

Being a Millennial Dad Today

Feast of Tabernacles

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Good morning, brethren. It's wonderful to see everyone here.

I have a target audience today, but the principles we're going to talk about are going to apply to everyone, and I will make an effort to reiterate that as we go along. So, ladies, stay tuned. Don't go anywhere.

What I'm going to be focusing on today is going to be targeted towards the fathers. By fathers, I'm speaking in rather broad terms. I'm speaking to fathers, grandfathers, uncles, perhaps even older brothers, and not just physical or biological relatives, but spiritual ones as well. So, perhaps you're not a father or grandfather physically, but there's a good chance that you play that role in a spiritual sense.

Romans, chapter 12, and 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 are both stand-out locations in scripture that define our relationships with one another spiritually as that of being a body. So, we have this connectivity with one another that's akin to, if not in many cases, much closer than actual blood relatives or blood relations. In addition, 1 Corinthians 11:3, makes it pretty clear that men have a level of responsibility and accountability without mention of marital or paternal status. So, fellas, I'm talking to all of you.

1 Corinthians 11:3. *But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. (NAS)*

Again, not just the guys, but mothers, wives, sisters; much of what we are going to talk about today will apply to you as well.

So, with a massive disclaimer out of the way, what exactly are we going to talk about? I'm not going to take the time to roll out a lot of facts, figures and details to support what I'm about to say. I think it's something we can all agree with, but we as a society, as a human race, are suffering greatly from a crisis in male leadership. We see, across the globe, the effects of a lack of responsibility, a lack of accountability on the parts of fathers. We see the effects of abuse, of neglect, and we see the effects of a lack of vision, a lack of purpose beyond just the here and now, the instant gratification world that we live in. If you want to think of it as peeling the layers of an onion; what we see if we peel away the layers is a crisis in character. We know who's at the heart of this crisis, right? We know that Satan has been, since the dawn of humanity, driving wedges into the very fabric of what God intended to be the foundation of His plan, which is the building of a family.

It's been argued that the issues extant, due to this crisis in fatherhood, are products of modern society, our culture of emasculation or the feminist movement. Each of these have certainly played a role and have contributed to the accelerating of this decline, but again I would argue that, fundamentally, when peeling back the layers, we have a character issue here. It's a poignant example of life without God's spirit indwelling and motivating thoughts and actions. That's going to be a critical point. We're going to beat that one up quite a bit today. Keep that in the back of your mind.

It's easy to point the finger, right? It's easy to point the finger at society – bad society! Bad culture! Bad other dads. All these guys messing up their families out there. However, as a father, I can say that no other experience in my life has shown me how far short I fall continually.

Speaking personally here, for those that don't know me, I'm an I.T. guy. I'm a computer geek. I have an engineering mindset, very binary, very black and white. I like to look at things analytically. So, before I got married, before I had kids, I spent a lot of time "getting ready." I did lots of reading, lots of research and I made lots of plans. Yes, there may have been a flow chart or two in there. I made lots of commitments to myself. "I'm going to be the dad that does this. I'm not going to be the slacker dad that does that (whatever that happens to be)."

I look back on that now, all that planning and organizing and activity, and my general response to all of that effort is, "Ha, ha, ha!" It's the adage of, "If I only knew then what I know now, right?" More than the reading, more than the academic research, it's been the school of hard knocks. I think I might be coming up on my graduate degree from that particular one.

More than plans, it's learning to be flexible and adaptable. We're going to spend some time talking about the value of that in just a little bit. Yet, tempering that with the reality, of sounding mellow-dramatic here, there are lives at stake, right? It's the physical and spiritual lives of my kids that are on the line.

I've continued to research and study, plan, orchestrate, know, and understand. I continue to do those things, but this really hit me a few months ago. I was reading a parenting book, and it just got to the point where I just closed it and put it down, and I thought, "This is too much. This is overwhelming to try to wrap my mind around what is involved and what I'm responsible and accountable for here." Guys, it's like "Ya know, this will take me just a minute to fix this." Maybe your wife comes up and says, "Honey, can you take a quick look at It will take you just a second." However, you end up with the house half torn apart, and it takes all summer to get it fixed, and calling a contractor for help. It's that kind of situation.

