



Family Values Part 1
Raise 'Em Up
Pastor Ted Cunningham

We are starting a new series that we are going to spend January and February talking about family values and what you're building your home and building on.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Joshua 24. We are going to look at two verses there this morning, but I'm going to encourage you to read that whole chapter today. Because at the end of Joshua's life and ministry, he gathers the people of Israel together and he declares the Word of the Lord. And the Lord reminds his children of rescuing them from Egypt. By the time you get about halfway through this chapter, Joshua is going to declare to the people a decision that they have to make. You can continue with the life that you are living, but you have to make a decision. You are either going to serve the false gods of the Egyptians or the Amorites, or you're going to make the decision to serve the Lord.

He calls them to a decision and then he says, "Make no mistake, I've made my decision. As for me and my house, we are going to serve the Lord." And we pick up today in

Joshua 24: 14 – 15 - ¹⁴ ***"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... And he's calling on undivided allegiance to the Lord. ***whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.******

It's a decision we want for every family that calls woodland hills Family church home kicking off this year that you would make the decision and declare *as for me and my*

house, we will serve the Lord, and we are going to take God's Word and build out our family values.

Here's how we are defining family values in this series. They are shared beliefs that establish our priorities, guide our decision, and determine how we treat each other. Our family has ours listed in what is called a *family constitution*. I shared that a couple of months ago. But I want you to know, as we go through these family values for the next several weeks, this whole series comes with a parental warning. You've heard me say it before. Your children see everything you do, they hear everything you say, they forget nothing, and then they repeat.

That's how we pass these values on to our kids. Well, here's the warning. A little bit different wording. Your children see everything you do, they hear everything you say, and they will hold you accountable to what you say you believe. They're with you all the time, looking... Now my kids are in their 20's and the older your kids get, the more they will hold you accountable. You will be driving in the car... I've taught the kids their entire life, no name calling, except when that idiot up there is doing what he's doing right now." But in those moments, the kids will whip their head around and look at you like whoa, whoa, whoa, you have taught us, you have told us... are you now, in this moment, going to live what you say you believe?"

This is a big one. As you can imagine today watching the news and a candidate or a politician from my preferred political party will say or do something and it's almost like whiplash in our home. They're looking at me going what he or she just said, you don't agree with that. That doesn't align with what you taught us all these years.

I just want to remind you, follower of Jesus, this is why your undivided allegiance needs to be to the Lord and the Lord only, not a political party. Dr. Adrian Rogers said it all the time.

He says, *"You, follower of Jesus, building your life and your values and what you say you believe on the Word of God, have to stand above all political parties so you can hold them all to account"*

God has given us these gifts called children to help us do that. They will look at us and call us out every single time. The way you treat wait staff, the way you talk to people who come up to you in public.

a couple of months ago, I received a text from an individual that said, “Hey, so and so would like to talk to you.” This was a ministry leader that I deeply respect and admired that’s kind of gone ahead of me in ministry. They said, There is this opportunity and possibility they’d like to discuss with you and I said, “Absolutely, I’d love to take the phone call.”

My son and I were out of town when I took the call, and I was driving and Carson was in the passenger seat. I took this 45-minute phone call over the speaker phone. Several times during that conversation, my son looked at me, basically to say, “eww, ick” that is disgusting. Dad, is that how people do ministry? Dad, that’s not how you do ministry.”

I’m like, “Pipe down. This is a big name. but I sat there the whole time and when I hung up the phone, my son looked at me and said, “Dad, please tell me you’re not going to do any sort of ministry with that guy.”

I love when people come up to me like, “Hey, have you read so and so? Have you done this or that? I’m like be careful when you meet your heroes. Does their life really align with everything they’ve put in books and in sermons? Because we were like having a business meeting that was icky and I had to take a shower after it.

