

Vessels unto Honor for God's Eternal Economy

A conference for parents

The Church in Denver

August 26, 2023

2 Timothy 2:21–22 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be *a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.*

22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Message 1

A Vessel Unto Honor, Sanctified

I. Honor refers to the nature of the vessel

- A. God's economy is the governing principle in the Scripture—Gen. 1:26–27; 1 Tim. 1:3–4; Eph. 1:5, 9–10; 3:2, 9–11
- B. Our goal is the building up of the Body—Eph. 4:11–16; Matt. 16:18; Col. 2:19
- C. Our vision is the New Jerusalem—Heb. 11:10; Rev. 21:2, 10–14; 22:1–3
- D. Our work is the unique work of the Lord's recovery in the divine stream—Gen. 2:10–14; Psa. 36:8–9; 46:4a; Ezek. 47:1–12; John 7:37–39; 1 John 1:3; Rev. 22:1

II. Sanctified is a matter of position

- A. Our children are uniquely positioned as vessels for God's economy—Acts 2:39; Psa. 87:5–6; Gen. 2:7; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:21
- B. We must see the extreme preciousness of our children and young people for God's economy—1 Sam. 1:11, 20, 27; Psa. 127:3–5; 128:1–6; Isa. 8:18; Gen. 1:28
 - 1. To labor with the children and young people we need a vision of their preciousness—Luke 18:16–17; Matt. 18:2–6, 10, 14; 19:13–14; Mark 9:36–37; 10:13–16; Luke 9:47–48
 - 2. We have been entrusted with a commission and are responsible to care for our children as God's stewards—Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 4:1–2
 - 3. To labor effectively we must have a heart for what we are doing
 - 4. It is good that we like children, but that's not enough to have a heart for them with endurance—2 Cor. 6:11; Col. 3:23; 1 Kings 4:29
 - 5. To labor most effectively, we need a vision—Prov. 29:18
- C. The future of the church hinges on the young people—2 Tim. 2:2; Deut. 1:38; Exo. 2:2–3, 10–11; Prov. 29:18; Psa. 127:3–5; 128:1–6; Gen. 1:28; Psa. 17:14; Deut. 31:10–13; Josh. 8:34–35; Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1–2; 1 Cor. 14:23; Psa. 8:2; Num. 3:28

1. Throughout the ages, God has called young people for His move— Moses (Exo. 2:10; 33:10); Joshua (Num. 11:28); Samuel (1 Sam. 1:24–28; 3:1, 4); Daniel (Dan. 1:2–8); the disciples (Matt. 4:18–20; Mark 1:19–20; Acts 2:14–41); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4–8); David (1 Sam. 16:11–12); Saul (Acts 7:58); John the Baptist (Luke 1:41); Timothy (2 Tim. 3:15); Esther (Esther 2:7–8); Joseph (Gen. 37:1); Miriam (Exo. 2:9); Mary (Luke 1:26–28); Jesus (Luke 2:41–47)
 2. God’s promise is to us and to our children—Acts 2:39; 16:31; Deut. 29:29
 3. The church can increase by laboring on the children and young people—Psa. 127:3–5; 128:1–6; Gen. 1:28; Psa. 17:14
 4. If we only gain our own children we will grow
 5. If we gain our children and some of their friends and preach the gospel and gain households we will have a very healthy growth
 6. We should not neglect our children in order to gain outsiders
 7. Rather, we include our children in our entire church life
 8. We must not lose any of our children!—John 17:12
- D. Children are a blessing and a gift from God—Gen. 4:1; 21:1–2; 30:1–2; 33:5; 48:9; 1 Sam. 1:11, 20, 27; Psa. 127:3; Isa. 8:18; Luke 1:13
- E. Our labor on our children will hasten or delay the Lord’s return—Mal. 4:6; 2 Pet. 3:9, 11–12a; Matt. 24:37–39; 2 Tim. 3:10, 14–17; 1 Cor. 16:16
- F. To be prudent stewards, we must labor on the children and young people—Luke 16:8; 19:13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 4:1–2

References & Resources

LSM, *Raising up the Next Generation for the Church Life*

Witness Lee, *Character*

Witness Lee, *How to Lead the Young People*

Witness Lee, *The Exercise and Practice of the God-ordained Way*, Chapters 8–9

Watchman Nee, *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Vol. 2, Ch. 20, “Household Salvation”

