



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

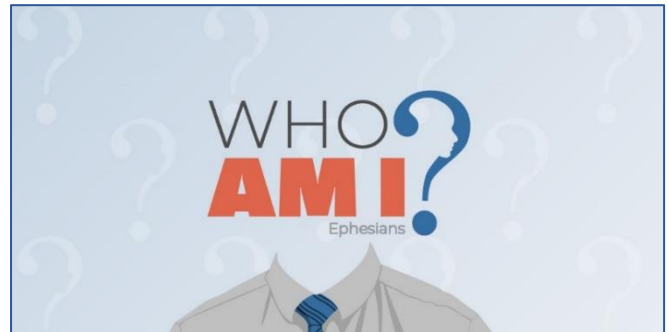
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Family Ties

WHO AM I?

Ephesians 6:1-4

Tim Badal | April 16, 2023



Turn in your Bible to the book of Ephesians. We're in chapter six, which means we're opening the last chapter of this series we started back in January, looking at the question, "Who Am I?" We have come to understand that the identifying mark of who we are is not found in how the world identifies it. It's not how we feel about ourselves. Rather, it's about what God has done in us through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We are the children of God, saved by the grace of God and now given the call to walk in a manner worthy of the calling we have received in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. We have been learning about this calling, and as we come to the end of chapter five and move into chapter six, Paul is now talking about what this looks like within the family life and the home life of the Christian.

Two weeks ago we talked about the home life regarding husbands and wives. The wife is called to submit to the husband. The husband is called to love and sacrifice for the wife in the same way that Christ loves and sacrificed Himself for the church. Now Paul pivots to the calling of the children to their parents, and the calling to the parents—especially the fathers—to their children. We will see the importance of this, especially regarding the impact the family has within society as a whole. Paul's words are concise, yet they are critical to the overwhelming aspects of our lives. Where the family goes, so goes the community, so goes society and so goes our country and our world. So 2,000 years ago Paul gave us what I believe are also contemporary words that apply to all ages.

I'm excited today to invite not only those who are here with us every week, but also our fourth and fifth graders who are joining us. I think Paul's words will be just as appropriate and crucial for them as for any of the rest of us. Let's listen to what Paul says to us, then we'll apply these words in a day when they are so badly needed.

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

This passage is short, sweet and to the point, but again, there's a lot here. So let's dig in.

Growing up in the '80s and '90s, it was uncommon for me to see a show where a family was not the centerpiece of the program. During those days, the family seemed to shape the plot line for so many shows. Some of the families represented dysfunctional lives. Maybe Dad was a misogynist; maybe he was absentee. Mom might have been a floozy. The kids were rebellious. Someone must have decided these programs were perfect pictures of what the American family had devolved into. People would laugh at shows like "Married With Children," thinking it was funny. Others however said this was actually what families had become.

There were other TV shows that pushed away from those images, going back to yesteryear when families seemed healthy. They were nostalgic returns to the '50s and '60s, when family life was slower paced and more wholesome. There were yet other shows where family life seemed more free-spirited, where the main character might have been someone who wasn't even part of the family at all. It might have been the quirky kid that lived next door, such as Steve Urkel in "Family Matters." You know there are people who aren't part of the family, yet they are.

Then there were shows that didn't make any sense at all, because they were family shows that had a British butler who did all the cooking, cleaning and counseling in "Mr. Belvedere." Every American family had a British butler doing all of that, right?

There were shows that showed family life starting with some very sad circumstances. A dad with three girls whose mother had passed away. Mom's brother and Dad's best friend would come to help raise these three girls in San Francisco. You would watch the exploits of this family in what was called "Full House."

There were all these shows and countless others, such as the "Cosby Show" or "Who's the Boss?" Every night there were shows about families. All of them were saying, "No matter what your family looked like, no matter what struggles they were going through, there were ties that made the family stick together."

One of my favorite shows was "Family Ties" with the Keaton family. Now that family "tie" is what Paul was talking to the Christians about in Ephesians 6. There is something that ties families together. Paul was speaking to Christian children and parents, saying, "If you live under the banner of being a follower of Jesus Christ, then listen up. God wants you to live differently."

When you ask the question, "Who am I?", Paul wants you to answer, "I am a child who is to obey Mom and Dad in the Lord." "I am a parent who is to lovingly discipline and instruct my children in the Lord." When we do these things, we will gain great good, and God will gain great glory. This morning I'm going to look at this passage under three categories: first, the family, then the kids, and third, the parents, especially the fathers.