Guess what? I have a 20-year-old who the Lord is using in my life to be like *Dad, you’ve taught us for 20 years... Let’s see it, bucko. Let’s see if you’re walking it out.*

This series is for singles. There is no better time for you to declare “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” I’m going to think these through. I’m going to plan these, I’m going to write these out. For engaged couples in here, I’d love nothing more than for you to incorporate some of the values we’re going to be talking about in the weeks ahead, into your wedding vows to declare we are starting a home today and as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Grandparents... Grandparents are like my *kids are raised*, I can’t wait to judge all the young parents in here during this series. I want to tell you that the thing about Joshua 24. You understand what we just read from Joshua, this was his final act with the people before his death. He died at the age of 110. When I read that, it reminds me and I look around and see a lot of senior adults in here. Wouldn’t it be something if your last moment upon earth, you’re on your death bed with your kids, your family, your grandkids gathered around you and your last words going out are “As for me and my house, we serve the Lord.” Keep this going in our families.

So, Grandma and Grandpa, I have to tell you something. Your children and your grandchildren are still watching you. We say it all the time around here. Grandparenting possibly could be your greatest season of influence. You just have more eyes on you. You have more people listening to you, aligning what you say you believe and what you've taught them for years. Is this still how you're going to live it out? When something comes at you, maybe threatening your Social Security check. Do they see faith or do they see fear? Do they see someone who trusts the Lord and says, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This series is for all of us in the weeks ahead and into February.

I want to take you to Proverbs 23. Shay... I love what he said last week as he gave a Bible Study method of repetition. When you read the Bible, you really do have to look for that repetition in short passages because that's really the point being made. You don't have to get to a commentary to go "what is the author truly saying?"

I want to start today with the parents, but then I want to go after the kids, coming at them the best I can because this passage is going to talk about what a child does to bring joy to a parent. What does it take to have a parent rejoice.

Listen to your father... I love Verse 22... ***who gave you life.*** Does that sound like a dad or what? "I brought you into this world. I will take you out of this world and I will create another one that looks just like you." ***Who gave you. life and do not despise your mother when she is old.***

Then look at these words we want for all of our kids. Wisdom, Instruction, and insight. As well. Now watch the repetition here. ***The father of a righteous child has great joy. A man who fathers a wise son rejoices.***

Can I just say something to the teens and young adults for just a moment. Do you have any idea of the joy that fills your mom and dad's soul when they watch you making wise choices. When they see you hanging out with wise people? Every parent in here, when their kids are growing up and they want to go do something, they will ask, "Who are you going to be with? Who will be there?" That's the question that determines how much trouble you are going to get into. They want wisdom. They want you to hang around wise people. A man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him. May your father and Mother rejoice. May she who gave you birth be joyful.

I had the opportunity... Amy and I were invited to a corporate christmas party in Michigan last month. I sat down at the table as dinner was starting and the son is the CEO, second generation of the company. His dad, the founder passed away in 2018. I'm super intrigued by how families run businesses together. It's always been something I've enjoyed watching, studying, and helping families with. So, generation one is passed on to generation two. In the room, they also had generation three. So, there are three generations in this room and I'm asking the CEO a million questions because I know this about founders. They want honor and they fear drift. They've established all these values for their company or organization and then they put someone new at the helm and they're like *Oh no, we're going to be drifting from these values*. So, sometimes founders see all change as drift. But not all change is drift. I'm asking this guy a million questions about the values of their company and decisions that they are making because, again, Generation two took it from here to here.

In the middle of me talking to the CEO, his mother sits down right beside me and I said, "I'm done speaking with you. and I go to the widow of the founder. Grandma is now sitting there, and she is now sharing with me all the relationships she has in the room. She had one 30 something grandchild not yet married and she said, "If there's anything you could say tonight to kind of prod that guy along a little bit..." So I was getting all the family history.

But I sat there ... I told Amy, I love this because when I think about this company we don't know a lot about, but the walking embodiment and values of this company are sitting right here – Grandma and Grandpa, you are the walking embodiment of your family values and what you want your children and your grandchildren to follow. You desire honor and we are called to honor the next generation, and I'm sure you fear drift. You fear for each one of your children and grandchildren that they would not stray from what God has called you to.

So, I want to start just real quick talking to the parents. We can get out of alignment really quickly on this stuff as we are raising our kids... they are all in their 20's now, but I dealt with all of these, what I'm calling four parenting joy killers. They will suck the life right out of your home; they will drain the energy out of your home if you allow this to sneak in.

