



---

## CELEBRATING CHILDREN

---

### Part 16 of Proverbs

Pastor Mark Driscoll | February 03, 2002

(Laughter)

Okay, you kids go with mama. Daddy preaches for a long time.

(Laughter)

Today's topic's kids, so it feels appropriate to introduce you to the kids. They're good. Calvin's a good boy. He slept five hours last night, so the Lord answers prayer. Things are going good. I'll pray and we'll get going.

God, thanks for a chance to study Scripture. Thanks for a packed house. Thank you, as well, Lord God, that the same spirit that inspired the writing of the Scriptures lives in your children so that we can learn and we can learn about you and how to be imitators of you and conform to your image. God, we love you. I thank you for the topic at hand today and I pray for wisdom for us all to wade through it. In Christ's name, Amen.

Does have anybody have any seat near them at all? There's a couple in the front. There's three. One in the back. One here. There's a couple. We got like four, so. One other thing I'd encourage you guys to pray about is that we've got a couple of buildings that we're actively pursuing and we're in negotiations with that'll seat anywhere from 500 to 800, which is really what we need, plus some parking. And so, we'll just encourage you guys to keep in prayer. Until then, we'll just keep adding services until we're out of hours in the day.

Today's topic is kids. In Proverbs, Proverbs talks a lot about kids. The problem, though, with coming right into Proverbs is that the people who were recipients of that book viewed children much differently than our present day. We tend not to see children the same way that the recipients of the Book of Proverbs did. So, in the next weeks, we'll get into child discipline, child instruction, a number of other issues related to children, but before that, we have to start with a Biblical understanding and world view of children.

At the time when Jesus was alive, historically, we know that the father had ultimate and total, complete authority over his own children; to the degree that he could actually, if he so desired, put them to death, and they did. If a child was born with any sort of physical or mental reduced capability; if the child was sickly or ill; or perhaps, even if it was just a girl, they could put the child to death. They would do that by suffocating the child. Sometimes, they would tie the children to rocks and throw them in the river to drown them. Sometimes, they would abandon the children, for example, out in the desert and just leave the children to die. It was very, very common. One of the common things as well is just like in our day, you take the trash out. They would have trash heap outside of the home. They would also have a dung pile outside of the home where they went to the bathroom and, often times, the small children were left either on the trash heap or on the dung pile. And what would happen, then, that child would be left to die and if anyone wanted those children, they could just walk by and pick up those children and take them home. And then, those children, then, were legal property of that person who picked them up. You can imagine. Incest and child abuse of varying sorts. These were the children who were raised to be gladiators, prostitutes and slaves. They were the throwaways and there was a legion of them.

In addition, at this time, the infant mortality rate was very high. They would not name the child until it had lived through the first week. So, when the child was eight or nine days old, then you would name the child, if only it lived. If it didn't live, you just, you know, the child would die and you would just rid the child from the home, throw it out on the garbage heap and not give it a name. Infant mortality was so high that only half of children lived to the age five. Only 40 percent of those children lived to the age of 12. And the life expectancy was very, very short.

And so, what you've got is you've got a society that views children as a commodity, but without high regard for them. Contraception was widespread. It was used, as was some primitive forms of abortion that were primarily chemical in nature. It had always existed that way throughout the Old Testament times and through the New Testament times. Birth control and abortion of varying sorts and kinds was available. All that to say, the children were not held in high esteem and you see this, for example, with even governmental policies. We see in the time of Jesus that Herod decreed that all the children, the first born sons, should be put to death. The children, the boys, rather, under a certain age should be put to death.

You can imagine in our day if the government put down a mandate that all of the boys were to be killed, what kind of social upheaval that would cause. In that day, it was not uncommon practice because the Roman government, as the Egyptian government, was threatened by the number of children that God's people were having. So, occasionally, there would be a decree sent down from a ruler to slaughter a certain number of religious children to keep the population in check. Pharaoh did it in Egypt in the Book of Exodus. Herod did it in the New Testament in the Book of Matthew in the province of Rome.

And so, you look at this situation where, if you can even imagine today, after church, we're all walking to our cars, the miles that we have to walk to get to our cars, and we're passing the trash bins that have been put out on the curb for the garbage collectors to pick up; if on those heaps, occasionally, we would see small children. We could just pick them up and do whatever we please with them. Bring them home and turn them into whatever our head could envision for their life. And they were property. And if we got sick of them, we could just kill them. That was the Roman world.

And you look at that world and you say, "What an atrocity." What I'm going to argue this morning is that we live in a world that is no less sick in its view of children. It is no less depraved. And it is cultural arrogance for us to point the finger at the Roman world and say, "Oh, those primitive, disgusting people." Our world is equally as vile. It just tends to be a little more medical, clinical and clean.

At least in that day, the women would birth the children before they killed them. Today, women don't even suffer that inconvenience. The world that we live in today, in the city of Seattle, one – for every four married couples, there is one couple that is shacking up, living together. Nationally, the average is one in ten, so our average is 250 percent higher than the national average. What that means is there are a great number of couples who want sex without marriage and they want sex without children, and they have no intention of ever having children. And they have no intention of ever being married. One of the things that we have done, in this city, as well as across the country, is we have separated marriage from sex and marriage from children. And so, people have sex all the time. We create birth control to prevent the birthing of children. If we don't use the birth control or if it, perhaps fails, then we have a backup plan that we call abortion. And one out of three children in this country is aborted each year since abortion was legalized in the early 1970s and it is upwards of 40 million people have died since that time.

This year alone, 1.3 million children will be put to death through abortion. If you have any qualms about whether or not it is a child, it is. It says in the Book of Matthew that when Mary was pregnant with Jesus, she was pregnant with what? Child. So, she was pregnant with child. Jesus was a baby in his mother's womb and he was a child. The world that we live in, though, puts children at that same level of respect as the Roman government.

The interesting thing, too, is there's a big debate this week in the news. Two of the leading articles. One is that unborn children desperately need medical attention to make sure that they're getting well cared for in the womb so that they're not born with defects or malnutrition and such things. And so, they are trying to – the government is – reclassify the unborn child as a person so that medical attention and governmental dollars can be shifted toward that unborn child. And there's an enormous debate that is going on now about the personhood of children. Is that a child? And it's interesting 'cause we live in a duplicitous context where, if a woman is pregnant and I punch her in the stomach and she loses the baby, I've committed murder. But, if I'm a doctor, I haven't. It has nothing to do with whether or not that is actually a child. That has everything to do with who is doing the act to the mother. And so, there's this huge debate on that.

And, in addition, there's a big debate because most birth control or prenatal clinics for poor women in this country, do not have ultrasounds. And if you've ever known anyone that had a baby, or if you've had a baby, you know that an ultrasound is helpful in detecting early onset of difficulties with the child's health and it's important for overall information for the mother to make informed decisions about how to best care for the unborn child. What they're wanting to do is put ultrasound equipment in clinics and the clinics are opposing them because they know that most women, when they see an ultrasound, do not abort the child. It lessens the likelihood because once they see arms, feet, legs, head, they do not believe the argument that it's tissue, which is a foolish argument. You're tissue also. So am I. It doesn't mean that we're not human. We're human tissue.

