



## Transcriptions

### The Family as a Setting for Learning

Ted Ward

**Annotation:** *Evangelistic Association of New England Congress (EANE), Boston, 1977.* The family can be an analogy for church. Ted Ward discusses ways in which the family is central—ways that he believes have not been adequately recognized by the church.



One of my youngest two, I can't remember which one, came to supper table the other night and announced, "How does it feel, Mom and Dad, not to have any sub-teenagers around anymore?" And I forget what the response was, but it grumbled a lot.

One of the things that worries me when people go to conferences and conventions is the possibility that they will return home without anything that they can hang onto and that they can accuse the people planning the conference, and making presentations, and the like, of not being practical enough. And I suspect, as a social scientist and as a theoretician, quite often it is a fair thing to accuse me of not being practical. I'm sensitive to that criticism and concerned about it and, therefore, I thought I'd start this afternoon with something very practical. You can work it into your notes, take it home, and use it, and you're in good shape. You won't be able to hold Don Gill or any of the rest of the committee or even me responsible for the failure to be practical.

It actually is an item that I can share with you out of a newspaper which is where we get most of our practical things nowadays—television has given up. And the headline is, "Order Chicken as Kidnap Food." Now this was provoked partly because I saw some of you running around with

your boxed lunches this noon, and I thought you'd be encouraged by this. It says here, the *Associated Press* item; and so help me I'm not kidding you. Would I kid you? "If you are kidnapped, ask for fried chicken to eat. This was among the tips from FBI agents at a businessman's law seminar last week. 'Get greasy fried chicken and don't wash your hands,' they said, 'then you'll leave fingerprints everywhere'".

I've worked in several parts of the country, but kidnapping is so humorous in New England. What's the deal? This is serious. The agent said, "Kidnapping, hostage situations, and extortion have replaced skyjacking as today's fad crime. 'One business executive who was kidnapped and later escaped actually left greasy fingerprints behind,' said Thomas H. Green, Special Agent from the Rapid City, South Dakota, FBI Bureau. 'He was what we call an 'ideal victim'."

It's a comfort to know that the FBI makes a distinction in the American society between ideal victims and the rest of us. "Leaving fingerprints will immeasurably aid a successful prosecution and conviction." Now I thought you could go home with something to share with your people and, for want of anything else, this is it.

Now the other possibility is that we might find something practical in the Word of God. I suspect a somewhat better possibility. I'd like to give you a couple of presuppositional statements with reference to this topic, "The Family as a Setting for Learning." First of all, in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ephesians the 11<sup>th</sup> verse and following:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men and their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, rose and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Presupposition #1 that I will not develop in the talk, but I will assume that we can agree on at the beginning, is that it is a biblical concept that what we are about in the work of Christ in the church is the development of the saints. Now that does not exclude a whole host of other things including various kinds and forms of overt witness and evangelization, but I presuppose that it is an understood given among us that to be about this business of growth, and learning, and development, moving toward an image of perfection is very much part of what it's all about.

I also make the presupposition—and I will not develop further but regard it as a given among us—that there is an analogous relationship between the church and the family. Thus, the word "family" appears in the materials of this conference, in part, in a double meaning. For the Christian, "family" means "the family of Christ." The family also means "the family unit" which consists of the people that are pulled in to that particular configuration in which they are ministering to each other's needs in that total pattern that is the family over a life of maturity.

And, by the way, when I talk “family” I don’t have to talk separately about “singles” and separately about “recently married” and all the rest of that. I respect those people as being always part of family pattern. One never loses his sonship. One never loses his involvement within the family of Christ if he is even unmarried as an adult, as a substitute, or an extension on the family serving in relationship to others; both in the family of Christ in that super relationship and also in the very practical relationships of adoptive roles through extended family within the body.

And, by the way, if your church doesn’t have a pattern like that, let me recommend it to you whereby singles and older people, whose families are out and gone to Florida and moved to California and everything, are not brought into the fellowship of some other families to become part of the extended family in a system much like we find in much of the world, with the exception of Western Europe and the United States. This presupposition about the body and its analog in the church is also found extensively in the in the writings of Paul—well, elsewhere in the writings of Paul such as 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12.