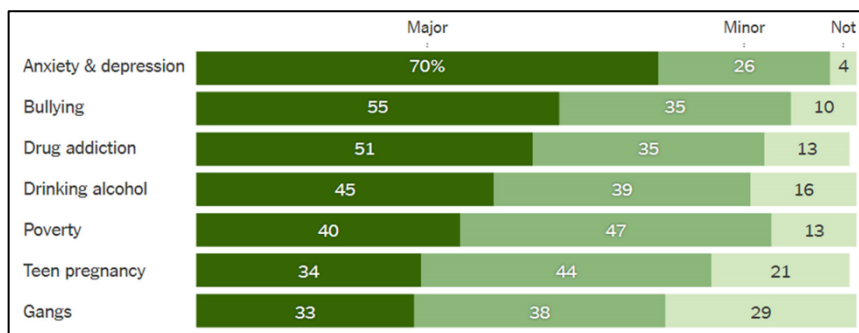
Families, you face many troubles today!

First, let me speak to families. We need to understand right away that families face many troubles today. In ways unlike any previous generation has encountered, families are being bombarded with challenges that threaten to destroy them. One place this especially shows up has to do with raising children. Our children are being flooded with things no previous generation of children has ever dealt with.

A recent study asked kids, "What concerns you the most?" Here is what they learned from kids between the ages of 11 and 18.

The number one concern was anxiety and depression. Second was bullying, then drug addiction, alcohol and poverty also ranked high in their minds. Finally, they were concerned about teen pregnancy and gangs. Let's look at some of these more specifically.

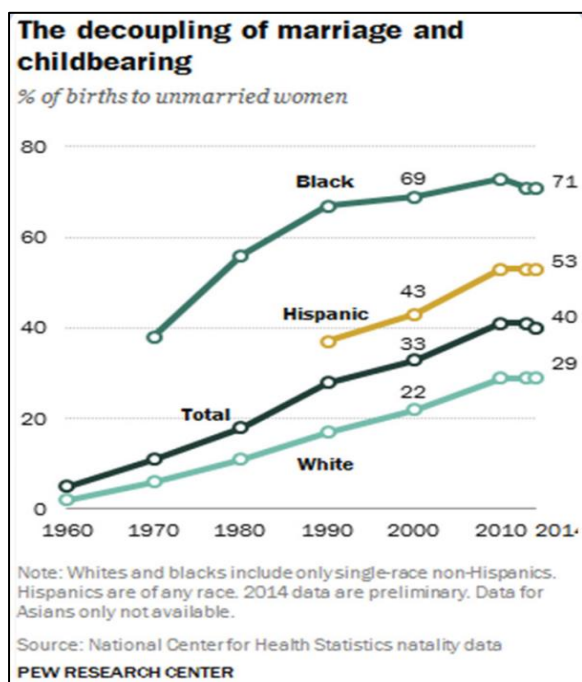
One-half of high school students are experimenting with drugs. Twelve million American teenagers have been diagnosed as drug addicts. Regarding sexual activity, it's estimated that 60% of teenagers are sexually active, which leads to 1.5 million teen pregnancies in America alone. This leads to more than 650,000 abortion each year.



Regarding mental illness, many of you have heard that the CDC recently sounded the alarm on the mental illness of young people, especially young women. They said two-thirds of teenage girls are dealing with "debilitating anxiety and depression." They also report that teen suicide attempts are up 400% in the last seven years. That means over 1.2 million teens in America alone will try to end their lives this year. That's one attempt every 30 seconds. In other words, from the time I started preaching today until the time when I finish, 60 teens will try to end their lives. Even sadder is the reality that every hour one of these will succeed. All of this tells us that kids between fourth grade and college need help and wisdom to navigate this thing called life. It's not because we're dumb or that we have problems we can't handle; it's that the world is really hard. Life is hard. God knows this, and we know this. God's answer to this is that He has given us parents. That was His design. But here's the problem, and it's not the kids' fault.

There are probably kids here today who are thinking, "My parents aren't around, or at least one of my parents isn't around." That itself is an epidemic. The Pew Research Center has found that parents have abdicated their roles. In the decoupling of marriage and childbearing, 71% of African-American children are born without a dad in the home. Let that sink in. These children have no dad in the home. Then 53% of Hispanic children are also born into a family without a dad; 29% of Caucasian children are in the same situation. That results in an average 40% of all American children being born into a family that does not have both parents in the house.