And so, there's this huge debate going on in the news this week about these two things. And you ask yourself – and I'm not gonna go down the rabbit trail of a political sermon – but, I wanna make a point that, in our culture, there is a disdain toward children. We see them as an inconvenience to be rid of. So, what we try and do is not get pregnant. We use birth control. If we do, we then invoke abortion to rid ourselves of the children. Interestingly, if you do your historical research on this, where this thinking comes from is not your Bible. It doesn't come from your Bible at all. It comes from Darwinistic thinking. That is, that certain people are fit and certain people are less fit. And that those people who are more fit should continue the species. Those that are less fit should not.

This is how we got Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany was nothing but the practical implications of Darwinian thinking. They said, "There is a certain race of Arian people that are most fit. Other ethnicities are less fit. Those other ethnicities should die through natural selection, means and process. They should just cease to exist. But, there's one thing that keeps fowling up this inevitability of genetics and that is Christian kindness. See, the problem was they anticipated Christians keep having mercy on people that are young. And sick. And elderly. And infirmed. And disadvantaged. And the Christians keep feeding them, and loving them, and caring for them, and enabling them to live. And in so doing, the Christians are ruining the genetic pool because they are enabling the less fit to survive. And so, there was attention put toward intentionally involving ourselves in the genetic pool, reducing whom we determined less fit. And whomever is less fit, you always know, is someone who's different than you. We all think that we're more fit. We are the super race. Everyone thinks that. It's the height of cultural arrogance.

This comes through in Nazi Germany where you wonder, "How did the Germans feel it necessary to put to death all of the Jews?" That's why they feel that way. That thinking comes through a gentleman named Thomas Malthus. He created something called Malthusian eugenics. He argued that certain races and certain people should not be enabled to reproduce. This thinking was carried forward in our country by a feminist woman named Margaret Sanger. She founded an organization. Do you know what it is? It's Planned Parenthood. She founded Planned Parenthood. She founded Planned Parenthood saying that, "It was necessary to make abortion and sterilization available, mandatory, if necessary, to overcome the influence of the Christian church and to weed out the less fit." For her, she wanted to eliminate everyone who did not have the intelligence of a 12 year old and she estimated that upwards of half of the population did not meet that criteria. She also was a vehement racist and an anti-Christian. And so, she determined that this Malthusian eugenic should be played out practically in our nation. What happened, then, is that clinics were set up to provide birth control and abortion.

Let me ask you this – what neighborhoods do you think she opened those clinics in? Rich or poor? White or other ethnicities? Always in poor, ethnic neighborhoods. Why? They're less fit, she anticipated. You ask yourself today, "Why is there not a Planned Parenthood clinic in Laurelhurst. Why is there not one in Madison Park? Why is there not one in Mercer Island? Most of the time, where you find an abortion clinic, you will find it where there are people who are first generation immigrants and lower socioeconomic income levels. It's absolute racism.

Statistically, as far as I've been able to garner, I think that per capita, the more abortions in this country are performed in Washington, D.C. Is that an ethnically diverse city and state, district? Yes. Yes, it is. And there – and we're at the place now to where between the upper 25 and 50 percent of income earners in this country, the wealthiest 25 to 50 percent have reached zero population growth. There's an animosity toward children. Some of you ladies have had an abortion. Am I saying it's not forgivable? I am saying that it's forgivable in Christ. Jesus can die for all sin. He can forgive all sin. But, what I am saying is very simply this. That we live in a city that is the least Christian in the United States of America and it has less children per adult capita than any city in the U. S., other than San Francisco. They have less children per capita because of the high homosexual population, which is not generally reproducing.

So, we are less Christian. We are less children. And we have the highest rates of cohabitation of any major city in the U. S. So, we live together, sleep together. We use birth control and abortion so that we don't have to get married and have children. That's Seattle. That's Seattle. You will never get that value system reading your Bible a lot. Paul says that, "The world in its wisdom does not know God and we should no longer be conformed to the pattern of this world, but instead, we should be transformed by the renewing of our mind." That we have to think and act differently if we belong to Jesus. And some of you are single. Many of you are single. And many of you are tempted to divorce sexuality from marriage and marriage from childbearing. And to view children as a burden, rather than a blessing. And to view them in a negative way, rather than in a positive light.

So, what we're going to do, I have to first show you the city that you live in and all of the invisible influences that are coming at you through media, through education, and through modeling. And I want you to realize that that is a bankrupt system. We may look at Rome and say, "I can't believe they treated kids that way." They put 'em out with the trash. We do the same thing. We put them in a dumpster in the back of the doctor's office. It's the same thing. The garbage men picked 'em up. The garbage men still pick 'em up. It's the same thing. But, if we are to be God's people, we must conduct ourselves quite differently.

So, what I'll do with 'ya, I'm gonna walk through Jesus' teaching on children, a bit of it. I'm gonna walk you through some of the teaching of the Old Testament and then we'll get into some practical implications in the Book of Jeremiah. Here's what Jesus had to say. And you think about this. Jesus is speaking as a single man who is unmarried and childless. What is his view of children? God incarnate. Matthew 19:13-14. "Then the little children were brought to Jesus" – this is in your notes – "for him to place his hands on them and to pray for them." That is one of my favorite pictures in the whole Bible. Little kids getting prayed for by Jesus. I mean, if you don't like that, you know, you need major help. That's a good picture. We like that here.

Little children are supposed to be prayed over. You should be praying, if you are a parent, praying over your children all the time. And if you have children that you know, nieces, nephews, friends, you should be praying for them, and praying with them, and praying over them. Every night, bedtime, we read the Bible, we pray, and we sing songs. That's our little routine, and it's amazing. Your kids learn how to pray. Zack and Ashley started praying on their own at 18 months. Eighteen months of age, they learned how to pray on their own. First time Ashley prayed on her own, I was laying sick in bed with the flu, and she came and laid hands over me and prayed for my healing. I just bawled. I lost it. Man, when your little girl prays for 'ya, that's something. That's beautiful.

Jesus prays over kids. We should be praying over the kids. "But the disciples rebuked those who brought them." The disciples – "Well, we're doing – ministry now. This is for adults. This is important. We don't have time to waste on little kids." Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." "Let the kids come to me. I made Heaven for them." Jesus tells us that we should come to him, not with a childish faith, but with a childlike faith.

The children are supposed to come to Jesus. It's still true. You want kids to come to Jesus. To love Jesus. To celebrate Jesus. To follow Jesus. It's amazing to me that I have seen with our children, there is, for some reason, God has placed within them the ability to love Jesus, even at a very young age. And they come to Jesus and they get used to coming to Jesus.