We might wonder why the current emphasis on the family; and it is quite clear that there has been, just in the last few years among evangelical Christians, a resurgence of interest in the in the phenomenon of the family. I was with Denny Rydberg of the *Wittenburg Door* just the other day who had come out to visit with some of the people in our research team at the university. And in the course of the conversation at lunch he made a comment that really worried me. He says, “I think this family stuff is a fad.” And I thought, you know, I kind of agree and yet I don’t want to agree. I’m glad to see evangelical Christians re-raising questions of family and I hope they don’t treat it as “fad.” I hope that it becomes a built-in given because, especially in our society, the family is central in ways that we have not adequately recognized in recent times.

Let me just suggest some of these. In the first place, the Bible depends on and assumes family relationship in much of the imagery that it uses to communicate God relationship. You might ask yourself the question: What would it mean if “God is our Father” falls on the ears of someone who has no concept of father? Now this does happen, even in our time and in our society, and this is one of your problems in trying to communicate anything about what a father of compassion and concern and nurturing really means to a person whose “father” experiences are so badly bent up by realities in life. You see, there’s got to be, within the Christian community, an imagery and experience created within children so that biblical language can have meaning. I’m distressed sometimes that the tendency we have to assume that all it takes to come to grips with God’s Word is just to hear the Word. If we don’t know what the meanings are, if we don’t know where it’s going with that set of words, then clearly this is not an adequate thing.

In the Christian community today, I think we must take very seriously a contrast with the secular society. The secular society is on the very verge, I believe, of giving up the family unit. Yes, various kinds of convenience units will replace the family, but I think that these are essentially outside the pattern of the teaching of the Word of God, for the most part. I can see all sorts of cultural variations on what the Word of God does say about family, by the way, but in the final analysis some of the Christian distinctives are really up for grabs. They have been characteristic of our society and they are now disappearing such as, for example, the notion of lifelong commitment of marital partners. This is really up for grabs in our secular society and the church has got to do some pretty clear-cut re-statement of its own position or this may be, in fact, lost. And I think that if it is lost within our society, the church at large within North America suffers a mortal blow from which it can’t readily recover apart from some miraculous intervention of God.

Secondly, as the Christian family becomes more different, the Christian family as such may become one of the most distinct communicating points about the Christian distinctive. In other words, if within a community we have clearly only one sector of the society that is really concerned about family distinctives like lifetime commitment of parents, acceptance of children as a proper responsibility, and the whole business that we will develop as we go along about nurturance. If the rest of society is rejecting that, it's going to be much more easy to identify the Christian community. And one of the identifiers of the Christian community may, in fact, become very soon the peculiar family-style. That's something to think about because we've got to do something to make that possible. It's not going to happen just because the secular society is eroding away. While it is eroding away, it is also pulling oodles of Christian families with it. See my point? We've got to do something positive or we, too, are eroded by that general secular thing.

The third point is that pressures on the family, I believe, will strengthen the church and should not be rejected, or not be a cause for some kind of panic alarm. I think the family is under stress of great sorts today; but I think this may be a strengthening theme for the church. But there's a heavy responsibility on parents today and I am, for one, very concerned that the church do more to provide help within the framework of the church in terms of the competencies and responsibilities of parents. I think, rather than being of much help, sometimes we're actually a hindrance. We tend to provide ways that parents can escape certain responsibilities by turning certain responsibilities over to the church. And we play into a very unfortunate societal delegation model that says the really important things you have to find some super institution to turn them over to. The education of your children you turn over to schools. You know, you turn over all sorts of things to civil authority. And you turn over religious education to the institutionalized form of the church; that's got to stop. And somehow our emphasis educationally within the church, I believe, needs to shift from the children to the parents, and that would be a radical shift.