Watchman Nee, *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Vol. 2, Ch. 33, “Parents”

A number of audio resources for parents and serving ones are available in the [Enjoyer](#) app:

- Children and Students class from the FTTA - recorded messages
- Previous parents’ & serving ones’ conferences - recorded messages

Trumbull, H. Clay, *Hints on Child Training*, published by Centennial Publishing and available on Lulu.com. (budurl.us/HOTC)

Durbin, Kara G., *Parenting with Scripture*

Message 2

Useful and Prepared

I. *Usefulness is a matter of function*

- A. Our children will be useful if they are brought up to be useful—Num. 3:28; 2 Tim. 3:15
- B. Our parenting matters to the Lord—it's our responsibility before God, and it impacts the Lord's move—Josh. 24:15; 1 Cor. 11:3; Gen. 18:17–19; 1 Sam. 2:27–30; 3:13–14; 2 Kings 20:19; 3 John 4; 1 Kings 1:5–6; Exo. 2:2–3, 11; Judg. 13:3–14
- C. The parents' care with the church's care will preserve our second generation—John 17:12; Acts 16:31; Titus 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:4; Exo. 1:15–17, 20–22; 10:8–9; Matt. 2:13–14, 16
- D. All of us can have children to care for—John 19:26; Rom. 16:13; 1 Thes. 2:7–11

II. *We can parent our children according to principle for God's purpose, with God's economy in view*—Eph. 6:4; 1 Sam. 1:27–28; 2 Thes. 3:9; Phil. 3:17

- A. God's Word presents principles of parenting, that is, how to parent our children—Judg. 13:1–23; Eph. 6:4
 - 1. In sanctification—Num. 6:1–12; Judg. 13:3–5, 8–14; 1 Sam. 1:9–20, 22, 28; 2:20–21; John 17:17–19; 1 Cor. 7:14; Job 1:5; John 13:15; 1 Cor. 7:14; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:14–16, 18–19; 3:3–5; 1 Tim. 2:9–10; 1 Thes. 5:22
 - 2. In the way of oneness—Psa. 133:1, 3b; Eph. 4:3; Phil. 4:2
 - 3. With learning—Judg. 13:1–23; Titus 2:4; 1:6
- B. Our parenting should be for God's purpose—Acts 16:31; 1 Tim. 3:4
 - 1. To conduct our children to Christ—Exo. 10:9; Mark 10:14; Gal. 3:24
 - 2. For God's building, God's testimony—Num. 3:28
 - 3. We raise our children to lend them to the Lord—1 Sam. 1:24–28
 - 4. It is normal to gain all our children—Acts 16:31; Titus 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:4
- C. There is a war over the children—Exo. 1:15–17, 20–22; 10:8–9; Matt. 2:13–14, 16

III. *The God-ordained way is to gain households—godly homes*—Acts 2:39; 16:31; 21:9; 1 John 5:12; Gen. 7:1; 1 Pet. 3:20; Psa. 87:5; 2 Tim. 1:5; Gen. 17:12–13; Exo. 12:3–7; Num. 18:1, 11; Josh 2:19; 6:17; 2 Sam. 6:11; Deut. 12:7; 14:26; 29:29; Luke 19:9; John 4:53; Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15; 18:8; Luke 10:5–6; 1 Cor. 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:19; 1:16; Josh. 24:15; 1 Cor. 11:3; Exo. 20:5–6; Deut. 28:4; Isa. 51:2; Eph. 3:14–15; Psa. 103:17–18; Prov. 12:7; Acts 13:26; Josh. 24:15; Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:18–19; 1 Cor. 7:14; Job 1:5; Mal. 2:15; Gen. 4:4; 18:19; 25:21; 37:2; 48:9; Exo. 2:10; 1 Sam. 1:24–28; Dan. 1:3–6; Esth. 2:5–7; 4:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:21–25; Acts 12:12; 21:8–9; 2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 3:11; 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 3:11

- A. Our labor should be to gain households, not individuals—Luke 19:5–9
- B. God chooses families and blesses them for multiple generations—Gen. 22:16–18; Exo. 20:5–6; Deut. 28:4; Isa. 51:2; Eph. 3:14–15; Psa. 103:17–18; Prov. 12:7; Acts 13:26
- C. The head of the household has a special responsibility to choose the Lord for the entire house—Josh. 24:15; Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:18–19; 1 Cor. 7:14; Job 1:5; 1 Cor. 11:3