The other day, Calvin, you know, he's a few weeks old, he's laying in his little bassinet thing and Zac – I hear Zac in the other room just yelling. And I walk in and Zac's just going at it. I said, "What are you doing?" He says, "I'm preaching to Calvin."

(Laughter)

I said, "What are you preaching about?" And he said, "I'm telling him about Jesus. He doesn't know Jesus." I was like, "That's good. Two and half, man. He's pretty accurate, too." Last night, he's screaming and yelling in bed. I think he has a nightmare, so I get outside of his door and I'm listening, and I hear him yell. "I will not go to Nineveh." He's preaching the Book of Jonah.

(Laughter)

Laying in bed, to his stuffed animals. Just going at it.

(Laughter)

Little kids can come to Jesus. Little kids can love Jesus. They should. Should expect that. Do not hinder them, right? Some parents don't read the Bible

to their kids. They don't talk to their kids about God. They're hindering them. They're hindering them. They're not supposed to hinder 'em. Matthew 21:15-16, "When the chief priests and the teachers of the law, the religious professionals, saw the wonderful things Jesus did, and the children shouting in the temple area, 'Hosanna to the Son of God, they were indignant. 'Do you hear what these children are saying?', they asked. 'Yes, Jesus replied. 'Have you not read from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'."

Who are the people that are worshipping Jesus in the New Testament? It's kids. They're singing, shouting, celebrating, and all the dower, overly serious religious professionals are very upset. "Oh, look at these kids. They're singing too loudly." Jesus says, "No, God has ordained to be praised by children." Children are supposed to come to Jesus and they're supposed to sing to him and worship him. And kids are some of the most able worshippers I have seen. They sometimes lack our inhibitions. My kids sing all the time. My daughter makes up the goofiest Bible stories, theologically accurate, but totally insane, and she loves to sing. My son loves to sing all the time. Every night, I have to sing with my son for about 15 minutes before he'll go to sleep. And he has asked to sing and that is one of the languages of prayer of a child. Jesus says, "Children are created to sing to and worship God." And religious people may not understand that, but God's really happy to hear them sing. So, children are supposed to come to Jesus. They're to be prayed over. And they are to worship and sing to God.

In Mark 9, I love this, "Jesus took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, "Jesus said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, does not welcome me, but the one who sent me'." Jesus says, "The way you treat this kid is the way you're treating me. And the way you're treating me is the way you're treating the father." Your view of God directly involves your treatment of children. Jesus says, 'cause some people say, "Well, I love the Lord" and then they're mean to children and Jesus said, "You can't do that. If you love that child, you're loving me. That child is my image bearer and God has made that child in his image and likeness. That child has dignity, value and worth. That child is not to be hindered from coming to God. That child is to be prayed over and encouraged to worship." Jesus tells us that we should welcome those children. My question is this. In your home, in your life, in this church, are children welcome? They should be. Some of you say, "But, I'm single." So was Jesus. "I'm a single man." So was Jesus, and he has kids on his lap and he prays for 'em. That's a good job for a single man.

I always tell the single men, "Work in the nursery. It's great. You'll think you're teaching the kids. They're actually teaching you. You're learning how to be a dad. You're learning how to love children." And that's an aphrodisiac. Women tend to like that.

(Laughter)

It works well. It's good for single men to be around children. It's good for single men to learn to pray with, and sing with children. It's good for little children to treat children in the same way that they want God to treat them. That's what Jesus is saying. That people should treat children the way that God treat them. And the treatment of children is an indication of our view of God.

Matthew 18, Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me, but if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea." We're gonna get into, this week, into educating children. There's some stupid teaching today that says that kids can't be Christian until they're 12, 13, 14 years of age. Some magical age of accountability. Jesus says, "Here, these little children who believe in me." "These little children who believe in me." What does that mean? These two, three, four year old Christians. You can be a two, three – you can be a one year old Christian. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from when? His mother's womb, right? It can start real early. It does not have to be that they're gonna be demons until junior high and then we hope to make up the difference.

(Laughter)

The children are supposed to love the Lord early. They're supposed to come to him early and it tells – Jesus tells us that if we do anything to hinder that or to harm these children or to encourage them to sin or disbelief, we would have it better if God put a large stone around our neck and threw us to the bottom of the Puget Sound. That would be an upgrade compared to what God has for us. And you think of that in light of a society where the foster care system is filled. Where children are being abandoned, neglected abused. Where one out of three children in this generation was sexually abused as a child. Where one out of three children is aborted. How many people are we missing this morning? Let's say here this morning there's over 300 people. We're missing 150. Two thirds made it. Congratulations. You made it. You think about that world where Jesus says, "It would be better for those people to be at the bottom of the Puget Sound with a large rock around their neck." It's a frightening thing.

Proverbs 1 says that, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and fools despise wisdom, knowledge and discipline." That there's no fear of God. There is no awe and reverence, and respect for God, and it shows, practically. And it shows practically in the way children are perceived and treated. That's Jesus's teaching.

Here's God's call on children from the Old Testament. I would submit this, too, to the single men or to the men who are not fathers. You should read the Bible. You should read the New Testament. You should read Jesus' teaching on children and say, "What does a man who has no children, who is God in human flesh, say about kids? Do I share his attitude? Do I share his perspective?" If not, then you need a renewing of your mind. You need a renewing of your mind." And some men think, "Oh, children. They take my money. They take my time. They rob my life. They make my wife gain weight. They ruin my whole existence." No. No, that's not the way Jesus talked about kids. That's not the way. That a woman who is pregnant is as beautiful as she can possibly be. "That she is great with child", the Scriptures say, "and that any man who God privileges to be a father has been blessed greatly by the Lord." And that God has given him the opportunity to be like Jesus to that kid. Have that kid sit on his lap, be prayed over, sing songs to, lead to faith, encourage in the Lord.

God, in the Old Testament, Genesis 1:28, speaks about this issue. "God created Adam and Eve and he says to them, 'Be fruitful. Increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it.'" God created the man and the woman. He brought them together for marriage, and then they had intimacy, and they were to have children. And there are two things they're to have. They're to multiply fruitfully. Those are two different things. Multiplication is sheer number. Fruitfully is the condition of those children. Is it easier to multiply or be fruitful? It's not that hard to multiply. Fruitfulness takes a lot of work. Some Christians think, "We have a lot of children. We've multiplied. We're a good family." Well, you're halfway there.

The other half is fruitfulness. If you have ten children who go to prison, that is not what the Lord was seeking. If you have ten children who are demons, that is not God's intention. God's intention is that you would multiply, that you would have children, and that you would do so fruitfully. That you would raise those children, by God's grace, to be fruitful. What that means is your children should love the Lord, and know the Lord, and serve the Lord, and study the Scriptures, and walk with God. And they should be fruitful. They should be extending God's grace to all ends of the earth. They should be practically living out the implications of love for Jesus. Fruitfulness. What that means here is when you see a family that has a lot of children, do not roll your eyes and say things like, "My goodness. Don't they know what causes that?" Well, they do know what causes all of those children, and they love those children, and having many children is not a problem.