God intended for every child to be raised by both a mother and a father, each bringing what they alone can give for the good of the child. We have failed our children in this way.



While preparing this message, I came across a study from the L.A. Times. In a multiple article report, they said the two greatest deterrents to success in adulthood for teens were unintended pregnancies and juvenile crime. They also said the most common predictor for a young person to end up with these two problems was income, race or the neighborhood they were born in. The greatest indicator of which teens will face these situations was their family structure. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which is a branch of the U.S. Justice Department, 70% of imprisoned minors come from homes that don't have fathers.

What we're seeing is that we face a problem for which Ephesians 6 provides the solution: both moms and dads teaching and training their children in the instruction of the Lord. We have the solution in front of us. We can keep voting in politicians. We can keep reforming the laws. We can keep doing all the education we can. But God has told us, "I created the family with both parents and children; I've given you the solution." So if we all do our part, kids and parents both, we would have a more joyful, vibrant and healthy experience than the way we're doing it now.

Kids, you have a key part to play!

So kids, you have a key part to play. Paul begins verse one with the word "children." We often want to walk right by this because we're thinking little kids. The 16-year-olds are thinking, "I've got a driver's license. I've got my own bank account. I don't need to listen to this." But you do need to listen. The word Paul uses speaks not only of an infant that is cradled, not only a young boy who would walk alongside his parents, but it also refers to someone like Joseph when he was in his late teens. Even more, it speaks of a young man on his wedding day.

The idea is that, yes, this is a young person, but the real distinction is whether this person is under a parent's authority. Regardless of their age, even the groom on his wedding day is still under the authority of his parents until he "leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife" (Genesis 2:24). In other words, he departs from being under their authority in order to become head of his own house. It's not so much a matter of age as where he stands in the family.

Think of it this way. Whose food do you eat? Whose water did you shower with today? When you go to the doctor, whose insurance card do you show? If you start answering those questions, "Mom and Dad, Mom and Dad, Mom and Dad," you could be 45 years old and you're still under the heading "children." It's about dependency, not age. If you are dependent on your parents, to that extent you are called to obey them and also to honor them.

So as children, what is your part to play? It's to obey and honor. It's a coin that has two sides. One is external and the other internal. Let's think about the internal side now. It's harder to do this because it can be hidden. Paul quotes Exodus 20:12. The word 'honor' brings with it a sense of weight, of heaviness. It speaks of valuing, like you might value a precious metal. We sometimes might say a person is "worth his weight in gold." You are to honor your mom and dad for the contributions they bring to you.

Our research team here at Village Bible Church calculated what it costs your parents to raise you and we came up with the sum of \$233,000—without college expenses. So you can either pay them back or you can honor them. It's your choice.

By the way, with compounded interest it might reach, I don't know, \$1.7 million?

What is honor? Honor means to have an attitude of respect that stems from your love for them and your understanding of their value.



What does honor look like? Honor is courteous, loving, holding them in high esteem. It's refusing to show contempt toward them or despise them. You're not rude to them. You're not ungrateful to them. This is because you realize that even though they're not perfect, they've done a lot for you. As much baggage as they have, they've gotten you to where you are. So that deserves something.

Then we come to this matter of obedience. Obeying means two things, kids. It means to listen and it means to do. Listen and do. So gauge yourself—how well are you doing this? Do you listen well?

Growing up, my older brother Chris—who passed away when he was 16—lived in the basement. He used to drive my mom nuts. Mom would call down to the basement, "Chris! Chris!" My brother would respond, "What? What?" "What are you doing?" "What? I can't hear you?" She'd scream back and he'd mock her tone. It was hilarious. He would rile her up and she'd scream louder. All the while, he'd be in his room, fully hearing what she was saying, just to get her upset.

Kids, you know you hear us. Let's be honest. You know you hear us. Right? I know this because I know I could hear my parents. The question is, how well do you listen? Then how quickly do you obey? In the middle of listening and doing, do you complain? Do you grumble? Do you delay?

Notice that Paul says you are to do this "in the Lord." Now remember, he is talking to Christian kids. So I'm talking to the kids of Village Bible Church. If you're here visiting, this isn't so much for you.