I've dealt with all of these motives.

Number 1 - Using your child's attributes and accomplishments to impress other people.

The Greek term for that is Face Book. We're constantly putting our best foot forward to impress people. We always pick the highlight reel; we don't ever put what the kids are struggling with. And I would argue you don't need to. You can protect your family's reputation. You don't have to spill the beans on everything online. The internet is not a safe place for your family. We call this *vanity parenting*. Trying to impress the world with a highlight reel every day. It will actually drain your home of joy.

Number 2 – We create environments for our children to succeed rather than teaching them to succeed in environments we can't control. We do this all the time.

I remember sitting at College of the Ozarks as a parent and Sue Head stood up and shared this story many times. It's still one of my favorite illustrations and probably the best thing I think Sue has ever said. She's talking to parents of students. She said, "Listen, your children will struggle... let them. I was the only one clapping in the whole room. Amy was like, "That wasn't a clapping moment." I go, "That was gold."

I got back and I emailed her. I said, "I'm going to give you attribution as long as I can, but I'm going to add one line to what you said. It's now three points because I'm a preacher. Your children will struggle. Let them. It will be hard to watch. It's challenging and it's difficult. But Mom and Dad, we can't protect them from all hurt and loss and challenges and difficulties. I always viewed it as a parent. What a joy it is when they come home and maybe they've got a bad teacher. I'm not going to go find a new teacher for them. I'm not going to find a better classroom for them. I'm like, *Wow I get a whole year to walk alongside my child*. because they may have a bad loss one day. They may have a difficult neighbor one day. I want them to learn how to deal with difficulties and not just rescue them from every situation.

Number 3 – We treat our children like children right up until the very day we expect them to be adults. We say it at this church all the time, *Parenting is a journey from control to influence*. With every year of your child's life, you are losing control, but hopefully, you're replacing it with influence. And that starts early in the home.

Many of you went to college and you showed up to college, and you had a roommate that maybe came from a fundamentalist family, a high control family. They dropped this kid off with all this freedom and responsibility and this kid had no clue how to handle it. Because the parent controlled, controlled, controlled right up until the very day they expected them to handle this.

So, Mom and Dad, we get this major blessing with our kids. We get almost two decades of walking alongside them in life. Driving them to places, all these conversations that we are going to talk about next week. We get to move from control to influence. I just made the commitment. I was never going to ask my 16-year-old, “Did you brush your teeth today?”

Some of you are like, “I will!” I pay the dental bills. I will ask him every single day, multiple times a day.” But we are moving from control to influence, and we need to let our children go.

4 – we take way too much credit and way too much blame for the way our children turn out. This series is not about sending parents or grandparents on a guilt trip. Do not feed your regrets in this series. Ask Jesus to redeem your remaining days.

My kids joke with me, I think, way too much about my death bed, but I just picture this gathering around me. I’ve asked the Lord... I know you know, just let me go out on...

I want to say – “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

I don’t know why I said this... A couple of years ago with my adult kids – we were gathered around a fire pit outside in our back yard. I have no idea what came over me. I was feeling the moment, but I said “You know what? When I think back over my parenting, I don’t have any regrets.” I just kind of put that out there into the world. All of my kids looked at me like, “What!? Do You really believe that? You should have many regrets, Dad.” And then, for about the next hour, they gave me some real solid examples that I could hang my hat on.

Mom and Dad, here’s what I’m asking you to do in this series. Delete the narrative that repeats It’s too late and it’s my fault. Decide right now – As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord and I’m going to put these in place and I know you’re watching, I know you’re listening. You’re going to hold me accountable to them. But I’m not living with regrets from the past. Things I said, things I did. Here’s the key, Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa. Give yourself permission, learn and grow just like you want your children to learn and grow. Give yourself permission to become wiser as you grow grayer, just as you want your children to become more wise. And I would say this – stop explaining and defending your parenting choices to critics. This is your family that God has called you to steward. You do not have to explain everything you do and the reasons why you do it.