I'm impressed that parenthood is something that's supposed to happen to you every now and then, and when it happens you're supposed to be able to do something about it without having ever been told, and without ever having been helped. It's as if somehow you're supposed to just emerge with all that understanding and wisdom. In our society, it's not appropriate, for example, for the older generation to be involved extensively in the raising of children. Ours is one of the few societies in the world where that is the case. And that means that everybody starts out parenting as a kind of late-teenager, early 20's, and the wisdom accumulation there is just not very great. What is the church doing to prepare people for parenthood? I'll tell you one thing the church is doing to prepare people for parenthood, is discouraging the public schools from getting into it. Now how that helps I never could figure out, but the logic goes like this: since that matter of sex education, family development education, and the like, really is a matter for the family and the home and the church, we don't want the schools messing around with it. Well, now, that's very interesting. I can follow that argument so far and then I want to ask, "Okay, what are you going to do about it in the home, family, and church?" And the answer quite often is, "Well, not very much," as if somehow this most basic institutional function of the community is to be left up for grabs with nobody really paying an awful lot of attention to it except maybe a really lovely sermon on Mother's Day. I submit that's not adequate.

You see, the families of the Christian community create the church relation. I suspect one of the reasons why we have bickering in the church is because the church is analogous to the family. The imagery of the church is developed in people's consciousness in the family. Follow me? So what do they bring to the church relationship? They bring the bickering that they learned in the family.

They bring the tensions they learned in the family. They bring the frustrations over dominating leadership that they learned in the family, and they bring those right into the church. They create a church which is the super family, and they bring all that garbage and dump it right into the church and create the family as an amalgam of all that was wrong with their respective family. We've got to get at that somewhere and I submit the time is now to begin facing it.

In the first place, we could understand something of the functions of family and even both as imagery of the church. In other words, I'm going to be talking at two levels from now on in this presentation. Everything that I'm saying about family is representative of an equivalent concept in church—because the church models for families, and the families produce assumptions about leadership and relationship that become church for that group of families. You just can't separate these two, and God knew that. So let us look, for a moment, at some of the things that sociologically we understand about church or about family and see if these give us any clues about what's involved in the church and the Christian family, particularly.

From a socio-psychological viewpoint, the family performs a set of three functions. The family performs a set of three functions, the first of which we might call, "The Protective or Coping Functions." We have identified the three clusters of these: the Sheltering Protective Function, the Teaching Protective Function, and the Launching Protective Function. Protective or Coping—you can see them passively as Protective Functions; you can see them dynamically as Coping Functions. We obviously don't need to dwell on the function of Sheltering. It's pretty clear that the human infant, unlike most of the rest of the animal kingdom, is born in a condition of tremendous dependency. I'm always amazed at this because God obviously singled out that sixth-day creature to do something very special. And one of the very special things he did was to create birth processes of the sort that were described earlier today, and dependency as the condition of not just a newborn, but of the child for a good long while. Have you ever seen a newborn horse? Wow! On its feet in a few minutes, and within a couple of hours moving around the pasture as if it owned the place. You take a look at the human being, you don't see that. Does it tell us something about what God intended to teach about the need for sheltering?

Now the teaching function is one that obviously is at first a protective and coping function, for example, as we teach children the dangers of certain kinds of things. These things must be must be taught and sometimes taught non-experientially. It's always nice to be able to teach things experientially, but there're certain kinds of cautions such as "Don't run out on the road in front of a truck" that are best not taught experientially.

There's a launching function, too, in this protective or coping function. And the launching function is perhaps the least well understood because it's the hardest to deal with. It's this whole business of the ultimate severance that Jesus even talks about in terms of ultimately turning one's back on the family and moving away, and the responsibility to one's spouse and then establishing yet another generation of family.