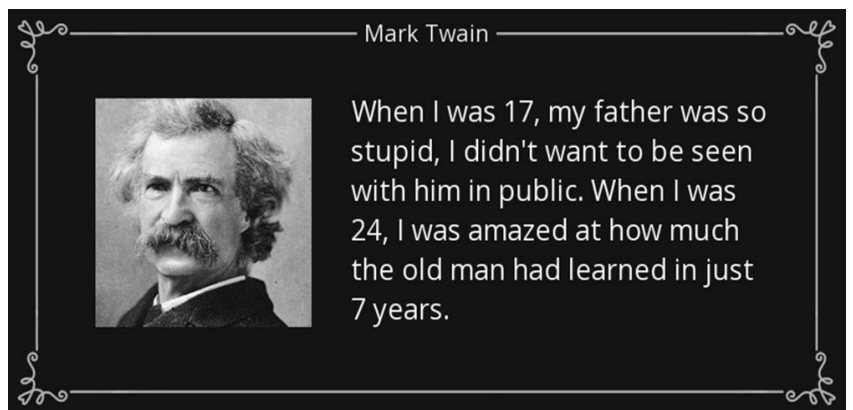
I'm assuming that you love Jesus, and you want to live for Him and please Him and glorify Him. If that's true, this is what the Bible says to you. If you want to please, glorify and honor Jesus, then do what your parents say. Jesus is telling you, "I've put your parents as middle managers between you and Me. So if you want to please Me, then listen when they talk and do what they say, as if I'm telling you the things they're saying." That's what Jesus is trying to communicate.

Then He says, "I want you to do this, because this is how I bless your life. Life will go well for you in the land." It's not exactly a promise—it's more of a proverb. "Things will go well with you" is a general understanding. But how will this happen? Let me give you five practical things that will help your life go well as you obey and honor Mom and Dad in the Lord.

1. Know that your parents are smarter and wiser than you think.

Many of you know who Mark Twain was. An American the author. This is what he said about his dad: "When I was 17, my father was so stupid I didn't want to be seen with him in public. When I was 24, I was amazed at how much the old man had learned in just seven years."

Parents, how many of you would agree that your parents got smarter the older you got? Show of hands. Kids, look at that. Your parents get smarter as you get older. The reason why is your parents are smarter and wiser than you think. So lean into that.



Part of the reason why is that they've walked the road ahead of you. If you take that and turn it on its head, know that you're not as smart and wise as you think you are. I'm not saying you're dumb. I'm not saying you're a fool. But every kid, including your pastor, thought he was smarter and wiser than he really was.

2. Thank your parents more often.

Your parents aren't looking for gifts. They aren't looking for trophies. They're not looking for money. I've never heard a parent say, "I want the \$233,000 back." But I can't tell you how many times I've seen parents light up when their kids have said, "Thanks."

So when your parents drop you off for practice, you should say, "Thanks, Mom. Thanks, Dad." When they've sat for hours watching you in that play, concert or athletic event, "Hey, thanks for coming. It really means a ton." Tell them thanks. It takes two seconds and it means the world to your parents. If your mom or dad makes a meal, something you think is so commonplace, they have stopped other important things to take care of your needs. Tell them, "Thanks." Your attitude is one of the key marks of the Christian; show it to your parents.

3. Always be teachable.

Always be ready to learn, especially from your parents. Listen, just because they're your parents doesn't mean everything they say is going to be foolproof. Take it under advisement. If your parents say, "Hey, let's sit down and let me tell you something," be willing to listen.

4. Take your faith seriously.

Remember, I'm talking to the young people here. If there's anything I could tell you as your pastor, it would be to take your faith seriously. Dig into this Book. I don't think there is anything more important than your walk with Jesus Christ. It will guide every major decision of your life in the future.

Here's what I know: we will stand behind that as a church. If you as a young person want to take your faith seriously, we will give you every opportunity to do that. I can prove it today: you had two examples of this standing right in front of you, singing this morning. Did you know that? Two wonderful teenage girls leading worship, leading our church in prayer. We have guys in the AV area right now serving back there. There were young people in the parking lot serving out there. We have young people in our children's ministry leading. Our church is what it is today because young people are taking their faith seriously. Mario, our student ministries pastor, says this all the time: "Our young people aren't the church of tomorrow; they are the church of today." Take your faith seriously and know that we are here to help you in that process.