What all is involved in being a father, being a male leader of a family? It's a big deal. It's more than I can wrap my mind around, and to my fellow fathers, grandfathers out there, if you take the time to dig, and dig deep, and consider this (we're going to do a little of that digging this morning) I'm confident you will come to the same conclusion. You may have already, and I may just be behind the times. That's very possible. So, if

this is the reality we face, gentlemen, what do we do? How do we cope? How do we be effective in this situation and circumstance? We're going to continue to ask those questions as we go along.

So, not only is the experience of fatherhood or motherhood, parenthood, vital to the success in the next generation, but unlike any experience in our lives, it provides us with a level of insight into how God views us, how God works with us, how God deals with us. We'll talk about this more a bit later, but there's a dimension added to God's patience, longsuffering and mercy that caring for children provides us like no other experience.

And again, if you're not a parent physically, I don't want to leave you out. Chances are you have opportunities. As a matter of fact, you saw almost a dozen opportunities up here just a few minutes ago when the children's choir sang, to influence the lives of younger people. It may be just here at the feast, or wherever you happen to be keeping the feast where there are families. Take the opportunity.

Now in the context of the feast and the Millennium, that's something for us to consider. Our roles in the family of God during the time of the Millennium, they're going to be quasi-paternal, aren't they? It's been mentioned in numerous messages so far this year, actually here. If we stop and consider the conditions extant at the dawn of the Millennium, the chaos, the horror that will just have been experienced on this planet, the wide-spread damage to this physical world, and for those of mankind that will have lived through that experience, the emotional and psychological trauma and the PTSD. It's going to be a "back-to-basics kind of world." And while there will certainly have to be some divine, miraculous intervention to repair much of the damage; if there wasn't, biological life would just cease to exist on this planet, there's also going to have to be tactical, hands-on support, encouragement, involvement, rolling up the sleeves kind of stuff for the people that remain who will have a mindset very much like kids. They perhaps will be like tired, hungry kids.

We will talk more about that as we go along, but keeping this scenario in mind, how do we cope, as we look out on the world? Millennium – day one, here we are. What's our reaction going to be? It may be easy to dismiss the idea. "Well, I'll be a spirit being. I'll have it all figured out and I'll be above the fray, no emotional involvement. I'll have it nailed." Well, yes, being a spirit being does give us the tools and resources and empowerment to be effective, but what does it not give us? Something we're building lots and lots of as we go through our lives. It doesn't give us any character, right?

If you have any doubt, read Ezekiel 28. We've got the story right there of Lucifer's rebellion. Again, if we're honest with ourselves, we deeply consider this day one picture, the moment we are spending our lives preparing for, that "storming the beach" moment. We're going to turn to Revelation 19 in a bit and take a look at that. Perhaps we will get a cold chill, perhaps our heart beats a little faster when we really stop to consider the depth and gravity of that situation, that circumstance that is coming up.

So, guys, gentlemen, we come back to this question: What do we do? As dads today, we face uphill battles constantly. We face Satan's influence, our own carnality, the sins of our fathers in the past. We can talk about the curses from generation to generation, well, they just keep accumulating. It's not getting any better. The shifting sands of society we live in, being prepared for this role we were just talking about in the context of the Millennium, and all the while being held responsible to raise healthy, well-adjusted, God-fearing children. Notice, I haven't mentioned the givens, things like, you've got to build a career, have a job, balance a budget, mow the lawn, fix the leaking faucet, change the oil in the car, and "Ah! There's a spider on the wall. Can you get that please?"

What I'd like to share with you today are three very simple, easy to remember questions that we can ask ourselves to help us be more engaged in the act of being a male leader in the context of a family. We're going to talk about why it's important now, why asking these questions will be important in our role in the Millennium, and how God and Jesus Christ serve as inspiration for that. Yes, guys, we can rise above this crisis. We can become the fathers our families need us to be. In that process, hopefully it will bring us in closer alignment with our ultimate Father, our Father in heaven.

Okay, the first question to tackle, turn with me to Malachi, chapter 4, please. My default Bible translation this morning will be The New American Standard Edition. However, I'm going to read this from the New King James.