Let's move to the modeling functions, those that I think Larry Richards has spent a good bit of time elaborating. Modeling functions fall into two categories for me. They fall into concept modeling and behavior modeling. Now, for heaven's sakes, I didn't say, "behavior mod." I don't buy that stuff. Concept modeling or imagery modeling is the sort of thing we were mentioning earlier when we say that the family provides a framework in which we get such concepts as what *mother* means, what *father* means, what *family* means. These concepts become part, then, of our

understanding of how we relate to each other within the church, and the family plays these modeling functions by acting them out. We don't teach the child, "Now father is a person who is the male part of a progenitor set, etc." We don't do it that way. We say, "That's Daddy." Daddy then becomes an operating model. It is seen in terms that that's what "daddy" means.

But we also have behaviors that are models. Appropriate and inappropriate things are learned, first and foremost, within the family and primarily from the parents, to some extent from the siblings: the brothers and sisters. The behavior modeling function, however, has its most important impact during late childhood and early adolescence, and unlike what I think Larry Richards is saying about modeling in reference to Christian education, I don't think the modeling function is really where it's at much beyond middle-adolescence. I think about that point children move beyond taking models as their primary sort of influence.

The third is what I would call the developmental functions which are classified as three: the exploring of disequilibrium. [Two more are dialogue and walking alongside, described later.] And remember we're talking about the social psychological functions of family. One of the things that Jean Piaget points out is that learning is a process of re-equilibration: encountering disequilibrium and re-equilibrating. Always, as we come up in the new experiences, there's something about the new experience that has to be either accommodated or assimilate—brought into our system and reconstructed from within us. And this produces in us, from time-to-time, especially on bigger issues, a tremendous amount of disequilibrium. Disequilibrium is probably easiest to define if we think of it in terms of a bicycle. When you are disequibrated on a bicycle, what tends to happen? You lose all your confidence and you tend to wobble a lot, and pretty soon, if you don't correct it, you're going to fall over. Disequilibrium comes from the word equilibrium.

Psychological disequilibrium is what happens when new ideas come down the pike that just don't quite fit and they tend to knock us off, make us wobble; and until we do something about it, we're in prone condition to fall. This happens to children, to adults, to even to pastors; and, to some extent, to those of us in situations like this when we run into new ideas. It's always going on in the processes of life.

Now family plays the role of exploring those disequibrations with children; not to fight them off, as to say, "Oh, you said a baddie. You never raise that kind of a question." Boy, I wish we could get parents out of doing that. It's very important in parent's lives, for example, pastors, Christian education leaders, that their children never ask the wrong question. My daughter was sent away from a Christian camping situation when she asked a question about the morality of the Vietnam War. She was sent to her cabin from an evening experience. She was disequibrated badly for a long period of time about the morality of the Vietnam War during that period of time. And for asking the wrong question, as a church staff member's daughter, she was sent away from that meeting so that she could go think it over. And that in a church a lot like yours and mine.

Instead, we ought to be standing alongside young people saying, "It's okay to ask questions. Let's ask them together. Let's explore together." We've got to get new reconciliations. We've got to get new understandings and those new understandings are always going to involve a certain amount of feeling uneasy about what we've always believed. Now if you haven't had a child who has discovered that some of the things he's always believed now have to be re-examined, I doubt very seriously that you've paid much attention to your child. The issue is do you have to cover that up and pretend it's not happening. Or within your family of God, within your church, is it well-known

that that's an okay stage, that kind of process is part of growing, that kind of process is part of learning? How much are we hung up for fear that we will be exposed as being failures as a parent?

Secondly, this business of dialogue is extremely important in development because it is the framework within which ideas are really shaped up. I feel most concerned about children who don't feel free to talk to their parents. I feel most concerned about kids that have quit asking, "Why?" Many times one of our big motives, after we had a 4- or 5-year-old, is to somehow get beyond the stage of having them ask, "Why?" about everything. By the way, I suggest to some of you younger parents a little tactic on that, and that is beat the kid to the draw. Ask the why before he does. Sounds a little glib, but it works. Because kids are really asking, "Can we talk about 'Why?'" They're not saying, "You tell me 'Why?'" but, "I want to I want to talk about 'Why?'" And sometimes if you can just put the shoe back on the other foot and say, "Okay, why do you suppose I'm asking that? Why are *you* resisting? Why are *you* asking your question? Why—from the parent point of view and get the kid involved in the "Why?" bit. And, by the way, kids quite often understand the question, "Why?" and they're willing to talk about it to far greater extent than the parent assumes.