We tend to see a large family and think, "What is that? A welfare mom who has no self control and is sucking the government dry?" No, it may be a Godly woman who is training the next generation of pastors. That might be her little seminary class that she is bringing up. She might have a lot that she is working on that you may be completely unaware of.

In this city, to have two or three children makes you a freak. I dare you. When you have kids, walk up and down the Ave or Broadway with three kids. You will see people you can't even figure out their gender, let alone what level of the food chain they're on, or potentially, even what species they are. And they will look at you like you are a freak because you have a child. That's the city we live in. There is nothing you can do to be extreme or bizarre in this city, other than get married, stay married, and have three kids.

(Laughter)

That is the most alternative culture you could possibly have in the city of Seattle.

(Laughter)

You're a freak. You have a station wagon.

(Laughter)

What kind of antediluvian throwback is this? This is – right? And to be married for a lifetime with a lot of children is, in this culture, completely counter cultural. That's what God was seeking. "Be fruitful and multiply. Increase in number. Fill the earth and rule over it." It's this issue of stewarding the creating that God has given us. What does that mean? God wants a culture built through the children and grandchildren that honors him, and serves him, and extends his influence to all nations of the earth. So, you wanna multiply fruitfully. You want your children to be fruitful. And that takes a lot of work. That takes an enormous amount of work just to be multiplying and having kids live 'til their 18th birthday, there are professionals who can accommodate that. It takes a good mom and dad to make sure that there is ongoing fruitfulness. Another thing, in Psalm 127:3, Psalm 127 and 128 are two of the classic sections in Scripture on children. I'll just pull out one. We are told that "Children are a reward." Some of your translations will say "A blessing from him."

According to the Bible, children are a blessing. Is that true? It is. They are to be a blessing from the Lord. We have three kids. Each a blessing. Each a blessing. My wife had a miscarriage and we lost a child. Was that a tragic loss for us? Yes. Why? Because we were anticipating this great blessing. Now, we'll have to walk into the Kingdom to meet that child.

~~My nomination~~ ~~and family~~. Thank you mom and dad. I love my mom and dad very much. I was the oldest of five kids. I'm glad that I came from a family where mom and dad told us that children were a blessing. And so, they had children and I'm glad to have brothers and sisters. I'm glad that my little sister is here today hearing her big brother teach the Gospel. She's a high school senior. Blessing? Yes, blessing. Absolutely. Children are a blessing. Now, they are a lot of work, right? Mom's work is cursed. It's work, but it's blessed work and it's good work. And it is seen in our culture that the children are the curse. And so, you have women who do not want to have children, and you don't get that from reading your Bible. You just don't because children are a blessing.

A couple of other things. In Proverbs 10:1 we're told that, "A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son, grief to his mother." Children are a blessing, but if you do not parent them well and they do not love and serve the Lord, then the children will be one of two things. A joy or a grief. But, they will be fruitful either way. They will reap havoc or righteousness; wisdom or folly; life or death. Your children will be fruitful for either good or evil. And they will produce in their father either joy, or in their mother, grief. You know, find a dad who has raised children who work hard, are honest, who love God, and who are being fruitful. That is a dad who has joy. He realizes that his time was invested well. You find a mother whose children are destructive, and self destructive, and violent, and foolish, and death. She sheds many tears, Proverbs says. She is filled with grief. She's filled with grief.

And so, children are a blessing, but they are given to us to steward and to shape and to mold. And Malachi 2:15 tells us why God gives us children. "Has not the Lord made them, the man and the wife, one in flesh and spirit? There he is. And why one? Because he was seeking Godly offspring, so guard yourself in spirit. Do not break faith with your wife, the wife of your youth." You're supposed to get married. You're not supposed to bust up that marriage. You're supposed to stay married, gentlemen. And once you are married, what you are seeking is to remain married and have Godly

offspring. God wants men who love him to have children and to have children who are fruitful and that offspring to be Godly. That's what God is looking for.

Here's where I wanna spend some time. Go to the Book of Jeremiah. If you don't have a Bible, there's one at the end of your row underneath your seat. Go to Jeremiah 1. I wanna look at Jeremiah. I'll give you the context of the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah is a man who is a prophet writing to God's people at a time when they are incredibly disobedient. They have walked away from the truth of God and God, through Jeremiah, is rebuking them. His name literally means, "God lifts up." They had sunk pretty low and God is gonna lift them up through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah, starting in Chapter 1:4, if you'll look at him, this is a bit of his calling. I want you to understand how God works here. It says, "The Word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.'" Okay, when did God know Jeremiah and when did God put a call on his life to be a prophet? In his mother's womb. Alright, when his mother was pregnant with him, I anticipate that she laid hands on her own womb and prayed for her son. And that God had destined that son to be a prophet and to serve him. And so, Jeremiah was picked from his mother's womb. God had this plan for Jeremiah. "Before you were born, I set you apart and I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Here's Jeremiah. "A sovereign Lord", I said, "I do not know how to speak. I am only a child." God comes to Jeremiah when he's a young man and says, "Jeremiah, you're a prophet." Jeremiah says, "I don't wanna be prophet." How old is Jeremiah, in all likelihood, at this point? He's probably a teenager. He's probably in junior high.

Now, you think about it. How many junior high kids have you met that are ready to write Books of the Bible and be a prophet to the nations of the earth? If they don't get someone pregnant or kill someone, we anticipate that we have succeeded in our parenting.

(Laughter)

What we have done in this culture is we have walked away from the Bible, which says, "There are children and adults", and we've created something in the middle called adolescence. Adolescence means you are an adult, but you get to act like a child. How long does adolescence go? 'Til you retire. That's right.

(Laughter)

Adolescence in this country, it used to be you were a child until you were in high school. Well, then, until you got your license. Well, then, until you're 18 'cause then you could be drafted, or until you graduated from high school. And now, until you're in college. Well, now, until you get married, or, perhaps, until you have a child. And adolescence is extended indefinitely. And there are people, especially men, who are in their '20's and '30's still acting like junior high kids. Why? They're just stringing out adolescence as long as possible. Not taking responsibility. Not being mature. Not thinking through their future. Jeremiah is a teenage kid. Maybe 12, 13, 14 years old. And God says, "Jeremiah, you're a prophet and you're gonna speak to me, for me, on behalf of me to all nations of the earth."

You ask yourself, "Is it possible to have a child who actually is ready for ministry at 13?" It is. It is. We see the young Lord Jesus in the temple arguing theology at a very young age. We see that Isaiah prophesied probably at least 40 years and had to begin when he was a young man. The knock on the Puritans. The knock on Jonathan Edwards. The knock on Charles Hadden Spurgeon was that they were just kids. But, children will rise to the level of expectation that is put upon them. And if the expectation is nothing, they will rise to nothing. God calls Jeremiah and says, "You're a teenage prophet. You're a junior high prophet to the nations of the earth." I think it's glorious. I pray that your sons and my sons would be up to that task. That when called upon, they could speak on behalf of the Lord at 13 years of age. But, I am only – "But the Lord said to me", verse 7, "don't say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue declares the Lord." God says, "Jeremiah, it's not about your age; it's about my calling. You are incapable of doing this. Don't worry. I go with you. We'll make you into a good prophet."