I remember the pressure of this and some of you have preschoolers. When I remember the pressure... I remember getting judged with the pacifier. Our daughter used a pacifier... for a long time. I'm like, Listen, I know she's four, but our doctor said if we're dealing with this stuff when kindergarten approaches, then we'll say something. I remember telling Corryn, "I will buy you a Barbie Jeep if you throw that thing away. Weeks later she just went over to the garbage and tossed it away and got a Barbie jeep. She's almost 23. I mean she can't pronounce her Ss but... She's good at a lot of other things.

Formula, breast milk, whatever it is that people are all judging online about, I'm going to tell you to block it out and make what matters most matter more. These family values we're talking about.

Okay, so that's to the parents. Now, kids, I love you, but here we go. I absolutely love this. Three ways you can bring joy to your parents. If you are still living at home, under your parent's roof and this gives you excitement and you can't wait to learn it and apply it, would you just shout right now. Let's try it again. How many are ready to bring joy to their parents.

Going back to proverbs, there are three things I want to give you. three ways. I'm talking to the elementary kids that may be in here. There aren't many of them. But I know there are a ton of teenagers and young adults still living with Mom and Dad, and still under their roof and under their authority, so a lot of this is going to apply to you, but it's also going to apply to those of you who have left home. You're starting your own family,

but the first one is this and we've read it. Joy, rejoicing, repeated four times. Wisdom. This is why your mom and dad are always asking you about your friends. It's cliché I know, but your friends do determine your future.

We read in Proverbs 13: 20 – ***Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.***

Some of you right now are like, "But these are my high school buddies." Yeah, but they are fools and you need new friends. I think I got this from Dave Ramsey. I don't know, but I think it's true. Your income is going to fluctuate, but it's going to be within 10 to 20 percent of the people you hang around as an adult. Why? It's because they determine your future. And mom and dad are freaking out right now about your friends because they know the path your friends are on and the path your friends are taking you on.

So, I'm telling the teenagers and the young adults in here today, please do this for me. Make the decision – as for me, I will serve the Lord. And if I'm hanging out with people that are not taking me down that path and actually taking me down another path, it is time to find new friends. So, who we walk with is important for wisdom.

Proverbs 1: 8 says, Listen. I just want a teenager right now to go home, walk into the kitchen today, and be like Blessed Mother, *I have this decision to make. Please give me some insight.* And then just lean in, keep your mouth shut, don't give any sort of rebuttal to it. Don't listen to respond, Listen to understand. ***Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, do not forsake your mother's teachings.***

There are many parents in here... if I can give the teens, young adults a picture...Stop and listen

I'm convinced that the most successful people I know in my life are some of the greatest listeners I've ever met. I think those are the two things we don't talk about. When I'm trying to figure out what makes a person successful – it's listening people and generous people. You put those two things together... but we don't talk about it enough. But if you are still at home and under the authority of your parents, this isn't just principles for you, this is a command for you.

Ephesians 6: 1 – ***Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.*** The only reason you should disobey your parents is if they tell you to do something that the Bible forbids. Or they forbid you from doing something that the Bible commands.

We can go to Matthew 10 for that when Jesus said, "I didn't come to bring peace, but I came to bring a sword." And when you give your undivided allegiance to me, it means it will affect your family relationships. But young person, be wise. Walk with wise people. Listen to your parents. Obey them.

Now some of you are in the influence stage. This is where I'm at. My kids are not under the command to obey me. I still want them to listen to me from time to time. But all I got left right now as a parent is influence. That's it. And the fastest way I can squander influence is to be controlling. I'm in that early 20 something season trying to figure it all out.

2 – Your parents know that their job is to send you out of the home to raise your own family one day. And that's going to take responsibility, taking personal responsibility for your life and being able to provide for someone else.

People ask – When do I know I'm an adult.?" You know you're an adult when you are prepared and able to care for someone else other than yourself. That's adulthood. Adulthood is *"I'm providing for my needs, and I make enough to provide for the needs of other people.* It's going to completely and totally... especially if you get married in your 20's. it's going to completely and totally change your spending habits. The Bible says this in Colossians 3: 23 – ***Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.*** I want to raise kids that are hard workers because I have great joy when I watch them work, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. You're going to leave your parents' home, and you have to provide for other people. Paul was very clear with Timothy when he said, ***"Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially their own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.***

It brings great joy to me when I see my kids working hard, giving generously... We are going to talk about this in February. Saving. And then whatever they might have left, they can spend. Do you really want to know what fills my heart with joy... and this has to start early, and we did this over the holidays. You have to play Monopoly with your kids.