Malachi 4:5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

6) *And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.*" (NKJV)

I want to take a couple of minutes to really analyze these verses. First, let's talk about context. Verse 5 states that this is an end-time event. It's preceding the time that we're here celebrating at the Feast of Tabernacles. What is the objective, the point? Verse 6 tells us it is to restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the children to their fathers. So, we see a reconciliation of the family structure. We're not just talking about a superficial reuniting, not just getting everybody in the same room together, but as the word "heart" in the Hebrew means, it's *the very center of awareness, the inner parts, the seat of appetites, the seat of emotions, the seat of passions* of fathers to their children.

For this turning truly to take place, what's going to be necessary? What's going to be required to do this? What's going to power the Elijah to come, if you will, to make this possible? This can only happen through the indwelling of God's spirit, of God's spirit being involved in the process.

We know that Romans 8:6,7 tells us that our carnal minds aren't capable of anything but carnality.

Jeremiah 17:9. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? (NKJV)*

Our hearts are deceitful and sick. This isn't something we can muster on our own. This isn't grit, determination and willpower. This is a function of God's miraculous intervention.

With that in mind, let's ask ourselves this: Should this turning not be happening to fathers with God's spirit today? In turn, the first question is this:

1. Where is my heart?

Is my center of awareness on my relationship with God, on my relationship with Jesus Christ, on my relationship with my wife, my children? Am I in tune with God's spirit working within me, because that's what makes it possible. Again, it's not something we can muster on our own, God's spirit has to be involved.

Having our hearts in the right place has to start in a very specific place. We can find that specific place. Notice who this is addressed to.

Malachi 2:1. *“And now this commandment is for you, O priests. (NASB)*

Consider again in the context of what we are being called for. As mentioned, we are called to be what? A kingdom of kings and priests. Today we have the opportunity to fulfill this role in practice, in type, with our families. But, gentlemen, have we used this responsibility for the good of our families, or have we used it to overlord? Have we used it as a rod of iron as opposed to a shepherd's staff? Again, we ask the question: Where is our heart? Where's our mind? Where is the center of our awareness? Where is our focus as we go along day to day?

2) If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart [critical] to give honor to My name,” says the LORD of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already,[why?] because you are not taking it to heart. (NASB)

God is rebuking the spiritual leadership of the time, for what? Not putting Him first. Not honoring His name. We ask the question: Can this, in principle, not apply to us today? Absolutely, it can.

This lack of not having God at our very core has cascading consequences in our relationships. We see that outlined here in Malachi. I'm going to read this from the NLT.

Malachi 2:13. *Here is another thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure.*

14) You cry out, “Why doesn't the LORD accept my worship?” ... (NASB)

Or as the Contemporary English Version puts it, “*Why isn’t God pleased?*” Maybe we put it, “Why isn’t God listening? Why isn’t God fixing all the things that are wrong with my life? Why are my kids giving me grief? Why is my wife giving me grief? Why do I have a job that makes me miserable? Why is my health so bad?” Maybe it’s a question akin to yesterday’s sermon, “Why is God on vacation? He’s not listening to me. I’m doing things, right? I’m working the 9 to 5; I’m burning and churning. It’s not working out. I don’t get it.” Men, as those spiritually accountable, do you ever ask yourself these questions? Let’s read on, because there’s an answer.

14b) ... I’ll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows.

15) Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? [What’s the point?] Godly children from your union ... (NASB)

So, the admonition is, as we finish verse 15 ...

15 continued) ... So guard your heart; [there’s that concept again] remain loyal to the wife of your youth. (NASB)

So, again, we go through these verses to see this cascading impact, right? A lack of mindfulness, a lack of faithfulness; to take again from yesterday’s sermon, maybe we’re the ones on vacation, spiritually. Not having a heart that’s towards God, in turn, means a heart that’s not towards our wives. If our hearts are not turned towards our wives, that means these Godly children, this output that God is expecting, is at least at risk if not happening at all.

On the flipside, the opportunity we have here, gentlemen, we can ask the question. We can start there. What’s in my heart? Where is my heart?