If you jump over to Chapter 2:13, here is the problem and Israel or, at this point, in Babylon, but here is the problem with God's people at this time. Here's why Jeremiah is being called. Chapter 2:13. "My people have committed two sins. Two sins. One, they have forsaken me, the spring of living water." That's God. "And two, they have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." God says, "There's two sins that my people have committed. One, they're supposed to get life giving, fresh water from me." Jesus talks about the streams of living water that'll flow through us. See, he's talking there about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. God says, "I want my people to live and I want them to have health. And I want them to have joy. And I want them to have wisdom so they can drink from me fresh water that will nourish them." But, he says, "What my people have done, they have walked away from my fresh stream. Not only that, they have started drinking out of the toilet." Do we still do that? We do. Some of you drink out of the toilet.

A lot of your thinking, your ideas, your worldview, your values, are not from God and his Word; they are taken from broken cisterns that cannot hold water. You're drinking out of the toilet and wondering why you're sick. You're sick because of two things, Jeremiah says. "You have stopped drinking in the truth of God and you have started drinking in the filth of the toilet of the world." Proverbs says that, "One is wisdom, the other is folly; one brings life, the other brings death."

I read a study that said that many Christians who come into their pastor for a Christian wedding, upwards of 50 percent of them, are already living and sleeping together by the time they show up for the church wedding. Fifty percent. What does that mean? We're just drinking from the toilet. Can't figure out why we're sick like everyone else. Fresh water. Dirty water. Folly. Wisdom. Death. Life. God says, "Jeremiah, I need you to go talk to my people. They have absolutely lost their mind. They've completely walked away from wisdom. Not only that, they have replaced it with folly."

With that in mind, go to Jeremiah 29. This is where we're gonna camp for a while. I love this. Here's the situation. God's people were in Jerusalem and

God took them in exile to a place called Babylon. Babylon, good city, bad city? What is it?

Response: It's a bad city.

Bad. Okay, I've always told you. If the Rolling Stones name an album after your city, you live in a very bad city, okay?

(Laughter)

Babylon is a bad city. Babylon is a city where the emperor thinks he's God. They worship false Gods. In the schools, they're studying Paganism. They're studying demonism. They're studying witchcraft. They're studying sorcery, just like – just like our schools. It's just like Seattle. They're putting their children to death. They are a corrupted people. Absolutely. Now, what often happens in the Old Testament is that when God wants to bring the Gospel, the good news of his salvation to a people group, his people refuse to go. So, he gets them there in very creative ways. How does Jonah get to Nineveh? Belly of a whale. My son'll tell you that story. He loves that. He loves that story. How does God send missionaries into Egypt? Slavery. How does God send missionaries into Babylon? Exile and captivity. When God's people refuse to talk to people who God is trying to get in his Kingdom, God sends them there in some very painful ways. What happens here is that God sends them into exile in Babylon.

You imagine, one day you just overtaken by a military and you get drug to a foreign country where it is completely Godless. What do you do? That's what he's writing about. Chapter 29:4, "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." Who carried them from Jerusalem to Babylon? God did. Who put you in Seattle? God did. Acts 17, Paul says that, "God determines the times and the places in which we live." Is it an accident that you were born at the time you were born? No. Is it an accident that you were born in the place you were born? No. Is it an accident that you're living in Seattle right now? No. Is it an accident that God has called you into exile here in Babylon? Not Christian. Desperately needing good news. It is no accident. God has appointed you and me to be here.

Grace and I, when we graduated from college, we knew that God had called us to Seattle. Today, we'll have 1,200 people in church. Five years ago when we started, we had 12 in our living room in Wallingford. We knew that God had plans for Seattle as he had plans for Babylon. And so, we knew that he was sending us here. So, we packed up from college and we settled in here. And God has sent me here and God has sent you here. And God has us here for a reason. And it is not exclusively for ourselves. It is for his purposes. God has a plan for Seattle.

Jeremiah then tells us here's what we are to do. "We are to build houses." Men, how hard is it for you to live off of one income if you are married with a large family, and buy a home in Seattle? Is that hard? Hard work. Average household in Seattle's nearly a quarter million dollars. Average. How hard will it be? This little, tiny postage stamp of a house behind us, 900 square feet, no yard, just sold \$200,000.00. Right behind the church. They were asking \$210,000.00. Men, how hard will it be for you here in Seattle to build a home? To buy a house? To get a piece of land and to settle in? It's hard work, isn't it? See, these people are saying, "When do we get to leave?" See, that's the question that the church is asking now. We read all these stupid books about when the rapture comes and when we get to leave, as if that was the point.

The point was, "Okay, I'm a Christian now. Am I done? Can I leave?" No. Most of you still have 50 or 60 years left. There are some things that God would like to get done and he has got you at an early age, and he has put you on this earth at an early age to get to work at them, not to sit around wondering when you get to go to the heavenly Jerusalem. You're supposed to build houses and settle in. It will take miracles for some of you to buy a house. It will take miracles for some of you to settle in. It will take miracles, and discipline, and wisdom for some of you to make enough money, men, to actually have a family and for your wife to stay home with your children. And to have a large family and educate them well.

And what I'm calling you to is the hardest thing that anyone has ever called you to. I'm asking you to throw your whole life into God's purposes and what we are anticipating is the building of a counter culture right here in Seattle, right here in downtown Babylon that will, in every way, run against the entire value system of the city. And the plan will not fail unless God provides and, to me, that is wonderful because the last thing we need is a plan that will succeed if God doesn't show up. We need God, and God has been faithful, has he not? How much did we pay for the building you are sitting in? Nothing. In one year, this morning service has gone from 50 to 600 because God has things he would like to do here and he has brought you to himself to get about that business. Are you excited about that? I am. I got 50 or 60 years left. I wanna do something. God says, "Start with this. Get a house." "Well, I wanna do ministry." "Get a house. Get a house."

Here's some other things to do. Settle down. Figure out where are you gonna homestead? Where are you gonna be? Where are you gonna raise your kids? Where are you gonna set up your life? Where's that gonna be? Some of you may be pilgrims. God's passing you through here onto a place that he has for you. Great. But, wherever God has called you, get there and settle down and put some roots in and say, "Okay, 50, 60 years here, whatever God gives me, how am I going to participate in this place?" "Plant gardens and eat what they produce." Plan on being there for a while. "Marry and have sons and daughters." Don't just kill your daughters and set them out. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage." This is huge. We're gonna get into dating and courtship for you single people in a few weeks. It tells us here that men and women are to be handled differently in marriage.