We are relentless in our home. We never treated our kids with kindness or fairness while playing that game. Amy would be like, "Oh, they don't have to pay rent now." No, I want it all. Give it to me. and when the kids would start crying, I'm like, this is parenting. This is what it should be. No greater joy fills my soul than to bankrupt my children. Can I get an amen for that one?

Number 3 – Faith – Paul, when he's speaking to Timothy... This passage just is going to set us up for Deuteronomy 6 next week, but Paul says, ***I'm reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your Grandmother Lois and in your Mother Eunice and I am persuaded lives in you also.***

This is how family values are passed on. It has to be on your heart first. What's on your heart will find it's way onto the hearts of your children. Good and bad. The stuff we regret, the stuff we need to deal with, but the stuff now in this series that we are building into. I want my children to walk with the Lord, be responsible adults when they leave home, have wisdom, making wise choices.

Now, Third John 4 is not speaking directly to parents, but it's a passage I feel deeply as a pastor and as a parent. When I see a church member making wise decisions, when I see someone who is living in sin that's clearly in violation of what the scripture teaches making a choice to confess and repent of that sin and move in the right direction. I am filled with Joy and that's why we read in third John 4 – ***I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.***

I want that for each member of our church; I want that for my kids. so, to close out, when I'm done reading this, we will pray and I'm going to invite the prayer team down. The prayer team will be here for anyone here, over and the chapel, to meet with for prayer. I know this series is going to surface a lot of issues in a lot of families and we want to help with that any way we can. But I want to end with words I jotted down this week as I wrote a letter to my kids. But just really quick, full of family values and I share this. When my daughter got married, I wrote her a letter, and my son is getting married later this year and I'll write him a letter. This is to my kids and just how family values kind of find their way of everyday life.

Kids, you're going to face many challenges and you'll get knocked down. Get up. Take personal responsibility for your life. Offer grace to others when they fall down. Help them up and be grateful for everything. Receive everything with thanksgiving. Gratitude and generosity are the antidotes for entitlement. Give away as much as you can always pick up the check. Tip well. You are a steward, not an owner. Everything you have is God's. He gave it to you so you can be a blessing to other people. Refresh others with your resources as often as you can. I promise you; you will never regret money that you give away. Work hard. Don't tell your boss how hard your job is. Stop reminding your boss how hard your job is. Never say "That's not in my job description." If you're sick and don't think you can make it to work, throw up and I promise you will feel better and be able to go to work.

Go to work, be resilient. I don't want to raise wimpy kids. Serve the Local Church. don't be a consumer that goes to church when it's convenient or when it fits your schedule. Submit to the authority of the local church and serve.

I don't want to raise you to be good, moral kids. Morality is not the ultimate goal. Following Jesus is. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. I want you to follow "Christ - His teachings, his ways. Love the Lord and have a zeal to serve him. I want the Bible for you in the driver's seat as it's been in the driver's seat of our home.

This is what I want for my kids and as we go through this series, I hope you start taking notes, writing letters, sending texts, making phone calls, grandma, grandpa, it's time to establish for your family... Even if they know it, declare it out loud – as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. We've made our decision. We're building our foundation on this.

Father, thank you for the scripture today and what it brings to us. Not guilt, not regret as parents but seeing our job as very important. The responsibility we have until we take our last breath or until Jesus returns. May we continue to live out these values and not just profess truth but walk in it and live it out.

I pray for the parent right now dealing with guilt and regret that this would be a time and a series that encourages them to say *it's not too late and I'm not going to feed those regrets. I'm going to ask Jesus to redeem my remaining days* that they would declare with their mouth today that they will serve the Lord. And their family will see this played out in their home and family gatherings, on vacations, and every time they get together.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation. That they would repent of their sins, confess with their mouth Jesus is Lord, believe in their heart he has been raised from the dead that they would be saved.

We pray this in the authority of the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen