, don't swear, right?

[19:45] Don't use the Lord's name in a profane fashion. I think that is a very, very good thing not to do. But I don't know that that's the entirety of what God is driving at here.

The idea of taking the name means to bear the name, not to even speak the name, but to bear the name of the Lord thy God in vain. What is Israel about to embark on here in this adventure? They just agreed to a chapter before.

We didn't read it, so I won't quiz you too hard. But I brought it up. You're going to be a kingdom of priests. What's a priest do? Well, that's a mediator between God and man, more or less, right? Because Christ is the only mediator now.

But at this point in time, they were supposed to be the nation that brought the light of God's truth and love to the rest of the world so that the world could come to him through that nation. And what he's telling them, I believe here in verse 7 of Exodus chapter 20, is if you're going to take that name, that job of being the people of God, don't do it to destruction.

Don't do it in an empty manner. You're representing me. If you're going to do it, do a good job of it. And the Apostle Paul echoes this principle to the members of the body of Christ all the way in 2 Timothy chapter 2.

[20:54] We see a similar principle brought up there. Our job is to represent an image Christ. And it starts when you wake up in the morning. As a family, you do it with your family, and you take it from there.

2 Timothy chapter 2, though, Paul, same idea. As a believer, if we are going to take on the name of Christ, it comes with an appeal. 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 19, Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

If you're going to bear the name, don't do so in vain. We're imaging something to the world about what God can do in our lives.

We are the visual representations. If we want to use another one, a Pauline word, we could go to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and say we are ambassadors for Christ. We are that visual representation to the world of that love of God, of the faithfulness of God, of the gospel of God.

But it's not just the world. It starts at home. And it starts with your kids. And it starts when they're young. How do we know it starts when it's young?

[22:09] Well, we've heard some of it already, but since we're in 2 Timothy and in a very convenient location, if you jump a chapter over to 2 Timothy chapter 3, we see that in Timothy's life, this started at a young age.

Verse 14, we'll start there. 2 Timothy 3, 14, But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Back up to chapter 1 of 2 Timothy. And we see another reference to Timothy's upbringing and what that looked like. 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 5, it says, When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Timothy was brought up in an environment and a culture of understanding who God was of the scriptures, so that as he got older, this shaped his life. It starts at an early age.

And I never made the connection until just recently here. So I really appreciate when people assign topics because it makes you go down a road that you didn't otherwise take.

[23 : 24] And this is one of the things that I didn't connect until prepping for this message specifically. Timothy's life was shaped from a young age, right? You've known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.

You've seen the faith of your grandmother. You've seen the faith of your mother. And Paul's convinced to transfer to him. How does that take place? How do we duplicate that? I believe God gave us the recipe for that in Ephesians chapter 6.

Here's one of those. We would be remiss to talk about raising children and neglect Ephesians chapter 6, would we not? Ephesians chapter 6.

And starting in verse 4. Good news, kids. Friends, you're off the hook. We don't have time to talk about verse 1. But it's about faithfulness of parents in the early years.

And I've studied through this multiple times and this time, a few things, dots seem to connect. So hopefully I can connect those for you too to show you. I think this is one of those things I kind of knew you're kind of doing.

[24 : 30] I mean... Okay, a little side note. We need a break anyway for a second, right? My wife and I will go on drives and we'll talk about stuff that's going on. And then, you know, you're looking around and you're seeing families struggle.

And at some point in time, you look back at... You reflect on what's going on in your own home, right? Well, wait. Are we missing something that's going on? And when we got married, we took a very intentional route with how we wanted to raise our children.

We came up with a game plan fairly early on. To some degree, it was a very broad picture of what I wanted to achieve. And to some degree, I don't know how it's going to turn out.

I like the direction it's going. But I'm kind of making this up on the fly. And one of the things that we determined early on was we wanted to make our faith part of our daily lives.

Something that was just natural. Something that happened. Something that defined who we were. It wasn't just, well, for a half an hour after supper, we're going to get down and have devotions.

[25 : 38] And good, we got God taken care of for the day. Now we move on with life. We intentionally tried to drive with that. And I appreciate the influence and the people who have come into play that helped us with that.

Another interesting side note. I asked ChatGPT, so therefore it must be true, right? But I was curious. How many parenting references, books, materials are out there?

Anybody want to hazard a guess? Conservative estimates between about 20,000 to 40,000. If you include brochures, pamphlets, and videos, and podcasts, at least 80,000 different sources where people will offer you advice doing what I'm doing, probably right here, right now, trying to give you advantage.

What does that tell me? That tells me there's 80,000 different ways people have tried to come up with to make this work correctly. Why are there 80,000 different ways?

At least, because there's far more families than that there are. And as Paul pointed out, they're all different. Everybody's different. Why didn't God just give us the easy one, two, three-step manual?

[26 : 49] No, it's 10 steps, right? If we could get a 10-step manual on how to guarantee your kids to turn out right, would you not go out and buy that today? Why does that not exist? Because your family is different than every other family.

Your relationship as a husband and wife is different than every other relationship as a husband and wife. What God did, and I'm convinced, is he didn't give us the one-size-fits-all solution to parenting your kids?

Because that doesn't exist. But he gave us a framework to operate in, and I believe that is demonstrated right here in Ephesians 6, verse 14. This is not your 10-step program, but I do believe this is your key to the door of success right here.

Ephesians 6, verse 4, and ye fathers, we could hammer on that, but I don't have the time. But notice who the responsibility falls on. If your family's going to be a success, it's got to be because the father is the one whose foundation is built on.

And, frankly, if you're going to be a success, your wife needs to be there, right there with you, supporting that role, coming in under that mission to build it up as well.