5. Be active in talking with your parents.

I know this one is awkward and that all your friends say it's stupid. But I'll tell you what, God is glorified when you're talking with your mom and dad. I know in a room this size, and with those who are watching online, there are kids who will say, "But my parents have blown it." My word to you is, "Find some older people who are trustworthy, someone you can lean into. Adopt some parents who can be Jesus' hands and feet to you, whom you can get wisdom from, whom you can get advice from." Maybe your mom and dad have blown it; maybe they've abdicated their role in your life. If that's your situation, find someone else you can lean into.

By the way, this is what the church is for. The church is here for some of these "orphans," if you will, whose moms and dads don't want to do these things. Come and find godly men and women who can help lead you. We have a wonderful women's mentoring program that's helping women of all ages. We have guys who would love to help mentor young men in this way. We want to help and we believe we can.

Parents, godly leadership can go a long way!

Finally, let's look at the third group this morning. There's only one verse for the parents, but it's a mouthful. Paul says, "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*" Now this is written to the fathers, but these words have bearing on mothers as well.

To be clear, dads, you have been given a great responsibility. You can bring great harm by embittering your children, whether aggressively or passively abdicating your role. You can do too much or too little; either way you will be abdicating your role in your family.

Let's look at the negative in this verse: "*Do not provoke...*" To provoke means "to make angry, to irritate or exacerbate. It means to stimulate one to the point of brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured or not allowed to die." Parents, this is when you're talking to your kid and his or her face is down. There are inaudible groans. This is the perpetual door slamming. It's, "I don't want to talk to you!" It's clenched fists. It's stomping of feet over and over again. When this happens, listen to me, parents, stop doing whatever you're doing. It ain't working. You're thinking, "But I don't know what else to do." Well, don't do that. It ain't working. I get it. It's frustrating. I get that you've tried a million things. But that ain't working. Okay? All that's doing is red-lining the kid. So whatever approach you've taken, it isn't working. You may be totally legitimate in your response, but it's not working.

Here are some of the things that might be producing this response: your actions, attitudes, or words.

I have three children, so three different things could be activating anger in each of them. It's not just one broad-brush thing that covers it all. What affects one kid could affect another in a different way. By the way, discipline may also not work the same for each of your children.

So what are some ways you provoke your children? Favoritism. Unfair comparisons. Unrealistic standards. Over-indulging your kids. Discouraging words. Lack of rewards. Unfulfilled promises. Treating them like boarders rather than sons and daughters. Not admitting your mistakes. Ridiculing them. Neglecting them. Using abusive words. Using sarcasm. Emotional, physical, relational or sexual abuse.

All of these things are likely to provoke anger from your children. They should get angry. It should cause them to be angry and they should respond in some of these ways. God is saying, "Stop these things. Don't do them." So that's the negative way to act toward your children.

There are, however, positive things we should do. Paul tells us to "*bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*" I love what John Calvin says about the phrase, "bring them up." He says, "Let them fondly be cherished in all gentleness and friendliness." The idea is not an ogre-type dictatorship, but a loving and kind leadership that imitates the lovingkindness and patience of our heavenly Father.

Notice this involves discipline and instruction. The idea here is you take your kid hand in hand; it's a partnership. "We're going to do this thing together. We are on a marathon together, so we're going to run this hand-in-hand. We started it together and we will finish it together, side by side." Sometimes it will go fast; sometimes it will be slow. There will be injuries along the way, but we'll get this done together.

Now I'm going to give you 11 principle and I think we should be done by 3:00.

1. Make your love for Christ and His church contagious.

have spread the contagion of the Chicago Cubs to my three boys. They didn't know about it when they were born into our family, but I've brought it to them. Why? Because I watch or listen to them; I go to the games. I can assure you parents: there is something you have brought your love for to them. There is some hobby or something you've invested in, so your kids have been bought into it.

Let me tell you, before any of these other things, be sure that the most important thing is Christ and His church. After all, the Cubs will come and go, but Jesus Christ is forever. Here's the thing. They may not take to Jesus or His church, but you want to bring them so it's easy for them to catch it and take hold of it.

2. Communicate your love for them in a variety of ways.

Do you know how to tell them you love them? Are they hearing it the way they want to be told? Gary Chapman talks and writes about the Five Love Languages. That works for kids as well. Do they want to be loved through hugs, gifts, quality time, acts of service or words of affirmation? Again, each kid is different. How do they want to be loved? Love them that way. They need to know they are loved. By the way, God told us in three chapters of Ephesians how much He loves us. It's the godly thing to do,

3. Court their mom or dad.

The best thing you can do for your kids here on earth is to court their mom or dad. This does two things. First, it stabilizes the home. Second, it strategically sets them on a trajectory of what their married life will look like. This means that kids need to know they're not first place in the affections of either their mom or their dad.

4. Fulfill your commitments.

When you say you're going to do something, do it. It's as easy as that.

5. Don't compare your kids with other kids.

Boy, Facebook is a killer for this. Have you noticed that not a single parent has ever put on Facebook, "My kid got suspended from school today"? That never happens. In my day, the '80s and '90s, we didn't have Facebook; we had bumper stickers. "My kid is an honor student at such-and-such a school."

We were driving one day, and my mother, with tears in her eyes said with a cracking voice, "Hey, Tim, do you think...maybe one day...we could get that bumper sticker?" To which I responded, "Well, Mom, no. But I think we can get one that says, "My kid beat up your honor student at such-and-such a school." I know, you're not supposed to talk about that, Pastor. It's wrong.

Seriously, don't compare your kids. I've been a pastor for 20 years now and here's what I know about kids. They all have issues. They all have issues. They all have issues. Did you hear me? Including the pastors' kids. Okay? I don't care what you put on Facebook. Some kids have issues that everybody sees; other kids have issues that nobody sees. Some kids have issues at the beginning of the race; others have issues in the middle of the race; others have issues at the end of the race. There's only one kid who didn't have any issues and His name was Jesus. And His parents even had issues.

6. Be compassionate when your kids fail.

So understand this. Don't compare. Instead, be compassionate when your kids fail—and they will fail. Remember this. Amanda and I have to remember this all the time: compassion before consequences. You got me? Compassion before consequences. Your kid's going to come in the door, tears in their eyes, saying, "Oh, I totally messed up my life. I've screwed it up." Or they're going to come in and be like, "I'm glad I screwed things up. I hope you'll help me figure this thing out." You've got to give them compassion before consequences. You have to. Why? Because Jesus is compassionate with us.

7. Let your kids experience consequences.

Be compassionate first, then consequences will come. Some of us are so compassionate that we never let consequences come. One of the greatest parent-teacher conferences I ever had was when my teacher told my parents everything I did that was bad in class. I thought my parents were going to come to my defense, but my father said, "Thank you very much. Tim will come back with a totally different attitude on Monday." I thought, "This is terrible." We need to let our kids experience consequences.

8. Dads, turn off the cruise control.

Dads, this one is for you. Turn off the cruise control. Get in your kids' lives. Stop playing golf as much as you are. Stop doing your hobbies and get into your kids' lives. They need you in their lives. Your sons need you in their lives. Your daughters need you in their lives. Turn off the cruise control. Stop letting your wife do everything. Get engaged. The wives are thinking, "Amen. This is good."

8.5. Moms, stop controlling everything.

We call these helicopter moms. Okay? There's only One Who controls everything, and His name is Jehovah. Let Him do it. Trust God. Now I'm being careful in how I say this: part of the reason why you can't sleep at night is that you're trying to control everything. God doesn't need sleep, so let Him control everything. The last prayer you pray at the end of the night should be, "God, You've got this. I'm going to bed." Let Him take care of it.

9. Celebrate their successes.

Last night, I saw one of our church parents at an event his kid was participating in. He was celebrating his kid like a crazy man. I thought, "That's it!" His kid was doing something, and dad was in a whole different world: "My kid is having a ball. He's being successful. He's doing what he loves." I don't even know if the dad even liked what his kid was doing, but because his son was enjoying himself, he was having a ball. Celebrate. Whoop and holler. Cheer. Be excited.

10. Don't compete.

When you're having dinner with another family, another set of parents, don't compete with them. If they start talking about Sally and Johnny and all the great things that are going on, don't start making up stuff about your kid. Don't compete. This is not a race.

11. Commit your kids daily to the Lord.

Finally parents, commit your kids to the Lord daily. Pray, pray, pray, pray, and when you're done praying, pray some more. God's got this. Take the long view. God speaks of us as prodigal children, and He has a way of bringing prodigals back home.