For the boys, you're supposed to seek a wife. Sorry, Proverbs says, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." He's looking for a wife. Is a wife – is a woman supposed to be looking for a husband? No. She is, according to this language here, "to be given in marriage." What that means is her dad loves her. Her dad is involved in her life. Her dad loves and fears the Lord. And her dad is keeping an eye on her, making sure that one, she isn't chasing boys; and two, that bad boys aren't chasing her. That if any boy wants to meet her and come to her, that's fine. He comes through dad. And if he lives through that, then he gets an opportunity to marry her.

(Laughter)

Okay, we're gonna talk about that. We live in a culture where we have women running around trying to find husbands. You will find a husband, but not a good one. Not a good one. We'll get into – I just – I wanna get into this so, right now, but I can't. We'll hold this, okay?

(Laughter)

But, then the way we set up marriage is different. We love the daughters and make sure boys aren't running around, breaking their heart, doing terrible things. And the boys, we tell them to be men and to pursue noble women, through noble means, for noble ends. Goes onto say, "So that they, too, may have sons and daughters." Grandkids. Here's my question to you. What are your grandkids gonna be doing in 40, 60 years? Do you have a plan for your grandkids? Some of you don't have a plan for Monday.

(Laughter)

You need to have a plan for your grandkids. What are we gonna do for the grandkids? Proverbs says that, "A wise man invests to bless his children's children." That is financial, but it's much more than that. It's housing. It says that, "Wealth and houses are inherited from parents", Proverbs says, "but, a prudent wife is from the Lord." You're saying, "What? We're supposed to give houses to our kids?" That would be nice. Would it not be nice if you could help your grandkids with college? You could help your kids with their home purchase, if you couldn't be generous and set up your life spiritually, and physically, and emotionally, and financially, to bless your children's children. And then you want to have grandkids. That's what he says. You wanna live to see your grandkids. I can't wait to meet my grandkids. My daughter's four and a half, but I can't wait to meet my grandkids. And right now, my wife and I are reading the Bible and praying, "What is the plan for the grandkids?" I don't know what God's call is on them, but we want to be in a position where we can be good grandparents, involved in their life, loving, encouraging, and supporting them in whatever it is that God calls them to.

See, that's wisdom. See, foolish people think from day to day, or weekend to weekend; wise people think from generation to generation. They do. And there's a legacy you wanna pass onto your kids. Jonathan Edwards, every day, would pray for up to five generations of his family.

If you're a single man, you should be praying for your great, great, great grandkids. That's faith. That's trusting that God will enable you to be like Abraham, the Father of a great new family that is a blessing to all the nations of the earth. That's what you want. But, you don't get that if you don't what? Get a job. Get married. Settle down. Live somewhere. You have to build this life and then bring your children into it.

He goes onto say, "Increase in number there." Do not what? "Do not decrease." These people are saying, "But, see, Babylon's a terrible place. Oh, the housing market's real high and there's no parking places for big vehicles that house multiple children and the school system is bankrupt and the taxation is really high and all the other women work and blah, blah, blah." This is the way we do things here in lovely downtown Seattle Babylon. God says, "Don't decrease." Among the wealthiest 25 to 50 percent of Americans right now, there is zero population and growth. Children are a curse not a blessing. They don't want them. There are two religions that are outpacing us in growth presently in this nation. Do you know which ones they are? Islam and Mormonism. How? Children. Children. They have taken a Biblical principle and implemented it. Now, they don't have a Biblical Gospel, but they have a Biblical principle. They are having large families and they are anticipating that maybe, right now, they're losing, but as far as religions go, give them a few generations. They will be winning because they will outnumber us. Wisdom thinks generationally.

Here's my question. In 50 years, who is going to preach the Gospel in the city? Who is going to plant the churches that reach the new generations? Who is going to continue the work forward? That should be your grandkids. That should be my grandkids. See, having children is not just about you getting your emotional needs met and having, you know, the perfect Christmas card photo where you all have matching hats.

(Laughter)

That's not the Biblical point. The Biblical point is you want your children to multiply fruitfully and to serve God and to extend his influence and to bring the good news of Christ from generation to generation. You think about it. If the statistics are true and the majority of people that are having children these days are not Christians, who are not living in wisdom, then isn't it going to be important that we send a lot of kids out there to connect with them and tell them about Jesus. It's hugely important. It only takes one generation for a nation to go from Christian to post-Christian. You look at this in Europe. A lot of the churches now have been turned into brothels, hotels and commercial real estate. Why? Because all of those people who served the Lord did not pass that legacy onto their children.

See, many of you are single, but if you don't have a plan, it will end with you. God says, "Increase. Do not decrease in number." Why? It's a ministry issue. It's a Gospel issue. It's a future generation issue. Right now, our church this week, we'll be running about 1,200 people. The only thing we lack for growth is seats, right? By the time my two and a half year old son is old enough to be in ministry, where do you think we're gonna be? Eight, ten, twelve thousand people? Perhaps. What kind of resources will we have to give him and to give your kids? Pretty significant if we're wise. What kind of things could they do? Who knows? Whatever God has for them, we should have the resources prepared to disseminate and to make sure the work outlives us. And we should be pouring this into the minds of the kids at a very young age. "You belong to the Lord. You should love the Lord. You should serve the Lord. You should be praying for the call that God has on you."

I had one of the most encouraging experiences with my son this week. It was magnificent. My son is a Bible freak. He reads the Bible at least an hour a day. He always wants to play act the Bible stories. One of us is Jonah. One of us is the whale. One of us is David. One of us is Goliath. One of us is Peter. One of us is John. We're always playing some sort of story. And this week, I got up early with him and we had breakfast and we got dressed and we were reading the Bible, and we're hanging out, and wrestling. And played a little David and Goliath and he slayed me, and then I had to get to work.

(Laughter)

And I said, "Well, I gotta go to work now, Zack." He says, "Where you going?" I said, "I'm going to, basically" – I told him it was like a hospital where this man who had a surgery go bad about a year ago has been hospitalized ever since, has not been able to get out of bed, stand. He lost all use of his lower body. And I said, "Zack, I gotta go pray with him and meet with him. I'm his pastor." I said, "So, I'll be home later." Zack gets very frustrated, and he looks at me, and he says, "Well, I wanna go too." He's two and a half. I said, "Well, Zackie, I'm his pastor." He says, "I'll be his pastor." And I thought, "God rebuke me. You're right. You should go. You should go with me." So, I said, "Okay, fine, you can go with me." So, he puts his froggie boots on and he grabs his Bible.