1. A sister can also take this stand before the Lord—Josh. 2:19; 6:17; 1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 16:15; 2 Tim. 1:5
 2. Our labor is not for our selfish interest—Prov. 11:25
 3. The result depends on God’s sovereignty—Eph. 1:4–5, 11; John 17:12; Rom. 8:28–30; 9:11, 15–16
- D. We must avoid one of the greatest failures of the Protestant church, being too loose with the second generation—Prov. 22:6
- E. Godly families can produce vessels useful to the Lord—2 Tim. 3:15; 1:5; 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:8; 6:6; 2 Pet. 1:6b–7; 3:11; Matt. 6:33
1. The Bible and church history are full of examples of godly families producing godly seed, including Adam & Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Amram & Yocheved, Elkanah & Hannah; Daniel, Mordecai & Esther, Joseph & Mary, Zachariah & Elizabeth, John Mark, Philip the Evangelist, Timothy; Augustine, Hudson Taylor, Susanna Wesley, John Newton, C.H. Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, Jonathan Edwards, Isaac Watts—Mal. 2:15; Gen. 4:4; 18:19; 25:21; 37:2; 48:9; Exo. 2:10; 1 Sam. 1:24–28; Dan. 1:3–6; Esth. 2:5–7; 4:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:21–25; Acts 12:12; 21:8–9; 2 Tim. 3:15
 2. Godly does not mean perfect
- F. Training the children and preparing them to serve the Lord is primarily the parents’ responsibility—Prov. 22:6; 4:1; 13:14; Eph. 6:4; Deut. 4:9; 6:7; 11:19; Job 1:5; 1 Thes. 2:19; Heb. 12:7–8; 13:17
1. The parents are by far the most influential factor on the children and young people—Prov. 1:8; 13:24; 29:15, 17; Deut. 4:9
 2. The church helps and supports the parents through the children and students’ work—Gal. 6:2
 3. We must absolutely reject the system of the Nicolaitans, and uproot the thought of having “professionals” care for our children—Rev. 2:6, 15
- G. Our labor is not just with the children and young people but with the families; the church should not replace the parents in the spiritual upbringing of the children, but rather to strengthen and equip them
- H. In the Biblical pattern, the congregation included the children—Deut. 31:10–13; Josh. 8:34–35; Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1–2; 1 Cor. 14:23; Psalms 8:2; Numbers 3:28

IV. *Prepared is a matter of training*

- A. Training the children is the primary job of the parents—Prov. 22:6
- B. Our parenting is a matter of our person—to be a pattern
- C. We must also infuse faith, imparting the Word all the time to make them wise unto salvation—2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1:5; 2:2
- D. This is the exercise of our priesthood of the gospel—Rom. 15:16
- E. Training the will to choose positively and not breaking the will—Isa. 7:15; Deut. 20:15–20; Josh. 24:115; Psalms 25:12; 119:30, 173; Job 34:4
- F. To have a home facing the tabernacle will make a deep impression on our children—Exo. 33:10
- G. To be a parent requires much learning—Judg. 13:1–23; Titus 2:4; 1:6

Message 3
The Household: The Unit of God's Salvation
and the Building Block of the Church

I. Our family life is central to God's economy—Gen. 2:24; 1 Tim. 3:2–5

- A. The building blocks of the church life are not the individual believers, but families or households—Acts 5:42; 16:33; 1 Cor. 1:16; Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; 2 John 1
- B. God's calling, blessing and dealing are with families for generations upon generations—Eph. 3:14–15; Psa. 103:17–18; Prov. 12:7; Acts 13:26; Exo. 20:5–6; Deut. 28:4; Isa. 51:2
- C. Without a godly family life, we will not have a strong church life
- D. Our family life is part of the “walls and gates” for the building of the church—Neh. 1:3; 3:1–30; Rev. 21:12, 18, 21
 - 1. Walls are for keeping the enemy out; this requires our sanctification—Neh. 2:17; 4:7–8; Rev. 21:27
 - 2. Gates are for our children to enter into the church life—Neh. 7:1; Rev. 22:14
 - 3. For the church to be built up and to bring the Lord back, we need to build up a godly family life