Proverbs 4:23. *Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. (NLT)*

So, guys, that’s where it has to start. We talked about the restoration of physical sacrifices. We can make physical sacrifices in our lives every day, all day long. At the end of the day, we’re out in the weeds. We’re way off course. Then we scratch our heads and ask, “Why aren’t things working out the way they should?” This is a concept, brethren, that we need to deeply consider, and again ask the question: Where is my heart?

While finding human examples in the Bible can be a tough order in this regard, one of the most striking examples that comes to my mind of our Lord having a heart towards His people is exemplified in the prophet Hosea’s experience. We’re not going to take the time to go through that account exhaustively here, but in the first three chapters of

the book of Hosea, we have recounted the prophet's experience of taking a prostitute named Gomer in marriage and having a family with her. At some point, she leaves him and goes off with another man. In Hosea 3:1, Hosea is given some interesting instruction.

Hosea 3:1. *Then the LORD said to me, "Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. [Notice why] This will illustrate that the LORD still loves Israel, even though the people have turned to other gods and love to worship them. (NLT)*

So, brethren, think about that statement. Where is the center of awareness? The God family, God the Father and Jesus Christ are faithful. They are persistent and determined. They are inclined and resolute in purpose. What is that purpose again? It's building a family. Now Jesus Christ, that same one who spoke to Hosea, also says and it's recorded in John 6:37-40; it says that all that the Father gives Him and believes, will have everlasting life and not be cast out or rejected. What tremendous comfort. What amazing comfort to know that we have a Father's love, to know that we have an elder Brother's love that transcends our weakness, because we are weak, aren't we? We mess up, sometimes like Gomer, like Ancient Israel and Ancient Judah. Sometimes we mess up on purpose. Spiritually, maybe we just didn't show up late for work. Maybe we packed for that vacation in Tahiti, spiritually speaking. But, in John 3:16, we're still loved.

John 3:16. *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)*

We need to bear that in mind. So, dads, grandfathers, gentlemen, this is the gold standard for us to rise to. You have a teenager? They're yelling at you, turning all kinds of red and purple, storming out the door. Maybe you have a toddler, and maybe they're screaming and crying, ripping on every nerve in your body. Have a heart towards them. In that moment, love, even when you are not being loved. It's a tough call.

Now in the context of the Millennium, why will this matter? What does heart have to do with it? We talked about this earlier, and it's been brought up multiple times, and we will visit it again as we go along at this feast. At the onset of the Millennium, it's not necessarily going to be an easy time.

Time doesn't permit us to go through the entire book of Revelation, but as has already been mentioned, we see if we go through it, that time after time, trumpet after woe after bowl after plague, what do we see? There's a common theme or thread. That thread is mankind just isn't giving up. Under the sway of the beast power, humanity will fight until the bitter end, all the way up to and through the return of the saints and Jesus Christ to rule on earth. We will visit Revelation 19 in a little bit.

Again, as we talked about earlier, supernatural intervention is going to be necessary in this restoration process. I don't want to rule that out here, but again there's going to be

a very physical, a very real, tangible, tactical effort involved as well. Who is going to be involved in those efforts?

One of the Biblical textbook examples that I appreciate and is one that I keep coming back to in the context of the feast and the Millennium is that of Nehemiah. We've spent some time in years past going through that book and the accounts and events that take place in the story of Nehemiah, so I'm not going to take the time to dive into it today. What I'd like to do is take a minute to whirlwind tour the condition of Nehemiah's heart, because that's what we are talking about here. We are asking the question: Where is my heart? I will mention some verses, but in Nehemiah 1:4, what do we see? We see Nehemiah weeping, mourning, fasting, and praying. For what? The state of disarray in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 1:4. *When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. (NIV)*

In the latter part of chapter 2, we see Nehemiah himself inspecting the conditions of the wall around the city. So, he's right down in there, sleeves rolled up. He's doing the work. In chapter 5:16, he says it himself that he too worked on rebuilding the wall, so he wasn't just sitting back barking out orders. He was out there in the midst of it.

In chapter 13, we see him cleaning up the temple, restoring reparations due the Levites, the sanctity of the Sabbath, and dealing with intermarriages of the people to the pagan women of the region, to which we read his reaction to that situation in verse 25 of chapter 13. This included things like cursing, physically hitting and pulling out. Remember, this was all in the context of what? The context of decay, disarray, with a small group of loyal but off track, maybe ignorant individuals with a larger foreign force that was not too happy with what was going on.

Again, I think we can draw some parallels between those conditions and what we're going to see at the very beginning of the Millennium.

So, brethren, as spirit beings at the dawn of the Millennium, as we look at this picture, what is our reaction going to be? Will we have a heart towards those that may not be too happy with what is going on and our efforts involved? Will we have the grit and determination to dig in and minister and shepherd those of humanity that will have the same potential as we will have realized? They will become spirit beings going through this process, becoming a part of God's family. So, we have the chance now, we have the chance today in this life to submit ourselves to the spirit that has been given to us, to soften our hearts to those closest to us, to cultivate awareness, to cultivate strength in caring for our families and our children.

So, we started with this question: Where is my heart, as the foundation for what is next? This is actually, in many respects, a big question mark in and of itself.

We live in a world today that is anything and everything but static, a world powered by rapid change, a world powered by progress. Unlike previous generations over the

course of our life, guys my age and younger will probably change careers a couple of times. We may go through long bouts of unemployment. There's no more of going to work for a company for forty years and get the gold watch at the end. Those days are gone. What defines education is more rigorous. You don't have a college degree? You're not getting anywhere. While at the same time, if you don't have the experience, you can have all the letters behind your name that you want, so you're still not getting a job. So, you're caught. Things like retirement, pensions ... not really happening. That three score and ten that we read about in Psalm 90:10, that's definitely pushing the four-score side of things with advances in modern medicine and, frankly, we just live more comfortable lives. We have less risk to our physical lives.

That also means that the children we're raising today, they're going to have a longer-term impact on our lives as they become not just the next business leaders, business people and decision makers, they are going to be our leaders, our business people, our decision makers as we go along in life.

So, gentlemen, in a world that's fraught with change and unpredictability, again we ask the question: What do we do? How do we deal? How do we cope? How do we equip our children to be well adjusted and productive when (and my wife and I heard this in a community meeting recently) our school-age children will have jobs in a work force that don't even exist yet? They haven't even been dreamed up yet. It's not: "My dad was a cobbler, I'm a cobbler, my son is going to be a cobbler." They're going to do stuff I haven't even thought of. Or the ubiquitous nature of technology and trying to track, control, educate and protect our children. Or, to bring it into this room, the ongoing scattering of the church, and concerns for friends, concerns for future mates. That's a lot to consider. It's a lot on our plate.

As much as change and having the ability to adapt and cope has become vital in our society today, let's consider this question: For those God is working with, this idea of adapting and coping and changing, hasn't this always been the case? Let's answer this question.

Hebrews 11:8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, [notice] not knowing where he was going.*

9) By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

10) for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (NASB)

Verse 10 is the key. It's having that vision, having that plan for the long-term future. So, the second question, once we have our hearts in the right place (we've addressed that) is ...

2. What is my plan?

What is my vision for my family? Vital to this is to ask the question: What is my vision for myself? Does my plan account for change? If it's a function of the times we live in or the fact that we are called to be, as we just read, Abraham was called to be an alien in this world. We may be on a path towards God's kingdom, but that path doesn't mean that it's flat, railroad tracks, bolted to the ground and we just park on it, turn the motor on and go. No. There will be twists and turns. Fasten your seatbelts, there will be turbulence.

Hebrews 11:22. *By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones. (NASB)*

I find this fascinating. This is a great example of an individual capturing a vision so clearly, in spite of what was going on around him. Remember, this is Joseph. He was second in command of all of Egypt. He had wealth, power, authority, luxury. He was second only to one other person, and that was Pharaoh himself. He had it all, and yet he was able to bear in mind that where he was, where his family was, wasn't the goal, not what God ultimately had in mind. Joseph had a vision and a plan for his remains that looked out into the future. I call this example out because it's a trap for us today. It's an easy trap for us to fall into. It's easy to lose sight of the big picture. Part of what we're doing here this week is trying to refresh that big picture. When we live in a world that's very much akin to what we read in the first six verses of Amos 6, you can read it on your own, but it describes beds of ivory and drinking wine from bowls. We live in the lap of luxury today, so it's easy to lose sight.

Hebrews 11:33. *Who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,
34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.
35) Women received back their dead by resurrection; ... (NASB)*

I just want to stop here for a second. I'm reading these because these are things that we would like to experience in our own lives. Ideally, if whatever situation or circumstance came up; if we got thrown into a lion's den like in verse 33, what would the plan be? God will shut the mouths of the lions. That's the plan at that point, right? Well, that's our plan.

Let's read on.

*35) ... others were tortured, not accepting their release so that they may obtain a better resurrection:
36) And others experienced mocking and scourging, yes, also chains and imprisonment.
37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword: they went about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, illtreated;*

*38) Men of whom the world was not worthy. Wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground,
39) And all these having approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised. (NASB)*

For those who got to experience verses 36 through 38, or may still experience verses 36 through 38, what's the plan? Was the plan to have a comfortable, well-orchestrated, well executed life? In my binary mind, that would be nice. Or as verse 35 ends, to obtain a better resurrection.

So, the key for us fathers, grandfathers, uncles, older brothers (physical and spiritual), not to be married to a micromanaged, detailed, tactical program to follow, rather it's about having a vision for ourselves, (it's got to start there) and then sharing that vision with our children in a way that makes it real to them. What happens in between today and when that long-term vision is accomplished, there's a whole host of things that can happen, and there's no way of predicting. If there's no way of predicting, we can't prepare for every possible scenario. It's just not possible.

Now the truth is that we're actually pretty good at dealing with this. Men (and I'm painting with a broad brush) are typically able to address change in a reasonable, rational, solution-oriented way. Ladies, please don't laugh too loud. We get blinders on, don't we? We get into a conquer mode. We can power through just about anything. I think that is a character trait that God has given us, and it's a character trait we can use, but as we started with, it has to start where? It's got to start with the heart, and for us guys, that can be the toughest part, but it's also the most important.

We can look to our Father in heaven as the perfect example here. God has a vision for us, doesn't He? He shared that vision with us, but He hasn't shared all the gory details of how each and every one of us individually are going to get there. We have a broad view, but we don't have individual tracks that are clear.

Dads, our job is to take God's vision and make it real to ourselves first and then make it real to our families, and have that be the focus through the good times and the not-so-good times as well.

So, what is our Father's vision for us? Let's take a look at that.

Revelation 21:3. *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.*

4) And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death, there will no longer be any mourning or crying, or pain. The first things have passed away.

5) And He who sits on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. And He said, Write, for these words are faithful and true.

6) Then He said to me, It is done, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

7) He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be His God, and he will be my son. (NASB)

My apologies for stealing a bit of Last Great Day material, but this is very clearly the end state. This is the end of the game. This is after the Millennium. This is after the second death. Satan is put away for good. This is the goal.

Not to take away from the time here that we are picturing now, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Millennium, but we've talked about this in the past. The Millennium, in and of itself, is not the end. For human beings, alive during the time of the Millennium, if it's day 1 or day 999, as physical human beings, until what we just read in Revelation 21:4, there will be tears. There will be some pain. There will still be some trouble.

We can take encouragement from the next verses we will read today, and we do. But picture, as we read through this, being able to say this to someone alive during the time of the Millennium, maybe a human being that's having a character-building moment. We take a lot of encouragement today from this passage.

2 Corinthians 4:16. *That is why we never give up; though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.*

17) For our present troubles are small and won't last very long, yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever.

This is really the focus here in verse 18.

18) So we don't look at the troubles we can see now, rather we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen; for the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

So, learning to have a vision and a plan that looks past what we read here in verse 17, *our present troubles, and fixing our gaze on things that cannot be seen*, applies to us today. It will apply until the very end, until Revelation 21 is fulfilled.

So, we've asked two questions so far.

1. Where is my heart?
2. What is my vision?

We've explored where the very core, the very center of our minds and the center of our awareness should be, and the importance of having a vision that looks beyond the challenges and the changes we have today and looks into the long term.

Now we get to the part (again, broad brush) that we guys tend to be strongest at, but with a couple of important caveats. The third question is:

3. What am I Doing?

Where's my heart? What's my plan? What am I doing?

Now that the right foundation is laid, which is one of the aforementioned caveats, the heart has to be in the right place. We can talk some tactical.

We're kind of breaking into the thought here, to explore the question: What am I doing?

Deuteronomy 11:16. *But be careful [notice this] don't let your heart be deceived ... (NLT)*

There's that concept again, the concept of the heart, right out of the gate.

16b) ... so that you turn away from the Lord and serve and worship other gods. (NLT)

So, again we see here in verse 16, the paramount importance of the heart being in the right place above all else. Before we start doing all the things, we have to be in the right place in our very core. We see here why as well, because deception, because having our hearts and minds in the wrong place, leads to what? Disobedience. It takes us off track, out into the weeds.

17) If you do, the LORD's anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and the ground will fail to produce its harvests. Then you will quickly die in that good land the LORD is giving you. (NLT)

In verse 18, we see this concept again.

18) "So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders.

19) Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

20) Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,

21) so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors.

22) "Be careful to obey all these commands I am giving you. Show love to the LORD your God by walking in his ways and holding tightly to him. (NLT)

This last part of verse 22, this is the second caveat. Dads, grandpas, uncles, brothers: We have to show our love by what? Walking, not just teaching, not just lecturing, not just requiring, not just laying down the law, not just using the rod, but by showing, by holding tightly, by living the life we claim we believe in.

Kids are great at seeing through facades, that we adults think we are so good at putting up. Kids can smell a hypocrite a mile away. They may not know what hypocrisy is, but they know there's something not right with that individual. So, if you believe it, you claim it, do it. It's pretty much that simple. Oh, if it was only that simple, right? Because we make mistakes. I make mistakes. I don't set a perfect example. Just to share with you a practice that I try to incorporate in my relationship with my children is to have an honest, transparent interaction and involvement. As a father, I have responsibilities. I have accountability for my family, and the buck stops here. We're all familiar with the famous sign on President Truman's desk. The phrase on that sign said, "The buck stops here." Do you know what it said on the other side of that sign? It said, "I'm from Missouri." Do you know what Missouri's unofficial nickname is? It's the "Show Me State." Is there a level of skepticism? Perhaps.

But being accountable, brethren, we are lights in the world, aren't we? Matthew 5:14; we know we are being seen. We are being watched and observed. Think of your children, your spouse, your neighbors, your coworkers all silently saying, "You believe this stuff?" Show me.

Back to the concept of interaction and involvement. Here's a simple example. We have a rule in our house that there's no elbows on the table at dinner time. If there's an errant elbow, it gets a little flick to remind it that it doesn't belong there. You know what? I'm not exempt from that rule, and my kids are on the lookout, and they flick me more than many times. I don't pull out the, "Papa is above the law" card. "I'm tired, I've had a bad day; leave me alone." It's simple and silly, but I hope the bigger lesson in doing this is about earning respect by practicing what I preach, by living by my own rules.

So, guys again, if you believe it, live it. How about a bigger thing? How about the healing power of repentance and forgiveness? Ask yourself this: When was the last time you apologized to your children for something you did wrong to them? We get on our kids all the time, right? "You slapped Johnny, and you need to apologize. Johnny, you need to say, 'I forgive you.'" Do we practice it to them? Again, living it is the most powerful teaching tool you have in your arsenal.

Turn to Philippians 2. This is the crux of the matter. This is where it has to start.

Philippians 2:5. *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. (NLT)*

What did that attitude result in? What was the action? What was done?

6) Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

7) Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,

8) he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (NLT)

We have a creator who was not beneath becoming the very sacrifice, both in human life and in death, that makes our potential even possible.

In the following verse, Christ tells us:

Matthew 5:17. *Don't suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning. (CEV)*

In a manner of speaking, He didn't say, "I can put my elbows on the table, but the rest of you can't." He came to show us how it's done. So, dads, when you ask yourself this question, "What am I doing?" We are showing our children how it's done.

So, in fast forwarding to the time here, celebrating, what's the take away? Why is asking, "What am I doing?" a vital question to consider for that future time? Again, as we talked about earlier, it's going to be an uphill battle, at the very dawn of the Millennium in a relationship specifically with mankind. We've talked about this before, to capture the magnitude of the scene of the return of Jesus Christ, turn to Revelation 19.