[27 : 58] But the father is the ground zero for this. Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. I'm going to bypass that for this morning because I don't have time to talk about that, but I want to get up to the next phrase.

But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What is the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

You know what's funny? If you look up the word nurture in Strong's Concordance, if your eye is like mine as a parent, it drops right to the word where it says discipline. Oh, I need to discipline my children. I need to raise them in such a way that, you know, it shapes who they are.

And part of that's right. But discipline is only one part of that. As I dug into it a little bit, now don't quote me on this, but as I understand it, the use of this phrase in Greek culture, because this was written in the Greek, how would the Greeks have understood this word to be used?

It includes discipline, but it has a heavy focus on shaping a person's way of life. You could say it is the intentional formation of the whole child's environment and culture.

[29 : 08] I'll say that again. Because it's more than just giving a spanking when they don't do what they're supposed to do. No, you are creating something specific. You are intentionally forming the entire child's environment and culture.

That is the minute they wake up to the minute they go to bed. And in between. The culture and environment you are creating in that home, which goes beyond just here, read your Bible in the morning and we have, you know, talk 30 minutes of devotions at night.

That's part of what you're doing. What else is going on in that time? Are you allowing, and who are you allowing to shape that culture? The Father is the one responsible for doing it.

Now, you can use resources, absolutely. Some use a TV as a resource. Some use video games as a resource. Some people use the public education system as a resource.

You're responsible for generating and creating that environment that creates a discipline within the child of how that life should look. You pattern that. Once again, this can apply beyond children and families, but I'm focusing exclusively on this.

[30 : 19] Nurture has that idea, and even, it comes through even in the old, well, here's the old King James idea of it, right? But when you nurture something, you don't just think about beating it into shape, right?

You're growing it. Once again, I really appreciate the fact that what George Craig talked about yesterday, because I don't have to go into all that. For those of you who are here, if you weren't here, I believe it's recorded.

Go back and reference it. Fantastic way of providing an environment for your children to grow, but that's exactly what this word means. But Paul's not done. There's two parts to this. You bring them up in the nurture, that you're creating this environment and a culture in which the child is being brought up, which for the record, isn't that what we saw with Timothy?

Those are the dots that connected for the first time. Paul's referencing back to that culture that his grandmother and his mother cultivated and raised him up in. But it's not only that, it's also the admonition of the Lord.

What's the word admonition? It comes from the Greek word, and I'm lousy with pronunciations, but we'll go with nuthesia, alright? And if you break it down in its basic form, it means to put in mind.

[31 : 25] But, a deeper sense to this would be to reason to the heart and mind. This was oftentimes a phrase that was used in the context of mentoring and counseling.

And in this particular context, I don't think it's a stretch to say that it means to fill the mind with godly counsel. Why does Paul use two different words?

because he's addressing the two environments in which we all operate. He's addressing the environment, the culture of the home and how it functions and operates.

And he's addressing the mind of the individual within it. We give them an environment that causes them to grow and we cultivate the mind during that time by teaching them the truth, by putting them in front of the word of God.

Once again, I'd love to preach everybody else's message again for them again this morning. But that's why I'm very thankful for what those guys said in the messages ahead because this to me is the key.

[32 : 33] And you have to be intentional about it. Otherwise, as we heard about gardening, if you garden one day and leave it for a month, what have you got? A bud of weeds. And don't get me wrong, I'm a fan of weeds.

I think weeds get a bad rap sometimes. But when they're where you don't need them to be, that can be a problem. What does faithfulness look like in the early years?

It is two people coming together, a husband and wife, creating an environment and a culture in which they bring their children up in a way that's pleasing to the Lord, right? That's how that verse ends in verse 4.

But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Shaping the heart and mind within that culture so that when they get launched, oh, yeah, I can't give, we can't give our kids all the answers.

I 100% agree with Paul on that one. They're going to run into things we haven't seen. The world has changed in the 20 years I've been paying attention to it.

[33 : 37] And as we were talking this morning, I'm sure it's changed even more in the last 90, it's not going to stop changing. There's going to be new hurdles, more disruptions.

The one thing that stays consistent, the one thing that stays sure, the one thing we can give our kids is this information and it starts at a young age. I love it. I work full time.

My wife does a lot of that cultivating at home most days. One of the things she's done with each and every one of our kids is about the time they can stand and lean on a chair and you're not afraid of them falling off, when she does dishes, she'll have them up on a chair and let them rinse.

My two and a half year old rinses dishes. And to George Craig's point, does he speed the process up? No. Does he help improve the results?

Not really. Does he love doing it? Generally speaking. Why? Because he's there. You're building relationship. The culture of nurturing and admonishment is relationship.

[34 : 40] It's building that. That's what we need to cultivate ultimately to the end, that that relationship be grounded and founded and that they gain a relationship with the Lord. I would love for my kids to all live close by when they get older.

I am ready for my kids to leave and go great distances. And the thing that will give me the most joy of them living far away is if they're serving the Lord where they're at and they're there because they love the Lord.

That's the goal. That's what we're aiming for. And we need to start in those early years and continue it throughout showing and demonstrating that faithfulness.

Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, we do thank you so much for your word. We thank you for the wisdom it contains. We thank you for the knowledge and the wisdom that's been shared here this weekend so that we can be better equipped to give our children a foundation moving forward in the world.

And we just ask that you would strengthen us and continue to give us the boldness, the firmness of conviction to not fail those little people, the older kids, the friends, the family, the coworkers, whoever it may be, that we would truly prove faithful to you and at the end of the day be found faithful.

[35 : 57] Lord, I just ask that as we ponder these things that they would sink in and that your truth would be more clearly revealed to us as we think on them.

For we pray it in Christ's name. Amen.