The third thing is this function of walking alongside. The family has got to be a safe haven in which there is always at least somebody there ready to walk alongside no matter how rough the road, no matter how weary the state, no matter how wrong the deed. There's somebody there available to walk alongside. I'm impressed that the Scripture uses this *paracelsus* notion for the Holy Spirit in terms of God walking alongside with us. This is exactly what is modeled appropriately in the family as the child walks along.

Now with these functions in mind, let me just dip very slightly into some of the research on moral judgment and extrapolate some material from the local resident, Harvard professor Lawrence Kohlberg, and some of the work that we've done taking a look at Kohlberg's research in Christian perspective. And we don't come out with all the same conclusions he comes out with, but we really admire his data. We discover that—and that was meant with a non-facetious tone—we have been mightily encouraged by his research, though his is a humanistic framework. We discovered that if you look at levels of moral influence in Kohlberg's three levels—and I've sub-divided these in terms of the two divisions of each that he calls, "The Six Stages." And then look at strategies of moral influence in terms of (1) rewards and punishments, (2) models and examples, and (3) dialogues and transactions, you see several things.

First of all, these are the clusters of moral influence procedure that are attuned most specifically to these levels of moral development. This is kind of like early childhood, middle childhood. As the child moves into adolescence, models and examples become much more important, and the rewards and punishment thing begins to fade. See it? But all the way through here something else is building: it's dialogues and transactions. Now if you take a 25-year-old and put him into a moral influence situation where the only moral influence you're bringing to bear is rewards and punishments, the odds are he's not going to respond very well because what he's much more apt to be able to respond to is models and examples.

If, however, you take a 40-year-old person who has really matured a lot, he's probably seen all the models and examples and he's probably done all the conforming to those that he's going to do. The way that he's going to continue to develop in his moral judgment throughout life is probably in here in terms of dialogues and transactions as he talks over the meaning of ideas and the meaning of moral choices.

One of the things we need to see, then, is that rewards and punishments pragmatically work pretty well. They work, in fact, the best of any of the techniques we can use. You try reasoning with a 5-year-old and discover that reasoning, in the sense of dialogues and transactions, has a minimal influence. So, pragmatically, you say, “Well, I’ve just got to engage in a rewards and punishments with that aged kid. Then with my junior high kids I discover that rewards and punishments pretty soon begin to fall like on deaf ears and water off a duck’s back, and what I better do is just be concerned about models and examples and good rules, and get them to conform to these kinds of external things.” Yes, but the problem is that if we do this sort of thing exclusively—rewards and punishments in Level I—we probably will ultimately trap the person and he’ll never get much beyond that. We need to get people involved, even as children, in that which isn’t going to have much direct influence at the time, but lays a foundation for the growth of this thing that is the ultimate mode of moral development throughout life which is the transaction and dialogue on moral issues. Now I don’t intend for you necessarily to process all that and I respect the fact that I’m being much too brief about it, but the time available to us is not that great.

I did, however, want to show you that there are some scientific propositions and findings and data that really do relate to this whole issue we’re talking about in terms of family development—the family as a setting for learning—and we can do something more than just make generalizations. We notice, for example, that if we examine again these three levels, that there are two issues that keep coming up over and over that represent the big differences between and among the three levels.

For example, in the first level of life, one’s orientation to the source of authority is in assuming *self* to be the authority. Now did you ever exist as a child? How many of you would say, “Yes.” Thank you very much. Most of us did. Do you recall anything about childhood to know that there was a time in your life—whether you’re a Christian or not, whether your parents were Christian or not—*right* is what felt good, and *wrong* is what felt bad. Do you know that? That’s where we all start out. Some of us stay there. That’s called “stalemated development.” There’s nothing automatic about growth of moral judgment; some of us stay there. In fact, some of us stay there but become very intellectual about it and our name becomes Hugh Hefner, for example. And I’m not being funny because there are people who are making elaborate hedonistic explanations for why they’re still in Level I. Judgment, as in terms of source of authority, is inside oneself; and response to authority, whenever it takes any form, is as a response to authority of a response to a force. Even a Hugh Hefner can be forced to conform to certain kinds of external rules. You follow me? But you have to force him.

Now in Level II which is entered into in middle childhood by most young people—or, let’s say when it is entered into at all, it’s somewhere in middle childhood or later—this transfer of source of authority is a marvelous transforming to outside. Always before “It’s right if I say it’s right.” And I determine that in terms of whether or not I get a good reward or a good feeling about it. But, ultimately, I confess that that isn’t adequate, and somewhere “out there” is the source of authority for judging right and wrong. Now for many young people, this transfer first occurs in terms of the recognition of parent as determinant of right and wrong. Great. I think this is one of the reasons that the Bible places such heavy emphasis on the role of parent because that parent is the first object of external authority to be respected. You can’t get a child, in Level I, to think in terms of God as authority if he hasn’t yet grasped parent as authority. Now it’s interesting the way the Bible says some of these things and we maybe haven’t noticed it, but are you aware that in the writings of Paul he identifies one commandment as being peculiar from the all the rest and he identifies it as “the

first commandment with promise.” In fact, it’s the only commandment with promise and it’s the one that says, “honor, father, mother.” Ah, very interesting. That is the *first* commandment. Did you ever ask yourself, “In what sense, *first*?” It’s not the first in the list and it’s not the first in importance, but it’s the first in sequence. It is the threshold that liberates through obedience. Obedience is the ingredient without which one does not move from Level I to Level II. In this level, authority is recognized as external to self, and response to authority is as to respected models and laws. It is a response in respect and, hence, “honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long.” Notice the promise associated with that. It’s a promise that’s meaningful in Level I terms, if you know Kohlberg’s findings.

Now in the third level—which, by the way, Kohlberg finds that relatively few adults get to, and in my own experience I suspect that is not necessarily terribly common even within the saints of God—this level of judgment in which authority is incorporated into self as principles from outside having become internalized. Orientation to authority, then, is back inside self. Now the saved and the saints among us will suddenly say, “Aha, that sounds like relativism.” Now, wait a minute, the Word of God talks about God’s preference that that which he has written on the tables of stone rather be, in his judgment, written in the fleshy tables of the heart. Now he’s not talking about Scripture memorization. He’s talking about that incorporating in oneself that is exactly what Kohlberg is talking about in Level III. It’s the bringing in of the principles. Jesus came, “Not to destroy the Law,” he said in Matthew 5, “but to fulfill the Law.” And then when he elaborated what that meant, he showed the principles underlying the particulars of Law. Then he said, “I give you a new commandment.” And you look at it and you say, “Well, it’s not a commandment like all the rest. You can’t command people to love.” It’s a principle of love. And then he says, “In this commandment all the Law and the Prophets consist.” In other words, it’s the underlying principle of the love of God.

Response to authority then is as response to principles willingly even eagerly incorporated into oneself; internalized source and eagerly responded to. Now I’d like to illustrate this, for what it’s worth, by giving you something to hang your hat on with reference to the difference between obedience and trust. Both are important in the Christian economy. I think, however, that most Christians have come to grips with the word “obedience” and the function of obedience in their life but haven’t necessarily come to grips with trust. And there’s a difference.

Three ladders: a person at the bottom of this ladder calling up and you’re standing at the top of the ladder. The person standing at the bottom says, “Jump.” And you say, “Are you crazy? If I jump you can’t catch me. I’ll hurt myself. I’m not going to jump.” Now what would you say is lacking there? Obedience? Trust? Both lacking.

Now let’s go to the second ladder. You’re at the top of the second ladder and someone is at the bottom saying, “Jump.” You look down and say, “Do I have to?” “Yes.” “Will you catch me?” “Yes.” “I don’t think you will.” “Jump.” “Okay, if I have to. Here I come.” In other words, the responsibility is on you, but I will obey. Now what’s lacking there? Obedience? No. Obedience is there. What’s lacking? Trust.

Third ladder: You’re at the top; person at the bottom says, “Jump.” And this ladder’s just as tall as the others. You look down and say, “You know, that doesn’t really make an awful lot of sense, but you and I have been through a lot together and you wouldn’t say, ‘Jump,’ if it were going to hurt me, or if it were going to take you beyond your resources. Here I come.” What’s present?

Obedience? Trust? Trust doesn't have to make sense. Trust is based on involvement and is based on participation that builds that kind of familial assurance that anything you send up as an instruction to me is in my best interests and yours. Do you see it? This is a fascinating thing that Kohlberg has found doing a purely naturalistic kind of examination of how people make moral judgments and moral choices. A very similar thing to what I think we can build an apologetic for in the Scripture.

What should we do, then, in terms of facilitating or enhancing the family as a setting for learning? First of all, pastors may I appeal to you to preach more on the nature of community and home. There's plenty of Scripture there for it. Spend time with it yourself, grow in it yourself, and share it with God's people. When you're doing this, let me suggest four emphases:

Always begin with the emphasis on *love*, not the coercivity of love that becomes ultimately neurotic, but the accepting love that allows the child in the relationship to be what he is and to grow in terms of what God is making of the person.

Then let me suggest that you emphasize *unity* because a tremendous amount of the epistles is given over to this concept and it is so easily overlooked. Sometimes it even embarrasses us because we reckon it only in terms of denominational differences. Accept that to be a problem and get on with the show. I don't think God's people today are that hung up on denominational differences. I think in any fellowship the real issue of unity is not cross-denominational, but unity in that body of believers. Put an emphasis on unity. The Word of God does. It's a kind of holding together thing, sharing of purpose, sharing of values.

Third, let me suggest that you emphasize the *lordship of Christ*. Perhaps that should be first and foremost, but it isn't always the best place to begin because until something is done with love and unity, the lordship of Christ doesn't come singing home with all the power that it can.

And fourth, let me suggest that you preach the *servanthood of leadership* and somehow exemplify it yourself because if you're not exemplifying it you're going to have a tough time preaching it.

Now in addition to the preaching, let me suggest that all of us get in the business of practicing Christian principles of leadership because it's in those patterns of leadership that are laid down in the church that fathers and mothers and potential fathers and mothers and a generation of leaders in the church tomorrow get their signals about what it is to be a father; what it is to be a mother; what it is to have authority; what it is to be compassionately concerned about a family. They see that in the pastor. What do they see? Let me ask you to practice Christian principles of leadership. And let me just suggest, as we go along here, something that has come home to me fairly recently. I'd share with you out of the thing that I'm exploring right now: it just struck me about six months ago that the many models of relationship of leaders in the New Testament and the relationship of growth tend to be botanical. Now the big image of the church as a body with the one head, Christ, is the big, if you please, the animal kingdom example. But so many other analogies in the Scripture are from the plant kingdom. Very interesting. Plant kingdom. Botanical. There's vines; there's wheat; there's growing things like flowers, there's lilies all the rest of it. And I ask questions: What is the emphasis there? Why weren't those animal analogies? Is there something peculiar about the botanical model? And I began to think about this in terms of being a parent or being a pastor, and I observed some things. For example, I discovered that no amount of shouting, lecturing, preaching, and so forth, was going to change a tomato plant into a cucumber. And you can't even

exhort a rose to bloom. We need leadership. We need parents. We need pastors who are like the gardener who facilitates. They make the conditions ripe for growth, but they don't attempt to change the pattern of things. God has laid down the pattern. They facilitate.

Then I also noticed in the botanical analogies that there are all sorts of good plants in the world. What a pity it would be if all we had were watermelon vines. Everywhere watermelon vines, you know? We need somehow parenting, leadership, pastoring that values difference. And then I noticed that the person involved in caring for the botanical world tends not to carry a big stick or a whip. Instead he carries a watering pot. Yes, indeed, he carries a hoe, too. But I noticed that the Scripture's not silent on that hoe. It suggests that when certain kinds of things that need to be done with a hoe would possibly disrupt the good plants, too, you put the hoe away and let the Lord of the harvest take care of it. We need that kind of parenting. We need that kind of pastoring.

Then I noticed something else. I noticed that in the plant world there is seasonality. And in this seasonality there is a right time for blooming and there's a right time for flowering and bearing fruit and there's a right time for dormancy. And I have to wonder: is it possible that we have this image of growth of the Christian and maybe even growth of the church that assumes that if all things are ripe, we're going to have a bloom all the blooming time?

I also noticed that a good gardener allows a tree many years to grow before he determines if it is going to bear fruit or not. He recognizes that not everything will tell you whether or not it's going to be productive right off the bat. And I thought to myself: how many times we set short-term goals on our church growth activities and if the short-term goals won't pay off when we think they ought to, we're just not willing to let them do their own thing in their own good time. We need a leadership that is patient and faithful, not suspicious. We need a leadership that accommodates individual developmental characteristics.

But I notice one more thing. I've seen a lot of beautiful gardens in this world. I respect a beautiful garden and I discovered that a beautiful garden always has somewhere a very happy gardener. But sometimes he's hard to find. I'll never forget an incident that occurred a number of years ago in Geneva, Switzerland when I was working at what I thought was one of the most charming small gardens that I had ever seen in a public place. There was a group of four or five Americans of us and we happened to spot this man who was obviously the gardener. And we went over and talked with him and he was just delighted. And a couple of our people were able to speak French and we were having a good time talking with him about his garden. He was so proud and he was so happy that we showed that kind of interest. We were asking him about this plant and that plant. Asking the ages of things. Asking what he did in the care of things. Then one of our group said, "Tell me, what does it take to be a really good gardener?" And he didn't answer. We were staring at some stuff. We looked around, and he was gone. We had changed our focus from the garden to the gardener and he wasn't interested in that conversation. I think we need leadership and maybe we need parenting that plays down its own importance in order to play up the importance of that which is growing and that which God is doing in people and in our fellowship.

But in order, again, to be practical, let me suggest a couple of things in closing. First of all, I encourage churches to plan more learning experiences in which these sorts of leadership and parenting can be encouraged and can flourish. For example, church-sponsored family camping. Now there's something that I think to be extremely valuable. Things that can be done collectively by small sets of God's people. Not necessarily the whole troop going out and taking over the nearest state

park for the week, but sets of people going away in experiences where they live and they learn together and the nuance of that situation causes them to come to grips with things about themselves and their personalities and what God is doing in them that they can share. And through such shared experiences, they can build a sense of community. Church-sponsored family camping can make a whale of a difference.

And then one other thing: one of the findings that Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard has found with reference to the conditions under which humans continue to develop toward higher form moral judgment is in relation to the amount of concern for justice in the environment that they find themselves in. Or putting it another way, more than any other single fact that has been identified, the degree to which the group of people—be it a family, be it an institutional form, whatever the situation the person is living in—if that group is collectively dealing with justice problems and justice issues within that community there's a tendency for more moral development. Notice it's very interesting the word "justice" that occurs in Lauren Hebert's, *The Relationship between Justice and Righteousness of God*. They're virtually inseparable. I wonder if we should not, even as Mary did, re-affiliate ourselves with what it is that God is doing in this world in terms of justice, so that we see the righteousness of God as something that we all have a stake in so that in our churches and in our families we are dealing with issues of righteousness in our society; issues of righteousness and justice within our own community, and within our own family. I think therein lies some of the greatest promise for the development of "the family as a setting for learning."

Thank you very much, indeed.