(Laughter)

And he jumps in the car with me and we go to do this hospital visit. And we get out and I'm trying to explain to him, "People here are sick. They're dying", you know, this, I mean, this might be a little new experience for a two and a half year old boy. He walks in. I sit down with this man, who is a good Christian brother, whom I've gotten to know and love. And my son sits on my lap for about an hour. Two years old. No toys, no nothing, and we talk with this guy. A two year old boy. And he's, you know, he's sitting on my shoulders and hanging out. He's being obedient and attentive, and he's listening to all the things that the Lord's teaching this guy. And we get all done and I said, "Zack, you need to pray for him." Zack says, "Okay." Bows his head, and quietly prays that God would heal him and touch his feet, and touch his legs, and he was paying attention and he knew what to pray for.

So, we left and I looked at Zack and it was like he was a 20 year old man. I mean, it was amazing. And my little co-pastor. And so, I took him out to lunch, and we sat at lunch, and he asked me questions for about a half hour, 40 minutes, on ministry. "Daddy, how often do you do this?" And, "What do you pray for?" and "What parts of the Bible do you tell them?" And, you know, "What if they're not Christians?" He's got all these great questions about how to be a pastor. And, I mean, I was just amazingly encouraged. I put him in the car, came home, I told Grace. I said, "This is the like the best day I've ever had in my whole life." It's amazing.

Got an email, then, from the guy. His legs had just started to work, but his feet weren't moving and working, so he couldn't stand. And Zack prayed, and he went into physical therapy and God healed his feet, and his feet work, and now he can stand, and he's starting to walk. And he'll be able to live on his own and move out in the next month, and go into his own house and resume life a bit. He said, "Tell Zack that God answered his prayer and I'm grateful." I told Zack, I said, "Zack, God answered your prayer. God healed his feet. He can walk." Zack says, "Who else should we pray for?"

(Laughter)

Okay? I mean, I'm hoping that by the time I'm done with Zack, he's ready to take my grandkids into the next generation. That's what you want. And see, here's the funny thing. We're thinking, "No, I want my life." Jesus says, "You lose your life, you find it." It's when you pour yourself into God's purposes that you actually get to be alive. It's the person who tries to build this autonomous, self-governing, disconnected, one generational, weekend to weekend life that is dead.

He says also, verse 7, "Seek the peace and the prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile." Do we hate Seattle? We don't, do we? We love this city. Why? This is our home until God takes us to his Kingdom. We want this city to be prosperous and blessed. We want it to be financially, and spiritually, and morally, and economically sound. Pray to the Lord for it. Here's my question. Are you praying for our city? Are you praying for Seattle? Are you praying for the schools? Are you praying for the kids? Are you praying for the totality of the place that we live?

See, sometimes the church gets this attitude. "We're the good guys. They're the bad guys. We need to get away from them. They'll ruin our life." And then, we move where? Way out of the city. So, statistically, across the country, the most dense urban areas are the least church-ed because the Christians get as far away as they can. God says, "No, I stuck you in Babylon. Settle down and pray for that city, that God would change it." We don't hate Seattle. We don't wanna run from it. We're glad we're here. Here's what I'm excited about. How much work is there to do here in the least church city in the United States of America? There's a lot of work. That's great. We're young. We need something to do for 50 or 60 years, rather than clubbing and cohabitating and shacking up and ruining the economy. We need a plan B. We need to have something to do.

And here's the great news. How long will it take to see the city transformed? Generations. Great. Our kids have something to do. Our grandkids have something to do. You say, but, "I'm single." I know, isn't it great you're learning this in advance? It's always better to take driver's ed before you drive in rush hour. It's good to learn these things. And if it prospers, you, too, will prosper. Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says. "Do not let the prophets and dividers among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them declares the Lord."

Here's the deal. He says, "Don't listen to the liars who claim to be on your team that tell you what you wanna hear." How do you know if someone is lying? Usually, it's because you like what they're saying. That's usually the first indication that they're a liar. Some people say, "I don't like you." Praise the Lord. I have done my job.

(Laughter)

If you don't like me, then the odds are I'm honest. If everyone says, "That was wonderful, man. You told me exactly what I wanted to hear", I'm gonna go throw myself on something sharp. I have not done my job.

(Laughter)

People encourage other people to speak on behalf of God and say some things that aren't true. So, you can just lobby to – "Oh, well, you know, singleness is better than marriage. Children are a burden. You know, pregnant women are, you know, lost their potential." I mean, just all this stupid nonsense that we buy into, that we didn't get from our Bible and certain people who claim to know God speak about it and they defend it. And they lie. And God says, "Do not listen to them." I will tell you this. Read your Bible. Read your Bible. Read your Bible. Read your Bible.

You guys see what could happen? I want you to get inside my Napoleon head for a second, okay? The city just continues to deteriorate. The school system completely bottoms out. It's nearly there. The tax rate is enormous because there is such social upheaval and chaos. And we have large families with children who have wisdom, who love and fear God, and are involved in the inner workings of the city. Banking. Education. Law. Real estate. Do you see it? Do you see it? Are we gonna take it over and kick 'em all out? No. We're going to build a world in the middle of their world that is better than their world, built on God's wisdom, and invite them to come enjoy Jesus with us.

Some of you started off very foolish, very stupid, drinking out of the toilet. And God has given you fresh water and you're really grateful. And things are going much better by his grace and you, now, have been provided that opportunity to extend that to someone else and to hand that off. You should love that. What else are we gonna do? I just can't wait. I told Grace, I said, "Honey, I think the highlight of my whole life will be the day I sit in a pew and I get preached at by my grandson. I think that will be the best day of my whole life." I plan on crying and tithing. That's what I plan on doing.

(Laughter)

Man, that'll be beautiful. That'll be beautiful to get preached at by my grandson. I can't wait for that. But, it starts with God's people renewing their mind, and thinking differently, and settling in, and having a plan, and anticipating that God has sent them to a place for a sovereign cause. Out of this, there are a couple of common questions 'cause there's so much stupid thinking. I mean, here's the couple of questions I get all the time. "Is birth control a sin?" Okay? The Bible does not speak directly – these are – this is your leftovers, okay? That was your meal. Here's your leftovers. The Bible does not speak about birth control. In the Old Testament and New Testament times, they had birth control, and they had abortion. But, the Bible doesn't speak about it. So, I cannot make a dogmatic statement about birth control, but principally, I can get to it indirectly from some other portions of Scripture. The Bible does say, "Thou shalt not kill." So, if you're gonna use abortion, or a morning after pill, or an IUD, or some forms of the pill, which can flush a fertilized egg, you could be terminating a life, and that's murder. So, those things off limits for believers? Should be. You'll need to do your homework and look at these things? Especially you ladies whom are married or anticipating marriage. So, those things are out.

The Bible also speaks about God's sovereignty over the womb. God opens and closes wombs, right? Sara is a very elderly woman, gets pregnant with her first child. Mary is a virgin. If there's ever been evidence that God is sovereign over the womb, a pregnant virgin should settle the case. God is sovereign. He opens and closes wombs. I've got it down there. For example, Leah had six children. Rachael had two. Sara and Rebecca had one. Rebecca actually had twins. She had one birth, two kids, okay? Here's the point. Some women get pregnant and they say, "Oh, my gosh, I got 25 years of child bearing potential left. I'm gonna get pregnant every month. I'll have one 1.7 million kids. I can't do this."

(Laughter)

It doesn't always work that way. God opens and closes wombs, ladies. He knows what you're capable of handling. So, is it possible that God would give you a child and then wait some time to give you another? Yes. Some of you are only children or there's only two kids in your family. Your parents wanted more and they didn't come. All kinds of interesting things happen. Some people assume that they can get pregnant and it takes them years to do so.

I'll throw in an addendum too. In the early church, who do you think began the work of adoption? That was a Christian ideal. It may be good for some of us to consider adoption because it's a great showing of the Gospel of Christ. God says that, "We are children who are astray. We're without a father and that God is our Father and he has" – the language of the Romans is – "adopted us into his family, and he is our Father and he has made us brothers and sisters in Christ." Adoption is all about God adopting us into his family and we should extend that kindness, adopting others into our family. Some of you should look at the foster care system. We have this family here, one of my dear friends from high school. He and his wife just adopted three children out of the foster care system. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. Am I saying have kids? Yes. Am I saying that there are kids that don't have parents that God's people should parent them? Yes, we should. We should. We should consider that an honor and an extension of our ministry.

As far as birth control goes, then, should you be using it if you're unmarried? No, you shouldn't be having sex. Should you be using it if you're committing adultery? No, you shouldn't be committing adultery. Should you be doing it because you don't like children? See, that's the issue. The issue is not are you using birth control? The issue is motive. Why? What is fueling that? Is it because you don't wanna be inconvenienced? Is it because you've been very foolish with your money and you continue to be very foolish with your money, so you're not in a financial position as a married couple to do that? Is it because the man is lazy and is not actively pursuing work? You gotta look at motive. If it's because of your sin or because of an erroneous non-Biblical view of children, then the birth control is not sin, but using it in those circumstances is. It is.

And it's amazing because our attitude is so much different. If you meet a young woman and she gets pregnant, it is not infrequent that you will hear, "Oh, my gosh, the end of the world has come. I've been cursed. I'm pregnant." Some of you girls have been there with your boyfriends. You're late on your cycle and you panic, thinking that the worst curse in the universe has come on you, that you're pregnant. In the Bible, it's just the opposite. Elizabeth is an old and barren woman. She's John the Baptist's mother, Jesus' cousin. She's speaking with Mary, Jesus' mother. It's this interesting situation in Luke where she says, you know, "The Lord has given me a child and now he has lifted my disgrace." Elizabeth thought that not having a child was a disgrace. In our culture, having a child is a disgrace. Your attitude about children is paramount to your use of birth control.

Some men who get married are very cowardly and weak and they do not wanna work hard enough to provide for a family and so, they deny their wife

the ability to have children. And, after a while, it becomes very difficult for their wife because she wants to be a mother. The guy says, "Well, you just have the baby itch." Yes, and that was given by the Lord. So, you have to look at the motives for birth control.

And lastly, this issue of overpopulation, which is absolutely stupid. What we have done, from this thinking of a guy name Malthus, Thomas Malthus, the Malthusian eugenicist who influenced Planned Parenthood, and abortion, and the whole nonsense of it all, he came up with this basic math equation to determine the carrying capacity of land and food. We still operate under these faulty assumptions that are generations old and no longer hold. It comes down to the place, now, where in the public school system, we have overpopulation games for elementary kids. We hand them food and there's not enough for all of them, so they have to decide which one is gonna starve to death. Just foolish things like that. Saying, "Okay, kids, you see? It's good to use birth control and have an abortion 'cause, otherwise, other children are gonna starve to death. That's wrong, right?" It's just dumb.

The math doesn't add up. They say that food will not grow as fast as population. That's not true. Food is outgrowing population. In addition, they are saying that the world will continue to multiply exponentially. It will not. There are wars. There are famines. There are environmental factors that do help reduce overall population. In addition to that, I've got this in your notes, every single person on the earth could fit into the state of Texas and have 1,700 square feet of space. That's not a bad idea. Send everybody to Texas.

(Laughter)

But, if we can get everybody in Texas, I think we're fine. In addition, the problem is not resources. It's distribution. So, if you're a Christian who's worried about hunger, starvation, and overpopulation, what you work on is not the reduction of children, but the better dissemination of the available resources to those in need. There's tyrannical governments. There is corruption. There is fraud. There are a number of factors that eliminate the possibility of food getting to those who are in most need. Christians should be about the political purpose of making sure that that food goes. If you just implement birth control and abortion, you will have less people starving to death, but you won't have more people being fed and that's the point. The goal is not less starvation. The goal is more feeding. And some people have done this because what they want is they want the women who do not have children, who abort their children, or who use birth control and never get married to be championed, as if they're a cultural hero. And it's not true. It's just not true. And when God says, "Increase. Do not decrease. Be fruitful. Multiply. Fill the earth with my children", I think he understood the carrying capacity of a piece of land. I assume that.

Practically, as God's people, you cannot divorce sex from marriage. You cannot divorce children from marriage. You cannot divorce God from family. Not if you're going to be a blessing. Not if you are going to continue God's work. How many of you are single? Look at that. Okay. This is vital for you to get your head around. Otherwise, your goal will be to have sex. That is not an enormous objective. It is a means to an end. It is part of a marital covenant. It is part of the blessing of having children. It is part of the blessing of a fruitful union. Everyone is looking for a shortcut for the benefits of a marital union without any of the responsibilities, i.e., marital covenants and children. And those things always end in death and they fail because Satan is a liar and that's all he tells is lies. I want a different life for you. I want a different life for your marriage. I want a different life for your kids, and your grandkids, and your great grandkids, and I want the city to be different, and I anticipate that God has brought us together because he has something in mind. And I want you to be excited about it. The fact that we can go from 12 to 1,200 in 5 years. By the time our grandkids are here, I will love to see what that looks like.

At this point, we always respond. The first way we respond is communion. It's remembering, celebrating, loving Jesus. Jesus came to us, in what form? God came to us how? A baby. Can you imagine today if Jesus came, teenage, unwed mother who's suffering from delusions? After all, she thinks that God made her pregnant. Walking into a clinic, can you imagine? Jesus wouldn't have even made it. God comes as a baby. Lives a perfect, sinless life on this earth. He dies for my sin and the sins of all of his people. He conquers your enemy of Satan, sin and death. He forgives us, changes us, not only – this is what I love. Jesus forgives us of all of our sin.

Some of you have had sex before marriage. You've had abortions. You're shacking up now. You're on birth control when you shouldn't be. Your whole life is just a wreck. And God'll forgive you if you come to him in humble repentance and ask him to. It's beautiful. He'll wipe it clean and make it all good. But, Jesus doesn't only forgive us of our sins. He transforms us so we don't do those stupid things anymore. He makes us new creations with new lives, new hope, new future, so that we don't do the dumb things that we've always done.