II. We can raise godly families by following the principles in God's Word

- A. Godly families begin with godly marriages—Gen. 1:27–28; 2:24; Mal. 2:14–16; Eph. 5:25–33
- B. As parents, we have a commission, a responsibility, and even a mandate to raise godly children—Gen. 1:28; Prov. 22:6; Josh. 24:15; Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:19
 - 1. Our children are not a burden but a blessing and a responsibility
 - 2. Our job is to nurture them
- C. Raising a godly family is a matter of discipline—Heb. 12:6–11; Prov. 13:24; 1 Kings 1:6
 - 1. Discipline is not a matter of punishment but of discipleship and training—Matt. 28:19; Prov. 22:6
 - 2. Discipline is a nurturing of our children—Eph. 6:4
 - 3. The Lord disciplines us in love with nourishing and cherishing, sacrificing Himself for our perfecting; this is our pattern in raising our children—Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 2:25; John 17:19
 - 4. We need to mean what we say—1 Sam. 2:22–25
- D. Raising a godly family is a matter of admonition—we are responsible to teach our children the Lord's Word—Deut. 6:1–2, 5–9, 20–23; 11:18–21; Gen. 1:1; Eccl. 12:1; 2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; Exo. 10:8–9; Acts 21:5; Gen. 18:17–19; Josh. 24:15
 - 1. The Word is our authority
 - 2. The Word washes our children from the world
 - 3. The Word equips our children and makes them wise unto salvation
- E. We must not provoke our children; i.e., must not make them bitter—Col. 3:21; Eph. 6:4
 - 1. Through a lack of discipline [e.g. Eli, Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah]—Prov. 22:15; 1 Sam. 2:29–31; 3:13; 2 Sam. 13:21–22; 1 Kings 1:6

2. Through improper discipline—getting angry, punishing in anger, abusing or criticizing—Eph. 4:26; Col. 3:21
3. Not neglecting them—2 Sam. 13–14
4. Through a lack of affection, love, encouragement and time
5. By showing favoritism—Gen. 37:3–4
6. All issues in the family resolved by coming to the Lord

III. We can raise godly families by praying together and meeting together as a family

- A. A home meeting is a meeting of the family at home
 1. Meeting in the “home way” and not in the congregational way
 2. The family meetings of a godly family are in our daily life, not in a formal setting
 3. In the church life, “each house” is involved—Acts 5:46
- B. We should start at birth or even before, and *not* when the children are older—2 Tim. 3:15; Judg. 13:7; 1 Sam. 1:11; Jer. 1:5; Isa. 49:5; Luke 1:15, 41–44; Gal. 1:15
- C. Let us not “outsource” the spiritual raising of our children—Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4
 1. Training the children and preparing them to serve the Lord is primarily the parents’ responsibility—Deut. 4:9; 11:19; Job 1:5; 1 Thes. 2:19; Heb. 13:17
 2. The church helps and supports the parents through the children and students’ work—Gal. 6:2
- D. The homes with the home (family) meetings are the key to building up the church—Acts 2:46–47; 5:42; 9:31; Rom. 15:16a; 16:5a & footnote 1; Acts 20:20; Heb. 10:25; 2 Tim. 3:15; John 15:16
 1. The fastest way to build up the church is *day by day* and *house to house*—Acts 2:46–47
 2. The building of the church involves *each house*—Acts 5:42; Heb. 10:25
 3. The built-up families are the “nest” to bring new ones into the church and bear fruit—Psa. 84:3; John 15:16; Rom. 16:5
 4. The excelling way to go out is to shepherd others by household—Acts 20:20
 5. The home (family) meetings are the best way to preserve our children—2 Tim. 3:15
- E. Our children and student work can also be carried out in the homes—Heb. 10:25
- F. Eventually our family life will become our church life, and our church life will be a family life

IV. Our labor in three stages is to gain the next generation for the building up of the Body of Christ

- A. To have the children saved and baptized by around age 12
 1. With an emphasis on learning the Word that will make them wise unto salvation—2 Tim. 3:15
 2. Not leading them into premature knowledge or experience
- B. To have the young people develop a spiritual life and become functioning members in the Body of Christ by the time they are in college
- C. To have our college graduates be perfected in the Lord’s service and go on to the full-time training
- D. The full-time training perfects our young adults to be normal, functioning members in the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12; 2 Cor. 13:9, 11; Heb. 13:20–21; 1 Pet. 5:10

V. The parents must take the lead in laboring to gain the next generation