Revelation 19:11. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.*

12) His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

13) He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. (NAS)

Brethren, hopefully that's you and I in this process as described in verse 14.

15) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. (NAS)

So, we've got this picture here. What is mankind's reaction to this picture?

19) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (NAS)

This is how we are reintroduced. It's vivid and powerful. There's going to be opposition. We have to transition, though. This isn't the end of the story. We have to transition from this scene to the Isaiah 11:6; the Isaiah 30:21; Isaiah 32:18; these classic millennial pictures that we have in scripture.

How is that going to take place? We've talked about this before. There is going to have to be a level of supernatural miraculous intervention, perhaps in this case like an

Isaiah 11:9 sort of way, in an overlaying of God's way of life over the minds of humanity, but there's going to be a lot of tactical. Who is going to be involved in the soup to nuts in this process? It's going to be us. That's what we are training for, that's what we're here for.

Again, going back to Christ's example for us today, we take comfort and instruction in the words that we find in Hebrews 4. This is a familiar passage. We take comfort and instruction.

Hebrews 4:15. *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

16) *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NAS)*

These words that we just read, will they not, indeed, apply in the context of the Millennium? In turn, will we not be able to relay our own personal experiences, in our own ways, be able to sympathize with weaknesses and relay our experiences in our relationship with Jesus Christ as human beings in receiving grace and mercy and reconciliation and forgiveness?

In part, today we can learn and experience what this means in our relationships with our families, with our children, catching that glimpse of what it means to be a king and a priest in our relationships at home, having that intimate, personal, transparent involvement so that our kids can know that they can find grace and mercy in us. How? Because we are directly reflecting what? It's what's in our hearts. It comes all the way back around, which, powered by God's spirit, we are growing in the mind of Christ. Again, we go back to Philippians 2:5.

Let's start to wrap this up. Turn to one of my favorite passages in the Bible, Joshua 24, please.

Joshua 24:13. *I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'* (NAS)

This verse, in particular, crosses my mind quite a bit. Guys, we toil for our daily bread, right? We're doing the 9 to 5, we're trying to get it done and make everything happen, but I challenge the majority of us to deeply consider how much we have, how much we enjoy because of the labor of others. Certainly, for all of us, the very fact that God has provided everything we have, the material abundance, the children that we have among us. The very next breath that we take is provided by God.

14) *"Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*

15) If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (NAS)

Alright, dads, grandfathers, uncles, brothers (physical or spiritual), now is the time. We are either, as is the essence of what we read in verse 15, we are either all in or all out. I encourage you, be all in. It starts with you and me. Where is our heart? Where is our focus? Is it not on God? Is it not on our families? We need to change it. How do we change it? A good place to start is on our knees. Make it early and make it often. Make that conversation with your creator real, not just pious cliché. It has to start there. We have to get that relationship right first.

Then reconnect with your wife. Love her the way you loved her when you first fell in love, and then be present with your kids. Remember, you’ve got the power of the creator of the universe in you. Tap into it and use it. Be inspired by God’s future for you and make it real to your family. Follow your elder brother’s example. Live your rules. Be willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to do and be what your family needs you to do and needs you to be.

Guys, show up. It’s easy to say, right? You say, “You’re up there and I’m down here. You can say all that.” When it gets hard, you’re not feeling it? How do we make it happen? Well, there were four little reasons up here this morning that we can keep in mind, and it reminds me when my kids were blessed. It’s a powerful moment for a father. There were a dozen reasons up here singing this morning, right in front of us about an hour ago. Put those pictures in your mind. Think. You see those kids. That is the future body of Jesus Christ right there. If we do our part, guess what? They win.

So, ask yourself these three simple questions:

1. Where is my heart?
2. What is my plan?
3. What am I doing?

Put God in your family, in your core. Champion God’s future and align what you do with what you say. With God’s spirit, our hearts and actions can be turned to our children before what we read earlier, that great and terrible day of the Lord, and equip us for just an amazing future beyond.

So, guys, brethren, let’s make this happen.